

Acts of Kindness: Increasing Positive Emotions

Barbara Fredrickson, the leading researcher on positive emotions has developed a “Broaden and Build” theory.

The broaden-and-build theory underscores the ways in which positive emotions are essential elements of optimal functioning, and therefore an essential topic within the science of well-being. The theory, together with the research reviewed here, suggests that positive emotions: (i) broaden people’s attention and thinking; (ii) undo lingering negative emotional arousal; (iii) fuel psychological resilience; (iv) build consequential personal resources; (v) trigger upward spirals towards greater well-being in the future; and (vi) seed human flourishing. The theory also carries an important prescriptive message. People should cultivate positive emotions in their own lives and in the lives of those around them, not just because doing so makes them feel good in the moment, but also because doing so transforms people for the better and sets them on paths toward flourishing and healthy longevity.

From: Fredrickson, Barbara L. "The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions." *Philosophical transactions-royal society of London series b biological sciences* (2004): 1367-1378.

Practice increasing your positive emotions with this tool:

Acts of Kindness

Being kind to others by voluntarily performing small acts of kindness is without doubt one of the most important activities for cementing human relationships and building bonds with others, whether they are strangers or family and friends. Positive psychology research provides the empirical evidence that doing kind deeds is good for the doer’s well-being, as well as being good for the recipient’s. Perform five random acts of kindness in a day, for example:

- Hold open a door or pick something up for someone
- Pay someone a compliment
- Give way to another driver
- Allow someone to go ahead of you in the grocery store line
- Give up your seat on public transportation