



Tools for the *Excelerated* Life

# THE HAPPINESS HUNDRED

100 THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT  
NOW TO INCREASE YOUR FEELINGS  
OF HAPPINESS

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Research shows that you can influence up to 40% of your happiness level by changing factors in your life that are under your voluntary control. Here are 100 things you can do *right now* to increase your feelings of happiness.

Pick one exercise that appeals to you and do it today. Pick a different exercise each day, to avoid over practice of any one happiness tool which can lead to quick adaptation, i.e. the exercise loses its ability to increase your happiness level.

## Express Gratitude

1. Maintain a gratitude journal and write in it once a week.
2. Set aside a time of day and a specific day of the week when you record 3 – 5 things you appreciate.
3. Pick a trigger (stopping at a traffic signal, brushing teeth, before a meal, etc.). During this time, think of things – from the mundane to the magnificent – for which you are grateful.
4. Write a letter to someone who has been an important part of your life and whom you have never thanked. Mail the letter or better yet, read them the letter in person.
5. Set aside a specific time each day when you contemplate on something for which you are grateful. Reflect on why you are grateful for this and how it has enriched your life.
6. Identify one thing each day that you take for granted and which normally goes unappreciated. Consider what life would be like without this.
7. Acknowledge when you have an ungrateful thought (“my husband / wife doesn’t appreciate me”, etc.) and replace it with a grateful thought (he / she is always there when I need him / her”).
8. Identify a “gratitude partner” with whom you can share your blessings list. Prompt and encourage each other to keep up your motivation for expressing gratitude.
9. Hang up a sheet of poster board, a white board, or a large sheet of newsprint in a spot where all of the family members pass. Have each member of the family write down one thing he or she is grateful for, each time he or she passes the Gratitude Board. You may want to provide a different colored marker or pen for each person.

## Cultivate Optimism

10. When you catch yourself having a pessimistic or accusatory thought, stop. Use the ABCDE model for disputing untrue thoughts:
  - A = *adversity*; the event that triggered the pessimistic thought
  - B = the *beliefs* that automatically occur when you have this thought
  - C = the usual *consequences* of the belief
  - D = your *disputation* of the routine belief
  - E = the *energy* that comes when you successfully dispute the negative thought
11. Recognize that your pessimistic beliefs are just that – beliefs. They may or may not be fact.
12. Acknowledge when you have a pessimistic thought. Consciously restate the thought such that it is external, transient and specific (“My house hasn’t sold yet because the market is down – it will pick up in the spring”) instead of internal, permanent, and pervasive (“I’ll never sell my house because it’s in a terrible location.”)
13. Spend 20 minutes a day for 4 consecutive days writing a narrative description about your best possible future self. In this exercise, visualize the best possible future for yourself in all the different domains of your life.
14. Keep a goals and sub goals diary. Pick a long term goal and write about it. During subsequent sessions, write about the steps you’ll take to reach the goal. If you detect any negative thoughts about any of the sub goals, reframe them into positive, uplifting thoughts or come up with alternative solutions.
15. Reflect on past successes. Recognize and acknowledge the strengths and resources you already have (and that you’ll continue to develop).
16. Create an internal movie that shows you achieving an important goal. See yourself overcoming obstacles and developing paths around or through problems – or rewind and choose a different path.
17. Journal about good and bad events.
  - Write about why the good events will last and spread and how your actions helped bring them about.
  - Write about why the bad events will pass quickly, are limited in their effect, and why you aren’t completely to blame for them.
18. Make a list of negative thoughts that you tend to overthink or ruminate on. Take a stack of index cards and list one negative thought on each card. Leave the back of the card blank. Once a day, select a card at random and read the negative thought. On the back of the card, list as many things as you can come up with to dispute this thought. Be kind and fair to yourself.

## Avoid Overthinking And Social Comparisons

19. Think, say, or shout “Stop!” or “No!” to yourself when you find yourself resuming overthinking, then think about something else.
20. Set aside 30 minutes sometime during the day when you will do nothing but ruminate. You can stop yourself at other times by telling yourself, “I’ll think about this later.” You may find that when you consciously try to overthink, the things you set aside to contemplate seem less important.
21. When you notice yourself beginning to ruminate or engage in social comparisons, choose to move yourself to a happier place by using a “Mood boosting activity”. Be sure to notice the power you have to control your thoughts. *Notice how empowering this idea is.*
22. Talk to a sympathetic and trusted person about your thoughts and troubles. Choose someone who can be objective, not someone who will start ruminating *with* you. And don’t wear them out by going to them too often.
23. Journal. By writing out your ruminations, you can organize your thoughts and make sense of them. You may begin to see patterns emerge. Plus, you get them out of your head and onto a piece of paper.
24. Make a list of the people, places, times, or circumstances that trigger your overthinking. Develop strategies to avoid these triggers or to modify them enough to impede their ability to trigger overthinking.
25. Build your sense of self worth. Learn a new skill, take up a new hobby, begin a new project.
26. When you begin a cycle of rumination or social comparison, stop, and ask yourself: “Will this matter in a year?”

