Using Positive Emotions to Enhance Human Flourishing

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“One’s own self is well hidden from one’s own self: Of all the mines of treasure, one’s own is the last to be dug up”

-- Friedrich Nietzsche
Positivity
\[ \frac{\text{Positivity}}{\text{Negativity}} \]
a.k.a., *Positivity Ratio*

Languish or Flourish
How Much Is Enough?

Positivity Ratio > 3-to-1


The Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing

Negativity is Necessary

Positivity Opens Us

The **BROADEN** Effect

- Positive emotions momentarily expand people’s attention and thinking.

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Testing the **BROADEN** Effect

- **Experimental Groups:**
  - Contentment
  - Joy
  - Neutral
  - Anger
  - Fear

- **Dependent Measure:**
  - Breadth of Thought-Action Repertoires

Evidence for the BROADEN Effect


“There is a way of breathing that’s a shame and suffocation. And there’s another way of expiring, a love-breath that lets you open infinitely.”

-- Rumi
The **UNDO** Effect

- Positive emotions erase the lingering traces of negative emotions.

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Testing the **UNDO** Effect

- **Backdrop:** Speech Anxiety
- **Experimental Groups:**
  - Contentment
  - Joy
  - Neutral
  - Sadness
- **Dependent Measure:**
  - Duration of Cardiovascular Reactivity

Testing the **UNDO** Effect

- Heart Rate**
- Systolic Blood Pressure**
- Diastolic Blood Pressure**
- Vasoconstriction**
- Pulse Transit Time to the Finger**
- Pulse Transit Time to the Ear**

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Evidence for the **UNDO** Effect

Positivity Seeds
Human Flourishing

Positivity Transforms Us
The BUILD Effect

• Over time, positive emotions prompt growth in personal and social resources that increases well-being.

Happiness Unpacked

Happiness Unpacked


Testing the **BUILD** Effect
Loving-Kindness Meditation

• CONTEXT: Workplace Wellness Program

• RANDOM ASSIGNMENT: 7-week Loving-Kindness Meditation Workshop vs. Waitlist Control

• DAILY: Reports of Positive & Negative Emotions

• PRE- & POST-TESTS: Cognitive, Social, Psychological & Physical Resources

Did Loving-Kindness Meditation Increase Positive Emotions?


Testing the **BUILD** Effect

Testing the **BUILD** Effect

Evidence for the **BUILD** Effect

- Positive Emotions Build:
  - Cognitive resources
  - Social resources
  - Psychological resources
  - Physical resources

“Things that are good are good, and if one is responding to that goodness one is in contact with a truth from which one is getting something.”

-- Thomas Merton
The **Broaden-and-Build** Theory of Positive Emotions


**Don’t “Be Positive”**
“There wouldn’t be such a thing as counterfeit gold if there were no real gold somewhere.”

-- Sufi proverb

Create the **Mindset** of Positivity

- Be Open
- Be Appreciative
- Be Curious
- Be Kind
- Be Real
“One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, ‘My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is Negativity. It’s anger, sadness, stress, contempt, disgust, fear, embarrassment, guilt, shame and hate. The other is Positivity. It’s joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and above all, love.’

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: ‘Which wolf wins?’

The old Cherokee simply replied, ‘The one you feed’”

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