



Triggered “Positive” Thoughts and Emotions¹

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I. What is “positive” triggering?: Positive-triggering thoughts and emotions will be produced by anything in the present that comforts, covers, or counter-acts the pain in traumatic memories. The triggered “positive” thoughts will be the opposite of the lies anchored in the trauma, the triggered “positive” emotions will be the opposite of the emotions usually associated with the lies, and positive-triggering behaviors are any behaviors that we deliberately engage in as we pursue triggered positive thoughts and emotions.

For example, various painful experiences in Charlotte’s childhood were the source of negative emotional learning along the lines of “I don’t have anything of value to contribute,” and “No one wants to hear what I have to say.” She also learned that she temporarily felt better when people really seemed to perceive the value of something she had said or something she had created. When people displayed an in-depth understanding of the details, and expressed intense interest and appreciation, “I *do* have something to offer” and “People *do* want to hear what I have to say” would temporarily feel true instead of the negative thoughts. And she would temporarily feel seen, heard, valued, and affirmed instead of feeling the subtle insecurity, the self-doubts, and the subtle sense of not being seen, not being heard, not being valued, and not being affirmed that often smoldered in the background when her trauma-anchored lies were close to the surface. In this example, positive-triggering behaviors would be any behaviors that would result in others being intensely interested in and perceiving the value of something she was saying or something she had created.

Furthermore, the perceived validity of positive-triggering thoughts and the intensity of positive triggering emotions will be exaggerated because they will match the perceived validity of the trauma-anchored lies and the intensity of the emotions associated with the underlying trauma (as opposed to being appropriate for the current situation in the present).

Unexpected stimuli will occasionally activate triggered positive thoughts and emotions. However, positive-triggering behaviors are the most common source of positive-triggering thoughts and emotions (as will be illustrated in the examples below).

II. Impaired discernment and balance: Just as we feel subtle (or not so subtle) forces *pushing*

¹ The “positive” in “positive triggering” is in quotes because positive-triggering thoughts, emotions, and behaviors initially appear to be positive, but actually have subtle toxic aspects as discussed below. Also, I am not sure “triggered” is the best word to use in “triggered positive emotions,” since we usually use “triggered” to refer to thoughts and emotions that come from directly activating the toxic content associated with unresolved trauma. I chose to use “triggered” because the subjective experience is so similar with respect to the exaggerated intensity, and with respect to the intense *subjective feeling* that the thoughts and emotions are reasonable *in the present*, even though careful investigation reveals that there is actually no *current* adequate source.

us away from situations that trigger *negative* thoughts and emotions, we feel subtle (or not so subtle) forces *attracting us towards* situations that trigger *positive* thoughts and emotions. Unfortunately, this attraction towards situations that trigger positive thoughts and emotions will impair our discernment and interfere with appropriate balance, drawing us into making poor decisions and causing us to neglect/harm ourselves and/or others as we pursue the temporary relief and/or gratification produced by the triggered positive thoughts and emotions.

For example (again continuing with Charlotte’s story), a number of years ago, before she became pastor, a group of visitors came up to Charlotte immediately after the Sunday morning service and explained that they were intensely interested in, and impressed with, the Children’s Church program that she had developed. They were also lay-ministers and were developing a children’s program as well. Charlotte was thrilled that they were so interested in her work, and thoroughly enjoyed describing the program, showing them the teaching accessories she had designed, and answering their questions. But she had also agreed to be some place else fifteen minutes after the service.

