



FLOW HIJACKED

WELLBEING

The Capacity to Receive Good

On pleasure, safety, love and allowing a
moment to be.

By Tomer Avraham, PhD

First edition · 20 September 2026

7 parts · 21 chapters · 24 publications

About this lecture and its evidence

This is a critical integrative review conducted on 20 September 2026, not an exhaustive or preregistered systematic review. Twenty-four publications support a bounded lecture. Search, retrieval and editorial selection were performed by one AI-assisted workflow, without independent dual screening or a complete data-level risk-of-bias audit.

The search covered fear of happiness, positive-affect dampening, reward, sleep, developmental adversity, relationships, acceptance, nonattachment, savoring and emotion dynamics. It used scholarly discovery, indexed abstracts, publisher pages and university repositories, with targeted searches for null results and competing explanations. References and distinctions in retrieved articles guided follow-up searches. Prestige was not an inclusion criterion.

Priority was given to directly relevant empirical research, randomized trials and research syntheses. Sources that only repeated another study, inaccessible records without sufficient substantive content and peripheral topics were not used as

evidence. No PRISMA flow or exhaustive screening count is claimed. Full-text retrieval does not mean every supplement was audited; the reviewed depth is recorded source by source.

Visible correction notices and linked discussions were considered on retrieved pages. An older happiness-pursuit article with a correction notice was used for discovery but is not relied upon in the final 24-source corpus. The refined 2024 study and the scale critique carry that argument. This is not a comprehensive retraction audit.

The principal conclusion is qualified: there are distinguishable processes that can make positive experience harder to access, feel or allow. Evidence supports several components, not one validated capacity or a complete causal model. The strongest direct evidence here concerns experimentally reduced sleep and selected psychological interventions. Developmental and relational explanations remain more dependent on observational designs.

All scenes are illustrative. No personal history is attributed to the author or to a real patient. The practical sequence is a Flow Hijacked educational proposal, not a tested treatment. Persistent impairment calls for suitable professional assessment.

Contents

1. An ordinary good moment	6
1. An evening without a problem.....	6
2. Four experiences that share one word.....	7
3. A life that does not have to feel one way	9
2. Pleasure in a living body	11
4. Wanting, enjoying and learning are different.....	11
5. The body present at the event.....	12
6. A feeling has a time course.....	14
3. When good begins to threaten.....	16
7. When good news begins to sound dangerous	16
8. The small act of taking the good away	17
9. Staying worried to avoid the drop.....	19
4. What we receive from other people	21
10. A history can shape a welcome	21
11. Good news needs a listener	23
12. Receiving love without acquiring a debt.....	24
5. Enjoyment without a demand for permanence	26

13. When happiness becomes an assignment.....	26
14. Savoring without holding still.....	27
15. Acceptance includes an ending.....	28
6. Conditions for a different experience.....	30
16. What treatment research permits us to hope.....	30
17. Change the conditions of the invitation.....	32
18. A practice with permission to stop.....	33
7. The Flow Hijacked synthesis	35
19. The Flow Hijacked synthesis	35
20. What could show the account is wrong?	36
21. Return to the quiet room.....	38

An ordinary good moment

1. An evening without a problem

Someone you love is sitting beside you. A difficult piece of work is finished. The room is quiet. Nothing needs to be solved in the next minute. Then another movement begins: a search for the catch, a small apology for being pleased, a rehearsal of what might go wrong. The good event has happened. Receiving it is a different event.

This is an illustrative scene, not a case history or a diagnosis. Some people recognize it immediately. Others enjoy good moments easily but struggle to anticipate them, believe another person's affection, or stop measuring whether they are happy enough. Those differences will matter throughout this lecture.

Our question is not how to manufacture a permanent mood. It is what allows pleasure, safety, love and satisfaction to become available experiences, and what happens when receiving them feels costly. The phrase "capacity to receive good" names an

inquiry. It is not an established psychological scale or a newly discovered brain function. Research already studies several of its components under different names. [1, 5, 7]

The Flow Hijacked lens asks how history, bodily state, attention, relationships and surroundings participate in the moment. Its value must come from making those contributions clearer. Saying that everything is connected is only the beginning. We must ask which connection matters here, what evidence supports it and what change would make a difference. We will return to this quiet room with more precise questions, rather than a verdict about the person sitting in it.

2. Four experiences that share one word

Pleasure is the enjoyable quality of an experience. Safety concerns the presence or absence of threat, including what we expect to happen next. Receiving love involves another person's intentions, our interpretation of them and the relationship's actual reliability. Satisfaction can involve the judgment that something is enough. In ordinary speech, all four may become "feeling good." In research, that shortcut can conceal the very problem we hope to understand.

We can enjoy a meal while feeling unsafe with the person across the table. We can feel secure in a room without feeling pleasure. A compliment may be pleasant and still difficult to believe. These examples do not require a hidden disorder. They show why one question cannot substitute for another.

