

HAPPINESS

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?



Studies in positive psychology have shown that our happiness is influenced by: our current life circumstances, our genetics and how we act and think. The part of the pie that comprises our actions and thoughts is the biggest. This means we can influence our happiness by the choices we make and how we think. Studies have also shown that we have a sort of happiness set point that we come back to even after big life events that change our happiness temporarily to higher (such as winning a lottery or getting married) or lower (like a job loss). You might have little control over your current life circumstances or genetics, but you can control the third part to increase your happiness.

1. Close relationships/connectedness: This is the number one predictor of happiness. Many studies have replicated this finding with various age groups. The quality of your close relationships is the biggest determinant of happiness. Deci and Ryan list relatedness as one of three aspects of their self-determination theory as well.

2. Altruism: volunteering, acts of kindness, spending money on others and not self-have all shown to boost happiness.

3. Purpose: feeling as if you have a calling makes you happier than having a job or a career. This does not have to be paid, could be a hobby. How can you find out about your purpose?

Tools for increasing emotional well-being:

1. Increase your happiness: do something that is fun for you, sing, dance, foster close relationships.

2. Let go of negative emotions such as anger, revenge, hate, fear. Yes they are normal to have once in a while. But they do not need to define us. Let them go.

3. Gratitude Journal: Each day write down what you are grateful for. Alternatively, you could write a letter of gratitude to a person who has helped you along your way. Studies have shown the impacts of just a few days of gratitude writing.

4. 5-3-1 Exercise: Meditate 5 minutes a day, write a list of 3 good things that happened today, practice 1 random act of kindness

5. Be in the present and in the now. Do activities that engage you, instead of passive ones. When we engage in challenging activities that allow us to use our skills we are able to experience flow, a very positive state of being.

Loneliness:

Emotions impact our body. Americans are lonelier than ever before. This has effects on our physical and emotional well-being. If you feel lonely, connect. It is not the amount of people but how you feel inside. One or two quality connections to close friends, the divine or even yourself make a difference. Join an online community, reach out to a neighbor or friend.

Resilience:

Resilience can be defined as the rapidity with which a person recovers from adversity. It shows how fast we rebound from anything. Maintain well-being during crisis to stay resilient. Resilience has to do with how we react to stress. It has to do with how we manage stress or difficulties in life.

How to become more resilient:

1. Make a list of things you can and cannot control. Change is natural and always occurring. Accept that things change and focus on the things you can control within a changing world.
2. Exercise and take care of yourself. You are worth it and you matter. Practice self-love through acts of self-care, go for a walk, meditate, connect with a friend. Join a support group or course online that helps you reframe your thinking and focus on possibilities.
3. Keep a positive outlook and in a positive affective (emotional state). Increasing your emotions of happiness and well being through the tips listed here. This positive state will allow you to see more possibilities and enable you to expand and overcome.
4. Think of your sense of purpose in life.
5. Use the **PERMA** Concept developed in psychology:
 - **P**ositive Emotions: Positive emotions help you cope and strive and see opportunities. Need help with this? Check out this online course to join a community and get the benefit of

coaching you through this.

- **E**ngagement, be involved and In flow, in the zone of activities. What do you enjoy and what do you want to accomplish? Take action steps.
- **R**elationships: As mentioned before quality connections are the number one predictor of happiness. Reach out to someone. Even just as a message or over the phone.
- **M**eaning: Creating meaning and purpose for yourself.
- **A**ccomplishment: In times of crisis this might not be a big work accomplishment. Instead, you could cook a healthy meal, homeschool your kids, connect with a friend.

Think of these 4 areas and look at small deeds you can do each day in each to fill your buckets.

Tools:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-flux/201810/9-ways-strengthen-your-resilience>

Sense of Purpose: Life is something more than just you, shows greater resilience, increased capacity to recover from adversity, finding your sense of purpose can be beneficial to respond to adversity.

For example: Examine motivation why we practice physical distancing for greater good and protect

more vulnerable, expand sense of purpose

Tool:

<https://centerhealthyminds.org/news/events/webinar-cultivating-purpose-in-uncertain-times>

[Meaning through transcendence https://centerhealthyminds.org/well-being-toolkit-covid19](https://centerhealthyminds.org/well-being-toolkit-covid19)

Outlook: Extend to which person can maintain positive emotion. People who are positive are able to maintain a positive affect. For ways to increase your positive outlook and rewire your brain click [here](#).

Self-Awareness: How sensitive are you to emotions within you? How easily are you able to recognize what is going on inside of you?

Depression/Anxiety:

Do you feel depressed or suffer from anxiety? Please reach out for help. In milder cases you can work with a coach/ counselor or spiritual healer. If you have more severe cases, please see a mental health professional to help you get over the hump.

Our emotions are not us.

We might feel them, experience them but they do not define us. Often releasing emotions such as anger, grief and guilt that we collected thought our life (and indeed sometimes lifetimes) will help us be more present in the now, have more energy and more action potential. Do what you can to heal you. Practice self-love through self-care. For ways to love yourself [click here](#).

Thanks!

Any questions?

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