

# HAPPINESS STRATEGIES

Sometimes we just need a few simple ideas to get us **back on the road to happiness**. The techniques below are **rooted in research** and are proven to **boost optimism** and **build resiliency**. Try one to start, and keep going until you find what works for you.



## #1 COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

1. Keep a gratitude journal on a consistent basis.
2. Contemplate things for which you're grateful.
3. Substitute ungrateful thoughts with grateful thoughts.
4. Share your blessings with a partner.
5. Directly express gratitude (e.g., write someone a letter of gratitude).
6. Vary the strategies that you use.



## #2 CULTIVATE OPTIMISM

1. Keep a "best possible selves" diary. Write about who you want to be. Write your goals, break them into sub-goals, and consider your strengths and resources that will help you achieve them.
2. Identify barrier, or pessimistic, thoughts and consider ways to reinterpret the situation.
3. Practice optimism to make it a habit (develop "flexible optimism").



## #3 AVOID OVERTHINKING & SOCIAL COMPARISON

1. Cut loose.
2. Distract yourself with other activities.
3. Use the "Stop!" technique when you catch yourself overthinking.
4. Set aside time every day to ruminate (e.g., 30 minutes).
5. Talk to someone about your thoughts.
6. Write out your ruminations.
7. Act to solve problems that cause overthinking – take small steps!
8. Avoid situations that cause you to overthink.
9. Consider the big picture (e.g., ask yourself "Will this matter in a year?").
10. Focus on lessons you can learn from a situation or ordeal.



## #4 PRACTICE ACTS OF KINDNESS

1. Select a specific act or several small acts to participate in one day a week.
2. Vary your acts of kindness.
3. Start a "chain of kindness" (think "pay it forward").



## #5 NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS

1. Commit extra time each week to hang out with a close other.
2. Find time to express appreciation to a close person each day.
3. Create a routine to reunite each day.
4. Schedule several hours together at least once a week.
5. Create a media-free zone in your home that's for conversations only.
6. Express at least five positive statements or behaviors for each negative one.
7. If you are in an intimate relationship, schedule time to directly express your appreciation for that person.
8. Write a list of attributes that attracted you to your partner and think about an episode that illustrates each one.
9. Remember and write about a good time in your relationship.
10. Think about a recent thing your partner did to upset you, and write down a few charitable explanations for the behavior.
11. Write about specific goals or values that you and your partner share.
12. Try to do one thing each week to support your partner's dreams or roles.
13. Take delight in friends' and loved ones' successes.
14. Manage conflict by deescalating tension or negativity through humor, expressing affection, or saying something directly (e.g., "I see your point").
15. Communicate openly – self-disclose and listen attentively.
16. Be supportive and loyal.
17. Hug.



## #6 DO MORE ACTIVITIES THAT TRULY ENGAGE YOU (I.E., PUT YOU IN A STATE OF FLOW)

1. Control your attention and focus fully on the task at hand.
2. Be open to new and different experiences. Keep learning until the day you die.
3. Figure out which activities create flow for you, and multiply them.
4. Transform routine tasks into meaningful microflow activities with specific goals and rules.
5. When participating in a conversation, focus intently on what the other person(s) says and how you react to their words.
6. Participate in smart leisure activities that allow you to experience flow.
7. Craft your job in ways that maximize flow and meaning.
8. Allow yourself to strive for super-flow whenever possible.



## #7 REPLAY & SAVOR LIFE'S JOYS

1. Learn how to take pleasure in mundane, everyday experiences.
2. Reminisce with family and friends.
3. Mentally transport yourself to a different time or place to feel pleasure or solace when you need it.
4. Replay and revel in your happiest life events.
5. Celebrate good news to the fullest extent possible.
6. Be open to beauty and excellence, and take pleasure in it.
7. Practice mindfulness by being attentive to the here and now.
8. Take delight in momentary pleasures and wonders.
9. Create a savoring/memory album to access when you need it.
10. Use your camera as a way to enhance your ongoing experiences, not to detract from them.
11. Seek bittersweet or transient experiences in which you can savor the remaining time you have.
12. Nurture nostalgic feelings.



## #8 COMMIT TO YOUR GOALS

1. Choose goals that are...
  - **Intrinsic:** Personally involving and rewarding
  - **Authentic:** Truly owned by you
  - **Approach-oriented:** Seeking to achieve something instead of avoiding something
  - **Harmonious:** Complementary with your other goals
  - **Activity-based:** Related to taking up a new activity, challenge, or opportunity
  - **Flexible:** Adapted to the opportunities that you currently have and value
2. Commit to your goals with passion.
3. Believe in your ability to achieve whatever goal you set.
4. Break goals into smaller sub-goals.
5. Anticipate obstacles and consider strategies to manage them.
6. Reward yourself for achieving milestones toward your goal. Be careful with external rewards, however. They can undermine intrinsic motivation.
7. Be prepared to adapt your goals when necessary or when an opportunity arises.



## #9 DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR COPING

1. Write about painful or distressing experiences to make sense of them (e.g., at least 15 minutes a day for several days in a row).
2. Write or talk about the benefit(s) of a painful or distressing experience.
3. Write challenges to your own pessimistic thoughts and use them when needed.



## #10 LEARN TO FORGIVE

1. Appreciate a time when you have been forgiven.
2. Imagine granting forgiveness to a person whom you blame for mistreating you.
3. Write a forgiveness letter. (But you don't necessarily have to send it.)
4. Practice empathy.
5. Try creating generous attributions for others' transgressions (e.g., think about the transgression from the transgressor's point of view).
6. Ruminant less.
7. Communicate forgiveness to another. (Send the letter or make a phone call or just be kind to the person.)
8. Remind yourself that you have chosen to forgive.



## #11 PRACTICE RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

1. Seek a genuine sense of meaning in life.
2. Dedicate time each day to pray, or pray spontaneously.
3. Find the sacred in everyday things.



## #12 TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

1. Meditate.
2. Participate in some sort of physical activity.
3. Act happy: smile, laugh, act engaged, show enthusiasm.