

What is the reason for embarrassing or painful memories to routinely resurface? What is the reason for our sleep to be constantly so severe? And what is the reason for the difficulty of eliminating bad first impressions? What the writers, John Tierney and Roy Baumeister, say is that all these events have one common point: negativity bias.

Through this summary, you'll understand why bad feelings and experiences have a lot of influence on our lives. Developing on Roy Baumeister's prowess as a notable social psychologist and John Tierney's years of practice as a science writer, *The Power of Bad* lays down the origins of our prejudice toward pessimism, cynicism, and despair.

There are good things, too. After learning what the reason is for feeling doom and gloom being irrationally influential, it becomes simpler not to think about them. In this summary, you'll find out positive strategies for dealing with your private issues and the world in a more reasonable, positive way.

## Chapter 1 - Negative things people go through are more influential than positive things.

Suppose you've got a girlfriend or boyfriend. As is the case for many relationships, you've got your own problems. From time to time, your girlfriend or boyfriend is amazing. They're clever, thoughtful, and witty. However, occasionally, they become the opposite of what they are. They're rude, spiteful, and cold. Do you continue to stay with them?

During the first years of his career, the same situation happened to Roy Baumeister. To decide what to do, he recorded each day. He wrote down which days went well, terribly, and neutrally. Following several months, everything became obvious: the positive days were twice as many as the bad days.

Having this information, he was cognizant of what he should do; he broke up with his partner.

Do you consider yourself similar to many other people? Then, it's very likely for you to regard Baumeister's choice to end the turbulent and irregular relationship as correct. If being with someone is just nice about 66% of the time it doesn't like an interesting future. To many, the "2 to 1" ratio isn't a satisfactory positivity ratio.

The positivity ratio is employed by social psychologists to explain the ratio between any given collection of good and bad experiences. Much research has demonstrated that, in most situations, a positive result entails a bigger positivity ratio, which means that positive experiences have to considerably surpass negative experiences.

Well-known research run by psychologist John Gottman shows the way this functions. In his research, married pairs were asked to write down their everyday interactions as either positive or negative. He discovered that pairs with an equal amount of good and bad

interactions have a high tendency to be separated. He discovered that the most felicitous pairs had, at a minimum, five positive interactions for each negative one.

This 5-to-1 ratio can also be referred to as the Gottman Ratio. It functions as a very useful accurate guide for gauging happiness in a romance but can function in other situations, too.

To gauge your growth as a person, Baumeister suggests that you should reach, at a minimum, the 4-1 positivity ratio. Suppose you're working on to continue a novel routine such as an everyday yoga exercise or not eating dessert after supper. Don't be too sad and angry at yourself should you cheat for one day. Rather, continue to work on reaching your objective of the 4-1 ratio for the subsequent four days.

This 4-to-1 method provides you with a more realistic outlook on your general achievement. It also doesn't allow one impediment to decide how you will be throughout your week. In the following chapter, we'll examine some techniques to keep up a high positivity ratio.

## Chapter 2 - The most solid thing to do to preclude things deviating from positive is to stay away from negatives.

Which traits render you a catch as a boyfriend/girlfriend? Perhaps you listen to people carefully or your sense of humor is just very good. Or perhaps you dress very well in terms of fashion. Were you to make a promotion of yourself, it would be better to begin by writing down these positive qualities. And it would be useful— during the start, at least.

However if what you want is harmony in the long-run, a social psychologist would suggest having a different perspective. Rather than bragging about your positive sides, go boast about you don't any negative sides if you can.

In the preceding chapter, we saw that a big positivity ratio is a must for every relationship to be successful. Thus, it might appear that gathering positive events is the solution for a happy life eternally. Studies say the vice versa is true, though. A happy life is achievable through alleviating negatives.

In the initial phases of many relationships, there are a plethora of positive feelings. However, this phase full of positive feelings unavoidably ceases after some time, whereas the negative traits of a boyfriend or girlfriend – for example, being insecure— are inclined to increase gradually.

Researcher Geraldine Downey demonstrated this phenomenon by watching pairs as their relationships advanced. Downey saw that when the boyfriend or girlfriend's behavior is insecure, such as feeling extreme jealousy or being controlling, it tends to exacerbate over time. Furthermore, it compels the other person in the relationship to get more defensive or stressful, which means one negative event generated more negatives.

