

The Fast Track

How to Be More Optimistic at Work

By [Alexandra Levit](#) | Posted on [February 13, 2013](#)



I was born a pessimist. From a young age, my thoughts have gravitated to the glass half-empty mentality, negatively impacting my own life satisfaction and my relationships with others.

Over the last several years, though, I've been working to change my outlook. Dr. Noelle Nelson, the author of [Make More Money By Making Your Employees Happy](#), thinks this is definitely a good thing.

[Research](#) from Yale University found that being optimistic adds an additional 7.6 years on average to our lives, which is more than low blood pressure, low cholesterol, healthy weight and regular exercise. From the Harvard School of Public Health, [study](#) results are similar: the most optimistic people had 50 percent less risk of a first heart attack when compared with the least optimistic.

“Other studies show optimists experience [significantly less stress](#), less depression, and heal faster than pessimists,” notes Dr. Nelson. “Not only that, but optimists outperform their own abilities. You may be good at something, but if you're an optimist, you'll be better at it. No matter what you undertake, you'll experience more success and joy by the simple decision to become an optimist.”

So how can you become more optimistic at work in 2013? Following are some recommendations from Dr. Nelson:

Focus On What Is Working

If you are not getting along with your boss, instead of focusing on the negatives, look at the situation with a new lens. Is your boss getting the job done? If the boss is new, does it look like he is trying to manage well? If so, [cut your boss some slack](#). Meanwhile, look for ways to maximize your skills and your contributions to the company.

Play the “What If” Game With a Positive Spin

We all play the “what if” game, but for the most part, we play it negatively (e.g. “if I get fired, I’ll go broke and my girlfriend will break up with me.”) Instead, ask yourself “what if?” in a hopeful direction: For instance: “If I get fired, I have a good skill set. I’ve learned a lot at this job and I’ve made new connections. I’m sure I can parlay some of that into a new situation. Meanwhile, I’ll put some extra effort into my current position so I’m not so dispensable.”

Don’t Be So Hard on People

Everyone makes mistakes and [fails at something](#) from time to time. When co-workers do something wrong on the job, don’t blame or complain. Figure out what you can do to help them succeed. This will enable you to value their efforts to do better and they, in turn, will most likely value your help. And often times, your boss will take notice.

Lift Your Employees’ Spirits

If you’re the boss, do you tend to only point out things an employee does wrong? Start acknowledging your employees for doing things right. They will be more likely to repeat the good behavior they have been praised for and their sense of competence and [happiness on the job](#) will increase. And in the end, so will your bottom line!