This is where positive triggering comes in. Instead of explaining that she had a prior commitment and making plans for more time at a later date, and then giving them a brief description of the program, a quick glance at the Children’s Church room, and answering a few questions, she described the program in detail, gave them the deluxe tour, and answered all of their questions, even though she knew that this was making her late for her prior obligation. Even as it was happening, she was aware of a compulsive push to keep talking about her Children’s Church program – she was aware of how her continued conversation was making her increasingly late for her next commitment, but she just couldn’t stop. Pursuing the triggered positive emotions stirred up by the interest and affirmation from these visitors made her feel like somehow she simply *had* to answer every question and tell them about *every aspect of the program, in detail, right then.*²

III. Push away from the negative and pull towards the positive: Looking closely at most (all?) situations in which we are drawn to pursue triggered positive thoughts and emotions will reveal that our triggered behavior is driven both by a pull to obtain triggered positive thoughts and emotions and a push to avoid triggered negative thoughts and emotions. For example, in my experience with triggers associated with my academic career (described below), getting the lowest score on an exam would have directly triggered all of the negative thoughts and emotions that were temporarily counteracted by getting the highest score. My academic performance was driven by both the desire to *avoid* the triggered *negative* thoughts and emotions associated with doing poorly, as well as the desire to *obtain* the triggered *positive* thoughts and emotions associated with doing well.

IV. Compulsive and addictive behaviors are often triggered behaviors: My perception is that many compulsive and addictive behaviors are fueled by a combination of trying to avoid triggered negative thoughts and emotions and trying to pursue triggered positive thoughts and emotions.

²Note that this was all very unusual for Charlotte. She is usually very responsible regarding anything she has agreed to do, she is usually very considerate regarding being on time, and she usually does a good job of balancing various life challenges so that she actually is on time. And that’s the whole point of this example – the attraction towards the triggered positive thoughts and emotions impaired her discernment and life-balance.

One set of data points contributing to this conclusion are the important similarities between compulsive behaviors, addictive behaviors, and behaviors associated with positive triggering:

- In all three of these behavior patterns, the behaviors in question are *qualitatively* abnormal in some way, and usually (always?) feel pressured and/or driven.
- The impairment of discernment and balance found with all three of these behavior patterns are very similar. For example, the way in which I neglected other aspects of my life in order to pursue the triggered positive thoughts and emotions associated with various aspects of academic excellence (described below) looks a lot like the way in which compulsive and addictive behaviors impair discernment and balance.
- The irritable/angry emotional reaction to being thwarted from a positive trigger is similar to the irritable/angry reaction experienced when thwarted from an addictive or compulsive behavior.

Another set of data points contributing to this conclusion are specific examples of compulsive behaviors being fueled by avoiding triggered negative emotions and pursuing triggered positive emotions. For example, a person who was made to use their hands as a part of childhood sexual abuse had trauma-anchored lies along the lines of “I am bad, and my hands are especially dirty and evil.” This person engaged in compulsive hand-washing in an attempt to counteract these lies. After each episode of washing, “I am bad, and my hands are especially evil and dirty” was temporarily replaced with triggered positive thoughts, such as “my hands are clean and I’m okay;” and triggered negative emotions of shame and self loathing were temporarily replaced with triggered positive emotions of relief and feeling clean. Furthermore, the link between the traumatic memories, the triggered thoughts and emotions, and the compulsive hand-washing was confirmed when the long-standing compulsive behavior, along with the negative thoughts and emotions, all completely and permanently disappeared when the trauma was resolved.

Workaholism provides another example of compulsive behaviors being fueled by triggered thoughts and emotions. My perception is that the addictive/compulsive work behavior at the center of workaholism is often (always?) fueled by avoidance of triggered negative thoughts and emotions (for example, “I won’t have enough” and associated anxiety), and pursuit of triggered positive thoughts and emotions (for example, “I got so much done today, and I just put \$1,000 in the bank. I think I’ll be okay after all,” and associated feelings of relief and security).

V. Triggered emotions mistaken for guidance from the Holy Spirit: Triggered positive emotions are often mistaken for a “prompting from the Spirit” (guidance from the Holy Spirit that we *should* do a certain thing), and triggered negative emotions are often mistaken for a “check in the Spirit” (guidance from the Holy Spirit that we *should not* do a certain thing).

This actually makes a lot of sense when you think about it for a minute. The subjective experience of guidance from the Holy Spirit usually includes several qualitative features:

- A true *check* from the Holy Spirit often feels subjectively like an emotional, intuitive nudge/pressure *away from* doing a certain thing, and a true *prompting* from the Holy Spirit

often feels subjectively like an emotional, intuitive nudge/pressure *towards* doing a certain thing.

