

Researchers already know that people who are stressed out or depressed by pessimism are subject to more illnesses more often than those who aren't. The question remains however: Do optimists get other benefits (special protection) that the general population does not enjoy? One study some years ago reported in the Journal of Personal and Social Psychology examined the health and attitude of first year law students. Optimistic students had more T-cells and natural killer cell activity than did the pessimists. Another study researched men who had heart by-pass surgery. No surprise here, the men who were optimistic had much better outcomes even five years after the surgery than did the pessimists. Don't be fooled, however, by thinking that optimists just don't live in the "real" world. They can be stark realists. The difference in attitude doesn't come from an illusion, it comes from researching a situation and coming up with a realistic/positive position of "hope". Then acting on that position rather than "reacting" negatively to the challenge. The good news is optimism is more learned than inherited. So obviously it is to our advantage to "learn" optimism and to "unlearn" pessimism.