
Twelve Top Tips on how to increase your happiness



Learn practical skills to increase feelings of joy, meaning and purpose in your life.

Welcome



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Be Your Best

How to learn practical skills to
increase feelings of joy, meaning
and purpose in your life

How to use this book

The first part of this book contains hints and tips on how to increase feelings of happiness, joy and purpose.

The second part is a downloadable section which is where you can complete the exercises and monitor your progress. I hope you enjoy the book.

Wendy Castelino

Here are the 12 key elements that help to improve happiness and wellbeing



1. Relationships



2. Physical Activity



3. Purpose & Meaning



4. Generosity



5. Gratitude



6. Meditation & Mindset



7. Optimism



8. Financial Security



9. Engagement



10. Personal Growth



11. Nature & Environment



12. Adequate Sleep



Improve your relationships

One of the most consistent findings in happiness research is the significant role of meaningful social relationships. People who have strong connections with family, friends, or partners report higher levels of happiness. Loneliness, on the other hand, is a significant predictor of unhappiness. Emotional support and a sense of belonging contribute to a positive well-being.



Physical Activity

Regular exercise has been found to boost mood by releasing endorphins, reducing stress hormones, and aiding sleep. It's not just about intense workouts; even light activities, like walking, can elevate one's mood. Physical health and happiness often go hand in hand.

Think of three ways you can increase your physical activity that you can improve your well being



**Gentle Stretching -
What can you do,
what time and
where?**



**Walking or Jogging -
here can you find
interesting places
you can visit and can
also exercise?**



**How can you
exercise at home?
Find ways to exercise
in a comfortable
environment?**



Purpose and Meaning

Increase activities that give you a sense of purpose

Having a sense of purpose, whether it's in a job, a personal project, or a meaningful hobby, gives direction and fulfillment. People who feel they have a purpose or calling in life are generally more satisfied than those who don't. Write down all the activities you enjoy, including ones you used to do. If you can't engage in previous ones, try to adapt or brainstorm another similar solution.

Generosity



Acts of kindness, whether big or small, boost happiness. The act of giving, volunteering, or simply helping someone, activates regions of the brain associated with pleasure, connection and trust.

Try to incorporate acts of kindness into your daily life. These acts can be very small, such as letting someone go ahead of you, thanking a person, smiling at a stranger, paying a compliment, telling a loved one what you find special about them, sending someone a positive message. Now start to record these acts of kindness and how it made you feel.



Gratitude

How grateful
do you feel?

Regularly expressing gratitude, whether through journaling or telling someone, correlates with increased happiness. Recognising and appreciating the good in life shifts focus from what's lacking to what's abundant. Having an abundant mindset can help to increase joy and well being.

Take time to reflect on things you can be grateful for. These can be big things such as the people in your life, nature or smaller things such as inventions - e.g. mugs, hot water, buttons, zips or shoes. Try to make this a regular practice and aim to be genuinely grateful, rather than just go through the motions.





Mindfulness & Meditation

Being present and savouring the moment, rather than ruminating on the past or worrying about the future, enhances well-being. Meditation practices, which cultivate mindfulness, have been shown to increase happiness and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

You can do simple daily activities by using all your senses to focus on the activity such as eating, drinking a hot drink, washing your hands, listening to music, concentrating on a film or getting engrossed in a good book.



Fully focus on the joy of eating



Immerse yourself in a good read

Optimism

Learning to be more
positive

Maintaining a positive outlook: even in challenging times, you can influence your level of happiness. Optimistic people often have better stress coping mechanisms and a lower risk of chronic diseases.



Reframe Challenges: The way you perceive challenges can make a difference in how you react to them. Viewing them as opportunities rather than threats can make you more resilient and optimistic. When faced with a difficulty, ask yourself: "What can I learn from this? How can this experience help me grow?" By searching for the silver lining or a lesson in every challenge, you can develop a more positive and constructive perspective on life's ups and downs.

Limit Exposure to Negativity: Continuously consuming negative information or surrounding yourself with pessimistic individuals can inadvertently shape your outlook. Protecting your mental space is crucial for maintaining positivity. Be mindful of the content you consume, especially in the media. Take breaks from news or social media if you find them affecting your mood. Similarly, try to surround yourself with uplifting and positive individuals.