This situation is also viable in different aspects of life, too. One watershed research run by psychologists at the University of Yale studied relationships between parents and their children. You won't be surprised to hear that research showed being bad and abusive bringing up a child usually caused children to be unhappy. But, The children of the parents who were overly supportive or nice didn't turn into remarkably merry or accomplished children. As is aforementioned, lessening the number of negatives was more significant than increasing that of positives.

This can also simply be feasible in your life. Instead of constantly making great efforts to be excellent, why not just try to be "good enough." That is, don't focus on expectations beyond realization and direct your focus on making the fundamental things right. You'll see that people will feel more content if you're stable and dependable than if positive and negative experiences occur suddenly and spontaneously.

In addition, avoid focusing on the faults of others, no matter whose faults they are - those of your husband or wife, friend, or even person working under you. Instead of showing a strong reaction to a small error or failure, try to understand it. Don't forget, though there might one negative thing they've done, there might be four positive things they've done, too.

## Chapter 3 - It is possible for us to learn how to take control of our negative feelings.

Imagine this in your mind. You're on top of a platform hung 24 miles above the Mojave Desert. To overcome the great height, you have to carry an airtight outfit and headgear. A few seconds later, you'll let your self fall earthward. As you continue to fall down, you'll get as fast as 800 miles per hour. The tiniest error can result in your death. So, what would scare you while you're at this moment?

If you are "Fearless Felix" Baumgartner, the person who was a man jumping from this altitude and broke a record, the altitude isn't fearsome for you. What you're afraid of are your suit and headgear. Why? Though he is very audacious, Baumgartner is claustrophobic. In order to perform his exceptional skydiving show, he initially needed to take control of his quite normal fear.

People naturally experience such negative feelings as fear, panic, and pain. Though we don't want to have them, they have, in fact, been very beneficial in the survival of mankind. Since humans first appeared, we managed to stay cautious of predators thanks to fear, to react to perils thanks to panic, and to learn which actions to stay away from thanks to pain.

Nowadays, there are not many life-threatening circumstances. However, the sections of our brain that were formed to produce these stress-invoking feelings – such sections as the basal ganglia system and the amygdala – still exist. This is usually beneficial, however, their reaction can be exaggerated and lead to issues occasionally.

Phobias, such as Baumgartner's claustrophobia about wearing a skydiving helmet produced especially for his daring jump, constitute an instance of these excessive panic reactions. In the case of Baumgartner, the panic reaction was pre-programmed. Just putting the headgear on led his heart rate to greatly increase, even though he knew the headgear increased his safety.

Fortunately, it is possible to master these sorts of negative feelings via Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, also known as CBT. CBT uses various methods to surmount the influence of unreasonable negative feelings. Some essential methods involve discussing fear thoroughly until fear is not as much crushing as it used to be, breathing deeply at the start of panic, and saying encouraging mantras to make positive thought patterns more noticeable.

These methods might seem too straightforward, however, they work. Actually, when "Fearless Felix" Baumgartner needed to surmount his fears of carrying a headgear, he counted on CBT. Through practices with a clinical psychologist, he understood how to identify his automatic fear reactions and gradually mastered his fears.

Following simply several months of effort, Baumgartner could wear his airtight outfit and headgear with no panic. Overcoming this fear, he could jump off the platform earthward from many miles up, which was a piece of cake for him.

## Chapter 4 - It is possible for criticism to be very functional if delivered in a suitable way.

Back in the mid-1980s, Ronald Reagan's popularity reached its zenith. In a visit to New York, he is greeted by Mayor Ed Koch and masses of people cheering for him. As the car goes through New York, Koch sees that there is something bothering Reagan.

What was this thing bothering him? Reagan's eyes caught something he was unable to disregard: one man raising him his finger. Even when countless people piling on the streets to cheer for the president, this sole derogator is what his eyes caught.

Criticism and different sorts of grave news or negative feedback might not be easy to handle. We often hear several negative words more clearly than the most generous praise.

So, what is the way of giving someone constructive negative feedback? The phrase "the feedback sandwich" must be familiar to you. In this method, we put a piece of criticism between two pieces of praise so that the praise mitigates the effect of the critique.

Research run by clinical psychologist Kenneth Cairns, however, shows this doesn't have to work all the time. He got students to look at a set of adjectives that were supposedly explaining how their characters were. There were usually positive adjectives; however, there were also a few negatives put in the middle.

