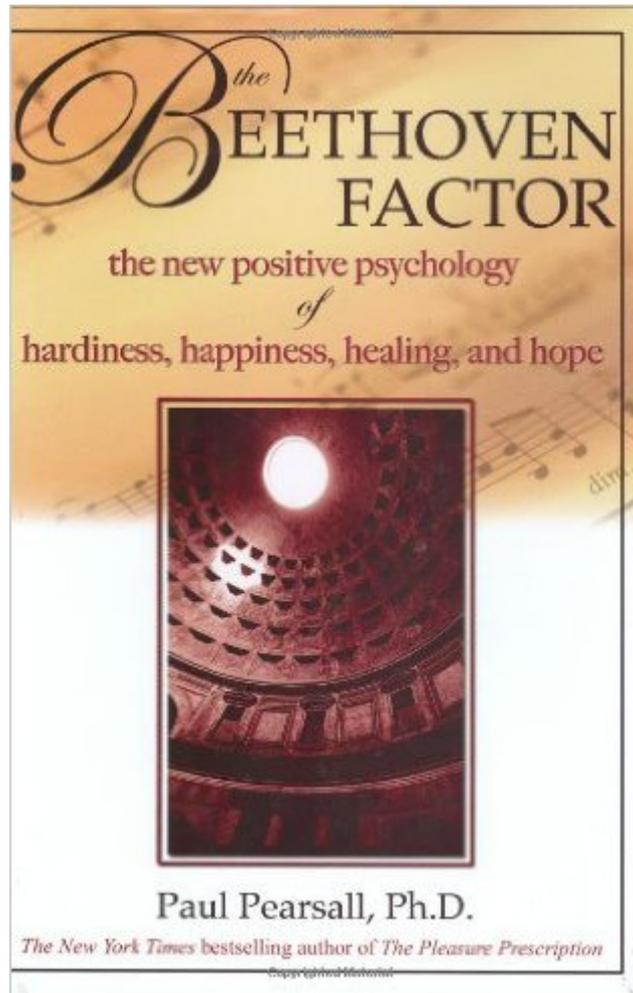


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The Beethoven Factor: The New Positive Psychology Of Hardiness, Happiness, Healing, And Hope



Synopsis

True or false: Stress is good for you. Conventional wisdom insists that the statement is false, that stress is a thief robbing us of our ability to relax and enjoy life to its fullest. But for centuries, poets and philosophers have celebrated the ups and downs of life as the very essence of living, the spice that enables us to taste life fully. So who's right? The new, fast-emerging positive psychology movement is affirming the timeless wisdom of the philosophers by showing that it is not stress itself preventing us from enjoying life, but our negative reaction to stress that does the damage. Positive psychology confirms that rather than shrinking from adversity, we must become engaged by it and thrive through it before we can savor all the sweetness life has to offer. Dr. Paul Pearsall, bestselling author and a leading figure in the field of positive psychology, calls this proven phenomenon of converting stress into personal discovery and transformation Stress-Induced Growth, and says it is the essential element in unlocking your life's full potential. In *The Beethoven Factor*, Pearsall introduces you to the people he calls thrivers, individuals who face life's unavoidable challenges head-on and grow stronger and more vital as a result. Included are the amazing and inspiring stories of these so-called thrivers, including the composer Ludwig von Beethoven who wrote his best-loved symphonies despite total deafness, and the author himself who overcame Stage IV cancer. Pearsall explains that these thrivers have important lessons to teach us about the life-enhancing art of flourishing. Though rare, thrivers are not unique; we all have the innate ability not only to weather life's tumults, but to become better than we ever were before. *The Beethoven Factor* gives you the tools to uncover your own "thriveability" and begin experiencing the richness, beauty, and true pleasure of living.

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Customer Reviews

Pearsall is Hawaiian, and he combines insights from his native culture, his personal experience with extreme challenge, and the wisdom of the emerging field of Positive Psychology. He contends that we can choose and/or learn how to be "thrivers," i.e. to move beyond victim or even recovery status, and experience "Stress Induced Growth". We can grow and be transformed through the pain and suffering of our lives. He cites many examples from his interviews, of people who have indeed experienced what an outsider might call horrific experiences-- and shows how their unique perspective (which he assures us is learnable) has let them create a "good life" despite their problems. Pearsall cites more scientific research that substantiates his position, so the reader who wants "hard data" can follow his references. This is a useful and even inspiring contribution to the Positive Psychology literature -- I gave it a "4" because I wearied of Pearsall's frequent references to his own (significant) crisis experiences. IMHO, the point was made without repeating his personal credentials as a thriver every page or two. Is it worth reading? Absolutely.

After hearing Dr. Pearsall at a conference in Kauai last year, I was so inspired by his keynote presentation that I immediately ordered "The Beethoven Factor" and "Toxic Success." I began reading "The Beethoven Factor" as soon as I returned home. I devoured the first half, and found its philosophy exceptionally meaningful to me personally. That said, I never finished the book, putting it back on the shelf half read. Pearsall began rambling and repeating, and my annoyance sent clear signals that I couldn't finish the book and thrive at the same time :-). Boredom drove me to another selection in my pile of "read this next" books. Last week, I began reading "Toxic Success." That one's a horse of a different color. I'm nearly done with it, and must tell you that it is wonderful, exceeding my wildest expectations! Dr. Pearsall is truly brilliant, but I think his brain got stuck midway through Beethoven's Fifth!

I read this book, excited to hear someone talking about how psychology can be used to study more than just dysfunction. However, as other reviewers have pointed out, the author repeats himself unnecessarily throughout the book. He also uses anecdotal evidence almost exclusively--which means most of his conclusions or platitudes with little impact. The book *Authentic Happiness* by Martin Seligman is a much better place to turn if you're interested in positive psychology.

I heard the author on the radio and bought the book. What makes this book unique is its attempt to dispute all of these "facts" about psychology and health in general. A lot of what is taken as fact by the health community is actually in dispute. If I had to sum up what I learned it would be: 1. Disease and evil exist for a reason in the world and these problems can be used for our benefit. 2. Our reaction to what happens to us is what determines happiness not how much we have compared to others. 3. Having the personality of a thriver will give you health benefits far in excess of traditional measures such as lowering your cholesterol or going to the gym. This book will really open your eyes and it's filled with unforgettable stories.

The author's key point is that we can consciously modify our explanatory system, construe meaning out of adversities and rise above them. I benefited from reading the book. However, it is not a well organized book. The author unnecessarily repeated himself multiple times. I spent quite some time reading through the book but often found same ideas scattered all over the book. I wish the author could organize his ideas more clearly and concisely. In addition, the font is smaller than regular books, so it is not very comfortable to read. If the author didn't repeat himself multiple times, he should have been able to say what he wanted to say more concisely thus could use larger font. The book is organized into two parts. In part 1, the author described five phases of coping with crisis (worsening, victimizing, surviving, recovering, and thriving). Then he pointed out characteristics of thrivers. He also emphasized the difference between positive psychology and pathology based psychology. Moreover he described a curriculum for students studying "thriviology". In part 2: the thriver's manual. The author discussed the four characters of thrivers: hardiness, happiness, healing, and hope. In my opinion, the meat of the book is mainly between pg 130-230.

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