



10 Ways to Boost Happiness

Some may say happiness is the ultimate commodity. Don't we all want to be happy and have joy in our lives? For a growing population, this is a real challenge. Rates of depression and prescriptions for anti-depressants are soaring*. Many of us think "if only I had..." or "if only this had (or hadn't) happened..." we would be happier. And here in lies the fallacy of our quest for happiness. It isn't something that just falls in your lap or happens to you, you play a role in creating it! During times when I'm feeling sorry for myself or overwhelmed by my circumstances I remind myself of this truth. Ready to steer your life towards more joy? Then read on for 10 ways you can boost happiness in your life.

1. Make happiness a verb!

Empower yourself and start taking action to increase happiness in your life. Happiness doesn't arise out of passivity; waiting for things to be "just right" or for others or situations to change. You have to be intentional about focusing on and creating joy in your life.

2. Keep a gratitude journal.

Numerous sources cite this as one of the most beneficial actions we can take to increase happiness. When you take a moment to be gracious, you focus on the positives in your life which in turn can boost happiness. If you're not much of a writer simply do this exercise mentally each day and list 5 things you can be grateful for. I know personally this has made a big difference and it doesn't take much time.

3. Stop thinking of happiness in terms of "all" or "nothing."

How many times do we focus on the one thing going wrong in our life only to ignore all the other brilliant, wonderful, miraculous features? Appreciate what aspects of your life are going well and that bring you joy. Even in a less than ideal situation, can you see the silver lining? I love the quote by Joan Marques that says, "Maybe the art of life is to convert tough times to great experiences. We can choose to hate the rain or dance in it."

4. Switch from an external to an internal focus to cultivate happiness.

People can be fickle, objects break, bodies sag with time or get diseased, and the world around us changes quicker than we can keep up with it. If our happiness depends on having the newest, greatest thing, having enough money, fame, beauty, power, health etc., etc., then it will be elusive. Because there will always be someone who has more and ours will seem like not enough. To become happier we need to get out of comparison mode. Instead of acquiring more things, focus on cultivating experiences that have meaning and bring you pleasure. Instead of focusing on things in the physical world, do the work of finding practices that help you connect to your inner (mental, energetic, and/or spiritual) world.

5. Get enough sleep.

More and more research is pointing to the importance of sleep for both our physical and mental wellness. When you are sleep deprived your body is more likely to be on alert and cue into potential threats or negatives, often ignoring positive ones. Get a good night's rest and notice how much more positive your outlook is the next day!

6. Manage your time.

People who are happier manage their time so that they have more desired activities in their day than obligations. Researcher Tim Kasser confirms this with studies that show time affluence, in other words, having enough time to engage in activities that you enjoy and that are of your choosing, is a more consistent predictor of wellbeing than material affluence. Ask yourself, what and where can I delegate? Where can saying “no” to someone or something else represent saying “yes” to my wellness?

7. Engage in positive rituals or practices on a regular basis.

This is the “doing” of happiness. Think about what makes you happy and make it a point to schedule happiness boosters throughout your day and week. These don’t have to be big things. It could be a few minutes of meditation or prayer, sitting for 10 minutes and talking with your significant other, spending time with your pet, dancing, playing music, or goofing around with your kids. You do have to be intentional about scheduling them in otherwise life has a way of interceding. If you’re having a busy day, pick a quick happiness booster, if you have more time schedule longer intervals of time. You could even be strategic in when you plan the happiness booster. Do you need one right before a stressful meeting at work to help shift your mood and mindset? Play around with scheduling and you will find the frequency and timing that works best for you.

8. Forgive yourself and others

Resentment, anger, and guilt only work to steal joy from our lives. They keep us stuck in the “if only...” mindset. Forgiving yourself and others does not condone the behavior, but moves us away from the pain of the past and into the possibility of peace in the present.

9. Create a “success” list and focus on things you have accomplished and/or progress you have made.

How often do you review your day only to focus on the things that you didn’t accomplish or that didn’t go as well as hoped? Happy people take a different perspective and focus on what went well. If they didn’t get the results they wanted, instead of labeling it a failure they look at what they learned or gained from the experience.

10. Recall a time when you experienced joy and replay it in your mind.

Close your eyes. Bring to mind as many details of the joyful experience as you can. Who were you with, if anyone? Where were you? What were you doing? What sights, sensations, smells, sounds and/or tastes were part of the experience? Perhaps you even smile, laugh out loud, and allow your body to act as if you’re in the experience again. Mentally rehearsing this experience will strengthen your “happy pathways” in the brain and will probably leave you feeling a bit more joyful.

While these strategies can’t guarantee happiness, they certainly can increase the likelihood of it. What is one step you can take today to bring more happiness to your life? Let’s share the joy! Follow me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wellfinity where I’m going to challenge myself to post something positive every day. I would love for you to chime in and share your ideas for happiness boosters.

My hope is that this newsletter inspired you to take action and make happiness a verb! If you need a “co-pilot” along the way, feel free to contact me for your FREE consultation to find out how wellness coaching can help.

Shelly

Live with Intention, Love Yourself, Create Balance, Fulfill Your Purpose & Thrive!

*This article does not intend to negate the seriousness of mental illness nor imply that depressed people can simply will themselves to feel better. In some circumstances therapy and/or medication may be necessary to alleviate symptoms. The strategies presented in this article are only intended to complement rather than replace cognitive behavioral or psychopharmacologic interventions.