Financial security

Learn how to manage your finances

While money can't buy happiness directly, financial security can alleviate stresses associated with basic needs. Once those needs are met, increasing wealth has diminishing returns in terms of added happiness.

There is a difference between planning and controlling your finances to ensure that you have a stable foundation, rather than feeling guilty and worrying about feeling greedy. As the saying goes it is the 'love of money' that people feel guilty about, not money in itself which is a means to an end. In addition, by providing financial security for your future and loves ones can enhance a feeling of stability and well being. If you have a poverty mindset then this can stop you finding ways of improving your ideas and generating ways to increase your financial security.

On the next page are five top tips to improve your financial security. Makes notes and write down some clear goals on what specifically you want to achieve and remember to review your goals regularly.



Top tips to increase your financial security

- Budget and Track Spending:
 - Create a Budget: Outline your monthly income and expenses. This will help you see where your money goes and identify areas for potential savings.
 - Monitor Your Spending: Regularly review your bank and credit card statements. Tracking apps or software can help keep an eye on your expenditures and compare them to your budget.
- Establish an Emergency Fund:
 - Start Small: Begin by saving a small amount regularly.
 - Aim for 3-6 Months of Expenses: Over time, build this fund to cover three to six months of essential expenses. This cushion will help in case of unexpected financial hardships like job loss, medical emergencies, or car repairs.
- Reduce Debt and Avoid Bad Debt:
 - Pay Off High-Interest Debts First: High-interest debts like credit card balances can grow quickly if not addressed. Focus on paying these off before moving to lower interest debts.
 - Avoid Unnecessary Debt: Only take on debt for essential items or investments, like a home or education.
- Invest for the Future:
 - Start Early: Thanks to compound interest, even small amounts invested early can grow significantly over time.
 - Diversify Investments: Don't put all your eggs in one basket. A mix of stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets can help reduce risk.
 - Educate Yourself: Before investing, do your research or consult with a financial advisor to make informed decisions.
- Continuous Learning and Adaptation:
 - Stay Updated: The financial world evolves rapidly. Keep yourself informed about economic news, interest rates, and market trends.
 - Review Financial Goals: Regularly revisit and adjust your financial goals based on your current situation and future aspirations.
 - Seek Professional Advice: A financial planner or advisor can help you make the best decisions for your financial health.
 - Remember, financial stability isn't achieved overnight. It requires patience, discipline, and consistent effort.

Engage in meaningful activities - go with the flow!



Make a list of all the activities, hobbies and interests that you find interesting or absorbing. Write down a priority list of two to three ideas of increasing these activities into your life. Create time for these activities even if it is for a few minutes per week. Keep the plan simple and make it easy to access. Make an effort to increase absorption on daily activities such as cooking or eating. Take regular short breaks where you can focus on something you enjoy or find interesting. This can be leaving the work place for five minutes in the break and take a look at something you find enjoyable. Practice giving your full attention to this activity, increasing your chance of getting into flow.

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Increase activities that induce a state of 'flow', where you are fully absorbed and loses track of time, are associated with happiness.

Engaging deeply in tasks or hobbies provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. The next page outlines the benefit of getting into 'flow'.

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THE BENEFITS OF 'FLOW'

"Flow" is a term that describes a specific mental state where an individual is fully immersed in a particular activity, leading to a heightened sense of focus, involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. It is often referred to as being "in the zone."

The concept of flow was popularized by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a psychologist who has devoted a significant portion of his research to understanding this phenomenon. Some key characteristics and aspects of flow include:

1. **Complete Concentration:** In a flow state, the person is entirely engrossed in the task at hand, leading to a loss of awareness of extraneous thoughts and distractions.
2. **Loss of Self-consciousness:** While in flow, people often lose a sense of self-awareness and instead become one with the activity.
3. **Distorted Sense of Time:** People in flow often report that time seems to either speed up (hours feel like minutes) or slow down.
4. **Balance Between Skill and Challenge:** Flow is typically achieved when a person's abilities are well-matched to the challenges of the task. If the task is too easy, it may lead to boredom. If it's too challenging, it may lead to anxiety.
5. **Clear Goals and Feedback:** Knowing what needs to be achieved and receiving immediate feedback on one's actions can enhance the flow experience.
6. **Control:** A sense that you can influence the outcome and there's no worry about failing.
7. **Intrinsically Rewarding:** The activity itself becomes its own reward, rather than an external prize or outcome.
8. **Absorption:** Becoming deeply involved in the activity, where other needs and concerns become temporarily irrelevant.
9. **Lack of Awareness of Bodily Needs:** Such as hunger or fatigue.

