

Notice & Savor Positive Emotions

Savoring is the mindful act of engaging in thoughts or behaviors that heighten our good feelings about positive events (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). It includes anything that generates, intensifies, or prolongs enjoyment (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Savoring is about paying more attention to noticing and appreciating all the big and small positive things in our lives for as long as possible. It can be done about the past, present, or future: We can savor memories, current experiences, and future events.

WHY INCREASE SAVORING?

Savoring increases positive emotions (which improves mental and physical health), deepens gratitude, facilitates mindfulness, enhances engagement, and provides greater meaning in our lives (Bryant 1989; Bryant 2003; Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Bryant, Smart & King, 2005). A chart of “Nine Savoring Strategies to Boost Positive Emotions” is provided below.

DIFFERENCES IN SAVORING HABITS

While some people automatically savor, others tend to dampen positive emotions, which is associated with depressive symptoms and other mental health conditions (Quoidbach et al., 2010).

People also differ in their tendencies to savor past, present, or future events (Bryant, 2003). To analyze your habits, review the following to assess whether you have strengths in anticipating, savoring the present moment, and/or reminiscing:

Anticipating: Looking forward to positive events.

- I get pleasure from looking forward
- I get excited by anticipating in advance

Savoring The Present Moment: Intensifying and prolonging enjoyment of current experience.

- I know how to make the most of a good time
- I feel fully able to appreciate good things

Reminiscing: Looking back to rekindle positive feelings.

- I enjoy looking back on happy times
- I find it easy to rekindle the joy of happy memories

The full Savoring Beliefs Inventory scale is provided

below for you to measure your current savoring habits as well as track progress.

AVOID KILL-JOY THINKING

Some also have dampening habits that squelch positive emotions (Quoidbach, et al., 2010). Five common habits are listed below in the “Avoid Kill-Joy Thinking Habits” chart. Often, people engage in these thinking-habits automatically, without realizing what they’re doing. Be on guard against them. They are related to poor mental health, including depression.

LET’S PRACTICE

Below is an activity designed and tested to help you practice savoring the current moment (Hurley & Kwon, 2012).

1. Baseline Measure. To get started, take a survey that will measure your positive and negative emotions. One option is the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), which appears below.

2. Reflect. Recall 3 positive events that occurred last week, and list ways that you could’ve savored them:

Positive Events	How I Could Have Savored?
1.	
2.	
3.	

3. Practice. Next, over the next two weeks, concentrate on savoring the present moment throughout each day. Look at the 9 Savoring Strategies in the chart below and note any additional strategies that you have identified on your own. Use any strategy you’d like to help you savor experiences.

- Pay attention even to mundane things that you have to do regularly and that you typically do on automatic pilot.
- Really pay attention to the moment and the good parts of the experience—the good smells, sounds, tactile sensations, and emotions.
- Use a Savoring Log to keep track of how often you savor events each day. Just write a short note

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about the savored positive event. There's no need to write a detailed description—which might actually undermine your ability savor by being overly concrete or literal (Lyubomirsky, 2010).

- Find ways to remind yourself daily to savor the moment. Set a reminder on your calendar, leave yourself sticky notes, etc.
- At the end of the two weeks, take the SPANE again. Were there positive changes?

- Next, begin practicing your skills of anticipating and reminiscing about positive experiences.

Once you have a little practice, work on creating mental habits that incorporate savoring into your every-day life. Joyfully anticipate upcoming events, mindfully attend to all the goodness in the present, and reminisce about the good parts of past experiences. Science suggests it will benefit your well-being.

9 SAVORING STRATEGIES TO BOOST POSITIVE EMOTIONS

SHARE ("CAPITALIZE")	Share experiences and memories with others.
BUILD MEMORIES	Actively store images for future reminiscing. Take "mental photographs" (or real ones) to form vivid images.
SELF-CONGRATULATE	Tell yourself how proud or impressed you and others are of, e.g., achievements and personal successes.
COMPARE	Do "downward comparisons" – contemplate how much better off you are than you could be.
SHARPEN PERCEPTION	Intensify pleasure by focusing on certain stimuli and screening out others. Be vigilant in your attention to positive aspects of your experiences.
ABSORPTION	Try not to think; shut off self-talk. Be mindful without cognitive reflection.
EXPRESS	Express positive emotions through non-verbal behaviors. Smile, laugh, jump for joy, pump your fist in the air.
REFLECT ON TRANSIENCE	Remind yourself how fleeting the moment is and that you should enjoy it now; savor bitter-sweetness.
GRATITUDE	Contemplate the good things in your life and feel grateful.

