

# BE REAL. IT'S IDEAL.

By Marie Shvakel

Are your moods all over the place? Feeling too happy or too sad? Then realism might be the perfect fit for you. Side effects include living a balanced life — proceed with caution.

Behavioral tendencies have been divided into two types and coined with the terms, optimism and pessimism. Being an optimist means seeing the positives in every situation. As Winston Churchill observed, “An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty,” while a pessimist “sees the difficulty in every opportunity.”

Each mindset has “relative locus controls.” Locus of control describes the degree in which people believe they have control over the outcome of events in their lives.

Optimism is associated with an internal locus of control — when a person’s deeds decide their success’ and failures. Pessimism is seen as an external locus of control — when the world controls how a person lives, meaning they do not attribute their achievements to themselves nor their failures.

There has been debate as to which mindset is best to live a more fruitful life. Some would agree that being an optimist leads to having more happiness and gratitude, while others would argue that it’s better to always expect the worst.

To learn more about this debate, I interviewed Monte Vista psychology teacher James Bowling.



Optimists tend to have a mental attitude that the negative aspects of life are temporary, Bowling explained. They approach every situation with the belief that it will have a favorable outcome and that they will be successful or at least happy with everything they attempt.

But beware, being too optimistic can lead to impracticality and over-confidence.

“People that have too much optimism think they can control everything,” Bowling said.

Still, if optimism is primarily correlated with happiness and improved health, why then are people pessimists?



Pessimists view life as the equivalent to a glass half empty. While pessimism is usually associated with mental illnesses like depression and anxiety, there is a reason why some choose to live this way, Bowling believes.

Anxious people often use defensive pessimism (assuming the worst) to manage their stress. Because followers of pessimism expect the worst, they go in assuming that they will fail, leaving little room for disappointment when things go wrong.

However, continually having negative thoughts can be detrimental to peoples’ mental health, and it makes it hard for pessimists to enjoy the good moments in life.

“Pessimistic people believe the world is against them,” Bowling said. “They feel that no matter what they do, they can never achieve anything unless by luck.”



However, there is one more mindset: realism.

“What can be nice about realism is that you have multiple viewpoints to solve a problem, you aren’t blinded,” Bowling said.

Realism is a mix of both optimism and pessimism — and, in my opinion, the best mindset to have. Realism has the mentality that “everything is good in moderation.” Meaning one sees the upsides and downsides to each situation and thus comes to a sensical, balanced consensus.

Sophomore Samay Bhasin appreciates the realism approach.

“My philosophy is to hope for the best but be prepared for the worst,” he said.

Bhasin said he tries to find joy in what he does and uses realism to move past the small inconveniences in life.

Of course, this is simply a guide, and you have no obligation to follow it. Although if you do make the smart decision of listening to my non-licensed, unprofessional words, then I prescribe moderate optimism combined with a daily dose of pessimism.

Happy living!

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