

Three tips for a happier life

If money can't buy us happiness, what can we do to increase our chances of being happy? Though researchers have found that half of our potential for happiness is genetic, there are things that everyone can do to improve our overall happiness levels.

A Make time to do the things you enjoy

Find out what activities make you feel good and make a conscious effort to do them regularly. If you feel great after exercising, or spending time pursuing a hobby, then make sure you schedule time for that activity as often as possible. Remember, though, that some leisure activities do little to contribute to one's overall sense of well-being – hours spent staring at the TV or surfing the Net are unlikely to have a positive impact on one's happiness.

B Surround yourself with positive people

We are strongly affected by the people around us. It can be hard to stay positive when others are constantly complaining and are only able to see the downsides to everything. Of course, this is not to say that you should abandon any friends or family members that are not always cheerful! If you are struggling with unhappiness, however, make an effort to spend more time with people who pick you up rather than bring you down.

C Be grateful for what you have

People tend to focus on what they lack rather than what they already have, but this only brings frustration and disappointment. There will always be other people who one perceives as "having more", but this does not mean that they are any happier or healthier. Taking time to appreciate what you do have can make you think carefully about what is truly important to you and give you a better perspective on life.

1 What are some of your free time activities? Write them down.

- a _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____
- e _____

Which of these activities make you a happier person? Which of them sometimes have a negative effect on your happiness? Talk to a partner.

2 Write five things that you are grateful for. Then talk to a partner about them.

- a _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____
- e _____

3 What changes can you make to become a happier person? Talk to a partner.

4 Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

abandon	bring me down	conscious	frustration	genetic
grateful	leisure	overall	pick me up	potential

- a When I'm feeling a bit tired, a good cup of coffee can really _____.
- b He's poor now, but he has the _____ to be rich in the future.
- c Some diseases are _____ and will occur regardless of what you do.
- d Of course I'm depressed sometimes, but _____ I feel quite optimistic about my life and future.
- e Let's watch something else. These kinds of sad movies just _____.
- f I feel very _____ to one of my high school teachers who helped me find confidence in myself.
- g Just when we were about to _____ all hope of rescue, we heard a plane overhead.
- h Working hard without any results just leads to _____.
- i When I have _____ time, I really enjoy going scuba diving.
- j We all have some bad habits that we are not _____ of.