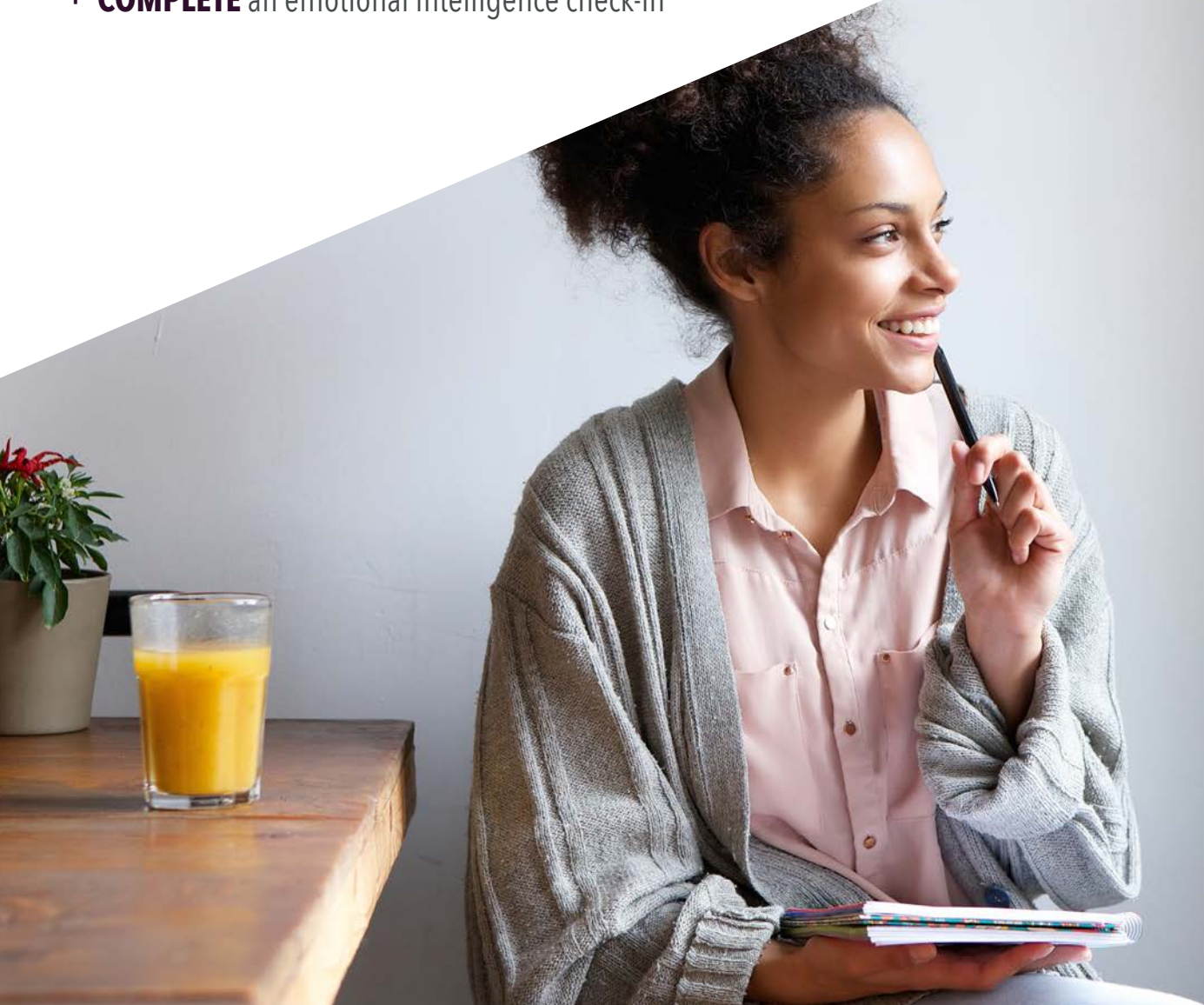


# A POSITIVE WAY TO THINK, FEEL, AND LIVE

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- + **UNDERSTAND** how to define positive psychology
- + **INTERPRET** the Broaden and Build Model of positive emotions
- + **DIFFERENTIATE** the various components of emotional intelligence
- + **COMPLETE** an emotional intelligence check-in



