

# DOWNLOAD PDF BRIGHT-SIDED HOW POSITIVE THINKING IS UNDERMINING AMERICA

## Chapter 1 : Bright-sided: how positive thinking is undermining America Research Paper

*"In this hard-hitting but honest appraisal, America's cultural skeptic Barbara Ehrenreich turns her focus on the muddled American phenomenon of positive thinking. She exposes the pseudoscience and pseudointellectual foundation of the positive-thinking movement for what it is: a house of cards.*

Audio CD Positive thinking has become so integrated into the value system of our modern culture, it might seem somewhat odd to find an argument against it. And yet that is exactly what Barbara Ehrenreich does. The release of this book, which was published as "Smile or Die" in the UK has corresponded with the publication of more bold books, willing to challenge the power of positive thinking. Even the great psychologist Richard Wiseman has taken positive thinking to task and looked at the real science behind self-help in "59 Seconds", which came out the same year as "Bright-Sided". This book was not an overt criticism of the self-help movement but rather a genuine attempt to use case studies, raw data and proven psychological methods to help people improve their lives. However, in keeping to the science Wiseman highlighted just how much of the self-help movement was bogus and even damaging. His first chapter, "Happiness", began with a total debunking of positive thinking and revealed that far from being innocuous at worst, these techniques endorsed by the vast majority of the self-help movement could actually be harmful. She begins with her first clash with the cult of positive thinking after being diagnosed with breast cancer in around 2002. The article inspired several people to question the so-called empowering methods being employed at all levels of cancer care and support. It even inspired the documentary "Pink Ribbon Inc. In "Bright-Sided" she has far more space to go through her own personal experiences on forums and support groups, which led her down the path of investigating the whole nature of positive thinking. Worse still, terminal cancer patients were being made to feel they had somehow failed. Ehrenreich noted the perverse extremes the philosophy of cancer support gurus who told "survivors" to be thankful for their cancer. Working through restriction and seeing opportunities through bad situations is all well and good, but that is a world apart from thinking that being affected by a disease like cancer is somehow a blessing! America, as the author, notes in her prologue, is a country known for its positive attitude. The sign-off "Have a nice day! Whereas Britain had the stereotyped stiff upper lip in the face of adversity, their cousins over the Atlantic did much more than stare down their problems with calm and a dry sense of humour, they "embraced it" with open arms. Positive thinking has a distinctively puritanical hard work ethic at its core, which the author linked back to Calvinism. She then traces how it evolved through the emergence of American religion such as Christian Science and the 19th century mystical idea that people could be healed through thinking in a certain way. Suddenly doctrines in Christianity that saw the virtue in poverty and humility were replaced by the idea that God wants Man to prosper. To be a successful and wealthy businessman went hand-in-hand with being a good Christian. Positive thinking, Ehrenreich argues fuelled the mega-churches and the rise of evangelism. The obvious attraction of enthusiastic and happy people - genuine and otherwise - meant that such institutions would be successful. Of course, American Christianity, as powerful and hugely influential as it is, does not have a monopoly on positive thinking as a method or ethic. The book makes a strong point that the allure of the attitude easily permeated the New Age movement from its earliest beginnings. Deepak Chopra and others fully endorse the mind over matter ideas that first became popular in 19th century America. This has allowed the gateway to open for all sorts of spiritual marriages with the acquisition of wealth. Concepts like cosmic ordering and the law of attraction, championed by the bestselling pseudoscientific book "The Secret" by Rhonda Byrne, straddles New Age spiritualism and secularism with ease. It is with the idea that positive thinking is just a given to be good for you, Ehrenreich makes the case that its misuse is responsible for the fall of businesses and a strong component in the Subprime Mortgage Crisis and global recession of the late 2000s. Looking at it both ways we see an interesting picture of self-justification and refusal to accept personal error or responsibility fueled by a culture of "yes men". The "yes men" element, of course, comes from Ehrenreich. Many large corporations have adopted a policy of

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firing advisers who were not positive enough. This type of delusion led employees of banks and businesses to refuse to listen to those who erred on the side of caution or presented a picture that was anything less than positive for the future. To not be positive has become a sin. And yet this has not always been so. There are plenty of fables that praise the person who is willing to stand against madness, delusion and flattery to deliver the hard truth. They play to his vanity. Lear ends up banishing her and suffers the consequences when his elder daughters reveal the true, cruel and ruthless natures. The truth is that every great leader needs their Cordelia. They need the person who has the strength and cares enough to tell the truth. The audiobook production is straightforward and slick. There are no whistles and bells, as befits the tone of the book. I get her dry humour and delivery, but a fellow listener commented that it sounded a little robotic. This is a problem with a lot of members of the sceptical movement. They might be witty and articulate, but that cold logic they bring to their subjects can permeate into their delivery, making them less appealing to the middle ground. I believe it opened the floodgates for more works that have dared to challenge impractical, exploitative and delusional concepts at the very core of modern society. This is coming from someone who counts life-coaches and self-help counselors among his friends. I even wrote a forward for a delightful collection of motivating essays written by a dear friend who is an incredible positive thinker. We may have some interesting arguments for applied pessimism in recent non-fiction books and perhaps nihilism will make a return to the fore in the wake the damage over-the-top optimism and unrealistic idealism has done to the financial factor. However, Ehrenreich is not putting the case for an opposite approach to positive thinking. Her final chapter, her postscript in fact, is perhaps the best piece in the entire book. She looks at the way pessimism can be applied practically without destroying ambition and how science enables us to best understand the way the world works. She argues for a sense of proportion, balance and realism.