Research on reward separates motivational, pleasurable and learning processes. Research on safety learning examines how signals acquire the ability to inhibit threat expectations. Neither literature justifies treating pleasure and safety as a single biological switch. [6, 24]

There is also a difference between excitement and a quieter sense of ease. In comparative studies, preferred emotional states varied across cultural groups, including the relative value placed on excitement and calm. These are group patterns, not rules about every member of a culture. [7]

A useful opening question is therefore more specific than “Why can't I be happy?” It might be “Was there pleasure that I interrupted?” or “Did I feel warmth but distrust its source?” Precision can soften judgment because it replaces a global failure with a process we can investigate.

3. A life that does not have to feel one way

Imagine a pleasant afternoon during a difficult year. Enjoyment does not settle the problems of that year. Equally, those problems do not make the afternoon fraudulent. Holding both facts is a central ethical choice in this work. We will not require a person to deny suffering before allowing something good to matter.

The same applies to grief. A laugh at dinner need not announce that grief is finished. Nor does sadness invalidate the laughter. These are descriptions of possible human experience, not a claim that everyone should experience mixed emotions or follow a particular timetable.

One danger of wellbeing education is turning an invitation into an examination. A reader begins by wanting a wider life and ends by checking whether each moment is sufficiently positive. Research on the pursuit of happiness makes this distinction unusually clear. A 2024 investigation separated aspiring to happiness from concern and judgment about one's happiness. Across cross-sectional, diary and longitudinal work, the latter was associated with worse wellbeing. The designs do not establish that every instance of self-reflection causes harm. [8]

Our aim will be room for experience, including its ordinary fluctuations. It is reasonable to want more enjoyment. It is also reasonable to want practical improvements in a painful life. Neither desire obliges us to make a good feeling prove that our life is now successful. An evening can be good without becoming a promise about tomorrow.

Pleasure in a living body

4. Wanting, enjoying and learning are different

Consider a favorite song. Before pressing play, there is anticipation and perhaps an impulse to seek it out. While listening, there is the experience itself. Afterwards, memory and learning influence whether we will choose it again. These stages interact, but they can come apart. Someone may make little effort to start an activity and enjoy it once it begins. Someone else may pursue an activity intensely while finding it increasingly unrewarding.

Neuroscience distinguishes aspects of reward often described as wanting, liking and learning. Much of the strongest causal evidence about small pleasure-generating regions comes from animal research. Human imaging adds important observations, but an activated region does not by itself show that it caused a person's pleasure. Dopamine is not a complete explanation of happiness. [6]

These distinctions matter when a person reports that “nothing feels good.” The difficulty may concern motivation, expectation, enjoyment, persistence, memory or several processes together. A broad statement deserves attention without being converted into one mechanism by assumption.

It also changes the meaning of effort. Starting an activity may help test an expectation, yet more effort does not guarantee more pleasure. A task can be accessible but unrewarding, or rewarding but too expensive in energy or time. The Flow Hijacked contribution is to keep those costs and conditions visible. Its synthesis does not replace assessment or supply an individual neural diagnosis. It gives us better questions to ask about the sequence of a particular experience.

5. The body present at the event

A success arrives on the same day as a sleepless night. The news has not changed, but the person receiving it has. This is one reason that explanations based entirely on attitude are inadequate. We experience an event through a body with a current history of rest, exertion, discomfort and demand.

A preregistered meta-analysis of experimental sleep research included 154 studies and 5,717 participants. Across different forms of sleep loss, positive affect decreased. Other emotional

outcomes were less uniform. This is stronger evidence for a bodily contribution than a general assertion that stress “shuts down happiness.” It is still evidence about particular experiments, not a personalized explanation for every flat or uneasy evening. [13]

The practical implication is to ask what the moment demands. A celebration may involve noise, social performance, travel and further obligations. A quiet pleasure may be more accessible on that day. Changing the setting does not mean that the person has failed to appreciate the occasion.

No breathing pattern, heart-rate value or feeling in the chest will be treated here as proof of safety or recovery. A bodily signal requires interpretation in context. Sometimes the useful change is very ordinary: an opportunity to rest, food when needed, less noise or permission to leave. Persistent loss of interest or pleasure deserves appropriate professional attention, especially when it interferes with life. A reading exercise should not become another explanation for why someone has not tried hard enough.

6. A feeling has a time course

A moment can begin well and fade quickly. Another can start awkwardly and become enjoyable after a few minutes. If we ask only for an average mood at the end of the day, those experiences may look similar. Their sequences are different.

Research on emotion dynamics examines variation, changes between observations and the persistence of emotion across time. A meta-analysis found associations between several dynamic patterns and wellbeing, with stronger relationships for negative than positive emotion. [22] But a later analysis found that complex dynamic measures added limited predictive information beyond simpler measures in its datasets. [23]

That disagreement is productive. It tells us that temporal questions can matter without making every sophisticated metric useful. A fluctuating feeling is not evidence of an attractor. A rapid shift is not automatically a phase transition. Those terms require specified models and measurements.

