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Why do some people get all the luck while others never get the breaks they deserve? A psychologist says he has discovered the answer.

Ten years ago, I set out to examine luck.

I wanted to know why some people are always in the right place at the right time, while others consistently experience ill fortune.

I placed advertisements in national newspapers asking for people who felt consistently lucky or unlucky to contact me.

Hundreds of extraordinary men and women volunteered for my research and, over the years, I have interviewed them, monitored their lives and had them take part in experiments.

The results reveal that although these people have almost no insight into the causes of their luck, their thoughts and behaviour are responsible for much of their good and bad fortune.

Take the case of seemingly chance opportunities. Lucky people consistently encounter such opportunities, whereas unlucky people do not.

I carried out a simple experiment to discover whether this was due to differences in their ability to spot such opportunities.

I gave both lucky and unlucky people a newspaper, and asked them to look through it and tell me how many photographs were inside.

I had secretly placed a large message halfway through the newspaper saying: "Tell the experimenter you have seen this and win £250."

This message took up half of the page and was written in type that was more than two inches high.

It was staring everyone straight in the face, but the unlucky people tended to miss it and the lucky people tended to spot it.

Unlucky people are generally more tense than lucky people, and this anxiety disrupts their ability to notice the unexpected.

As a result, they miss opportunities because they are too focused on looking for something else.

They go to parties intent on finding their perfect partner and so miss opportunities to make good friends.

They look through newspapers determined to find certain types of job advertisements

and miss other types of jobs.

Lucky people are more relaxed and open, and therefore see what is there rather than just what they are looking for.

My research eventually revealed that lucky people generate good fortune via four principles.

They are skilled at creating and noticing chance opportunities, make lucky decisions by listening to their intuition, create self-fulfilling prophecies via positive expectations, and adopt a resilient attitude that transforms bad luck into good.

Towards the end of the work, I wondered whether these principles could be used to create good luck.

I asked a group of volunteers to spend a month carrying out exercises designed to help them think and behave like a lucky person.

Dramatic results

These exercises helped them spot chance opportunities, listen to their intuition, expect to be lucky, and be more resilient to bad luck.

One month later, the volunteers returned and described what had happened. The results were dramatic: 80% of people were now happier, more satisfied with their lives and, perhaps most important of all, luckier.

The lucky people had become even luckier and the unlucky had become lucky.

Finally, I had found the elusive "luck factor" .

Here are Professor Wiseman's four top tips for becoming lucky:

- Listen to your gut instincts - they are normally right
 - Be open to new experiences and breaking your normal routine
 - Spend a few moments each day remembering things that went well
 - Visualise yourself being lucky before an important meeting or telephone call.
- Luck is very often a self-fulfilling prophecy

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