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"1,000 IDEAS & ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS"

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Optimism is good for our health

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

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10th October, 2011

THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

Scientists have discovered that people who are too optimistic about the future may have “faulty” brains. Their study, in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, concluded that the reason many people always see light at the end of the tunnel may be because of an inability to sensibly deal with risk. They even say this over-optimism could have been a cause of the 2008 global financial crisis, with bankers failing to accept or see the riskiness of their investments. Report author Dr Tali Sharot of London’s University College analyzed brain scans to measure the activity taking place in patients who were asked to think about their future. He found that negative predictions were ignored in the minds of optimists.

In the study, Dr Sharot gave volunteers 80 different negative situations ranging from unpleasant to disastrous. These included getting divorced, having your car stolen and developing cancer. Many of the volunteers underestimated the chances of these situations happening to them. Dr Sharot said: “The more optimistic we are, the less likely we are to be influenced by negative information about the future.” He added: “Smoking kills messages don't work as people think their chances of cancer are low. The divorce rate is 50%, but people don't think it's the same for them.” He also said: “Seeing the glass as half full rather than half empty can be a positive thing. It can lower stress and anxiety and be good for our health and well-being.”

WARM-UPS

1. OPTIMISM: Walk around the class and talk to other students about optimism. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

scientists / discovered / brains / inability / financial crisis / investments / predictions / volunteers / disastrous / developing cancer / optimistic / influenced / positive thinking

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. DEAL WITH IT: What's the best way to deal with these situations? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

	How bad?	How to deal with it?	Reasons for optimism?
Divorce			
Stolen mobile phone			
Illness			
Bankruptcy			
Exam failure			
Hair loss / baldness			

4. OPTIMISTIC: Students A **strongly** believe we must always be optimistic; Students B **strongly** believe otherwise. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. POSITIVE: What are you most positive about? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the ones you're most positive about at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- your health
- your financial security
- being in control of your life
- job / career
- your country's future
- world peace
- the planet's health
- your happiness

6. BRAIN: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'brain'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. The new drug Optimism cures over a dozen common illnesses. | T / F |
| b. Optimism helps people with poor vision see light better in tunnels. | T / F |
| c. Over-optimism may have been a factor in the 2008 financial crisis. | T / F |
| d. Optimists paid little or no regard to negative predictions. | T / F |
| e. A scientist asked volunteers to think about 80 happy experiences. | T / F |
| f. Volunteers accurately assessed the chances of bad things happening. | T / F |
| g. The scientist said people disregarded warnings on cigarette packs. | T / F |
| h. The scientists said optimism can be a good way to reduce stress. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. discovered | a. because |
| 2. optimistic | b. manage |
| 3. deal with | c. examined |
| 4. analyzed | d. scenarios |
| 5. predictions | e. likelihood |
| 6. situations | f. found |
| 7. chances | g. probable |
| 8. likely | h. hopeful |
| 9. as | i. stress |
| 10. anxiety | j. forecasts |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. people who are too optimistic | a. the minds of optimists |
| 2. see light at the | b. information |
| 3. a cause of the 2008 global | c. of cancer are low |
| 4. analyzed brain scans to | d. about the future |
| 5. negative predictions were ignored in | e. unpleasant to disastrous |
| 6. negative situations ranging from | f. financial crisis |
| 7. the chances of these situations | g. measure the activity |
| 8. influenced by negative | h. well-being |
| 9. people think their chances | i. end of the tunnel |
| 10. good for our health and | j. happening to them |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Scientists have (1) _____ that people who are too optimistic about the future may have (2) "_____ " brains. Their study, in the journal Nature Neuroscience, concluded that the reason many people always see light at the end of the (3) _____ may be because of an inability to sensibly (4) _____ with risk. They even say this over-optimism could have been a (5) _____ of the 2008 global financial crisis, with bankers failing to accept or see the (6) _____ of their investments. Report author Dr Tali Sharot of London's University College analyzed brain scans to (7) _____ the activity taking place in patients who were asked to think about their future. He found that negative predictions were (8) _____ in the minds of optimists.

