



Happiness

Are you aware that life may be getting objectively better by most standards, we are also living longer yet more and more of us feel hopeless, depressed, alone and unhappy. This despair may be a lack of having a meaning in life, leading to lack of happiness. We try different ways to help increase our happiness at an individual level.



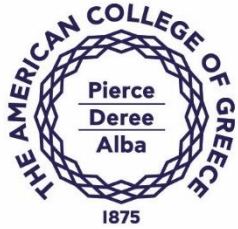
Some countries like India are breaking away from the traditional math, science and language classes by starting special training courses teaching "Happiness". The new happiness curriculum aims to impart emotional intelligence through meditation, storytelling and activities in which the focus is on students' emotional and mental needs. These skills are intended to reduce stress and anxiety and manage any depression eventually leading to happiness. In this KTF we will talk about what happiness is, the health benefits of being happy, the happiness and health connection, how to be happy, how do you know if you are happy, the things that won't make you happy.

What is happiness?

We asked students what happiness was for them.

Before you read what they told us please take a minute and think about what is happiness for you.

- Being carefree and stress free
- Having a non-judgmental attitude
- Forgiving
- Letting go
- Having a cat, a book, a piano & a cup of tea
- Living a healthy lifestyle: eating, exercising, sleeping
- Spending time with good company, family and friends
- Enjoying the simple things in life: laughing, playing, good company
- Belonging in a relationship where you love and are loved
- Having a purpose in life
- Serving others



Here are some of the health benefits of being happy

1. Being happy is good for your heart

Being happy releases the hormone oxytocin. According to Dr. David Hamilton, "oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide in blood vessels, which dilates (expands) the blood vessels. This reduces blood pressure and therefore oxytocin is known as a 'cardio-protective' hormone because it protects the heart (by lowering blood pressure)." Kindness strengthens your heart physically and emotionally.

2. Happiness prevents illness

Oxytocin also reduces inflammation. Inflammation in the body is associated with all sorts of health problems such as diabetes, cancer, chronic pain, obesity, and migraines. Did you know that even little acts of kindness can trigger oxytocin's release. So maybe the secret sauce to a healthy, happy life is being kind?

3. It can help you live longer

Firstly, practicing being happy is chemically healthy for your heart and secondly when you are happy you attract others and develop strong, meaningful friendships and relationships that offer support and are associated with living a longer, healthier life. You are actually at a greater risk of heart disease if you don't have a strong network of family and friends.

4. Happiness releases feel-good hormones

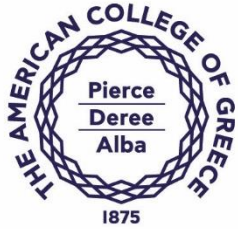
Being happy boosts your serotonin, the neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of satisfaction and well-being; just like exercise helps release endorphins that makes you feel good.

5. Being happy eases anxiety and reduces stress

There are several ways to ease anxiety, such as meditation, exercise, spending time outdoors and natural remedies. Being happy is one of them. As pointed out in a study on happiness from the University of British Columbia, "social anxiety is associated with low positive affect (PA), a factor that can significantly affect psychological well-being". Positive affect refers to an individual's experience of positive moods such as joy, interest, and alertness. UBC researchers found that participants who engaged in kind acts displayed significant increases in PA. Reducing stress through being happy may be easier than we think. When we are happy or make others happy we take a break from the stressors in our own lives.



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The happiness-health connection

Want to feel better and improve your health?

Start by focusing on the things that bring you happiness. Scientific evidence suggests that positive emotions can help make life longer and healthier. Lowering your stress levels over a period of years with a positive outlook and relaxation techniques could reduce your risk of health problems.

Pathways to happiness

In an early phase of positive psychology research, University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson of the University of Michigan chose three pathways to examine:



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Feeling good. Seeking pleasurable emotions and sensations, from the hedonistic model of happiness put forth by Epicurus, which focused on reaching happiness by maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain.

