

BEST POSSIBLE SELF OPTIMISM TOOL

APPENDIX K

There has been a serious amount of research (see Chapter 2) about how psychological interventions have been able to increase optimism in individuals. The strongest effect in these studies was found to be the “Best Possible Self” method. It only takes minutes of your day.

If you’re reading this, you know we’ve tailored our tools and appendices for school teams. However, we truly hope you utilize this for yourself and perhaps other people in your life outside the workplace. We live in a modern era in which optimism for the future can be hard to come by. It can be hard to come by because so much of what we are exposed to (e.g., comparison and competition mindsets) drains our optimism.

Anyway, remember back in school when you got in trouble for daydreaming? Well, daydreaming is actually going to be an asset when it comes to this exercise. So take a minute to daydream and even visualize a bit. Find a comfy place for about 15 to 20 minutes of your time.

- Pick a future date, ideally several years away—perhaps 5 years?
- Assume you have accomplished everything you plan to do. *Imagine everything has gone as well as possible.*
- Now, imagine yourself in the mirror 5 years from now. You are completely fulfilled, and you experience an overwhelming sense of accomplishment. You also still have future aspirations for new adventures and experiences.
- Visualize the deepened relationships with your family and the joyous moments you share.
- Imagine your friends standing beside you, their company enriching your life’s journey.
- Professionally, you see yourself contributing to a field you’re passionate about, reaping satisfaction from your accomplishments.
- Envision your future home as a sanctuary that reflects your personality, offering tranquility amid a week full of rewarding experiences.
- In your free time, picture yourself as you engage in activities you love, filled with enthusiasm and contentment.

NOW: Write a diary entry for that day in your life 5 years from now. You just left the mirror with all those feelings, and you sit down and write a diary entry. Spend 10 minutes (or so) writing, vividly portraying your ideal day in the future.

- Delve into your surroundings—have you chosen a holiday in paradise? A dynamic workplace? Or the comfort of your home? What does it look like?

- Who is there sharing this perfect day with you?
- How does the weather contribute to the ambience? Is there a gentle breeze? A light rainfall? A warmth from the sun?
- Are you savoring your favorite meal? Perhaps accompanied by a cold, refreshing drink?
- If it is a workday, what fulfilling tasks are you absorbed in?
- Paint a picture of this perfect future day. Detail each enriching experience contributing to its perfection. Be as creative as you can—daydream! Be vivid! Use doodles if you like.

NOW: Spend at least 5 minutes reflecting on that future day. Go for a walk, sit in a chair, have a cup of coffee or tea, and look out the window imagining that day.

What researchers have gleaned from this exercise is that when we engage with this experience now and again (every 3 months or so), it improves our positive feelings and our feelings of optimism. After you complete the exercise, simply ask yourself: “Will I change my plans to build on this exercise? Will it become the basis of a new or renewed life plan?”