For the person in our quiet room, a modest temporal distinction may be enough. Did pleasure never arrive, arrive and disappear on its own, or give way to a particular thought or interruption? Those are different observations. None requires continuous tracking.

The goal is not to keep a feeling alive as long as possible. A moment that ends naturally has not failed. The relevant question is whether a recurrent pattern unnecessarily restricts experience or action. Being able to return to something valued after a shift may matter as much as the duration of the feeling itself. That last proposition is a Flow Hijacked synthesis to investigate, not a finding established by the dynamics literature.

When good begins to threaten

7. When good news begins to sound dangerous

“If I let myself enjoy this, the fall will be worse.” The sentence contains a prediction and a strategy. It predicts that something painful will follow. It proposes reducing enjoyment now as protection against that future. Whether or not the strategy helps, its intention can be understandable.

Researchers study beliefs and unease of this kind under fear of happiness. In a clinical study of 52 people with moderate to severe depression, fears of happiness and compassion were associated with several measures of distress and attachment. A small cross-sectional sample cannot establish that these fears caused the distress, or that trauma produced the fears. [4]

A later network study also found both overlap and distinctions among measures of anticipating, avoiding and reducing positivity. Its associations are not a map of causal interactions inside an individual. The authors explicitly identify the limits of the cross-sectional design. [5]

These boundaries matter because an attractive story can become a trap: “You are afraid of happiness because your nervous system learned that good things are dangerous.” That may describe one person's history. It cannot be assumed from discomfort alone. Current unreliability, cultural expectations, embarrassment, exhaustion or uncertainty may also matter.

We can begin with the prediction itself. What exactly seems likely to happen if this moment is enjoyed? Disappointment? Envy? A new demand? Loss of vigilance? Giving the expectation words does not make it true or false. It makes the inquiry more specific and leaves room for the person's actual circumstances to answer.

8. The small act of taking the good away

Someone says, “You handled that well.” Before the sentence has settled, a reply appears: it was luck, anyone could have done it, it will not happen again. This could be modest conversational style. It could also be part of a recurrent pattern that diminishes an already positive experience. Context and consequence distinguish those possibilities.

The Responses to Positive Affect questionnaire helped establish dampening as a measurable response style, alongside forms of positive rumination. A questionnaire identifies reported tendencies. It does not reveal the motive behind every instance. [1]

A 2022 meta-analysis found a substantial concurrent association between dampening and depressive symptoms, with a smaller prospective association after accounting for baseline symptoms. Evidence also ran in the reverse direction, from depression to later dampening. This supports a relationship worth studying, not a simple one-way claim that people create depression by minimizing good events. [2]

The unevenness matters. In a community study with a five-month interval, dampening did not predict later depressive symptoms after relevant adjustments, despite its concurrent association. [3] A responsible account retains that finding rather than selecting only studies that fit the narrative.

The humane question is not “Why do you sabotage yourself?” It is “What does this response do, and what does it cost?” Sometimes a correction protects realism. Sometimes it dismisses evidence before it can be considered. Making space to consider a compliment is different from agreeing that it is completely accurate. Receiving does not require surrendering judgment.

9. Staying worried to avoid the drop

There is a peculiar comfort in already expecting the worst. If the bad event arrives, at least it will not catch us relaxed. This describes one possible function of worry. It is not evidence that worry prevented the event or made it easier to solve.

The contrast avoidance model proposes that worry can maintain negative emotion and thereby reduce the sharpness of a later negative shift. In an experiment involving 48 participants with generalized anxiety disorder and 47 controls, worry increased negative emotionality before film exposures.

Participants with the disorder appraised prior worry as more helpful for coping than did controls. This offers experimental support for a bounded account of emotional contrast. It does not explain every form of anxiety or every reluctance to relax. [11]

The model helps us see a tradeoff. A person may avoid the abruptness of a drop by paying for it with a longer period of distress. From inside the strategy, vigilance can feel like preparation. From outside, it may look unnecessary. Neither perspective is enough without asking what actually happens.

This is also why “Just relax” can miss the problem. The feared event may be the transition from ease into pain, not ease itself. Clinical work can examine that pattern with appropriate support. This lecture does not prescribe exposure or ask readers to force

themselves into vulnerable states. Our smaller task is recognition: sometimes preparing for loss begins to occupy the very experience that has not yet been lost.

What we receive from other people

10. A history can shape a welcome

The same kindness can be received differently in different relationships. Praise may once have preceded a demand. Warmth may have disappeared without warning. Or affection may have been steady enough to become unsurprising. These are illustrative learning histories, not explanations we can infer from a stranger's reaction.

Longitudinal research in 106 adolescents linked reported emotional neglect with changes in reward-related ventral striatal activity across two years and with depressive symptoms. The study supports a developmental association. It does not establish a permanent injury, identify the meaning of every positive experience or allow us to read an individual's childhood from a scan. [12]

We should also leave room for histories that do not fit an adversity narrative. Temperament, current mood, social expectations and material circumstances may be relevant. A person does not need a dramatic origin story for difficulty to be real.