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## Chapter 2 : NPR Choice page

*Bright-sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* by Barbara Ehrenreich A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Americans are a "positive" people – cheerful, optimistic, and upbeat: This is our reputation as well as our self-image.

Trade Reviews "Deeply satisfying. I have waited my whole life for someone to write a book like Bright-sided. Ehrenreich makes important points about what happens to those who dare to warn of the worst. Helping us face the truth is Ehrenreich at her best. With a refreshingly caustic tone, Barbara Ehrenreich takes on the relentlessly upbeat attitude many Americans demand of themselves, and more damagingly, of others. Bright-sided offers both a welcome tonic and a call to action and a blessed relief from all those smiley faces. In a voice urgent and passionate, Ehrenreich offers us neither extreme [between positive thinking and being a spoilsport] but instead balance: She favors life with a clear head, eyes wide open. I hesitate to say anything so positive as that this book will change the way you see absolutely everything; but it just might. They have no one to blame but themselves. Barbara Ehrenreich has put the menace of positive thinking under the microscope. This is truly a text for the times. A message that deserves to be heard. A rousing endorsement of skepticism, realism, and critical thinking. Bright, incisive, provocative thinking from a top-notch nonfiction writer. Bright-sided scours away the veneer of conventional wisdom with pointed writings and reporting. Ehrenreich convinced me completely. Ehrenreich delivers a trenchant look into the burgeoning business of positive thinking. Ehrenreich delivers her indictments of the happiness industry with both authority and wit. Bright-sided offers both a welcome tonic and a call to action--and a blessed relief from all those smiley faces. Ehrenreich reprises her role as Dorothy swishing back the curtain on a great and powerful given. Gleefully pops the positive-thinking bubble. She exposes the pseudoscience and pseudointellectual foundation of the positive-thinking movement for what it is: This is a mind-opening read. In this hilarious and devastating critique, Barbara Ehrenreich applies some much needed negativity to the zillion-dollar business of positive thinking. Insightful, smart, and witty. Once again, Barbara Ehrenreich has written an invaluable and timely book, offering a brilliant analysis of the causes and dimensions of our current cultural and economic crises. She shows how deeply positive thinking is embedded in our history and how crippling it is as a habit of mind. Barbara Ehrenreich scores again for the independent-minded in resisting this drool and all those who wallow in it. Wide-ranging and stinging look at the pervasiveness of positive thinking.

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## Chapter 3 : Bright-sided â€“ Barbara Ehrenreich

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In it Ehrenreich not only details her own experiences with the positive-thinking movement, but delves into its history and evolution. In this incessantly upbeat culture, fear and anger are not tolerated; only optimism is acceptable. Cancer is viewed as an opportunity, even a gift. Ehrenreich explores this world in various ways. She explains the prevailing mindset that being positive will help you feel better and even cure you more quickly mind over matter. She then proceeds to debunk this long-standing myth with the relevant psychological studies; previous studies declaring a link between positive thinking and cancer survival are replete with problems and have been discounted by most researchers. And she goes one step further, proposing that this culture of positivity may in some cases make women feel worse. The patient is left to feel that since they have negative thoughts, they must be partly to blame for their illness. Why do Americans discount reality, facts, and science in favour of magical thinking? Ehrenreich takes us through the history and reach of the positive-thinking movement. She ends with the current state of affairs, from Oprah Winfrey and The Secret to practitioners, motivational speakers, preachers, and hucksters who make a living off of telling people to think positively. The author attends the National Speakers Association conference in San Diego, which contains all manner of woo. In a funny and biting tone, she writes: As the purveyors of positive thinking and positive psychology would have you think, the only thing keeping you from having a good life is your negative attitude. Therefore, you are to blame for anything bad that happens in your life. This, Ehrenreich believes, is not only hackneyed, but dangerous because it leads to a form of denial that actually stunts social progress. Do not misunderstand the basis of this book. While it has its share of snark, sarcasm, and humour, this is not a cynical or sardonic book. Ehrenreich is not damning happiness or hopefulness; rather she is exposing the almost religiosity with which people preach positive thinking while exposing its downsides. She allows that happy, positive people are more likely to make friends and be successful in business because of their upbeat personalities. To conclude, here is another excerpt from the end of the book, which readers of this newsletter will likely cheer: You have to be sure.

## Chapter 4 : Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America by Barbara Ehrenreich

*In Bright-sided, Barbara Ehrenreich reveals how the positive thinking movement, though seemingly harmless, has in fact deluded America and played a role in some of the most destructive events in recent U.S. history. Far from just a healthy mindset, "bright-siding is an epidemic of self-deception that has spread to all circles of American life.*

## Chapter 5 : Bright-Sided Quotes by Barbara Ehrenreich

*A sharp-witted knockdown of America's love affair with positive thinking and an urgent call for a new commitment to realism Americans are a "positive" peopleâ€“cheerful, optimistic, and upbeat: this is our reputation as well as our self-image. But more than a temperament, being positive, we.*