



Enriching Lives

12 things happy people do differently to increase their levels of happiness.

Studies conducted by positivity psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky point to 12 things happy people do differently to increase their levels of happiness. These are things that we can start doing today to feel the effects of more happiness in our lives.

I want to honor and discuss each of these 12 points, because no matter what part of life's path we're currently traveling on, these 'happiness habits' will always be applicable (Positive Thoughts).

1. **Express gratitude.** – When you appreciate what you have, what you have appreciates in value. Kinda cool right? So basically, being grateful for the goodness that is already evident in your life will bring you a deeper sense of happiness. And that's without having to go out and buy anything. It makes sense. We're gonna have a hard time ever being happy if we aren't thankful for what we already have.
2. **Cultivate optimism.** – Winners have the ability to manufacture their own optimism. No matter what the situation, the successful diva is the chick who will always find a way to put an optimistic spin on it. She knows failure only as an opportunity to grow and learn a new lesson from life. People who think optimistically see the world as a place packed with endless opportunities, especially in trying times.
3. **Avoid over-thinking and social comparison.** – Comparing yourself to someone else can be poisonous. If we're somehow 'better' than the person that we're comparing ourselves to, it gives us an unhealthy sense of superiority. Our ego inflates – KABOOM – our inner Kanye West comes out! If we're 'worse' than the person that we're comparing ourselves to, we usually discredit the hard work that we've done and dismiss all the progress that we've made. What I've found is that the majority of the time this type of social comparison doesn't stem from a healthy place. If you feel called to compare yourself to something, compare yourself to an earlier version of yourself.
4. **Practice acts of kindness.** – Performing an act of kindness releases serotonin in your brain. (Serotonin is a substance that has TREMENDOUS health benefits, including making us feel more blissful.) Selflessly helping someone is a super powerful way to feel good inside. What's even cooler about this kindness kick is that not only will you feel better, but so will people watching the act of kindness. How extraordinary is that? Bystanders will be blessed with a release of serotonin just by watching what's going on. A side note is that the job of most anti-depressants is to release more serotonin. Move over Pfizer, kindness is kicking ass and taking names.
5. **Nurture social relationships.** – The happiest people on the planet are the ones who have deep, meaningful relationships. Did you know studies show that people's mortality rates are DOUBLED when they're lonely? WHOA! There's a warm fuzzy feeling that comes from having

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an active circle of good friends who you can share your experiences with. We feel connected and a part of something more meaningful than our lonesome existence.

6. **Develop strategies for coping.** – How you respond to the ‘cra-p-tastic’ moments is what shapes your character. Sometimes crap happens – it’s inevitable. Forrest Gump knows the deal. It can be hard to come up with creative solutions in the moment when manure is making its way up toward the fan. It helps to have healthy strategies for coping pre-rehearsed, on-call, and in your arsenal at your disposal.
7. **Learn to forgive.** – Harboring feelings of hatred is horrible for your well-being. You see, your mind doesn’t know the difference between past and present emotion. When you ‘hate’ someone, and you’re continuously thinking about it, those negative emotions are eating away at your immune system. You put yourself in a state of suckerism (technical term) and it stays with you throughout your day.
8. **Increase flow experiences.** – Flow is a state in which it feels like time stands still. It’s when you’re so focused on what you’re doing that you become one with the task. Action and awareness are merged. You’re not hungry, sleepy, or emotional. You’re just completely engaged in the activity that you’re doing. Nothing is distracting you or competing for your focus.
9. **Savor life’s joys.** – Deep happiness cannot exist without slowing down to enjoy the joy. It’s easy in a world of wild stimuli and omnipresent movement to forget to embrace life’s enjoyable experiences. When we neglect to appreciate, we rob the moment of its magic. It’s the simple things in life that can be the most rewarding if we remember to fully experience them.
10. **Commit to your goals.** – Being wholeheartedly dedicated to doing something comes fully-equipped with an ineffable force. Magical things start happening when we commit ourselves to doing whatever it takes to get somewhere. When you’re fully committed to doing something, you have no choice but to do that thing. Counter-intuitively, having no option – where you can’t change your mind – subconsciously makes humans happier because they know part of their purpose.
11. **Practice spirituality.** – When we practice spirituality or religion, we recognize that life is bigger than us. We surrender the silly idea that we are the mightiest thing ever. It enables us to connect to the source of all creation and embrace a connectedness with everything that exists. Some of the most accomplished people I know feel that they’re here doing work they’re “called to do.”
12. **Take care of your body.** – Taking care of your body is crucial to being the happiest person you can be. If you don’t have your physical energy in good shape, then your mental energy (your focus), your emotional energy (your feelings), and your spiritual energy (your purpose) will all be negatively affected. Did you know that studies conducted on people who were clinically depressed showed that consistent exercise raises happiness levels just as much as Zoloft? Not only that, but here’s the double whammy... Six months later, the people who participated in exercise were less likely to relapse because they had a higher sense of self-accomplishment and self-worth.