

Defining toxic positivity

We define toxic positivity as the excessive and ineffective overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state across all situations. The process of toxic positivity results in the denial, minimization, and invalidation of the authentic human emotional experience.

The phrase “toxic positivity” refers to the concept that keeping positive, and keeping positive only, is the right way to live your life. It means only focusing on positive things and rejecting anything that may trigger negative emotions. But that sounds pretty good, right? Not so fast.

When you deny or avoid unpleasant emotions, you make them bigger. Avoiding negative emotions reinforces this idea: Because you avoid feeling them, you tell yourself that you don’t need to pay attention to them. While you are trapped in this cycle, these emotions become bigger and more significant as they remain unprocessed. But this approach is simply unsustainable. Evolutionarily, we as humans cannot program ourselves to only feel happy.

Do refer to the class in which we discussed the annotation task as well to get a further understanding on toxic positivity.

While annotating you can think if the sentence that you are annotating has the following:

- encourage hiding or suppressing negative emotions
- encourage focusing on positivity rather than processing the negative emotions
- Minimizes someones negative feelings (like by saying it could be worse)
- states an affirming statement that is very detached from the current reality of a person and focuses on results rather than processes.
- encourage to thrive even in the worst scenario.
- brushing off someone’s concerns by saying, “it could be worse”
- Romanticizing sadness or loneliness or any other negative emotion
- negative emotions are seen as inherently bad. Instead, positivity and happiness are compulsively pushed, and authentic human emotional experiences are denied, minimized, or invalidated.

If it does, it is likely a toxic positive text. Do not limit yourself to these points, use your own understanding from the class and readings that I have linked below to get a further understanding.

You will also be marking the type of quote:

- Worldview: Quotes that give a perspective on things, are abstract and philosophical
 - “Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.”
- Personal-experience: Quotes that give insights based on personal experience
 - “I always did something I was a little not ready to do. I think that’s how you grow. When there’s that moment of ‘Wow, I’m not really sure I can do this,’ and you push through those moments, that’s when you have a breakthrough.”
- Advice/Instructional: Quotes giving instructions on what to do, giving direct advice.
 - “Do one thing every day that scares you.”
- Analogy/metaphor: Quotes that use analogies and metaphor to make a point

- “A diamond is merely a lump of coal that did well under pressure.”
- Affirmation: First-person statements that are used as an affirmation
 - “I choose to make the rest of my life, the best of my life.”

Example:

Magic is believing in yourself. If you can make that happen, you can make anything happen.	1 worldview
If something is important enough, even if the odds are stacked against you, you should still do it.	0 advice
Hold the vision, trust the process.	0 advice
Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great.	0 advice

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions on teams chat or email.

Email: ishan.sanjeev@research.iiit.ac.in

Further reading:

<https://thepsychologygroup.com/toxic-positivity/>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/17/health/toxic-positivity-mental-health-wellness/index.html>

<https://www.girlsglobe.org/2020/11/05/what-is-toxic-positivity-and-how-can-it-hurt-our-mental-health/>

<https://www.health.com/condition/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/what-is-toxic-positivity>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-man-cave/201908/toxic-positivity-dont-always-look-the-bright-side>