

# The Telegraph

HOME NEWS SPORT FINANCE COMMENT BLOGS CULTURE TRAVEL **LIFESTYLE**

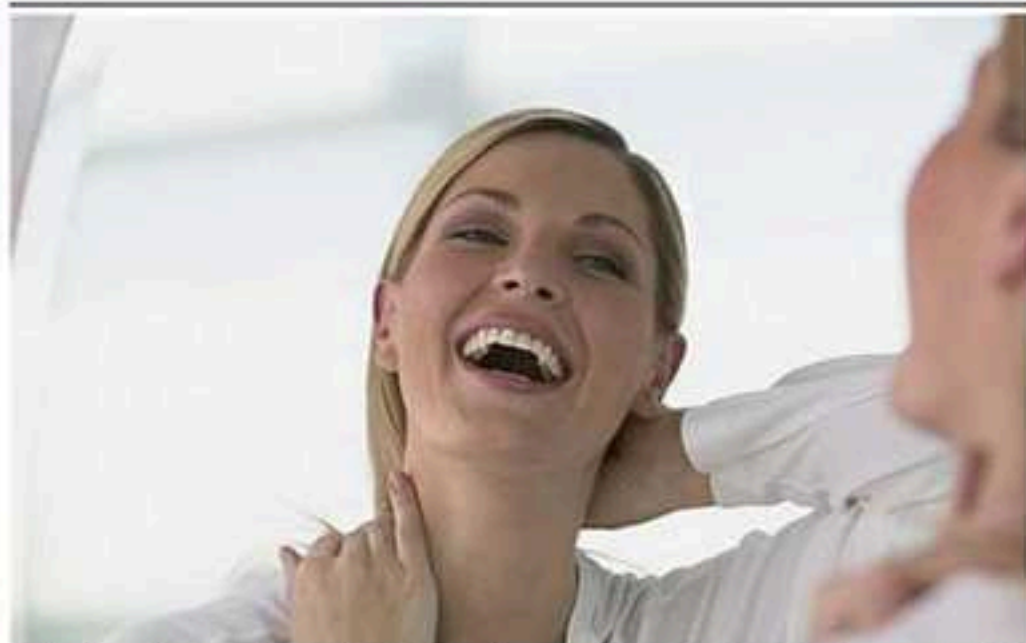
Motoring **Health** Property Gardening Food and Drink Family Outdoors Relationships

Health News Health Advice Diet and Fitness **Wellbeing** Expat Health Flu Swine Flu

## Wellbeing

### Pessimistic French rediscover their prophet of positive thinking

The notoriously gloomy French are turning to that bastion of optimism, Emile Coue, to pull themselves out of their economic funk.



Smiling through: France is adopting Emile Coue's mantra of saying 'Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better' Photo: photolibray.com



By **Max Davidson**  
7:30AM BST 13 Sep 2011

Comment

Anyone who has ever been served by a saturnine French waiter who looks as if he has just shot his grandmother and lost his life savings in a fire will know that pessimism runs deep in the Gallic psyche. Where else would that whingeing party-pooper Jean-Paul Sartre have achieved cult status?

Share:

Recommend 2

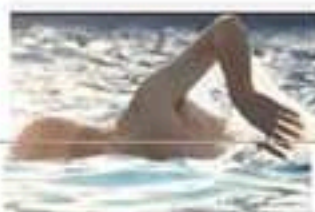
Tweet 13

Share 3

+1 0

#### Wellbeing

France > Comment >  
Active >  
Max Davidson >



Telegraph Medical Insurance

Students at ex-polytechnics twice as likely to be jobless  
One in five graduates from some newer universities fail to find a job within six months.

Universities with

So it is a jolt to the system to read that our neighbours across the Channel have rediscovered one of their most optimistic sons, a beacon of bonhomie whose rays lit up the world. Émile Coué, high priest of positive thinking, the man who coined the mantra "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better", is making a comeback. In his heyday, the smiling apothecary, born in 1857, gained Europe-wide celebrity with his theories about auto-suggestion – patients getting better because they believed they would, not because of any pills.

His belief in the healing effect of willpower originated by accident. He had run out of medicine, gave a patient a bottle of water instead, and told him it would cure him. And it did. In the face of scepticism from the medical profession, he treated maladies ranging from diabetes to stammering.

His pioneering use of placebos had the great and the good eating out of his hands – his patients included Prince Albert, later King George VI – although he was a prophet largely without honour in his own country. The neurosis-ridden French – recently voted the world's most pessimistic country – were allergic to positive thinking.

No longer, it seems. The country is in such a deep economic hole that even bastions of scepticism such as the Left-wing daily *Libération* are recommending a dose of Coué-style optimism as an antidote to the prevailing gloom. Businessmen are being coached in the art of looking on the bright side, telling themselves as they look deep into a mirror that they will succeed ... until they do.

#### RELATED ARTICLES

- [Women and divorce: You're just too dull](#) 04 Sep 2011
- [Office work bad for your brain](#) 07 Aug 2011
- [This happy breed](#) 22 Jul 2011
- [Plan ahead to combat hair loss](#) 11 Jul 2011
- [How meditation could help your health](#) 28 Jun 2011

And not before time. One of the most depressing features of the economic situation, not just in France, is the way that bad news has bred more bad news. How can we win through to better times unless we believe in our bones that better times will come?

Whatever you think of David Cameron, it is good to have an optimist in Downing Street. There is a boyishness about him, an undimmed faith in the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, that bodes well for hard times ahead.

**Universities with worst employment rates plan maximum fees**

A number of universities plan to charge the maximum tuition fees while having one of the worst employment rates in the country, new figures show.

**99-year-old victim of America's Great Depression finally collects his degree**

In 1932, Granville "Leo" Plass was just a term away from completing his teaching degree at Eastern Oregon University, when like so many Americans his life was turned upside down by the Great Depression.

Tuesday 20 September 2011

# The Telegraph

When you ponder some much-loved British celebrities – cheery Ronnie Corbett, smiley Sue Barker, beaming Joanna Lumley – what they share is a ready smile, a twinkle in their eye and an almost childlike faith in the future. We have basked in the warmth of their personalities, perhaps even adjusted our way of looking at the world. Why not look for the best in people instead of the worst? Why not allow ourselves to dream? Worrying can be so exhausting.

How long the renewed French love affair with Emile Coué lasts is in the lap of the gods. But positive thinking is too important to be a passing fad. In uncertain economic times, it is the best prophylactic against despair.

Tuesday 20 September 2011

**The Telegraph**