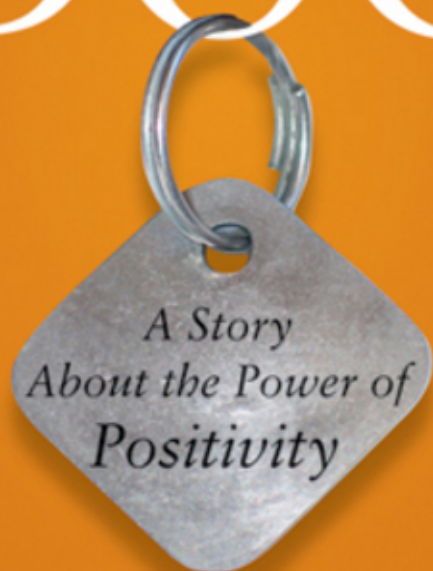


THE
POSITIVE
DOG



JON GORDON

Wall Street Journal bestselling author of *The Energy Bus*

THE
POSITIVE
DOG

THE
POSITIVE
DOG

*A Story
About the Power of
Positivity*

JON GORDON



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Copyright © 2012 by Jon Gordon. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Gordon, Jon, 1971-

The positive dog : a story about the power of positivity / Jon Gordon. —1
p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-470-88855-1 (hardback); ISBN 978-1-118-22109-9 (ebk);

ISBN 978-1-118-23486-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-25948-1 (ebk)

1. Motivation (Psychology) 2. Positive psychology. I. Title.

BF503.G667 2012

158.1—dc23

2012005817

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*For Dharma,
my positive dog*



Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>ix</i>
Matt and Bubba	1
The Benefits of Being Positive	5
Simple as a Smile	9
Feed with Laughter	13
Take a Thank-You Walk	17
Build Your Gratitude Muscle	19
A Day of Gratitude	23
Tell Yourself Positive Stories	27
<i>Get to</i> instead of <i>Have to</i>	33
<i>Blessed</i> instead of <i>Stressed</i>	35
Turn Complaints into Solutions	39
Fear or Faith	43

Challenges or Opportunities	47
An Opportunity	49
The Positive Dog Grows	53
Positive Energy is Contagious	57
Positive Boomerang	59
Feeding Others	63
Love	65
Encouragement	67
No Ordinary Day	71
Negativity Serves a Purpose	73
What Would Bubba Do?	77
A Special Day	81
Two Positive Dogs are Better than One	83
<i>Feed the Positive Dog: Action Plan</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>The Positive Pledge</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>Resources</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Feed Your Team with Positivity</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>About the Illustrator</i>	<i>103</i>

Introduction

I'm not a naturally positive person. People think I am because of the books I write, but the truth is I have to work really hard at being positive. I'm a student first and a teacher second, and the student in me tries to learn and practice everything I teach. In fact, many years ago in my quest to be more positive I read all of the research in the emerging field of positive psychology and ultimately wrote a book to help people cultivate more positivity and energy in just 10 minutes a day.

Long before books such as *The Happiness Advantage*, *Happiness Project*, *Stumbling on Happiness*, and *Positivity*, I created a positive energy plan that I implemented in my own life and shared with others. Robert Emmons, the leading researcher on the impact of gratitude and a major contributor to the field of positive psychology, wrote this about my book, *The 10 Minute Energy Solution*: “Drawing

on the latest scientific research, Gordon convincingly makes the case for an evidence based approach for energetic living. Just reading the book increased my energy.”

However, for several reasons, including the title, the book didn't reach as many people as I hoped. I remember being at a book fair to sign copies and sitting next to me was John Grogan who was signing copies of his book *Marley and Me*. I had 10 people in line. He had hundreds of people in a line that stretched outside the building. At the time I smiled and thought, “One day I'm going to write a story about a dog that becomes more positive.” So this book has been many years in the making and I'm thankful you have it in your hands.

Since my initial idea to write this book many years ago there has been an abundance of new research in the maturing field of positive psychology. Much of this research demonstrates the benefits of being positive . . . and following this introduction you can read eleven of these benefits. But perhaps you are someone that is motivated more by negative consequences rather than positive benefits. In this case, I have also included research that reveals the cost of negativity as well. My hope is that knowing the benefits of being positive and the cost of negativity will inspire you to read this story and implement the action plan in the back of the book.

