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Understand Happiness

6 STEPS

to have a
happier life

By changing a few habits, you
can have a better and happier life

Although we may not shout it out loud, we all want happiness in our lives. We want to be happy ourselves and also wish our friends and family to be healthy and happy.

A big part of our happiness depends on us, on our habits, attitude and behaviour towards ourselves, our life, and others, and only a small percentage of it on external factors. So we have a lot of work to do :)



Becoming aware

of your life and how each of its aspects impacts the others is of great importance. In this guide, we will address 6 of them: your mood, your sleep quality, your nutrition, your happiness at work, your kindness towards yourself and others, and your social life.

Your mood and its variations is one of the main factors affecting your everyday and overall happiness, so learning to control it will be crucial.

Your sleep quality is also important - it's very hard to be in a good mood if you are tired and restless. What can be affecting it? We will tell you the probable causes and how to fix them.

Your job takes a big part of your day. Your mood then and your sleep quality will ultimately impact on your workday and overall performance. But are those just the causes that are making you unhappy at your job? Finding meaning at work will also determine your satisfaction with it.

Another key ingredient to the "happiness recipe" is **your social life** and your connection to others. Are you giving enough importance to nurturing your friendships and widening your social networks?

Finally, a broader question that will make you think about yourself and your attitude towards others: **how kind are you?** When was the last time you did something kind or generous for someone else? And for yourself?



Accept where you are and the responsibility that you are going to take yourself where you want to go.

Learning TO control your mood



Our vision of our life and of all the events that happen to us is partially blinded by our thoughts and the way we look at things. The well-known phrase "change your thoughts and you will change your world" is quite correct.

Pessimism, anger and frustration sometimes take over our days, and the more often these pessimistic thoughts dog us, the more of a habit we make of them. And we know how hard it can be to get rid of habits...

Fighting the storm cloud over you

There are some deep, long-term actions you can take to control your mood and bad temper, and some more superficial, immediate ways to improve it. Let's start with the latter ones:

- If you are in a bad mood, don't stay where you are. Go for a walk or to the gym. Exercising will relieve tensions and clear your mind.
- If your bad mood is work-related, switch tasks. You will not produce anything good if you are angry or frustrated. Get up from your desk and try to find an available and funny colleague that can cheer you up.
- Change the subject: don't dwell on that thing that is causing you so much trouble, it will not make it disappear. Don't allow your mind to keep going over and over a situation that is making the storm cloud bigger and bigger.
- And always remember, the cloud or storm is not permanent, it will pass. Be patient, hang on.

If still you find yourself getting easily annoyed or in a bad mood much too frequently, then you need to start looking for long-term solutions:

Choosing your battles

There are things that are beyond your power to control, like other people's attitudes, behaviours, and way of doing things, and trying to change them will only frustrate you and worsen your mood. Be wise and choose your battles. Don't let emotions get in the way of logic; learn to know them, learn to control them and accept that some things cannot be changed - yet your attitude towards them can.

If someone can easily anger you, it is because you are off-balance with yourself

Reframing

Reframing implies looking at things from a different, more positive perspective. It may feel difficult at first, but that will be until you create the habit. Consistently applied, you will find yourself instinctively thinking positively in situations where previously you had negative or pessimistic thoughts.

An example?

Switch from: "I hate my job. I'm stuck at this desk 8 hours a day doing a boring task for awful pay".
To: "Although this is not my dream job, it gives me reasons to get up everyday, I have my money and my independence, people here are nice, and there is always something to learn from every situation, so that will be my goal from now on."

Improving your sleep quality

RELEASING TENSIONS FROM THE DAY

We can't force ourselves to fall asleep; we can only allow sleep to occur. Trying to sleep will only result in greater difficulty falling asleep, and when this becomes a nightly pattern, it contributes to insomnia.

After a busy and stressing day, we need to prepare our mind and body to sleep. Having a calm and clear mind will be important; and making a positive balance of the day, a big plus.

Two good ways of releasing tensions from the day come by breathing and doing a kind-of-meditation ritual related to gratitude.

