



CONCERN:EAP

Healthy & Resilient You

Choose Happy:



The Science of Training
Your Brain to Walk on the
Sunny Side of the Street

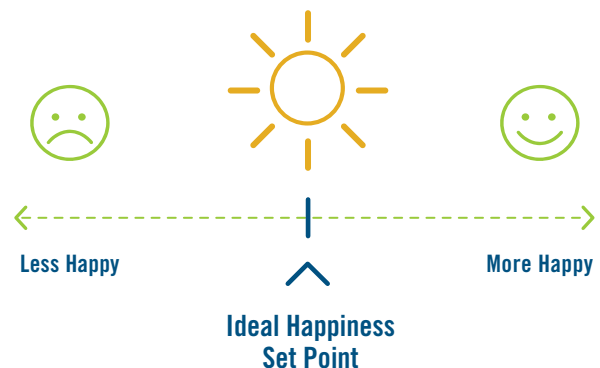


How much of our personal happiness is within our control?
As it turns out, it may be more than you might think.

For some time, the scientific community has been aware of a *happiness set point* that determines how consistently happy we generally are. You can think of it as your happiness equilibrium: sometimes you might surpass it, other times you might dip below, but you'll eventually return to it.

That point was once thought to be unchangeable, but new research suggests that we have more influence over it than previously believed. With a little conscious effort, we can nudge our happiness baseline upward.

**The Happiness “Set Point”
Isn’t as Set as Previously Believed.**



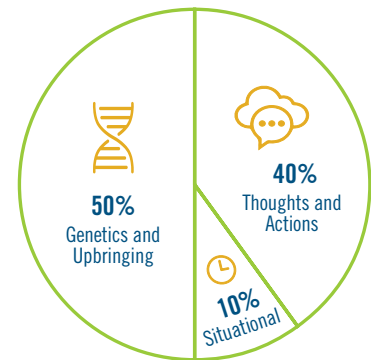
So what can we do to increase our happiness? As you'll read below, a large part of our happiness can be influenced with mindful thoughts and actions we can incorporate into our daily routine.

The Happy Factor(s)

Recent discoveries in the field of positive psychology have helped to demystify the mechanics of happiness. In particular, studies comparing the happiness levels between identical twins concluded these levels are influenced by three factors: (1) **genetics and upbringing**; (2) **thoughts and actions**; and (3) **current situation**.

Because of genetics and how they were raised, certain people are more or less predisposed to happiness than others. That slice of the happiness pie—about **50%**—is largely out of our control. Surprisingly, studies show that situational circumstances such as occupation, marital status and income, only account for **10%** of a person's overall happiness. That leaves a whopping **40%** of happiness that's under the influence of our thoughts, actions, and outlook.

The Happiness Pie



Make the Most of Your 40%

The day we can dramatically change our genetics is likely far off, and the day we can change our upbringing is long gone. But with 40% of our overall happiness levels to play with, there's a lot that we can do to boost our mood in the here and now. Here are a few ideas:



Make Happiness an Intention

A happy attitude comes easier to some than others. But by actively choosing to be happy, everyone can position themselves to adopt new attitudes and behaviors that increase happiness. Try making happiness a top priority, and see how things start to change.



Engage in Meaningful Activities

People tend to be happier when in the flow or immersed in activities that are meaningful or enjoyable to them. To some, this could mean working with their hands or engaging in a favorite hobby. Since we often lose track of time when we're in the flow, think of activities that make you forget the clock and make time for them as often as you're able throughout the week.



Practice Gratitude

When negative thoughts threaten our state of happiness, we can offset them by practicing gratitude exercises. That involves thinking about the things in your life you're grateful for, and maybe reaching out to those people who matter most and telling them "Thank you." You might be surprised at how much of an impact this has on your happiness—and theirs. *You can dive deeper into gratitude practices with our [A Grateful Mind](#) newsletter.*



Meet Negativity with Mindfulness

If the mind is like a sky, then we can think of negative thoughts like dark, passing storm clouds. The more we practice mindfulness strategies like meditation and breathing, the better we'll get at identifying and clearing stormy skies.



Money Can't Buy Happiness

Research shows that once income surpasses a certain amount, making more money has less of an effect on overall, long-term happiness levels. Buying stuff might be followed by a jolt of excitement, but it doesn't promote enduring contentment as cultivating positive thoughts and actions can.



Foster Friendships and Relationships

Friendships and relationships are essential to happiness. One study found that people over 70 with strong networks of friends lived longer than those who didn't. Dedicate time and attention to building a lasting network for sharing and amplifying the happy times and support during the not so happy times.

Start the New Year off with the affirmation that you are more in control of your own happiness than you might have thought.

For even more ways to help cultivate mindfulness and resilience in 2017, visit the Resilience Hub™ at www.ConcernResilienceHub.com regularly. First time users may be asked to enter their company ID.

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional advice.

If you find your level of stress is impacting your well-being, you can contact us for additional help and support.

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