

# Happiness



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According to Psychology Today, "research in the field of positive psychology and happiness often define a happy person as someone who experiences frequent positive emotions, such as joy, interest, and pride, and infrequent (though not absent) negative emotions, such as sadness, anxiety and anger." (1)

Happiness also has to do with being satisfied or content and appreciating life.

I thought of this topic because of a Twitter post I read on Things We Can Control.

I read through the list of 11 items and noted that a couple really weren't things that were completely within our control. But the one that struck me was Happiness.

I thought it'd be perfect topic with the new year upon us. And, while it's not directly linked to writing, working at something you enjoy helps boost happiness. If you enjoy ... if you love ... writing, it's another element that will give you pleasure.

While everyone has the potential to be happy, everyone is wired different. I know people who do everything they can to be positive and happy, but for them happiness is elusive (even when things are going good).

This led me to do some research. According to another article at Psychology Today (2), there are 23 things you can do to improve your personal happiness – you do need to practice them consistently though.

**So, what are some of the most important elements to creating a happy you? Below are 10.**

**1. Do some research** to figure out what your first step should be.

**2. Prove to yourself** you can make changes in your life by starting simple. Achieving small goals will give you the confidence to go for larger ones. This will help you build a "growth mindset for happiness."

**3. Take steps** to feel better about yourself. Positive thoughts and self-talk will help. Note your positive qualities and things you like about yourself.

**4. Be sure to** have balance in your life. Avoid burnout.

This seems to be a tough one today. Everyone is going and going and going.

Slow down.

**5. Make positive memories** that you can keep remembering. This will help you limit the negative memories you remember.

**6. Practice finding the 'silver linings'** in all event in your life. If you do this often enough, you will help yourself cultivate a happiness attitude.

**7. Limit your social media** usage.

Some studies are finding a correlation between heavy social media use and a decrease in happiness. This seems to be especially true of Facebook and Instagram.

**8 Think twice about spending** on expensive, fancy, showy things. The money you save can be use on vacations, adventures, and gifts for others – things that can help bring happiness.

**9. Practice empathy and kindness.** These qualities help you feel better about yourself.

**10. Envision the life you want.** "Did you know that your brain has a difficult time differentiating between things that happen in your imagination and things that happen in real life?"

So, imagine the life you want. Your brain will believe the happiness you envision is real.

**In another article at Inc.com (2), it lists 10 "scientifically proven ways to be incredibly happy":**

**1. Everyone knows** exercise boosts the immune system and releases endorphins. One study shows even 7 minutes a day is beneficial.

**2. Get the proper amount of sleep.**

I did a 4-week Mind-Body Detox with Deepak Chopra. In it, the importance of sleep was emphasized.

Going to bed at the same time every night, 10pm was the time mentioned, is super important as your body gets accustomed to that time and sleep. And, waking at 6am was also noted. It's the cycle your body is in rhythm with.

Note: The Chopra program and a number of other sources strongly suggest no electronics in the bedroom: no iPhone, no iPad, no computer, nothing digital, and no lights.

**3. Make time to be with family and friends.** This type of in-person socialization creates and builds happiness.

#### **4. Being outside matters, especially in nature.**

According to one study, spending just 20 minutes outdoors, helped boost happiness.

Ayurvedic wisdom teaches that being in nature and walking barefoot helps create harmony between you and the earth.

Looking at it scientifically according to Life Advancer, "the Earth conducts electricity through a negative ionic charge, while your body produces and conducts positive electricity, that if left alone, can harm you. So, by 'grounding' yourself, you balance out your electrical charge." (4)

#### **5. Have a generous heart and help others.**

Study after study show that helping others can make you feel happy. In the Inc.com article, it explains that "100 hours per year (or two hours per week) is the optimal time we should dedicate to helping others in order to enrich our lives." (3)

#### **6. Smile your blues away.**

Studies show that smiling is a powerful mood booster. According to an article at Buffer.com, "smiling stimulates our brain's reward mechanisms in a way that even chocolate, a well-regarded pleasure-inducer, cannot match." (6)

According to PsyBlog, smiling can also "improve our attention and help us perform better on cognitive tasks." (5)

An important note is that this only works with 'real' smiles. Fake smiling can have the opposite effect.

#### **7. Make plans to take a trip.**

Interestingly, this helps boost your mood even if you don't take the trip.

## **8. Meditation works.**

According to the Inc article, "studies show that in the minutes right after meditating, we experience feelings of calm and contentment, as well as heightened awareness and empathy. And, research even shows that regular meditation can permanently rewire the brain to raise levels of happiness." (3)

Going back to my Mind Body Detox program with Deepak Chopra, meditation was an essential part of it. Yoga also, but the meditation was key. It clears your mind.

## **9. Shorten your commute.**

This is another interesting one. Even if you have an expensive car or a bigger house, the "misery created by a long commute" outweighs the joy of those things. (3)

## **10. Make gratitude a part of your daily routine.**

This strategy has been around for a very long time. The Psychologist quotes the Roman statesman, lawyer, and philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43bc), "Gratitude is not only the greatest of the virtues, but the parent of all of the others." (8)

More recently, studies show that gratitude is linked to a boost in everything from energy to motivation to satisfaction. It's shown to help with sleep and health as well as reduce stress. (7)

Practicing gratitude is kind of a magic bullet.

**I hope these tips help you boost your happiness level. Below are several happiness quotes to get you thinking.**

"The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer someone else up."  
~ Mark Twain

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. ~ Dalai Lama

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." ~ Mahatma Gandhi

"Now and then it's good to pause in our pursuit of happiness and just be happy." ~ Guillaume Apollinaire

"Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be."  
~ Abraham Lincoln

"People don't notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy."  
~ Anton Chekhov

"Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get."  
~ Dale Carnegie

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## About the Author

**Karen Cioffi** is an award-winning children's author, children's ghostwriter, and author/writer online platform instructor with WOW! Women on Writing.

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