

THE EIGHT HABITS OF HAPPY (HINT: THEY INCLUDE PETS)

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PHOTOGRAPH
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I've read so much about what makes happy people happy – and the things they do on a daily basis that make them so joyful. What I know is this: Being cheerful is contagious – for you (you want to be happy more and more) and for everyone else around you. (It's hard not to smile when someone else smiles at you.)

It also brings a natural radiance and beauty to your face that can't be mimicked by any skin creams or treatments. Happy people are beautiful people. This is what I call truly natural beauty.

Here, then, are the habits of happy people. Try them. They're contagious.

Smile. Smiling makes you happy on the inside. It lights up your face – and makes others happy to be around you. There's a natural beauty in those who smile a lot.

Appreciate the simple things in the every day. Big victories and events shouldn't be the focus in life. It's the small victories and pleasures that we also should be finding joy in. Many times these small things are around us every day. They're not something to be gotten or achieved or bought. If we stop chasing happiness, we will realize that opportunities for fun and meaningfulness are all around us.

This is why I love this quote from Frederick Keonig:

"We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have."

See the glass as half full. As hard as it is to look at life from the bright side, doing so will make you



happier. In fact, being positive has been linked to a healthier heart, too.

Take time to relax. The happiest people are those who take regular breaks from daily stress. Whether it be regular meditation, yoga, exercise, daily walks or even just taking time for yourself to do something you enjoy, taking a break from the grind will make you happier.

Be resilient. Knowing how to get back on track when life doesn't go according to plans is key to happy people's cheerfulness.

Do good – for others and for the world. The sense of helping others and the world at large gives happy people what's been called a "helper's high" – and seems to help protect them against depression.

Cultivate your spiritual side. Spirituality gives you a sense that there's something greater in the world than just you. This is a humbling way to think – and seems to help happy people shrug off the not-so-great things that happen in life. Cultivating spirituality has also been shown to be good for your health. One study found that a sense of spirituality can help reduce depression and nurture hope.

Spend time with other people. Happy people are those who have strong social ties and close family and friends. Very simply, the more social you are, the happier you'll be.

Pets help make people happy, too, because they provide meaningful social support. In one study, pet owners were found to have higher self-esteem, felt less lonely, were less fearful and were more

socially outgoing – all factors that can make one less stressful and happier. These same pet owners had a greater sense of belongingness, meaningful existence, and control over their lives. I can see this firsthand in my own life. My two dogs, Lexington and Madison, are integral parts of our family life. They add so much daily pleasure and love – and make our family smile and laugh.

But excluding everything else, just making it a habit to count your blessings on a daily basis can help make you happier. Make a list if you have to, every day, of the five to 10 things that bring you happiness. You might just find your outlook shifting – for the better. 🐾

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