This chapter examines a possible mechanism to account for why helping behaviors might have positive health outcomes. It argues that positive emotional responses, particularly future-oriented positive emotions, form the basis of attitudes that lead to repetitive choices in one's use of time and energy. Such choices related to the arousal of positive emotions secure accompanying cardiovascular and immune physiologic responses capable of improving health and extending life. The chapter focuses primarily on the elderly population, where declining health may be a factor, and where accumulated knowledge and decreased daily demands make providing help to others personally appropriate and socially useful. It suggests that the most likely underlying mechanism linking helping behavior and health is positive emotions, and no single activity or even class of activities will arouse positive emotions in all individuals, especially when responses must be time extended or repetitive.

This chapter argues that emotions research and positive psychology are poised to have deep and lasting mutual influence as these two intertwined specialty areas move forward in the coming decade. Indeed, tests of basic theory within emotions research—especially the long-range consequence of frequent experiences of certain emotions—
can kick up promising positive psychology interventions. However, as researchers collectively embark on exploring these and other new frontiers, they must be willing to leave the pack, think outside the box, all the while attending to the subtle yet recurrent patterns whispered by their data. They must also be open to capitalize on the rapid advances in measurement tools and mathematical and statistical models.

Wonder and the Moral Emotions
Robert C. Fuller

in Spirituality in the Flesh: Bodily Sources of Religious Experiences
Published in print: 2008 Published Online: September 2008
Published Online: DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195369175.003.0003
Item type: chapter

The emotion of wonder is among our genetically encoded programs for responding to unexpected features of the environment. Wonder is distinct from other emotions in its ability to foster receptivity, openness, metaphysical thinking, and moral sensitivity. Biological and psychological studies of wonder help us understand the moods and motivations that distinguish aesthetic spirituality or nature religion.

Gratitude, Like Other Positive Emotions, Broadens and Builds
Barbara L. Fredrickson

in The Psychology of Gratitude
Published in print: 2004 Published Online: March 2012
Published Online: DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195150100.003.0008
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the feeling of being grateful. It suggests feeling grateful is similar to other positive emotions that help build a person’s enduring personal resources and broaden an individual’s thinking. It describes various ways by which gratitude can transform individuals, organizations, and communities in positive and sustaining ways. It discusses the specific benefits of gratitude including personal and social development, community strength and individual health and well-being.
This chapter provides a treatment of some of the most important ways in which aspects of emotion, self, and personality intersect with—both facilitating and impeding—agile thinking. It begins with a consideration of positive emotions, including the fundamental question of what the functional role of positive emotions is. This leads into an outline of the “broaden and build” theory of positive emotional experiences, according to which the modification and extension of our understanding and skills is most likely to occur when we are in mildly positive emotional states such as interest or contentment. Subsequent sections examine both the evidence for, and against, the effects of positive mood on flexible thinking. The broader role of the self and personality in mental agility is then explored through, first, an examination of the effects of an apparently modest but quite potent social-motivational and cognitive intervention known as “self affirmation” and, second, a consideration of the role of the personality characteristic of “openness to experience” in enabling agile thinking and adaptive learning.

* The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions

Barbara L. Fredrickson

in The Science of Well-Being

This chapter discusses the long-term effect of positive emotions on a person’s well-being. A brief history on the research done on positive emotions is reviewed and several trends are identified. First, positive emotions have been neglected relative to negative emotions. Second, positive emotions have often been confused with related affective states. Third, the functions of positive emotions are identified as facilitating approach behaviour. The author then proposes an alternative model, the broaden-and-build theory, to better capture the unique effects of positive emotions. This is then contrasted with traditional models based on specific action tendencies. The chapter ends with a discussion on the research findings which reveal that positive emotions broaden thought-
action repertoires, undo lingering negative emotions, fuel psychological resiliency, build personal resources, promote physical and psychological well-being, and engender the complex dynamics that enable humans to thrive and flourish in their day-to-day lives.

The Psychology of Gratitude
Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough (eds)
Published in print: 2004 Published Online: March 2012
Item type: book

Gratitude, like other positive emotions, has inspired many theological and philosophical writings, but it has inspired very little vigorous, empirical research. In an effort to remedy this oversight, this book brings together prominent scientists from various disciplines to examine what has become known as the most-neglected emotion. The volume begins with the historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations of gratitude, and then presents the current research perspectives from social, personality, and developmental psychology, as well as from primatology, anthropology, and biology. The volume also includes a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of research on gratitude. This work contributes a great deal to the growing positive psychology initiative and to the scientific investigation of positive human emotions. It will be an invaluable resource for researchers and students in social, personality, developmental, clinical, and health psychology, as well as to sociologists and cultural anthropologists.

