

# Good news reports may emotionally buffer effects of negative news stories

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News stories featuring the best of humanity take the sting out of items exploring the worst of humanity. Credit: Suzy Hazelwood, Pexels, CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>)

People who saw news about human kindness after consuming news about a terrorist attack or other immoral acts felt fewer negative emotions and retained more belief in the goodness of humanity compared to people given just the bad news, according to a study published May 17, 2023, in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Kathryn Buchanan from the University of Essex, and colleague Gillian Sandstrom from the University of Sussex, U.K.

The authors split 1,800 study participants into different groups. Across all the groups, participants were shown one- to three-minute-long video news clips or given brief [news stories](#) to read: news reporting on a recent U.K.-based [terrorist attack](#) or similar ("Immorality" group); reports of kind acts performed in response to the terrorist attack or unrelated kind acts ("Kindness" group); lighthearted, unserious material ("Amusement" group); and content from the Immorality group plus either the Kindness ("Immorality and Kindness") or the Amusement ("Immorality and Amusement") group.

The "Immorality" group participants reported both significant increases in negative emotion and significant decreases in positive emotion, as well as more negative perceptions of humanity and society. In comparison, "Immorality and Kindness" participants reported relatively lower increases in negative emotion and lower decreases—or even significant increases—in positive emotion.

"Immorality and Kindness" participants also reported significantly more positive perceptions of humanity than those in the "Immorality" group. The "Immorality and Kindness" group reported more effective mitigation of the negative effects of immorality than the "Immorality and Amusement" group, both in terms of increases in positive emotion and perceptions of society.

The results suggest that positive news can help provide an emotional

buffer against negative news. Viewing kind acts, versus merely amusing acts, was especially effective in helping participants retain beliefs about the goodness of others.

The authors hope their results will push the media to incorporate more positive coverage, as well as constructive or solution-oriented framing for complex, important issues.

The authors add, "News stories featuring the best of humanity take the sting out of items exploring the worst of humanity. This allows people to believe to maintain a core belief that is crucial for [good mental health](#): that the world and the people in it are fundamentally good."

**More information:** Buffering the effects of bad news: Exposure to others' kindness alleviates the aversive effects of viewing others' acts of immorality, *PLOS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0284438](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284438)

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