Sadly, after research, the only things the students clearly remembered were the insults. Due to seeing the negative adjectives put in between all the positive adjectives compelled them to become defensive and disheartened.

So, giving negative feedback can be required from time to time. Well, it is only possible to learn and grow if feedback delivered to us is candid. For such cases, medical doctors can teach us a few things. Because of their profession, they might have to give patients distressing information.

What are their techniques while doing it? Doctors with experience have learned that the best way to deliver this sort of information is to make their patients participate in the process of delivering bad news. Instead of simply spelling out bad news, they start by directing at them such questions as “What do you think is going on?” and “Do you understand what this information means?” Such questions make the patient participate in the process and they feel they have more control of the condition.

This technique can be feasible in your own life, too. No matter who the person you have to deliver negative feedback to might be, approaching criticism as a two-sided conversation is useful in getting better outcomes.

However, no matter how constructive a conversation might be, it may still not change anything. Thus, in the following chapter, we’ll examine the encouraging influence of positive and negative incentives.

## Chapter 5 - Negative incentives work much better than positive ones.

Back in the 1740s, the colony in Massachusetts Bay was afflicted with an issue. The once-zealous Puritans making the population of this colony were no more so religiously devoted. Inhabitants of the colony were consuming alcohol and having sexual intercourse before marriage instead of prayer and chastity. No one was going to churches.

Ministers like George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards knew the solution to this issue. What they did was not trying to lure Puritans back to church with stories of a benevolent god. What they did was to travel through the region giving ardent speeches about an enraged and vindictive deity. The truth was obvious: get better or you'll be doomed perpetually.

The result? The strategy proved effective. People returned to the church, and the number of people becoming a church member significantly increased.

The discussion about which one works best as a motivation - punishment or reward - has been continuing for a long time. Which one can bring about a difference in someone’s conduct: reward or punishment? It is found that punishment gives usually a better result. Social science research that lasted for years demonstrated that negative outcomes push

people to be more encouraged to do something as they want to avoid them but positive outcomes won't yield the same effect.

A Red-Cross run experiment demonstrates this phenomenon in operation. The Red-Cross delivered a lot of letters to people, asking blood donation. In some letters, it was stated that they would "save a life" if they donated blood while in other letters it was stated that they would "prevent someone from dying." While donations increased thanks to the letters, people who were delivered the latter letter, one with a negative statement in it, were 60% more than the ones who got the former letter, one with a positive statement in it.

This case is also especially true for the classroom. One research, for example, granted teachers two different sets of incentives. One group of them was told they were going to get a big reward if their students were successful at school. The other group was directly provided with the money, however, they were also given a warning: Were their students to be unsuccessful in getting good results in the exams, they were supposed to give the money back. When the semester ended, the grades of the students of the latter group were much higher.

In each of these circumstances, the phantom of punishment or the panic of losing precious or important things is what encourages people. But we shouldn't deduce from that that tough intimidations will invariably work. It's essential that any incentive system leaves enough space for improvement.

Should a person thinks punishments are too many or inevitable, the incentive that is used to make things better loses its power. Well, if we are all doomed in the end, why not have some fun while it is still possible?

## Chapter 6 - Negativity is like a disease.

Have you experienced working at a depressing job, where merely being present there is enough to make you feel bad? Psychologist Eliza Byington has had such a job. No one was saying a word in her office and everything was tight. People weren't socializing with each other. But it changed one day. The most cantankerous, most grim co-worker began working from his home.

With him leaving the office, everything became different. Abruptly, the office became a lively place. People mingled in the breakroom and had conversations in the corridors. Collaborators went to bars for after-work drinks and began bringing snacks along to give their colleagues. The office was as if it was not the old one.

As an old adage puts it, "one bad apple will ruin the bunch." It might come as a platitude, however, a social science study has demonstrated it to be correct. The mood and behavior of people around you can deeply affect your own feelings and performance.

Physicians have known for a long time that patients who've got many friends and family have a tendency to regain their health more promptly. An arrangement like this gives the patient sufficient stress-lowering aid, which is called social support. But, this is functional only if there is no negativity in the relationships. If the people around a patient are negative, pessimistic, or harsh, the patient cannot regain his health as quickly, which is called social undermining.