Achieving flow can lead to increased productivity, creativity, and well-being. It's often sought after in various fields, from art and music to sports and work. The state is desirable because it not only enhances performance but also brings about a profound sense of satisfaction and joy.



Personal Growth

Pursuing self-improvement, learning, and growing contributes to happiness. The journey of self-discovery and mastery can be as rewarding as achieving the goal itself. Regularly write down your achievements however small.

Journal regularly: Writing down your thoughts, feelings, and experiences can help you identify patterns, understand emotions, and recognise areas that need change.

Seek feedback: Ask for constructive criticism from trusted colleagues, friends, or mentors. They can provide a perspective that you might not see.

Continuous Learning and Curiosity: Read widely: Dive into books, articles, podcasts, or seminars. This not only expands your knowledge but also challenges your existing beliefs.

Take up new hobbies or skills: This pushes you out of your comfort zone, making your brain more adaptable and versatile.

Maintain a Growth Mindset: Embrace challenges: Instead of avoiding difficulties, see them as opportunities to learn and grow.

Learn from failures: Instead of getting disheartened, analyse what went wrong and how you can improve. Failures are stepping stones to success.

Seek mentorship: Engage with people who inspire you. Their experiences and guidance can be invaluable in helping you on your journey.

Personal growth is a lifelong process. Try to stay patient, persistent and celebrate small victories, .

Nature and Environment

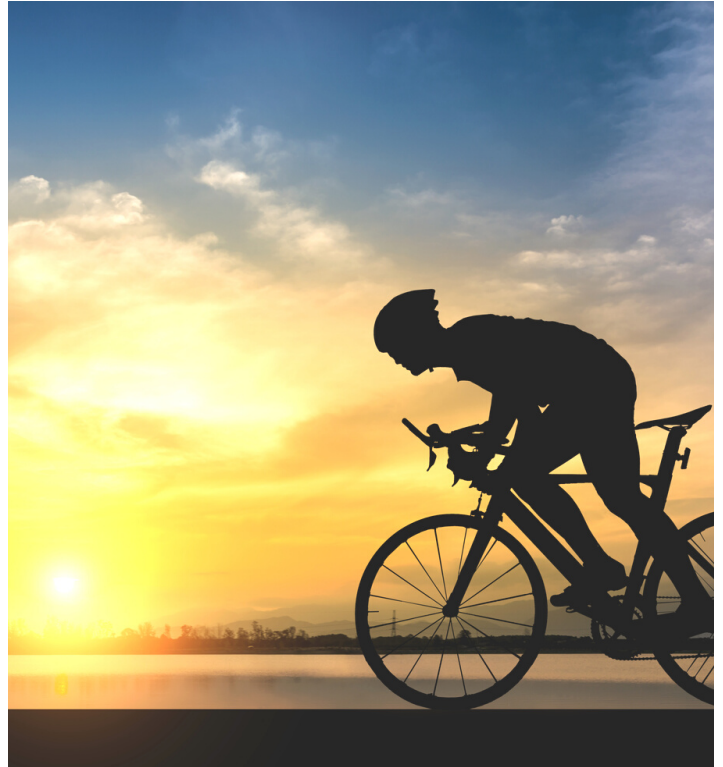


Spending time in nature and green spaces has been shown to reduce stress, increase relaxation, and boost mood. A good environment, whether it's a tidy home or a serene natural landscape, can have positive effects on happiness.

