

Family information: Looking on the bright side

Thinking optimistically means that you expect things to mostly turn out well. You focus on the positives rather than the negatives in a situation. It also means that you understand that setbacks and difficult times happen to everyone but that things get better. Teaching your child to be optimistic will help them to 'bounce back' when they face difficulties, frustrations and problems. It means that when they are faced with a problem, they will be more likely to look for solutions rather than stop trying and give up.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about being optimistic

Look on the bright side.

This means being positive and expecting that things will work out well or get better. When you look on the bright side you believe that good things CAN happen to you and you don't give up easily.

Be a positive tracker.

A positive tracker looks for the good things in themselves, in others, and in what happens in their life. They are more fun to be with and others like them more and want to be their friend.

Look for the good parts in the bad things that happen.

Sometimes things happen that you don't like. But you can usually find something good in the situation if you try. Sometimes the good things are that it could have been worse, the lesson you learnt from it or a small good thing happened even if the rest was bad.

Bad times don't last. Things get better.

When a bad thing happens in your life, it isn't forever. Bad times and bad feelings always go away again although sometimes it might take time for this to happen. Things will get better faster if you talk to someone you trust about what's worrying you.

It's important to stay hopeful when you have unhappy times.

You will get over unhappy times in your life more easily if you stay hopeful that good things will happen again and the difficult parts will get better. If you stay hopeful then you don't give up.

Be thankful and grateful.

Being thankful for the nice things people do for you and the good things that happen in your life can help you feel happier. Letting people know that you are grateful for how they have supported and cared about you makes them feel happy, too.

Good memories of things can help you to bounce back.

When you are feeling sad because you have lost someone or something you love, it helps to remember the good times you shared with them to help you feel a bit better.

When one unhappy thing happens in your life it doesn't spoil everything else.

When one thing in your life goes wrong or you feel unhappy or worried, try to remember all the things that are still good in your life. It's just one thing that is going wrong for a while, not everything.

◆ What can you do to help your child to look on the bright side?

Three good things in your day

At the dinner table, ask your child, 'What were three good things that happened for you today?' With younger children you can do this just before they go to sleep. If they can't think of anything ask them some prompting questions (e.g. Did anything funny happen? Did you enjoy being with anyone? What did you do well?).

The positive tracking game

Challenge everyone in the family to identify the three best things about your family, your home, your holiday, your suburb, about being their age, about this time of the year etc.

Showing gratitude

Encourage your child to say thank you to someone who has done something kind for them (e.g. by sending a note or card, text, email or by calling them on the phone).

Good memories

Help your child to make a photo album, slide show or little book of their favourite photos and to look at the photos to help them remember the good times when they need 'brightening up'.

Modelling

Let your child see and hear you using positive tracking, showing gratitude, saying 'things will get better soon' and expecting that good outcomes are possible.