

The Signs of *Silent* Suffering: Toxic Positivity

Emotional pain and suffering show up in a number of ways. Sometimes it's very apparent that someone is hurting and other times it's hidden. In fact, these silent signs can often go unnoticed and ignored far longer than more outward Signs of Suffering. Learning the silent signs, recognizing when they are happening, and intercepting them is critical in creating healthy emotional reactions and habits.



TOXIC POSITIVITY

Toxic positivity is when "negative" feelings and experiences are covered up with layers of "positive" words, feelings, and reactions. All feelings are authentic, whether happy or hurtful. Allowing ourselves to feel is positive, no matter the emotion. Toxic positivity may be used to mask emotional suffering by deflecting emotional struggles and are used as a distraction from what a person is really feeling.

Have you ever felt like your emotions were being dismissed or belittled by someone telling you to "just be positive"? There are numerous phrases, like "just smile", that are common responses that perpetuate toxic positivity. These words deny, minimize, and invalidate human emotional experiences, even if they are said with good intent.

Toxic positivity thrives in places when people try to cover up negative emotions with excessive positivity. We're all under the microscope, and it's easier than ever to feel pressure to present the perfect lifestyle.

TOXIC POSITIVITY LOOKS LIKE:

- Hiding/Masking your true feelings
- Using platitudes, like "it could be worse", to dismiss "negative" emotions and reframe them as "positive"
- Trying to "just get on with it" by stuffing/dismissing an emotion(s)
- Feeling guilty for feeling what you feel
- Minimizing other people's experiences with "feel good" quotes or statements to provide false reassurance
- Giving unsolicited advice or your perspective instead of listening and validating other emotional experiences
- Shaming or chastising others for expressing frustration or anything other than positivity
- Brushing off things that are bothering you with an "it is what it is" or "fake it till you make it"