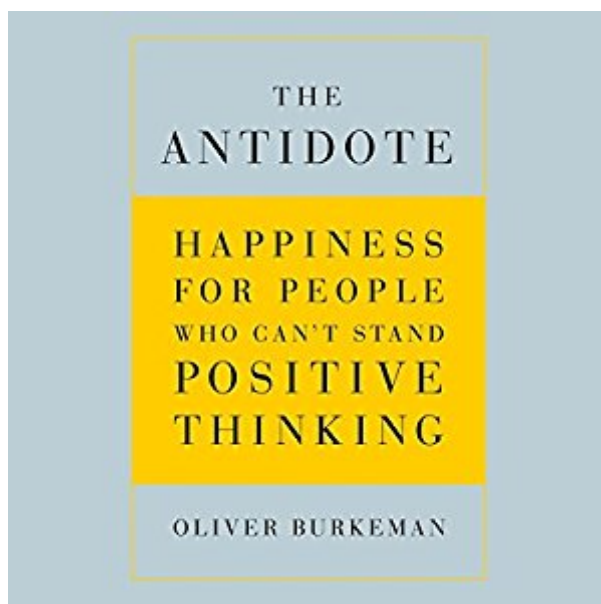


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# The Antidote: Happiness For People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking



## 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

I am a sucker. Feature a writer on National Public Radio, and the interview is mildly entertaining, I will buy the book. I will also probably read it -- the only question remaining: will I actually like it? The Antidote, for sure, is personally fascinating. I abhor positive thinking, gravitating instead toward reality. But I didn't come by this easily. In my early 20's, I became obsessed with all manner of self

help, positive thinking and new age spirituality. I devoured (embarrassing) self help books, feeling temporarily inspired by them while making feeble attempts to put the words into practice. Inevitably, I'd feel like a failure for not being able to be perfect -- or even slightly "better" than I was before; I'd feel consumed with anger and resentment, too, that my problems didn't magically go away; that life wasn't easier. It took me a LONG TIME to realize that my faux spirituality was primarily the cause of my dissatisfaction and pain. My actual problems were far less annoying than the books I was reading to solve them. I wish I'd read *The Antidote* 15 years ago. *The Antidote* travels familiar -- to me, a junkie, at least -- terrain. If you've ever read a book on buddhism (through a pop culture lens), for instance, much of this won't be new: accept life as it is. But the context will; the author blends storytelling, cutting edge research, personal anecdote and wry humor into this compelling case for what he refers to as the negative path; the wisdom of the Stoics as a sane approach to life. I am torn as to how many stars to offer; for whatever reason, I wasn't in love with the book as a whole. The author is certainly a talented writer, but I felt like the book went on and on. And on.

I picked up *Antidote* after hearing an interview with the author on Slate.com. The book is well-written, concise, interesting, and doesn't labor any point too much. The author clearly spent a lot of time researching the book, and some of his experiences were memorable, being presented in a witty, self-deprecating way. The discussion presented in the book is more philosophical than of the self-help variety. Self-help books are traditionally positive thinking books while philosophy books are not, so it is a natural choice. That is not to say that the book is dense or inaccessible. It is highly accessible to any reader with copious examples to illustrate its points. I came to this book with previous experience with Buddhism, some knowledge of Stoicism, and a tendency to feel nauseous when encountering the positive thinking mantra. Before reading this book, I assumed that this made me a bad, "negative" person, but after reading it I realized that, if anything, my so-called negativity was more beneficial to me than the positivity that many people are desperate to cultivate in themselves. As the book explains, being "negative" doesn't mean harping on the downside of everything, but it does mean taking a path away from strict positivity. It explains that most people ignore the negative sides of life, trying to wish them away in rosy colored aphorisms and mantras. Those negative aspects, however, are part of life and being unable to confront them and help people accept them is a big part of why the positive thinking manuals fail. Some of the best parts of the book:- I found the idea that "you don't have to feel like doing something to do it" a relief.

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The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking Dealing with People You

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