

Head out to the ski slopes, for happiness' sake

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Are you contemplating a skiing holiday? The all-out pleasure and enjoyment you experience on a pair of skis or a snowboard is positively priceless to enhance your overall happiness. This is true even if you only get to go out on the slopes once in a blue moon, says Hyun-Woo Lee and colleagues from Yonsei University in the Republic of Korea, in an article published in Springer's journal *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.

Lee and his team conducted a survey of 279 visitors at three major ski resorts in South Korea. The happiness and satisfaction of skiers and snowboarders were determined by assessing their sense of pleasure, their level of flow or engagement in the activity, and the sense of involvement and satisfaction they subjectively reported after venturing out on the snow. Of the sample, 126 (45.2 percent) participants skied, 112 (40.1 percent) were snowboarders and 41 (14.7 percent) participated in both activities. Respondents spent on average four and a half days at a resort, while more than 90 percent visited ski resorts fewer than five times in a season.

The results of the survey indicate that sport participation indeed has a positive effect on satisfaction, and that such rich experiences enhance happiness. This can in turn lead to positive affirmations outside of sports that can have an impact on one's health and well-being. The manner in which participants engaged in the activity (known as flow) had the greatest direct impact on [satisfaction](#), followed by involvement.

Flow or engagement is the manner in which you lose yourself in an activity, and are almost oblivious of all else around you. The experience itself, such as skiing, is so enjoyable that people will do it even at a great cost, for the sake of doing it. Involvement relates to having a sense of meaning and purpose in life: how you are able to be part of something larger than yourself. Being deeply involved in an enjoyable physical activity can enhance a person's positive outlook on life. Together, the research model demonstrated how such elements are interrelated in influencing a person's subjective well-being.

Lee noted that even one-off or fewer skiing outings had a positive effect on participants. Interestingly, skiers showed a higher level of pleasure and involvement in their sport than snowboarders did.

The findings are in line with the thinking of positive psychology that physical activity such as participating in sports helps people and communities to flourish. Previous research highlighted its benefits in preventing mental illness, in enhancing positive thinking and in buffering people against the stresses of life.

"Adult playfulness can influence people's [happiness](#), while activities and socially convening around a sporting activity such as skiing have positive psychological outcomes and contribute to overall well-being," Lee believes. "This is also true for people who only casually participate in sports." Lee advised that people who organize sporting activities should attempt to build group solidarity and greater involvement so that people can grow emotionally, socially and creatively.

More information: Lee, H.-W., Shin, S., Bunds, K. S., Kim, M., & Cho, K. M. (2013). Rediscovering the Positive Psychology of Sport Participation: Happiness in a Ski Resort Context, *Applied Research in Quality of Life*. [DOI: 10.1007/s11482-013-9255-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-013-9255-5)

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