

12 TIPS FOR BEING

Unconditionally **Happy**



By Faith Spencer

12 Tips for Being Unconditionally Happy

Most of us want specific things to happen so we can be happy. Whether it's being invited to the Saturday night party or getting likes and follows online, we have ideas about what will make us ecstatic forevermore. The only problem is, we can't always control whether these things happen for us.

Fortunately, we don't have to be a victim of circumstances. Using specific techniques and habits, we can cultivate a lasting sense of well-being that's independent of outside circumstances. Try one or two of the following techniques for a month, and notice whether they make you feel better without anything in your life needing to change.

1. Define Your values and Live by Them

If you try to live according to others' values, you'll have a hard time creating a life that's truly happy. Maybe everyone around you seems to value money or thinness, but you cherish kindness, service, and creativity. You can define your own unique values and live according to them, which gives you so much more power than trying to fit into others' boxes.

How can you make this work for you? Write down the values that you observe in the world around you. Then across the page from that list, write down your own values. What have you always considered important? Afterward, circle your top five values. For each of your top five, write down one way you could express that value more. Post a list of your values where you can see it regularly and remind yourself what really matters to you.

2. Practice Gratitude

The research is in: Of all the happiness-boosting strategies that have been studied, gratitude practices are the most effective. This is because practicing gratitude lifts your mood and helps you see the good in life. Perspective is everything!

How can you make this work for you? Write down five things you're grateful for every night for a month (and why you're grateful for them). Or write a letter to someone and tell them why you're grateful for them. If you're not a writer, lie in bed every night and review your gratitudes before falling asleep.

3. Appreciate Yourself

Instead of expecting the world to give you approval, you can generate a sense of appreciation from within by acknowledging what is good about you: who you are, what you do, and your unique qualities.

How can you make this work for you? As part of your nightly routine, do a self-appreciation exercise. For the next four weeks, write down (or say) five things you appreciate about yourself from that day. Try to make them unique each day. (This self-appreciation exercise is from my trainer Marci Shimoff, author of *Happy for No Reason*.)



4. Take Time for What You Enjoy

Research shows that people who do more enjoyable free-time activities each week tend to sleep better, feel calmer, have better moods, and even enjoy better physical health. And those who do more than one pleasurable activity each week feel less stressed.



How can you make this work for you? Carve out at least fifteen minutes a day for something you love. Mix it up, engaging in more than one enjoyable activity per week. Do you love art? Tennis? Long walks? Swimming? Singing? Ensure that you spend time doing those things.

5. Get Into the “Flow”

When you feel completely absorbed and engaged while doing something you’re naturally skilled at, that experience is often referred to as “being in flow.” When you’re in this flow state, you tend to lose track of time and even a sense of your physical boundaries. Those moments are naturally happiness-inducing, and they can boost your well-being if you experience them regularly.

How can you make this work for you? Identify what activities make you feel in the flow, and figure out how they can be part of your daily life and goals.



6. Follow Your Intuition

We all have intuition—a feeling inside that guides us toward what is best for us. You might notice it as a “gut feeling,” an inexplicable knowing, or a flash of insight. When we follow that inner guidance, we can feel more confident about our choices—and our lives work out so much better!

How can you make this work for you? Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit in silence (or with soft meditative music) for five to ten

minutes. Once you’re relaxed, imagine that you are surrounded by a bright light that connects you to a greater field of energy. This field contains all the information and wisdom you need. Now think of a situation you’re wondering about, then put your hand on your heart and ask a question: “What do I need to know about this situation?” An answer could present itself as a knowing, a mental flash, an image, a word, or a sentence. Write down what you receive. If nothing comes, ask for a clue or a sign to come to you during the upcoming days.

7. Allow Your Feelings

Disappointments happen, and when they do, it’s natural to feel upset and frustrated. Yet, if you don’t allow those feelings to flow through you, they will bog you down. When you allow yourself to feel whatever comes up and take time to listen to your emotional body, you can process those feelings so you can move forward with a clear mind and open heart.