## Practice Acts Of Kindness

27. Pick one day a week and do five acts of kindness. Do things that stretch you (may not be your usual nature, or may take time away from your own activities, etc.) Vary your acts of kindness so they don’t become an obligation or routine.
28. Think of someone who is having difficulties either financially, emotionally, physically or otherwise. Think of ways you can help this person that allows them to retain his or her dignity. Consider helping anonymously.
29. Do something to benefit or help another person or a charitable organization, in a way that is completely anonymous, without any chance of recognition.

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30. Volunteer (e.g. fund raising, teaching, mentoring, coaching, helping at a charity that interests you).
31. Keep a kindness journal. Observe and record the pleasure kindness brings to you and others. Observe the growing sense of connectedness you feel as a result of doing kindnesses to others.
32. Give the gift of time: weed a garden, take a child to the park, look over someone's taxes – use your talents and skills to help someone else.
33. Surprise someone – with a home cooked meal, a phone call, a card or letter, etc.
34. Do something that doesn't come naturally – smiling at a stranger, saying "thank you" to the cashier at the grocery store, being nice to someone who rubs you the wrong way.
35. Strengthen your compassion. Imagine what it would be like to be unable to read, to care for a dying spouse, to be unable to pay your bills, to be without a job, to be too weak to care for yourself. Offer assistance to someone in one of these or a similar situation.

## Nurture Social Relationships

36. Spend five minutes each day expressing appreciation or gratitude to your partner for specific behaviors.
37. Before you part in the morning, find out one thing each of you is going to do that day. When you meet again, have a "reunion conversation" in a low-stress setting and *listen*.
38. Schedule several hours once a week and make it a dedicated ritual. During this time, do something, or share an experience, together.
39. Respond to good news with an active-constructive response (as opposed to a passive or destructive) response. Ask questions about the event or experience. Be genuinely enthusiastic about their experience. Comment on the meaning it may have for them.
40. When your partner is excited to tell you something, pay close attention, ask lots of questions, and relive the experience. If you are happy for them, tell them so.
41. Be helpful and supportive when your friend needs it and affirm his or her successes.
42. Stand up for your friends when they're not around, don't disclose secrets they share with you, don't put down their other friends, and reciprocate favors.
43. Aim for 5 hugs per day, with different people. Research shows: Hugging makes you happier.

## Develop Strategies For Coping

44. Concentrate your efforts on doing something about the problem.
45. Develop a strategy for dealing with the problem and create an action plan.
46. Talk to other people who can advise you about resolving the problem.
47. Engage in exercise or other physical activity that can distract you temporarily.
48. Find the seed of good in the adversity; seek spiritual meaning and comfort.
49. Turn to family and friends for support, comfort, and contact.
50. Find the meaning behind the problem or trauma by journaling or expressive writing.
51. Challenge and dispute your own negative thoughts about the issue. Use the ABCDE disputation method. (Adversity, Beliefs, Consequences, Dispute, Energize – see exercise # 10).

## Learn To Forgive

52. Understand that forgiveness isn't about excusing, condoning or forgetting. Forgiveness is something you do for *yourself*, not for the person who has wronged you.
53. Remember a time you received forgiveness. How did the injured party communicate with you? How did you respond? What did you learn or how were you changed by the experience?
54. Reflect on this teaching of the Buddha: "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else. You are the one getting burned."
55. Identify a person who has offended you. Imagine seeing the situation through his or her eyes, from his or her perspective. Try to empathize with the offender and understand why he or she did what they did.
56. Write a forgiveness letter to someone who has hurt or wronged you. Describe in detail the injury or offense that was done to you. Show how you were affected by it and how it continues to hurt you. State what you wish the other person had done instead. End with an explicit statement of forgiveness and understanding.
57. Practice empathy. When someone does something you don't understand, try to get at that person's thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Why did she do what she did?
58. Imagine you are the transgressor and consider what might have caused you to do the thing that was done and if you expect to be forgiven.

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59. Write the letter of apology you'd *like* to receive from the person who harmed you.

## Increase Flow Experiences

60. Seek out activities at home, at work, and during your leisure time that engage your skills and expertise. Pay attention to what you pay attention to.
61. Practice giving full concentration to the task at hand. If the challenge is too low, you will get bored. If the challenge is too high, you will become discouraged.
62. Be open – and actively seek out – new and different experiences. Try something you've never done before, taste a new food, learn a new skill.
63. Always be learning. Imitate the small child who is learning new experiences every day.
64. Learn what flows for you. It may not be what you think.
65. Transform routine tasks into something more meaningful and stimulating by adding “microflow” activities, with specific goals and rules.
66. Commit to spending some of your leisure time on activities that require full concentration, using your mind, and exercising your skills.
67. Any job or career can be transformed into a calling. What would do that for you? Think of ways you could re-craft your job to make it more meaningful to you and to maximize flow.

