

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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The Pursuit of Happiness

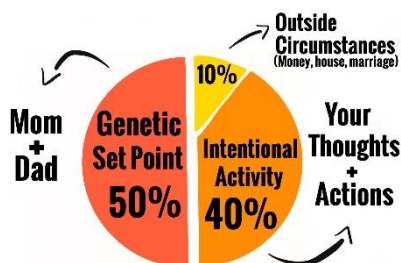
Defining Happiness

Happiness depends on ourselves.

These were famous words of Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aristotle taught happiness is a long-term goal, achieved throughout the course of a lifetime, rather than something that promises instant gratification.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD, a psychology professor, conducts most of her research in a field called “positive psychology,” which focuses on the positive side of life rather than traditional psychology topics like depression and stress.

Lyubomirsky argues contrary to the popular belief that happiness is based on our circumstances, much of happiness is actually within our control. She explains happiness using this pie:



Happiness Activities

She states that happiness can be achieved through the “forty percent solution.” A large portion of happiness is based on our intentional daily activities and the choices we make. She presents twelve “happiness activities” to exercise daily to enhance our level of happiness.

EXPRESS GRATITUDE

- Keep a gratitude journal
- Express gratitude directly to someone else in person or by writing a letter

CULTIVATE OPTIMISM

- Keep a “best possible self” diary
- Write down short and long-term goals

AVOID OVERTHINKING AND SOCIAL COMPARISONS

- Embrace the picture by asking yourself, “will this matter in a year?”

- Identify and avoid the situations that trigger overthinking and comparison

PRACTICE ACTS OF KINDNESS

- Make a list of kindness acts you intend to do

NURTURE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Commit extra time to a partner or friend each week
- Take delight in the success of the people close to you
- Try to do one thing each week that supports your partner’s dreams or hobbies

DEVELOP HEALTHY COPING

- Put your deepest thoughts on paper concerning traumatic experiences
- Turn to a social support group in a time of stress or trauma

LEARN TO FORGIVE

- Recall a time when you did harm to another but they forgave you
- Let go of your anger by writing a letter to the person who hurt you—but do not send it

BE “IN THE MOMENT”

- Be open to new and different experiences
- Transform ordinary activities into something meaningful

SAVOR LIFE’S JOYS

- Take pleasure in the routine activities of life
- Replay happy days in your mind
- Admire an object of beauty

COMMIT TO YOUR GOALS

- Contemplate the personal legacy you would like to leave
- Believe in yourself

PRACTICE RELIGION OR SPIRITUALITY

- Dedicate time each day to prayer or meditation
- Seek meaning and purpose in life

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

- Focus on a healthy diet and exercising; if you get off track, don’t beat yourself up—just start again the next day
- Always remember to smile and laugh!

Benefits of living a happy life

A review of the available literature has revealed that happiness has numerous positive byproducts, which appear to benefit both the individual along with families, communities, and society at large. Here are some benefits of happiness supported in the literature:

Higher income and superior work outcomes

Happiness results in greater productivity and higher quality of work.

Larger social rewards

Happiness leads to more satisfying and longer marriages, more friends, stronger social support, and richer social interactions.

Greater activity, energy, and overall health

Happiness improves the immune system, lowers stress levels, decreases pain levels, and can even result in longer living.

Research also supports that happy individuals are more creative, helpful, charitable, self-confident, and show better coping abilities.

HAPPY
MIND
HAPPY
LIFE.

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Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Karinda Polk, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.