The Flow Hijacked synthesis is that history participates in present expectations while the current situation continues to supply information. Neither deserves automatic priority. An old expectation may be overgeneralized. A present concern may also be accurate.

Consider an unreliable person offering reassurance. Teaching the recipient to feel safe would miss the relational problem. Conditions that permit receiving good include the possibility of checking what is offered, setting limits and noticing whether behavior remains dependable over time. A better welcome for good experience should increase discrimination, not dissolve it. Trust becomes meaningful because it can respond to evidence.

11. Good news needs a listener

A small success changes when another person asks about it with interest. The event acquires a second life in the telling. Alternatively, a dismissive response can make the speaker feel foolish for having mentioned it. Receiving good is sometimes something people do together.

Gable and colleagues studied capitalization, the sharing of positive events, across four studies. Sharing and perceived active, constructive responses were associated with personal and relational benefits. The work broadens a literature often centered on support during difficulty. It does not imply that every disclosure helps, that outward enthusiasm is universally appropriate or that these associations guarantee an intervention effect. [14]

A useful listener does not need to exaggerate. “What mattered to you about it?” can make room for the speaker’s meaning. “Now you must do even better” may turn achievement into a new obligation. These examples are educational applications, not tested scripts from the studies.

The choice of listener matters. Some relationships are competitive, intrusive or unsafe. Privacy can protect a good experience. Sharing is an option whose value depends on the response and on whether it was wanted.

This is a concrete extension of the Flow Hijacked lens: the surrounding relationship changes what the experience asks of the person. An interested witness may reduce the need to justify enjoyment. The appropriate conclusion is not that other people regulate us in one uniform way. It is that the social conditions of pleasure deserve the same attention we already give to the social conditions of distress.

12. Receiving love without acquiring a debt

An offer of care can bring relief and a rapid calculation: what will be expected in return? Sometimes that calculation reflects an old expectation. Sometimes it correctly detects a condition attached to the offer. An ethical account of receptivity must preserve the difference.

The association between fear of compassion and attachment difficulties makes receiving care a legitimate research question. It does not make resistance to care irrational, or show that every supportive gesture should be accepted. [4] Love and safety are not established by the intensity of an offer. Their practical meaning includes consistency, consent and the freedom to say no.

An everyday experiment, where the relationship is already trustworthy, might be to acknowledge a small act of care without immediately repaying it. This is a voluntary educational suggestion. It is not a validated treatment protocol and it should not be used to lower boundaries with someone coercive.

Notice what the experiment asks. It does not require believing “I deserve everything.” It asks whether this particular kindness can be received on the terms actually offered. Gratitude can remain specific. A person may appreciate the gesture without promising availability, agreement or intimacy.

In our recurring room, another person does not have to become a guarantor of the future. Their presence can matter now, within the ordinary limits of a relationship. Receiving love becomes less like accepting a contract for permanent certainty and more like participating in something real whose value includes the ability of both people to remain free.

Enjoyment without a demand for permanence

13. When happiness becomes an assignment

There is a moment when enjoyment turns into supervision. We stop listening to the music and begin asking whether it is working. Is this enough pleasure? Why am I not more grateful? Can I keep it from fading? Attention has moved from the experience to a judgment about the experience.

This is not an argument against reflection. Reflection can help us notice what matters. The question is what kind of reflection, at what time and with what demand attached.

A factor-level analysis of a widely used happiness-valuing scale found that its items did not represent one simple construct. Associations with wellbeing differed across factors. [9] The later study distinguishing aspiration from concern sharpened this point. Wanting happiness and anxiously evaluating whether one has enough of it should not be treated as the same thing. [8]

That distinction changes the message of the lecture. “Stop trying to be happy” is too broad. Planning a walk with someone we enjoy can be sensible. Requiring the walk to deliver a particular emotional score creates a different task.

The Flow Hijacked formulation is to shift some effort from controlling the feeling to arranging conditions in which a worthwhile experience can occur. That is a synthesis, not a guarantee. The walk may still be ordinary. It may include sadness. Its value may lie in companionship, movement or a conversation that was possible. Good experience need not justify itself by defeating every competing feeling.

14. Savoring without holding still

Savoring means attending to and appreciating a positive experience. It may involve the present, a memory or anticipation. The appealing idea is that attention can allow an experience more room. The difficult question is whether that attention becomes another demand to make the feeling stronger.

A 2026 meta-analysis combined 20 randomized trials involving 4,805 adults. Its pooled effect across emotional outcomes was moderate, but heterogeneity was high. Estimates were smaller against active controls than passive controls, although the

difference between those categories did not reach conventional statistical significance. Bias adjustments also gave differing results. Most interventions were brief. These details limit confidence about the precise size and durability of benefit. [21]

This is encouraging evidence for carefully chosen practice, not a universal instruction to intensify positivity. The trials do not establish that any particular number of seconds stores an experience permanently or rewires a circuit. Nor do they validate the exercises proposed in this lecture as a complete package.

