

# 7 ways being "bad"

Summer brings plenty of memorable moments, like beach getaways and neighborhood softball games. But if you're like us, juggling the work that goes into making the fun happen can leave you spent and quick to snap when little irritants arise. The good news: Having an emotional flare-up or meltdown can be beneficial, says Maya Tamir, Ph.D., director of the Emotion and Self-Regulation Laboratory at Boston College. That's because emotions and behaviors that are perceived as negative actually work to buffer stress. Read on for the unexpected upsides of your worst behavior.



## Sadness makes you mentally sharper

When you can't seem to shake a blue mood, turn your attention to a detail-oriented project or problem-solving task. Sadness seems to facilitate a more careful and effective thinking style, says Paul Andrews, Ph.D., an evolutionary psychologist at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. He explains, "It encourages rumination, an analytical process that allows you to take a complex issue and break it down into manageable components."

## Anger boosts confidence

*Argh!* Instead of helping with the cook-out, your honey disappeared into the backyard with a beer. Go ahead and let your blood boil, says Tamir. Feeling fiery will help you argue your case more effectively. "Anger is an 'approach emotion,'" she explains. "That means it readies you mentally and physically by energizing you, making you less averse to risk and boosting your creativity." To keep your wrath in check, remind yourself in the heat of the moment what you aim to get—an apology? a rain check? This will help you regulate your intensity. Bonus: Communication can spell a healthier marriage and longer life. A University of Michigan study found that couples who vent their irritation outlive those who conceal it.



## Idle gossip solidifies bonds

You're catching up with neighbors when chitchat turns to the Smiths' messy divorce. While your conscience may balk, exchanging choice tidbits (so long as the scoop isn't false or damaging) can boost your mood. "Gossip reinforces your role in a social network," explains Frank T. McAndrew, Ph.D., a psychology professor at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. "And that feeling of connectedness delivers an instant reward—a spurt of happiness."

## Jealousy strengthens drive

Your flower beds have all but shriveled up, so you can't help but bristle at Sally's perfectly pruned lawn. The upside: "Envy can inspire positive action," says Debbie Mandel, author of *Addicted to Stress* (Jossey-Bass, 2008). "Say to your friend, 'I so admire your yard. Will you give me some pointers?' By approaching her as a mentor rather than an opponent, you conquer the toxic 'I'm not good enough' emotion and affirm that you are capable of success."

