

How optimistic is your approach to work?

Answer the questions below to learn more about your thinking style. Remember though that this is just an indicator of your attitude to optimism. For a valid and reliable measure of your optimism you will need to complete the Seligman Attributional Style Questionnaire (SASQ) under the guidance of an accredited tester. Contact us if you would like to take the SASQ.

Read the short scenario below and tick the thoughts that best describe the way you would react.

The Scenario

The deadline is fast approaching for a project you are working on. You don't manage to get everything done on time, and feel responsible for letting the team down. Which response best describes what you would think? Pick from A and B for each set of answers:

- A. I am unreliable and always let people down.
- B. I didn't manage my time well on this particular project.

- A. I don't want to work on another project with this team.
- B. I am keen to get started on our next project.

- A. Judging from this experience, it is likely I will miss the next deadline too.
- B. The project was an isolated event which has no impact on my future ability to meet deadlines.

- A. I am unable to influence whether I make deadlines – it depends on factors out of my control, like suppliers, managers and the rest of the team.
- B. It really is up to me whether I make a deadline.

- A. I feel stressed about making future deadlines.
- B. I enjoy the challenge that comes with tight deadlines.

- A. My failure to meet the deadline is an indication of a character flaw.
- B. Although I am disappointed that I missed the deadline I know I could have made it if I had done a few things differently.

- A. I have lost all hope of the team ever respecting me now.
- B. I can see the team is upset at me but I know it is only temporary.

Your Response

You may have figured it out already, but 'A' represents the negative response, while 'B' is the optimistic way of explaining your failure. What answer did you give most? If it was 'B' then you could be limiting yourself by explaining events in a pessimistic style.

Here are some of the characteristics of optimists compared to pessimists, based on the theories and research of American psychologist Dr Martin Seligman:

- Optimists see bad events as temporary ('I didn't make that particular deadline'), while pessimists regard them as prevailing ('I will never make deadlines').
- Pessimists internalise negative events ('I wasn't good enough'), while optimists externalise them ('Circumstances got in the way')
- Optimists internalise positive events ('I am really good at this') while pessimists externalise them ('I got lucky')

Changing your thinking to an optimistic style will increase your confidence, enabling you to take risks, think creatively and reach a higher level of performance.

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