

## ***Make Happiness a Daily Decision***

We all strive to be happy. In fact, much of what we do each day is driven by the desire to be happier. What we don't always realize, however, is that much of what we do to bring about more happiness, and even our view of what that looks like, can often have the opposite effect.

Fortunately, researchers have determined that a good deal of what goes into being happier and more content is within our control. This means that happiness can be learned and there are things we can do each day to achieve a greater level of happiness. Start with these suggestions and try a variety of techniques until you find what works best for you.

### **Quit comparing**

The first and perhaps most important step toward achieving more happiness is to understand that what it looks like and what it means is different for each person. Avoid aspiring to your friends', coworkers', or family members' brand of happiness. Instead, focus on what *you* value, brings *you* joy, and leaves *you* feeling fulfilled.

### **Nurture close relationships**

The company you keep can greatly influence your overall happiness and well-being. Your time and energy are valuable, so be picky about who you spend them with. Seek and maintain worthwhile relationships where you know you are supported, loved, and valued, and ditch any that leave you feeling isolated, used, or replaceable. Sustaining mutually meaningful connections with those closest to you contributes to an increased sense of daily fulfillment and satisfaction.

### **Scale back**

As a society, we tend to pursue or strive for more — more possessions, achievements, activities, obligations, and money, etc. But a life of perpetual accumulation is not only impractical, it's usually less satisfying than we believe. There's only so much physical, mental, and emotional space, and more of one thing usually comes at the cost of another. For example, more furniture, clothes, and cars can lead to more clutter, cleaning, maintenance, and debt. Too many commitments or obligations means less time for sleep, creativity, mindfulness, and the people in your life. Take a look around your home, assess your calendar, and revisit your to-do list. Decide what is and isn't adding value or happiness to your daily life and start cutting the things that take your time and attention away from what matters most. Do the same for any future purchases, goals, and RSVPs.


### **Find purpose and do meaningful things**

It's no secret that when we do something we love, we're good at, or that contributes to society, we experience more joy, pride, and fulfillment. Unfortunately, a lot of the things we do each day are usually because we have to, not because we want to, which can cause happiness to wane. Like most people, you may not have the luxury to up and quit all the things that don't make you happy, but you can make more room for the things that do. Take some time to consider the story of your life: your values, what motivates or energizes you, and what gives you a sense of purpose and meaning. Then slowly incorporate those things into your life one by one. Start small and, over time, you just may notice the balance shifting more in favor of your passions and purpose.

### **Pursue happiness persistently**

One mistake people often make is believing that happiness is something that can be accomplished and then crossed off their list. Happiness is an ongoing process that you must be intentional about, grateful for, and work toward every day. Avoid putting too much pressure on yourself to achieve more or absolute happiness, as this can become a self-defeating cycle. Instead, focus on the individual things that make you feel fulfilled and contribute to you becoming incrementally happier.

For more guidance on how to live more happily and additional techniques to try, reach out to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Call any time, day or night, to speak with a consultant who can help you live a more satisfying and fulfilled life.

 **800-222-0364**  
24 HOURS  
A DAY  
TTY: 888-262-7848  
[foh4you.com](http://foh4you.com)

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to eligible federal employees at no cost.