



Choose Optimism

Athlete: "I'll never be any good at this game; I'm always messing up."

Parent: "Hey, I don't want to hear that pessimistic talk."

Athlete: "I'm not being pessimistic...I'm just telling the truth."

So which one are you? A pessimist or an optimist? Or are you one of those people who think it doesn't really matter? Well let's define each one first.

Pessimists tend to believe the bad things that happen affect everything in life and are due to being dumb or unlucky. In other words, it's a permanent condition and it's who they are.

Optimists tend to believe the bad things that happen are temporary blips on the screen-of-life and are due to the mistakes they make, but it's NOT who they are. They know that circumstances can be changed next time around and they're determined to make an adjustment in the future. Experiments show that pessimists tend to give up more quickly, and optimists tend to do better in school and in sports.

Pessimists explain things that happen like this:

"I'm so dumb." "I always make mistakes like that." "I can't do math." "Coaches hate me."

Optimists are more likely to say:

"I wasn't thinking on that one." "I'm having an off day." "That's not like me to miss." "My coach is mad at me today."

The big news is that pessimists can learn to be optimists and there's one technique that's simple to do: Learn to argue with yourself! When you hear your brain say something like "I'm so bad at tests", immediately argue back by reminding yourself of the times you've done well. If your brain says, "I always blow it in games", learn to stand up for yourself by pointing out a fact that proves it's not true, like - "I made a great play last week!"

Correct your brain about the lies it tells. When you learn the skills of non-negative thinking, you'll be more optimistic, and the benefits are huge! Research shows that optimistic people not only win more often, but they are noticeably better under pressure, AND better when they have to overcome obstacles.

Remember, this kind of thinking is a choice we each make. Choose to be an optimistic thinker when bad things happen. Use your brain as a powerful friend, not a devious opponent.





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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1 Think of some situations when you have been pessimistic and vocalized it in front of your children.

2 Encourage your child to choose a more optimistic interpretation of some recent situations.