- **Breathing:** a breathing exercise is an excuse to quiet your mind and clear it off any thoughts: by focusing on your breath, you avoid thoughts coming and going. There are many breathing techniques which you can review here, but an easy one you can start with is the Belly Breath: while on bed, place

can start with is the Belly Breath: while on bed, place your hands over your belly. Breathe in and out comfortably and just feel your tummy going up and down with each breath. Do this for as long as necessary, or for as long as you are awake.

- **Our kind-of-meditation ritual:** similarly to the above breathing exercise, the objective of this ritual is to clear your mind from worries and tensions of the day, but with a plus: it also helps you to gradually move to a more positive attitude in general. All you need to do is turn the lights off, sit on the floor with your back against the bed and close your eyes. Now, for a minute, you need to think of one or two things in your life that you truly feel grateful for.

OTHER PRACTICAL TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOU SLEEP BETTER ARE:

- Keep the room temperature at around 18C°
- Before you go to bed, make a to-do list with all the activities for the following day. This way, you will know that everything is being taken care of.
- Try 5 or 10 minutes of mindfulness meditation. If you've liked the breathing exercise we mentioned earlier, then you are not too far from what mindfulness meditation involves.

It's not big news that we need to sleep well to function well throughout the day. Bad sleep can ruin your mood, your appetite, your productivity, your interaction with others, etc. It may also significantly impact your overall wellbeing: you lose concentration, alertness, and your capacity to assimilate new knowledge, to name just a few.

As with your mood, there are superficial, temporary solutions you can adopt to improve the quality of your rest, but if this happens all too frequently, then you will need to assess the real possible roots of the problem, and for this meditation can help.

More kindness-



More joy

This topic is not intended to be moralistic but rather serve as one scientifically backed way to be happier.

Think about the last time you did something good or kind to someone deliberately. How did you feel?

In recent years, there has been quite a lot of research from positive psychology and other sciences that explains how happiness works and how to be happy.

Studies have shown that there is a positive feedback loop between kindness and happiness, meaning that one encourages the other: if you are kind, you are happier; and if you are happy, you tend to be kinder.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, Professor of Psychology, UC Riverside, said that "people who engage in kind acts become happier over time *"When you are kind to others, you feel good as a person - more moral, optimistic, and positive."*

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"Developing our own positive inner qualities is the best way to help others in a more effective way", says Matthieu Ricard. "It would be absurd (if not impossible) to feel happy while countless other beings all around us are miserable. Seeking happiness for oneself alone is doomed to failure, since self-centeredness is a major source of our discontent."

To be kind doesn't mean to do big charitable acts. Kindness is more than deeds - it is an attitude, an expression, even a smile. It's anything that lifts another person. Our smallest actions sometimes can have the biggest impacts.

Sometimes, our smallest actions can have the biggest

Take action: keep record of how many times you do something kind, and how you feel about it. Remember: even small things, like a word of support, a smile, or offering a simple way of helping, count as kindness.

Now, that's about others. What about being kinder to yourself?

How hard are you on yourself? How do you react at yourself when you don't meet your own expectations over your own performance? Do you find that your inner critic comes up just too often?

If your answer to the questions above was positive, then ask yourself this one: how would you react if you see someone else treating another person just like that? Or what would you tell a friend that punishes him or herself so hard?

Every time you find yourself over-criticizing your own actions and work, take some distance and look at it from a different perspective: if you are supportive, kind and understanding with your friend, then why shouldn't you act the same way towards yourself?



Mindful eating



Observing the way we eat can tell us very well how present we are in our day-to-day life. Our nutrition is a good indicator of our mood, happiness and self-respect. Many eating disorders come from not paying attention to our food and to the way we eat, and we can usually associate our nutrition to our (un)happiness: very frequently, a poor diet is associated with a hidden sadness or depression since it isn't unusual that we take food as a palliative for our dissatisfactions. Being mindful of your life and feelings - i.e. becoming aware of them - will help you identify them.



