

RESEARCH-BASED ACTIVITIES TO BOOST HAPPINESS



These are reputed to be the most well-known happiness boosters in positive psychology. You may already be familiar with most of them – but this is a time to become reacquainted with what makes us happy. Try them, talk about them and pass them on. This research page was adapted from information from Ryan Niemiec, The 10 Most Popular Happiness Boosters (<https://www.viacharacter.org/topics/happiness>, 2015).

1. Count your blessings

Reflect at the end of the day and write down 3 things that went well and why they went well. This helps overcome gratitude adaptation/habituation and increases the salience of good acts.

2. Use your signature strengths in a new way

Complete the VIA Survey

<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths-via>

and identify your highest strengths. Choose one of your top strengths and use it in a new way each day for one week.

3. Write a gratitude letter

Write a letter of gratitude to someone you have not previously thanked. If appropriate, meet the person and read the letter.

4. Practice mindfulness

Take a few minutes each day to bring your full and complete attention to something you are doing: for example, walking, eating, listening, breathing.

5. Set goals

Write down a goal you want to reach that is consistent with your life values. Write down your plan of action for reaching that goal: What are 2 specific steps you can do this week to make progress on your goal?

6. Imagine your best possible self

Imagine a future in which you are bringing your best possible self forward. Visualize a “best possible self” that is very pleasing to you and that you are interested in. Make note of the character strengths that you’ll need to deploy to make this best possible self a reality.

7. You at your best

Think of a specific time, recently or a while back, when you were at your best — really feeling and behaving at a high level. You felt like you were your authentic self, being who you are. Share the “story” of this experience with someone important in your life.

8. Practice loving-kindness

Loving-kindness meditation involves generating positive emotions of love in the present moment. Most common forms include the use of loving imagery and positive statements.

9. Count your kind acts or pay kindness forward.

Count the acts of kindness you perform each day and track them so that you can report the total by the end of the week. Or, take notice when someone does something deliberately kind for you; pay the kindness forward by being kind to 3 people that day.

10. Savouring/Reminiscence exercise

Reflect each day for 2-3 minutes on two pleasurable experiences and allow/make the pleasure last as long as possible.

These research studies were done on groups of people so not every strategy works for every person in the study or for every person. But, they are popular for a reason...they tend to work for a lot of people. It is very likely that if you give each one a try, you will gravitate to certain exercises and will benefit.

Taking action should be your top priority. So, take you pick from these 10 popular exercises or from the 10 popular happiness strategies and start boosting your well-being today!

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