Being too positive

Having a positive outlook on life is good for your mental well-being. The problem is that life isn't always positive. We all have painful emotions and experiences. Those emotions, while often unpleasant, need to be felt and dealt with openly and honestly to achieve acceptance and greater psychological health.

Toxic positivity is the belief that no matter how dire or difficult a situation is, people should maintain a positive mindset. While there are benefits to being optimistic and engaging in positive thinking, toxic positivity rejects all difficult emotions in favour of a cheerful and often falsely-positive façade. It takes positive thinking to an extreme. In other words, it makes it too general. This attitude does not just stress the importance of optimism — it also minimizes and even denies any trace of human emotions not strictly happy or positive.

Toxic positivity means having a "good vibes only" approach to life and discarding any seemingly negative emotions. It denies people the authentic support they need to cope with what they are facing.

Toxic positivity can take a wide variety of forms. Some examples you may have encountered in your own life include the following. When something bad happens, such as losing your job, people may say to "just stay positive" or "look on the bright side." While such comments are often meant to be sympathetic, they can shut down anything the other person might want to say about what they are experiencing. After some type of loss, people might say, "everything happens for a reason." While people will make such statements because they believe they are comforting, this is also a way of avoiding the other person's pain. Upon expressing sad feelings, someone may respond that "happiness is a choice." This suggests that if someone is feeling negative emotions, it's their own fault for not "choosing" to be happy.

Such statements are often well-intentioned, or people just don't know what else to say and don't know how to be empathetic. Still, it is important to recognize that such behaviour can be harmful.

Too much positivity is toxic because it can harm people who are going through difficult times. Rather than being able to share genuine human emotions and gain support, people who are faced with toxic positivity find their feelings dismissed, ignored, or outright invalidated.

It's also shaming. Receiving too-positive responses can lead to feelings of shame. **It** tells people that the emotions they are feeling are unacceptable. When someone is suffering, they need to know that their emotions are valid and that they can find relief and love in their friends and family.

Shame goes hand in hand with guilt. Being toxically positive can also cause feelings of guilt. It sends a message that if you aren't finding a way to feel positive — even in the face of tragedy — you are doing something wrong.

Moreover, it avoids authentic human emotion. When people engage in this type of behaviour, it allows them to sidestep emotional situations that make them feel uncomfortable. Sometimes we turn these same ideas on ourselves, internalizing them. When we feel difficult emotions, we then discount, dismiss, and deny them.

It prevents growth. Toxic positivity allows us to avoid feeling things that might be painful. But this denies us the ability to face challenging feelings that can ultimately lead to growth and deeper insight.

I believe it is possible to be optimistic in the face of difficult experiences and challenges. But people going through trauma don't need to be told to stay positive or feel that they are being judged for not maintaining a sunny outlook.

Which consequence of toxic positivity is NOT mentioned in the text?

1) Ignoring other people's negative feelings.
2) Avoiding harmful behaviour of those around you.
3) Putting the blame on the person dealing with pain.
4) Discouraging people from sharing emotions.