

# Tough Minded Optimism

My friend TK Coleman coined the term tough minded optimism a decade or so ago. The idea is to recapture genuine optimism from the false idea that it means being a Pollyanna, living in delusion, or denying tough realities. Real optimism does not stick its head in the sand or deny any negative realities. It accepts them and chooses to focus more energy on the positive responses to those challenges.

I've always been on board with this approach to optimism, but it's never been more valuable to me than now.

I'm not trying to be sensational, but the world is more visibly fucked up right now than at any point in my lifetime. There are trends that pose a threat to the way I work and live, and require adjustment, adaptation, monitoring, and re-assessing the best cost/benefit tradeoffs. To continue to live as free and fully alive as possible I cannot ignore or wish away shitty developments as easily as I used to.

Most bad things in the world do not affect you and stressing over them won't help you. That is still the case, but there is a much higher percentage of bad things in the world that actually do affect me than at any time I can remember.

Optimism is difficult right now. Especially the kind that comes to mind when I don't explicitly employ TK's approach. The old optimism as naivete is difficult and costly. But tough minded optimism is very possible and important.

A stoic assessment of all possible outcomes, even the worst, and acceptance of those possibilities is the starting point. Then a conscious choice to focus energy and attention on the best course of action for even the worst series of events comes next. Increasing the probability that the better outcomes occur. Then daily focus on good developments that are often quietly happening right alongside the bad in my own life and the world.

Nobody wins being negative. But positive shouldn't mean naïve. Tough minded optimism is the answer.