This introductory Factsheet provides an overview of the benefits of taking control of pessimistic thoughts and pessimism and focusing on the things we can control in life in an optimistic way.

**Introduction**

**From pessimism to optimism**

Let’s be ‘realistic’ for a moment, not everything is getting better. People die to early, often from avoidable diseases, man-made disasters strike too often, but in many ways the world is a better place, we are wealthier than ever before, and wiser and more informed.

The belief or perception that things are a lot worst then they really are is widespread, because our brains seem to be hard-wired towards pessimism (our ancestors were always on the lookout for predators), and we pay 10 times more attention to negative than positive news. Negative news is more dramatic and ‘bigger’, social media has provided a ideal platform for all this negativity and pessimism and our brains know that pessimism is the course of least resistance. However, it lessens our wellbeing, happiness and indeed reduces our life-span, so take control of it.

**The benefits of a being optimistic**

The benefits of being optimistic are vast and include: greater happiness, better immunity to stress, illness (physical and mental) and personal resilience, happier relationships, better coping mechanisms and achieving more in life. Optimistic people focus on results, get things done and are the ones people want to be around.

**How to be optimistic**

**Summary**

As with so many things in life the foundation and start is self-awareness. So STOP, THINK (about how optimistic or pessimistic you are at the current time) OBSERVE (situations where you’ve been optimistic/pessimistic and their outcomes), PLAN (to be optimistic as per the guidance here). Do this STOP exercise regularly in life, as it deepens your self-awareness. These are the signs we are optimistic, the opposite is true for pessimists. Optimists see problems in perspective, do not take them personally, see them as temporary, believe they are in control of their life, are forward thinking, they have high self-confidence, see possibilities rather than problems, they face their fears and deal with them.

So, to be optimistic when a challenge comes along STOP and be objective and un-emotional, talk to yourself in a calm and positive way and visualise yourself confidently overcoming that challenge. Remind yourself that challenges/setbacks are temporary, look at it in a specific way (rather than generalising about it) and externalise it rather than taking it personally.

Any problems that come along classify them into either ‘no control’ and let it go, ‘indirect control’ and decide who you need to communicate with to solve the problem and do that, or ‘direct control’ and make the decision to deal with it and take action.

Optimists focus on how they can grow and move forward, whereas pessimists focus on security and safety, so there is a balance here as you want to be secure and safe but always seek to move forward in life and grow as a person.

Take control of your optimistic thinking and reap the benefits. It will open up new and exciting possibilities in life, can be contagious to other people because you expect the best to happen. It could inspire you towards achieving your true potential and developing inner peace, why because optimistic people look for and find possibilities in life. Make that optimistic decision today.