

100 **W** **A** **Y** **S** TO

Be Happy

Simple Tips and
Tricks to **Brighten**
Up Your Day



100 Ways to Be Happy

Simple Tips and Tricks to Brighten Your Day

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Contents

Introduction

Change the Way You Think

Smile, Even if You Don't Want To

Give Yourself Props

Chill Out Before Your Day Begins

Appreciate Yesterday, But Anticipate Tomorrow

Make Your Own Space

Practice Tolerance

Give Blood on Your Birthday

Create Your Own Mission Statement

Establish New Family Traditions

Write a Love Note to Your Partner

Have Sushi with Friends

Share What You Like with Your Partner

Set Clear Boundaries

Be the Friend You Want to Have

Be a Better Mom or Dad

Assign Chef Duty to the Family

Become Skilled at Conflict Resolution

Schedule One-on-One Time

Help Your Kids Invent New Games

Employees — and You — Must Wash Hands

Mix It Up in the Bedroom

Practice Deep Breathing Throughout the Day

Pamper Yourself at a Spa

Find a Mentor

Use the Law of Attraction Before Bed

Think of Three Ways to Improve Your Job

Calm Down Before You Go to Sleep

Don't Burn Your Bridges

Create — and Stick to — a Household Budget

Pay Off Your Highest Credit Card

Forgo the Daily Latte

Carry President Washington with You

Buy a Home

Release Some Pressure

Scream it Out

Save the Drama

Uncork and Unwind

Note the Little Things that Make You Smile

Bring Your Pillow

Try a New Food or Drink

Downsize Your Suitcase

Take a Family Road Trip

Be Generous with Your Tips

Visualize Yourself Succeeding

Spend a Half Hour Every Day on Your Passion

Focus Your Dream

Plan Celebrations for Your Achievements

Be a Supportive Partner

Be on Time and Be Ready

Leave with a Clean Desk

Take Time to De-Stress at Work

Take Action to Improve Your Workplace

Work Out with a Friend

Sign Up for a Kickboxing Class

Start an Herb Garden

Boogie While You Brew

Leave the Car at Home

Teach Your Favorite Recipes

Use Your Hobby to Help Others

Host a Wine Tasting

Collect Something

Create Something New

Make Peace over Coffee

Put Yourself in Your Enemy's Shoes

Try to Find Common Ground

Have the Courage to Walk Away

Recognize that Happiness is Not a Destination

Adopt a New Friend

Exercise with Your Pet

Bake for Your Pup

Volunteer at Your Local Shelter

Plan a Worst Case Scenario for Your Pet

Plan Your Own Birthday Party — and Go All Out

Throw an Oscar Party

Make Specific Name Tags for Your Guests

Play Photog and Send Out Pictures as Thank You's

Donate Your Loose Change

Waste Away an Afternoon at a Bookstore

Go Antiquing with Your Pals

Find a Study Buddy

Go to Band Camp

Just Play

Help a Kid Develop an Interest

Read a Silly Story with Kids

Plan Multicultural Activities

Teach Respect

Make Promises and Keep Them

Stop Gossiping

Share Your Favorite Book with a Friend

Turn a Negative Nancy into a Positive Polly

Tell Someone You Love that You're Proud

Be Nice or Be Quiet

Brainstorm Three Helpful Actions

Spread Some Virtual Cheer

Think Globally

Make Your Own Fortunes

Also Available

Copyright Page

Introduction

What is it that makes you happy and contented? Although happiness and life satisfaction are relative, new areas of psychology study, research suggests that it's not external objects like cars, luxury homes, and all the must-have gadgets money can buy that make people happy, but rather internal factors like good health and an optimistic, hopeful outlook.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the eighteenth-century playwright, had nine requisites for a happy, contented life. First was health, in order to make work a pleasure. Then came wealth to support one's needs. Other factors in his list included strength to deal with difficulty, grace to confess and abandon sin, patience, charity, love, faith, and hope.

What does it take for you to feel that things are going well and that you are flourishing? There are ideas worth examining, for the answers reveal how you can have a happier life. We've put together 100 different ways you can explore happiness in your own life through simple activities, thoughts, and actions.



