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ADD HAPPINESS TO YOUR GOALS



AS FITNESS LEADERS WE KNOW THE LONG LIST OF BENEFITS OF REGULAR EXERCISE: REDUCES STRESS, AIDS WITH DEPRESSION, ASSISTS WITH MANAGING ANXIETY, INCREASES SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE, IMPROVES QUALITY OF SLEEP, LOWERS BLOOD PRESSURE, MANAGES DIABETES, MAINTAINS LEAN MUSCLE MASS AND BONE STRENGTH, AND BOOSTS BLOOD FLOW TO THE BRAIN PROVIDING CLARITY AND ALERTNESS. ENDORPHINS ARE ALSO RELEASED DURING HIGHER INTENSITY WEIGHT TRAINING OR ANAEROBIC EXERCISE. **WHAT CHEMICALS ARE RELEASED WHEN YOU ARE HAPPY?**



ANSWER: DOPAMINE, SEROTONIN, OXYTOCIN AND ENDORPHINS.

When dopamine is released, it motivates us to achieve our goals and reinforces the 'good-feeling' when we achieve those goals. Serotonin is released when you feel important and when having accomplished a task. The release of serotonin serves as an antidepressant. The best way to trigger this release is practicing gratitude. Oxytocin is important to create stronger social bonds and interactions which build healthier relationships.

A quick way to reduce cortisol release and to stimulate oxytocin and serotonin release is to hug for at least six seconds. Finally, to feel endorphins, laugh! Laughter is one of the easiest ways to induce its release. So how can we increase our happiness without digging deep into psychological factors or personal matters? Take the same approach as we would with exercise and create short term and long term goals. Refer to the Handout on the next page for a summary list correlating happiness with better health. Pessimists will say that your happiness scale is determined by your genetics [Set Point Theory]. However, this is only 50% true. 10% to 20% of happiness

is attributed to life circumstances, health, financial matters, occupation and religious affiliation. The rest is controlled by how a person thinks and acts.

William James [a philosopher and psychologist] states: "Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not". For example, you're driving and someone cuts you off. Instead of trying to chase that person to express your anger, roll down the window to get some fresh air, turn up the music and be glad that you were aware of your surroundings and didn't get into an accident. Or, the next time you're rushing out the door and your child wants to play, instead of saying you are in a rush, stop for five minutes and play.

So how can you incorporate bouts of happiness in your day? The same way you would approach other goals - plan, execute and evaluate. Determine which areas of life you would like to improve, how can it create

personal growth and set a timeline. These goals don't have to be big grand schemes; it's the small changes that cause the greatest effects. Ideas include learning a new skill, reading that book you have been putting off or planning a trip or adventure. Create positive experiences for yourself to boost your own happiness. What do you have to lose? On a final note, happy individuals are pleasant to be around with, are more productive, engaging, accomplished and their positive emotion is contagious. So... be contagious!

HAPPY OR POSITIVE THOUGHTS ARE

CORRELATED WITH: (1) Longevity: happiness is a better predictor of longevity than tobacco use (2) Lower risk of Stroke (3) Healthier Heart: lower incidence of cardiovascular disease, quicker recovery from cardiac surgery (4) Reduced allergies (5) Stronger immune system (6) Better quality and quantity of sleep (7) Healthy mind: lower reports of anxiety, social phobia and depression (8) Less perceived pain from physical activity

HANDOUT COURTESY OF BCRPA

ADD HAPPINESS TO YOUR GOALS CONTINUED.

NOTE: THIS IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL ADVICE.



◀ Kieu Nguyen

USE THESE EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES TO REACH YOUR HAPPINESS GOALS:

1

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE:

Appreciate the good things that are happening in your life. Share your gratitude and thank those around you.

2

PROMOTE OPTIMISM:

Think about the positive aspects of every situation versus the potential pitfalls.

3

PRACTICE KINDNESS:

Give it forward. Be kind to yourself and others.

4

NO CALCULATIONS:

Don't keep score with others. Perform an act of kindness without expecting something in return.

5

SOCIALIZE:

Get out and meet people. Start by connecting with people who share the same interest as you. It can lead to other interesting activities and gets you connected with your community.

6

COPING STRATEGIES:

Find ways to observe your thoughts and reactions to situations. Remember to focus on observations and not make judgements.

7

LEARNING TO FORGIVE:

Forgiveness is letting go of the past of what could have been. Sometimes it's 'us' that we need to forgive for letting a situation happen. Once you can 'free' yourself, practicing happiness can occur.

8

COMMITMENT TO YOUR GOALS:

Like all things, you need to make it into a habit. Like exercise, you need to practice. Practice at being happy and accomplishing happy things: personal goals, career goals, or adventure goals. This creates a sense of direction, security and trust.

9

PRACTICE SPIRITUALITY:

Spirituality = what it means to you. The practice of spirituality makes people feel safe, strong, secure and confident.

10

INCREASE POSITIVE FLOWS OF EXPERIENCE:

Spend money on positive experiences versus materialistic things.

11

TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR BODY:

Exercise, consume healthy foods, get good quality and quantity of sleep.

12

BE PRESENT:

Focus on the process, not the end result; whether it is the new exercise you are learning, a deadline at work, caring for family or yourself.

Resources: (1) <https://gretchenrubin.com/books/the-happiness-project/about-the-book> (2) <http://www.actionforhappiness.org> (3) http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/nat_fp.php?cntry=3&name=Canada&mode=3&subjects=784&publics=58 (4) Easterlin, R.A. (2005). 'Building a better theory of well-being' in L. Bruni and P. Porta eds. Economics and Happiness: Framing the Analysis. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.