



# OUTLAW CATALOGUE OF Cagey Optimism

excerpted from the revised and expanded edition of  
Rob Brezsny's *Pronoia Is the Antidote for Paranoia*

Psychiatry and psychotherapy obsess on what's wrong with people and give short shrift to what's right. The manual of these professions is a 943-page textbook called the DSM-IV. It identifies scores of pathological states but no healthy ones.

Some time back, Rob Brezsny began to complain about this fact, and asked readers to help him compile material for a proposed antidote, the Anti-DSM — a compendium of healthy, exalted, positive states of being. As their entries came in, Rob's Beauty and Truth Laboratory was inspired to dream up some of their own. Below is part one of their initial attempt at creating an Anti-DSM-IV, or as they also like to call it, *The Outlaw Catalogue of Cagey Optimism*.

**ACUTE FLUENCY.** Happily immersed in artistic creation or scientific exploration; lost in a trance-like state of inventiveness that's both blissful and taxing; surrendered to a state of grace in which you're fully engaged in a productive, compelling, and delightful activity. The joy of this demanding, rewarding state is intensified by a sense that time has been suspended, and is rounder and deeper than usual. (Extensive studies in this state have been done by Mihaly Csicszenmihalyi in his book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.)

**AESTHETIC BLISS.** Vividly experiencing the colours, textures, tones, scents, and rhythms of the world around you, creating a symbiotic intimacy that dissolves the psychological barriers between you and what you observe.

**AGGRESSIVE SENSITIVITY.** Animated by a strong determination to be receptive and empathetic.

**ALIGNMENT WITH THE INFINITY OF THE MOMENT.** Reveling in the liberating realisation that we are all exactly where we need to be at all times, even if some of us are temporarily in the midst of trial or tribulation, and that human evolution is proceeding exactly as it should, even if we can't see the big picture of the puzzle that would clarify how all the pieces fit together perfectly.

**AUTONOMOUS NURTURING.** Not waiting for someone to give you what you can give yourself.

**BASKING IN ELDER WISDOM.** A state of expansive ripeness achieved through listening to the stories of elders.

**BIBLIOLISS.** Transported into states of transcendent pleasure while immersed in reading a favourite book.

**BLASPHEMOUS REVERENCE.** Acting on the knowledge that the most efficacious form of devotion to the Divine Wow is tintured with playful or mischievous behaviour that prevents the buildup of fanaticism.

**BOO-DUH NATURE.** Dwelling in the blithe understanding that worry is useless because most of what we worry about never happens.

**COMIC INTROSPECTION.** Being fully aware of your own foibles while still loving yourself tenderly and maintaining confidence in your ability to give your specific genius to the world. To paraphrase Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral: following the Byzantine ploys of your ego with compassion and humour as it tries to make itself the centre of everything, even of its own suffering and struggle.

**COMPASSIONATE DISCRIMINATION.** Having astute judgment without being scornfully judgmental; seeing difficult truths about a situation or person without closing your heart or feeling superior. In the words of Alan Jones again: having the ability "to smell a rat without allowing your ability to discern deception sour your vision of the glory and joy that is everyone's birthright."

**CRAZED KINDNESS.** Having frequent, overpowering urges to bestow gifts, disseminate inspiration, and perpetrate random acts of benevolence.

**ECSTATIC GRATITUDE.** Feeling genuine thankfulness with such resplendent intensity that you generate a surge of endorphins in your body and slip into a full-scale outbreak of euphoria.

**EMANCIPATED SURRENDER.** Letting go of an attachment without harbouring resentment toward the stimuli that led to the necessity of letting go.

**HIGHWAY EQUANIMITY.** Feeling serene, polite, and benevolent while driving in heavy traffic.

**HOLY LISTENING.** Hearing the words of another human being as if they were a direct communication from the Divine Wow to you.

**IMAGINATIVE TRUTH-TELLING.** Conveying the truth of any specific situation from multiple angles, thereby mitigating the distortions that result from assuming the truth can be told from a single viewpoint.

**IMPULSIVE LOVE SPREADING.** Characterised by a fierce determination to never withhold well-deserved praise, inspirational encouragement, positive feedback, or loving thoughts; often includes a tendency to write love letters on the spur of the moment and on any medium, including napkins, grocery bags, and skin.

**INADVERTENT NATURE WORSHIP.** Experiencing the rapture that comes from being outside for extended periods of time.

**INGENIOUS INTIMACY.** Having an ability to consistently create deep connections with other human beings, and to use the lush, reverential excitement stimulated by such exchanges to further deepen the connections. A well-crafted talent for dissolving your sense of separateness and enjoying the innocent exultation that erupts in the wake of the dissolution.

