

# Developing Your Happiness Intelligence

## Objective

To increase your overall happiness through daily activities.

## What to Know

Over time the human brain became naturally became hard-wired with a negativity bias. But did you know you can train your brain like a muscle to adopt new thought patterns – resulting in happiness?

Happiness is the combination of your moment-to-moment experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with the belief your life is good and meaningful. The factors most affecting happiness are mindset and lifestyle choices. You can learn new ways to process everyday experiences, thoughts, and feelings to make measurable increases in your “happiness intelligence” (HI). There are three activities you can do every day to develop your HI.

- Increase present moment awareness.
- Overcome negative thoughts.
- Enhance gratitude.

Like any skill, if you want to be happier, commitment and work is required. Focus on these elements:

**1. Mindset.** This is the most influential element for increasing happiness. It includes three components.

- How mindful are you of each present moment?
- Do you engage in positive yet realistic thinking?
- Are you consistently appreciative and grateful?

**2. Lifestyle.** Happiness is influenced by these key areas.

- pleasure
- engagement
- relationships
- accomplishments
- healthy work-life balance
- supporting other people

To develop these areas, it is important to consistently practice happiness-supportive activities until they become daily habits. Here are some ideas to get started.

### Develop Grateful Appreciation

**1. Gratitude-enhancing meditation.** Imagine the loss of something you care about – for example, family, friends, or freedom. It might be difficult at first, so you may start by

imagining the loss of a precious material possession. Spend some time writing about your experience.

**2. Gratitude journal.** Each day write down the things you appreciate. You can also create a mental list of things you are grateful for before falling asleep or just before getting up in the morning.

**3. Communicate.** When you feel grateful, tell someone. Send a message or make a phone call just to say you appreciate them and their actions. This also improves relationships, enhances your emotional connections with others, and increases your capacity for compassion.

### Nurture Positive Thoughts

**1. Forget negativity.** When you perceive something “bad” has happened to you, do not suppress it – but also do not give it a lot of attention. Try not to repeat stories for sympathy or attention. Instead, allow undesired memories to fade from your thoughts.

**2. Look for the good.** You can learn from every experience. Find the silver lining or look on the “bright side.”

**3. Observational meditation.** Focus on your breath and body sensations to improve your ability to nurture or disregard thoughts.

**4. Habituate positive shifting.** Assume whatever people say or do has positive intent and selectively recall positive memories.

### Live in the Present Moment

**1. Mindfulness meditation.** Bring your thoughts to the present moment instead of drifting into the future or focusing on the past.

**2. Savor.** Write down the answers to these questions: What is good right now? Where am I right now? How did I get here? How does my body feel? What can I taste? Smell? Are my clothes comfortable and comforting?

**3. Avoid the “arrival fallacy” trap.** Try not to focus on future happiness – once something is completed or accomplished. Instead, appreciate each step of the journey.

**4. Consciously choose.** Regain your power by avoiding blame or making excuses. Pause and choose how you will respond, instead of reacting impulsively.

**5. Reduce exposure to social media and advertising.** If you find yourself comparing your life to others’ lives, or feeling jealous or dissatisfied with what you have, unplug, and take a break.

**6. Eliminate taking things personally.** Many (if not most!) events have nothing to do with you.

## Support Yourself

- 1. Take time for yourself.** Make time for daily activities that are pleasurable and rewarding.
- 2. Change your routine.** Modify your diet, attend a networking event, visit a place you have never been, or add a “do something new” evening to your calendar.
- 3. Encourage growth.** Visualize progress toward a goal, set micro-goals, and actively track your progress.
- 4. De-clutter.** Prioritize the nagging to-do list. Review your workspace, home, and anywhere else you spend time and make it cleaner and brighter. Consider reducing your possessions.
- 5. Practice patience.** Remain calm in the face of frustration to reduce stress and increase mental peace. Traffic jams, slow checkout lines, an unreliable internet connection, and other unexpected interruptions are great opportunities to practice patience.

## Support Others

- 1. Nurture happiness catalysts.** Loved ones can be powerful catalysts of happiness when it is least expected. Perhaps they stimulate a memory to be grateful for or provide support during times of need.
- 2. Do good.** Subtle yet positive endorphins are released when you do good deeds, reducing stress, improving cognitive functioning, and boosting physical health. Volunteering at the local animal shelter is great, but do not forget the “micro-giving” you can provide by being polite, courteous, and generous during interactions with others.
- 3. Reduce damaging acts.** For example, you can increase your recycling efforts, reduce car use, stop unhealthy habits, or educate others.

Many techniques to increase happiness are easy to learn and understand, but harder to consistently implement. Like New Year’s resolutions, the key is determination and consistency. Personal responsibility must be adopted – it is up to you to take consistent actions and make changes. More investment of time and effort = more results. This worksheet will help you practice daily activities to increase your overall happiness.

## **What to Do**

For three weeks, use the chart on the following page to track your daily “happiness” activities. Refer to the ideas above or come up with your own. Include the date, the activity, and how it affected your happiness. Finally, use the last column to make notes (if anyone else was involved, if you will do the activity again, and so on).

Date	Activity	Feel happier? Y / N	Notes

Date	Activity	Feel happier? Y / N	After-work activities

### Reflections on This Exercise

Describe your experience developing your “HI.” Did you experience any challenges? Explain.

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Discuss the emotions you experienced while completing the “happiness” activities.

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn during this exercise?

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