

Steps to a Happier Life

1. Live in the present, and strive to live each day as though it is your first and your last.

2. Learn to like and accept yourself and feel good about life in general.

Recognize the true measure of your abilities and achievements and appreciate those of others.

3. Decide to be happy.

Think and act happy to create the state of mind for yourself and inspire it in others. Scientific evidence indicates that when we force ourselves to smile or laugh, speak in a cheerful voice, and walk confidently, we experience a substantial boost in mood. Going through the motions can trigger the emotions.

4. Take control.

Understand that you are the only one in control of your life. Take charge of your time and schedule to make effective change in your life. Have clear priorities, and don't waste time second-guessing your priorities or yourself.

5. Pinpoint what is crucial to you, the deeply held principles that promise a more satisfying life, and align your life with those principles.

Define your core values, and incorporate them into your life every day.

6. Give your life meaning and a sense of purpose. Ask yourself:

- What activities make me feel excited or enthusiastic?
- What do I want to be remembered for?
- What matters most to me?

7. Set goals.

Choose goals that urge you forward, but also let you realistically reach them. Persist at working toward your goals in the face of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement.

8. Engage your skills.

Seek work and leisure activities that challenge your talents and abilities and allow you to get so caught up in what you are doing that you lose consciousness of yourself. ("Flow" is the mental state in which you are totally absorbed in whatever you are doing and are fully present and completely focused on the task at hand, because it is challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding. The more you go with the flow, the happier you will be.)

9. Remain curious.

Stay open to new people and experiences so you continue to grow. Love learning, and acquire new skills.

10. Begin each day with two questions.

- What's good in my life? (to focus on the positives)
- What needs to be done? (to remind us that our well-being is our own responsibility)

11. Focus on staying healthy and recharging your energy.

Eat well, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Sleep quality has a substantial influence over how much you enjoy life.

12. Feed your soul.

Spend time alone, without distraction. Do something artistic, listen to upbeat music, write poetry, meditate, pray, or read inspirational literature. Our moods are influenced by what we listen to and read.

13. Do something you love every day if only for 5 minutes.

Whatever gives you great pleasure, give yourself permission to indulge every day.

14. Appreciate beauty and excellence and have the ability to recognize and take pleasure in the good things in life.

Savor the small pleasures of life, such as early morning sunlight, a moment of closeness with a friend, the sight of a loved one's face after a busy work day, etc.

15. Make or buy a bouquet of flowers.

Researchers have found that flowers put a smile on 100% of the faces of the people who receive them. People who receive flowers report less stress, sadness, and anxiety, and a great sense of well being.

16. Let go of desired outcomes.

So much of what happens to us is out of our control. Letting go of desired outcomes doesn't mean you don't work toward something. It means if something doesn't happen, you adjust to the opportunities life presents you.

17. Notice what's right and consciously focus on what is positive in your life.

Many people make themselves miserable by choosing to focus on what is wrong in their lives instead of what is right. Acknowledging what is working in your life or in a given situation is the key to gratitude and happiness.

When you approach life with an upbeat attitude, you set yourself up for greater joy and satisfaction. Developing a positive outlook takes repeated practice, especially if you have gotten into the habit of being critical or looking on the dark side.

18. View a challenge as something over which you exercise some control, and begin brainstorming steps to get past it.

The biggest difference between happy and unhappy people is that happy people think of solutions, not problems. Process your experiences so that as quickly as possible, positives are in the foreground of consciousness and negatives are in the background.

19. Always look for something positive in a negative situation.

Have the ability to find humor and something to laugh at, even in times of trouble, and help others do the same.

20. Identify negative thoughts and counter them with positive or neutral ones.

For example, instead of telling yourself, “I don’t do very well”, say, “I did the best I could right now, and I can improve.”

21. Step back from troubling situations and view the big picture.

Ask yourself how critical the situation is in the greater scope of your life. Chances are it’s not as overwhelming as you think.

22. Set your sights on what you can control.

Feeling that you are in the driver’s seat of your life gives you the will and the way to achieve your goals and bolsters your ability to bounce back from adversity.

23. If something is wrong in your life, ask yourself if there is an action you can take to correct it.

If there is, take action. If there isn’t, do your best to not torment yourself about what is beyond your control.

24. Surround yourself with happy people, and nurture those relationships.

Spend as much time as you can with people you value who give you a sense of connection and a support system.

25. Do an appreciation circle with family, friends, co-workers, or any group in which people know each other fairly well.

Choose one person at a time to focus on. Let everyone who wants to speak about what they appreciate in that person. When everyone has spoken, choose another person until everyone has received appreciation.

26. Reach out.

Be compassionate and focus beyond yourself to help those in greater need. Giving makes you feel good about yourself, puts meaning into your life, and gives you a sense of purpose because you matter to someone else. Do kind things for others to make you see others and yourself more favorably.

27. Work on accepting others as they are.

When you notice yourself judging someone critically, pause and say to yourself, “They want to be happy just as much as I do. They are doing the best they can.”

28. Develop the capacity to forgive others and to let go of hurt and anger.

29. Remember the bad old days.

Nostalgia about the past can be a terrible happiness killer. When you stroll down memory lane, be sure to recall what was hard about it, too.

30. Don’t get bogged down in regret about a choice you have made.

In their book, **Choose!**, Dottie Gandy and Marsha Clark suggest adopting the following slogan: “There is no such thing as a bad choice. There is only a next choice.”

31. Don’t postpone happiness.

Stop putting happy feelings off until some future event.

32. Keep perspective.

Take a moment at the end of each day to reflect on the positive things in your life that make you feel grateful. Write down the answers to three questions :

- What am I thankful for today?
- What do I feel satisfied about?
- What did I enjoy doing today?

Use these notes as a guide to discovering and relishing the smaller joys that rarely get your attention. Slow down, savor them, and watch them multiply. Avoid the natural tendency to take things for granted.