

## [Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 100 - Why You're Not Happy & Why To Fix It: Tali Sharot

Why do people listen to this podcast? That's a question I've asked myself over and over again. We never could have expected the audience to gather around this podcast and these conversations

and the way that it has. And as I've reflected over and over again, there's one word that comes to mind when I'm trying to answer that question, why people listen to this podcast and it's the word connection. The conversations we've had and the vulnerability and the way in which our guests share them fosters this sense of connection and relatability, which is so unbelievably human and important. It's what makes us feel alive like we belong and like we're part of the tribe. And so what we've done here at the DiRover CEO is we've created something that will allow you to bring that sense of connection we create here into your own lives. And it's called the DiRover CEO conversation cards. In the DiRover CEO, we have hundreds of questions that have been left by our guests. And some of these questions, I have to be honest, are pretty life changing because they invoke a sense of vulnerability which is the doorway to connection. So we've taken all of these questions and we've put them on these cards. And on these cards, you have the question that's been left in the DiRover CEO, the name of the person who wrote the question. And if you turn it over, there's a QR code. If you scan that code, you can see which guest answered the question and watch the video of them answering it. Every time I've done this podcast and every time we've asked the kind of questions we ask here, I feel a tremendous sense of affinity to the guest. It's crazy in the space of about two hours or three hours after having these conversations. I feel connected to the guests we have on this show at a level which is hard to explain. It's almost spiritual in nature. And our aim with these cards is that you can create that sense of connection through vulnerability at home with the people you love the most. Your boyfriend, your partner, your wife, your kids, your grandparents, your colleagues, your friends, whoever it may be. Vulnerability is the door to connection. And these cards are a powerful prompt for that vulnerability. The optimism bias from what I understood is that bias to believing that the future will be good. Is that accurate or is that accurate? Yeah, kind of. So, optimism on its own means...

You're agreeing to me even though I'm wrong. No, no, no, you're not wrong. I think what you mean is right. Thank you.

I'll just give you the scientific definition. So, yeah. So, optimism is believing that positive things will happen. The optimism bias means that you believe these optimistic things, these good things will happen, but the evidence suggests otherwise. So, it's actually a mistake. The optimism bias, so usually we define it as overestimating the likelihood of positive events happening. So, you're overestimating how much money am I going to get with my first job when I leave graduate school, right? Or overestimating how long my marriage will last and so on. So, overestimating the positive in light of the evidence that is in front of us and underestimating the likelihood of negative events happening. So, underestimating my likelihood of getting COVID, of getting cancer, of being in a car accident, going bankrupt, whatever it is, based on whatever evidence is there. So, optimism bias does mean mistakes. So, the word bias means a systematic mistake. So, obviously when we think about the future, we can't be right most of the time because the future is uncertain and we don't know what's going to happen. So, we're going to be wrong a lot of times when we predict

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the future. But the optimism bias means that the mistakes that we make tend to systematically be that we expect it to be better than it ends up being. So, that's basically the optimism bias, right? I expect it to be better than it ends up being. Which sounds like a bad thing, but it's not necessarily so. I mean, the word bias, people usually, because it is a mistake, people usually think that that means it's not a good thing. But it's not necessarily so. It can actually have both positive and negative outcomes to it. So, if you think about the positive, if I expect good things in my future, specifically good things, even though I'm overestimating the likelihood of these things happening, even if I think, oh, I'm going to make one million in the next year, and of course that's way more than I'm going to. But that then motivates you, right? So, having these positive expectations motivates you to try harder. It's a bit like, I think I'm going to get the gold, I'm more likely to get the silver. So, that's kind of the idea. And it also enhances your happiness and well-being, right? Because how you're feeling now is a lot to do, not necessarily with what you're doing at the moment, but what you think you'll be doing later, right? How you're feeling now is like, okay, you might be feeling nice talking here, but a lot of it is, what do I think I'm going to do later on this evening, next week, next month, in a year? Our expectations of where we will be in the future, effects our happiness today, right? And so, if I have these positive expectations of the future, even if they're not going to happen, they make me happier today. This is why there's a really cool study that was done at Harvard, where they were asking people who are about to go on vacation, how happy they were every day before vacation, and have every day during vacation and every day after vacation for a week. So, a week before vacation every day, a week during vacation every day, a week after vacation every day. So, what was the happiest day, do you think? The day before they were. Right, exactly, right. The day before vacation, they were still in the office, working on the computers, but on their mind, they were already on vacation. In their mind, it was wonderful. And when they went on vacation, it was good, but it wasn't as good as it was in their mind the day before. So, it's the anticipation of these good. So, it's an optimism bias, because they thought the vacation's going to be better than what it ended up being, but that brought them the happiness beforehand, right? And also, probably, enhance the likelihood that they will go on vacation, which is a good thing as well.

