

Why other people make us happy

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Telling other people about good things that have happened to you, and feeling socially connected, can make you happier, according to new research from Victoria University of Wellington.

Associate Professor Paul Jose from the School of Psychology specialises in the study of [positive psychology](#), and happiness in particular.

After being awarded a \$600,000 Marsden Fund grant eight years ago, Professor Jose set out to discover what makes people happy. He has found that savouring the good moments in life—whatever they may be—means people enjoy those experiences more and become happier as a result.

Professor Jose's recent research has revealed that being socially connected is a predictor of greater long-term happiness and gives people an increased [sense](#) of meaning in their life. "Feeling part of an important group—whether that's your family, friends, workplace, educational institution or the wider community—tends to settle people. It makes them more confident, and gives their life joy and purpose."

Furthermore, he says, sharing a positive event with other people amplifies the happiness that a person derives from that situation. "The act of telling other people your good news fosters a sense of wellbeing and happiness."

However, he says, it's not yet clear whether sharing happy events on [social media](#)—such as Facebook—offers the same benefits as telling

somebody face-to-face. "We don't know for sure, but interactions on social media seem to have less impact than those in person," he says. "It makes perfect sense really—if you post something you're proud of on Facebook, people can comment but you can't see their face or hear their tone of voice. These are fundamental things—we're physiologically built to respond to people's expressions."

Sharing experiences and social connectedness are linked, says Professor Jose, and both serve to increase a person's gratefulness.

"Feeling grateful for good experiences, as mundane as they might be, really amplifies your happiness. That gratitude enhances your experience because it gives you a greater sense of appreciation and deepens the significance of the event."

Professor Jose says it's possible to make yourself happier by being consciously grateful for things in your life. "Maybe think of three things every day that you are grateful for," he says. "That makes you more aware of positive things in your life, and it makes you humble. By being knowingly mindful of those things, you can develop your sense of gratitude and that's beneficial. It makes you happier."

Provided by Victoria University of Wellington

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