



# Learning Optimism

The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind.

William James (1842-1910)

Some lessons need to be learned and relearned every generation. This time we have the help of researcher

Dr. Martin Seligman, author of *Learned Optimism*, who provides specific ways optimists and pessimists differ and concrete methods to become more optimistic. In fact, Dr. Seligman, who describes himself as a pessimist by nature, has himself applied methods discovered in the course of his research in order to become more optimistic.

## Explanatory Styles and Attitudes:

After analyzing tens of thousands of people's "explanatory styles," Seligman concludes that pessimists and optimists explain negative events in three distinctly different ways. This doesn't mean that optimists are fools who ignore the facts, but in an ambiguous situation in which the outcome of events is unclear, optimists will choose to think positively and assume things will work out.

Habitually pessimistic people see negative events as being permanent, pervasive to everything in their life, and generally look for someone to blame. In contrast, optimists view bad events as temporary, specific to an individual event and generally look for practical reasons or causes.

## Three ways pessimists and optimists explain negative events:

	<b>Pessimist</b>	<b>Optimist</b>
<b>Duration</b>	Forever	Passing
<b>Scope</b>	Far-reaching	Particular/limited
<b>Cause</b>	Fault finding and blaming	Practical reasons— What can I learn?