



InterVision Group, LLC

Look on the Bright Side

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Perspective is a funny thing. As many of us were told in childhood, every cloud has a silver lining. We have the choice to look at the glass as half full or half empty. In fact, when we look at events in someone else's life, it is often easy to bring a new perspective to the situation. For example, when a friend loses a job, we can easily remind him that he hated that job anyway and wanted to find a new one. Or, if a friend runs late for her lunch appointment, we point out that she was late because she was helping at her child's school, thereby honoring something that is important to her.

However, when we are stuck in the middle of a traumatic life event, it is often difficult to bring that same perspective to our own predicaments. We lose our ability to change perspective and get stuck in a negative perspective that saps our joy and energy. Frequently we default to the negative or pessimistic perspective because that is what we have grown up with or because we have simply developed a negative perspective habit.

Viewing events from a negative perspective probably once served you because it helped you to manage risk in your life. It may have begun as realism. For example, when you were in school, thinking "if I go out tonight and don't study for my exam, I probably won't pass my class" was probably a valid and realistic perspective that kept you from making serious mistakes. It was a negative perspective but also a realistic one.

While it is still important to be prudent and to be realistic, our "realism" can get out of control. At that point, a pessimistic view becomes fixed in our minds, and we pervasively look at things from a negative perspective. There is a difference between seeing the negative consequences of an event (realist) and coloring things as "always" going wrong (pessimist).

This negativity saps energy, leads to lower productivity, and fosters a feeling of being overwhelmed or out of control. Studies have shown that being able to change perspective and think more optimistically is linked with better physical and mental health. Optimists are also more successful as leaders and bounce back more quickly from negative events.

Simply changing the way you look at the events in your life can increase your productivity and your happiness quotient. Begin by noticing when you take a negative approach, acknowledge the negativity and turn it around. Having a positive outlook can help you get on the fast track to reaching your goals, so look on the bright side.

Tips for Developing a Positive Perspective:

1. Challenge your pervasive assumptions that “everything” will turn out badly or that a particular person will “always” behave a certain way.
2. Consciously look for the silver lining in every situation.
3. Stop and mentally separate yourself from the negative event and view it as an outsider would.
4. Try to see the humor in the negative event or listen to a joke.
5. Do something you enjoy that has nothing to do with the negative event.