

# Book review

## Born to Be Good

The science of a meaningful life

**Category:** Book Reviews / Self-help

**Author:** Dacher Keltner

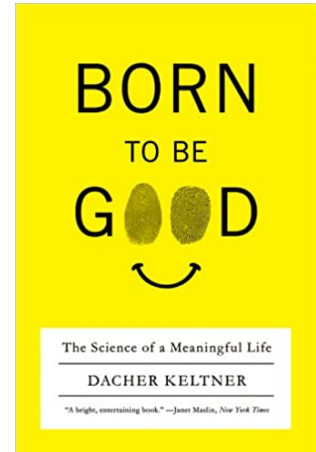
**Year:** 2009

**Publisher:** WW Norton & Co, US

**ISBN:** 9780393337136

**Audience:** Supporting Myself

**Summary:** *The study of human emotion and evolution, with positive emotions at the heart of what it means to be human*



Keltner's book is filled with a wealth of interesting anecdotes and references to research, including his own, that show human beings are built to cooperate with and care for each other. Keltner explains the origins of human goodness are rooted in your emotions and in the first part of the book, he walks you through decades of evolutionary research showing humans are actually wired for good.

Keltner and like-minded scientists conclude compassion and the desire to work with others are contagious emotions and the likelihood of spreading them across people and space increases as more people show kindness to another. Even hearing about the good acts of others can inspire within you the desire to reach out in caring ways to others. I see this at the early years hub. When parents hear stories about what other parents have shared or donated, immediately they start to think about what they could do.

### Being good to each other

Warm smiles, laughter, caring touches, playful light-hearted movements and gentle teasing; are all expressions of positive emotions which can be gained through connecting in healthy, respectful ways with others. Not only do the hormones released by such behaviour increase our own wellbeing and quiet "the press of self-interest" but they also promote the wellbeing of others.

The pursuit of happiness and success often refers to sensory pleasures or material wealth. Keltner points out that what is missing in such discourse is the language and practice of emotions like compassion, gratitude, amusement and wonder.

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In a nutshell, this book provides scientific data to prove what we all already know; it feels good to love and care for others and those feelings enhance our own wellbeing. If you enjoyed *Body Language* by Allan and Barbara Pease, you will also like reading *Born to Be Good*.

**Reviewed by Jacinta Liddell, Project Leader Levin Early Years Hub**

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