

# Can You Use The Power of Positive Emotions?

OPTIMISM Part 1  
BEACON Program

# WHAT GOOD ARE POSITIVE EMOTIONS ?

*Those experiencing positive emotions such as joy, awe, love, hope, serenity, amusement and pride, experience an "opening" up. They experience the following benefits:*



## SEE MORE:

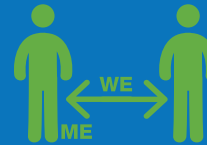
Your field of peripheral vision is expanded so you can take in about 75 per cent of what's happening, versus 15 per cent in a neutral or negative mood.



## CREATE, ORGANISE AND PROBLEM SOLVE:

The ability to make and sustain more neural connections so you can:

- think quickly and creatively,
- analyse, problem solve, and
- invent new ways of doing things.



## CONNECT BETTER:

Because your brain feels safe, it thinks more about "we" and how to collaborate compared to when it's in survival mode and thinking only about "me".



## BOUNCE BACK:

People who experience more positivity are able to be more open-minded when they face problems - to bounce back more quickly from adversity. Positivity appears to trigger an upward spiral that leads to growth and epitomises flourishing.

# WHAT ARE POSITIVE EMOTIONS?

Positive Emotion	Impact and Benefits
Joy	Joy emerges when one's current circumstances present unexpected good fortune. It creates the urge to play and get involved and allows us to accrue skills gained through experimental learning.
Gratitude	Gratitude emerges when people acknowledge another person as the source of their unexpected good fortune. It creates the urge to creatively consider new ways to be kind and generous and builds the skills for showing care, loyalty and social bonds.
Serenity	Also called savour, serenity emerges when people interpret their current circumstances as utterly cherished, right, or satisfying. It creates the urge to savor those current circumstances and integrate them into new priorities or values.
Interest	Interest arises in circumstances appraised as safe but offering novelty. It creates the urge to explore, to learn, to immerse oneself in the novelty and thereby expands the self.
Hope	Hope arises in dire circumstances in which people fear the worst yet yearn for better. It creates the urge to draw on one's own capabilities and inventiveness to turn things around and builds the resources of optimism and resilience.
Pride	Pride emerges when people take appropriate credit from some socially valued good outcome. It creates the urge to fantasize about even bigger accomplishments in similar arenas and leaves us feeling confident and self-assured.
Amusement	Amusement occurs when we appraise our current circumstances as involving some sort of non-serious social incongruity. It creates urges to share a laugh and find creative ways to continue the joviality helping us to build and solidify enduring social bonds.
Inspiration	Inspiration arises when people witness human excellence in some manner. It creates the urge to excel oneself, to reach one's own higher ground or personal best and builds the motivation for personal growth.
Awe	Awe emerges when people encounter goodness on a grand scale. The experience of awe compels people to absorb and accommodate this new vastness they have encountered and creates new world views.
Love	Love, which appears to be the positive emotion people feel most frequently, arises when any other of the positive emotions is felt in the context of a safe, interpersonal connection or relationship. It creates momentary perceptions of social connection and self-expansion and builds social bonds and community.

(Fredrickson, 2013a)

“YOUR MILD AND FLEETING PLEASANT STATES ARE FAR MORE POTENT THAN YOU THINK.”

*Professor Barbara Fredrickson*

To the extent that positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and cognition, enabling flexible and creative thinking, researchers have argued the function of the expansive form of positive emotions is to spur the development of resources, placing people on positive trajectories of growth. A broadened mindset appears to be the recipe for discovery of new knowledge, new alliances and new skills (Isen, 1987; Isen, 1990; Isen, 2000; Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

For example, in one study, Professor Barbara Fredrickson and her colleagues (Fredrickson, *et. al.*, 2008) offered a Workplace Wellness Program that comprised a free seven-week meditation workshop to help employees better manage stress. Volunteers were randomly assigned to either begin the course immediately or were wait-listed.

All participants were asked to complete daily web-based surveys of how they were feeling across nine positive emotions, a diary reconstructing each day and a survey before and after the course to measure their current mental, psychological, social, and physical resources. By the study's conclusion, participants reported gaining mental, psychological, social, and physical resources, becoming more accepting of themselves, feeling a greater sense of purpose, forging deeper and more trusting relationships, experiencing more support from others and proving to be physically healthier.

