

# SANE AUSTRALIA

SANE Australia Online Peer Group

Date: 2/12/2021

**Title:** Toxic Positivity

**Description:** Have you ever had someone say to you: 'Lift your chin up! it's not so bad' or maybe 'you can overcome anything with the right attitude!?' These comments are often intended to make us feel better but can make us feel worse. This is sometimes called 'toxic positivity'. Join us, in this Online Peer Group to discuss Toxic Positivity, its impacts and how you might respond!

**Hi everyone! Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about toxic positivity. First, we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands we are all joining this event from. We pay deep respect to the Elders of those Countries, past and present, and we further extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people joining this group tonight. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land. This is a new peer support service we are running! Because of this, we really value your thoughts on how it goes, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this chat for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to**

earthling95(PSW)

provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can access the survey here now: [https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW](https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW) Tonight, peer support workers @earthling95 and @RiverSeal will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of toxic positivity. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both- anyone can benefit from thinking about toxic positivity and how that can affect us. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation could be heavy in nature as we may talk about our mental health struggles. @Basil, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. If you're having any technical difficulties, please see our FAQ (<https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/chat-faqs#what-if-i-am-having-a-tough-time-and-need-immediate-support>) . If you can't find an answer to your question there, please message @Basil directly. We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together and expand our ideas of toxic positivity, how it might show up and the impacts it can have, as well as how we might be able to challenge or harness it! Lastly, just so you're aware, the transcript of this group will be made available for download afterwards on SANE's Peer Support website.

Shaz51

Hello my @RiverSeal (PSW) xx

earthling95(PSW) howdy :)

RiverSeal (PSW) Hi @Shaz51 Welcome to the event

Shaz51 Hi @earthling95

earthling95(PSW) Hello @Shaz51 nice to e-meet you :)

BPDSurvivor Hello

earthling95(PSW) **Welcome everyone! We'll be starting the discussion shortly and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join 😊 In the meantime, feel free to introduce yourselves! I'm @earthling95**

RiverSeal (PSW) Hello @BPDSurvivor Welcome!

**earthling95(PSW)** Hello @BPDSurvivor! :)

BPDSurvivor Just a quick question. In the past, I was able to tag members into discussion here. I can seem to do it anymore. Any hinters?  
BPDSurvivor Can't \*

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor mine is working ok at the moment

**RiverSeal (PSW)** ARE you using the @ symbol  
BPDSurvivor Yes. It doesn't work. I'm doing what earthling is doing, but names are not appearing.

**earthling95(PSW)** Mine isn't working :(  
BPDSurvivor I've tried on my laptop, iPad and phone  
BPDSurvivor Phew @earthling... so it's not just me  
BPDSurvivor That's okay. I won't take up any more time about this

Shaz51 @RiverSeal (PSW) , @BPDSurvivor xx  
@BPDSurvivor Maybe we just work with it as it is tonight and we can have someone who has skills contact you through the Formus afterwards?  
**RiverSeal (PSW)**

**earthling95(PSW)** **Starting off now ..What does toxic positivity mean to you?**

the magician hi people  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** Hi @the magician Welcome

**earthling95(PSW)** hello @themagician, welcome!  
BPDSurvivor Hi Shaz and magician!

Shaz51 @earthling95 boot sure but love to learn more xx  
earthling95(PSW)

whenever I read "good vibes only".. it reminds me of toxic positivity

the magician

how do you highlight peoples names in blue?

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

I feel that sometimes people are to positive about life when I have had many challenges

BPDSurvivor

Toxic positivity... I'm very interested in this. I believe it is when people keep pointed out the positives in things that they forget to acknowledge the big feelings and experiences of people.

BPDSurvivor

That's just a guess

BPDSurvivor

Hi @frankwalker !

**earthling95(PSW)**

"chin up".. "it could have been worse".. "be grateful"

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

Thats right @BPDSurvivor people forget the big things sometimes

the magician

the you'll be right statement is toxic positivity. its sad that that attitude is out there but when i was young going off to school that statement got me through the day everyday it was reinforcement.

