

Personal Improvement

Your evidence-based checklist to long-lasting happiness

Research shows that being happy has extraordinary benefits.

It makes you feel good and you become more sociable and generous; it makes you like yourself and others more; and improves your ability to resolve difficult situations.

“However, there is more to it than that,” says Dr. Richard Wiseman, professor for the public understanding of psychology at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK.

“Happiness actually affects how successful you are in both your personal and professional life.”

Wiseman cites, as an example, a study by the University of California, which involved more than 250,000 people.

It was found that those who were happier tended to have personalities traits that made them more likely to be successful.

Thus, he says, “Happiness doesn’t just flow from success, it actually causes it.”

But, what is the best way to achieve long-lasting contentment and joy?

In his book, *59 seconds*, Wiseman describes which strategies, according to the latest research, can help you be happy – and stay so.

Count your blessings

Look at what’s good in your life and be grateful for it. Surely, there is at least one thing you are happy for.

Perhaps it’s loving kids, good health, caring parents or a nice house.

Take it for granted and, with time, the happiness will wear off. Learn to express your gratitude, and the results may well surprise you.

A study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that people who express gratitude for what they have are happier, healthier and more optimistic about the future than those who don’t.

Smile!

“This shouldn’t be a brief, un-felt smile that finishes in the blink of an eye,” Wiseman says.

“Research suggests that you should try to maintain the expression for between 15 and 30 seconds.”

If you are not very good at it, do some practice.

Think of something funny, like a joke your colleague said, and do the most heart-warming smile you can.

Try this daily a few times, and keep trying until it becomes natural.

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Be kind

Do small acts of kindness every day.

Offer to help an overworked colleague, look after your best friends’ kids for a few hours, so that they can have some time for themselves, send flowers to your mom, visit an elderly relative, or give a thank you card to someone who did something nice for you.

“Never continue in a job you don’t enjoy. If you’re happy in what you’re doing, you’ll like yourself, you’ll have inner peace. And if you have that, along with physical health, you will have had more success than you could possibly have imagined.”—Johnny Carson



Do rather than have

Contrary to common belief, buying a new dress, watch, or the latest smart phone doesn’t speed up your search for happiness.

Findings from researchers of the University of Colorado at Boulder and Cornell University show you are better off spending money on things to do with family and friends.

So, if you need something that cheers you up, think of a meal or a day out with the people you love, instead of buying jewelry, shoes or clothing.

Find new sources of joy

There is one more trick that happy people have up their sleeves.

They regularly take up new interests, set new goals or develop new skills.

According to a recent study by the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of California Riverside, things like starting a new hobby, joining a club, or learning something new are among the most effective ways to put “a permanent smile” on people’s face.