A gentle version might be to notice one detail already worth noticing: the sound of a voice, the warmth of a cup, the relief of finishing. There is no need to make it larger. If attention becomes strained, it is reasonable to return to the activity or stop. The possibility that a feeling will pass does not have to become a reason to rush it out or hold it captive.

15. Acceptance includes an ending

Acceptance can sound passive until we ask what is being accepted. We can acknowledge a feeling without approving the circumstances that produced it. We can enjoy a moment without agreeing to keep life exactly as it is. We can let a feeling change while continuing to care about what mattered.

In two randomized trials, mindfulness training that combined monitoring with acceptance increased positive affect more than monitoring alone and control conditions. Effects differed by assessment method across the two studies. This supports the contribution of acceptance within those interventions, not the claim that observation by itself always damages wellbeing. [15]

Other research on habitual acceptance found links to lower negative responses to stress, without corresponding links to higher positive responses in those tests. Accepting mental experiences also differed from accepting external situations. [16] Reducing struggle and increasing pleasure are therefore related possibilities, not interchangeable outcomes.

Research on nonattachment offers another vocabulary for loosening fixation on experience. Its early scale-development evidence is largely psychometric and associational. It should not be treated as proof of a Buddhist metaphysics or as an instruction to withdraw from relationships. [17]

Our philosophical proposal is modest: a good experience need not promise permanence to be worth receiving. This cannot be settled by one experiment. It can, however, change the question we bring to the room. Instead of asking how to prevent the evening from ending, we may ask whether fear of its ending needs to occupy all of it.

Conditions for a different experience

16. What treatment research permits us to hope

Positive Affect Treatment is a structured psychological intervention developed to address low positive affect and reward-related difficulties. It is delivered as a course of therapy. Its evidence cannot be transferred intact to a brief website exercise.

In a 2019 randomized trial with 96 participants, the treatment produced greater improvements in positive affect than a treatment focused on negative affect, including at six-month follow-up. A 2023 trial with 85 participants also supported improvements in a combined clinical measure and some reward-related targets, while reward-learning measures did not differ between groups. [18, 19]

The 2026 trial adds an essential qualification. Among 98 adults, the positive-affect treatment had a modest advantage on combined clinical status. This was mainly driven by depression and anxiety symptoms. Positive affect and interviewer-rated anhedonia did not improve more than in the comparison treatment. Behavioral and physiological measures did not establish the proposed mediation. [20]

This is how a developing evidence base should look: promising findings, partial replications and constraints on mechanism. We can say that targeted treatment is worth studying and can help selected populations. We cannot say that one reward mechanism has been proven, or that people who fail to improve have resisted happiness.

The clinical implication for a reader is to describe the problem precisely when seeking help. Difficulty starting, enjoying, trusting or staying with an experience may call for different questions. No diagnosis or treatment choice follows from this lecture alone. Hope becomes more useful when it has room for assessment, alternatives and revision.

17. Change the conditions of the invitation

Suppose a person repeatedly fails to enjoy an evening planned as a reward. The evening arrives after exhaustion, includes a long journey and requires cheerful conversation. We might first ask whether the invitation is too costly. The problem is not necessarily an inability to receive good. It may be the form in which the good is offered.

Research on prioritizing positivity examined choosing situations likely to bring positive emotion. In a community sample, this tendency was associated with wellbeing. Because the study was cross-sectional, it did not show that teaching the strategy would necessarily produce the same benefits. [10]

The Flow Hijacked application is to examine conditions before escalating demands on the person. Is there time? Is the activity chosen? Is the company welcome? Does accepting it create an obligation? Is there a way to stop? These questions include material circumstances that a mindset exercise cannot supply.

One possible adjustment is to make the invitation smaller. A short visit may be more accessible than an entire celebration. Another is to remove an unnecessary performance requirement:

company can be welcome without continuous conversation. These are options, not a hierarchy in which quieter experiences are always better.

Changing conditions also generates useful information. If a good experience becomes easier in one setting, we have learned something about the setting and its interaction with the person. We have not proved a universal mechanism. The next step is to see whether the change is repeatable, worthwhile and compatible with the person's own priorities.

18. A practice with permission to stop

The following sequence is a Flow Hijacked educational exercise. Its components draw on the preceding literatures, but the sequence itself has not been clinically validated. It is appropriate only when there is a genuinely acceptable experience available. It is not a request to find a benefit in harm.

Begin with something that is already a little pleasant, interesting or welcome. Name what is actually there rather than what you should feel. Then notice whether another response follows: disbelief, guilt, checking or a wish to move on. There is no need to remove that response before continuing.

If it feels comfortable, allow attention to return to one concrete detail of the experience. Keep ordinary choice available. You may change position, look elsewhere, say no or end the exercise. Afterwards, one brief question is enough: did this leave a little more room, or did it become another task?

The answer can be neutral. No improvement is not a failure. If the attempt reliably increases distress, stop and consider a different approach or support. Persistent loss of pleasure, marked changes in sleep or activation, or significant impairment call for assessment rather than stronger attempts to generate a mood.