**earthling95(PSW)**

I hear you @themagician. It's almost brings up feelings of not being 'allowed' to feel other emotions

frankwalker

Hi. To me, toxic positivity is the sort of well-meaning but ultimately unhelpful advice people tend to offer to others as a kind of 'cure-all'. Think of phrases like "every cloud has a silver lining", "it's always darkest before the dawn". No attempt is made to understand or get to know the person who is suffering.

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

@the magician that's such a common phrase in Australia

**earthling95(PSW)**

**How do you react to toxic positivity when you notice it in life?**

the magician

when climbing a creek and hill in the country i was feeling nervous. my sister says what are you ninety? that can be taken both ways its your choice.

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

Welcome @frankwalker Well-menaing is not always the best option but people do it all the time

the magician

it can be a double edged sword not understanding or encouraging

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician People can be really hurtful at times by saying things like that

BPDSurvivor Sometimes I think toxic positivity is as 'toxic' and unhelpful as toxic negativity. When I notice toxic positivity, I tend to get very frustrated and feel the person is not hearing me....ie. that things are hard. Nowadays, I don't notice toxic positivity much.

**earthling95(PSW)** I know that some of my friends mean well but over the years I have become mindful about whom I share my feelings with.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor It's so important to be heard  
the magician people expect you to brush it all aside. being listened and heard validates. and sometimes you have to provide your own validation.

BPDSurvivor true @earthling95. For me, I probably don't notice toxic positivity much anymore because I simply don't hang around those people

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician Needing validation is part of the human experience I think

**earthling95(PSW)** I struggle with conflict but have found some ways over the years to communicate if I am not feeling heard.

BPDSurvivor that's a great way to balance it @the magician. I like that

**earthling95(PSW)** So true @RiverSeal (PSW)

**earthling95(PSW)** I wish this was normalized

the magician how do you communicate it? earthling95

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor You do need to pick who you hang around with in life  
the magician stray away from the non good ones  
BPDSurvivor Yep! Sounds good @the magician and @riverseal  
the magician

its about being on a different plane.

**earthling95(PSW)** @themagician- "I appreciate your support but I want you to know that this situation has brought up \_\_\_feelings for me. I need to process them rather than just putting a bandaid by thinking positive. I think it's okay if I don't want to be grateful right now. "

BPDSurvivor Thanks for that @earthling95!

frankwalker There are many people out there who when they hear someone is in pain their instinct is to try and 'fix' that person's problems, or offer some kind of practical solution. Many people find it very difficult simply to sit there and listen to another person without trying to help that person. Yet often that is all many of us need in a time of crisis. To be heard.  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** I tend to keep a pretty tight circle anyway and I get caught up in it if I experience toxic positivity

**earthling95(PSW)** I had to learn these boundaries with family.  
BPDSurvivor You're so right @frankwalker

**earthling95(PSW)** **How do you feel when toxic positivity is something you notice in yourself?**

BPDSurvivor Sometimes, it's not about 'fixing' things

**earthling95(PSW)** True @BPDSurvivor . There's a time and place for everything. Feelings and emotions can't be 'fixed'.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** I have seen it in myself from time to time and it can creep up on you. I try and refocus and think more practically.  
BPDSurvivor @earthling95 , I reframe my language so that I acknowledge and validate others' feelings rather than just sending off positive vibes

**earthling95(PSW)** I definitely find it creeping up- especially when I am overwhelmed and want to avoid feeling my emotions.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor I love the word "reframe" it's so useful in life. That's a good method!  
BPDSurvivor

I find toxic positivity sometimes takes over when I'm in a rush to answer someone and don't make the time to validate their big feelings. I think next time, it's better I don't answer because it can do more harm than good.

frankwalker

I doubt I could ever fall into preaching toxic positivity. I remember how insulting it felt to me, I would never want to inflict it upon other people.

the magician

sorry that this may have brought up issues for you. sometimes understanding of another is limited to what we can truly understand of other people anyway

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

@BPDSurvivor It's good to communicate sometimes even if you think you might say the wrong thing. You can always talk it out afterwards to correct yourself! So many times people do nothing

the magician

listening becomes important

**earthling95(PSW)**

yes.. sometimes just sitting with silence is the most comforting feeling in the world.