The impacts of social undermining might be very influential, particularly in the workplace. In one research, researchers applied a personality questionnaire to detect emotionally volatile people. Then, they arranged groups to work on a collaborative project. As research demonstrated, groups in which there was one emotionally unstable person did as badly in their project as groups whose members consisted solely of emotionally unstable people.

Drawing on this study's results, psychologist Terence Mitchell distinguishes three sorts of colleagues who are bad apples. Initially, there's "the jerk." These people denigrate others or are very impolite. Next, there's "the slacker." These people constantly dodge responsibility. And lastly, there's "the downer." These people are always depressed.

Whatever sort of bad apple you've got at work, you can reduce their impact by means of several strategies. The most productive technique is to talk about bad behavior from the onset. Detect bad behavior so that it doesn't get the chance to become permanent. Or, another option is to change the work. You could assign the employee to a separate job or make them work in more secluded working conditions. This might be useful in mitigating their influence on others.

Curbing the influence of bad apples is particularly significant for customer service firms in the age of online critiques. In the following chapter, we'll reveal how the peril of negative critiques is transforming the business world.

## Chapter 7 - Staying away from negative reviews on the Internet is crucial in today's business world.

The Casablanca Hotel is not the most elegant hotel in New York City. The hotel is okay, however, it's no sumptuous tower with extensive panoramas of Central Park. Yet, we find something different when we check its page on TripAdvisor. On TripAdvisor, which is a review site on the Internet, the Casablanca is given by almost everyone five-star reviews.

It is important for the hotel to have each one of them since there is a huge rivalry among hundreds of other hotels around Manhattan. Once they begin losing this positivity ratio, it is possible to get a room in an alternative hotel for clients.

Then, what is the true significance of good online reviews? As the results of one research put it, it's very significant. The bulk of people look at reviews on the Internet before deciding on their reservations. What's more, researches demonstrate that for people, negative reviews are particularly very important.



As an experiment, researchers gave people reviews about an apartment complex. 50% of the reviews were good, whereas the rest was bad. In each case, a customer considered the negative review more reliable and convincing. There was also another research carried out by retailer Barnes & Noble, the outcome of which wasn't different than the former experiment; a negative book review decreased book sales and a positive review couldn't raise them as much as the negative review caused them to decrease.

If this is how the reviews work, then what can a business do to dodging negative reviews on the Internet? Adele Gutman, a professional at online reputation management, has several solutions. Thanks to advice from her, many businesses everywhere in the world have garnered high scores – such as the Casablanca Hotel.

One technique is to have expectations that can be realized and never to think otherwise can happen. If clients truly know what their purchase is, they won't be much disappointed. In the case of the Casablanca, the hotel shared clear, full photos of all their hotel rooms on the Internet, which showed that they were frank about some disadvantages. You can really see on the hotel's online page whether a room is too noisy due to being close to the street or receives not sufficient sunlight. So, nobody is frustrated as no one sees a surprise when people arrive.

One other technique is to stay in line with the Peak-End Rule. According to this rule, what affects people most is not their experience in the middle of their sojourn but rather at the end of their stay. The Casablanca put this rule into practice by making sure that the checkout is as good as possible. They ensured there is no extra charge coming out of nowhere, and they confirm nothing went wrong via a kind email. Thus, clients never leave the place disappointed.

Should they get a negative review, they respond with a brilliant and lively message. Actually, good behavior can be useful in most cases. It is explained in the following chapter.

## Chapter 8 - We are inherently positive, which is something good.

Do you recall the children's character, Pollyanna? This positive little girl looks constantly on the bright side of each situation, no matter what happens. You don't get any presents for Christmas? It's okay. Do you have only bread and water for supper? Appetizing.

Though Pollyanna is a completely fictional character, her behavior is extremely genuine. Lots of research points out that Pollyanna's optimistic viewpoint, also known as the "Pollyanna Principle," is an indispensable component of the human soul.

There is enough evidence that shows people's inclination to emphasize positive feelings. In the 30s, researchers counted the words used in a plethora of books. The research demonstrated that such positive words as "love" and "sweet" appeared a lot more than such negative words as "hate" and "sour". Positive words appeared fifteen times more. There was



a newer study that applied the same method on lyrics of songs, news articles, and Tweets, and the outcome was very similar.

