

## 10 Keys for Happier Living<sup>1</sup>

Life Area	Why is this important?	What tiny steps or micro-actions could you try?
<b>Do things for others (Giving)</b>	When we give to others it activates the areas of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection and trust. Altruistic behaviour releases endorphins in the brain and boosts happiness for us as well as the people we help. Studies have shown that giving money away tends to make people happier than spending it on themselves.	
<b>Connect with people (Relating)</b>	People with strong and broad social relationships are happier, healthier and live longer. Close relationships with family and friends provide love, meaning, support and increase our feelings of self worth. Broader networks bring a sense of belonging. So taking action to strengthen our relationships and build connections is essential for happiness.	
<b>Take care of your body (Exercising)</b>	Our body and our mind are connected. Being active makes us happier as well as being good for our physical health. It instantly improves our mood and can even lift us out of depression. We don't all need to run a marathon - there are simple things we can all do to be more active each day. And we can also boost our well-being by unplugging from technology, getting outside and - importantly - making sure we get enough sleep!	
<b>Notice the world around you (Awareness)</b>	Learning to be more mindful and aware can boost our well-being in all areas of life. It helps us get in tune with our feelings and stops us dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. A growing number of scientific studies are showing the benefits of mindfulness in many aspects of our lives including our physical and mental well-being, our relationships and our performance at school and at work.	
<b>Keep learning new things (Trying out)</b>	Learning affects our well-being in lots of positive ways. It exposes us to new ideas and helps us stay curious and engaged. It also gives us a sense of accomplishment and helps boost our self-confidence and resilience. There are many ways to learn new things - not just through formal qualifications. We can share a skill with friends, join a club, learn to sing, play a new sport and so much more.	

1. <http://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living>

<p><b>Have goals to look forward to (Direction)</b></p>	<p>Feeling good about the future is important for our happiness. Goals are the way we can turn our values and dreams into reality. Happiness doesn't just happen - it comes from thinking, planning and pursuing things that are important to us. Setting and working towards goals can contribute to happiness in various ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a source of interest, engagement or pleasure</li> <li>• Giving us a sense of meaning and purpose</li> <li>• Bringing a sense of accomplishment when we achieve what we set out to (or milestones along the way) - this also builds our confidence and belief in what we can do in the future</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Find ways to bounce back (Resilience)</b></p>	<p>All of us have times of stress, loss, failure or trauma in our lives. But how we respond to these has a big impact on our wellbeing. Resilience is about our ability to cope with and bounce back from adversity. It involves the ability to persevere and adapt when faced with challenges and also helps to make us more open to and willing to take on new opportunities. It includes letting go, learning and growing as well as finding healthy ways to cope.</p>	
<p><b>Look for what is good (Emotions)</b></p>	<p>Research shows that regularly experiencing positive emotions - like joy, gratitude, contentment, inspiration, and pride, creates an 'upward spiral', helping to build our wellbeing and happiness. So although we need to be realistic about life's ups and downs, it helps to focus on the good aspects of any situation - the glass half full rather than the glass half empty.</p>	
<p><b>Be comfortable with who you are (Acceptance)</b></p>	<p>No-one's perfect. But so often we compare our insides to other people's outsides. Dwelling on our flaws - what we're not rather than what we've got - makes it much harder to be happy. Learning to accept ourselves, warts and all, and being kinder to ourselves when things go wrong, increases our enjoyment of life, our resilience and our well-being. It also helps us accept others as they are.</p>	
<p><b>Be part of something bigger (Meaning)</b></p>	<p>People who have meaning and purpose in their lives are happier, feel more in control and get more out of what they do. They also experience less stress, anxiety and depression. But where do we find 'meaning and purpose'? It might be our religious faith, being a parent or doing a job that makes a difference. The answers vary for each of us but they all involve being connected to something bigger than ourselves.</p>	

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