



NOVEMBER 2009

— FYI —

American Diabetes Month

November is American Diabetes Month®—a time to shine a spotlight on a serious disease that leads to potentially life-threatening complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and amputation.

This year, we need to take a bolder, more audacious approach to American Diabetes Month. Consider that:

- 24 million children and adults in the United States live with diabetes
- 57 million Americans are at risk for type 2 diabetes
- 1 out of every 3 children born today will face a future with diabetes if current trends continue

Learn how you can become involved:

- **Share.** Inspire others to join the movement by sharing your personal story. Beginning November 2, visit stopdiabetes.com to learn about all the exciting ways to be a part of the *Stop Diabetes* movement. Invite your family, friends, and co-workers to join this effort as well.
- **Act.** Whether you want to walk, bike or simply tell a friend, there will be many ways to help us build momentum for the *Stop Diabetes* movement.
- **Learn.** The American Diabetes Association has many resources throughout the country to help *Stop Diabetes*. If you, or a loved one, already have diabetes or are at risk for developing it, we can provide medical, lifestyle and motivational information to prevent this disease from taking control of your life and the lives of those around you.
- **Give.** Sign up with your local American Diabetes Association office to help raise money for diabetes research, federal and state advocacy and public education.

<http://www.diabetes.org>

Helping Organizations Retain Their Most Valuable Asset

How to be **HAPPIER!**...Everyday



What would it take to make you happier? More money? A bigger house? A new relationship? Maybe a flatter stomach? According to the latest research on happiness, none of the above will make you happier in the long run. Human beings adapt, researchers report, so acquiring new material possessions or changing life circumstances don't result in sustained happiness. That new car, promotion or house feels great at first. Then we get used to it. An often-cited study found that within one year, lottery winners returned to approximately the same level of happiness they experienced before their windfall.

So, what does it take to be happier? Through analyzing studies on identical twins and other research, happiness researchers have determined that each of us has a "happiness set-point," a baseline level of happiness that we return to, regardless of the ups and downs of life. Just like your weight set-point, which keeps the scale hovering around the same weight, your happiness set-point will remain the same – **unless you make a concerted effort to change it.**

Tips to increase happiness

Happiness researchers say that you have the ability and power to be happier by changing your habits. Below are strategies and "happiness activities" shown in numerous studies to increase the happiness. To improve your happiness, choose the strategies or activities that suit you best. Build these activities into your everyday life to ensure long-term success. Seek out additional resources, if needed, to expand your knowledge, skills and success in the areas you choose.

Live with purpose. People who strive for something personally significant – whether it's learning a new skill, raising a good family, or changing careers – are happier than those who don't have strong dreams or aspirations. Pick one or more significant goals and devote time and effort pursuing them. The process of working towards your goal is as important to your well being as its attainment.

Cultivate optimism. "Many people say things happen for the best. I don't agree with that," says Tal Ben-Shahar, Ph.D., a Harvard University psychology professor and author of *Happier*. "But some people are able to make the best of things that happen – and that's a key to happiness." One way to do this is to reframe your thoughts. If you see everything that goes wrong as being permanent (things are going to be this bad forever); pervasive (this is going to wreck everything); and personal (it's all my fault); you're more likely to feel sad, fearful or anxious.

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Instead try to view your problems as temporary (this will pass); limited (this problem affects only one, specific part of my life); and impersonal (it wasn't my fault).

Nurture your relationships. The happiest people surround themselves with family and friends. A Japanese study published last year found that contented people's happy experiences most often involved connecting with someone. Happy people have a strong bond with at least two out of three of these essential relationships: partner, friend, or parent. Experts say the best way to improve a relationship is to invest time and energy in it.

Count your blessings. One way to feel happier is to recognize good things when they happen. Express gratitude for what you have privately and also by conveying appreciation to others. If you have trouble counting your blessings, try keeping a gratitude journal. Write down three to five things you're grateful for once a week. Several studies show that people who record what they appreciate experience greater happiness and less anxiety.

Practice kindness. Do good things for others. Acting kind or helping others makes you feel capable, compassionate and full of purpose. In one recent study, researchers could literally see the benefits of kindness. Subjects were hooked up to a brain-imaging mechanism and asked to click yes or no to charity-giving opportunities. When they donated, the machine registered a boost in blood flow to a part of the brain associated with happiness.

Best Path To Weight Control Is To Be 100% Fad Free

Diet fads come and go, and some may help you lose weight, in the short term. However, after a period of intense dieting, most people return to their old eating and lifestyle habits and gradually put the lost weight back on. In fact, according to the most recent studies, only 5% to 10% of people are successful at keeping weight off in the long term.

According to the American Dietetic Association, the best way to maintain your weight in the long term is to avoid fad diets and instead focus on healthy eating habits and your overall health.

The American Dietetic Association offers these keys to maintaining a healthy weight and healthful eating:

- Develop an eating plan for overall health. Too often people adopt the latest fad rather than focusing on overall health. Know the basics of sound nutrition. Use the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" as your guide to healthy eating.
- Whatever the food, eat a sensible serving size. Knowing the appropriate serving size for you is part of eating smart.
- Add color to your plate by eating more fruits and vegetables. This may be the best lifestyle change you'll ever make. Think red, green and orange – fruits and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals that may help prevent some cancers and lowers blood pressure. Try adding fresh fruit to pancakes and yogurt.
- Choose foods sensibly by looking at the big picture. A single food or meal won't make or break a healthful diet. When consumed in moderation and in appropriate portions, all foods can fit into a healthful diet.
- Learn how to spot a fad diet. Unreasonable or exaggerated claims that eating (or not eating) specific foods, nutrient supplements or combinations of foods may cure disease or offer quick weight loss are key features of fad diets.
- Find your balance between food and physical activity. Regular physical activity is important for overall health and fitness, plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.

Learn to forgive. When we hold on to pain, old grudges, bitterness or hatred, many areas of our lives can suffer. When we're unforgiving, we are the ones who pay the price over and over.

According to research conducted by Dr. Fred Luskin at Stanford University, people who learn to forgive become less stressed, less angry, more optimistic and reported healthier relationships and improved physical health.

Forgiveness is not excusing someone else's wrong behavior, nor does it necessarily include reconciliation with the person who wronged us. Forgiveness means no longer dwelling on the wounds that keep us tied to the past. By learning to forgive, you take responsibility for how you feel and take back the power from others to keep hurting you. An effective forgiveness technique to consider: Write a letter in which you let go of anger and resentment toward those who have hurt you. Actually sending the letter is optional.

Move your body. Research overwhelmingly shows that people who exercise are happier. Make some form of exercise – such as brisk walking, running, swimming or yoga – a regular habit. When you exercise, your body produces valuable brain chemicals and hormones – like endorphins, serotonin, dopamine and adrenaline – that impact your energy, mood and health. Additionally, taking up a sport or working out regularly will help you feel more in control of your body and health, thereby increasing your confidence and self-image. Also important to feeling happier: Eat a nutritious diet and get adequate sleep.

HMS SERVICES

PROVIDED BY YOUR EMPLOYER FOR YOU AND YOUR DEPENDENTS

This confidential prepaid program is designed to help employees and their eligible dependents resolve problems which may be interfering with their personal, work or home life. HMS offers help for marital and family issues, substance abuse, job concerns, emotional problems, life adjustments, legal issues, financial matters, and elder care and child care referrals.

If you're experiencing problems, you and your HMS counselor can work as a team to find solutions.

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