



Unit 2

Role of Motivation and Optimism

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the four pillars of self-leadership
- ✓ Use techniques related to adjusting to change, cultivating optimism, and developing good habits to build your self-leadership

Unit 2

Role of Motivation and Optimism

Motivation for Optimists

Motivation from Within

The things that motivate us are as different as the people we know. Do you know what motivates you?

- What motivated Walt Disney to create cartoons and capture them on film?
- What motivated Mohammed Ali to become a world champion boxer?
- What motivated Stephen King to be an internationally renowned writer?

The things that motivate us include the **rewards** we get from doing the things that we want to do. This doesn't mean that self-leadership means being self-serving without thought to other people's needs, or to the laws or social mores that govern the way we act. It does mean that there are things that we do where the act of doing is its own reward and that in itself is motivating.

Other times, there are more **tangible rewards**. A reward can be simple, like time to read a book or having lunch with a mentor. These kinds of rewards help to motivate us quite easily and naturally. Other times, **more sophisticated rewards** are needed to encourage us to complete tasks that we don't find naturally rewarding.

Test your knowledge

Consider the following questions in terms of your own motivation.

Are you able to incorporate enough activities that you enjoy in your work?

Is there a space at work where you can work comfortably and effectively?

Do you spend more time thinking about the parts of your job that you do like rather than the parts that you don't enjoy?

Do you point your thinking toward pleasantries of your job, rather than things that are unpleasant?

If you answer “yes” to these questions, then you are able to increase your motivation to do your job. If you have several “no” answers, then it’s time to look at your job from a self-leadership perspective. Work towards understanding the nature of your work and how fulfilling it is, and could be.

Creating a Motivational Climate

There are several features that make work naturally rewarding.

Competence

When we know we are doing, and we continue learning so that we know what we know and what we are going to learn, our own competency becomes a reward. We usually like to do the things that we do well, that people compliment us on, and that we perceive we are doing well with.

Self-Direction

We enjoy doing things that we want to do, that we have decided to do, and that we can control. If your boss says that you need to improve your efficiency by 15%, you can feel inadequate and defeated, but if you recognize the need to increase efficiency yourself and then show your boss how you’ve improved by 15% without being directed to do so, you are in control of your results, and that is motivating.

Purpose

In career planning, we often talk about working within your purpose, or calling. When we do what we are called to do, the work itself is rewarding. When we add self-leadership to this idea, the negative aspects of the job are significantly outweighed by the positive. Our own connection to the work motivates us to do what needs to be done.

Building Rewards into What You Do

When you are someone who is highly motivated already, you will still have off days. Life is just like that. When you can design work with the rewards built in, or clearly defined for yourself, then an off day is suddenly better. In order to build in rewards, you need to be clear on the things that you enjoy and the rewards for doing them. (Those rewards might be a feeling of competence, a feeling of living your purpose, or something else.) Another way to build rewards into what you do is to set up benchmarks or deliverables, like those used in a project plan, and tie rewards to completion of each benchmark or deliverable.

The Value of Optimism

Optimism and pessimism are attitudes which affect the way we see the world and what is happening around us. Optimists see success as the result of their own hard work, whereas a pessimist views success as being the result of good luck or fate.

Optimists see something like the loss of a job as a short term problem or the result of a lack of work in their field. They tell themselves that they will work hard to find another job, and as a result, another job will be secured. A **pessimist** sees a job loss as someone else's doing: their boss does not like them, the system is against them, life is not fair. When a pessimist loses their job, they see it as a huge barrier. They may even take it to the extent that they will never find work again.

In his long-running research and best-selling book *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Dr. Martin Seligman describes how differently optimists and pessimists view the world. He also teaches how to shift our thinking to be more optimistic. The benefits to optimism are indisputable, as evidenced by repeated studies. Optimists have better overall health, live longer, and are able to more easily adapt to even the most harsh or horrible circumstances. Pessimists on the other hand, suffer more incidents of ill health, including increased clinical depression and anxiety.

Pessimists can learn to change attitudes and be more optimistic. Not only do they become healthier, but they also get more happiness from life in doing so.

Being an optimist is not always an approach that you can take in light of difficulty or adversity, however. If you want to focus on achievement, focus on improving morale, inspire, or teach, Dr. Seligman recommends an optimistic approach. However, pessimism also has a certain place, and even some benefits. Even the very optimistic can become pessimistic at times. Pessimism does have a way of looking at things realistically, which some optimists may fail to do.