**JOYFUL POIGNANCE.** Feeling buoyantly joyful about the beauty and mystery of life while remaining aware of the sadness, injustices, wounds, and future fears that form the challenges in an examined life.

**LATE LATE-BLOOMING.** Having a capacity for growth spurts well into old age, long past the time that conventional wisdom says they're possible.

**MODULATED RAPTURISM.** Welcoming miracles and peak experiences in full awareness that the growth they initiate will require sobriety, commitment and disciplined work to complete.

**NON-RESENTMENT SYNDROME.** Having an ability to be friendly, open, and helpful to people with whom you disagree.

**NOT HAVING TO BE RIGHT.** Fostering an ability, even a willingness, to be proven wrong about one of your initial perceptions or pet theories; having an eagerness to gather information that may change your mind about something you have fervently believed; cultivating a tendency to enjoy being corrected, especially about ideas that are negative or hostile.

**ORGIASTIC LUCIDITY.** Experiencing an expansive and intricate state of clarity while in the midst of extreme sensual pleasure.

**RADICAL CURIOSITY.** Characterised by the following traits: an enthusiasm for the mystery embedded in the mundane; a preference for questions over answers; an aversion to stereotyping, generalisations, and jumping to conclusions; a belief that people are unsolvable puzzles; an inclination to be unafraid of both change and absence of change; a strong drive to avoid boredom; a lack of interest in possessing or dominating what you are curious about.

**RELENTLESS UNPRETENTIOUSNESS.** Possessing a strong determination to not take yourself too seriously, not take your cherished beliefs too literally, and not take other people's ideas about you too personally.

**SACRED PERCEPTIVENESS.** Seeing others for who they really are, in both their immaturity and genius, and articulating your insights to them with care.

**SCARY-THUNDER-IN-THE-DARK HAPPINESS.** Feeling deliciously safe in a well-protected sanctuary during a severe storm.

**SCHIZOFRIENDIA.** Hearing voices in your head that are constantly supportive, encouraging, and keen to offer advice that helps you make the most of every experience.

**SELF-ACCEPTANCE UNDER PRESSURE.** The state achieved upon leaving a room filled with people who know you, and not worrying about what anyone will say about you.

**SELF-HONOURING.** Having an unwillingness to disparage, belittle, or hurt yourself; includes a taboo against speaking phrases such as, "I'm such an idiot!" and "What's wrong with me?"

**SLY TRUST.** Having a discerning faith that the integrity of your efforts will inevitably lead to a result that's exactly what you need; being skillful in the art of never trying too hard.

**SONGBIRD-IN-A-TREE.** The cultivated awareness that daily life presents countless opportunities to be buoyed by moments of ordinary extraordinary beauty, and that these moments are most available if you perceive with your senses and not with your internal turmoil.

**TENDER RAGE.** Maintaining a strong sense of love and protectiveness towards a person or creature or institution you're angry at.

**UNSELFCONSCIOUSNESS.** Doing what you're doing and being who you're being without thinking about it at all. Being happy by virtue of not worrying about whether or not you're happy; enjoying a unified state in which you are not split between the you who acts and the you who observes.

**UNTWEAKABILITY.** Having a composed, blame-free readiness to correct false impressions when your actions have been misunderstood and have led to awkward consequences.

**VIRTUOSO INTEGRATION.** Consistently walking your talk; effectively translating your ideals into specific actions; creating results that are congruous with your intentions; being free of hypocrisy.

**VISIONS OF THRILLING EXPLOITS.** Experiencing an eruption of intuition that clearly reveals you will attempt a certain adventure in the future, as when you spy a particular mountain for the first time and know you'll climb it one day.

**WEATHER SENSITIVITY.** Having a high degree of awareness about your sensitivity to changes in the weather, and having a skill for managing your responses to those shifts so as to consistently bring out the best in yourself.

**WHOLEHEARTEDNESS.** Having the capacity to give, on a moment's notice, your complete attention, empathy, and playful intelligence to any person or circumstance you choose.

**WILD DISCIPLINE.** Possessing a talent for creating a kind of organisation that's liberating; knowing how to introduce limitations into a situation in such a way that everyone involved is empowered to express his or her unique genius; having an ability to discern hidden order within a seemingly chaotic mess.

**WHEEEE.** A serenely boisterous, intensely focused chaos of communion with streaming fountains of liquid light hurtling softly through the giggly upbeat tender assurance that all is well and a mysterious unimaginable intelligence is magnetising us forward into ever-more wonderful throbs of naked truth that bestow the humble happy sight of life as a river of fantastically lucky artful change flowing through us forever.