**earthling95(PSW)**

**How can we express genuine optimism in our interactions without being overwhelming with toxic positivity?**

BPDSurvivor

You're right @riverseal.. otherwise I may fall into the trap of pure avoidance

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

I feel that sometimes I've taken on that attitude because I'm unsure of the situation or how to react that peace from silence should be endorsed with other activities/practices that have the same effect. every time you want a piece of silence you can return to it. if we are confident and centred in ourselves it shows.

the magician

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

I think that genuine optimism is about understanding the negative outcomes of a situation and not just being focused on positivity

**earthling95(PSW)**

Yes and it focuses on validation, support and providing a safe space.

**earthling95(PSW)**

whatever that may look like for the person.

the magician

yes feeling blessed even in darkness

**RiverSeal (PSW)**

@the magician Peace can come in many forms not just silence

frankwalker

@earthling95 one way I think is to observe and focus on what that person is able to do. Build them up. You could say things like "that was really courageous of you to share that with me"

**earthling95(PSW)** thank you for sharing @frankwalker <3  
BPDSurvivor That's awesome to acknowledge the person's strengths @frankwalder

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @frankwalker "that was really courageous of you to share that with me" Great thing to say to someone!!

the magician i call the peace happy factors. noticing others strengths makes you want to be a better person.  
frankwalker You gotta focus on the little wins to start with, I think :relaxed:  
frankwalker @earthling95 you're very welcome :relaxed:

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician When you start seeing people for their strengths you see them totally differently  
**earthling95(PSW)** "I hear you. I will support you through thick and thin, you don't have to go through this aone"  
**earthling95(PSW)** alone\*

the magician knowing that you are capable of major change. you are the one in control. something to be learnt.

**earthling95(PSW)** It's a balance between making space for both hope and their reality.  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician Change and learning go hand in hand and thats a great attitude  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** I think you can hand genuine interest in other people and not just making conversation

the magician the balance of genuine optimism and negativity is like a wave. its like every time i have to concentrate on my new bike.

**earthling95(PSW)** It's a tricky one hey  
**earthling95(PSW)** we're all learning and unlearning

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician waves of different attitudes and be challenging and it's good to have strategies to cope when you need to

the magician stepping stones.....  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** I think improving our knowledge by being genuine is a great way to interact

**earthling95(PSW)** **How can toxic positivity negatively impact our experiences?**

the magician feeling like someone just chucked a bucket of water over your genuine struggle

**RiverSeal (PSW)** I can feel that people are not really in tune with life and think that everything is just great all the time. I can put me off talking to them sometimes too

BPDSurvivor I think toxic positivity will eventually break down relationships.  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** So true @BPDSurvivor

the magician people who cant talk things through or air themselves outloud.

**earthling95(PSW)** I think for myself toxic positivity or forced gratitude feels like getting stuck in a shame spiral.

BPDSurvivor Just like I steer away from people who are chronically NEGATIVE, i most likely will do the same for someone who is chronically positive!

**earthling95(PSW)** It can foster my inner critic to tell me that my emotions are bad. I am a bad person for feeling a certain way.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician can be challenging when people think out loud and don't talk things through if others don't agree

the magician people like that are there for the good times and not the bad.

frankwalker Toxic positivity leads people to blame themselves for not being able to lift themselves out of misery. They assume that it's their fault, they didn't try hard enough to stay positive etc.

the magician very good point frankwalker

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @earthling95 the inner critic is a fantastic tool

the magician how does it work?