ABC's of Optimism

Here is a framework that you can use to work through any situation in an optimistic, realistic way. You can use the steps as outlined from A thru E to help you define and work through the issue. (This model was originally developed by Dr. Martin Seligman.)

A – Adversity

- Anything you see as a problem

B – Beliefs

- Our thoughts on the adversity become our belief
- How do we feel about the adversity?

C – Consequence

- What action takes place because of our belief

D – Disputation, Distancing, or Distracting

Disputation is arguing with yourself:

- What is the evidence for this belief?
- What are some alternative ways to look at the adversity?
- Even if my belief is correct, you say to yourself, what are its implications? De-catastrophe the situation.
- How useful is holding on to a negative belief?

Distancing means moving away from the pessimistic attitude.

- We can distance ourselves from the unfounded accusations of others but we are much worse at distancing ourselves from the accusations that we launch daily at ourselves. They are usually bad habits of thought produced by unpleasant experiences from the past.
- Stand back and defend yourself.

Distracting helps you break away from the pessimistic thoughts.

- Use a mental or physical technique to make yourself stop. Some people use an elastic band that they snap when they think pessimistically.
- Do what you have to do to turn your directions elsewhere.

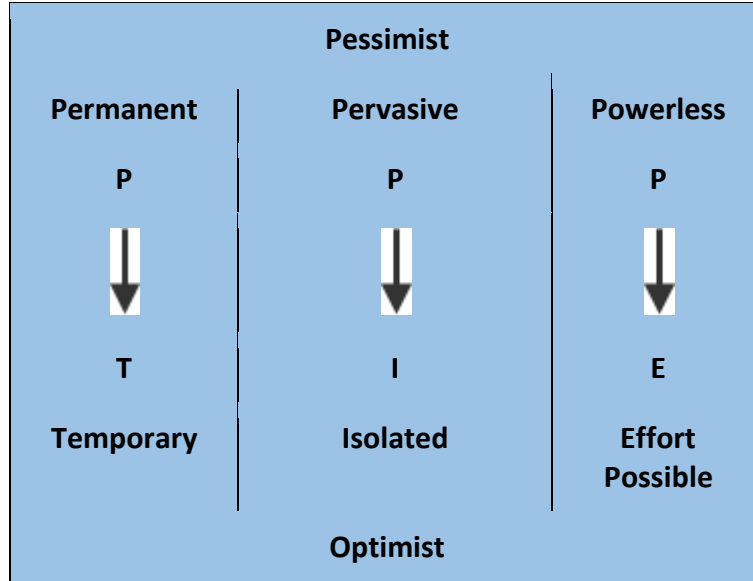
E – Energization

- How disputing your pessimistic thoughts makes you feel

Pessimism vs. Optimism

A pessimist and optimist view the same situations differently. Dr. Martin Seligman explains it like this:

- A **pessimist** sees things as permanent, pervasive, and personal.
- An **optimist** will see it as temporary, isolated, and from the perspective that effort is possible. They see that they have control.



VET Process

VET is a way to help to explore the problem. VET stands for Validate, Explore, and Transform.

- **Validating** emotions means recognizing what it is and naming it. It doesn't try to ignore or change what the emotion is. It is accepting it for what it is... a piece of information.
- **Exploring** looks at understanding why you are feeling that emotion. Where did it come from and why is it useful information to have?
- The last process is **transforming** the emotion so you can create the best possible outcome.

Adversities

Use the chart below to explore an adversity in your life.

A Adversity	B Belief or Feeling	C Consequence	D Distance, Debate, Distract	E Energization

Using What You Know

Our Physical Self

One important aspect of self-leadership that we have not mentioned so far is the need to look after our physical and emotional health.

Our physical health is heavily influenced by our emotional health. Self-leadership includes the necessity of maintaining fitness in order to provide a stable platform (our body) so that we can support the demands we make of ourselves.

Regular exercise, a healthy diet, good sleep hygiene, and managing stress all have positive effects on our physical health.

Questions to Consider

Do you get thirty minutes of exercise a day? Is it intense enough to increase your heart rate so that your heart benefits?

How many hours of connected sleep do you get each night?

Do you nap during the day?