Change the Way You Think

If you want to find happiness and add years to your life, think happy thoughts. When you choose positive thoughts over negative ones, you are more likely to develop an optimistic outlook on life. According to happiness researchers such as Martin E. P. Seligman, director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, and Barbara Fredrickson, PhD, professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, positive people generally have higher levels of optimism and life satisfaction and live longer. In a BBC News report, Dr. Seligman was quoted as saying that he believed that “we have compelling evidence that optimists and pessimists will differ markedly in how long they live.” Dr. Fredrickson has counseled that changing your mindset can change your body chemistry. She has stated that positive feelings literally can open the heart and mind. And there’s more good news. Even if you aren’t normally a happy person, thinking happy thoughts is a skill that can be learned. Work on being open, being an optimist, choosing to think positive thoughts, and seeing the proverbial glass half full rather than half empty. The next time you are in line at the post office and someone cuts in front of you or says something rude, resist the urge to respond with anger, which can clamp down your blood vessels and increase your blood pressure. Instead, return rudeness with kindness and respect. Keep that positive vibe going through your intentions and actions in whatever you do. The more frequently you choose to be happy, the more your effort will be strengthened. So don’t fret; be happy and live longer.



Smile, Even if You Don't Want To

Force yourself to smile. Try it; it's not that difficult. Now hold it for a count of ten and deepen it. Mentally affirm, "I am happy, totally, blissfully happy." Notice how your mood begins to shift. You can't help but feel a little lighter. Use your smile to start a happiness epidemic. Smile at everyone everywhere. People are hardwired to respond to the facial expressions they encounter. If you glower at someone, that person will return a frown, but your smile will evoke a smile. You'll feel happier, too, because your body responds to your smile, even if you are faking the grin. So fake it until you genuinely feel happy. Once you know it works, do it often.



Give Yourself Props

You praise your children, your friends, your coworkers, and your spouse whenever they accomplish something praiseworthy, so why not give yourself a one-minute praising for your own achievements? You're not being a braggart or egotistical when you acknowledge some wonderful task or breakthrough you made during your day. You undoubtedly work very hard and probably accomplish much that no one but you recognizes. If you finally played a complicated piano libretto all the way through or found an ingenious way to increase the family budget, tell yourself how wonderful, brilliant and accomplished you are. Bask in the glory of that moment. You deserve it.



Chill Out Before Your Day Begins

Focus on your thinking at the start of every day. Are your thoughts already racing through your to-do list? Are they jumping from one subject to another through thought associations? Did a troubling dream leave you anxious or angry or fearful upon awakening? If you answered yes to any of those questions, spend ten minutes before you even get out of bed doing a mental check-in. Take deep breaths and be aware of your entire body. Feel anchored and centered in it. Quiet your mind. Think positive thoughts. Dial out the emotions of bad dreams and the anxieties associated with the day ahead. Relax into peace. The world can wait for ten minutes.



Appreciate Yesterday, But Anticipate Tomorrow

You can never go back to previous moments or past events. Once you have moved through them, they are forever gone. Whatever is in the past that haunts you or makes you sad or fearful necessarily stays there. It cannot be undone. If some past event or encounter still bothers you, do what you can to process through it and let it go. You alone give it the power it has over you. Release it and instead focus on the present moment. Be mindful right now of where you are, who you are, and what you are doing. Paying attention to and being fully present in each moment of your life means you truly will be “showing up for your life.” That is the way to happiness.



Make Your Own Space

Create an area in your home that can serve as a sanctuary for yoga, prayer, writing in your journal, sipping tea, reading, and reflecting. Make your sacred space private. Add a screen, a large plant, a curtain, or something that defines and separates that space from the rest of the house. Add a small table to hold your spiritual texts, sacred objects, candles, incense, holy oil, or prayer beads. A window or door with a view of a lake or garden is an added bonus. Otherwise hang a piece of silk, a batik, or spiritual art. Regularly retreat to your sanctuary to reconnect with your own inner joy.



Practice Tolerance

When was the last time you tried to understand a bias you hold toward something or someone? If it has been a while, now might be the right time to revisit your beliefs. Growing up, many people consciously and unconsciously absorb the biases of their family members, associates, friends, and peers. When you let go of intolerant biases and recognize and respect the beliefs of others, you are practicing tolerance. Consider one or more of the beliefs you still hold. Perhaps your beloved grandmother told you that things would never change or the father you respected taught you not to trust anyone who didn't look or talk like you. Think for yourself. Using truth and fact, compassion and understanding, create a new lens for seeing bias. Visit www.tolerance.org.



Give Blood on Your Birthday

The greatest gift you can give anyone is the gift of life. Hospitals nationwide provide life-saving blood transfusions every day. Yet, all too often, a shortage of blood prompts blood donation centers, the American Red Cross, and hospitals to call upon citizens to donate and help replenish the national blood supply. Blood banks repeatedly call upon their good donors, those who don't mind coming in as frequently as every six weeks, to help them out. Consider donating on a regular basis or even just once a year on your birthday so that someone ill can make it to his or her next birthday. The happiness you feel on your special day thus can be magnified by your generosity.