Being There When Things Go Right: Support Processes for Positive Events
Shelly L. Gable and Sara B. Algoe
in Support Processes in Intimate Relationships
Published in print: 2010 Published Online: September 2010
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on support when intimate partners experience a positive event. Consistent with many of the contributors to this book, the authors suggest that the mechanism of action is the effectiveness and appropriateness of the provider's response to positive events. Specifically, the authors describe data showing that people who respond to their partners' positive events in an active and constructive manner have more positive individual and couple outcomes.
Among the many different evaluative judgments that enter into an emotion, the most straightforward are judgments of approval and disapproval, liking and disliking, approach and avoidance. This is so obvious that it is barely worth mentioning. But this obvious fact leads to a natural and commonsense distinction between two kinds of emotion, “positive” and “negative,” where the idea is that some emotions are good and good for you (love, for instance), while others are bad and bad for you (anger and hatred, for example). But this seemingly simple distinction is actually many distinctions masquerading as one. Once again, the conflation of these many distinctions is another instance of the primitivization of emotions, another way of making them seem much more simple and one-dimensional than they actually are. Thus another excuse rears its head; that is, another reason for taking emotions less seriously than we ought to.

Empirical Research; Philosophical Conclusions
Fred Feldman

Philosophers and others have alleged that empirical research on happiness has important implications for some long-standing philosophical questions about happiness. The distinguished British economist Richard Layard seems to claim that the empirical research such as that done by the psychologist Richard Davidson has philosophical implications. Layard apparently thinks that this empirical research supports the conclusion that “there is such a thing as happiness”. He also suggests that it demonstrates that interpersonal comparisons of levels of happiness are feasible. Finally, there is a suggestion that this research might help to show that happiness is a natural kind rather than a mere figment of “folk psychology”. In this chapter, the relevant empirical research is described. There is an attempt to reconstruct the arguments that purport to show that the empirical research supports
the philosophical conclusions. In each case it turns out that the research does not have any relevance to philosophy.

The Positive Psychology of Positive Emotions
Shigehiro Oishi and Jaime L. Kurtz

in Designing Positive Psychology: Taking Stock and Moving Forward
Published in print: 2011 Published Online: May 2011
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

This chapter offers a critique of positive emotion research with the goal of suggesting specific ways positive psychology could move forward. Although research on positive emotion has made tremendous inroads in the past decade, several areas need further addressing. First, positive psychology often appears “thin” at this point, partially because it is not founded in a historical perspective. Second, positive psychologists must make an explicit connection with other contemporary research on the topics relevant to positive psychology (e.g. empathy, willpower, cooperation) to broaden its intellectual base. Third, although most people in the US want to be happier and most positive psychologists want to make people happier as well, it is critical to test the tacit assumption of positive psychology that the happier, the better. Fourth, it is important for positive psychologists to acknowledge that negative emotions play a non-trivial role in a well-lived life, and to begin to fully examine how negative emotions fit into positive psychology. Fifth, although recent intervention studies were successful, it is important to examine the longer-term effects of these interventions in the future.

The Grateful Heart
Rollin McCraty Doc Childre

in The Psychology of Gratitude
Published in print: 2004 Published Online: March 2012
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the psychophysiology of appreciation, an emotion that is seen as overlapping with gratitude. It analyzes the role of the heart in appreciation and other positive emotions and describes the cardiovascular contours of appreciation. It evaluates intervention studies that demonstrate the benefits of various techniques that enable people
to develop a greater awareness of their emotional responses, including appreciation.

Dialectical Emotions
Brooke Wilken and Yuri Miyamoto

in The Psychological and Cultural Foundations of East Asian Cognition: Contradiction, Change, and Holism

Over the past few decades, a body of research has begun to emerge on the dialectical experience of positive and negative emotions. In this chapter, this research is explored in detail. First, the chapter delineates what dialectical emotions encompass and how they relate to other constructs. Additionally, it outlines how dialectical emotions traditionally have been measured within different approaches. Building on the different ways to conceptualize and measure dialectical emotions, the authors then review studies that have examined the nature and variations of dialectical emotions in Western cultural contexts. Subsequently, a review of findings that have demonstrated cultural differences in dialectical emotions is provided. The chapter concludes with implications of dialectical emotions, and some of their personal and interpersonal consequences are discussed and future directions proposed.

Positive Emotion
Adam W. Carrico

in Positive Emotion: Integrating the Light Sides and Dark Sides

The positive emotions that individuals derive from substance use likely promote continued recreational use. However, key neurobiological changes account for the development and maintenance of substance use disorders. Because individuals with substance use disorders are hyporesponsive to non-drug-related rewards, chronic deficits in positive emotions may be an important component of a larger pattern of cyclic emotional dysregulation that maintains addiction. Consequently, the capacity of individuals to experience positive emotions could represent
a source of resilience that sensitizes individuals to non-drug-related rewards and buffers against deleterious effects of negative emotions on relapse. Lending support to this hypothesis, the limited clinical research conducted to date indicates that elevated positive emotions may predict better substance abuse treatment outcomes. In order to inform future clinical research, this chapter concludes by delineating theory-based pathways that may account for the effects of positive emotions on recovery from substance use disorders.