Is your bedroom set up so that it helps you to sleep? (This means no distractions, television, or cell phones buzzing in the night, and the room is sufficiently darkened.)

Do you eat three meals per day?

Do you drink enough water?

Are you limiting salt, caffeine, fats, and sodas to reasonable levels?

What can you start doing today to improve your physical health?

Do you know how to work through worry or stressors to reduce the effects they have on you?

Emotional Intelligence

Understanding Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is our ability to:

- Accurately identify emotions in ourselves and others
- Understand and manage emotions
- Effectively communicate emotional feelings

Most social scientists agree that there are seven emotional expressions that are basic to every culture. Keep in mind that our face often displays more than one emotion at a time, so we will witness things like a person smiling although their eyes are sad.

According to Dr. Paul Ekman, a renowned psychologist, we can teach people to recognize visible and hidden emotions by carefully reading what is shown on someone's face. These emotions include sadness, anger, fear, happiness, surprise, contempt, and disgust. Being able to recognize those emotions is helpful, as is being able to recognize your own emotions and your reactions to what's going on.

Do you tend to often react with anger? With fear? Or are you able to take the information in, work on it optimistically, and prepare for the results?

Let's look at the seven emotions and their telltale signs.

Sadness

Sadness comes with a set of identifiable marks: the eyebrows are drawn upwards in the middle and curve down toward the end. There is also a slight vertical furrow between the eyes. Taken together, this is called **Darwin's grief muscle**. The outside corners of the mouth point downward as well.

Anger

When we are angry, we often press our lips together so hard that the upper lip almost disappears. The eyes may widen across the upper eyelids, while the lower eyelids are contracted. The inner corners of the eyebrows pull downward. There is often enough pressure there to create a furrowed brow.

Fear

In fear, a scared person's eyebrows may be close to horizontal, with wrinkles in evidence across the forehead. Similar to anger, people who are frightened may open the upper eyelid more widely and show more of the whites of their eyes, while the corners of their mouths pull the lips into a horizontal line.

Happiness

Happiness is generally accompanied by rising cheeks. We describe the accompanying smile as going up to someone's eyes when the muscles around the eyes tighten (hence the way that smile lines lead to permanent lines around the eyes). Authentic smiles, also called a **Duchenne smile**, were first described by French neurologist Guillaume Benjamin Amand Duchenne de Boulogne. They are characterized by those eye wrinkles, whereas a phony or forced smile is missing those characteristic smile lines.

Surprise

Characterized by raised upper eyelids, in addition to exposing additional whites of the eye. The mouth or jaw may also open as a part of the response.

Contempt

Is anyone rolling their eyes at you? This gesture is quite common in expressions of contempt, in addition to the left corner of the lip being pulled out asymmetrically, creating a dimple.

Disgust

People who are feeling disgusted may wrinkle their nose as they might to a bad smell, and/or generate wrinkles at the top of the nose between their eyes. The upper lip may also be raised.

What Do Emotions Tell Us?

Emotion	What It Tells Us
Sadness	Lost something of value
Anger	Way is blocked or get out of my way
Fear	Possible threat; be prepared
Happiness	Gained something of value; the way is safe
Surprise	Something unexpected happened
Contempt	Not worthy of care, hardening of feelings
Disgust	Rules are violated

Applying Emotional Intelligence

Emotional expressions don't tell us the cause that prompts the response. You have to take into account the situation in which the emotion was expressed and how your own emotions affect the situation in order to understand it. As you try to understand emotions that you witness, it is important to remember that emotions in themselves are neither positive nor negative; it is what we do with the emotion that creates the outcome.

When you learn to leverage what you know about your own reactions to things and the emotions you express, you are developing your emotional intelligence. This will allow you to leverage your intellect and do your very best at anything that you do. This helps to make you a fully aware, competent, self-leader.

When you combine what you understand about self-leadership, including the pillars, you really are demonstrating self-leadership.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Conner, Daryl. Managing at the Speed of Change. Villard Books, 1992.*
- ✓ *Gerber, Michael E., Awakening the Entrepreneur Within: How Ordinary People Can Create*
- ✓ *Extraordinary Companies. HarperCollins Publishers, 2010.*
- ✓ *Manz, Charles C. & Sims, Henry P. Company of Heroes: Unleashing the Power of Self-Leadership.*