AVOID KILL-JOY THINKING HABITS

SELF-DOUBT	Thinking "I don't deserve this."
SUPPRESSION	Hiding positive emotions due to, e.g., shyness, modesty, or fear. "People will think I'm bragging."
DISTRACTION	Thoughts (often worries) unrelated to current positive event. Thinking of other things you should be doing.
FAULT-FINDING	Paying attention to negative aspects of otherwise positive situations. Focusing on what could go wrong or how it could be better. "This is too good to be true."
NEGATIVE MENTAL TIME TRAVEL	Think about what has gone wrong in the past and how they likely will go wrong in the future. Attribute causes of good things in the past to external causes (e.g., "I won that motion because my opponent was weak, not due to my strengths") and negatively anticipate the future (e.g., "My good luck streak will end soon.").

(Nelis et al., 2016; Salzberg, 2014)

Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE)

The SPANE scale can help you evaluate progress on experiencing more positive than negative emotions through savoring and other activities discussed in other worksheets.

Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing during the past four weeks. Then report how much you experienced each of the following feelings on a scale of 1 to 5.

	1 Very Rarely or Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Very Often or Always
Positive	1	2	3	4	5
Negative	1	2	3	4	5
Good	1	2	3	4	5
Bad	1	2	3	4	5
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Joyful	1	2	3	4	5
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Contented	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring:

The measure can be used to derive an overall affect (i.e., emotions and mood) balance score, but can also be divided into positive and negative feelings scales.

- **Positive Feelings:** Add the scores for the 6 positive items: positive, good, pleasant, happy, joyful, and contented. The score can vary from 6 (lowest possible) to 30 (highest positive feelings score).
- **Negative Feelings:** Add the scores for the 6 negative items: negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, afraid, and angry. The score can vary from 6 (lowest possible) to 30 (highest negative feelings score).
- **Affect Balance:** Subtract the negative feelings score from the positive feelings score. The difference that results can vary from -24 (unhappiest possible) to 24 (highest affect balance possible).

Source: Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39, 247-266.

Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI)

The SBI can help you measure your current mental habits related to savoring as well as track your progress on savoring skills.

For each statement listed below, please circle the one number that best indicates how much you disagree or agree with the particular statement. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		
1. Before a good thing happens, I look forward to it in ways that give me pleasure in the present.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. It's hard for me to hang onto a good feeling for very long.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. I enjoy looking back on happy times from my past.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. I don't like to look forward to good times too much before they happen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. I know how to make the most of a good time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. I don't like to look back at good times too much after they've taken place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. I feel a joy of anticipation when I think about upcoming good things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8. When it comes to enjoying myself, I'm my own "worst enemy."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9. I can make myself feel good by remembering pleasant events from my past.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10. For me, anticipating what upcoming good events will be like is basically a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11. When something good happens, I can make my enjoyment of it last longer by thinking or doing certain things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12. When I reminisce about pleasant memories, I often start to feel sad or disappointed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13. I can enjoy pleasant events in my mind before they actually occur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14. I can't seem to capture the joy of happy moments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15. I like to store memories of fun times that I go through so that I can recall them later.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16. It's hard for me to get very excited about fun times before they actually take place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17. I feel fully able to appreciate good things that happen to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18. I find that thinking about good times from the past is basically a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Savoring Beliefs Inventory – Continued

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
19. I can make myself feel good by imagining what a happy time that is about to happen will be like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I don't enjoy things as much as I should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. It's easy for me to rekindle the joy from pleasant memories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. When I think about a pleasant event before it happens, I often start to feel uneasy or uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. It's easy for me to enjoy myself when I want to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. For me, once a fun time is over and gone, it's best not to think about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Scoring

- The SBI is made up of 4 sub-scales, which represent different types of savoring habits: (1) Anticipating, (2) Savoring the Moment, (3) Reminiscing, and (4) the SBI Total score. You can score your results as follows:
- Anticipating subscale score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following four items: 1, 7, 13, 19. (b) Sum up responses to the following four items: 4, 10, 16, & 22. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed score for the Anticipating subscale.
- Savoring the Moment subscale score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following four items: 5, 11, 17, 23. (b) Sum up responses to the following four items: 2, 8, 14, & 20. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed score for the Savoring the Moment subscale.
- Reminiscing subscale score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following four items: 3, 9, 15, & 21. (b) Sum up responses to the following four items: 6, 12, 18, & 24. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed score for the Reminiscing subscale.
- Total SBI score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following 12 (odd-numbered) items: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, & 23. (b) Sum up responses to the following 12 (even-numbered) items: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, & 24. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed SBI Total score.