

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 263 Optimist or Pessimist – How do Others See Us?

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? How do you think your coworkers would classify you? I'm Jerry Roberts and we'll dig into the positives and negatives of how we're viewed by those we work with, today, on The Extra Point.

Our perception of life is a matter of perspective. Many of us were taught that pessimists see the glass as half-empty while optimists see it as half-full. Our society seems to worship optimists, promoting that a positive mindset with a thick layer of optimism is the ticket to happiness, while a negative view covered in pessimism brings the opposite.

So are we really optimistic or pessimistic as a people? Many psychologists classify the population as predominantly optimistic, some claiming the number soars as high as 80% of us fit that description. I've seen that number more often in the 60% range, with four in ten of us at least somewhat pessimistic. Does any of this matter?

Medical research shows that optimism is tied to higher life expectancy, better health, being able to handle the things life throws at us, greater popularity, and more success in our chosen careers. I've seen the results of other studies which support that last part, claiming that optimistic people do make more money and are more likely to be promoted. People say they like to be around others who are optimistic. Yet, we spend a lot of time on Facebook, where at times the negativity is at a high level. So, there are contradictions.

Perhaps the question to toss in at this point is: does that thinking positively add to our health and success, or does being healthier and more successful make us think in a more positive manner?

Have you heard of optimism bias? It's a key factor in calculating the true cost of big

projects. We tend to underestimate both time and cost, and that's because we're optimistic that we'll do them faster and spend less. Some governments now add an extra percentage, by default, to offset positive estimations. This is part of what is termed "defensive pessimism." We use a form of negativity, in this case not believing we can perform a project so quickly and inexpensively, to protect ourselves in the long run. It might be interesting to look back over the history of GovGuam's large projects to see how many took longer and came in over budget.

All in all, it might be good to adapt an attitude that all optimism may not be good, and all pessimism may not be bad — and to avoid putting labels on people so quickly. When we try to balance things out, it comes down to perspective and differences aren't necessarily bad. Some people are just more or less cautious than others.

Now, do our coworkers and bosses like us more if we're positive? Will we enjoy our time at work more if we more often put a happy face on things? I think the answer to that is yes. But is it more fun to be optimistic or more fun to be pessimistic?

I read this summation: a positive approach to life is not just about seeing only the bright side but accepting the two sides — both optimism and pessimism — have advantages and disadvantages. We need both.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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