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @frankwalker self blame can be really taxing on your attitudes

**earthling95(PSW)** Thats the thing.. the inner critic is always working and doesn't need a reason to stop its chatter. Mindfulness can help :)

frankwalker The inner critic can be a force for good, however you have to be able to read it for what it is

**earthling95(PSW)** so true!

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician it's like you see your own self and fault yourself which can be both positive and negative at times

the magician positive self image. acknowledging your down points.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** I can get caught up and lose sight of what is practical in life if I find myself to positive "toxic"

the magician i try to say if i could do anything i wanted what would be stopping me? why not be that person.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician we all have faults so it's great to acknowledge them

**earthling95(PSW)** love that!

**earthling95(PSW)** **What strengths help us to notice toxic positivity in our interactions?**

the magician fake listening, lots of ahufs

**earthling95(PSW)** "don't worry"

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician life has it's limitations for us all we just always see them but we control out own destiny

BPDSurvivor Reading people's body language helps...it's not just about what people say but how they use body language to communicate  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** \*don't

the magician if you worry it will make it worse  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** Having the strength to see how you are affecting others around you can really help you in your interactions

**earthling95(PSW)** Mindfulness and taking a step back from the interaction. It's not always necessary to come up with a reply.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician Worrying is a difficult thing to overcome at times and it usually makes things worse

**earthling95(PSW)** There have been times when my some of my friends said nothing but just held my hand as I wept. I felt so held and comforted.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @earthling95 Friends that can just be there for you when you need are really valuable in life

the magician i have become too selfish in my own space

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician something we can all probably admit to a little bit

the magician i meet a lot of people have close family and friendly neighbours but not really friends

**earthling95(PSW)** **If you were to challenge someone who was expressing toxic positivity what would that look like to you?**

the magician i think you need to point out that the person with the difficulty is being human .

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician I'm the same really and it can be really challenging but finding spaces like this is really valuable too  
**RiverSeal (PSW)** I think I would point out that there are less positive outcomes in every situation too and life doesn't always work out in your favour

BPDSurvivor

@earthling95, I'm not sure I'd challenge someone about their toxic positivity. I'd pick my battles. I don't think I want to cause them to 'feel bad' in anyway.... Then again, I HAVE challenged people expressing toxic negativity...i simply give them a dose of toxic positivity... hope that balances it out!

the magician life isn't supposed to be fair. but out of trauma comes growth.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician the human experience has both positive and negative outcomes for sure

**earthling95(PSW)** I struggle with being assertive sometimes. I hear you @BPDSurvivor sometimes disengaging can be the best option.

BPDSurvivor so perhaps, in order to challenge toxic positivity, i'd give them a does of toxic negativity? I can't see that happening, but just a thought LOL

**earthling95(PSW)** "choose my battles".. love this!

**earthling95(PSW)** Haha that made me chuckle @BPDSurvivor

the magician sometimes people don't mean what they say either and can be flippant or abrupt  
the magician biting tongue

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor creating conflict is a tricky situation sometimes! Picking battles is a very rounded approach. Two different attitudes that each might work at times

BPDSurvivor Come to think of it, i do know someone who 'suffers' from toxic positivity... in the end, i don't want to talk to her, and neither do people around me. The word goes 'she's too positive'.... so yes, I believe toxic positivity can really affect relationships. Hence, if I really wanted to befriend her, I'd make an effort to challenge her positivity by pointing out REALITY - with evidence and all!

**earthling95(PSW)** Makes sense! Love this approach.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician Some people do often just say things without having any meaning or knowledge of what they are talking about

**earthling95(PSW)** Expressing toxic positivity is something we can all experience so how can you refocus your thoughts?

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor Creating and maintaining relationships is very important in life

the magician concentrate on the main message you want to express  
the magician people happen for a reason and a season, sometimes a lifetime.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** I refocus my thoughts by how I feel others are reacting to me. I like to feel that the conversation is flowing and not one sided.

BPDSurvivor The first step to refocusing my thoughts is to recognise that toxic positivity has perked up its head. Then it is about knowing the purpose of your conversation and asking myself, will continuing this toxic positivity help me achieve the goal of my communication? If not.... take a detour!

the magician putting things into perspective and monitoring your self talk.

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor I'm sure that toxic positivity has it's place and being able to recognise that time is a real strength  
BPDSurvivor That's a good point @riverseal about one-sided conversation... however, I'm also mindful of people who struggle with conversing, particularly those with additional needs...

