

Eight Steps to Happiness

Tips for living a more meaningful and fulfilling life from 'Eight Steps to Happiness'.

Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools to reduce their stress and increase their sense of satisfaction.

Connect with the present

Let thoughts come and go without getting caught up with them

Take the time to feel grateful

Recognise that all humans are fallible

"I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than attempting to satisfy them."

John Stuart Mills

1. Practise random acts of kindness

Random acts of kindness has been scientifically shown to increase the happiness and wellbeing of both the giver and the recipient. Do something nice for a colleague every day this week.

2. Be mindful

We're enticed to want more, buy more, use more, consume more. Our heads become so full of this chatter that we take for granted the good things in the here and now. To become more mindful try:

Connection: Connecting with the present, engaging fully through all senses.

Defusion: Letting thoughts come and go without getting caught up with them.

Expansion: Allowing emotions to freely flow through you without a struggle, whether they are pleasant or painful.

3. Find your strengths and solutions

Focus on what is good and what works. The simple idea underpinning this is that "what you focus on grows". If we train ourselves to focus on strengths, we can reorient our minds to the positive. This brings flexibility.

4. Practise gratitude

When we take the time to feel grateful life seems to be better. Appreciating something involves taking the time to notice it and then acknowledging its value and meaning. This creates a positive emotional connection.

5. Learn to forgive

You might think it impossible to forgive deep-seated hurts and insults, yet the remarkable thing is that people do. When they do forgive their physical and mental health is better for it. Guidelines for forgiveness:

Recall the hurt - recall it fully, but as you do so begin to think about different aspects of the story. If it is really traumatic, seek professional support.

Empathise with the person - have compassion for the offender. As you think about the wrong that person did, try to understand what their motive might have been. Recognise that, however awful the offence, humans are all fallible.

Altruistic gift of forgiveness - for you to achieve benefit from this act of forgiveness, it must be the real thing.

Commit yourself to forgiving publicly - sharing your forgiveness makes it more "real" and harder to step away from.

Still *holding on!* - if the old feelings return, use these techniques to deal with them again and let go again.

6. Create social networks

Fundamentally, we are social animals. Many people go to great lengths not to be alone. Being physically alone in itself is not unhealthy. The problem is not being alone, it's loneliness. Build connections by being proactive - don't be inhibited by fear of rejection.

7. Write your own eulogy

Imagine you've lived your life and are now at your own funeral. You're listening to what people are saying - the dreams, the aspirations, the things that meant a lot to you. What would they say? Identify two or three little things that you can do to help move you forward towards creating purposeful, positive change - write them down and do them!

8. Reflect, review, renew

There comes a point in every journey when it's time to stop, pause, take stock and appreciate our progress. By taking the time to reflect, our motivation and enthusiasm is renewed.

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Dr Anthony Grant is recognised globally as a key pioneer of Coaching Psychology. He is director and founder of the world's first Coaching Psychology Unit at Sydney University. His books have been translated into eight languages. Alison Leigh is the editorial director of the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers and has been a journalist and broadcaster for more than three decades in the UK and Australia. She serves on the advisory council of the Australian Science festival.

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