- This nudge/pressure inherently feels like more than the ordinary “I *don’t* want to do such and such” or “I *do* want to do such and such.” (If it did *not* feel like more than just ordinary preference, we wouldn’t think it was a check or prompting from the Spirit).
- And this nudge/pressure inherently feels somewhat mysterious – we can’t identify an adequate, logical explanation. (If we *could* see an adequate, logical explanation, we wouldn’t think it was a check or prompting from the Spirit³).

And the subjective experience of “guidance” from triggered emotions usually includes several very similar qualitative features:

- Triggered negative emotions will often feel subjectively like an emotional, intuitive nudge/pressure *away from* doing certain things, and triggered positive emotions will often feel subjectively like an emotional, intuitive nudge/pressure *towards* doing certain things.
- The inflated perceived importance and exaggerated emotional intensity of triggered emotions causes this nudge/pressure to feel like more-than-the-ordinary “I *don’t* want to do such and such” or “I *do* want to do such and such.”
- And we usually can’t identify an adequate, logical explanation for the nudge/pressure produced by our triggered emotions because our psychological defenses usually hide the connection to the underlying wounds and lies.

Our verbal logical explainers (VLEs) will happily explain that our oddly intense avoidance of situations that trigger negative emotions is actually just an appropriate, discerning response to a check in the Spirit, and that our oddly intense attraction to situations that trigger positive emotions is actually just an appropriate, discerning response to a prompting from the Spirit. I would much rather believe that I am perceiving guidance from the Holy Spirit, confirming that my discernment is good and that my sense of how to best navigate the situation is correct, as opposed to acknowledging that I am triggered, indicating that my discernment is seriously impaired and that my sense of how to best navigate the situation could easily be wrong.

Furthermore, triggered implicit memory always comes with the intense subjective perception that it is real, and valid, and important in the present. This aspect of implicit memory adds conviction to triggered “guidance” that we mistake for a check or prompting from the Holy Spirit.

Our perception is that many people, including ourselves, have mistaken triggered emotions for guidance from the Holy Spirit. The *good news* is that it is reasonably easy to tell the difference between true guidance from the Holy Spirit and triggered emotions once you learn to recognize both triggered negative emotions and triggered positive emotions. See “Triggering vs Guidance

³ We sometimes feel a “check” before we have a logical explanation, but as we consider the matter more we think of the logical explanation. Our perception is that the initial feeling could be a true “check” from the Holy Spirit, and that this true check from the Spirit prompts us to think about the situation more carefully.

from the Holy Spirit” for discussion of how to discern the difference between triggering and guidance from the Holy Spirit.⁴

VI. Child ego states: If the traumatic memories and lies in question are carried by internal child parts, the triggered positive thoughts and emotions will feel young/childlike because the child ego state from the memories will come forward with the triggered positive thoughts and emotions. Another way to say this is that we will feel partially blended with child ego states when we are experiencing triggered positive thoughts and emotions that are associated with traumatic memories carried by internal child parts.

VII. Additional examples of triggered positive thoughts, triggered positive emotions, and positive-triggering behaviors:

A. “I AM important/special” and attention from father figures: During much of my childhood, my Dad spent many hours each week in church-related ministry and also worked a full time job. In addition to having limited time with me and our family, counseling-related crises often interrupted when we did have time together. I have many memories of emergency phone calls taking Dad away from his time with me and from his time with our family. I misinterpreted the meaning of these events to come up with, “I’m not important or special enough for Dad to spend time with me,” or just “I’m not important or special.” It should not be surprising that special attention from father figures like Francis MacNutt, Ed Smith, or our senior pastor has been especially powerful in triggering positive thoughts and emotions by temporarily counteracting these lies.

