

# Access

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## The link between happiness and health



Happiness is the experience of positive emotions such as joy, contentment and having a general satisfaction with life. A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that being happy actually benefits health and helps promote a healthy lifestyle. Happy people are more likely to take better care of themselves and choose healthy behaviors — such as exercising, eating well and getting adequate sleep — over unhealthy ones.

Happiness can also have beneficial effects on the cardiovascular and immune systems and help combat stress. While the specific effects of happiness on the immune system are still being researched, evidence shows that being happy appears to play a role in helping to keep the immune system strong.

## The impact of happiness on the workplace

### What's the connection between happiness and the workplace?

Numerous studies show that happy people are able to maintain better personal relationships and are more successful at work. Having positive emotions creates a more productive and harmonious work environment.

By maintaining a positive mindset, our brains are flooded with the chemical Dopamine. Besides making us feel happier and more optimistic, Dopamine activates the learning centers in our brain which allow us to become more engaged, motivated, creative, energetic and productive at work.

On the flip side, negative emotions are detrimental to the workplace environment. Negativity hurts productivity, morale and quality of work. When someone's brain focuses on only negative thoughts, it actually takes away from that person's ability to perform cognitive tasks such as math, data analysis or decision making.



# How can you become happier?

Research shows that your happiness level is not set in stone. The brain is actually wired to be happy and can become happier. We simply need to engage in activities and mindsets that are positive and meaningful. Here are some proven approaches that have been shown to make people feel happier.



- **Practice gratitude daily:** You can increase your happiness by focusing on things you are grateful for. Write down three things you are grateful for each day.
- **Get and stay active:** Regular exercise is not only good for your physical health, it helps boost your mood and your outlook on life too.
- **Connect with people:** Staying socially connected increases your happiness level. In fact, social support is an important predictor of longevity. Having positive interaction with people (or even animals) can foster a sense of happiness.
- **Learn to meditate:** Regular meditation can increase happiness and provides other benefits, such as reducing stress and improving sleep. Meditation allows your brain to stop multi-tasking and focus solely on the task at hand.
- **Don't shortchange your sleep:** Lack of sleep has a negative effect on happiness. If you struggle with sleep because of stress, family problems or other issues, please contact Aurora EAP. Remember, EAP services are free and confidential.



## Choose to be happy

Happy people realize that happiness is a personal choice. However, fully experiencing happiness still requires a conscience decision to do so each day. When you begin choosing a more optimistic outlook on life, science shows you can actually change or rewire your brain and increase your happiness level.

Learning to enjoy your work, becoming more grateful and having positive relationships can all increase your level of happiness. So, what is the bottom line on the link between happiness and health? Focus on things that make you happy. Doing so will not only improve your overall health and your life — it might actually help extend it, too.

## Ever wonder if you could live a happier life?

Aurora EAP is here to help. For free, confidential assistance, give us a call at 800-236-3231. You'll be happy you did.