

Self Care: Counselor and Client Wellness

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“A Pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity: an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

Harry S. Truman

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary the definition of the word pessimism is the following: “an inclination to emphasize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities or to expect the worst possible outcome; the doctrine that reality is essentially evil; the doctrine that evil overbalances happiness in life”. The phrase stated by Harry S. Truman is a poeticized form of the previously stated definition nonetheless it opens the door to another term which is optimism; additionally, he implies that ones perception affects willfulness; whether to take hold of an event and use it to ones advantage or discard the opportunity because the myriad of negative outcomes are overwhelming. As an aspiring Counselor, perceiving the negative rather than the positive can be harmful for not only the counselor but also the client. The Lord was tugging at my heart as I delved into this term and made me understand that I need to work in this area. In searching, I understood that a pessimist mind set has a root in a negative self-view of oneself, which in turn not only affects the pessimist but can adversely affect others; moreover, not all hope is lost because this thinking can be used to grow. The following articles will firstly discuss some examples of negative mental cycles and their effects on the self and others and lastly how pessimism can be used positively.

Leanne Kane, Nancy Bahl and Allison J. Ouimet conducted an experiment in which they tested the importance of fear of negative evaluation in comparison with the

fear of positive evaluation in predicting excessive reassurance seeking (2018). It is stated that individuals with depressive manifestations in order to disconfirm self-doubts excessively ask others about their worth; as this cycle continues still being unconvinced about the genuineness of the feed back seek more, ultimately frustrating others (Kane, Bahl & Quimet, 2018). Additionally, Kane, Bahl & Quimet state that if the other person's frustration is visible to the reassurance seeker this may lead him to believe positive feed back as a social rejection thus reaffirming the need to seek reassurance (2018).

There is countless research that links negative thinking reflected through action and its impact on others specifically in a marriage with children. In a study conducted by Martina Zemp, Matthew D. Johnson, and Guy Bodenmann called: *Out of Balance? Positivity--Negativity Ratios in Couples' Interaction Impact Child Adjustment* mentioned how overtly destructive parental conflict both verbal and non-verbal had an impact o child maladjustment (Barletta & O'Mara, 2006; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Davies, Hentges, et al., 2016; Grych & Fincham, 1990, as cited in Zemp, Johnson & Bodenmann, 2019). Additionally, it is stated that cooperative marital conflict was linked to adolescents' internalizing problems (Zhou & Buehler, 2017 as cited in Zemp, Johnson & Bodenmann, 2019).

Though there is research that demonstrates the downside of a negative mindset and its implications there is also research that sheds light on how to turn things around. In the study conducted by Barbara S. Held and Arthur C. Bohart titled *Introduction: The (Overlooked) Virtues of "Unvirtuous" Attitudes and Behavior: Reconsidering Negativity, Complaining, Pessimism, and "False" Hope* the following is stated: "... reveals the

potential benefits and costs of both optimism and pessimism” (Norem, 2011 as cited in Held & Bohart , 2002). Moreover, it was additionally stated that complaining can be used constructively in relationships to encourage normative and socially desirable behavior and impression management if the complainer isn’t seen as a chronic complainer (Kowalski, 2001 as cited in Held & Bohart , 2002).

In conclusion, pessimism is the tendency to see the negative side of things, which can be debilitating and harmful to yourself and to those around you but it all depends on how you use it and to what degree. There are possible benefits to pessimism but it is up to the person to discover it. That is why God gives everyone an opportunity and equal chance to turn their lives around in Him and to turn our mess into a message and our test into testimony. The Lord will help me to use what I think is despicable about me for His honor and glory.

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