

Aim to live happier this summer. Here's how

July 10 2023, by Cara Murez



It might seem like sunshine, vacation and time spent with family and friends will bring you happiness this summer.

But sometimes it takes a little more effort, said [Lina Begdache](#), an associate professor of health and wellness studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York.

If you'd like to lift your spirits, start by thinking [positive thoughts](#), she said in a university news release.

"The way our brains work, the more negative thinking is practiced, the higher your chance of developing a low mood and feeling miserable," Begdache said. "The good news is that the brain is adjustable, or better known as 'plastic.' People can weaken the negative wiring by practicing [positive thinking](#)."

Pioneers of positive psychology research have shown that positive thinkers appraise [stressful situations](#) as less threatening, Begdache said. They cope well compared to negative thinkers and are happier people.

Eating [healthy food](#) can also boost your mood, she added.

Lifestyle factors, including [diet](#) and sleep, have an impact on your mood. A fluctuation in [blood sugar](#) can lead to feeling "hangry" (bad-tempered or irritable as a result of hunger). Certain healthy diets, such as the Mediterranean diet, are rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory chemicals that support brain and heart health, Begdache said.

In addition, a healthy sleep schedule can help your brain steadily produce the chemicals needed to maintain a positive mood.

Another way to improve your mood: Practice gratitude.

"There is a strong positive relationship between gratitude and happiness," said [Jennifer Wegmann](#), a lecturer of health and wellness studies at Binghamton University.

"Gratitude is a two-part practice: First, slow down, be present, and acknowledge what is right in your life. Second, identify the source of the goodness," Wegmann advised.

Ways to practice gratitude include saying "thank you," writing a thank-you note and setting a daily intention to be grateful via a journal or reminder app, she said.

Here are some of Wegmann's other suggestions:

Cultivate supportive and healthy relationships because these also promote happiness. One way to build these relationships is to set healthy boundaries and respect boundaries others have set for themselves.

Be mindful. "If you want to experience happiness, you must be present. Auto-pilot robs us of the beautiful moments life offers us every day," Wegmann said.

She suggests setting a daily intention to be in the moment and pay attention purposefully. Start small and try connecting to the present for five minutes at a time, then build from there. Unplug from technology during this time. Focusing on your breath can help to bring you into the moment.

More information: The National Science Foundation has more on [enhancing happiness](#).

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Citation: Aim to live happier this summer. Here's how (2023, July 10) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-07-aim-happier-summer.html>

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