When one of these father figures would give me special attention, I would have appropriate, truth-based positive thoughts, such as, “It’s an honor for these people to spend time with me,” “This mentoring is a real gift and something I need,” and “These people feeling led to spend time with me is one way the Lord shows me he loves me;” and I would experience corresponding truth-based positive emotions, such as encouragement, gratitude, and joy. However, these appropriate, truth-based thoughts and emotions were mixed together with triggered positive thoughts, such as, “Oh boy, oh boy, he wants to spend time with *me!* I *am* special! I *am* important!” and corresponding triggered positive emotions of unbalanced, pressured/manic giddiness. I also usually (always?) felt partially blended with a child ego state during these times of triggered positive thoughts and emotions.

Not surprisingly, these triggered thoughts and emotions would impair my discernment and balance. For example, I would sacrifice almost any other consideration in order to pursue a potential opportunity to spend time with one of these father figures, and I would always talk too much when I was triggered in this way.

As the Lord has been progressively resolving these absence-wound traumas, the lies have been feeling less and less true, my discernment regarding time with special father figures has been improving, and I am increasingly able to be a calm, balanced adult when I am actually with them.

⁴ Available as a free download from the “Special Subjects/Advanced Topics” section on the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

B. “I AM important and special” and physical manifestations: When my clients first started displaying physical manifestations during therapy sessions, I thought “Wow, something really *is* happening! God *is* answering my prayers – I *am* important, I *am* special!” And I temporarily felt encouraged, excited, important, and special instead of discouraged, unimportant, and ignored.

Not surprisingly, these triggered positive thoughts and emotions would impair my discernment and balance. Instead of recognizing these exaggerated, triggered thoughts and emotions for what they were, I perceived them as confirming that the physical manifestations were somehow inherently important and valuable. And pursuing these triggered positive thoughts and emotions impaired my discernment and led me to focus on physical manifestations in an unbalanced way.⁵

C. “I AM going to be okay,” “I AM important and special,” “I AM good at something,” and family vacations: As a grade-school age child living in Chicago in the 1960's, I felt like the world was falling apart. I saw civil rights marches and urban race riots on television, and I experienced constant tension, frequent intimidation, and occasional violence in our mixed race neighborhood. Environmental activists were warning us about how pollution from modern industry and the exploding population would soon cause global ecological disaster. The news was filled with horrors from the Viet Nam War (I can still remember seeing the television footage of the naked, screaming Vietnamese girl running out of a burning village, and color *Life* magazine pictures of napalm-burned children.) John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King were all assassinated. And everybody knew that we would all die in World War III if somebody pushed the wrong button. On top of all of this, my parents and the other grownups in our church were too busy dealing with all of these huge problems to help a little kid deal with his fears. All mixed together, this pile produced strong thematic lies along the lines of “I’m not going to be okay.”

In addition to being chronically anxious, I was also skinny, slow, and not good at any sports. I had difficulty in school because of my dyslexia, and I was not artistically or musically gifted. These aspects of my childhood experience reinforced the “I’m not important/special” lie described above, and also contributed to a lie along the lines of “I’m not good at anything.” Nature study was the one thing I felt good at as a child. I felt at home in the woods, and knew all about the plants and animals in the rural areas we visited – even when I was a kid the others in my family recognized me as the nature study expert. Unfortunately, nature study wasn’t much good when it came to impressing peers in our urban neighborhood.

Once each year throughout my childhood our family would leave the city for two weeks, either to go camping or to visit my grandparents in rural Pennsylvania and Virginia. For two weeks each year we escaped from the playground and the neighborhood where I felt physically unsafe, from the pollution that constantly reminded me of environmental destruction, from the

⁵ See the five essays “Deceiving Spirits and Counterfeit Manifestations: How Wounds, Lies, Internal Parts, Repression, and Denial Can Give Them a Place,” “EMDR, Traumatic Memories, and Physical Phenomena,” “Emotional Healing, Spiritual Opposition, and Physical Manifestations,” “Physical Behavior, Phenomena, and Manifestations: ‘Pressure Leaks’ that can Hinder Prayer for Emotional Healing,” and “Physical Behavior, Phenomena, and Manifestations: Summary, Practical Applications, & Sample Prayers” for discussion of physical manifestations, and for additional discussion of how my unresolved issues impaired my discernment regarding physical manifestations. (These essays are available as free downloads from www.immanuelapproach.com)