Positive Emotion
June Gruber and Judith Tedlie Moskowitz (eds)

This book offers a comprehensive summary of current theoretical and empirical work on positive emotion and provides empirical examples of the “light side’ or adaptive benefits of positive emotion according to the degree, context (health, social relationships, coping), and type of adaptive outcome. It also provides empirical examples of the “dark side’ or maladaptive aspects of positive emotion organized according to the degree, context, type and reasons for pursuing positive emotion in healthy and clinical populations. It discusses therapeutic applications regarding how to cultivate and foster healthy positive emotion, and suggests future research to better understand the nature of positive emotion.

Shared and Differentiating Features of the Positive Emotion Domain
Belinda Campos and Dacher Keltner

To understand positive emotions and their relevance for particular psychological processes and outcomes, it is necessary to systematically study the similarities and differences that characterize the positive emotion domain. The goal of this chapter is to describe findings generated by research that has focused on identifying the positive emotion domain and examining its interrelationships in terms of subjective experience, behavioral displays, and physiology. As part
of this review, we focus on our own recent work that suggests that the positive emotion domain may be a hierarchical structure rooted in one shared quality—positive valence—that branches outwards into states characterized by varying degrees of differentiation in subjective experience, behavioral displays, and physiology. We conclude by considering the possible contribution of eight states that we have studied—amusement, awe, contentment, gratitude, interest, joy, love, and pride—to the light and dark sides of human life.

Positive Emotion Disturbance in Bipolar Disorder across the Life span

Elizabeth J. Reeves, Ellen Leibenluft, and June Gruber

in Positive Emotion: Integrating the Light Sides and Dark Sides

While much is understood about the benefits of adaptive positive emotion and the ways we experience and manage it, less is known about how positive emotional processes can go awry. In this chapter, we examine bipolar disorder (BD) as a clinical model for maladaptive positive emotion, given the extreme states of positive emotion and accompanying impairment associated with the disorder. We highlight two key factors that may be implicated in positive emotion disturbance in this population across the lifespan; namely, the degree to which positive emotions are experienced (i.e., positive emotion reactivity) and the ways in which they are managed (i.e., positive emotion regulation). Finally, we conclude by evaluating implications for the etiology and treatment of BD and suggest a roadmap for future research.

Positive Urgency and Negative Outcomes

Melissa A. Cyders

in Positive Emotion: Integrating the Light Sides and Dark Sides

Impulsivity is a multi-faceted construct, consisting of lack of conscientiousness (lack of planning and lack of perseverance), sensation seeking, and urgency (emotion-based disposition to rash action in positive and negative emotional states) constructs. Positive urgency is
a facet of the broader trait of impulsivity that represents the tendency to act rashly in response to extreme positive emotions. This trait has been shown to uniquely relate to maladaptive levels of risk-taking, including pathological gambling, sexual risk-taking, drug use, and alcohol use. This chapter will review the research on positive urgency with a particular attention paid to increasingly stringent levels of evidence, from cross-sectional evidence, to longitudinal and experimental designs. This chapter will also discuss the integration of the personality disposition of positive urgency with social learning theory, temperament research, and neurobiological underpinnings. The chapter will discuss implications for impulse-control disorders and possible mechanisms of identification and treatment strategies. The chapter will conclude by discussing future research directions to continue the examination of positive urgency.

Increasing Positive Emotion in Negative Contexts
Kateri McRae and Iris B. Mauss

in Positive Neuroscience

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Item type: chapter

Human reactions to adversity can range from severe incapacitation to growth. What explains this vast variation in stress adjustment? Most scientific examinations of this question focus on how individuals can avoid prolonged incapacitation, often through the ability to dampen negative reactions. However, this conceptualization largely ignores the remarkable human capacity to generate positive emotions such as happiness, gratitude, and love, even in the face of adversity. We offer the possibility that it is precisely this ability that allows people to not only recover from adversity but to grow (i.e., be resilient). In this chapter, we argue that cognitive reappraisal, or reevaluating a situation to change its emotional impact, is a particularly promising avenue to generating positive emotion in negative situations (“positive reappraisal”). We start by providing a conceptual framework for positive reappraisal (PR), its short-term effects on emotion, and its role in resilience. We then review literature in support of this framework, focusing, first, on the short-term effects of PR, including its emotional consequences and neural correlates, and, second, on more long-term effects of PR on resilience.
Theories of emotion often posit that visceral physiological changes mediated by the autonomic nervous system are a fundamental aspect of emotional responding. Early empirical studies of “happiness” suggested that positive emotions have limited autonomic involvement, as compared with negative emotions. More recently, however, studies examining a wider variety of positive emotion states and differentiating among several neural mechanisms within the autonomic nervous system have uncovered considerable evidence for autonomic reactivity in positive emotion. This chapter (1) reviews the structure of the autonomic nervous system and key methodological issues for research on emotion psychophysiology; (2) summarizes four major theories of autonomic involvement in positive emotion (“undoing” of distress-related arousal, polyvagal theory, approach motivation, and autonomic specificity) and the state of the evidence for each theory; and (3) offers tentative conclusions and future directions for the emerging field of positive emotion psychophysiology, as well as implications for the light and dark sides of positive emotion.