But first, what is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is to deliberately pay attention and to be fully aware in a non-judgemental manner of what is happening inside and outside of ourselves, to our feelings and to the environment. In other words: to be mindful means to be present and more aware of ourselves.

So what is mindful eating?

Mindful eating involves taking time to savour not just food, but also the experience of eating - probably the opposite of what we do every day during our meal times.

Mindful eating means eating with intention and attention, noticing the flavours and enjoying them. Eating slowly is an important part of it, but it's a bit more: it also implies choosing food for both enjoyment and nourishment; learning to identify non-hunger triggers for eating and to meet your other needs in more effective ways than eating.

Why is it important?

Eating slowly and paying attention to your food is a great mindfulness exercise. Apart from making sure that you don't eat more than you should, it could be the beginning of a more mindful life, which will mean less stress and more joy and gratitude.

TAKE ACTION:

Designate a block of time just to eat. If you are watching TV or reading as well, then you won't be paying attention to your meal and to your sensations.

A small trick to eat slower is to place your fork and knife back on the plate after you've put food in your mouth.

Take your time,
don't rush.
One mouthful
at a time.

Enjoying your work day

The well-worn suggestion that we need to separate our personal life from our professional life is basically impossible. Because we are integral beings, it is intrinsically impossible to "leave our personal problems at the doorstep of the office" and vice versa.

Having said that, it is clear that both spheres complement each other, and that if we want to feel happier at work, we should seek an integral approach.

Your workday starts pretty much the moment you wake up, so if you have a good start of the day, you'll have bigger chances of having a good time at your workstation.



BEFORE YOU GET TO WORK

1. Wake up earlier to give yourself time to stretch, have a good breakfast (not just coffee and a slice of toast) and, if you are a morning person, exercise as well.

2. Do you have a long commute? Make the most of it. If travelling by public transportation, take the time to read a book, listen to music, or simply look out of the window.



WHILE IN THE OFFICE

3. Find a sense of meaning and purpose. Even if your job or position is far from being your dream one, there is always something you can

learn from it, either professionally or personally. If you know that what you do makes a positive impact on others (other colleagues, **t e a m m a t e s**, consumers, etc), then you are not just going to be happier, but you will be more productive too.

4. Celebrate your achievements, even if

small. So you have this big to-do list, you manage to do all what's in it, you tick all the boxes and... that's it? There are numerous benefits to celebrating our accomplishments. Focusing on what we have done well boosts not just our happiness but our self-confidence and our sense of self-worth.

5. Engage with your colleagues. Christine Riordan states that employees who "have friends at work perceive their jobs as more fun, enjoyable, worthwhile, and satisfying." Furthermore, having friends at work can create a support system, comradery, and a common sense of purpose.

6. Take breaks. Refrain from having lunch at your desk; go out instead, take some fresh air, or use your lunch time to bond with your colleagues.

ONCE YOU ARE OUT

7. Do not leave aside all those things that you love doing. Because we are integral beings and what we do in our personal life affects our performance at work and vice versa, it is important that our job does not occupy all our day but a part of it.

8. Have a healthy life. Make sure you eat well and that you keep active. Exercising will be good not just for your physical health but also for your mental wellbeing. Additionally, when we exercise we release endorphins, which counterbalances the effects of stress.

9. Relax and make sure you sleep well. Make a balance of your day. If you repeated it everyday for, say, a year, would you be where you want to be? Take time and reflect on this questions. Now relax, rest well and enough, so you are ready to start a new day tomorrow.



Have a *rich* and **strong** social life

Feeling close to and valued by other people is a fundamental human need, and what is more, our well-being is dependent on the well-being of our social networks. This means that the happier our family and friends are (and our community as a whole), the happier we ourselves will be.

Because of our busy routines, we tend to rely on social media to keep connected to our friends and family. Whilst not bad, it is definitely not as powerful as closer, face-to-face interaction. We to foster strong relationships and widen our network.

