8 SCIENCE-BACKED WAYS TO GET HAPPY

Let’s face it, 2020 has been tough! We are in the midst of a global pandemic that has brought on unprecedented challenges and uncertainty. Our nation is also reckoning with the prolonged effects of systemic racism and social injustices. It almost feels like it’s hard to catch our collective breath. But, now more than ever, we must recognize the need to focus our attention to our own well-being and happiness in order to get to a place of healing. Self-care and joy are essential to this process.

A Yale University course, The Science of Well-Being, by Dr. Laurie Santos, teaches us some scientifically proven ways to boost our happiness and well-being.

1. **PRACTICE RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS**
   Research shows that when we do kind acts for others, we feel good. In fact, doing multiple kind acts for others in the same day has been shown to have increased and prolonged mood benefits.

2. **BE GRATEFUL**
   Demonstrating gratitude for the people and things in your life increases your sense of happiness. Keep a gratitude journal or send a thank you note to someone who has helped you. Research shows that this simple act not only brings you joy in the moment, but the feeling lasts long after you’ve written that letter. Say THANK YOU in person for the greatest happiness boost!

3. **SAVOR MOMENTS**
   Appreciate the positive moments you are experiencing right now. By focusing on the “right now,” you develop a sense of gratitude and connection that invokes positive feelings. So, be present in the moment and resist the urge to look beyond it. Savor it!

4. **PRACTICE MEDITATION**
   Meditation has long been known to help with our physical and mental health, but did you know that when you meditate, you increase your happiness level for extended periods of time not just in the moment? Start slow—just a few minutes at a time can help you achieve a greater sense of well-being.

5. **STRENGTHEN YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**
   Let’s face it, we are social creatures. The act of connecting with others in a meaningful way has tremendous happiness-boosting power. Research shows that the happiest people are those with strong social and family connections. During these times of isolation due to COVID19, it’s more important than ever to nurture your connections.

6. **INVEST IN EXPERIENCES**
   Invest in experiences rather than material things for fulfillment. Research finds that even though most people believe they would be happier with more “stuff” (house, car, higher salary, etc.), the biggest happiness bang for their buck are experiences, and not things. The act of experiencing something with others or even the anticipation of the activity, has tremendous joy inducing benefits.

7. **PRIORITIZE SLEEP & EXERCISE**
   Regular sleep and exercise have great health benefits. Research shows that exercising 3 times per week for only 30 minutes a day can have greater mental health effects than medication. Getting 7-8 hours of sleep per night not only helps improve our physical health, but also our cognitive performance. Sleep also plays an important role in increasing our positive mood. Sleeping under 5 hours per night for prolonged periods has the opposite effect with increased irritability and mood swings.

8. **VALUE TIME**
   According to a research study, most people would choose money over time when given a choice. However, the research shows that having more time, not money, brings us greater happiness in the long run. Time affluence is the idea of having enough time to do the things we really want to do. As you can believe, achieving this brings us much joy.