Since replicating the findings, Fredrickson (2013a) has concluded that as positive emotions accrue they appear to build you:

- **Psychological strengths** – help you become more optimistic, more resilient, more open, more accepting and more driven by purpose.
- **Good mental habits** – help build mental habits that enable you to be more aware of your surroundings, to find different ways to reach your goals, are able to savour the good things happening to you and to live mindfully.
- **Social connections** – helps forge lasting social ties and stronger connections with others.
- **Physical Health** – Physical health – Positivity predicts lower levels of stress-related hormones and higher levels of growth-related and bond-related hormones. Positivity also sends out more dopamine and opioids, enhances immune system functioning, and diminishes inflammatory responses to stress. People who experience more positivity have lower blood pressure, less pain, fewer colds, and better sleep

Our goal, Fredrickson (2013b) suggests, should be to find the right balance between heartfelt positivity and heart straining negativity that enables us to consistently flourish. You can test your levels at [www.positivityratio.com](http://www.positivityratio.com).

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Positive Emotions have a powerful, positive impact on our brains and bodies. They are like the "tiny engines" that drive our wellbeing., **opening us** up in the moment and broadening our resources, relationships and resilience over time. Professor Fredrickson (2013a) has concluded that as positive emotions accrue they appear to build your:

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“YOUR ATTITUDE IS LIKE A BOX OF CRAYONS THAT COLOUR YOUR WORLD”

*Allen Klein*

### Tested ways to dial up heartfelt positivity are ...

- **Exercise** – even 20 minutes of moderate activity could significantly improve your mood for the next 12 hours.
- **Meditating regularly** – even just 10 minutes of meditation a day can help to boost your positivity. Try the app “headspace”, **1Giantmind** or **smilingmind** to get you started.
- **Spending time with good friends** – the tie between flourishing and enjoying good social relations is so strong and reliable that scientists have called it a necessary condition for flourishing.
- **Connecting with nature** – things that are green and blue have been found to be particularly good for your mood.
- **Use your strengths** – spend time doing the things you’re good at and enjoy doing at least once a day.
- **Practicing acts of kindness** – choose one day each week to perform five random acts of kindness for others.
- **What’s working well** – make the time to savour what’s working well and the reasons why, to build your sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Injecting jolts of joy** – like a favourite song, funny video, beautiful poem or tickle fight – into your day.



# WHAT'S YOUR POSITIVITY RATIO?

Track your positivity ratio each day at [www.positivityratio.com](http://www.positivityratio.com) or use the table provided. Think back over the past 24 hours, then using the 0-4 scale below, indicate the greatest degree that you've experienced of each of the following feelings.

0 = Not at all

1 = A little bit

2 = Moderately

3 = Quite a bit

4 = Extremely

1	What is the most amused, fun-loving, or silly you felt?		11	What is the most hopeful, optimistic, or encouraged you felt?	
2	What is the most angry, irritated, or annoyed you felt?		12	What is the most inspired, uplifted, or elevated you felt?	
3	What is the most ashamed, humiliated, or disgraced you felt?		13	What is the most interested, alert, or curious you felt?	
4	What is the most awe, wonder, or amazement you felt?		14	What is the most joyful, glad, or happy you felt?	
5	What is the most contemptuous, scornful, or disdainful you felt?		15	What is the most love, closeness, or trust you felt?	
6	What is the most disgust, distaste, or revulsion you felt?		16	What is the most proud, confident, or self-assured you felt?	
7	What is the most embarrassed, self-conscious, or blushing you felt?		17	What is the most sad, downhearted, or unhappy you felt?	
8	What is the most grateful, appreciative, or thankful you felt?		18	What is the most scared, fearful, or afraid you felt?	
9	What is the most guilty, repentant, or blameworthy you felt?		19	What is the most serene, content, or peaceful you felt?	
10	What is the most hate, distrust, or suspicion you felt?		20	What is the most stressed, nervous, or overwhelmed you felt?	

a) Circle your answers to questions 1, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19. These items reflect positive feelings. Count the number that you endorsed as 2 or higher.

b) Underline your answers to questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 17, 18 and 20. These items reflect negative feelings. Count the number that you endorsed as 1 or higher.

c) Calculate your ratio by dividing your positivity tally by your negativity tally (for example 6 positive items divided by 2 negative items = 3:1). If your negativity tally is 0 for today, consider it to be a 1 instead, to side step the can't-divide-by-zero problem. The resulting number represents your positivity ratio for today.

(Fredrickson, 2009)

# YOUR POSITIVITY TOOLKIT

**WHAT WILL YOU DO TO BRING YOURSELF HEARFELT POSITIVITY?**