How can you make this work for you? Take a few minutes a day to sit with yourself, paying attention to how your body feels. Breathe deeply and allow yourself to just “be.” If you feel an uncomfortable sensation, put your hand there and send it love. Also, try having a dialogue with an imaginary figure who’s kind and loving and can understand what you’re feeling.

8. Question Your Negative Thoughts

Much of our unhappiness is not about what happens, but what we tell ourselves about what happens. The truth is, what we think must be a certain way doesn’t usually truly have to be that way in order for us to be happy.

How can you make this work for you? When you’re obsessing about what “should have” happened, ask yourself, “Is it true? Can I absolutely know that it’s true?” Byron Katie’s “The Work” teaches us to question our thoughts and examine their validity. Ultimately, we see



that we have choices about what we believe, and we can drop the beliefs that cause us distress. Check out The Work app, which guides you through this questioning process.



9. "Take In" the Good Stuff

We all have a tendency to think negatively or even cynically about ourselves or the world. There's a reason for this. Our caveman ancestors had to constantly scan for danger, so we are biologically wired to notice the negative. Unfortunately, this compromises our happiness. So, we need to develop the habit of scanning for the positive. How? As we really enjoy the positive events in our lives and "take them in," it strengthens positive brain pathways, which makes staying positive much easier.

How can you make this work for you? When something good happens, take time to enjoy it for 10-20 seconds. Experience it like a warm shower washing over you, a sun shining inside of you that radiates out, or a beautiful jewel being placed in the center of your heart. (Rick Hanson's books, such as *Hardwiring Happiness*, discuss those strategies.)

10. Take a Bird's Eye View

Another important way to find unconditional happiness is to get a broader perspective on your life. Often what we call a crisis is just a

minor blip on the radar screen. The good news is that some part of you already has a larger perspective. When you get in touch with this part of yourself, you'll realize that there is another way to see your situation—and you'll also receive wise guidance about what to do.

How can you make this work for you? Take a moment and imagine that you are stepping outside of your life and placing yourself up in the clouds. From that vantage point, look down at yourself in your life right now. Consider the situation that is troubling you. What perspective or insights can you share from your position up there in the sky? Write down what you learn.

11. Cultivate Forgiveness

We tend to be pretty good at saying, "Sorry!" After all, we mutter this to strangers when we bump into them in the Target aisle. Although we know how to apologize, most of us don't know how to forgive others. Even worse, we don't know how to forgive ourselves. And knowing how to release those negative feelings of blame and resentment is super important for taking control of our happiness.

How can you make this work for you? Close your eyes and picture clearly in your mind someone you've been upset with. See them standing there, and send them your wish that they receive everything they've ever wanted. See them having received that and feeling so loved and fulfilled. Notice how they look, and realize that they wouldn't even want to do anything negative anymore. Send them one more dose of good energy, say goodbye, and then open your eyes.



12. Embrace Your Interconnectedness with Life

Another thing that causes us to be unhappy is believing we are separate from others and everything around us. But the deeper truth is that we are interconnected with life. Ancient traditions like Buddhism tell us that we are intertwined with everything around us. Quantum physics says everything is energy and there is an energy field we exist within that connects us all.

How can you make this work for you? Sit in meditation and feel that the boundaries of your body are opening up to include everything in the room and beyond. When you're out in the world, act as if you are already connected with everyone you see. Learn more about quantum physics and your inherent oneness. Consider reading *The Oneness Guide for Today: A Book of Insight for Young Women* to discover how a oneness perspective and oneness-related practices can transform your life.



These are just a few of the ways you can cultivate unconditional happiness. Watch for my weekly newsletter to receive more tips and tricks to help you along on your journey toward accepting life unconditionally while creating your best life from within. Also visit faithspencer.com/explorations for audio versions of some of these exercises and others.

-Faith

