

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

- Rob:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English, I'm Rob and with me is Finn.
- Finn:** Hello Rob.
- Rob:** You sound very cheerful – so, how are you feeling?
- Finn:** I'm good thanks. Things are going well. I'm here in the studio with you, I'm going on holiday next week, and I'm really enjoying this cold weather.
- Rob:** Really – I think it's miserable outside but I suppose you're a good example of **an optimist** - someone who always looks at life from a positive point of view. It's a good thing, Finn. The opposite of an optimist is, of course, **a pessimist**.
- Finn:** Well Rob, there is some hope for pessimists because research is taking place to see if people's attitude to life can be switched from negative to positive.
- Rob:** Well I'll drink to that! Finn, here's a glass of lemonade to celebrate – the only thing is - it's half empty, there's not much left in there.
- Finn:** Stop complaining Rob – that's half full – look, there's still enough to enjoy.
- Rob:** If you say so. We'll explain more about that glass half empty saying shortly. But first, how optimistic are you about getting today's question right?
- Finn:** Extremely positive.
- Rob:** OK. Well do you know who wrote this famous quote: *"A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty"*. Was it:  
**a)** Winston Churchill  
**b)** Oscar Wilde  
**c)** Charles Dickens
- Finn:** It's a good quote. I'm not sure but I think I'll say **b)** Oscar Wilde.
- Rob:** You sound optimistic! I'll give you the answer at the end of the programme. So we are talking about being an optimist or a pessimist. It's not something that can be easily measured; it more of **a state of mind**.
- Finn:** A state of mind is how you think or feel. There are many factors that can **influence** – or affect this. Certain events in a person's life, such as someone you know dying, or losing your job, can **trigger** – or cause – a negative feeling about life.
- Rob:** And people with **depression** – a medical condition where someone is very unhappy – tend to be pessimistic.
- Finn:** Indeed. But scientists are now looking inside our heads to see what's going on and if there is a way to change how we feel.

**Rob:** A medical journalist and doctor called Michael Mosley has been looking into this. He says our attitude to life – the positive or negative way we view life – affects our **personality**.

**Finn:** What phrase does he use to describe the importance of optimism and pessimism in our characters?

**Medical journalist and doctor, Michael Mosley:**

*Our personalities are a complex interaction of character traits that affect behaviour, emotions and ultimately the lives we lead. And one of the fundamental drivers is how optimistic or pessimistic we are. This is also one of the hottest new areas of scientific research.*

**Rob:** OK, so he says one of the fundamental **drivers** in shaping our personality is how optimistic or pessimistic we are. A fundamental driver means the most important thing that makes something happen.

**Finn:** So our outlook on life drives – or shapes – our behaviour, our emotions and character **traits** – traits are the particular qualities we have. This subject is described as 'one of the hottest new areas of research' – *hottest* here means latest and most popular.

**Rob:** And the research may find a way to change people from seeing a glass being half empty to one that is half full.

**Finn:** There's that phrase again! We sometimes say pessimistic people describe a glass of water or beer as being half empty – they have already drunk half of it and there's not much left.

**Rob:** But someone who is optimistic, like you Finn, would view the glass as being half full – there is still half of the drink left to enjoy. It really depends on your **point of view** – how you view things.

**Finn:** We asked our BBC Learning English audience how full or empty their glass is. What have they been saying?

**Rob:** Mariola says "My glass is half full because I'm going on holiday next Friday!"

**Finn:** And Raquel says "My glass is always half full because it's the best way to be happy!"

**Rob:** But Mon Tran says "My glass is half empty. I'm far away from my family and missing them so much."

**Finn:** Well maybe scientists will be able to help Mon Tran and others to feel more optimistic about life in the future? Well Rob, I'm optimistic that I got today's quiz question right.

**Rob:** Let's find out. Earlier I asked who wrote this famous quote: "*A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.*"

**Finn:** I said b) Oscar Wilde.

**Rob:** You are wrong. They were the words of Winston Churchill. Ok that's it for this programme. Do join us again soon for more 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

**Both:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

an optimist	someone who thinks good things will happen
a pessimist	someone who always thinks bad things will happen in a situation
a state of mind	how you feel and what you think
influence	have an effect (on something or someone)
trigger	cause / make happen
depression	a medical condition where someone is very unhappy and cannot lead a normal life
point of view	how someone judges a situation
personality	how you behave, feel and think
drivers	<i>(in this situation)</i> things that make something else happen
traits	particular qualities or characteristics that someone has

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