# A POSITIVE WAY TO THINK, FEEL, AND LIVE

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift in focus from researching negative emotional states and psychological disorders to positive psychology. **Positive psychology** was spurred on by Drs. Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi with the intention of building positive qualities as opposed to focusing only on repairing or fixing problems.<sup>1</sup> Positive psychology emphasizes personal experiences (i.e., well-being, satisfaction, hope, optimism, etc.), individual-level traits (i.e., love, interpersonal skills, spirituality, perseverance, etc.), and group-level virtues (i.e., responsibility, altruism, work ethic, nurturance, etc.). With these three factors in mind, positive psychology aims to explain “the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.”<sup>2</sup> There are many variables that can help people flourish and achieve optimal functioning, including having a growth mindset and grit; expressing optimism, gratitude, joy, and self-compassion; practicing mindfulness and spirituality; and living life with strong social interaction (**Figure 1**). Each of these variables will be discussed in the following chapters. In order to understand the following chapters, it is necessary to discuss a model that explains why positive emotional expression is so beneficial.



**Figure 1.** Many variables contribute to optimal functioning, including social interaction.

**Positive psychology:** a study that emphasizes personal experience, individual traits, and group virtues to achieve optimal functioning

# Broaden and Build Model

There is a distinct difference between the impact of expressing positive emotions compared to negative emotions. The **Broaden and Build Model**, created by Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, helps explain the what, why, and how behind the beneficial impact of positive emotions on our emotional and behavioral management.<sup>3</sup> Essentially this model explains that positive emotions help broaden the available scope of a person's available and expressible thoughts and behaviors, also known as **thought-action repertoires**. Such positive emotional expression then adds resources, or "tools," to an individual's "toolbelt" of long-lasting experiences, emotions, and behaviors to rely on later. On the contrary, negative thoughts narrow an individual's thought-action repertoires, causing the individual to make immediate decisions with the goal of immediate benefit. This model explains how thoughts and resultant behaviors are often learned and automatic, especially in regard to negative situations. Positive emotions help us discard automatic responses and both think and react creatively, openly, and flexibly (thus broadening the scope of potential thoughts and behavioral responses).

**Broaden and Build Model:** a model that explains the beneficial impact of positive emotions on how we manage our emotions and behaviors

**Thought-action repertoires:** the available scope of a person's available and expressible thoughts and behaviors

For example, Binoy, an undergraduate student at his state university, has received a scholarship for tuition based on his high school grade point average being above a 3.0. If he continues to maintain this GPA, he will continue to receive this scholarship. However, he recently failed a midterm, receiving a 59% in biology. Upon receiving this failing exam grade, his automatic thought was that he is going to lose his scholarship. This disappointment and fear (negative emotions) elicit the automatic behavioral response to give up on his biology class for the rest of the semester, stop trying to maintain his scholarship, and quit attending classes altogether (**Figure 2**). These behaviors can be categorized by avoidance and escape. Rather than trying for the rest of the semester and still failing, Binoy can avoid and escape all class-related responsibility to allow himself to think "I lost my scholarship because I didn't try; but I could have if I wanted." However, if Binoy had resilience, or the ability to bounce back from difficulty, he might have thought of his failing midterm grade as a learning opportunity, a chance to receive tutoring from classmates, to try harder, and to ask questions of his biology professor. Such thoughts may have resulted in behaviors that promote learning and growth, rather than avoidance and failure.



