

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OF THE PACIFIC

WHAT DO HAPPY PEOPLE DO ?

Scientists are beginning to address the question of the way to happiness with systematic, controlled research. Although many of the new studies reaffirm time-honored wisdom ("Do what you love," "To thine own self be true"), they also add a number of new strategies and insights. Writer and neuroscientist Gabrielle LeBlanc reports that:



1. Happy People find their most golden self. Picture happiness. What do you see? Researchers now believe that the ability to strive toward your personally-defined unique talents and potential, and continually taking on new challenges to fulfill their sense of purpose in life.

2. Happy People design their lives to bring in joy. It may seem obvious, but "people don't devote enough time to thinking seriously about how they spend their life and how much of it they actually enjoy," says David Schkade, PhD, a psychologist and professor of management at the University of San Diego. Analyzing one's life isn't necessarily easy and may require questioning long-held assumptions. Working with a counselor at Employee Assistance of the Pacific may help you examine your assumptions and activities that interfere with your life's satisfaction

3. They avoid "if only" fantasies. "If only I get a better job...find a man...lose the weight...life will be perfect." Happy people don't fool themselves into this kind of thinking. An argument against "if only" fantasies is the "hedonic adaptation"—the brain's natural dimming effect, which guarantees that a new house won't generate the same pleasure a year after its purchase and the thrill of having a boyfriend will ebb as you get used to being part of a couple. Happy people are wise to this, which is why they keep their lives full of novelty, and keep trying new activities.

4. They value best friends. Social engagement is one of the most important contributors to happiness. It is just as true that the nature of the relationship counts. Compared with dashing around chatting with acquaintances, you get more joy from spending longer periods of time with a close friend, according to research by Melikah Demir, PhD, assistant professor of psychology at Northern Arizona University. One of the most essential pleasures of close friendship, Demir found, is simple companionship.

5. They allow themselves to be happy. As much as we all think we want it, many of us are convinced, deep down, that it's wrong to be happy (or too happy). Whether the belief comes from religion, culture, or the family you were raised in, it usually leaves you feeling guilty if you're having fun.

Employee Assistance of the Pacific

...is a short term confidential counseling service, provided to you by your employer, that can assist in identifying and resolving issues that may be interfering with your job or personal life.

Our counselors are available across the Islands and can be contacted by:

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BOOKS YOU MAY WANT TO EXPLORE

Eric Weiner, [The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World.](#)

He chronicled his travels to explore places in the world that revealed happiness. In a stop on his happiness search, Weiner visited Bhutan, where he met a man with this rather unexpected advice: "To be happy, you need to set aside a few minutes a day to think about death." "That really hit home with me, I have to say," Weiner says. "In this country, we do not talk about death. ... We will talk about anything except for death. We will talk about how much money we make, we'll talk about our sex lives, we'll talk about politics. We will not talk about death."

Sonja Lyubomirsky, [The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want](#) reports that there are things you can do in your own life to bring about happiness.

One of the problems with attaining happiness is our tendency to adapt or get used to almost anything, Sonja says. One study showed that people get a huge boost after they are married,

but then in two years, happiness goes back to what it was before. "We kind of get used to almost every positive thing in our lives," she says.

Another road block to happiness is that people are constantly striving for more, and therefore never satisfied.

The strategies to counteract adapting and never feeling satisfied? Practicing strategies such as these can all contribute to our overall happiness

- expressing gratitude
- expressing kindness
- trying to be a more forgiving person, and
- living in the moment



WHICH COMES FIRST– HAPPINESS OR SUCCESS ?

Does success in life bring happiness, or is it the other way around? Most research studies presume that happiness follows success, but the American Psychological Association recently announced findings based on 250 other studies on happiness that point to just the opposite: success follows happiness. Other factors such as intelligence, family, and physical fitness contribute to success, but making decisions that help produce happiness really does help you achieve it. Happy individuals are more likely to have fulfilling marriages and relationships, high incomes, superior work performance, community involvement, robust health, and even a long life. It looks like the saying “do what makes you happy and success will follow” is supported by scientific research.

As EAP counselors, we regularly help people who are not sure what makes them truly happy. If this is a dilemma for you, consider making an appointment to meet with an EAP counselor. Remember, these confidential sessions are not just for work problems or a life crisis but can be used to help you clarify goals and make life style changes as well.

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FIFTEEN MINUTE BREAKS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Fifteen-minute breaks need more respect. They can be powerful recovery periods for managing stress. Don't head for the staff kitchen or a coworker's cubicle on break! You'll shortchange the health benefits. Complete detachment is what you're shooting for. If possible, leave your cell phone, pager, or BlackBerry behind. Try a quick walk, go to the lounge on another floor, or head around the corner and sit on a bench. The complete shift in focus is what maximizes these mini-rejuvenators. Reading at your desk or playing a game on your computer doesn't count. Go outside and get some exercise and fresh air. Talk about something non work related. Laugh, think, connect with a friend, and then return to your job recharged.

Stress management involves many small steps to control (not eliminate) stress. Making effective use of a break is an important element. Remember, managing stress involves making conscious choices. For many people, stress management needs to be viewed as a necessity and not a luxury, and taking a short break during the day is an important component of a successful plan.



GETTING ALONG WITH THE NEW CO-WORKER

The new hire has become your coworker. Will you get along? Here is what you can do (or not do) that will stack in favor of things going well:

1) Realize that first impressions count for you as much as for the new coworker, so act quickly to welcome this person into the fold.

2) Take the lead and dismiss the thought that others will judge your kindness as resulting from ulterior motives.

3) Don't "hover" over your new coworker, giving too much information and not enough space; allow him or her to get used to the new environment.

4) Be available for questions and assistance as needed. Any new position has a steep learning curve. Things that are second nature to you will be unknown to someone new.

5) Value differences because there will be some. Consider how those differences will positively help the work unit.

6) Be careful asking personal questions early on, such as “why did you leave your last job?” or “where do you live?” Everyone has a comfort level about personal information. Be welcoming, but not prying.