HAVING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND OF BEING PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

Belonging means acceptance as a member of a group or community, feeling valued and appreciated. Being around people with similar interests to ours will make us feel part, give us a sense of support and comfort.

You can find this sense of belonging in your closest circle, in being part of a club, an organization or a dedicated community, even a virtual one; attending community events, taking up new hobbies, or volunteering for causes you care about are other ways to extend your social connections.

FOSTERING YOUR NETWORKS

Having good friends requires being a good friend. Never forget about that.

It is important to note that the people you surround yourself with will either lift you up or weigh you down, simply because optimism and pessimism are contagious. So choose very carefully your friendships and be brave enough to let go of those who drag you down.

How much does my relationship with myself affect my relationship with others? A lot, and because of multiple reasons. There are certain behaviours that are absolutely toxic for us because they hinder both our personal and professional success and may push people away from us.

Our expectations of others

What we expect from others is usually based on our own personality and behaviour. "If that had been me, I would have acted this way". Unknowingly, we are putting a big burden on the other person.

In *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz says: "We make the assumption that everyone sees life the way we do. We assume that others think the way we think, feel the way we feel, judge the way we judge, and abuse the way we abuse. This is the biggest assumption that humans make."

Our self-esteem issues

The usual **competition with people** and **our need for approval** are the killers of many relationships.

Why would we want to compete with others? If we are reasonable about it, it is a waste of time and energy. As Justin Zoradi so clearly said it: "you can't compare the beginning of your journey with another person's middle or end". You can read more about this topic in our post: "4 Signs That Show You Are INDEED Your Worst Enemy"

As toxic as competing with others is trying to get everybody's approval. Seeking approval when is not needed is a form of self-rejection because you are putting others above you. Trying to be accepted and liked by everyone is as ridiculous as it is frustrating simply because you cannot control what other people think or say about you – just as they cannot control what you think or say about them.

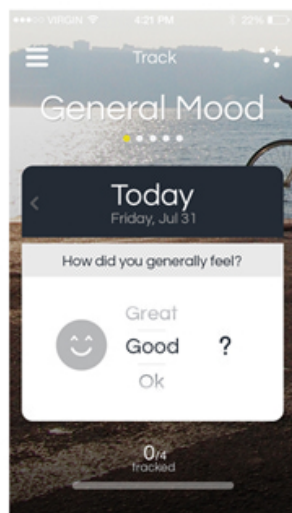


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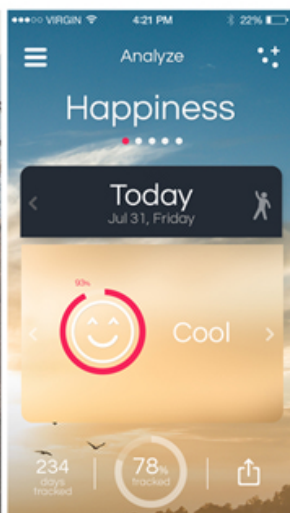


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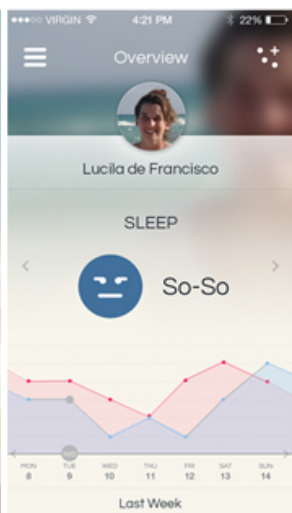
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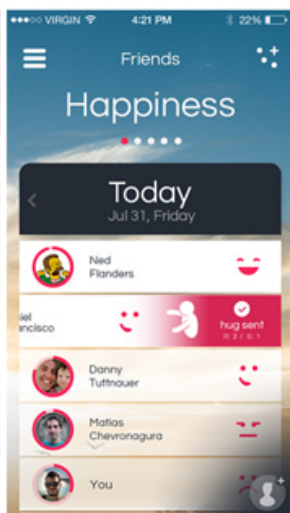
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life and
feelings



Get your
happiness
score!



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your week



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