



## Challenge™ #2 – Leveraging Flexible Optimism

### Resource Sheet

For Challenge #2, we are flexing the muscle of Optimism to make productive moments occur in all facets of your life. As before, your challenge is separated into two focuses: (1) Growth as an Individual and (2) Growth as a Team. Use one or both to increase your usage of Optimism as you strive to elevate all 5 Bounce Back Factors at work and at home.






### Growth as an Individual

**Part 1:** Begin with a quick recap of the definition of Optimism.

Skill	Definition
Optimism	An inclination to put the most <b>favorable construction upon actions</b> and events or to anticipate the <b>best possible outcome</b> .

### Self-Assess: Where are you now?

Using the characteristics of Low, Moderate or High usage of this skill, do a self-assessment and determine how frequently you are using this EI skill.

Low Usage 	Moderate Usage 	High Usage 
Characteristics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tend to see the world with a “glass half-empty” approach.</li> <li>expect and plan for the worse, feeling better when contingency plans are in place.</li> <li>set goals and performance targets that are likely very conservative.</li> <li>are not as hopeful about the future as most.</li> </ul>	Characteristics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tend to see the world with a “glass half-full” approach.</li> <li>are generally hopeful about the future.</li> <li>are energized by setbacks and obstacles, fueled to overcome challenges in life.</li> <li>Occasionally, in times of stress, may feel challenged to remain hopeful.</li> </ul>	Characteristics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>approach the world with a “glass half-full” attitude.</li> <li>believe in themselves and others and rarely give up prematurely.</li> <li>inspire those they work with to overcome challenges.</li> <li>if overly optimistic, may set unrealistic goals, ignore personal shortcomings, or ignore evidence that suggests efforts are headed towards a negative outcome.</li> </ul>

**Self-Rating:** on a 10pt scale

(1 to 3 mirrors 'low usage', 4 to 7 is 'moderate usage', and 8 to 10 mirrors 'high usage') \_\_\_\_\_

Reflect on the impact your current usage is having in your life (is it creating productive, unproductive, or neutral outcomes?).

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## Growth as an Individual (cont.)

### Part 2: Blind vs. Flexible Optimism

- **Blind Optimism** – pie-in-the-sky thinking where we deny problems exist (Pollyannaish)
- **Blind Pessimism** – overly critical thinking where we are unable to see beyond what’s not working.
- **Flexible Optimism** - grounded-in-the-real-world hopefulness, equating to the ability to read our surroundings accurately, leading to Bounce Back Moments.

Based on these variations, take a moment to assess:

Which one of these describes you a majority of the time (what examples or behaviors describe your actions)? \_\_\_\_\_

How has that changed since the start of the pandemic (what examples or behaviors describe your actions) ? \_\_\_\_\_

### Growth Strategy: 4 Steps to Leveraging Flexible Optimism

(example of our views due to the COVID-19 outbreak)

**Step 1 - Worst possible scenario:**

*“I am going to get this, and it will be bad. I could die.”*

**Step 2 - Best possible outcome:**

*“I will not get this, nor will my family. It will blow over.”*

**Step 3 - Most likely to happen:**

*“I will probably get this, and while uncomfortable, I will recover.”*

**Step 4 - Plan for the most realistic scenario:**

*“I will continue preventative measures but will immediately contact my doctor upon symptoms and have back-up childcare and plans for work if I’m out.”*

Adapted from Dr. Martin Seligman, Dir. of Penn’s Positive Psychology Center

**Practice Activity:** What recent moments have you experienced (personally or professionally) where your thoughts took on an overly critical response? Walk through the 4 Steps to Leveraging Flexible Optimism for productive outcomes.

Describe the Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 1 - Worst possible scenario:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2 - Best possible outcome:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3 - Most likely to happen:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 4 - Plan for the most realistic scenario:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Growth as a Team

We encourage you to use this process as a way to (1) connect with others around you and (2) increase the productivity of your teams. Here is a list of action steps and discussion starters you can use to gain momentum and value from stretching your Optimism with others.

### **Part 1 – Watch the video**

Share the link to the video with others and have everyone walk through their current tendencies (trending towards blind optimism, blind pessimism, or flexible optimism) and reflect on the results they are creating.

### **Part 2 – Setup a time to connect**

Using any online connection platform (many have free versions), plan a 20 to 30-minute discussion on reflections from the video and stretch exercises.

### **Part 3 – Compare thoughts and create accountability for growth**

As you interact as a team (family or work), consider the following conversation starters. Looking through the list, find those that resonate with you, and, using your own voice, alter the questions and share them with the group. Keep in mind, listening can be even harder when you are remote, so encourage full focus as you support and learn from each other.

#### **Discovery Conversation Starters:**

1. What portion of the video resonated the most?
2. What are some examples of your optimism in low or high use over the past 4 to 6 weeks? What impact did that have on your and/or others?
3. How could the 4 Step Process be used to help our team through current challenges?
4. Have you tried the 4 Step Process activity? If so, what results did you see?

NOTE: We encourage you to share our free resources with others. For those who are not currently opted-in to receive our 6-MINUTE stretch™ series, they can sign-up here: [Opt-in to receive the 6-MINUTE stretch™](#)