I know there are some who may not think this book is serious enough, complicated enough, big enough, or

x

Introduction

valuable enough because it's a story about a dog that learns to be more positive and, yes, the dog talks. But please don't underestimate the message in this book because it features pictures and talking dogs. 😊

At my company, one of our core principles is *simple is powerful*, and I have shared the simple, powerful strategies in this book with Fortune 500 companies, professional sports teams, college football teams that have played in national championships, school districts, and hospitals—and I know they work. The proof is in the thousands of emails I have received from people sharing with me how these strategies have influenced their life and work. The strategies in this book have grown sales revenue, motivated salespeople, improved team performance, developed positive kids, enhanced careers, improved marriages, and lead to greater individual and team success.

The goal of this book is to take much of the research on positivity and make it simple, fun, and actionable so anybody, even a child, can benefit from feeding the positive dog. In this spirit, I hope you enjoy the book, have fun with the story, follow the action plan, and experience the benefits of being positive. Like me, you may not be naturally positive, but as the research shows, you can become more positive and improve the direction and quality of your life.

11 Benefits of Being Positive

- 1.** Positive people live longer. In a study of nuns, those that regularly expressed positive emotions lived an average of 10 years longer than those who didn't (Snowdon, 2001).
- 2.** Positive work environments outperform negative work environments (Goleman, 2011).
- 3.** Positive, optimistic salespeople sell more than pessimistic salespeople (Seligman, 2006).
- 4.** Positive leaders are able to make better decisions under pressure (Institute of HeartMath, 2012).
- 5.** Marriages are much more likely to succeed when the couple experiences a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions, whereas when the ratio approaches 1-to-1, marriages are more likely to end in divorce (Gottman, 1999).
- 6.** Positive people who regularly express positive emotions are more resilient when facing stress, challenges, and adversity.
- 7.** Positive people are able to maintain a broader perspective and see the big picture, which helps them identify solutions, whereas negative people maintain a narrower perspective and tend to focus on problems (Fredrickson, 2009).

- 8.** Positive thoughts and emotions counter the negative effects of stress. For example, you can't be thankful and stressed at the same time.
- 9.** Positive emotions such as gratitude and appreciation help athletes perform at a higher level (Institute of HeartMath, 2012).
- 10.** Positive people have more friends, which is a key factor of happiness and longevity (Putnam, 2000).
- 11.** Positive and popular leaders are more likely to garner the support of others and receive pay raises and promotions and achieve greater success in the workplace.

More research and links to studies and resources can be found at www.feedthepositivedog.com.

The Costs of Negativity

- 1.** Ninety percent of doctor visits are stress related, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 2.** A study found that negative employees can scare off every customer they speak with—for good (Rath, 2004).
- 3.** At work, too many negative interactions compared to positive interactions can decrease the productivity of a team, according to Barbara Fredrickson's research at the University of Michigan.
- 4.** Negativity affects the morale, performance, and productivity of our teams.
- 5.** One negative person can create a miserable office environment for everyone else.
- 6.** Robert Cross's research at the University of Virginia demonstrates that 90 percent of anxiety at work is created by 5 percent of one's network—the people who sap energy.
- 7.** Negative emotions are associated with decreased life span and longevity.
- 8.** Negative emotions increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

9. Negativity is associated with greater stress, less energy, and more pain.
10. Negative people have fewer friends.

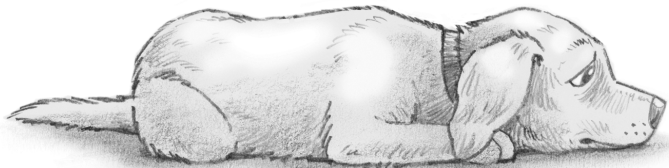
More research and links to studies and resources can be found at www.feedthepositivedog.com.

Matt and Bubba

His name was Matt but they called him Mutt and a shelter was his home. He had a tough life before being rescued and brought to the shelter. Perhaps that's why he was so mad and sad and often barked as people came to look at him.

“He's mean. Let's pick another doggy,” the children would say to their parents as they walked away from his cage.

“Where you going?” Matt would say, but it was too late. They were gone and Matt was left wondering why he had no one to love and no one to love him.



He often walked around the yard during play time and complained to anyone who would listen. He complained about his past. He complained about being at the shelter. He complained that his life wasn't what he dreamed it would be when he was a young pup. When he grew tired of complaining he would just lie down by himself, think of all the sad events from the past, and feel depressed.

One day while walking around the yard feeling sorry for himself he came across Bubba, the big dog who was walking around singing his favorite song about a dog uniting with his owner.

Bubba loved country music, fresh cold air, positive psychology, movies with happy endings, and most of all, helping the hopeless find hope. He smiled at the little dog who approached him and wondered if he'd ever seen anything more hopeless. He knew someone had to teach this dog how to hunt for the *good* things in life. Besides, he had made a pact: One day, not long ago, Bubba woke up to find his house on fire. Trapped in the maze of flames and smoke, he promised that if he made it out alive, he would help everyone and anyone he could.