So, does that mean that we should, in our relationships, in our teams, etc., we should try and give people things to look forward to?

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think that there's two things. You kind of want things in the diary, right? So, having a vacation in the diary that's going to happen in a month makes you happy today. So, whatever it is, whatever you're doing for that matters to your team, have what I call anticipatory events, right? Things that they could look forward to that will make them happy today. But also, I think a lot of times, I do motivate my team by telling them that I think this project is going to work really well. I mean, even I think it's going to work pretty well, but I might exaggerate a little bit, because that enhances motivation. And who knows? Maybe it will work even better than I expected. So, it's good to kind of enhance kind of the expectations and also to have these things that people can look forward to. And of course, it works the other way. So, also, if you're dreading something,

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that's going to happen to more next week, right? You have to go to the dentist or whatever bad thing is happening is going to get there. And it's going to affect your mood today. So, dread of things in the future and anticipation of the good stuff is all affecting how we feel at the moment.

How contagious is optimism and conversely pessimism in life generally? If I'm around a group of pessimists or I'm around a group of optimists, what kind of contagious impact is there on me?

Yeah. Any emotion is contagious. Anything. Sadness, anxiety, joy, everything is contagious, fear. And it happens really, really fast and in an unconscious way, right? It could be even like you're sitting in the tube and someone in front of you is looking fearful. You straight away will feel fearful yourself. First of all, you will mimic the expression of the person that's in front of you without noticing it. So, if you look fearful, I'm going to start mimicking the same facial expressions. Yeah. And that facial expression will make me feel fearful, right? Because our brain is learning from how our face, right? It's a signal and it goes both ways, like a feedback loop. And there's a good reason for it because if someone is afraid, there might be something dangerous around us.

So, I should... We've seen the monkeys in the David Albert documentary. They know that. They know that the other monkeys are taking a cue from them. So, they fake fear. So, they go, ah! And then when all the monkeys run off, they go and get the food. Because they've got to level two where they realize that they're all taking cues from each other. And I remember that documentary thinking, wow, like, you know, because all the monkeys would run the minute one monkey made a reaction. And that's pretty much what you're describing there, right?

Yeah, exactly. And it works for good things as well. If someone looks excited, you're like, you will feel excited as well. You don't know why. But if they're excited, there might be something good around, right?

Is this why people yoon together? I'm just thinking about yoon to contagious.

It's just mimicking. We do facial expressions. We mimic any kind of facial expression and bodily expressions as well. Yeah, I'm trying not to now. But, okay. So, why is this really important to think about? Because let's say you want to... You're managing your team.

If you're stressful and you're going to start like, I don't know, even like shouting or raising your voice or they're going to get more stressed as well, right? So, it's true.

It's a bit like the monkeys. You can actually change at least how you look in terms of the emotions. You need to think about what is my... What emotion am I conveying? Because the emotion that you are conveying is going to then affect how people around you feel. So, there's a little bit of kind of emotional control that is helpful too.

You mentioned that you might exaggerate a little bit the belief in a positive outcome to your team members. And I think that's...

And I hope they're not listening.

Yeah. Well, I think we all do sometimes. I mean, I usually believe it because I think I have a bit of a bias, optimism bias myself. But that's in part because of, I guess, chapter three in the optimism bias where you talk about how self-fulfilling optimism is. And there was some really, really staggering statistical sort of studies and experiments that have

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been done to prove that optimism really is a self-fulfilling thing. And it kind of makes me think about this concept of manifestation. People always talk about manifestation. And it seems... In my mind, it's always been this kind of pseudo-science. You just think about something and then it happens. What's your view on manifestation? Is it true?

Yeah. So, it's not magic. It's not that I'm thinking something in my mind and the waves are going to change what happens in the world. The reason, if you believe something, the likely that will happen is higher is because you then change your actions, right? You think, I think my startup is going to really succeed. And that then changes your actions. You're more likely to go out there and tell other people, right? So, if you think it's going to succeed, you're more likely to convey that information to investors and so on. They can see you're kind of confident. They'll be more likely to invest in you, right? You put more time in. You put more effort in. And that's why it can have an effect on the outcomes. So it's not kind of a magic kind of thing. It's just that what we believe in our mind changes the way we behave and the way we behave in the world changes the world. So that's why that is.