

6 Simple Ways to be Happier Today

Written by David Singer

There are numerous ways that we can help ourselves to be happier every day. In fact, there are so many ways that a looking at too comprehensive a list could cause someone to be overwhelmed, leading instead to unhappiness.

In order to avoid the overwhelm that I just mentioned, the first thing I want you to do is to adopt the following habit, which will help you with all future habits you want to adopt in your life. Ready? Here it is: Slow down.

What I mean is this: Instead of experiencing the failure, frustration, and stress that comes with trying to do too much each year via New Year's resolutions, maintain a running list of life improvement goals and break them down into pieces that are small enough to turn into new habits one at a time, over the 21 days that it takes to make a new habit stick.

Below are a few ideas for you to consider adopting. Break them down into smaller goals, specific to your situation. Work on a goal for 21 days. When it becomes a habit, consider adding another. Making small, meaningful changes will add up, moving you towards the big goals you want to achieve.

- 1. Measure your progress not your distance to the goal.** Human nature causes us to be more inclined to reflect on negatives than positives. To counter that natural tendency, be sure to make it a daily practice to celebrate your achievements. And when looking at your goals, remember to look at how far you have come towards achieving them. When you measure yourself against your goals, you will always come up short. When you measure yourself against where you started, you will be recognizing your achievements, and those deserve to be celebrated.
- 2. Make gratitude lists.** You've probably heard this before. Expressing your appreciation for what you have helps to take away your focus on what you don't have, and is an acknowledged happiness strategy. It's *one that is worth doing on a daily basis. Short of that, try doing it at least weekly, starting today. If you're having trouble thinking of things, you may be thinking too small. Widen your view. Think about nature: the trees, the sun, the sound of a running stream. Think about people: family and friends with whom you are grateful to have a relationship. We all have much to be grateful for, even in what might be difficult times.*
- 3. Help other people. There are many benefits that come from giving of yourself, whether helping someone you know or volunteering for a community service activity. Volunteering is proven to be good for your health and your happiness. Studies have shown that people who volunteer live longer.** Volunteering is also a great tool in the fight against depression because it's easier to temporarily forget about your own problems when you shift your focus to helping others. And it's an extremely gratifying activity.
- 4. Recognize the power of negative thinking.** Most of us have heard of "the power of positive thinking." While "the power of *negative* thinking" isn't a well-known phrase, we are all familiar with the results of negative thinking—stewing over minor slights and inconveniences, being snippy with the ones we love, and general unhappiness. When we learn that our thinking has everything to do with our emotions, we can be happier by recognizing when our thoughts are running away from us, bringing ourselves back into the present moment, and reminding ourselves not to sweat the small stuff.
- 5. Look at the glass as half full.** We've all heard that saying, but do we really know what it means? Maybe this will help you. If you heard that someone you loved was in a car accident. What would your first question be? I bet it would be, "Is he/she okay?" And then, if the answer was "yes," you would express relief. You would be looking at the glass as half full. You would be happy that your loved one was okay, despite the bad news about the accident. On the other hand, if you were in a car accident and your car was badly damaged, but you were okay, you might spend time and energy kicking yourself for getting into the accident. If so, you would be looking at the glass as half empty instead of being grateful for being okay.
- 6. Recognize how much you can accomplish if you break your big goals down into small pieces.** This is so important that I'm going to repeat this point from this article's introduction. It takes 21 days to form a habit. If you use that fact to make small improvements, rather than trying for too much, too fast (like so many of us do with New Year's resolutions), you can accomplish incredible things. Use this strategy in all areas of your life, including putting into action the first five items on this list. The results will be a happier life!

Author: David J. Singer source: www.pickthebrain.com

Thank you for Supporting the Arts!

On Friday, January 18th, participants of the 2012-2013 PTA Reflections Program were honored at a reception in the Media Center. The celebration was attended by parents, grandparents, Mr. Baird, Mrs. Caswell, and several PTA members. We, the co-chairs of the Reflections art program would like to extend huge thank you's to the PTA for supporting the program again this year and to the Food Lion stores on Lead Mine Road and Strickland Road for generously donating cake and punch for the reception. We would like to thank the following students for creating thoughtful interpretations of this year's theme, "Magic of a Moment" and to their parents who supported their endeavors:

Reilly Coleman

Lucy Harris

Ashton Lawley

Cyrus Dybwad

Xavier Hameed Centimole

Carolyn Brueggeman

Landon Douek

Breanna O'Neill

Abby Kinlaw

Lindsay Kinlaw

Abigail Moe

Katie Murr

Zachary Denning

Nadira Skinner

Nathan Dempsey

Alex Chapman

Nathaniel Davis

Brandon Schaffnit

Hassan Carlos

Ethan Sherk

Georgia Spivey

Rebecca Cobb

Sean McSoley

Esmeralda

Gonzales Michael Brink

Hannah Miller

Keri Brice

Kitana Reynolds

Sarah Jaber

Kiara Malloy

Many thanks are also extended to our two anonymous judges, who specialize in music and visual arts. The judges are community volunteers, who spent much time carefully reviewing each entry. The results were:

Visual Arts Primary

1st place: Katie Murr

2nd place: Georgia Spivey

3rd place: Cyrus Dybwad

3rd place: Nathaniel Davis

Merit award: Hassan Carlos

Visual Arts Intermediate

1st place: Ashton Lawley

2nd place: Breanna O'Neill

Photography Primary

1st place: Abigail Moe

2nd place: Nathan Dempsey

3rd place: Alex Chapman

Musical Composition Primary

1st place: Lucy Harris

Dance and Choreography Primary

1st place: Lucy Harris

Literature Primary

1st place: Abigail Kinlaw

1st place: Lindsay Kinlaw

Literature Intermediate

1st place: Breanna O'Neill

Thanks to all who donated time and supplies for this year's Reflections art program!

~Amie Lennox & Lorri Heilig