

# POSITIVE EMOTION

Integrating the *Light Sides* and *Dark Sides*

edited by JUNE GRUBER, PhD

and JUDITH TEDLIE MOSKOWITZ, PhD, MPH

OXFORD

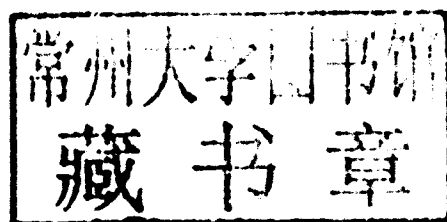
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PART 1

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INTRODUCTION



## CHAPTER 1

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# SEEING IT ALL

### *The Light and Dark Sides of Positive Emotion*

JUNE GRUBER, HILLARY C. DEVLIN, & JUDITH TEDLIE MOSKOWITZ

There is a recent explosion of interest on happiness and positive emotion in both the scientific literature and the popular press. This “positive emotion *zeitgeist*” is evident through an increasing demand for motivational speakers, life coaches, and positive psychology self-help books—all with a primary focus on increasing positive emotion. Indeed, a recent line of research in affective science and positive psychology highlights the ways in which positive emotion is critical to human flourishing. Recent scientific work in psychology has illustrated the ways in which positive emotion facilitates the pursuit of important goals, contributes to vital social bonds, broadens our scope of attention, and increases psychological and physical well-being (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Shiota, Campos, Keltner, & Hertenstein, 2004). Although critical, this wave of interest in positive psychology has to date neglected another important possibility regarding positive emotion—that it may, under certain conditions, be maladaptive (e.g., Grant & Schwartz, 2011; Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011; Oishi, Diener, & Lucas, 2006). We propose that the field is now ripe to consider not just the benefits, but also the costs, of positive emotion. Adopting this comprehensive and integrative approach will provide a novel framework to understanding positive emotion more fully.

## WHY ANOTHER BOOK ON POSITIVE EMOTION?

At present, there is no existing volume geared toward scientists and researchers on the positive and negative aspects of positive emotion and happiness, either in psychology or any other related field. Therefore, the aspirations of this volume are multifold: (1) to offer a comprehensive summary of current theoretical and empirical work on positive emotion, (2) to provide

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, (3) to provide 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, (4) to discuss therapeutic applications regarding how to cultivate and foster healthy positive emotion, and (5) to suggest future research to better understand the nature of positive emotion. This book will be of interest to researchers, teachers, and, in particular, graduate and advanced undergraduate students in a number of areas of psychology, including affective science, social psychology, clinical psychology, and health psychology. This volume will also be of interest to scientists and scholars from other disciplines, ranging from philosophy to sociology, literature, marketing, neuroscience, and even political science, who are looking for interdisciplinary cross-fertilization of new theoretical and methodological approaches.

This volume focuses on positive emotion specifically and integrates its benefits, as well as the counterintuitive and surprising possibility that positive emotions can also have negative consequences. Most of work on positive emotion to date has been heavily influenced by the positive psychology movement, with less attention paid to potential controversies surrounding this movement and a relative neglect of the potential downsides of positive emotion. As such, this book will provide a balanced and comprehensive view of the topic of positive emotion that researchers can turn to as a resource on contemporary scholarly thinking on positive emotion, which captures a broad view of different perspectives on the benefits and costs of this intriguing emotional state.

## SECTION I: WHERE IS POSITIVE EMOTION? CURRENT STATE OF THE FIELD

What is positive emotion? What are its unique behavioral and physiological signatures? Until recently, these questions remained unanswered, with a historical emphasis on understanding negative emotions instead. However, in the past decade there has been an explosion of interest in understanding precisely what happiness and positive emotion are; what the associated behavioral, cognitive, social, and physiological correlates may be; and identifying mental and physical health outcomes associated with positive emotion (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Shiota, Neufeld, Yeung, Moser, & Perea, 2011). Therefore, we will begin this volume with an overview of recent empirical discoveries in understanding the very nature of positive emotion by leaders in the field. This will cover definitional approaches to understanding the categorization of positive emotion as well as its predictors and functions, as well as a novel approach to moving beyond the broader construct of happiness to understanding distinct flavors of positive emotions.

In this section, Condon, Wilson-Mendenhall, and Feldman Barrett (Chapter 2) begin with a psychological constructionist approach that sheds light on how our conceptualization of positive emotions has important implications for well-being. Next, Carver, Scheier, and Johnson (Chapter 3) examine positive affect through a goal regulation perspective, which illuminates the complexities of positive emotion and goal pursuit, and how their relationship can have both a light side (e.g., adaptive goal regulation processes) and dark side (e.g., dysfunctional goal pursuit in bipolar disorder). In Chapter 4, Campos and Keltner skillfully tease apart the broad construct



of positive emotion into different flavors of feeling good, highlighting how discrete positive emotion states both share important overlap and have their own distinct features. This examination will cover a range of important elements that comprise emotional experiences (e.g., subjective experience, behavior, physiology) and examines how they converge and diverge across a wide range of discrete positive emotions (e.g., awe, gratitude, love, pride).

Next we present a series of chapters that covers various indices of positive emotions, spanning the cognitive, physiological, and neural domains. It will also highlight novel insights in the field of positive emotion research through the lens of behavioral genetics and animal models. This section will begin with a tribute to Alice Isen (Chapter 5), a pioneer in positive emotion research, whose intended contributions to this volume are acknowledged by Moskowitz and Gruber and whose seminal role in the field of positive psychology as a scientist and mentor is noted by Clark and Ong.

The volume will then segue to an overview of the extant literature on positive affect and its role in cognition. In the next chapter, Shiota and Danvers (Chapter 6) detail the theoretical and empirical evidence challenging the notion that positive emotions involve minimal physiological reactivity. Instead, they posit a novel perspective regarding unique physiological correlates that profile distinct positive emotional states. Then, Kirkland, Man, and Cunningham (Chapter 7) adopt an affective neuroscience approach to further advance the current understanding of positive emotion. They achieve this by outlining the neural underpinnings of a “happy brain,” focusing on two broad themes including reward- versus threat- sensitivity and motivational versus hedonic processes. In Chapter 8, Panksepp provides a novel perspective on understanding positive emotion through the lens of animal research, and how studying positive affect in animal models can shed light more broadly on the promotion of mental health across different species. Finally, Nes (Chapter 9) concludes this section with a chapter disentangling the unique contributions of genetics and environment on positive emotionality, while highlighting exciting discoveries from the realm of behavior genetic research. Our overarching aim in this section is to provide a foundation for the reader to understand *what* positive emotion is, and include a comprehensive summary of the empirical data to answer this question before moving onto the associated light and dark sides of positive emotion in the subsequent two sections.

## SECTION II: WHAT IS THE LIGHT SIDE OF POSITIVE EMOTION?

There is a strong popular and scientific emphasis on happiness as a source of beneficial outcomes. But precisely when and why are positive emotions good for us? A recent wave of work has uncovered a diverse array of key benefits of positive emotions. The “Light Side” section of the volume is devoted to systematically reviewing cutting-edge research on the benefits of happiness from major pioneers in this area. This will span literature that reviews associations between positive emotion and adaptive outcomes, including improved physical health, formation and maintenance of vital interpersonal and social relationships, resilience and improved coping with grief, emotion regulation, reward-seeking in adolescence, and increases in positive emotion as a function of aging.

To begin this section, Samson and Gross (Chapter 10) present an emotion regulation perspective on one key positive emotion process—namely, humor. They explore the adaptive