

Tips for Increasing Your Happiness

Fact Sheet



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There are a number of things that you have control over in your life which might increase your happiness.

If you look at the happiness equation, these things fall mainly into the 'V' section (voluntary control), and some fit into the 'C' section, for circumstances. $H = S + C + V$

H = Happiness

S = Set range - (Genetics: about 50%)

C = Circumstances (8-15%)

V = Voluntary Control - (Past, Present, Future)

For more information on the Happiness equation check out the [What is Happiness?](#) fact sheet.

You might find it easier to control some of these aspects than others - it's a matter of trying some of them out and seeing what works for you. Those which you find more difficult might become easier with time and practice.

Tips for Being Happy

There are lots of things you can do to increase your happiness. Here are a few suggestions for you to try out. If you want more suggestions check out the links on the right side of the page.

Be in the Present - Don't get distracted by the past or the future - What this means is to enjoy what is happening in your life now, and concentrating on being as happy as possible now rather than dwelling on bad things that may have happened in the past, or worrying about what may or may not happen in the future.

This doesn't mean to forget the past or not think about the future, but there are definitely more helpful ways of thinking about these times too, which may influence how happy or unhappy you are.

For example, you might be feeling stressed about your upcoming exams, especially since last time they didn't go too well. A useful way to bring you back to the present might be to think about one good thing that you did well last time you had exams - for example, you wrote a really good essay in one of your exams. That's great! Maybe you can do well in even more exams this time. Now think about what it is you have to do now to make this a possibility - you're back in the present.

Another example might be that you have a party on Saturday night and feel nervous because you struggle talking to new people and feel like you don't ever look quite as good as everyone else. To bring you back to the present think about someone that you get on really well with and what is it that makes it that way. When was the last time you felt great. Keeping that picture in your mind, think about how you can use that example to make the party fun.

For more information, check out the gratitude fact sheet.

Take Notice of the Little Things in Life and in the World, and Enjoy Them - It may sound strange, but by paying attention to the things around you such as the natural environment, someone's smile, or how good your hot chocolate or coffee tastes in the morning, it may actually increase your overall happiness - it can be the little things that make all the difference.

Build and Maintain Good Quality Relationships - This doesn't necessarily mean having a boyfriend or girlfriend, but it includes family members, friends, and social acquaintances, and work colleagues. You shouldn't need to have a boyfriend or girlfriend to be happy, but having quality relationships in general does increase your

likelihood of being happy.

One of the good things about having good quality relationships is that you're likely to be more active if you have them, and this is a significant contributor to happiness

Friends and family also act as social support, and can be a great place to turn to if you're not feeling great, for example if you're feeling sad or stressed, and they can help you work through those feelings. Their support can also protect you from a range of illnesses and health problems.

Making friends isn't always easy, and can require quite a bit of effort. Improving and maintaining friendships you already have can require a lot of effort too, but the rewards can be huge.

To build a good quality and strong relationship it is important that you establish good open communication, that you think positively about the other person in the relationship, and that you respect and trust that other person.

For more information check out the [Friends and Relationships](#) issue stream on the Reach Out! Website.

Train Your Mind - Choose the way you think about things. Sometimes things happen in life which might seem like a disaster at first, but aren't necessarily in the end. For example, you might have an assignment which is overdue, and although it might seem at first like a lost cause, you have a choice about how you think about the situation. You might just give up, and regret what's happened, or else you might finish the assignment, lose a few marks for getting it in late, and treat it as a learning experience for next time.

For more info check out the [Regrets](#) fact sheet or to test your skills in seeing how your thoughts about a situation influences your feelings in [Reach Out! Central](#).

Use Your Strengths - Research has shown that focusing on your strengths leads to higher levels of health, happiness, and success. For more information, check out the fact sheet on using your strengths to optimize your happiness.

Plan for Happiness - Happy and successful people tend to choose their happiness, and plan for it. If you want to be happier, you might want to develop your own happiness plan.

First you'll have to ask yourself "What do I want in life?" This may be something that is obvious to you, or you may have no idea what you want out of life. What you want might also depend on the stage of life you're at, and may change over time.

Something you might do if you don't know what you want is to imagine what your life would be like if you were really happy. It may be just as it is now, or there may be certain things that stand out for you that are different - where you live, what you do, what your relationships are like.

Once you know what you want your life to be like, you can develop goals for yourself based on these desires. They might be really big goals that seem really unattainable, and it might be necessary to break them down into smaller goals, and develop an action plan so that the goal doesn't seem so overwhelming.

It is important that your goals are realistic and achievable, or else you may just be setting yourself up for failure, and make yourself unhappy instead of happy.

Over time, you'll need to reassess your goals, and as your goals change you'll need to change your happiness plan accordingly.

Try it Out

Now that you know a few things that can help increase your happiness, why don't you try them out? It might not be easy at first, and may take some time. The rewards could be huge - not only in terms of making you happier, but for your general wellbeing as well.

Let us know how you go - we'd love your feedback! You can do this by filling in a feedback form at the bottom of the page, or by joining in on the discussion in the Community online forums in the feeling great thread [here](#).

Acknowledgement

The Happiness Handbook
Dr. Timothy Sharp
The Happiness Institute
<http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com>

Authentic Happiness
Martin Seligman
Random House Australia (2002)
www.authentichappiness.org
(you'll have to join, free of charge, to access the various questionnaires)

Last Reviewed: 23 May 2008