

the psychologist

A to Z

P ...is for positivity



Suggested by
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'Being surrounded, mostly, with rapidly-becoming-grumpy-old-men in the *Psychologist* team, I thought I would suggest something upbeat! Each month I seek suggestions for #PsychAtoZ on Twitter – please get involved!'

There's a **downside of positivity**: when deployed at the wrong time or in the wrong amount, positivity has clear downsides for preparation, prevention, relationships, and even mental health. See Kate Sweeny's article from February 2017.

Positivity can even be brought to bear on trauma: see Stephen Joseph's November 2012 article 'What doesn't kill us...'

Some psychologists, including Tim Lomas writing for us in July 2016 on cross-cultural nuances of positivity, found the **first wave of positive psychology** 'daunting... It often gave the impression of being so



relentlessly upbeat that, if you weren't swept up by this spirit of positivity, you could feel like an outsider'.

Positivity in online comments can have a **disproportionate effect** on subsequent ratings, according to a 2013 study led by Lev Muchnik and covered on our Research Digest blog. Collaborating with a news-sharing website, they randomly assigned either a positive or negative first-rating, or no rating (control condition), to 101,281 real comments posted over five months. The first viewer of a comment rated positive by the researchers was 32 per cent more likely to add their own positive rating, as compared with the control condition.

A to Z

Tweet your suggestions for any letter to @psychmag using the hashtag #PsychAtoZ or email the editor on jon.sutton@bps.org.uk

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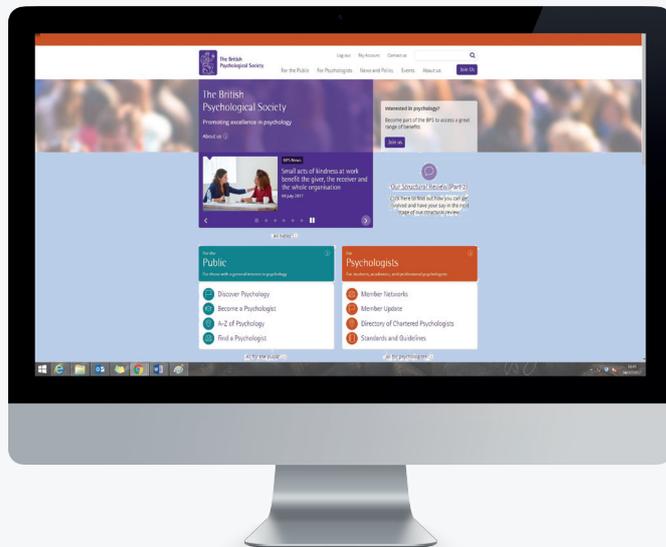
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Extract from The Charter