crowding that reminded me of global population problems, from the media full of death and destruction, and from the counseling crises that constantly took Dad away from our family. (My best childhood memories with my father are all from family camping trips). And we escaped *to* the rural environments where I could enjoy, and excel at, nature study. These “big trips” provided temporary relief from the negative emotions associated with many of my lies. For these two weeks each year, “The world is falling apart and I’m not going to be okay” seemed to be replaced by “Maybe there’s still hope;” “I’m not important/special enough for Dad to spend time with me – there is always something or somebody else more important” seemed to be replaced by “I *am* important and special – Dad *does* want to spend time with me;” and “I’m not good at anything” seemed to be replaced by “I’m the best at nature study.”

Not surprisingly, as an adult I have experienced intense triggered positive thoughts and emotions in association with “big trips” that involved getting out of an urban environment and having opportunities to study nature. And these triggered positive thoughts and emotions have impaired my discernment regarding how often we should travel, and they impaired my ability to hear Charlotte’s desires regarding where to go and what to do on our vacations. Furthermore, my triggered positive thoughts and emotions while actually on these trips would have a pressured, unbalanced intensity that made it difficult for me to hear Charlotte’s desires or care for her needs regarding the many specific questions/issues/choices that would come up while traveling.⁶

Our experience with traveling out of the city provides a good example of parallels between a person pursuing triggered positive emotions and a person pursuing positive emotions through addictive self medication. Much like people who are engaged in addictive self medication, I displayed an intense, pressured, subtly abnormal “happiness” when I was experiencing triggered positive emotions, but I would instantly become irritable and intolerant when anything got in the way of the activity that produced the triggered positive emotions. For example, I would be unreasonably impatient regarding any delay in leaving on a trip – my reaction would be exaggerated and unreasonable if Charlotte did not get money out of the bank the day before, so that we had to delay our trip for ten minutes to drive by the cash station; it seemed like she always took *much* too long to take care of last minute things like checking to make sure she had turned off her computer or that her driver’s license was in her purse; and I couldn’t imagine *what* she was doing if she took more than a couple of minutes in the bathroom.

My experience with traveling out of the city also provides a good example of positive triggering being associated with a child ego state. I would become increasingly giddy as the time for a “big trip” approached, and both Charlotte and I could especially perceive the presence of a six-to-eight-year-old ego state sharing my mind on the morning of departure. I would usually wake at 4:30 – 5:00 a.m. in a state of excited agitation, and would *march* around the house with a compulsive six to eight year old grin on my face, saying things like “Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy, oh boy!” and “I can hardly *believe* it – we’re gonna go *today!*” (All of these details being just like my behavior as a child).

⁶ As described below, positive emotions and associations can also be healthy and truth-based. I have many healthy, truth-based positive emotions and associations from these childhood trips, and there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to continue “big trip” and nature study traditions from my childhood. The problem in our experience was that healthy, truth-based positive emotions and associations were contaminated with triggered positive emotions that impaired my discernment and balance.

Unfortunately, my being blended with a child ego state also contributed to impairing my discernment regarding “big trips.” For example, my “adult” discernment regarding how I should help with trip-related responsibilities was remarkably similar to my childhood perspective. I would prepare my travel bags days or even weeks ahead of time (just like I had as a child), but it seemed reasonable that this would be my only trip preparation responsibility. It just somehow seemed reasonable that somebody else (the “grown-ups”) would take care of all the other details, such as planning the route, communicating with people we would be visiting, putting gas in the car the day before, getting money out of the bank, etc..

On the day of departure I would help put everything in the car, check all of my pets and plants, and get my body into the car (usually bouncing up and down and saying “Let’s go, let’s go, let’s go”) – just like I had as a child. But it seemed reasonable that these would be my only responsibilities. It just somehow seemed reasonable that “somebody else” would take care of all the other last minute preparations, such as making sure that necessary things like maps and phone numbers and gas money had indeed gotten into the car, and that we had closed the windows, shut off the lights, and locked the doors, etc.