"What's up little mutt? What's got you so down?" Bubba asked the sad, little dog.



“Oh, a bunch of things,” said Matt. “I’ve got one problem bigger than the next. I’ve got so many big problems, I don’t know which one is the biggest.”

“I do,” said Bubba as he put his paw on Matt’s shoulder. “Since our cages are right across from each other, I’ve been watching you for a while now and I definitely know your biggest problem.”

“You do?” said Matt as his eyes opened wider.

“Yep,” said Bubba. “It’s so clear, but you can’t see it because you are blinded by negativity. Your biggest problem is that you are feeding the negative dog inside you. You see, we all have two dogs inside of us. One dog is positive, happy, optimistic, and hopeful. The other dog is negative,

mad, sad, pessimistic, and fearful. These two dogs often fight inside us but guess who wins the fight?"

Matt looked confused. "I don't know, Bubba," he said as he shook his head.

"The dog who wins is the one you feed the most," Bubba exclaimed. "You have to feed the positive dog inside you and starve the negative dog. The more you feed the positive dog, the more it grows. The more you starve the negative dog, the more it shrinks and weakens. You become the dog you feed, so feed the positive dog and your *big* problems will give way to big blessings and a bright future."

Bubba then playfully tagged Matt and off they ran to play around the yard and talk about the power and benefits of positivity and the costs of negativity.

The Benefits of Being Positive

“It’s one thing to say you need to feed the positive dog. It’s another thing to truly understand why you should be positive in the first place,” Bubba said as he stopped under a large tree and began to dig. After a few minutes he lowered his head in the hole and, using his nose, he scooped up a large book that had been buried underneath the dirt.

“This is a book that was left by Jade, one of the college students that volunteered at the shelter a few months ago,” said Bubba. “She was a pretty, young thing and not only did she smell real nice but she would also read the book out loud to us during quiet time. I learned all about the latest research on the positive effects of being positive and the negative effects of being negative from her and this here book. In fact, I’ve read the book so much I pretty much have it memorized. And you know what?”

“What?” asked Matt who was really curious to learn what Bubba knew.

“The research is clear,” Bubba proclaimed. “It really does pay to be positive. Positivity makes us happier and healthier. It helps us live longer and improves our relationships. It makes us better leaders and leads to greater success. Being positive is not just a nice way to live. It’s the *best* way to live. Best of all, the research doesn’t just apply to humans. It also applies to dogs because, as everyone knows, dogs have thoughts and feel emotions, too.

“Not only does it pay to be positive,” Bubba continued, “but the research says that there are also big costs to being negative. For example, negative emotions increase our risk of having a heart attack and stroke. Negativity weakens our immune system, makes us feel more stressed, and saps our energy. It is also associated with feeling more depressed and making fewer friends. The simple truth is that no one wants to be around a negative person or dog,” Bubba said, knowing Matt needed to hear it.

“I guess that’s why no one wants to be around me or take me home,” Matt said as he put his head down and started to cry. “That’s why I’m still here at the shelter.”

“Well, that’s probably true,” said Bubba as he put his paw on Matt’s head. “I ain’t going to lie to you. Your attitude certainly hasn’t been one that would win friends and

influence people in a positive way. But the great news is that now you know the benefits of being positive and the costs of being negative. And now that you *know* the importance of being positive you can *be* positive.

“You don’t have to be mad and sad anymore. You don’t have to focus on your problems. You don’t have to feel sorry for yourself. You can feed the positive dog and starve the negative dog on your way to a happier, successful, and more fulfilled life. You can be the kind of positive dog that every dog in the shelter wants to be around and every family wants to take home.”

Matt looked up at Bubba as his eyes opened wider. For the first time in a long time he felt a sense of hope. Bubba gave him a vision for his life and everything he said felt like the truth. He didn’t want people to walk away from his cage anymore. He didn’t want children to think he was mean. He wanted to love and be loved. He wanted to enjoy all the benefits that came from being positive. Most of all he wanted a family to fall in love with him and take him home. If he could be more positive, then perhaps his dream could come true.

As playtime ended, Barry, the man in charge of the shelter, called the dogs back into the building. Bubba nosed Jade’s book back into the hole and covered it with dirt, for

safekeeping. As they headed inside, Matt decided he was ready to start feeding the positive dog inside him.

“Is it hard to feed the positive dog?” he asked.

“It’s a lot easier and simpler than you think,” Bubba said. “Tomorrow, first thing in the morning, we’ll begin our positive feast and your life will never be the same!”