



Happiness Challenge

On some days, being happy just comes easier than on others. But that doesn't mean you have to stay in the doldrums on days that feel like more of a slog. Small changes can boost your mood and invite a brighter outlook that can have a lasting impact throughout the day and week. Challenge yourself each week to try one of these mood-boosting strategies and then build on them throughout the month.

< WEEK 1 2 3 4 >

Start with a smile.

Okay, this one might take work. Even if you're not feeling your most chipper, try greeting people with a smile to start your day and then extending it out like a ripple in a pond until you're sharing smiles all day long.

- Start easy by using a smile with those in your household as you eat breakfast and get ready to leave the house.
- On days two through four, use a smile to engage your barista, security guard at the office or coworkers. It may not entirely transform your mood, but a review of more than 130 studies found your facial expressions do have some impact on how you feel.
- By day five, bring that smile back home as you engage with your family to share your day and hear about theirs.
- As the week comes to a close, remember, if nothing else, don't wear a scowl, as negative facial expressions can boost angry feelings.





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Take it outside.

Whether your days are stacked with back-to-back meetings or running errands, take at least one task outdoors today. Getting outside improves your mood and concentration and boosts Vitamin D levels.

- At work, try gathering a few colleagues for a walking meeting.
- Depending on the weather, try bringing your lunch outside or sending emails from your phone at a park.
- Midweek, take advantage of long summer days after work and try swapping an episode of TV after dinner for a nature walk. Have kids? Bring them along!
- At the end of the week or weekend, plan for a larger outdoor adventure, whether at a beach, a local walking trail or all-day backyard activities.





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Set a goal.

Whether large or small, striving for something can make you happier, according to The Happiness Project author Gretchen Rubin. Make your goal clear and then make it a reality. The goals can be simple all week long.

- On day one, start with 10 minutes of exercise or stretching.
- Commit to making your bed or dealing with one pile of clutter in your home. Pick one or two household tasks that always gets pushed aside and get it done.
- Stand tall this week. For the latter half of the week, focus on these simple exercises to improve your posture.
- Need more inspiration? Here are ways to get started to make longer-term positive changes as the week comes to a close.





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Embrace self-care.

This week is all about taking time to yourself and being in the moment.

- At the start of the week, take 10 minutes for yourself to do something that makes you feel present and at peace, whether that's focusing on your breath, doing meditation or making a cup of tea.
- In the middle of the week, make an effort to really connect with a friend, leaving behind gossip or simply talking about yourself.
- Are you hip to hygge? You should be! A Danish word that is similar in meaning to the English word cozy, hygge is more of an approach to life. It's really about living in the moment.
- At the end of the week, curl up with a great book or a refreshing drink al fresco and have a quiet moment while leaving frustration and stresses aside.

