



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

Spotlight

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Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



How to be Happy: Tips for Cultivating Contentment

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How to be Happy: Tips for Cultivating Contentment

Live in the Moment. Don't postpone joy waiting for a day when your life is less busy or less stressful. Instead, look for opportunities to savor the small pleasures of everyday life. Focus on the positives in the present moment instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. Do you know how to be happy? Or are you waiting for happiness to find you? Despite what the fairy tales depict, happiness doesn't appear by magic. It's not even something that happens to you. It's something you can cultivate. So what are you waiting for? Start discovering how to be happy.

How to be happy: what science tells us.

Only a small percentage of the variation in people's reports of happiness can be explained by differences in their circumstances. It appears that the bulk of what determines happiness is due to personality and more importantly, thoughts and behaviors that can be changed. Yes, you can learn how to be happy or at least happier. Although you may have thought, as many people do, that happiness comes from being born rich or beautiful or living a stress-free life, the reality is that people who have health, beauty or less stress are not happier on average than those who don't enjoy those things. People who are happy seem to intuitively know that their happiness is the sum of their life choices and their lives are built on the following pillars:

- Devoting time to family and friends
- Appreciating what they have
- Living in the moment

How to be happy: practice, practice, practice.

The good news is that your choices, thoughts and actions can influence your level of happiness. It's not as easy as flipping a switch, but you can turn up your happiness level.

Invest in relationships. Surround yourself with happy people. Being around people who are content helps your own mood. And by being happy yourself, you give something back to those around you. Friends and family help you celebrate life's successes and support you in difficult times. Although it's easy to take friends and family for granted, these relationships need nurturing. Build up your emotional account with kind words and actions.

Express gratitude. Gratitude is more than saying thank you. It's a sense of wonder, appreciation and thankfulness for life. It's easy to go through life without recognizing your good fortune. Often, it takes a serious illness or other tragic event to jolt people into appreciating the good things in their lives. Don't wait for something like that to happen to you.

Cultivate optimism. Develop the habit of seeing the positive side of things. If you're not an optimistic person by nature, it may take time for you to change your pessimistic thinking. Start by recognizing negative thoughts as you have them.

If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.



Physical Fitness While Social Distancing

Exercise and physical activity are great ways to ease symptoms of depression or anxiety. When you have depression or anxiety, exercise often seems like the last thing you want to do. But once you get motivated, exercise can make a big difference. Exercise helps prevent and improve a number of health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis. Research on depression and anxiety shows that the psychological and physical benefits of exercise can also help improve mood and reduce anxiety. Don't think of exercise or physical activity as a chore. If exercise is just another "should" in your life that you don't think you are living up to, you will associate it with failure. Rather, look at your exercise or physical activity schedule the same way you look at other appointments.

Regular exercise helps ease depression and anxiety by:

- Releasing feel-good endorphins, natural cannabis-like chemicals and other natural brain chemicals that can enhance your sense of well-being.
- Taking your mind off worries so that you can get away from the cycle of negative thoughts that feed depression and anxiety.

Regular exercise has many psychological and emotional benefits, too. It can help you:

- Gain confidence. Meeting exercise goals or challenges, even small ones, can boost your self-confidence.
- Healthy coping. Doing something positive to manage depression or anxiety is a healthy coping strategy.

Trying to feel better by drinking alcohol, dwelling on how you feel, or hoping depression or anxiety will go away on its own can lead to worsening symptoms.

Is a structured exercise program the only option? Some research shows that physical activity such as regular walking, not just formal exercise programs, may help improve mood. Physical activity and exercise are not the same thing, but both are beneficial to your health.

- **Physical activity** is an activity that works your muscles and requires energy and can include work or household or leisure activities.
- **Exercise** is a planned, structured and repetitive body movement done to improve physical fitness.

Any physical activity that gets you off the couch and moving can help improve your mood. You don't have to do all your exercise or other physical activity at once. Broaden how you think of exercise and find ways to add small amounts of physical activity throughout your day. For example, park a little farther away from your destination to fit in a short walk.

How much is enough? Doing 30 minutes or more of exercise a day for three to five days a week may significantly improve depression or anxiety symptoms. But smaller amounts of physical activity, as little as 10 to 15 minutes at a time, may make a difference in mood but only if you stick with it over the long term.



Parenting During COVID-19: Managing Anger and Frustration

We know we're not supposed to yell at our children; however, parents are understandably stressed at the moment. Because of conditions related to the current pandemic, frustration and anger are inevitable. Overwhelmed with everything you are currently being asked to do, you find yourself losing your temper with children who are not on their best behavior. But consider, when your circumstances are not normal, your parenting won't be normal either.

It's time to lower our expectations. You won't be able to do as much as you usually can as a parent, employee or partner. Instead, experts recommend focusing on your and your children's emotional state and strive to maintain positive family dynamics. If you do nothing academically and just focus on your relationship with your children, then it will be time well spent. If there's a strain in the connections at home, and it feels very tense and miserable, your child's brain isn't going to take in what they're learning because they are stressed and angry.

There are many parenting struggles at the moment, and staying calm isn't always easy. Here are some ways to manage some of the most challenging issues:

- When you do lose your cool, wait until everyone has calmed down before you apologize. Be honest with your children and tell them if you are struggling or overwhelmed. Apologize for your behavior and let them know you will work hard to do better.
- For children who are anxious, use this time to teach them when to worry, which is never right before bed. Give them time to discuss their worries every morning or afternoon. Before bed, engage in positive conversations about great memories, things they like or what they plan to do tomorrow.
- Sleep regressions are normal in times of uncertainty or a change in routine. Your children want extra connections with you and there's plenty of reason to shift habits during this time. Maybe it's extra hugs or cuddles right before bed or giving them something special of yours to sleep with. Or, maybe it's promising to check on them every 15 minutes as long as they are quiet.

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EASY, KID-FRIENDLY, RECIPE: Ladybugs on a log

- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
 - 1/2 cup raspberry flavored cream cheese
 - 6 stalks celery, cut into 3-inch pieces
1. Fill each celery stick with raspberry flavored cream cheese and top with 3 or 4 dried cranberries.
 2. Enjoy!

