

IND-1293A

Art and Science of Optimism for Teachers

Course Syllabus

- **Instructor: Dr. Maryam Torbati**
- **Number of Credits/Units: 3 Semester Credits/Units**
- **Format: Online Self-Paced Course**
- **You will have 6 months from your date of registration to complete the course.**

Course Description:

Both the [Harvard Brain Science Initiative](#) and the [Center for Mind-Body Medicine](#) have presented research that shows the benefits of optimism. Dr. Larry Dossey as the head of medical neuroscience defines optimism as “The tendency to believe, expect, or hope that things will turn out well” (2018). Particularly unique about the role of optimism in healing is that it is self-induced. All learners and patients, in this sense, possess potential for some form of better learning and self-healing.

Dossey believes that health and learning is a "conscious-dependent" state, meaning that learners/patients have an opportunity to realize a better sense of meaning in their lives & environment and thus to gain a better understanding of their own being during times of learning /illness. Numerous studies have been conducted by Harvard Medical School to analyze a possible correlation between spiritual optimism and physical health as it relates to learning. The studies have found that there is indeed a correlation between health, learning and spirituality, stemming from some positive physical effect produced by an optimism mindset. When a person prays or acts in some form of repetitive mindfulness, brain waves slow, and metabolism, heart rate, and breathing rate decrease. These effects oppose the "fight or flight" responses produced by stress, potentially preventing a worsening of symptoms. Power of optimism can facilitate healing and learning by countering the effects of stress-causing agents associated with many syndromes.

Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of optimism as a psychological phenomenon, leading to various theoretical formulations of the same concept, conceptualized as “disposition”, “attributional style”, “cognitive bias”, or “shared impression”. This overview is a set of skills to explore the “optimism”

concept and its relations with mental health, physical health, coping, quality of life and adaptation of purpose, health lifestyle and risk perception. Research has proven that our optimism is directly linked to our success.” A positive mindset is just the beginning

Optimism can profoundly impact students, teachers, and business, empowering them to grow and flourish. Research has shown that sales people who are optimistic sell 47% more. Optimistic students are more engaged and 45% more productive, 33% more energetic, 25% more accurate, 57% more successful. The good news it is a set of skills that can be learned, practiced, and developed.

This course is based on the premise that optimism is a learned skill. Participants will acquire background knowledge in the psychology of optimism, will understand their own optimist/pessimist tendencies in light of those definitions and will develop specific, practical skills for engaging the strategies of successful optimists, and many other strategies that will help your students in your classrooms.

Essential lessons on optimism and how to raise resiliency in self and others are included. Content is focused on skill application and on harnessing the power of optimism, with particular emphasis on how to do so in the workplace. The role of faith in maintaining hope is addressed.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- View the world of optimism
- Define and differentiate between optimism and pessimism.
- Explore practical strategies to enhance optimism.
- List the various types of optimism.
- Assess PERSONAL strategies for developing or increasing optimism.
- Clarify the significance of discreet characteristics such as self-confidence, goal setting, planning, information seeking, problem solving, and risk taking
- Discuss the relationship between the brain and optimism.
- Describe the historical perspective on optimism.
- Make connections over time between optimism and situations that occur within their own family, communities, school districts, and classrooms.
- Place optimism in academia.

- Recognize optimism pitfalls.
- Utilize the research behind optimism
- Prepare activities to promote optimism.
- Apply optimism to every lesson.
- Organize the classroom environment to maximize optimism.
- Explain concepts that bring about positive thinking.
- Identify ways that technology can be used to assist a teacher in becoming more effective in creating an optimistic community of learners.
- Explain effective optimistic enhancing techniques that you can use immediately.
- Identify characteristics of optimistic classrooms and how they work step by step.
- Describe how this can help ELD and special ed. students.
- Analyze how learners learn to be optimistic.
- Align all of these to Common Core.

Recommended Textbooks (Choose One):

- [The Power of Optimism](#) by McGinnis, Alan Loy (2010)
- [Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life](#) by [Martin E. P. Seligman](#) (Jan 3, 2016)
- [Begin with Yes: A short conversation that will change your life forever](#) by [Paul S. Boynton](#), Lee Phenner, David Morgan and Alice Ripley (Oct 14, 2015)
- [Creating Optimism](#) by [Bob Murray](#) and Alicia Fortinberry (Jan 19, 2015)
- [The Optimism Bias: A Tour of the Irrationally Positive Brain \(Vintage\)](#) by [Tali Sharot](#) (Jun 12, 2012)
- [The Optimism Advantage: 50 Simple Truths to Transform Your Attitudes and Actions into Results](#) by [Terry L. Paulson](#) (Mar 22, 2014)
- [Optimism: Cultivating the Magic Quality that can Extend Your Lifespan, Boost Your Energy, and Make You Happy Now](#) by Dawson Church and Stephanie Marohn (Oct 15, 2016)

CCSS Standards for the Art and Science of Optimism:

- Describe and define optimism.
- Recognize step by step how optimism happens.
- Create learning environments based on respect and mutual kindness toward one another.
- Compare and contrast different types of optimism.

- Development of critical thinking based on the power of positive thinking.
- How optimism improves student learning.

Takeaways – What this course gives you:

- Initiative to create optimistic learning environments.
- Self-esteem building through optimistic learning for a better behavior and interrelation connection.
- Knowledge to develop, expand, or adapt effective and practical optimistic enhancing lessons.
- Materials to teach optimism.
- Preparation for dealing with pessimistic circumstances before they happen.
- A summary of the importance of optimism in education and the classroom.
- Awareness of how learners learn to be optimistic.
- A vision of building classrooms based on real life problems.
- The ability to teach unconscious optimism.
- Strategies for going beyond the classroom and text to connect with students' lives.
- The ability to implement these optimistic styles in different settings like reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, and many other subjects
- Methods of classroom participation in self-reflection and self-evaluation.
- Tools to help teachers shape timely instructional strategies targeted to immediate student needs through optimistic points of views.
- An understanding of how optimism relates to CCSS.

Assignments

Assignment 1.1 Reflection and Goals

Reflect on your past experience with optimism and describe your future goals for enhancing learning through the Art and Science of Optimism course.

Assignment 1.2 Optimism Book Review and Application

Choose a book of your choice from the list of the instructor recommended textbooks.

Assignment 2.1: Readings/videos to acquaint you with the Art and Science of Optimism

This assignment will help you to understand and reflect on what you have read about and viewed and how you can transfer this knowledge to your classroom.

Assignment 3.1: Teaching Optimism Pre-Planning

Produce creative activities for implementing the Art and Science of optimism in your teaching curriculum.

Assignment 4.1 & 4.2: Lesson Plan and Presentation

Create a detailed, multi-paged, 3-Day lesson plan for applying the Art and Science of Optimism in your curriculum.

Create a 10-slide PowerPoint project based on the course readings, to present to an audience of peers.

Forum Posting

Share your experience with other course participants