What counts as a useful outcome? Perhaps a compliment remained believable for a moment. Perhaps nothing changed, but a demand became visible. Perhaps the activity was simply enjoyed without analysis. We should not turn any of these into a score. The exercise serves the experience. The experience does not owe the exercise a result.

The Flow Hijacked synthesis

19. The Flow Hijacked synthesis

We can now state the organizing proposition carefully. Receiving good may depend on several interacting conditions: access to a worthwhile experience, the current capacity to engage with it, expectations about its consequences, the behavior of other people and the demands imposed on the feeling once it arrives. Evidence supports pieces of this account. Their integration here is a Flow Hijacked synthesis, not a validated unified model.

[2, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20]

The model's practical advantage is discrimination. A person with little pleasure does not automatically need the same response as someone who enjoys a moment and then feels guilty. A person facing actual unreliability does not need to be persuaded that all vigilance is outdated. A person without time or resources does not need a lecture about insufficient gratitude.

We can ask four questions about a good experience. Can it be reached? Can it be felt? Can it be allowed without excessive cost? Can it end without making its occurrence worthless? These are organizing questions, not a diagnostic instrument or four proven stages.

Dynamic language can help us consider feedback: expecting obligation may produce withdrawal, which can reduce opportunities to discover uncomplicated care. But that proposed loop needs evidence in the individual situation. It cannot be inferred merely because the story sounds plausible.

The synthesis earns its place if it guides a more accurate observation or a helpful change. If a simpler explanation does that equally well, complexity has added no value. A scientific lens should improve what we can see, including where the lens itself distorts.

20. What could show the account is wrong?

A useful model risks being wrong. For this subject, a strong study would separately measure anticipation, experienced pleasure, threat expectations, dampening and judgments about

emotion. It would sample real situations repeatedly, distinguish people from changes within the same person and compare predictions with simpler measures of mood and circumstances.

One testable hypothesis is that reducing evaluative pressure helps some people remain engaged with an already pleasant activity. Another is that a more dependable relational context changes the cost of receiving care. These are new hypotheses in the present formulation. Neither follows automatically from a correlation in the literature.

Results could weaken the account. Evaluative pressure might add no predictive value after depression and context are measured. What looked like difficulty receiving good might be adequately explained by lack of genuinely rewarding opportunities. A complex model of transitions might perform no better than an ordinary average. The emotion-dynamics critique makes that last possibility particularly important. [23]

Measurement itself also changes the situation. Frequent questions about happiness may encourage the monitoring we are trying to understand. A diary therefore needs restraint and a clear research purpose. It is not automatically a helpful daily practice.

The most consequential missing evidence concerns long-term change, diverse cultures and people living under ongoing adversity. We should not export findings from short interventions or university samples as instructions for everyone. The research agenda is to identify which process matters for whom, under which conditions, and with what costs and benefits.

21. Return to the quiet room

The room is the same one we entered at the beginning. Someone is nearby. A task is finished. The evening will end. None of those facts guarantees that pleasure will arrive. None requires us to apologize if it does.

What has changed is the set of questions available. If nothing feels good, we need not assume a refusal. If worry arrives, we can ask what it is trying to prevent. If kindness feels expensive, we can examine whether the price is expected, real or both. If the moment becomes a test, we can notice the demand without adding another demand to stop it immediately.

The capacity to receive good is not a moral achievement. In this lecture it is a name for a changing relationship between a person and the experiences available in a life. Sometimes the

next useful step concerns attention. Sometimes it concerns treatment, rest, a boundary, a trustworthy relationship or an opportunity that did not previously exist.

The philosophical position developed here is that pleasure does not become meaningless because it passes. Care does not have to solve the future to matter in the present. A quiet evening need not be used efficiently, displayed to anyone or converted into proof of recovery.

Perhaps nothing remarkable happens. A sentence is heard without being immediately dismissed. A cup is warm. A person remains in the room. For a little while, there is room for this too.

Companion: claims and evidence

C01 • Empirical result

Moderate for distinguishable reported constructs

Anticipatory fear, dampening and devaluation overlap but should not be collapsed. Self-report and cross-sectional networks cannot identify a causal sequence.

[1], [5]

C02 • Empirical result

Moderate for association; limited for causal direction

Meta-analysis: 60 cross-sectional and 12 longitudinal samples. Concurrent $r=.45$; prospective $r=.34$. Baseline-adjusted paths are much smaller and bidirectional. Nelis et al. provide an important prospective null.

[2], [3]

C03 · Empirical result

Limited

The clinical fear-of-happiness study had 52 participants and correlational measures. It cannot establish that fear causes depression or that trauma causes fear.

[4]

C04 · Broader scientific inference

Strong for keeping constructs separate; indirect for this framing

Reward and safety learning are not interchangeable. Animal causal findings and human imaging have different inferential limits. No single dopamine, vagal or oxytocin explanation is justified.

