



Wellbeing Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life



10 Keys to Happier Living

Think you are unhappy by nature? Do you feel miserable because of your life circumstances? Think again! Research has shown that we do indeed operate around a happiness set point. However, only 50% of this set point is due to genetics and upbringing. A mere 10% is related to life circumstances, and the other 40% is purely under our control (e.g., our activities, relationships, how we choose to live).

Many state that simply being happy is one of their biggest life goals. The good news is that extensive research has yielded consistent findings on how to achieve it. With August being “Happiness Happens Month,” what better time to get started? The following 10 keys, which together spell “[GREAT DREAM](#),” put improving happiness in your hands.

GREAT DREAM

Giving – Generosity is strongly bound to the reward center in our brain. If you want to feel good, do good! Giving also helps us build stronger connections with others and creates happier communities on a larger scale.

Relating – People with strong social relationships are not only happier, they also live longer. Take the time to nurture the relationships in your life that bring you a sense of support and belonging. Remember, we become more like the people we spend time with, so choose carefully!

Exercising – Our body and our mind are strongly connected. Being active will

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instantly improve your mood and is a miracle worker for overall happiness. View physical activity as a tool for happiness instead of a chore to accomplish; you may be surprised with the difference this little change in mindset can make.

Awareness – Take the time to notice the little things and appreciate the beauty around you. Tuning in to the present moment throughout the day can help us cope better with daily life and keep us rooted in the here and now.

Trying Out – Keep a healthy curiosity in daily life and try to learn something new every day. This helps keep us engaged in daily life, builds self-confidence and resilience, and has a host of other benefits, all depending on what you choose to learn about.

Direction – Setting goals is an important part of maintaining motivation, a sense of direction and purpose, and feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction. Set both short- and long-term goals for yourself that are personally meaningful and challenging enough to excite you, yet also realistic and achievable.

Resilience – Although we may not have the power to control what happens to us, we always have the power to choose how to respond. It's important for our happiness that we develop ways to bounce back during trying times. Remember, if you can't change it, change the way you think about it.

Emotions – Regularly experiencing positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, inspiration and pride can create an upward spiral of happiness over the long-term. Every day, make an effort to acknowledge the good things in life (no matter how small) and for what you are grateful.

Acceptance – Self-acceptance is an important key to happiness. Avoid comparing yourself to others as much as possible and focus on building up your strengths instead of fixating on your flaws. Be kind to yourself.

Meaning – People who feel they are a part of something bigger and have a purpose and meaning outside of themselves are happier, feel more in control and get more out of what they do.

Learn more at actionforhappiness.org



Mindful Minute

To truly build happiness in our lives, it can be beneficial to devote time to specific rituals that encompass parts of the “GREAT DREAM” framework. This science-backed exercise, called “**Three Good Things**” is designed to help with appreciation and positive emotions – two of the keys to happiness. It helps to reset any negative bias you may have when recalling things. Perform this exercise every day, or as often as you can, for the next 2 to 4 weeks and then reflect on how it has impacted your daily happiness levels. (Research suggests you will see results after 1 week.) You may find it helpful to designate a specific notebook or journal and set a time in the evening to perform the exercise.



1. Write down 3 things that went well for you today. No experience is too large or too small, from being joyfully greeted at the door by your dog to receiving a big promotion; anything that elicited a positive emotion will work. For each experience, write down the details of the event – who was involved, where you were, how you felt, etc.
2. Read back your first item on the list. Close your eyes as you recall the experience, and enjoy a deep inhale and exhale as you repeat the mantra “May I stay present to the joy and watch my happiness grow.”
3. Repeat step #2 for the other 2 items on your list.



It's not how **much we have**,
but how much **we enjoy**
that makes happiness.

– CHARLES SPURGEON



On the Menu

Papaya

Though its origin is rather obscure, the papaya is thought to be the fusion of two or more species of carica, a succulent fruit native to Mexico and Central America. Today it is cultivated throughout the tropical world and in the warmest parts of the subtropics. This obviously includes Mexico and Central America, but it also grows naturally in the Caribbean and Florida.

Because papaya comes from a variety of places, there's a good chance you'll be able to find it in a grocery store year-round. Unripe papaya has a color that's a mixture of green and yellow. A ripe papaya is bright yellow and firm, but it can feel soft with gentle pressure. When selecting a fruit, look for one with little or no bruising/blemishes. If you aren't able to find a fully ripe papaya at the store, an unripe papaya should ripen in a couple of days when left on the counter. Once ripe, store it in the refrigerator to help slow the ripening process.