Create Your Own Mission Statement

Your mission statement is a blueprint of your vision for your life. When thinking about writing your mission statement, be specific. If you want to have a happy, meaningful life, ask yourself what actions you will need to take and what values and purposes you must have to drive those actions. What is your *raison d'être*? What is the focus of your life's work? How do the things you do and the way you treat your family and other people reflect your core values? Maybe you prefer to react as life comes at you. But if not, clarify what you want to do with your life. What will give you lasting peace and happiness when, at the end of your life, you look back at how you lived?



Establish New Family Traditions

Brainstorm with your children and spouse about making a new family tradition. Perhaps something wonderful and spontaneous occurred as you were preparing to leave for summer vacation, the night before Thanksgiving, the afternoon of the first snowfall, or on the way to the pumpkin patch. Could maybe you had a pillow fight that ended with everyone making popcorn, S'mores, and watching old movies in their pajamas ... if it still evokes powerful memories for all of you, make it a tradition. Other ideas might include an annual family cleaning day (when everyone pitches in to tackle the mess in the garage, basement, or attic), an annual family fun day (let a child choose what the family does for the day, even if it's bug hunting), or an annual plant-a-garden day. According to Dr. G. Scott Wooding, best-selling author and leading Canadian authority on parenting teenagers, traditions help to determine family boundaries and help children feel more secure by giving them a sense of belonging to a clearly defined unit.



Write a Love Note to Your Partner

Leave love to its own devices or take some action to evoke a response from your lover. Write a simple “I love you” note and tuck it under your partner’s pillow to be found when it’s time for bed or after you have already left for the day. Such a simple act will call up strong, loving feelings in him during your absence. Expect a call, possibly the delivery of some flowers, or lots of attention. Want a double dose of happiness? Try it and see for yourself the results.



Have Sushi with Friends

Host a hands-on, sushi-making party for your friends. Tell each person to invite someone else. You gather the supplies (sushi rice, nori or seaweed sheets, crab, cucumber, avocado, and other fillings). Explain the directions: each person puts the rice on the nori, adds the filling she desires, rolls the sheet, wraps one end and wraps it over the other to seal close, and then cuts the roll into several pieces. Depending on the number of people participating, you will have plenty of sushi to eat. Sharing a meal with friends is one of the most pleasurable activities known to humankind. And who knows? You just might meet someone special. Sake, anyone?



Share What You Like with Your Partner

Most men and women find bringing up this topic a little tricky. You know what gives you pleasure. And she knows what she likes. Here's an easy way to enter a discussion about sex. Talk about how the ancients did it. Read the *Kama Sutra* or a book about Tantric yoga practices that utilize the sexual act as a means to enlightenment. Read about the practices of the ancient Greeks and Romans or the erotic exploits of the Victorians (some of them weren't as prudish about sex as you might think). The point is to go from general to specific. Of course, if you are already "performing," you could whisper in her ear how you'd like to be pleased. Don't forget to ask her what she likes. That way, you'll both be breathlessly happy.



Set Clear Boundaries

Sometimes the answer is a simple no, especially when you are trying to hold firm a boundary that someone is trying to push across. If you have a hard time saying no, try this exercise. Stand in front of a mirror and practice saying, “No, it’s not possible. It’s just not possible,” then turn and walk away. Think of how wonderful you will feel to be empowered to say yes and no when it suits you. You never again have to give in when you know you don’t want to or it is not a good idea. Practice until saying no is as easy as saying yes. And that is a powerful tool in your game-of-life chest.



Be the Friend You Want to Have

If you are seeking loyalty and trust in your friendships or the romantic relationship you hope to have, first cultivate those qualities within yourself and then demonstrate them to others. In so doing, you will become a magnet for exactly what you want. Similarly, if you seek a gentle, loving spirit for a life partner, avoid someone with a mercurial, volatile, and temperamental nature. Although opposites can sometimes attract, you'll most likely be happiest with a kindred spirit.



Be a Better Mom or Dad

If you want to be the best parent you can be, sign up for a parenting class. Such classes often can be found through parent teacher organizations, local adult education courses, the family court system, and even online. Learn what to expect from your child as he or she goes through various stages of adulthood. Discover techniques for discipline that do not involve yelling, spanking, screaming, or arguing. Understand why children need boundaries and guidelines as they grow. Invest a little time in becoming a better parent if you want to raise strong, self-sufficient, well-adjusted, happy children.



Assign Chef Duty to the Family

Ever too tired to cook? Encourage each family member to choose one day each week to prepare the family meal. Be graceful and supportive if you're presented with a stack of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Get children an age-appropriate cookbook and help them make some recipes. After that, they will be on their own. Even little children as young as four or five can prepare food. Show them how to wash berries and grapes and break off pieces of bananas, and then demonstrate how to stir some fruit yogurt as salad dressing. Train the whole family so that the next time you are too tired to cook, you can relax and check the family schedule to see who's turn it is to cook.

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