measure

tunnel

cause

discovered

ignored

riskiness

faulty

deal

In the study, Dr Sharot gave (9) _____ 80 different negative situations ranging from unpleasant to (10) _____. These included getting divorced, having your car stolen and (11) _____ cancer. Many of the volunteers underestimated the chances of these (12) _____ happening to them. Dr Sharot said: "The more optimistic we are, the less likely we are to be (13) _____ by negative information about the future." He added: "Smoking kills messages don't work as people think their (14) _____ of cancer are low. The divorce rate is 50%, but people don't think it's the same for them." He also said: "Seeing the glass as half full (15) _____ than half empty can be a positive thing. It can lower stress and anxiety and be good for our health and well- (16) _____."

rather

developing

chances

situations

volunteers

being

disastrous

influenced

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

Scientists have discovered that people _____ about the future may _____. Their study, in the journal Nature Neuroscience, concluded that the reason many people always see light at the _____ may be because of an inability to sensibly deal with risk. They even say this over-optimism could _____ of the 2008 global financial crisis, with bankers failing to accept or see the riskiness of their investments. Report author Dr Tali Sharot of London's University College _____ to measure the activity taking place in patients who were asked to think about their future. He found that negative _____ in the minds of optimists.

In the study, Dr Sharot gave volunteers 80 _____ ranging from _____. These included getting divorced, having your car stolen and developing cancer. Many of the volunteers underestimated the chances of these situations happening to them. Dr Sharot said: "The more optimistic we are, _____ to be influenced by negative information about the future." He added: "Smoking kills messages don't work as people think their _____ are low. The divorce rate is 50%, but people don't think it's the same for them." He also said: "Seeing the glass as _____ empty can be a positive thing. It can lower stress and anxiety and be good for our _____."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'neuro' and 'science'.

neuro	science
--------------	----------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• faulty• light• deal• see• measure• minds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 80• getting• situations• less• glass• stress
---	---

STUDENT OPTIMISM SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

Write five GOOD questions about optimism in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

OPTIMISM DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'optimism'?
- c) Are you more of an optimist or a pessimist?
- d) Do you think optimism is good for your health? Why?
- e) Have you ever thought you might have a "faulty" brain?
- f) When was the last time the phrase "see the light at the end of the tunnel" applied to you?
- g) Do you think optimism or greed was more responsible for the 2008 global financial crisis?
- h) What do you think about risk? Are you a risk taker?
- i) Do you ignore negative predictions and always look on the bright side of life?
- j) Who are the biggest optimists and pessimists you know?

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OPTIMISM DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Would you like to volunteer for a scientific study?
- c) Are you optimistic about your own future? Why?
- d) How do you deal with unpleasant or disastrous situations?
- e) Are you optimistic about the future of the world?
- f) Do you take notice of health warnings or statistics that tell us 50% of marriages end in divorce?
- g) What does seeing the glass half full or half empty mean? Is there a similar saying in your language?
- h) What advice would you give to a pessimist?
- i) What would you like to be more optimistic about?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Dr Tali Sharot?

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LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1110/111010-optimism.html>

Scientists have discovered that people who are (1) ____ optimistic about the future may have “faulty” brains. Their study, in the journal Nature Neuroscience, concluded that the reason many people always see light at the end of the (2) ____ may be because of an inability to (3) ____ deal with risk. They even say this over-optimism could have been a cause of the 2008 global financial crisis, with bankers failing to accept or see the (4) ____ of their investments. Report author Dr Tali Sharot of London’s University College analyzed brain scans (5) ____ measure the activity taking place in patients who were asked to think about their future. He found that negative predictions were ignored in the (6) ____ of optimists.