Apparently, people simply perceive the world in positive terms. They'd also rather be with positive people. Think about two similar faces, one with no expression and the other is smiling. In studies, people constantly consider the smiling countenance more charming, wholesome, and charitable. This impact is prominent on social media, too. On the Internet, negative posts receive more prompt attention, whereas positive posts wind up with more likes at the end.

This is simply how our brains function; they are designed to concentrate on the advantages. Even our recollections have a prejudice toward the good moments. Usually, people remember recollections that generate happiness more frequently and with more accuracy than distressing ones. This is also known as fading affect bias.

You can recognize this bias anywhere. People who gamble never forget their memories of hitting the jackpot, people who like sports love remembering championship triumphs, and parents remember the happiness of children instead of the stress of 3:00 a.m. diaper changes.

Though “Pollyanna” functions occasionally as an insult, this baseline optimism is, in fact, very helpful. Our inclination to let negative reminiscences wane is beneficial for us to regain health and become more robust. Though Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, also known by its abbreviation PTSD, gets more notice in the media, a more prevalent consequence from negative events is Post-Traumatic Growth or PTG. Individuals who experience PTG can let negative reminiscences wither away and it is more probable for them to appreciate the good sides of today.

Thus, apparently, having a positive perspective on life is quite prevalent. However, what is the way to keep it up during the most stressful moments of crisis? This will be examined in-depth in the following two chapters.

## Chapter 9 - The world isn't as terrible a place as you believe; it is much better.

Switch on the TV, and take a glance at the news programs. What do they broadcast? Accounts of grim terrorist attacks, enigmatic hacker plots, and startling novel technologies that put our way of life in peril. Actually, one might think that the world is on the brink of collapse.

What we hear on the news is sufficient to make even the most Pollyanna-like people uncomfortable. However, don't act so quickly on worrying and constructing a bunker, and breath deeply, instead. Reality broadcast by the news media isn't always portrayed precisely.

Yes, the news can be harsh, however, everything is not as they appear. What we go through is named the “Crisis Crisis” by the writers. The Crisis Crisis explains how the news media prefer to take tiny, controllable menaces and exaggerate them into big, unpreventable crises, which makes us vexatious and renders it more difficult to find answers to the genuine issues in front of us.

You read it right, there are genuine issues that need us to tackle. Such problems as global warming constitute a genuine peril. But, the entire planet isn't falling asunder. In fact, there are lots of good advancements that must be celebrated. From the 50s onward, life expectancy in underdeveloped nations has grown by 30 years. The worldwide poverty rate has been reduced by around 60%. Literacy has reached its zenith everywhere in the world today.

Then, why does everything appear so frightful? One reason is that we tend to juxtapose the worst things of our time with the best things of the past, which is also referred to as the record-store effect. Here's how this effect takes place: if you switch on the radio, you listen to the good and bad songs that have come out recently. However, if you are in the record store, the only songs they've got are the most prominent ones from the past. Our recollections are similar in that regard as they make the present state of things appear more terrible than it really is.

Furthermore, our brains might not be so quick to adapt to new circumstances. Scientists have revealed this phenomenon in various studies. In one study, researches presented to participants a long series of countenances and asked to detect the bitter ones. As the series continued to appear, the number of angry countenances were reduced. Notwithstanding this difference, subjects continued to say that the number of angry faces didn't change. Why? Participants started to define anger more comprehensively to incorporate more neutral faces.

One thing you can do to stay away from the Crisis Crisis is to be more cynical of the things broadcast in the media. But, don't disregard altogether what you see, however, take some time to reflect more critically on what the media broadcast. Enquire to yourself things such as “Whose interests does this crisis serve?” Get yourself out of the cycle for a while and see the big picture. You may discover the crisis is not that much of a big deal as the media presents it.

## The Power of Bad: How the Negativity Effect Rules Us and How We Can Rule It by John Tierney, Roy F. Baumeister

### Book Review

Years of social science studies have discovered that negativity has a strange influence on us. While people are usually positive and drawn toward positivity, negative thoughts, feelings, and ideas frequently have an unbalanced influence on our actions. Using our

reasonable brains can be beneficial in recognizing this “negativity effect” and breaking its bad influence.

Develop an “attitude of appreciation.”

Though it is simple to be obsessed with what’s going astray, it’s more healthy to discern what’s going on its right track. Why not make a routine of identifying the positive things in your life, both past, and present. Just focusing on these positive things for a while can have a huge effect on your mood and outlook.

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