

**Positivity: groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive** by Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph. D. excels in inspiration, joy, and scientific substantiation. I highly recommend this book to those who work with people or to those who want practical tools for self-development. Working with this book can be an active life-expanding experience. As a life coach and psychology master, I also found the book to be a great resource for bringing measurable progress to clients with powerful reliable tools.

Take a moment to read the following quote and experiment for a few minutes.

“When you are ready, I invite you to imagine and relive a joyful moment, one in which everything’s going your way and you can scarcely hold back a smile. You’re simply beaming.” p.56 (Fredrickson, 2009)

You have just experienced part of an exercise intending to bring home Dr. Fredrickson’s theory of “broaden-and-build.” This task follows with an experiment of recording one’s thoughts to show how the emotion of joy brings about expansion. The ten forms of positive emotions promoted in **Positivity** are: Joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love. Each of these can expand world-view, increase creativity, and promote flourishing.

This beautifully written book is filled with imaginative examples, poetic analogies, personal experiences, and active exercises like the one introduced above. Did I choose some pop self-help book to review for this course in scientific writing? My field is psychology and this book is a surprisingly exceptional work that is instructional, inspiring, and, as the subtitle indicates, is grounded in scientific research.

Dr. Fredrickson received the first American Psychological Association Templeton Prize in Positive Psychology in 2000. Dr. Martin Seligman, the renowned leader of the positive psychology movement, recognizes Fredrickson as “the laboratory genius of positive psychology.” (Seligman, 2011) p. 66. Perhaps, Fredrickson has earned the choice to poetically compare humans to flower opening in the sun of positivity, and closing in the cold or darkness of negativity.

In discussing Fredrickson’s broaden-and-build theory Dr. Seligman states: “Positive emotion does much more than just feel pleasant; it is a neon sign that growth is under way, that psychological capital is accumulating.” (Seligman, 2011) The seemingly simple and basic ideas in **Positivity** are supported by scientific studies by major researchers in the field of Positive Psychology.

I was most impressed by the power and simplicity of “broaden-and-build” theory, which originated with Dr. Fredrickson:

“I proposed that, unlike negative emotions, which narrow people’s ideas about possible actions, positive emotions do the opposite: They broaden people’s ideas about possible actions, opening our awareness to a wider range of thoughts and actions than is typical.” P. 21 (Fredrickson, 2009)

This phenomenon is reflected in another theory brought to this work by Fredrickson – the Positivity Ratio. This is a tool that can be used with measurable results that will indicate how far a client is from flourishing and how positivity can broaden and build. Experiments with ratios of positivity to negativity have shown that the average person has a 2 to 1 ratio of positive to negative. Working with positivity experiments can take that ratio up to 3 positive to 1 negative: the ideal for flourishing.

Here is a science that is simple, useful, and effective.