

5 Ways to Increase Your Happiness Now



We all want to be happy. Did you know there are steps we can take to be happier? **Here's how:**

1 Invest time in your family and friends.

Studies have shown that strong family ties reduce rates of depression, suicide and stress, and may even help you live longer.

Happiness action steps: Create a family ritual such as a weekly family meal or an annual vacation, and schedule an afternoon playing golf or wine tasting with friends.

2 Find your purpose.

Happy people have a reason to get up in the morning, are able to live their values and use their skills and talents to fuel their passions in their professions, the community and their personal lives.

Happiness action step: What's your "why"? If you're not sure, ask:

- When do I feel fulfilled or happiest?
- When do I feel that I am maximizing my full potential?
- What do I want my life to look like in a year? Five years? Ten years?

3 Have faith.

Religious people tend to be happier than nonreligious people and may even deal with setbacks better. Additionally, having faith helps people find perspective.

Happiness action step: Take a few minutes to pray or meditate every day.

4 Get your financial house in order.

The happiest people may not be rich, but they have enough money to be comfortable. Take control of your finances, and put the stress to rest.

Happiness action steps: Create a spending plan that accounts for all of your income and expenses; make a plan to get out of debt; and enroll in an automatic savings or investment plan.

5 Exercise, and eat right.

Exercise releases endorphins, the ultimate mood booster. Eating a healthy diet full of vegetables, fruit, beans and nuts has been shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol and reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Happiness action steps: Take a walk during your lunch hour, or join a gym or recreational sports team. Write a shopping list that includes mostly healthy food and stick to it.



5 Reasons to Get Happy

Happiness is more than a state of mind. A happy disposition has positive benefits on your physical well-being, your career and your personal life.

1. **Earn more money.** Happy people tend to have higher incomes and a better quality of work.
2. **Reap the social rewards,** including a longer, more satisfying marriage, a stronger social support network and a richer social life.
3. **Get an energy boost,** and function better on a daily basis.
4. **Experience good health** with less stress and a stronger immune system.
5. **You may live longer.** Happiness boosts longevity.

How happy are you? Dan Buettner, who wrote *The Blue Zones* and *Thrive*, used his research with National Geographic to create a test that measures your happiness. Find out more and take the test at bluezones.com.

These daily habits are sure to make you happier. . .

- **Express gratitude.** Write down three things you're thankful for every day to help you appreciate the people, events and things in your life.
- **Change your perspective.** If you can't change a situation, change the way you see it.
- **Perform random acts of kindness.** Altruism taps into your brain's pleasure centers and may give you a sense of purpose.
- **Lighten up.** Laughter improves your outlook, reduces stress and may even lower your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Visit somewhere happy

These cities are brimming with happy people. Plan a trip to one of these great places and soak up some happiness.

1. Montreal, Quebec
2. Peterborough, Ontario
3. St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

4. London, Ontario
5. Vancouver, British Columbia

Source: Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index