Engaging fully. Pursuing activities that engage you fully, from the influential research by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. For decades, Csikszentmihalyi explored people's satisfaction in their everyday activities, finding that people report the greatest satisfaction when they are totally immersed in and concentrating on what they are doing — he dubbed this state of intense absorption "flow."

Doing good. Searching for meaning outside yourself, tracing back to Aristotle's notion of eudemonia, which emphasized knowing your true self and acting in accordance with your virtues.

Through focus groups and testing hundreds of volunteers, they found that each of these pathways individually contributes to life satisfaction.



Things that won't make you happy

Money and material things. The question of whether money can buy happiness has, for more than 30 years, been addressed by the "Easterlin paradox," a concept developed by economist Richard Easterlin. His research showed that people in poor countries are happier when their basic necessities are covered. But any money beyond that doesn't make much difference in happiness level. This idea has been challenged periodically, as in 2008 when two University of Pennsylvania researchers analyzed Gallup poll data from around the world. They showed, in contrast to Easterlin's work, that people in wealthier countries are happier in general. The two studies were not directly comparable in method, however. And Easterlin points out that the new study may be flawed by cultural bias, as people from different countries may have different ways of answering questions about wealth and happiness.

Youth. Being young and physically attractive has little or no bearing on happiness. In a study published by Richard Easterlin in 2006 in the *Journal of Economic Psychology*, not only did being young fail to contribute to happiness, but adults grew steadily happier as they moved into and through middle age. After that, happiness levels began to decline slowly as health problems and other life problems emerged.

Children. Children can be a tremendous source of joy and fulfillment, but their day-to-day care is quite demanding and can increase stress, financial pressures, and marital strife. Don't put your life on hold waiting for a child to come into your life. In several studies, marital satisfaction declines after the first child is born and only recovers after the last child leaves home. Personal relationships of all types are important, however. In studies, being married, having more friends, and having sexual intercourse more often are all moderately or strongly associated with happiness.



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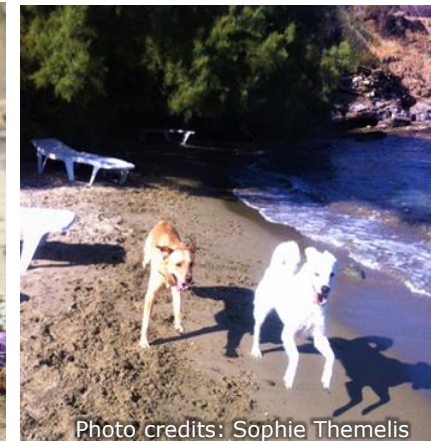
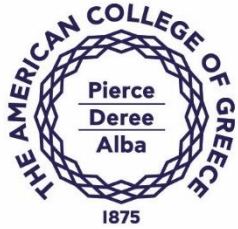


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Know the Facts

Mind & Spirit



You don't have to have money to be Happy here are some ideas:

- **Express gratitude:** Focusing on the things for which you are grateful. Practice gratitude by writing down three things you are grateful for at the end of each day.
- **Get active:** Particularly Cardio exercises is the most effective type of exercise for increasing happiness. So exercising won't just be good for your physical health, it'll help boost your mood too.
- **Get a good night's rest:** Lack of sleep can have a negative effect on your happiness. Try going for a walk, meditation, listening to music if you have a hard time falling asleep and always go to bed early maximum by 23:00.
- **Rise & shine:** there is nothing better than celebrating life early in the morning.
- **Spend time outside:** Go outdoors, walk, swim, hike, get your hands dirty in the garden. It takes five minutes of outdoor exercise to improve your mood.
- **Meditate:** Meditation can increase happiness, reduce stress and improve sleep.
- **Eat a healthier diet:** Study after study shows that healthy eating habits improve your health, and the healthier you are the happier you will be.
- **Play . Play . Play**



How do you know if you're happy?

- You lose awareness of time.
- You aren't thinking about yourself.
- You aren't interrupted by extraneous thoughts.
- You work or do things effortlessly.

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