The one change that worked: When good things happen, I write them down – and it's made me more optimistic

Growing up, I was envious of optimists. I was **hypersensitive** to the ease with which they sailed through life with a sunny **conviction** that things would work out. "It'll be fine," a friend would say. "Or you could embarrass yourself," my mind would purr like a villain. "Be rejected. Fail."

I was a **chronic** worrier. I grew up in a difficult household where my father's moods changed quickly. Every morning, I would tell myself it was going to be a bad day. My thinking was that if you always **expected** the worst, things had a tendency to turn out better than you imagined.

This continued into adulthood. Before a date, a job interview, or a presentation, I would convince myself it wasn't going to go well. I learned in therapy that I **was prone to catastrophising** – **ruminating** on worst-case scenarios kept me up at night.

Then, early last year, everything changed when I found a £20 note on the ground. I pocketed it. I didn't want to forget how f**ortunate** it felt, so I wrote it down in my notes app. Later, as I walked up to a traffic crossing, the light turned green, as did the two directly after. It was such a funny moment that I **jotted it down** too.

That was when I had an idea. From that day on I began to make a list of every single good thing that happened to me, big or small. A train pulling in just as I got to the platform. A neighbour bringing over a slice of cake.

All day, every day, I added to my notes app. I began to notice that people were constantly going **above and beyond** to help me out. When my alarm went off, I knew good things were going to happen because I had proof of it. It became a **self-fulfilling prophecy.**

Of course I'm still prone to fretting, but on trickier days I sit and **reread** my list – which stretches on in my phone – and it reminds me that good things are on the way. Unlike a gratitude journal, this list is real and **evidence-based.** It is as simple as: this happened, and it was good.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

- **Match the words to their definitions**

Word	**Definition**
1. hypersensitive ……..	**a.** to think repeatedly about something worrying
2. conviction ……..	**b**. something that becomes true because you believe it will
3. chronic ……..	**c.** a strong belief or feeling of certainty
4. ruminate ……..	**d.** reacting too strongly to things
5. self-fulfilling prophecy ……..	**e**. lasting a long time; constant

- **Use the words and phrases below to complete the sentences.**

catastrophising ■ evidence-based ■ going above and beyond
prone to ■ jotted down ■ fortunate

1. She felt very _____ to have such supportive colleagues at work.
2. The new treatment is _____ – it has been tested in hundreds of patients.
3. I quickly _____ the address before I forgot it.
4. He's _____ anxiety, especially before important events.
5. The volunteers were clearly _____ – they stayed three hours after the event finished.
6. Try not to start _____ – one bad meeting doesn't mean you'll lose your job.

- **Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first. Use between two and four words.**

1. *I always assumed something bad would happen.*
   I always _____ the worst.
2. *She has a habit of worrying too much about things that might go wrong.*
   She is _____ worst-case scenarios.
3. *He reacted too strongly to any kind of criticism.*
   He was _____criticism.
4. *Reading the list again made her feel better on difficult days.*
   On difficult days, she _____her list to feel better.

LIVEWORKSHEETS