**Figure 2.** Avoidance and escape can be automatic behaviors when one faces an obstacle or setback.

The work of Dr. Fredrickson on the Broaden and Build Model has helped create a framework and foundation for applying positive emotions research to practice.<sup>4, 5</sup> Research that indicates broadened thought-action repertoires from positive emotions have a wide variety of benefits, such as promoting social, physical, intellectual, and psychological resources.<sup>6</sup> Research supporting the Broaden and Build Model can be seen in a review by Dr. Fredrickson.<sup>7</sup> This review supports the idea that positive emotions broaden thoughts, actions, and urges through increased thought flexibility, creativity, integration, openness, and efficiency.<sup>8, 9, 10, 11, 12</sup> Furthermore, research supports the idea that individuals who express positive emotions are more resilient and resourceful, and function more optimally.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup> Researchers are continuing to examine the impact of positive emotions in relation to the Broaden and Build Model. One area of research and application that is related to positive psychology and the Broaden and Build Model is emotional intelligence.

## Emotional Intelligence

**Emotional intelligence (EQ)** can be described as the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of oneself, others, and groups.<sup>16</sup> Since emotional intelligence was coined by Dr. Daniel Goleman in 1995, the research and practical application has gained extensive momentum. In his book

*Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Dr. Goleman explains how EQ may actually be more advantageous than IQ in terms of workplace efficiency and performance.<sup>17</sup> In *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, EQ is discussed in light of research as being crucial to leadership development!<sup>18</sup> College students with higher EQ have exhibited greater writing abilities, greater stress management, and academic success.<sup>19, 20, 21</sup> Furthermore, in a case study of college freshmen, EQ was a significant predictor of college student progression, retention, and four-year graduation (**Figure 3**).<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 3.** Emotional intelligence can be a great predictor of educational and workforce success.

**Emotional intelligence:** the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of oneself, others, and groups

As explained by Goleman, EQ can be measured across five domains, with each being an integral determinant in how people think, feel, and behave (**Table 1**).<sup>23</sup> The first domain, **self-awareness**, is comprised of emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. A student may exhibit these components of emotional awareness by knowing what they are feeling and why, having awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and being open to feedback. They will exhibit self-assurance and decisiveness, and stick to their beliefs and values.

The second domain, **self-regulation**, is composed of self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovativeness. A student displays self-regulation if they can manage their feelings and behaviors, act ethically, meet commitments and stay organized, and engage in novel ideas or ventures.

The third domain, **self-motivation**, is comprised of ambition, commitment, initiative, and optimism. A student displays self-motivation through process- and outcome-oriented goals, commitment to a larger purpose, doing more than what is expected of them, and emoting hope rather than pessimism (**Figure 4**).



**Figure 4.** A student with strong self-motivation, one of the five domains of emotional intelligence, will have the drive to achieve their goals.

The fourth domain, **social awareness**, includes empathy, service orientation, developing others, leveraging diversity, and political awareness. Students who gladly help and meet others' needs, acknowledge the strengths of others, provide empathetic feedback, and can respect others of different backgrounds exhibit social awareness (**Figure 5**).

The fifth domain, **social skills**, includes influence, communication, leadership, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, and team capabilities. Students with social skills are active listeners, deal with difficult issues and build rapport, communicate unconditional positive regard, lead by example, model expectations of others, handle conflict effectively, collaborate rather than lead from an authoritarian view, and draw out the best capabilities from a person or group.



**Figure 5.** Respecting those of different backgrounds is evidence of social awareness, one of the five domains of emotional intelligence.

**Self-awareness:** a domain of emotional intelligence that includes emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence

**Self-regulation:** a domain of emotional intelligence that includes self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovativeness

**Self-motivation:** a domain of emotional intelligence that includes ambition, commitment, initiative, and optimism

**Social awareness:** a domain of emotional intelligence that includes empathy, service orientation, developing others, leveraging diversity, and political awareness

**Social skills:** a domain of emotional intelligence that includes influence, communication, leadership, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, and team capabilities

Each of the five domains of emotional intelligence revolve around awareness and knowledge of one's own emotions, learning to self-motivate, the ability to manage emotions, and the ability to both recognize and effectively emotionally engage with others in light of their emotions. It is important to understand emotional intelligence as it can guide the awareness and use of positive emotions that will be discussed later in this course. Emotionally intelligent individuals exhibit better physical health, psychological health, social and intimate relationships, academic achievement, and work-related outcomes.<sup>24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31</sup>

