

## The Power of Positivity

It was an unbearably steamy August afternoon in New York City, the kind of sweaty day that makes people sullen with discomfort.

I was heading back to a hotel, and as I stepped onto a bus up Madison Avenue I was startled by the driver, a middle-aged black man with an enthusiastic smile, who welcomed me with a friendly, "Hi! How you doing?" as I got on, a greeting he proffered to everyone else who entered as the bus wormed through the thick midtown traffic.



Each passenger was as startled as I, and, locked into the morose mood of the day, few returned his greeting. But as the bus crawled uptown through the gridlock, a slow, rather magical transformation occurred.

The driver gave a running monologue for our benefit, a lively commentary on the passing scene around us: there was a terrific sale at that store, a wonderful exhibit at this museum, did you hear about the new movie that just opened at that cinema down the block? His delight in the rich possibilities the city offered was infectious.



By the time people got off the bus, each in turn had shaken off the sullen shell they had entered with, and when the driver shouted out a "So long, have a great day!" each gave a smiling response.

The memory of that encounter has stayed with me for close to twenty years. When I rode that Madison Avenue bus, I had just finished my own doctorate in psychology—but there was scant attention paid in the psychology of the day to just how such a transformation could happen.

Psychological science knew little or nothing of the mechanics of emotion. And yet, imagining the spreading virus of good feeling that must have rippled through the city, starting from passengers on his bus, I saw that this bus driver was an urban peacemaker of sorts, wizard like in his power to transmute the sullen irritability that seethed in his passengers, to soften and open their hearts a bit.

*Written by Daniel Goleman and taken from the book "Emotional Intelligence".*

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