

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

# Be mindful, build your happiness

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Most of us want to be happy, but how?

I wish there was a magic spell or an easy solution that would ensure happiness, but there isn't.

Part of the problem lies in the way we define happiness. Instead of defining happiness as a feeling of contentment, many of us confuse happiness with a permanently elevated mood (excitement, joy) or even an endless supply of positivity. This is an unrealistic expectation; with such a definition, everyone will struggle to be "happy."

But being happy is not about having an attitude adjustment or forcing posi-

tive emotions while suppressing, ignoring or avoiding negative ones.

Rather, it's about directing our energy and choosing an approach to our existence that can offer us a sense of fulfillment.

Happiness is not stumbled upon, but built. It comes from being self-aware, taking responsibility, making decisions, doing something meaningful, and connecting with ourselves and others.

**Responsibility.** Many of us try to find people or things that will make us happy – we try to outsource the task. As a result, we often feel disappointed or upset when a relationship or a new job doesn't move the needle from dissatisfied to satisfied with our overall existence. But no "thing" or person can make us happy. Happiness is an inside job.

**Decisions.** We can't decide to feel happy, but we can make decisions that make us happy. Happiness is a reflection of how we choose to live our life. It is not a single event but rather an outcome of all our decisions – big or small.

**Meaning.** It would be really difficult to find happiness without any meaning. Meaning, shortly, is a recognition that

we and our life hold value and purpose. Doing something meaningful every day can often lead to a sense of happiness. However, it's important not to confuse meaning and productivity. It's not about being productive every day – it's about doing something that holds value for you. This can be as simple as having a cup of tea or a conversation, resting, helping someone or learning something new – the list is endless. It's not about "doing more," it's about doing what truly resonates with who you are.

**Awareness.** The trick to happiness is self-awareness. It's hard to give yourself what you need or want without being aware of what that is. And if we are not attuned to ourselves, we may even experience joy, excitement, and contentment without fully taking a moment to embrace it (or enjoy it).

## Tips for finding happiness

● **Be helpful:** Humans tend to feel happy when they feel useful or find their work meaningful.

● **Be present:** We are often robbed of our happiness by focusing on the past (which we cannot change) or our future

(which we cannot control).

● **Set a goal:** People find it very difficult to be happy if they feel directionless. Having something to work toward, a purpose, can be very helpful – even if the goal is to drink a couple of glasses of water and stretch each day.

● **Practice gratitude:** Life is so hectic that it can be easy to ignore all the good that happens and solely focus on the bad (or the demands of everyday life). Finding moments to be grateful can help lead to happiness.

● **Don't stop celebrating:** It's important to allow yourself to celebrate the little moments and efforts, not just the big milestones.

● **Practice acceptance:** Accepting the things we cannot control or change is an important step in learning to be happy with our lives.

● **Protect your time and effort:** Learn what to spend your time on, how to protect your energy and how to recharge. It's difficult to be happy if we are constantly running on empty. This is where boundary-setting comes in.

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