

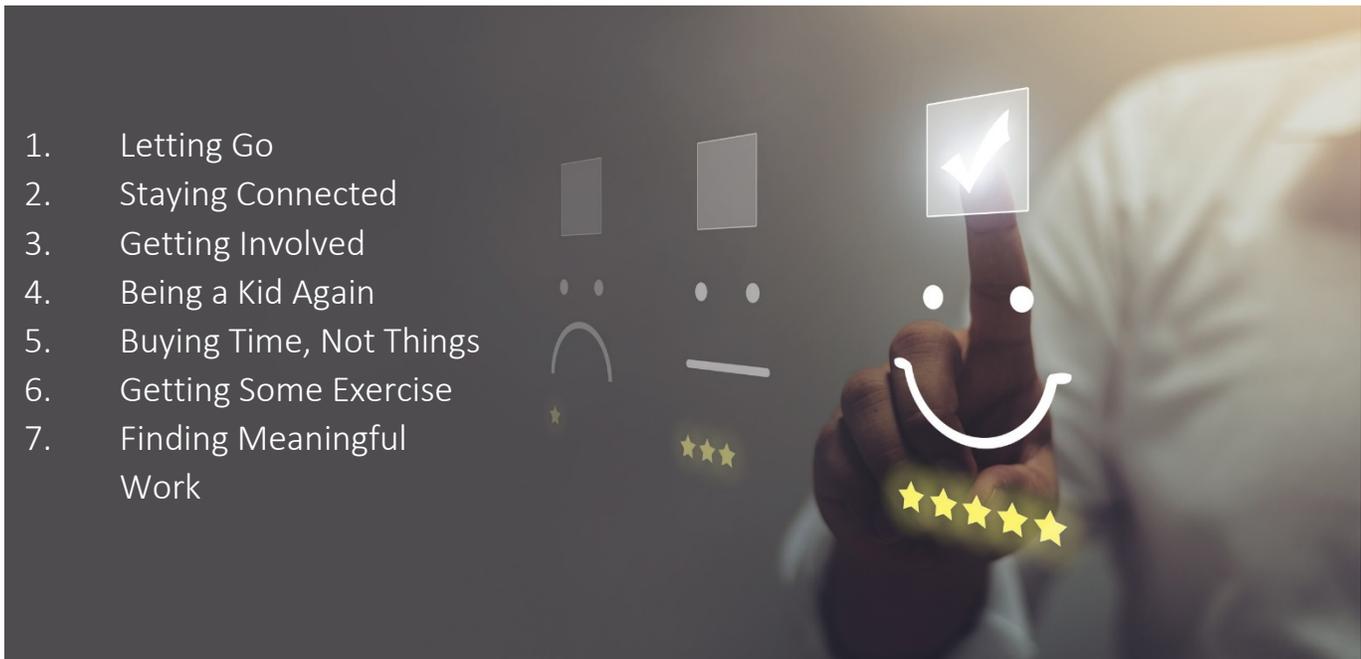


Safe Environments
Healthy Workers

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE HAPPY? IT'S A SIMPLE FORMULA

Happiness may be elusive, but there is one thing we know for sure: being healthy makes you happy, and being happy makes you healthy. Being happy and healthy propels you to face the world in a positive way, every day. Just having a reason to smile lowers your blood pressure, combats stress and boosts your immune system. It builds confidence, and that helps you to achieve your goals. Best of all, it's contagious: being happy makes other people happy. So how do you get there? That can be complicated. There are ups and downs in everyone's life, and being happy isn't about smiling and laughing all the time. It's about having the strength to cope with whatever life throws at you, and making the most appropriate, ethical and intelligent decisions along the way. Some people are just naturally happier than others, whether due to genes, upbringing, circumstances, or birthright. But according to the Harvard Men's Health Watch newsletter research suggests that 40% of people's happiness comes from the choices they make. That means you have a lot of control over your own state of happiness. You can make yourself happier.

According to Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of a Harvard Study on Adult Development, happiness is related to specific traits and behaviours that contribute to happiness and well-being. The study followed 724 men since they were teenagers in 1938, collecting all kinds of health information, including medical exam data, blood samples, and brain scans. Every two years, participants were asked questions about their work and home lives and mental and emotional wellness. Researchers also interviewed family members. Here is a brief description of some of the choices and behaviours adopted by those who were the happiest:



LETTING GO

It's important to learn from your mistakes, to be open to new experiences and people. But at some point, you need to let go: forget about your past failures, and learn to walk away from people and situations that are toxic or that don't make you happy. The past is the past, and life is short. Move on.

STAYING CONNECTED

On the other hand, be sure to nurture the relationships that do make you happy. There is a strong connection between happiness and close relationships with family, friends or a spouse. It creates mental and emotional stimulation. Isolation can cause depression, and that can affect your physical health.

GETTING INVOLVED

Volunteering is another way to stay connected and has the added bonus of making you feel useful and helpful. It can give you a sense of purpose and accomplishment, and fulfil a need we all have to help others and give back to our communities.

BEING A KID AGAIN

Remember how much fun it was to play games, sing, or spend hours engaged in your favourite hobbies? Revisiting these activities as an adult can bring the same kind of pleasure. Join a bridge club, or invite some friends over for a round of Euchre or even a board game. Take up woodworking or knitting. Or join a choir. All of these activities can take your mind off negative thoughts, almost like meditation.

BUYING TIME, NOT THINGS

We all focus on how much money we have, but how you spend your money is just as important to your well-being. For example, if you splurge on time-saving services, such as house cleaning, lawn care, or grocery delivery, you will have time for other things that are more fun (see the above point).

GETTING SOME EXERCISE.

Endorphins are the body's natural opiate. They can elevate your mood, reduce anxiety, eliminate stress and even help heal physical ailments. And once they kick in, you don't feel the immediate discomfort of waking up those tired muscles. How do you get endorphins? Exercise. It has the bonus of building muscle strength, burning fat and boosting the immune system.

FINDING MEANINGFUL WORK

Finding work that engages you either mentally, intellectually or physically makes you feel productive. If you enjoy the people you work with, it will also help develop your social skills, and that is a big element of being happy. Your boss will be happy too because you will be more productive; there might be a promotion in it for you! You see how this cycle works? Happiness can be very rewarding.

REFERENCES

Harvard Men's Health Review Volume 22. Number 4. November 2017

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