Like many fruits, papayas are chock full of health benefits. These include:

- **High in Vitamins C and A** – Due to papaya's high vitamin C and A content, it may improve heart health and may reduce your risk of heart disease. It may also protect your skin and help reduce signs of aging.
- **Lots of Antioxidants** – It has powerful antioxidant effects, which may reduce oxidative stress and lower your risk of several diseases. Early research suggests that these antioxidants may reduce cancer risk and perhaps even slow cancer progression. Papayas also contain carotenoids that can reduce inflammation.
- **May Improve Digestion** – Papaya has been shown to improve constipation and other symptoms of digestive stress. Its high water content can also help improve digestion by reducing bloating and easing constipation. The fiber also encourages regular bowel activity.

A note for those who are pregnant – Semi-ripe and raw papaya contain a substance called latex, which may trigger uterine contractions. Therefore, you may want

to reconsider limit or avoid papaya. Consult with your health care provider about best practices for you.

Keep It Fresh

Unripe papaya can sit on a kitchen counter, out of direct sun and heat, until ripe. Ripe papaya should be refrigerated to slow the ripening process. Whole fruit should keep in a plastic bag for about a week. To freeze, pack cut papaya in rigid containers or heavy-duty plastic freezer bags. Once cut, it can also be stored in the refrigerator for about a week.

Papaya Salsa

Fresh salsa and summer go hand in hand. This spin on a classic staple is a great way to add color, flavor and numerous health benefits to many of your favorites, such as chips, grilled fish, jerk chicken, shrimp tacos and more.

Ingredients:

- 1 papaya
- 1 large lime, juiced
- 1 hot green pepper, thinly sliced (if desired)
- ¼ medium red onion, finely minced
- Handful of fresh cilantro leaves, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional ingredients: ½ diced avocado, ½ cup diced pineapple, 2 finely chopped green onions

Instructions:

Peel the papaya. Scoop out the seeds and dice the fruit. Mix the papaya with the rest of the ingredients. Taste to adjust the seasonings. Add any optional ingredients. Refrigerate until ready to serve. For best taste, use within one day.

Adapted from plattertalk.com



Nutrition Info

Per ¼ cup serving

Calories	25
Total Fat	0g
Carbohydrates	6g
Sugar	3g
Fiber	1g
Protein	0g

Summertime Sleeping

Getting enough sleep can be a struggle, and no matter how much you love the heat, the summer months pose extra challenges that can leave you tossing and turning. Here are some ways to combat these summertime sleep hazards.

Keep the light out. Light disrupts our natural sleep/wake cycle, which can make it nearly impossible to get restful sleep no matter how long you are in bed. Make your bedroom as dark as possible at night with blackout curtains. Avoid electronics with lights and turn your TV off before going to bed (or better yet, don't keep a TV in the bedroom at all).

Stay cool. Temperature preference varies person to person, but studies show that when it comes to restful sleep, 60°F to 68°F is the ideal range. If you are trying to save money on your AC bill, nighttime is not when you want to dial it up to 80°F. If

you do insist on keeping it warm, you can compensate by using a fan for extra air circulation (the white noise it creates is an added bonus), wearing lightweight pajamas and swapping your quilt/comforter for a lightweight blanket.

Wind down. Of course it's hard to fall into a restful sleep when your blood is still pumping from your 9:00 p.m. softball game. In the heat of summer, many of us put off our activities until it cools down late in the evening. If you find yourself in this group, be sure to take some time to consciously wind down before bed. Dim the lights and turn off your electronics an hour before bed. For a fast track to sleep, try some deep breathing; inhale for a count of 4 and then exhale for a count of 4 (all through your nose) for a few minutes to slow your heart rate and help let go of other thoughts.

Keeping Produce “Berry” Fresh

The summer months are prime time for fresh produce. Keep these tips in mind to make sure you are getting the most from your farmer's market finds.

- **Keep it fresh.** One bad apple really will spoil the whole bunch, so if you buy several of the same item (bundle of spinach, asparagus, pears, etc.) make sure to go through your haul to check for pieces that may be overly ripe. If it's something like a peach, pear or avocado, you can pop it in the fridge to slow down the ripening process and keep it from ruining other pieces in your produce bowl.
- **Keep it whole.** As soon as produce is cut it becomes more susceptible to moisture loss and bacteria growth. Once the integrity of the whole food is compromised, microorganisms begin to grow very quickly, shortening the life of your fruits and veggies. If you aren't going to eat it in the next 48 hours, leave it whole.



- **Keep it dry.** Take anything that comes in a plastic bag (greens, carrots, grapes, etc.) and dry them as soon as possible. You can even add a paper towel to your storage container to help soak up extra moisture.
- **Keep it visible.** No one likes finding rotten produce shoved in the corner of a cupboard or fridge. When you bring produce home, make a plan so that it's not forgotten and wasted.

