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2[B] – A New Look at Optimism 

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G1 12-1

Psychologists have long noted a seeming paradox in people's attitudes towards the future. In surveys, large majorities of respondents say they expect things to get worse, citing rising crime, a worsening economy and growing social problems.

A 2007 poll, for example, found that 70 percent of respondents believed families in general are less successful now than they were in their parents' day. When it comes to their own prospects, this outlook ( 29 ). Seventy-six percent of the same respondents reported feeling satisfied with the future facing themselves and their families.

Regardless of race, religion, or socioeconomic background, people are steadfastly optimistic about their individual futures, even when the statistics point in another direction. Despite the large percentage of marriages that end in divorce, for example, people still believe their own marriage will be successful.



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- (29) 1 seems more justified                      2 tends to melt away  
3 is expressed more subtly                      4 becomes exaggerated

## Further Questions

1) What did the poll taken in 2007 find?

*It found that 70 percent of respondents believed families in general are less successful now than they were in their parents' day.*

2) What did the respondents say about their future?

*Seventy-six percent of the same respondents reported feeling satisfied with the future facing themselves.*

3) What do people believe about marriage?

*Despite the large percentage of marriages that end in divorce, people still believe their own marriage will be successful.*

Optimism may have developed alongside the evolution of human consciousness as a coping mechanism. Consciousness provides humans with the ability to imagine and plan for the future. However, it also burdens us with ( 30 ). Pessimism may seem like the rational response to this, but Tali Sharot, author of *The Optimism Bias*, suggests a slightly irrational optimism may have evolved instead. According to Sharot, the knowledge that one will inevitably cease to exist “had to emerge side by side with the persistent ability to picture a bright future.”

- (30) 1 a need to focus on the present                      2 a constant feeling of failure  
3 an awareness of our mortality                      4 a desire to know the truth

Further Questions 

4) What does consciousness provide humans with?

36. *Consciousness provides humans with the ability to imagine and plan for the future.*  
37. **5) What does Tali Sharot believe was inevitable?**  
38. *The knowledge that one will inevitably cease to exist had to emerge side by side*  
39. *with the persistent ability to picture a bright future.*

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40. Research suggests being optimistic may enable a person to ( **31** ). In an  
41. experiment by neuroscientist Sara Bengtsson at Karolinska Institute in  
42. Sweden, students were told they could expect to perform well in a series of  
43. cognitive tasks generally did better than the students who were given more  
44. discouraging predictions.  
45. While this supports the view that positive encouragement can have a powerful  
46. effect on performance, scans of the participants' brains as they performed the  
47. tasks revealed further clues to the evolutionary advantage of optimism.  
48. Compared to the students with negative expectations, those expecting positive  
49. results showed greater activity in the area of the brain controlling the act of  
50. self-reflection. According to Bengtsson, this indicates that imagining a good  
51. result stimulates the brain to learn from experience when things fail to go as planned.

52. **(31)** 1 make accurate predictions      2 ignore their mistakes  
53.        3 cooperate more with others      4 deal with unfavorable outcomes

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### Further Questions

54. **6) What happened in the experiment when students were told they were**  
55. **expected to do well?**

56. *Students who were told they could expect to perform well in a series of*  
57. *cognitive tasks generally did better than the students who were given more*  
58. *discouraging predictions.*

59. **7) What happened in the brains of those expecting positive results?**

60. *Compared to the students with negative expectations, those expecting positive*  
61. *results showed greater activity in the area of the brain controlling the act of*  
62. *self-reflection.*

63. **8) What does Bengtsson say this indicates?**

64. *According to Bengtsson, this indicates that imagining a good result stimulate*  
65. *the brain to learn from experience when things fail to go as planned.*

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66. 解答: (29) 2 (30) 3 (31) 4



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