



# DANA LIGHTMAN, Ph.D.

Absolutely. Positively. Uplifting.

“Create the outcomes you want. Regardless of the circumstances.”

## Take Charge of Your Life

In the 21st century, with changes taking place at an extraordinary rate, people are looking for ways to feel secure. But what the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said is even more true today, “There is nothing permanent except change.” Today, however, the quality of change is different. A new term has been coined to describe modern day change: RAPLEXITY—referring to the *rapid, complex* nature of current changes. Amidst all these changes, we yearn for a sense of control. In reality, when we strive for control, what we are really seeking is a sense of our own empowerment, a way of creating security by knowing we are in charge of our lives.

POWER Optimism offers a way to gain that sense of empowerment and control in your life. It is based on a simple yet profound principle: You create the thoughts, feelings and behaviors in your life by the way you interpret what has been happening to you. If you **choose** an interpretation that allows you to feel positive, you will thrive—you will experience yourself as successful and empowered. You will live your life on an upward spiral! If you **choose** an interpretation that is based on negative thinking, you will eventually get stuck in fear, anxiety, sadness or anger. You will experience a downward spiral of stagnation.

POWER Optimism shows you how to choose positive interpretations of events and situations in your life by teaching five positive practices, which form the acronym POWER. The heart of each practice is captured by a question. *Focusing your attention on these questions helps you create positive interpretations.*

Proactive—What can I do?

Open-Minded—What is an innovative response?

Well-Informed—What do I need to know?

Evolving—What can I learn?

Resilient—What is a motivating interpretation?

Optimism is a tendency to expect the best possible outcome and to dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation. Most of us are optimistic at least some of the time, depending on our natural disposition and the circumstances of our lives. But research also shows that you can increase your optimism set-point by as much as 50%. And this is good news. Because the more optimistic you are, the more success and well-being you bring into your life. Studies have shown that optimists:

- Live longer, healthier lives
- Do better in work, school and sports
- Age more successfully
- Have better relationships
- Enjoy better mental health
- Achieve more of their goals
- Realize greater potential.

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Optimism is self-fulfilling. In other words, because optimists expect better results, they produce better outcomes.

A word of caution, however. Optimism is misused when it leads to denial. Denial is a refusal to acknowledge painful realities, thoughts or feelings. When a loss or traumatic event occurs, there is generally a three stage process for healing. The first stage is numbness, in which you are in shock. This is followed by disorientation, as you experience and wrestle with feelings of grief, anger and sadness as well as new demands and challenges. It is inappropriate at this time to hide behind optimism as a way of denying the pain. However, having an optimistic attitude towards life has been shown to be conducive in helping people cope more effectively with the disorientation stage. And optimism proves to be a critical factor in achieving the third stage of reorientation and transformation.

Optimism helps you not only return to normal, but to experience personal growth and positive change as a result of the healing process.

POWER Optimism is reality-based. It acknowledges that sometimes the glass is indeed half-empty. But it also acknowledges that dwelling on the emptiness is not productive. When it is time to shift perspectives, POWER Optimism provides you with strategies to see the fullness of the glass. It gives you tools to choose thoughts, feelings and behaviors that will lead to optimal outcomes.

Replacing unproductive, maladaptive habits with an optimistic attitude is not always easy, but it is always rewarding. POWER Optimism enables you say good-bye to outmoded thoughts, feelings and behaviors without being self-critical or judgmental as you discover new insights, uncover new strengths and draw on your natural gifts.