Quick Guide to Apps for Parents

If you worry your kids are spending more time snapping selfies or recording dance moves than actually communicating, you're not alone. According to the nonprofit group Common Sense Media, American teens/tweens spend an average of 6 to 9 hours on screens daily and most of that time is on a phone. For many kids who go from school to sports and other structured activities, social media and messaging apps present the only "free" form of communication they have. A recent article in the Washington Post likened teens' use of social media to their parents' time at the community pool or mall and other hang-out spots of old.

The digital world of apps and social media our kids are growing up in is constantly changing, and there isn't a precedent for parenting in an online world. Keeping our kids safe online while allowing them to grow and thrive socially requires open conversation.

It's important to set expectations for online behavior and help your kids develop critical-thinking skills. Parents should consider creating a family contract around phone and social media use. [Examples can be found here.](#)

The site connectsafely.org says safety is typically more about how kids use an app than which apps they use. Know the apps your kids use. Try them yourself and "follow" your kids. Here are some of the most common apps teens/tweens are using:

- **Snapchat** – Users share "snaps" or photos/images customized with text and photo/video filters through direct messaging and share "stories" with selected followers. Snaps and stories aren't meant to be a conversation archive but rather a way for users to share what's happening in the moment. They disappear shortly after viewing, giving kids a false sense of privacy. Snapchat also encourages users to share location in a "snapmap." In fact, some photo filters are only available when location permissions are on. Not only can sharing location expose users to predators, but kids can also see where others are. It's hard to feel left out at any age, but with snapmaps and stories, missing out is real time.
- **Roblox** – This is one of the most popular multiplayer gaming sites for kids and teens. It's more than just gaming though, as users can create their own platforms and games and share with others. Roblox is often younger kids' first introduction to social platforms and thus a great place to begin teaching kids about online expectations and risks.

User experiences are limited by age (the age entered when signing up for the account), but that doesn't mean it's perfectly safe. Monitor location sharing, friends/followers lists and more.



- **TikTok** – This app's popularity exploded in 2020 to over one billion active users a month. Users create and share short videos combined with music. By default, users can view almost any content, so setting privacy controls is a must. TikTok offers [a top 10 tips list for parents here.](#)
- **Instagram** – Users share images, short videos and stories with followers and can also direct message (DM) friends in the app. Unlike Snapchat, Instagram stories and posts are archived. Many kids try to carefully cultivate their Instagram personas and pay attention to follower counts. Follow your kids on Instagram so you can see what they're sharing with others, but note, many kids have a public Instagram username and a "finsta" or "spam" account they keep private for only select followers. Like other apps, privacy settings are important. Teach kids to not allow followers they don't know or accept direct messages from unknown accounts.

For a list of other common apps and more in-depth information for parents, [click here.](#)

How to Buy Happiness

Over the past 50 years, the average amount of personal space (e.g., the size of your house, car, etc.) has tripled. At the same time, our debt and environmental footprints have increased, yet general levels of happiness have stayed the same. So what gives? It is apparent that spending money to have more ‘stuff’ doesn’t necessarily make us happier. However, if you believe money can’t buy happiness, you may just be spending it wrong.

Here are some proven “purchases” that increase happiness:

Giving Back – Studies show a positive link between charity and happiness. Time and time again, those who spend money on others become happier than those who spend the same amount on themselves. Gallup research confirms that the happiness people experience from giving to charity occurs worldwide despite variance in disposable income. Consider reallocating a portion of the money you typically (or impulsively) spend on ‘stuff’ to a charity or community initiative that has special meaning. The return on investment of doing good are warm, fuzzy feelings that will outlast a new pair of shoes or the latest electronic gadget.

Joyful Experiences – When it comes to treating ourselves, spending money on experiences will increase happiness much more than buying items. You might choose to shift your budget around a bit to build up a vacation fund each year. However, a simple day trip to a new park or taking in some local community theatre may be just as effective. Outside of travel, hobbies are another great experience to consider. Whether it’s photography or a dance class, if it’s something you find joy in doing, it’s worth considering. It is our life experiences and the people we share them with that will lead to happiness.

In addition to lasting memories, new experiences enable personal development and growth, which also increase happiness.

Places You Spend Time – When it comes to actually purchasing items, spend your money where you spend your time. Think about which purchases may truly make your life more enjoyable. For example, if you spend every morning on your deck, invest in a nice patio set and some plants or flowers. If you enjoy walking, invest in a great pair of shoes.

Time – Buy yourself more time to do the things you love by hiring a babysitter, a housecleaner, etc. Purchases that afford you more time to enjoy life are a luxury worth the investment.



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