

Positive Psychology is a relatively new field of study that emphasizes the necessity to analyze the individual differences and the processes that contribute to well – being. In this realm, research on positive emotions flourished and the data revealed numerous benefits on different levels.

For example, **at the cognitive level**, experimental studies have shown that inducing positive emotions broadens individuals' scope of attention and increases their creativity. **At the somatic level**, longitudinal studies have shown that positive emotions are associated with increased longevity. **At the social level**, positive affect is related to better interpersonal relationships and generally increases altruism. As a whole, these studies point to the importance of positive affect at both the individual and the societal levels and highlight the importance of developing interventions aimed at increasing positive affect and, consequently, well-being.

### **But how can we enhance positive emotions?**

***Savoring** is a process for up – regulating positive emotions in our everyday life. It entails the use of thoughts and actions to increase the intensity, duration, and appreciation of positive experiences and emotions. It involves a meta-awareness of the positive experience/emotion with a focus on it. It is as though you are “looking” at the positive event from above with an appreciative stance.*

This means that savoring can be associated with an internal or external event, which might not necessarily be tangible.

Although intimately related to pleasure, savoring is more than pleasure.

Let's see an example. A dinner in a beautiful restaurant with a friend brings pleasure. To savor it though, one needs more than just to have fun and enjoy the moment.

Savoring your dinner with a friend entail:

- A special attention to the senses. A focus on the smell and taste of the food, a detailed consideration of the beautiful details of the place.
- An appreciative stance to the event. Your inner dialogue involves thoughts like “I am so lucky to be here”, “I feel so grateful for this friendship”, “This restaurant is so beautiful. Great chance that we found it”

The process of Savoring operates in three dimensions of time:

1. Savoring the present or *savoring the moment*. For instance, enjoying the meal by drawing your attention to the flavors and smells.
2. Savoring the past, also known as *reminiscence*. For example, remembering funny moments from the dinner the next day.
3. Savoring the future, also referred to as *anticipation*. For example, visualizing the trip you have planned with your friend for the upcoming summer vacations.

Bryant and Veroff (2007) distinguish 10 savoring strategies for modulating positive emotions during positive events.

### **1. Sharing with others or Capitalizing**

Positive emotions are amplified when shared through narration. We tend to self-disclose the painful events of our life and forget to include other people in our positive stories. Ask significant people in your life about the “beautiful details” of their everyday life and tell them yourself all the little things that make a memory positive and special for you.

### **2. Memory building**

Create intentionally positive memories and try to remember them. Research indicates that happy people remember better all the good things that happened to them. Taking a mental picture of an event or keeping a journal or scrapbook to document special moments are some examples of how to build memories.

### **3. Self-congratulation**

Savoring individual or collective success by relishing achievements is another way to amplify positive feelings. Self – congratulation is not arrogance, it is the internal amplification of the positive emotion of pride.

### **4. Sensory-perceptual sharpening**

Purposefully focusing attention on specific features of an experience can enable people to deepen their positive experience or explore it in more detail. Listening to your favorite music with your eyes closed is a way to narrow your attention and enhance the inner delight generated from the sound.

### **5. Comparing**

Enjoyment can be heightened by creating a downward contrast with similar times in the past or with what one imagined the event would be like (“Some years ago I could not afford a beautiful hotel like that”, “I never thought this trip would generate so much happiness and pleasure, I thought it was a mundane professional meeting”.)

### **6. Absorption**

Trying not to think, but rather to get totally immersed or engrossed in the moment, relaxing and existing only in the present. Absorption is the opposite of multitasking, so if one can minimize multitasking savoring the moment is enhanced.

### **7. Behavioral expression**

Laughing, giggling, jumping up and down, making verbal sounds of appreciation. An outward physical manifestation of inner feelings in which one expresses an energetic response of exuberant joy excitement and enthusiasm. By physically manifesting positive emotions, people can amplify those feelings.

## 8. Temporal awareness

Reminding oneself how transient and fleeting the moment is, wishing the moment could last forever, telling oneself that one must enjoy it now.

Bringing awareness to the fleeting nature of a positive experience can motivate people to savor the moment and make the most out of it before it ends.

## 9. Counting blessings

By attending to and reflecting on a positive experience and the reasons one might be grateful for that experience, people can foster positive feelings.

## 10. Avoiding kill-joy thinking

Evading downplay and devaluation of positive experiences by not focusing on imperfections can promote lasting positive feelings.

## Further Reading

Boniwell, I. (2012). *Positive Psychology In a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness (3rd edition)*. London: Mc Graw Hill

Bryant, F. & Veroff, J. (2007). *Savoring. A new model of Positive Experience*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Fredrickson BL. What Good Are Positive Emotions? *Rev Gen Psychol*. 1998 Sep;2(3):300-319. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.300. PMID: 21850154; PMCID: PMC3156001.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3156001/pdf/nihms305175.pdf>

## SAVORING EXERCISES

- For the strategy “Counting blessings”

<https://www.sjcoe.org/selpa/PDF/Three%20Good%20Things.pdf>

- For the strategy Sensory Perceptual Sharpening

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/noticing\\_nature](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/noticing_nature)

- For Savoring by anticipation

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best\\_possible\\_self](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best_possible_self)

