

KEYS TO HAPPINESS

I am sharing my keys to happiness Please use what works for you. *Sandra M*

Everyone's version of true happiness is different and is very personal and very special. For example, it may be having a reliable network of friends and family who love you or having the opportunity to work with nature and animals.

For me right now in my life happiness is music, dance, creativity, a peaceful and safe living space, the freedom to manifest my deepest dreams and most important to give to the world. I feel that innately our spirit comes to this world to be happy and to be in love with life, so why not create heaven on earth here and now.

You can create a happier, satisfying and joyful life by creating positive daily, weekly, monthly habits that keep you on your happy path. It just takes a few keys to happiness to get you there and for them to become deeply engrained and to last a life time.

The following keys are suggestions. Explore, analyze and decide what fits your lifestyle and leave the rest behind. Happiness is your personal journey and you alone know what feels happy.

Daily Keys

1. Smile: A powerful energy

People smile when they are happy which causes the brain to release the chemical dopamine, which makes us happier. And it works two ways. Next time when feeling low, crack a smile. Start each morning by smiling at yourself in the mirror. Pick up on the smiling energy.

2. Exercise for the body and to reduce stress

Regular exercise reduces stress, and boosts self-esteem and happiness. Don't overexert so you end up sore or frustrated. To get started.

- Take a walk around the block every night after dinner.
- Sign up for a beginner's class in yoga or tai chi.
- Start your day with 5 minutes of stretching.
- Get back to the fun activities you enjoy, golf, bowling, dancing, yoga, and gardening.

3. Plenty of Sleep.

7 or 8 hours every night is good for health, brain function, and emotional well-being. This is when the body makes all the necessary adjustments for optimized functioning. Here are tips to for better sleep:

- Write down how many hours of sleep you get each night and how rested you feel. After a week, you should have a better idea how you're doing.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- Reserve the hour before bed as quiet time. Take a bath, read, or do something relaxing. Avoid heavy eating and drinking.
- Keep your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet.
- Invest in some good bedding.
- If you have to take a nap, try to limit it to 20 minutes.

For consistent sleep problems sleeping, please talk to a sleep specialist.

4. Eat to have a happy mind.

What you eat affects our overall physical health. However some foods also affect our state of mind. For example:

- **Carbohydrates** release serotonin, a “feel good” hormone. High in sugar simple carbs give you a short energy rush often followed by a crash. Complex carbs, veggies, grains give more sustained energy.
- **Lean meat, poultry, legumes, and dairy** are high in protein and release dopamine and norepinephrine, which boost energy and concentration.
- **Processed or deep-fried foods** and skipping meals tend to leave you feeling down.

Make one better food choice each day. For example, swap a sweet breakfast pastry for some Greek yogurt with fruit. You'll still satisfy your sweet tooth, and the protein will help you avoid a mid-morning energy crash. Try adding in a new food swap each week.

5. Be grateful

Simply being grateful can give your mood a big boost and have a significant impact on feelings of hope and happiness.

Acknowledge one thing you are grateful at the beginning of each day. Keep an eye out for pleasant things in your life: Big things, such as knowing that someone loves you or getting a well-deserved promotion. And little things like a neighbor waving to you or the warmth of the sun on your skin. Soon you will be so aware of all the positive things around you.

6. Give lots of compliments

Practice acts of kindness. Giving a sincere and respectful compliment is a quick, way to brighten someone's day and to boost your own happiness.

Catch the person's eye and say it with a smile so they know you mean it. You might be surprised by how good it makes you feel.

7. Breathe deeply

You're tense, your shoulders are tight, and you feel as though you just might "lose it." We all know that feeling. Instinct may tell you to take a long, deep breath to calm yourself down.

When you feel stressed work through these steps:

- Close your eyes. Try to envision a happy memory or beautiful place.
- Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose on a count of 4
- Slowly breathe out through your mouth or nose on a count of 4.
- Repeat this process several times, until you start to feel yourself calm down.

