

Interpreting Events with an Optimistic vs. Pessimistic Bias

	Temporary vs. Indefinite	Internal vs. External	Contained vs. Widespread
Good Events	<p><i>Got 3.78 GPA last term</i></p> <p>Optimistic (Indefinite): “I know I have what it takes.” “I’m really on a roll.”</p> <p>Pessimistic (Temporary): “I’ll probably crash this term.” “I have nowhere to go but down.”</p>	<p><i>Got an ‘A’ on paper.</i></p> <p>Optimistic (Internal): “I’m a damn good writer.” “My hard work paid off.”</p> <p>Pessimistic (External): “The teacher was an easy grader.” “Everyone got an ‘A’.”</p>	<p><i>Got good internship placement.</i></p> <p>Optimistic (Widespread): “My career is taking off.” “I could make a lot of future connections.”</p> <p>Pessimistic (Contained): “So what? I still have a 2.8 GPA.” “I’ll hardly be noticed in such a big company.”</p>
Bad Events	<p><i>Failed biology course.</i></p> <p>Optimistic (Temporary): “I slacked off that term.” “I’ll get an ‘A’ or ‘B’ when I retake it.”</p> <p>Pessimistic (Indefinite): “Forget med school.” “I’m not a science person.”</p>	<p><i>Got turned down for a date.</i></p> <p>Optimistic (External): “He’s not for me.” “She likes my best friend.”</p> <p>Pessimistic (Internal): “He’s way out of my league.” “I’m horrible with women.”</p>	<p><i>Parents got divorced.</i></p> <p>Optimistic (Contained): “This will be very hard for us.” “I can rely on my siblings and friends for support.”</p> <p>Pessimistic (Widespread): “My relationships will never work.” “I should drop out of school to be closer to my mom.”</p>

Adapted from M.E.P. Seligman (1998) *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Life*. Simon & Schuster: NY, NY.