During the actual trip I liked most to sit in the front passenger seat and stare out the window, “looking for animals” – once again, just like I had as a child. It just seemed reasonable that Charlotte would always start as the driver, and I was happiest when she did *all* the driving. It also just seemed reasonable that she should be the one to know the way to wherever we were going. All these perspectives regarding trip-related responsibilities just *felt* like the way it ought to be. I was able to help with all the “grownup” tasks if Charlotte really pressed the issue, but her requests always felt like unreasonable impositions. (I can now see that her requests frustrated me because they interfered with my “big trip” triggered positive emotions.) It is not surprising that Charlotte did not appreciate my six-to-eight-year-old approach to helping with “big trips.”

Thankfully, our experience with traveling out of the city – from deciding to go on a trip to sharing the driving responsibilities – has improved dramatically as I have been resolving the memories underlying my triggered positive thoughts and emotions associated with “big trips.”

D. Exceptional competence, academic performance, and various lies: In Jr. High I discovered that I could be an exceptional student if I worked hard enough, and I began to use academic achievement to pursue triggered positive thoughts and emotions. Each time I got the highest score on a test or straight A’s on my report card, “I’m smart” would temporarily cover the “I’m stupid” lies that had gotten so deeply imbedded during my years of not being able to read due to dyslexia, and “I’m important” and “I’m good at something” would temporarily cover the “I’m not important/special” and “I’m not good at anything” lies described above. Confidence and excitement would temporarily replace the discouragement and insecurity usually associated with these thematic lies that tended to smolder in the background of my overall subjective experience.

I eventually learned that I could become exceptionally competent in many areas if I worked hard enough long enough, and I began to use the combination of academic achievement and exceptional competence to pursue triggered positive thoughts and emotions. For example, each time I knew what to do in a difficult medical situation, I would have the conscious thought “I know what to do – I’m gonna be okay,” and a feeling of being safe and in control would

temporarily replace the usual anxiety and insecurity associated with my underlying “I’m not going to be okay” lies. When I worried about the world falling apart and that I wouldn’t be able to take care of myself, I always figured that it would be an advantage to be the best. If you’re *really* good, somebody will always make a place for you. Being the best would give me more options and more control if the world *really* started falling apart. Each time I made a significant career accomplishment that would go on my resume, like getting a scholarship, receiving an academic award, or scoring exceptionally high on a standardized test, the anxiety and insecurity usually associated with my deep “I’m not going to be okay” lies would temporarily be replaced with confidence and security associated with thoughts like “No matter how bad it gets, there will always be a place for me.”

My experience with academic performance provides a good example of how triggered positive thoughts and emotions can disrupt balance in our lives. There was nothing inherently wrong with my working hard to be competent, doing well academically, or even being the top student in my class, but there *was* a problem with using academic performance and exceptional competence to pursue triggered positive thoughts and emotions. The problem was that my intense pursuit of the triggered positive thoughts and emotions associated with being the best and with being extremely competent disrupted the *balance* between studying and the rest of my life. In my triggered, driven attempt to be the best and to know what to do in every situation, I neglected sleep, recreation, personal spiritual growth, and my relationships with others. As noted above, this looks a lot like the impaired balance characteristically seen with compulsive and addictive behaviors.

E. “I’m not important,” “I’m not wanted,” and dramatic success with the Immanuel

Approach: Another example we have seen occurs when a person⁷ with “I’m not important” and “I’m not wanted” lies experiences dramatic success with the Immanuel Approach. When Jesus shows up and releases glorious healing right in front of her, it feels like the Lord has just chosen her to be one of His personal assistants – one of His special, inner circle – one of the disciples that travels with Jesus and gets to watch Him heal. The discouragement and low self esteem associated with the person’s usual “I’m not important” lies are temporarily replaced with the thrilling excitement of “*I am* important! God is answering *my* prayers. Jesus is showing up in *my* office!” The word spreads, and people start calling: “My friend just told me what happened last week. Can you make time in your schedule to pray with me?”, “Oh, *thank you*, for giving me an appointment. I was afraid there wouldn’t be any space left,” and “Please, can’t you just see me for *one* session?” The loneliness and rejection associated with her usual “I’m not wanted” lies are temporarily replaced with the warm affirmation of “*Everybody* wants me!”

