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**MINDFUL
MONDAY**

Simple Ways to Find Joy in Your Everyday Life

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**STOP
WAITING
TO BE
HAPPY**

The good news is there are always fresh opportunities to be happy. Imagine life is like Grand Central Station, where happy times arrive around the clock. Chances are the opportunity to be happy has already arrived. Sometimes it's right in front of you. For whatever reason, you are unable to shift your focus to notice and appreciate it.

Regardless of what is going on around you, you can feel happier, be productive, attract success and enjoy yourself during the process. When you shift your focus and the way you think, your perspective changes. When shift happens, your life changes.

Joy is a sustained sense of well-being
and internal peace—a connection to
what matters.

(Oprah Winfrey)

Can you see it? You live on a tropical island. You get up when you like and you do what you want. Some guy named Jeeves brings breakfast. From a reclined position on your balcony, all you can see is the ocean and your feet. Ah, the life of the young and retired.

We all dream of being happy someday. Until then, we are overworked, overstressed and under-happy. The dream doesn't seem possible without a lottery win or a call from a wealthy uncle in poor health. But what fun is life if we aren't happy about it?

The good news is, you can add happiness to your life now. Just a few serotonin-producing activities can reduce stress and make the wait for Utopia easier to bear.



**Add happiness
to your life,
right now.**

3 Being able to take a moment for yourself in order to hit the reset button is something we all need to do every once in a while. But here's the thing: Taking a timeout to give yourself a moment of respite or relaxation or indulgence is only part of the battle. We carve out time for happy hour, but it ends up being less than happy because you're thinking about the last couple of emails you didn't get to in order to be there. How can anyone binge watch Netflix stress-free with piles of dirty laundry lurking next to the TV? Can you really go to town on that box of salted caramels knowing you haven't been to the dentist in 18 months? Or when you still haven't ordered a wedding gift for your college roommate and it's been two years since the wedding?

One of the surest ways to let that self-care time shine is to make sure you're not stressing about miscellaneous, small-ball to-do's while you're trying to check out.

Get yourself sorted so that your "me time" can be as effective as possible.



**Make self-care
part of your
routine.**

4 A joyful life is the best existence we can hope to achieve. It's the kind of life that produces positive vibes and feel-good energy, and encourages us to look to the future with high hopes. Pure joy might seem like a fleeting emotion, but even if you only feel it for a moment in time, you can hold onto it. You can relish in it.

**Get in a
joyful state
of mind.**



5 Happiness works much like love, in mysterious ways. However, science and psychology tell us that brain chemistry alters emotion. But in order to activate those chemicals, we have to talk about habits first.

There is a formula to happiness, and it lies in changing thought patterns. Your patterns—what you do and think and say every day—determine how happy you are. It's got nothing to do with what's around you, but everything to do with how your brain works—that inner voice. Happiness is not within your grasp because it is, quite literally, within you.



**Stop
worrying.**



Appreciate the small things.

6 We all have them; those small moments or things that often go unnoticed or unappreciated because we think they're either insignificant or we take them for granted because we live in a culture that celebrates big accomplishments. But what if we made it a habit to embrace and celebrate the small things? Real life is happening all around us while we're waiting for the big thing we hope is going to give us some sort of inner peace, contentment or joy. The truth is that often the things that matter most are the small ones.

Laugh more.

8 Breaking news: Laughing makes you feel good.

OK, maybe this isn't so surprising. But try to think about the last time you really laughed—chances are, it may have been some time ago. Preoccupied with all of our grownup responsibilities, we adults just don't giggle as often as we did when we were kids.

We should, though! Laughing has been shown to reduce stress, enhance immunity, improve blood flow and strengthen relationships.



Surround yourself with positive people.

7 One big mistake people make is not realizing that happiness is an individual choice. But every choice is influenced by the people in our lives. If you change your life influencers for the better, you can dramatically increase your chances for happiness and success.

In my research, I've found that positive social connection is the greatest predictor of long-term happiness. Welcoming a positive new influencer into your world can be one of the most important choices for happiness you make.



“‘What is Real?’ asked the rabbit.”

“‘Real isn’t how you are made,’ said the Skin Horse. ‘It’s a thing that happens to you.’”

In 1922 Margery Williams tackled a particularly complex topic in her now beloved children’s book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*. On its journey to discovering what it means to be Real, the Velveteen Rabbit learns that, in the end, it’s to have someone love you and to be able to accept that love in return.

The classic illustrations and touching lesson offer a comforting bedtime read. But as we age, we’re taught that being Real means paying attention in school, landing a good job, earning a steady income, settling down with a family and preparing for retirement. As adults, we smile nostalgically at the simpler times. Because we know life is more complicated than just loving and being loved.

Right?

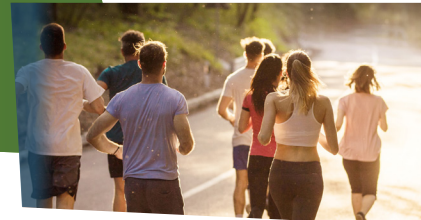
**Love
more.**



**Find bliss in a
bucket list.**

Each time I complete one of these checked boxes, there is a moment. Sometimes it only lasts a flash of a second, but on the lucky days it lingers for minutes or hours. It’s a moment, a fleeting moment, where I can honestly say that I’ve found bliss. It’s every part of you, from your fingers to your toes nearly bursting with light and full with purpose. It’s the amazement, pride, triumph and an overwhelming sensation of the purest self-love. It’s your entire perspective changing after seeing the world from a different lens. It’s the feeling of feeling completely in the moment. It’s being alive.

**Plan your
happiness.**



We put money in our 401(k)s.
We take calcium supplements.
We exercise. We hope these precautions will protect us as we age. But as we safeguard our money, bones and blood pressure, we forget to safeguard the one thing that can make a difference in the quality of our lives as we get older: our happiness.

Decades of positive psychology research has shown high levels of subjective well-being (the combination of overall life satisfaction and in-the-moment positive feelings) can translate into better physical health and a longer life. In a 2011 report from the International Association of Applied Psychology, Edward Diener, Ph.D., a psychology professor emeritus at the University of Illinois, analyzed over 160 relevant studies and found that while positive feelings did not improve outcomes for people with certain diseases such as cancer, the evidence that happiness leads to better health is “clear and compelling.”

Start planning for your happy future.