

American Values, #20: Hope and Optimism (Lesson 159)

Phrases and Idioms: [sth = something; sb = somebody]

is likely to; will likely = probably will; will probably **Sally is likely to get the job. Sally will likely get the job.**

is more likely to = has a better chance of sth/doing sth **Sally is more likely to get the job than Susan.**
settle for sth/sb = accept sth/sb that isn't what you really want **Susan had to settle for a job in a company she didn't really like.**

change sth for the better; sth will change for the better = improve sth; sth will improve
Through hard work, Tom changed his financial situation for the better.

tends to + verb = usually + verb **Michael tends to worry when his teenage son stays out late at night.**

tends to be + adj = is usually + adj **David tends to be more patient than Deborah.**

Proverbs:

1. Every cloud has a silver lining. Every difficulty or disappointment also has something good or some benefit with it.
2. Lightning never strikes twice in the same place. The same bad thing won't happen again to the same person or in the same situation.
3. Look on the bright side. Try to see the good side of a difficult or disappointing situation. Keep your hopes up.
4. Never say never. Never give up. Never stop trying.
5. No news is good news. If we don't hear any news from somebody, that means he/she is fine.
6. Where there's a will, there's a way. There's always hope for success or for a way to solve a problem, so don't give up.

Previously, we learned that Americans often take risks confidently and work with determination in spite of setbacks. We also learned that Americans believe changes usually result in improvements. The above proverbs represent a basic American cultural belief that we should be positive about life, even when our life is difficult. If we look on the bright side, we are more likely to keep trying to succeed. Though we never like to settle for partial success, it's much better than no success at all. We're often optimistic that we can do better next time, or that we can get closer to our goal with more effort or a different method. Also, we tend to have a lot of faith in our own ability to change things for the better. This optimism affects the way we view the rest of the world. We have built a nation that has great economic and military power. We imagine, rightly or wrongly, that if our influence could become stronger in the world, the effect could be good for everyone, not just for America. At least this is the hope of many Americans.

Questions:

1. What's the difference between optimism and wishful thinking? Give an example of each one.
2. Do you think it's better to be optimistic (hopeful), or to be realistic (accurate/practical)? Why? Also, is it ever good to be pessimistic (doubtful)? If so, why?
3. When you are in a difficult or disappointing situation, are you more likely to look on the bright side, or do you tend to respond differently at first? Explain.
4. Share an example of when no news is good news. Also, share an example of when no news is not good news.
5. Have you ever settled for something that wasn't your first choice? (examples: a school, a job, a boyfriend/girlfriend, an item of clothing, a research project, an apartment, a car, etc.) If so, and if you

don't mind, please share about that experience. Also, did it end up being better than, worse than, or exactly what you expected?

6. In your country, at what age do people (e.g., people in their 40s) tend to be the most optimistic about the future? Why?