Without even realizing what is happening, the person will begin to compulsively pursue these intense positive thoughts and emotions. She will pursue emotional healing work in a compulsive and unbalanced way, neglecting other responsibilities, her family, and herself. She will also make poor judgment decisions regarding when and where it is appropriate and/or safe to do emotional healing work, and she will fail to maintain appropriate confidentiality out of the intense pressure to tell others about the exciting things that are happening.

⁷ This is one problem that I did *not* experience in my journey with emotional healing work. My gift for discovering clutter by getting stuck in every possible way provided ample protection from this particular form of triggered positive emotions.

VIII. Reducing trauma reduces the problem: What is probably clear by now is that the impaired balance and discernment associated with positive triggering can only occur where there are unresolved underlying traumatic memories. Carrying more trauma will make you more vulnerable to these problems, and resolving your wounds and lies will make you less and less vulnerable to this particular variety of impairment.

IX. Positive triggering provides clues regarding underlying wounds and lies: Realizing that triggered *positive* thoughts and emotions always come with a complimentary set of underlying *negative* thoughts and emotions led to the realization that triggered positive thoughts and emotions provide another tool for finding unresolved trauma. Reversing triggered positive thoughts and emotions will reveal trauma-anchored lies and their associated negative emotions, and these lies and negative emotions can then be used as initial targets in Immanuel approach emotional healing work. For example, I experienced exaggerated triggered elation, confidence, and encouragement whenever I got the best score on an exam. If I focus on these positive emotions I can identify the associated positive thoughts such as “I’m *not* stupid,” “I *can* do it,” and “I’m the best!” When I reverse these I get the underlying lies of “I’m stupid,” “I can’t figure it out,” and “I’m not good at anything,” and the associated negative emotions of sadness, insecurity, and discouragement. Focusing on these lies and negative emotions will then lead me to the traumatic memories where they are anchored.

Another way in which to find unresolved trauma is to imagine the opposite of the situation that triggers the positive thoughts and emotions. This will lead to the underlying lies and negative emotions, and as with the first approach, these can then be used as initial targets for Immanuel approach emotional healing. For example, I can ask myself “How would I feel if I hadn’t gotten the best score? If I had only scored average? If I had gotten the lowest score? (I can stir up some pretty intense negative thoughts and emotions if I imagine getting the lowest score on an exam.)⁸

X. Healthy, *truth-based* positive associations and emotions: It is important to distinguish between *triggered* positive emotions and healthy, *truth-based* positive associations and emotions. The Lord has designed healthy, truth-based positive associations and positive emotions to guide and motivate us *towards* fun and restorative activities in much the same way He designed healthy, truth-based negative associations and negative emotions to guide and motivate us *away* from painful and destructive activities. We want to embrace healthy, truth-based positive associations and emotions as the blessings that they are, and accept as healthy the desire to engage in activities that elicit them (as opposed to trying to resolve truth-based positive associations and emotions with emotional healing). For example, it is normal and healthy to want to continue certain Christmas traditions that are associated with positive childhood memories of happy times together as a family. It is normal and healthy for a couple to want to play a certain song that reminds them of special occasions together – a song that is associated with memories of happy romantic times together as a couple. As mentioned above, there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to continue camping and nature study traditions that are associated with positive childhood memories, and there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to work hard

⁸ Note that this is *not* trying to find traumatic memories by imagining what might have happened with respect to the underlying trauma, but rather probing for traumatic memories with imagination triggers. For additional discussion of memory-error risks associated with directly imagining possible trauma, see “Discerning Truth in Memory” (available as free download from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com).

and perform well.⁹

⁹For additional discussion of healthy, truth-based emotions and associations, see “Healthy, *Truth-based* Emotions and Associations,” available as a free download from www.immanuelapproach.com).