**Table 1: Domains of Emotional Intelligence**

<b>Self-Awareness</b>	<b>Emotional awareness:</b>	Recognizing one's emotions and their effects.
	<b>Accurate self-assessment:</b>	Knowing one's strengths and limits.
	<b>Self-confidence:</b>	Being sure about one's self-worth and capabilities.
<b>Self-Regulation</b>	<b>Self-control:</b>	Managing disruptive emotions and impulses.
	<b>Trustworthiness:</b>	Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.
	<b>Conscientiousness:</b>	Taking responsibility for personal performance.
	<b>Adaptability:</b>	Being flexible in handling change.
<b>Self-Motivation</b>	<b>Innovativeness:</b>	Being comfortable with and open to novel ideas and new information.
	<b>Achievement drive:</b>	Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence.
	<b>Commitment:</b>	Aligning with the goals of the group or organization.
	<b>Initiative:</b>	Being ready to act on opportunities.
<b>Social Awareness</b>	<b>Optimism:</b>	Being persistent in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.
	<b>Empathy:</b>	Sensing others' feelings and perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns.
	<b>Service orientation:</b>	Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs.
	<b>Developing others:</b>	Sensing what others need in order to develop, and bolstering their abilities.
<b>Social Skills</b>	<b>Leveraging diversity:</b>	Cultivating opportunities through diverse people.
	<b>Political awareness:</b>	Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships.
	<b>Influence:</b>	Wielding effective tactics for persuasion.
	<b>Communication:</b>	Sending clear and convincing messages.
<b>Social Skills</b>	<b>Leadership:</b>	Inspiring and guiding groups and people.
	<b>Change catalyst:</b>	Initiating or managing change.
	<b>Conflict management:</b>	Negotiating and resolving disagreements.
	<b>Building bonds:</b>	Nurturing instrumental relationships.
	<b>Collaboration and cooperation:</b>	Working with others toward shared goals.
<b>Team capabilities:</b>	Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals.	

**Data Source:** Goleman, *Emotional intelligence* (1995)



Emotional intelligence is based on various general principles.<sup>32</sup> For example, emotional intelligence is a mental ability, meaning that people have the ability to perceive emotions accurately, use emotions to accurately facilitate thought, understand emotions and emotional meanings, and manage emotions in themselves and others (**Figure 6**).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, emotional intelligence can be measured as an ability just like any other problem or behavior. However, emotional intelligence is not the same as intelligent behavior. Behavior is explained through social context and can be based on an expression of someone's personality. Although this list is not all-inclusive, it is important to understand that emotional intelligence is multifaceted in nature and is associated with a wide variety of benefits.



**Figure 6.** Emotional intelligence is a mental ability, meaning people have the ability to understand and manage emotions in themselves and others.

Each of the following chapters will emphasize methods to improve awareness and development of emotional intelligence as pertaining to the Broaden and Build Model. Common assessments are discussed as well as practical applications for individuals or groups. Before moving on, take time for a quick emotional intelligence check-in (**Activity 1**). Try to answer honestly and openly!

## ACTIVITY 1

### Domains of Emotional Intelligence: A Check-In

Using the descriptions presented in this chapter, assess whether you exhibit each subcategory on a scale from (1) Rarely to (3) Almost Always. Put a check in the corresponding box for each group.

	1 Rarely	2 Sometimes	3 Almost Always
Self-Awareness			
Self-Regulation			
Self-Motivation			
Social Awareness			
Social Skills			

### Answer the following questions:

1. Fill in your total score by summing the numbers for all five domains:
2. Are you surprised by this score?
3. In which domain did you score highest?
4. In which domain did you score lowest?
5. Take a moment to review the subcategories of each domain.  
Which subcategory do you want to work on throughout the next few months?

How do you think you can make progress in this area?

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