## Savor Life's Joys

68. Take a few minutes, once a day, to take pleasure in something you usually rush through – a meal, a shower, finishing the work day, a chore. Write about how you experienced the event differently and how it felt.
69. Savor two pleasurable experiences per day and try to make the experience last as long and as intensely as possible.
70. Be aware as you go through your daily routine of pleasures that come up throughout the day. Resolve to take full advantage of them. Linger over your morning coffee; relish your morning or afternoon snack; bask in the feeling of accomplishment when you complete a task.
71. Share a positive experience, something you love to do, with a friend who also enjoys the experience.
72. Reminisce with a friend or family member about an event or experience you both shared and enjoyed.
73. Look at pictures or mementos that remind you of a joyful time.

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74. Allow yourself to become completely immersed in a pleasurable experience. Don't wonder what comes next or remind yourself of other things you have to do. Don't think, just sense.
75. Get out into nature. Take a walk or hike. Don't try to follow a timetable or have to be at a specific place at a certain time. Be in the moment and use all your senses to experience the wonder and beauty of nature.
76. Celebrate good news with your spouse, a family member or a friend. When you or someone you love receives an honor or award, sincerely congratulate him or her or yourself. Take pride in the accomplishment and soak up the feeling.

## Commit To Your Goals

77. Choose intrinsic goals. Intrinsic goals are those that are personally rewarding to you.
78. Choose authentic goals. These are the goals that you value and "own", as opposed to goals that you set because of the expectations of others (parents, spouse, friends, society). Choose goals that fit your values and strengths.
79. Choose Approach goals - working toward a positive outcome - rather than avoidant goals - avoiding a negative outcome. Approach goals promote well-being; avoidant goals can detract from happiness.
80. Choose harmonious goals. It may seem obvious, but it is important that your goals complement each other. "Grow my business" and "spend more time with my family" may put you into conflict. You may be able to change your method of pursuing each one, so that they are in harmony overall. Or, you may need to give up one or the other, or run the risk of losing both.
81. Choose activity goals. Seeking to improve your circumstances (bigger house, bigger car, bigger TV) has been shown to be a difficult route to improved happiness. It can be done, but circumstances are often difficult and expensive to change, and their ability to provide lasting happiness is small. On the other hand, activity goals allow you to meet new challenges, take advantage of new opportunities, and have a variety of experiences.

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82. Strive for enjoyable goals; develop both short- and long-term goals; seek out goals you value; change your goals if they are not working; focus on goals that increase happiness and well-being in terms of orientation, content, and motivation.
83. Unhook from outcomes. Don't get attached to one path of pursuing your goal. See and develop many different ways to reach your goal.
84. If you've had a goal for two years or more, and haven't progressed toward it, drop it. It isn't really *your* goal. Replace it with a goal that really excites you and gives you energy.

### Practicing Religion And Spiritually

85. Attend religious services, or a spiritual group that matches your beliefs, on a regular basis.
86. Seek spiritual models you can observe and learn from, either through fellowship or from mentoring.
87. Cultivate sacred moments in which you devote time to "just be" with the holiness of sacred space or sacred objects.
88. Set aside time each day to read from a religious or spiritual text.
89. Cultivate a spiritual discipline: prayer, meditation, fasting, study, simplicity, service.
90. Develop the ability to see the sacred and holiness in ordinary, everyday things.
91. Look for the deeper meaning or teaching in problems or setbacks.
92. Walk a labyrinth.

### Taking Care Of Your Body

93. Practice meditation. Be open, nonjudgmental, non-striving, patient, trusting, free of attachment. Practice daily to receive the most benefit.
94. Try a loving-kindness meditation. Image and deeply feel each of these thoughts:
  - May I be filled with lovingkindness.
  - May I be safe from inner and outer danger.
  - May I be well in body and mind.
  - May I be at ease and happy.
95. Engage in at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.

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96. Start the morning with some activity to gently get your body moving. This doesn't have to be anything strenuous. Do some light stretching or yoga, to loosen up your joints and get the blood to flowing to your muscles. Slow and easy is good.
97. Move more during the day; don't remain sedentary for long periods. Get up and walk to someone's office (instead of sending an e-mail) or to the copier or to the water cooler. Stand up when you make a phone call.
98. Change your seating when you watch TV. Sit in a rocking chair or gently bounce on a therapy ball. Get up and move around during commercials.
99. Act like a happy person. Smile more; be enthusiastic and engaged in whatever you are doing.
100. Laugh. (It's the best medicine.) Learn a new joke at least once a week and share it with someone.

### **BONUS TIP:**

101. Understand and accept that your life to this point is the result of your thoughts and actions, and you can change your life by changing your thoughts.

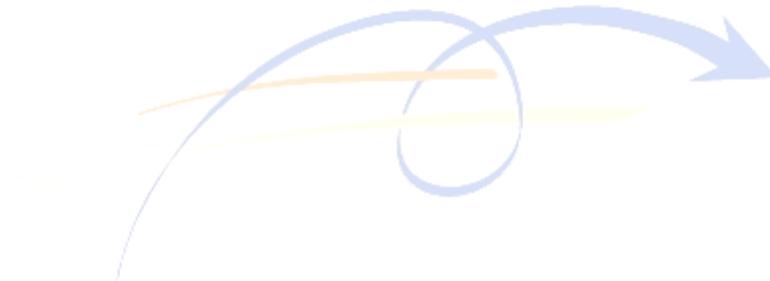
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## Resources

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Create Your Life.

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