

Are you a lucky student?

We all know that luck plays a part in being a successful student. Getting a question you can answer in the exam, not getting ill at a crucial point in the course, having a really good tutor – I've heard students use all these 'lucky' events as being responsible for their success. But it's always seemed to be a random business.

I've just been reading a book* which claims that luck isn't random and that to some extent it depends on your attitude to life's events. Now I don't usually read 'self-improvement books even those written [as in this case] by a psychologist – 'if you want to know the obvious ask a psychologist' – oh dear I'll get letters – no I don't really mean it. But in this case there did seem to be some useful ideas worth thinking about.

The author Dr. Richard Wiseman says that 'lucky' people are those who tend to see positive aspects of even bad things that happen to them and that when bad things happen they tend to shrug them off and don't dwell on them but take practical steps to prevent bad luck in the future. Then in true self-improvement style he claims that people can improve their luck by undertaking exercises in order to develop a 'network of luck' by connecting with other people more, becoming open to new experiences, developing a more relaxed attitude to life and so on.

Now I wouldn't normally take too much notice of this kind of stuff but it does link it with some of things that 'student retention theorists' [yes we do exist and we're as good at stating the obvious as psychologists] think help students complete courses. These are 'resilience' – the ability to overcome setbacks, 'self-efficacy' – confidence in yourself as a learner and 'networking' - the ability to set up good support networks.

- Resilience means that when a bad thing happens such as getting a low mark on an assignment that you don't dwell on it, that you can see the positive side of it, you can use it to learn from and you can generally shrug the experience off.

- Self-efficacy means that you have some confidence in how you study – for instance that you trust your intuition more about what works best for you rather than struggle on studying the way you were told at school.
- Networking means that you will use the support available – not just from your tutor but from other students and your family, friends and work colleagues.

You can't change your own attitudes very easily but Wiseman claims that by concentrating on these concepts you will become luckier. Maybe it might just be worth a try.

And er – good luck!

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*The Luck Factor, Dr Richard Wiseman, Random House (2002)