[6], [24]

C05 · Empirical result

Moderate, population-specific

Two studies distinguish actual from ideal affect and find cultural group differences in desired excitement and calm. Group findings are not individual predictions.

[7]

C06 · Empirical result

Moderate

The 2024 study used student and community samples totaling 1,815. Concern about happiness, rather than aspiration alone, was linked to poorer wellbeing. The 2016 scale analysis (N=938) warns against combining different meanings of valuing happiness.

[8], [9]

C07 · Empirical result

Limited for intervention efficacy

Prioritizing positivity was associated with wellbeing in 235 community adults. Its cross-sectional design cannot show that teaching the strategy causes benefit.

[10]

C08 · Empirical result

Moderate for the laboratory contrast effect

A 95-person experiment supports contrast avoidance under its task conditions. Perceiving worry as helpful is not evidence that worry prevents bad events.

[11]

C09 · Empirical result

Limited to moderate

Two-year observational neuroimaging in 106 adolescents links neglect, reward-related change and depressive symptoms. Residual confounding, self-report and population limits prevent causal or deterministic conclusions.

[12]

C10 · Empirical result

Strong for experimental short-term effects

Across 154 experimental studies (N=5,717), sleep loss reduced positive affect. Effects on other emotional outcomes varied. This does not explain every individual difficulty or prove an identity change.

[13]

C11 · Empirical result

Moderate for the reported relational associations

Four studies connect sharing positive events and perceived constructive responses with individual and relationship outcomes. The recipient, response and choice to share matter; benefit is not universal.

[14]

C12 · Empirical result

Moderate

Dismantling trials support acceptance within mindfulness programs for positive affect. Habitual acceptance studies instead find lower negative reactivity without higher positive reactivity. These outcomes must remain separate.

[15], [16]

C13 · Empirical result

Limited for causal claims

Nonattachment is a measured construct distinct from interpersonal attachment. Early psychometric findings do not prove that teaching it produces durable wellbeing, nor validate a metaphysical claim.

[17]

C14 · Empirical result

Moderate for clinical potential; mixed for specific outcomes and mechanism

Trials of 96, 85 and 98 participants must not be pooled informally. In 2026, the combined clinical advantage was $d=.27$ for change and $d=.21$ at one month; positive affect and anhedonia did not differ between treatments. Self-report mediation did not establish a behavioral or physiological mechanism.

[18], [19], [20]

C15 · Empirical result

Moderate for short-term promise; uncertain magnitude and durability

Twenty RCTs, $N=4,805$: overall $g=.51$, 95% CI $.26-.77$; $I^2=86.61\%$. Active-control estimate $g=.30$ versus passive $.77$, but moderator $p=.068$. Thirty percent of studies had high risk of bias; median intervention duration was 14 days. PET adjustment was near zero, while other adjustments retained benefit.

[21]

C16 · Broader scientific inference

Mixed; complexity must demonstrate added value

Emotion dynamics have associations with wellbeing, but incremental prediction can be limited. Do not infer nonlinearity, metastability, nonnormal amplification or an attractor from a feeling or a plotted time series.

[22], [23]

C17 · Flow Hijacked synthesis

A plausible organizing synthesis, not independently validated

Access, felt response, evaluative cost and the ability to allow an ending organize the lecture. They are not four validated stages, a clinical score or a complete causal model.

[2], [8], [12], [13], [14], [15], [20]

C18 · New hypothesis

Untested in this formulation

Reducing evaluative demand or increasing relational dependability may change engagement with positive experience. Test against mood, resources and simpler contextual accounts, using prospective or randomized designs.

References

[1] Feldman, G. C., Joormann, J., & Johnson, S. L. (2008). Responses to Positive Affect: A Self-Report Measure of Rumination and Dampening. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 32, 507–525. doi:10.1007/s10608-006-9083-0

Reviewed access: Selected full-text sections

[2] Bean, C. A. L., Summers, C. B., & Ciesla, J. A. (2022). Dampening of positive affect and depression: A meta-analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 156, 104153. doi: 10.1016/j.brat.2022.104153

Reviewed access: Publisher abstract and selected sections

[3] Nelis, S., Holmes, E. A., & Raes, F. (2015). Response Styles to Positive Affect and Depression: Concurrent and Prospective Associations in a Community Sample. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 39, 480–491. doi: 10.1007/s10608-015-9671-y

Reviewed access: Selected full-text methods, results and limitations

[4] Gilbert, P., et al. (2014). Fears of happiness and compassion in relationship with depression, alexithymia, and attachment security in a depressed sample. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 53, 228–244. doi: 10.1111/bjc.12037

Reviewed access: Publisher abstract

[5] Gallagher, M. R., Collins, A. C., & Winer, E. S. (2023). A Network Analytic Investigation of Avoidance, Dampening, and Devaluation of Positivity. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 81, 101870. doi:10.1016/j.jbtep.2023.101870

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; construct definitions and limitations reviewed

[6] Berridge, K. C., & Kringelbach, M. L. (2015). Pleasure systems in the brain. *Neuron*, 86, 646–664. doi:10.1016/j.neuron.2015.02.018

