

7 Habits The Happiest People Practice

So much has been written about the burgeoning happiness movement. While combing through my own research and notes on what happy and successful people do, it struck me how intentional they are about choosing the right mindset to become happier and more optimistic.

While countless books have been written on happiness, I'm narrowing this article down to a working template for living life to the fullest. Here are seven sure signs of the happiest people.

1. They choose to have healthy relationships.

I've learned to be picky over the years about whom I let into my inner circle of friends. Why? Because I believe close relationships are the key to sustaining happiness.

For 80 years, researchers followed 268 men who entered Harvard in the late 1930s through war, career, marriage and divorce, parenthood and grandparenthood, and old age. The surprising finding was that our relationships and how happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence on our health. Taking care of our body is important, but tending to your relationships is a form of self-care too. That, is the revelation.

2. Have a mindset of giving.

The late Jim Rohn said, "Only by giving are you able to receive more than you already have." In the book *The Go-Giver*, the main character, Joe, learns that changing his focus from getting to giving--putting others' interests first

and consistently adding value to their lives--ultimately leads to unexpected returns.

Now science confirms that giving makes us feel happy, is good for our health, and evokes gratitude. One Harvard Business School report concluded that the emotional rewards are the greatest when our generosity is connected to others, like contributing to a cancer-stricken friend's GoFundMe Campaign.

And before you restrict your giving to financial generosity to something or someone, consider the positive impact of giving of your time, mentoring others, supporting a cause, fighting injustice, and having a pay-it-forward mentality.

3. Make all your decisions in integrity.

Living, working, and leading in integrity means that we don't question ourselves. When we listen to our hearts and do the right thing, life becomes simple, and we live in peace. Our actions are now open for everyone to see, and we don't have to worry about hiding anything.

Billionaire Warren Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, does not mince words when it comes to the importance of integrity. In choosing the people you hire, he said: Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you. You think about it; it's true. If you hire somebody without [integrity], you really want them to be dumb and lazy.

4. Practice mindfulness.

Positive and happy people make the daily choice of surrendering their thoughts and feelings to the moment.

By being mindful and focusing your awareness in the here and now, by calmly acknowledging and accepting your feelings and thoughts, you attain great peace and free yourself from worry.

The great thing about mindfulness is that it blocks distractions that try to derail you from your dreams and goals.

5. Have good emotional boundaries.

Negativity is rampant. We can't scroll Facebook updates before being hammered by someone's political rant or hatred. Happy people remain in the positive because they control what they let in -- whether on social media or in people interactions. So take the stand of a happy person: Protect yourself by limiting exposure to negative things and negative people; seek out friendships with people who will lift you up; and read stories about the good things happening around the world.

6. Exercise patience.

Patience is a virtue I wish more people practiced. It helps you relax and rethink your decisions.

In one 2012 study, researchers found that patient people made more progress toward their goals and were more satisfied when they achieved them (particularly if those goals were difficult) compared with less patient people.

Other research also found that patient people tend to experience less depression and negative emotions and can cope better with stressful

situations. Additionally, they feel more gratitude, more connection to others, and experience a greater sense of abundance.

Finally, patience helps you see the innocence in other people during those really frustrating moments when you'd like fist to meet wall.

7. Upgrade your happiness to joy.

While we're highlighting the habits of happy people here, you may be surprised to find that there's a big difference between happiness and joy. Joy is more serene, stable, and deeper, whereas happiness can be fleeting, emotional, and temporary (like watching a movie you've been dying to see).

Being in a state of joy comes down to choice, and making that choice has long-term psychological benefits. Brain research by Wataru Sato of Kyoto University says that when you choose joyful behaviors (like gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, or kindness), you hold the key to rewiring a region of the brain called the precuneus.

By rewiring your brain with new habits that lead to joy, you'll be able to control your sense of well-being and purpose. So if you're caught in a vicious circle of nasty emotions like doubt, fear, and uncertainty, your best course of action is to replace those emotions by consciously and intentionally choosing joyful behaviors.