

Trying to be happier really can work: Two experimental studies

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Think yourself happy! Is becoming happier as easy as trying to become happier? The latest research by two US academics suggests it might be.

Writing in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, Yuna L. Ferguson and Kennon M. Sheldon present the results of their recent experiments into 'trying to become happier'.

In the first study, two sets of participants listened to 'happy' music. Those who actively tried to feel happier reported the highest level of positive mood afterwards. In the second study, participants listened to a range of 'positive' music over a two-week period; those who were instructed to focus on improving their happiness experienced a greater increase in happiness than those who were told just to focus on the music.

What seems to have made one group so much happier than the other in their respective studies was a combination of actively trying to become happier and using the right methods – in this case, listening to happy music.

Ferguson and Sheldon's important findings challenge earlier studies suggesting that actually trying to become happier was, in fact, counterproductive. "[Our] results suggest that without trying, individuals may not experience higher positive changes in their well-being," they write. "Thus, practitioners and individuals interested in [happiness](#) interventions might consider the motivational [mindset](#) as an important

facet of improving well-being."

And that's definitely something worth thinking about.

More information: Ferguson, Y. and Sheldon, K. Trying to be happier really can work: Two experimental studies, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. DOI: [10.1080/17439760.2012.747000](https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2012.747000)

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