Reviewed access: Abstract and selected full-text sections

[7] Tsai, J. L., Knutson, B., & Fung, H. H. (2006). Cultural variation in affect valuation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 288–307. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.90.2.288

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract

[8] Zerwas, F. K., Ford, B. Q., John, O. P., & Mauss, I. B. (2024). Unpacking the pursuit of happiness: Being concerned about happiness but not aspiring to happiness is linked with negative meta-emotions and worse well-being. *Emotion*, 24, 1789–1802. doi:10.1037/emo0001381

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract

[9] Luhmann, M., Necka, E. A., Schönbrodt, F. D., & Hawkley, L. C. (2016). Is Valuing Happiness Associated With Lower Well-Being? A Factor-Level Analysis using the Valuing Happiness Scale. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 60, 46–50. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2015.11.003

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; abstract, measurement and limitations reviewed

[10] Catalino, L. I., Algoe, S. B., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2014). Prioritizing Positivity: An Effective Approach to Pursuing Happiness?. *Emotion*, 14, 1155–1161. doi:10.1037/a0038029

Reviewed access: Selected full-text methods and discussion

[11] Llera, S. J., & Newman, M. G. (2014). Rethinking the Role of Worry in Generalized Anxiety Disorder: Evidence Supporting a Model of Emotional Contrast Avoidance. *Behavior Therapy*, 45, 283–299. doi:10.1016/j.beth.2013.12.011

Reviewed access: Publisher abstract and selected sections

[12] Hanson, J. L., Hariri, A. R., & Williamson, D. E. (2015). Blunted ventral striatum development in adolescence reflects emotional neglect and predicts depressive symptoms. *Biological Psychiatry*, 78, 598–605. doi:10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.05.010

Reviewed access: Selected full-text methods and results

[13] Palmer, C. A., et al. (2024). Sleep loss and emotion: A systematic review and meta-analysis of over 50 years of experimental research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 150, 440–463. doi:10.1037/bul0000410

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract and publisher record

[14] Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E. A., & Asher, E. R. (2004). What Do You Do When Things Go Right? The Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Benefits of Sharing Positive Events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 228–245.

Reviewed access: University-hosted article; selected study sections

[15] Lindsay, E. K., et al. (2018). How mindfulness training promotes positive emotions: Dismantling acceptance skills training in two randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 115, 944–973. doi:10.1037/pspa0000134

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; abstract and design reviewed

[16] Ford, B. Q., Lam, P., John, O. P., & Mauss, I. B. (2018). The Psychological Health Benefits of Accepting Negative Emotions and Thoughts: Laboratory, Diary, and Longitudinal Evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 115, 1075–1092. doi:10.1037/pspp0000157

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; abstract, distinctions and limitations reviewed. Online publication 2017; issue 2018

[17] Sahdra, B. K., Shaver, P. R., & Brown, K. W. (2010). A scale to measure nonattachment: A Buddhist complement to western research on attachment and adaptive functioning. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 92, 116–127. doi: 10.1080/00223890903425960

Reviewed access: Publisher bibliographic record and abstract

[18] Craske, M. G., Meuret, A. E., Ritz, T., Treanor, M., Dour, H., & Rosenfield, D. (2019). Positive affect treatment for depression and anxiety: A randomized clinical trial for a core feature of anhedonia. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 87, 457–471. doi:10.1037/ccp0000396

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract

[19] Craske, M. G., Meuret, A. E., Echiverri-Cohen, A., Rosenfield, D., & Ritz, T. (2023). Positive affect treatment targets reward sensitivity: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 91, 350–366. doi: 10.1037/ccp0000805

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; abstract, methods and limitations reviewed

[20] Meuret, A. E., Rosenfield, D., Wang, E., Hough, C. M., Ritz, T., & Craske, M. G. (2026). Positive Affect Treatment for Depression, Anxiety, and Low Positive Affect: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Network Open*, 9(4), e267403. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2026.7403

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; abstract, discussion, outcome specificity and limitations reviewed

[21] Chen, P.-H., Tung, H.-H., Wu, Y.-C., & Sie, J. (2026). Effectiveness of savoring interventions: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 18, e70134. doi: 10.1111/aphw.70134

Reviewed access: Full text retrieved; methods, Tables 2–5, bias analyses and limitations reviewed

[22] Houben, M., Van Den Noortgate, W., & Kuppens, P. (2015). The relation between short-term emotion dynamics and psychological well-being: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 141, 901–930. doi:10.1037/a0038822

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract

[23] Dejonckheere, E., et al. (2019). Complex affect dynamics add limited information to the prediction of psychological well-being. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 3, 478–491. doi:10.1038/s41562-019-0555-0

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract and linked comment records

[24] Laing, P. A. F., et al. (2021). Characterizing human safety learning via Pavlovian conditioned inhibition. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 137, 103800. doi:10.1016/j.brat.2020.103800

Reviewed access: Indexed abstract