**earthling95(PSW)** Sometimes I tell myself- it's on them, maybe they shame themselves for having 'bad emotions'. I can speak my truth.  
**earthling95(PSW)** breathing and relaxing my shoulders helps bring things into perspective

BPDSurvivor When I speak with people who have autism, I don't feel it flows, but I know I need to continue in order to get the message across in a way that helps...

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @the magician I have had to learn to put things in perspective through my journey with mental health. It's a great skill  
the magician to have but it's something I still work on at times

some people become entrenched from other people and find it hard to relate or to communicate and reach out to anyone. because o their experiences.

BPDSurvivor      yes @the magician... precisely

**earthling95(PSW)**      so true!

**earthling95(PSW)**      excellent point

**RiverSeal (PSW)**      Yea that's so true @the magician

**RiverSeal (PSW)**      isolation is a really challenging aspect with mental health but the are things we can do to stay connected

**earthling95(PSW)**      **Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what was it that you took away? 😊**

BPDSurvivor      Sometimes I actually use toxic positivity to 'brush people off' because I want them to problem solve and work things out for themselves rather than being spoon-fed.

**RiverSeal (PSW)**      I learned that everyone has a similar view point and we all have great strategies for coping with challenges. Great chat tonight!!

the magician      that psychosocial peer groups are so important and there need to be more of them. even just like this but F2F meditation discussing over a coffee.

**earthling95(PSW)**      Thank you for sharing your experiences and thoughts everyone. I felt heard and validated :)

BPDSurvivor      I've learnt a lot about toxic positivity tonight, and have really enjoyed the chat. I find that toxic positivity can be as harmful as toxic negativity. All people deserve to feel validated and heard.

**RiverSeal (PSW)**      Peer groups are a great place to connect with other people who share similar experiences.

**earthling95(PSW)**      Tonight's topic could have brought up some uncomfortable feelings as we talked about negativity and positivity biases.

**Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do? 😊**

BPDSurvivor Speaking out within peer groups has played a major role in my recovery, because I felt understood  
BPDSurvivor As part of self-care, I'm going to spend some time perusing the SANE forums and catch up on the social threads :)

**RiverSeal (PSW)** @BPDSurvivor validation is really valuable. Glad you learnt a lot

BPDSurvivor Thank you for this evening everyone!

**earthling95(PSW)** **Tonight's topic could have brought up some uncomfortable feelings as we talked about negativity and positivity biases. Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do? 😊**

the magician see you next fortnight people I'm off to read a very enthralling book.

BPDSurvivor SOunds great @the magician

**earthling95(PSW)** wow! enjoy :)

**earthling95(PSW)** I will be drinking water and sleeping early <3

RiverSeal (PSW) @the magician enjoy your book

BPDSurvivor And @earthling95, if you work out how to tag people on a PC, please let me know :)

earthling95(PSW) Will do

BPDSurvivor Good night!

the magician thankyou!:innocent:

**RiverSeal (PSW)** I'm eating leaf overs and really looking forward to it. I cooked it haha

We'd like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Peer Group Chat- we'd love to hear any feedback you may have. It will only take a few minutes to complete. Please click this

earthling95(PSW) link: [https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW](https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW)

RiverSeal (PSW) good night all

**Here are some further resources on caring for yourself while caring for someone else you might like to have a look**

earthling95(PSW) **at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/negative-bias-4589618> <https://positivepsychology.com/pollyanna-principle/>**

RiverSeal (PSW) Thank you for coming tonight!!

earthling95(PSW) goodnight everyone

Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion. If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat>. You can also ask a question for our next topic, which will be talking about being kind to yourself and you can read

earthling95(PSW) the transcripts of all our previous topics too 😊

**Possible Resources/ To Draw Inspiration from<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-dr-susan-david-on-the-dangers-of-toxic-positivity-part-1-of-2>/<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-dr-susan-david-on-the-dangers-of-toxic-positivity-part-2-of-2/>**

earthling95(PSW) **of-toxic-positivity-part-2-of-2/**