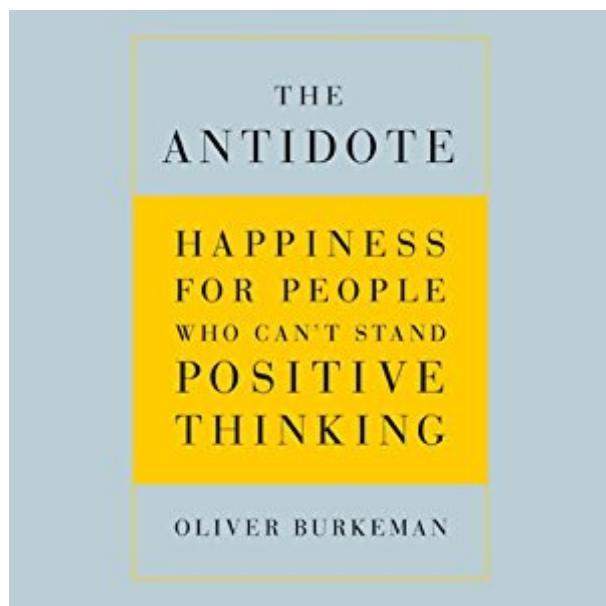


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# The Antidote: Happiness For People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking



## Synopsis

The Antidote is a series of journeys among people who share a single, surprising way of thinking about life. What they have in common is a hunch about human psychology: that it's our constant effort to eliminate the negative that causes us to feel so anxious, insecure, and unhappy. And that there is an alternative "negative path" to happiness and success that involves embracing the things we spend our lives trying to avoid. It is a subversive, galvanizing message, which turns out to have a long and distinguished philosophical lineage ranging from ancient Roman Stoic philosophers to Buddhists. Oliver Burkeman talks to life coaches paid to make their clients' lives a living hell, and to maverick security experts such as Bruce Schneier, who contends that the changes we've made to airport and aircraft security since the 9/11 attacks have actually made us less safe. And then there are the "backwards" business gurus, who suggest not having any goals at all and not planning for a company's future. Burkeman's new audiobook is a witty, fascinating, and counterintuitive listen that turns decades of self-help advice on its head and forces us to rethink completely our attitudes toward failure, uncertainty, and death.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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## Customer Reviews

This is my second, "I'm skeptical of self-help books but decided to write one anyways" books. The first was Dan Harris' 10% Happier which I found to be a very effective guide to meditation written by someone who wouldn't seem to be interested in meditation. The Antidote is another one of these books and I enjoyed it quite a bit. Oliver Burkeman is a fantastic writer and I was perpetually entertained by the dry wit sprinkled throughout the book. Throughout the course of the book, he

covers various different philosophies that go against the grain of the common refrain that we must stay positive. By looking to long standing traditions like Stoicism to Buddhism, he shows how dwelling on the negative can sometimes make life worth living. By analyzing the meaning of a museum of failed consumer products and the day of the dead, he shows how ruminating on death and failure can add spice to life. In addition to covering an interesting topic with interesting examples, this book also stands out because of its journalistic writing style. Unlike a lot of self-help books that are heavy on advice and short on narrative, *The Antidote* really takes us on Oliver Burkeman's journey. In the end, the title of the book says everything. This book is truly for anyone who can't stand positive thinking. It's entertaining and illuminating, which is more than I can say for most of the self help books I've read

Burkeman pulls from Buddhism, stoicism, cognitive behavioral therapy, and doubts on the concept of the self. The mixture is uneven, but particularly in the first five chapters does pull from cutting edge research that matches up with ancient theories of psychology and mind. The framing is against the positive-thinking movement is only pronounced in the introduction. This is not Brightsided and readers looking for that should go to the book by that title. The chapter on memento more and Dia De Las Meurtos was a little more slight than I thought it should be so it cost the book a star. The book is a quick read and generally insightfully.

The subtitle "happiness for people who can't stand positive thinking" leads one to believe that the book may be a parody of self help gurus who preach positivity and motivation but lack the depth to transform lives and confront the grim realities of life. What the book really contains is a very well written and thoroughly researched book that is an enjoyable read. Burkeman writes in a style that is very conversational yet he can seamlessly integrate serious research and experiences with alternatives to positive thinking. He can be humorous at times but mostly in a self-deprecating way that is refreshing. Burkeman traces routes through Stoicism, Buddhism, and other philosophic practices for remaining grounded in reality. He cites a variety of studies and includes an interaction with Eckhart Tolle. He concludes the book with a fascinating look at the work of Ernest Becker. While it may sound like the book is about pessimism, it's really not. Burkeman acknowledges man's need for optimism and a meaning that is "larger" than himself/herself.

I'd say the book is inspiring, but that will sound as a pun on the subject. :) Rather, I'll say the book served me as a very nice and refreshing introduction into one of the branches of philosophy and

psychology. The language is light, the text is informative; no empty words, as it could have been expected from the author who is a journalist. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who is in awe at enormous amount of the belief-schools and is searching on how to better grapple through the flowing invitations to all kinds of spiritual practices. This bit of knowledge will surely help to get a good start for authentic opinion on how to deal with all this motivational and spiritual upheaval of the modern day... :)

I'm a rational and logical person who enjoys life within reason. There are things that I do for a living and also for recreation that positive thinking will have no bearing on, for example cooking food for many hundreds of people at a time, regularly, and deep sea fishing in a medium sized power boat with family and friends; all of which require knowledge and planning to have a happy end result. This is why I love this book. It's easy to read and relates lots of ideas well. There is no reason (unless you have one!) to be unnecessarily glum, but this book helps a person value their own reasoning in life if they are the sort of person who can clearly see that the glass is not half full. This book has made me happy from just reading it. Trying to explain the ideas to some friends and relatives has been frustrating, but also reiterates why they do not have the end game responsibilities that I choose. Positive thinking may make you feel good momentarily but doesn't mean s\*\*\* if you haven't properly planned for a situation. This book doesn't mean you won't be a lucky bastard but .....D

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