There’s a landslide of evidence demonstrating the impact of Optimism on things that matter. Here are some of the key findings on Stress and Coping, Burnout, and Stress at Work:

Stress and Coping

* Optimistic individuals adjust more favorably to life transitions (e.g., first year of college; Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992)
* Optimists cope more effectively with stressful events (Scheier et al., 1986)
* Optimists report fewer physical symptoms (Scheier & Carver, 1985).
* Optimism “is associated with the use of adaptive, engagement-coping strategies, such as rational problem solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions or seeking social support when dealing with a stressful situation.” (Chang, 1996)
* Pessimists are more likely to display helplessness deficits when confronted with a bad event (Abramson et al, 1978; Seligman et al., 1979)
* Optimists experience fewer symptoms of stress, cope more effectively with stressful events, and adjust better to important life transitions (Macan, 2007)
* Optimists use adaptive and engaging coping strategies including: rational problem solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, and seeking social support during stressful times (Macan, 2007)
* Pessimists use maladaptive and disengaging coping strategies including: avoiding problems, impulsive and careless problem solving, being self-critical, and socially withdrawing from stressful situations (Macan, 2007)
* The positive emotions associated with optimism allow individuals to take a break from the demands of coping, can help the person persist in the face of obstacles, and can facilitate recovery from harm or loss by restoring depleted resources (Gottlieb, 1997; Lazarus et al., 1980)
* Individuals with higher levels of optimism are better able to adjust and to overcome stressful situations (Chang et al., 2000; Peterson, 2000; Scheier & Carver, 1985)
* Optimists take on more positive coping actions during demanding circumstances (Chemers et al.,2000; Gagne & Shepherd, 2001; Gillham, 2000).
* Optimists naturally manage better for the duration of difficult times (Carver & Scheier, 2002)
* Optimists cope using approach strategies, that is, they deal with problems by actively trying to solve them (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006).
  + Contrary to popular belief, optimists may, therefore, be less likely to deny problems by actively trying to solve them.
  + Pessimists on the other hand, cope using avoidance strategies, which may prevent them from solving problems (Carver et al., 1989)
* Greater optimism was associated with smaller increases in stress and depression and greater increases in perceived social support in a sample of incoming college students (Brissette et al., 2002)
* Optimists report being engaged and planning when confronted with a stressful event whereas pessimists disengage from the stressful event (Scheier & Carver, 1992)
  + Optimists accept the reality of stressful events, while pessimists use tactics such as denial and substance abuse to lessen their awareness of the problem
* For patients of coronary artery bypass surgery, optimists, more than pessimists reported making plans for their future and setting goals for recovery. Optimists focused less on negative aspects of the experience (distress and symptoms). (Scheier et al., 1989)
  + After surgery, optimists were more likely than pessimists to seek out information about what the physician would require of them in the months ahead.
  + Optimists also were less likely to say they were suppressing thoughts about their symptoms and there was a positive impact of optimism on the quality of life 6 months later that occurred through the indirect effect of these differences in coping
* Optimists take credit for favorable events in their lives and distance themselves from unfavorable life events (Luthans et al., 2007).
* Optimism has a strong negative relationship to stress (Chan, 2004)
  + Then mental perception and behavior of an optimist make them better able to cope with and buffer themselves from the effects of stress
* Optimism is negatively associated with stress, including environmental stress (Chang et al., 1994)
* Optimistic high school student reported significantly higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of psychological distress (Creed et al., 2002)
  + The pessimistic students reported significantly lower levels of self-esteem and more psychological distress

*Stress & Coping in the Workplace*

* + Restaurant workers who reported having higher levels of optimism reported lower levels of **stress** (Hayes & Weathington, 2007)
  + Optimism buffers against the occupational and **life stress** of university teachers (Macan, 2007)
  + The more optimistic, the more likely one is to use **problem solving** and positive cognitive restructuring strategies and the less likely one is to use avoidance strategies to deal with **workplace stress** (Welbourne et al., 2007)
  + **Coping** successfully with workplace stress has benefits in the workplace (Welbourne et al., 2007)
    - The use of **problem-solving**, cognitive restructuring and support-seeking coping strategies was associated with greater job satisfaction
    - These coping strategies accounted for over 20% of the variance in satisfaction
  + Optimistic call center employees had less **stress** and work/nonwork **conflict** than their pessimistic counterparts (Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004)
  + For salespeople, there are differences in the degree to which they use coping strategies (Strutton & Lumpkin, 1993)
    - Optimistic salespeople were more likely to use directed **problem solving** (using careful, experiential based analysis in their efforts to remove the stressor), positive reinterpretation (readjust/reshaping themselves for the better as a consequence of the stressors), and self-control (acting with restraint) as coping strategies
    - Pessimistic salespeople were more likely to pull back from the **stressful** situation and to do so in a way that would harm their performance (using self-indulgent escapism and negative avoidance coping)

*Work Engagement/Burnout*

* + Optimists perceived lower levels of **job stress** and work & non-work **conflict** than pessimists for employees at a call center (Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004)
  + Optimism acts as a buffer against the **burnout** for information technology professionals (Riolli & Savicki, 2003)
    - Under conditions with low work resources, being optimistic was related to lower burnout and being pessimistic was related to higher burnout
  + Restaurant workers who reported having higher levels of optimism reported lower levels of job **burnout** (Hayes & Weathington, 2007)
  + Optimists are more likely to interpret organizational events as favoring their individual goals, interests, needs, and well-being, thus experiencing more **positive affective states** (Mignonac & Herrbach, 2004)
  + Greater optimism is significantly associated with less risk of job **burnout** (Chang et al., 2000)
  + Optimism was significantly negatively associated with **emotional exhaustion** and **job cynicism** and positively related with **professional efficacy**. (Chang et al., 2000)
    - This suggests that more optimistic workers are likely to feel less **emotional exhaustion** from their jobs and less cynical about their job goals, while also suggesting that more optimistic workers feel they have more control and **influence** on what happens at work.
  + **Employee engagement** is significantly positively related to workplace optimism (Medlin & Green Jr., 2009)
  + Manager and employee optimism was significantly related with **engagement** which, was significantly related with **project performance** (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007)
    - This suggests that managers who are more engaged in their work are more likely to manage teams that produce better results.