In the study, Dr Sharot gave volunteers 80 different negative situations (7) ____ from unpleasant to disastrous. These included getting divorced, (8) ____ your car stolen and developing cancer. Many of the volunteers underestimated the chances of these situations happening to them. Dr Sharot said: “The more optimistic we are, the less (9) ____ we are to be influenced by negative information about the future.” He added: “Smoking kills messages don't work as people think their (10) ____ of cancer are low. The divorce rate is 50%, but people don't think it's the same for them.” He also said: “Seeing the glass as half full (11) ____ than half empty can be a positive thing. It can lower stress and anxiety and be good for our health and well-(12) ____.”

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. | (a) over | (b) much | (c) at | (d) too |
| 2. | (a) roll | (b) tunnel | (c) day | (d) brain |
| 3. | (a) sensibly | (b) sense | (c) sensed | (d) sensible |
| 4. | (a) riskily | (b) risked | (c) riskiness | (d) risking |
| 5. | (a) for | (b) see | (c) to | (d) by |
| 6. | (a) skulls | (b) minds | (c) cortex | (d) intelligence |
| 7. | (a) ranging | (b) waging | (c) engaging | (d) staging |
| 8. | (a) being | (b) looking | (c) arranging | (d) having |
| 9. | (a) liked | (b) likely | (c) liking | (d) likelihood |
| 10. | (a) enhances | (b) prances | (c) stances | (d) chances |
| 11. | (a) instead | (b) prefer | (c) rather | (d) not |
| 12. | (a) being | (b) doing | (c) thinking | (d) having |

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HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about optimism. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. OPTIMISM: Make a poster about optimism. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. BEING OPTIMISTIC: Write a magazine article about being optimistic. Include imaginary interviews with people who think it's good and other people who think it's bad.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to an expert on optimism. Ask him/her three questions about it. Give him/her three of your personal experiences why optimism is good or bad. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. discovered | a. found |
| 2. optimistic | b. hopeful |
| 3. deal with | c. manage |
| 4. analyzed | d. examined |
| 5. predictions | e. forecasts |
| 6. situations | f. scenarios |
| 7. chances | g. likelihood |
| 8. likely | h. probable |
| 9. as | i. because |
| 10. anxiety | j. stress |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. people who are too optimistic | a. about the future |
| 2. see light at the | b. end of the tunnel |
| 3. a cause of the 2008 global | c. financial crisis |
| 4. analyzed brain scans to | d. measure the activity |
| 5. negative predictions were ignored in | e. the minds of optimists |
| 6. negative situations ranging from | f. unpleasant to disastrous |
| 7. the chances of these situations | g. happening to them |
| 8. influenced by negative | h. information |
| 9. people think their chances | i. of cancer are low |
| 10. good for our health and | j. well-being |

GAP FILL:

Optimism is good for our health

Scientists have (1) **discovered** that people who are too optimistic about the future may have (2) "**faulty**" brains. Their study, in the journal Nature Neuroscience, concluded that the reason many people always see light at the end of the (3) **tunnel** may be because of an inability to sensibly (4) **deal** with risk. They even say this over-optimism could have been a (5) **cause** of the 2008 global financial crisis, with bankers failing to accept or see the (6) **riskiness** of their investments. Report author Dr Tali Sharot of London's University College analyzed brain scans to (7) **measure** the activity taking place in patients who were asked to think about their future. He found that negative predictions were (8) **ignored** in the minds of optimists.

In the study, Dr Sharot gave (9) **volunteers** 80 different negative situations ranging from unpleasant to (10) **disastrous**. These included getting divorced, having your car stolen and (11) **developing** cancer. Many of the volunteers underestimated the chances of these (12) **situations** happening to them. Dr Sharot said: "The more optimistic we are, the less likely we are to be (13) **influenced** by negative information about the future." He added: "Smoking kills messages don't work as people think their (14) **chances** of cancer are low. The divorce rate is 50%, but people don't think it's the same for them." He also said: "Seeing the glass as half full (15) **rather** than half empty can be a positive thing. It can lower stress and anxiety and be good for our health and well-(16) **being**."

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - b 3 - a 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a 8 - d 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a

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