- Reduction of Stress: Nature has a calming effect on the mind. Natural settings reduce cortisol, a stress hormone. The sounds, sights, and smells in nature can distract us from our worries and help us to reset.
- Boosts Mood: Exposure to nature has been shown to elevate mood in those suffering from depressive disorders.
- Improves Concentration: The natural environment can enhance focus and attention. This effect is sometimes called "the restorative effect of nature." Children with ADHD have also shown improvements in attention after spending time in nature.
- Increased Creativity: Nature can enhance cognitive functioning and stimulate creativity. After being in nature, people often perform better on problem-solving tasks.

Natural environments can enhance exercise and relationships

- **Vitamin D Exposure:** Spending time outdoors in the sun increases Vitamin D levels, which has a variety of health benefits, including mood regulation.
- **Physical Activity:** Natural settings encourage physical activities like walking, hiking, or cycling, which releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals.



- **Social Connection:** Activities in nature often involve social interaction, whether it's hiking with a group or having a picnic with family. Social connections are crucial for mental well-being.
- **Air Quality:** Natural settings, especially forests, release oxygen and phytoncides, which have health benefits and can improve mood.



Nature helps to increase feelings of calm and peace

- **Mindfulness and Presence:** Nature encourages a sense of presence, grounding, and mindfulness. The natural world, with its unfolding phenomena, gently directs our attention to the here and now.
- **Perspective and Reflection:** The vastness of nature can put our problems into perspective, making them appear smaller and more manageable. Natural settings provide a space for introspection and self-reflection.
- **Reduced Mental Fatigue:** Urban environments can be overloaded with stimuli, causing cognitive fatigue. Nature offers a break from this constant barrage, allowing our minds to rest and recover.
- **Biophilia Hypothesis:** This theory proposed by E.O. Wilson suggests that humans have an innate affinity for nature. Being disconnected from it may result in negative effects on well-being, while reconnecting can bring about feelings of wholeness.
- **Reduced Noise Pollution:** Natural settings tend to be quieter than urban environments, which can help reduce the stress and cognitive load associated with constant noise.
- Incorporating regular nature exposure, even in small amounts, can be a simple and effective way to enhance well-being and happiness. Even if you don't have immediate access to large natural settings, small green spaces or indoor plants can offer some of the benefits associated with nature.

Adequate Sleep

Quality sleep is crucial for mood regulation

Quality is crucial for cognitive function, and overall health. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to mood disorders and reduced quality of life. Ensuring a consistent sleep pattern is fundamental for maintaining a positive mood. Below are some top tips to enhance quality sleep.

- ✓ Get into the habit of going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.
- ✓ Ensure that you have wind down time before bedtime.
- ✓ Reduce stimulants and stimulating activities such as electronic devices.
- ✓ Don't worry about not sleeping, enhance relaxation practices, such as listening to meditations, reading or relaxing music or sounds.



Where are you now?

Decide how close you are to your goals in each category from 0 - 10 (high).

You do not have to reach a 10 to be happy and you don't have to measure every category

No.	Description	0 - 10
1.	Relationship	
2.	Physical exercise	
3.	Purpose and Meaning	
4.	Generosity	
5.	Gratitude	
6.	Meditation and Mindset	
7.	Optimism	
8.	Financial Security	
9.	Engagement	
10.	Personal Development	
11.	Nature and Environment	
12.	Adequate Sleep	

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Where do you want to be?

Now set clear goals of what you want to achieve, in order of priority. You can set however many you want in the categories which are the most important to you.

No.	Name of Goal	Time Frame
1.		
2.		
3.		
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12.		

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Action Plan

Your final challenge is to write down actionable steps in line with your goals. These can be daily or weekly. Take each goal and break it down further into clear, achievable steps.

No.	Actionable Steps	Time Frame
1.		
2.		
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Your Next Steps

Do you need more support?
See below for details.



This e book was written to help you to identify practical activities you can do to improve your well being and happiness. It does not intend to replace professional help from a therapist or coach. If you want further information on professional support please go to the website: WendyCastelino.com.



Author: Wendy Castelino is an accredited psychotherapist with over thirty years experience. She is passionate about helping people to 'be their best' and to reach their full potential. For more resources and further information please visit her website: WendyCastelino.com



Thank you