8. Acknowledge the unhappy moments

Even though a positive attitude is a good thing, no one is happy all the time. If you get some bad news, make a mistake, or just feel like you're in a funk, don't try to pretend you're happy.

Acknowledge your unhappy feelings. Let yourself experience it for a moment. Then, shift your focus toward what made you feel unhappy and what it would take to recover. A deep breathing exercise, a long walk outside, talking it over with someone. Let that moment pass and take care of yourself.

9. Keep a journal

A journal is a good way to organize your thoughts, become aware of your feelings, and make plans for the future. Writing it down on paper often makes everything in your mind clearer. It can be as simple as a few notes before bed.

10. Face stress head-on

Life is full of stressors some good and some harmful. Recognize the difference and take an action impossible to avoid all of them. This might mean initiating an uncomfortable conversation or putting in some extra work. The sooner you tackle it, the sooner the pit in your stomach will start to shrink. Most of the time, you're stronger than you think you are.

Weekly Keys

11. Declutter

Decluttering sounds like a big project. Setting aside just 20 minutes a week can have a big impact. Set a timer. Take 15 minutes to tidy up a specific area of one room, your closet for example. Toss or give away what no longer is useful. Create a "Give away box"

In the last 5 minutes, take a quick walk through your living space and put away whatever stray items end up in your path. Do this once a week, a day, or when you feel your space is out of control.

12. Stay in touch with friends

We are social spirits and sharing with our close friends make us happy. Take time to connect.

Meaningful relationships with one or two people are a powerful happiness boost for all. To make new friends with like-minded people, try getting involved in a local volunteer group or taking a class. Pet companionship offers so many positive benefits. Love animals? Consider volunteering at a local animal shelter to make new friends – both human and animal.

13. Plan your week

To overcome feeling overwhelmed by all you have to do, try making a prioritized basic list for the upcoming week. Blocking out time where you can do laundry, go grocery shopping, or tackle projects at home or work can help to quiet your mind.

14. Ditch your phone

Unplug all the electronics for at least one hour per week or a shorter amount of time 3 times a week. You might be surprised at the difference it makes. Let your mind wander free for a change. Read. Meditate. Take a walk and pay attention to your surroundings. Be sociable. Or be alone. Just be.

15. Get into nature

Spending 30 minutes or more a week in green spaces can help lower blood pressure and tendencies to depression. Your green space could be anything from your neighborhood park, your own backyard, or a rooftop garden — anywhere you can appreciate some nature and fresh air. Better yet, add some outdoor exercise for extra happiness benefit.

16. Explore meditation

Meditation can involve movement, focus, spirituality, or a combination of all three. And it doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as sitting quietly for 5 minutes or even the deep breathing exercises mentioned above done on a regular basis.

18. Create a self-care ritual

It's easy to forget self-care in our fast-paced world. Since your body is your temple and carries your thoughts, passions, and spirit through the world, it deserves a little TLC? No matter what you enjoy and that also relaxes you, make time for it. Put it in your planner if you must, but do it.

Monthly Keys

19. Give back

If you find that giving daily compliments provides a needed boost to your mood, considering making a monthly routine of giving back on a larger scale.

Maybe that's helping out at a food bank on the third weekend of every month, or offering to watch your friend's kids one night per month.

20. Take yourself out for some fun

Going out alone can be very enjoyable and who knows who you may meet. Go to your favorite restaurant, take in a movie, or go on that trip you've always dreamed of. Spending some deliberate time alone can help you reconnect with the activities that truly make you happy.

21. Create a thought list

Take control of your thoughts. At the start of each month, make a short list of happy memories or things you're looking forward to on a small piece of paper or on your phone.

When you find yourself waiting for a ride, standing in line at the grocery store, or just with a few minutes to kill, break out the list. You can even use it when you're just generally feeling down and need to change up your thoughts.

22. Take time to reflect

Set aside some time to catch up with yourself the way you would with an old friend:

- How are you doing?
- What have you been up to?
- Are you happier than you were a year ago?
- Let go of goals that no longer serve you.

24. Take care of your body

You hear it all the time, including several times in this article, but your physical and mental health are closely intertwined.