



Happiness 101 Workbook

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Welcome!

Congratulations for taking an important first step towards bringing more positivity into your life! As Leonardo Da Vinci said, “It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.” By working systematically through this workbook, you will be “happening to things” by taking action towards increasing your sense of well-being.



This workbook is chock-full of exercises that have been shown, through research, to increase happiness and a sense of well-being. Feel free to skip through it, picking and choosing the activities that resonate most with you - happiness should feel good, so don't feel compelled to do exercises that don't seem like a good fit for you.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the workbook, and I wish you the best of luck with it!

Take care,

Patricia

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The Importance of Positive Emotion

As you may have learned from exploring my website, cultivating positive emotion is essential for living a happy life. People who experience more positive emotions are healthier, live longer, experience greater life satisfaction, and enjoy more fulfilling relationships. In the workplace, people who experience more positive emotions are more productive, better leaders, and more reliable in terms of attendance than their peers who experience less positive emotion. Not surprisingly, therefore, positive emotions play an integral role in thriving.

And, this makes pretty good intuitive sense - after all, when you are in a negative mood, you have to put a lot more energy into managing your worries or concerns. This can interfere with your ability to concentrate and leaves you with less ability to connect with others in a constructive way, or to attend to your self-care. Plus, negative emotion and stress can take their toll on the body. So, focusing on happiness not only feels good, it contributes to a better overall life.

According to Barbara Fredrickson, a preeminent researcher on positive emotion, in order to flourish on an individual level, we should aim for about a 3:1 ratio of positive to negative emotions. While there have since been some back-and-forth discussions that has brought this exact ratio into question, suffice it to say that most studies have found that this is a good ballpark figure to aim for. Unfortunately, most of us are existing well below this ratio, and as a result, are likely not achieving our potentials and flourishing as much as we could be. Luckily, research has shown there are a variety of activities we can do to increase our positivity ratios. Read through the following exercises and experiment with them to see which ones are most appealing to you. Practicing them on a regular basis will help increase your ratio, and in turn, will likely lead to greater happiness, increased life satisfaction, and better results for you in a variety of areas.

Exercise 1: Keep a Gratitude Journal

The research tells us that people who are grateful tend to be happier than those who are not. Like all of the activities we will be exploring, gratitude is a skill that can be developed across time. Studies indicate that if you regularly keep a gratitude journal, after a few weeks your level of happiness will increase. Read below for a step-by-step guide on how to keep a journal:

- a) A few days a week, at the end of the day, take a moment to write down 3-5 things for which you are grateful. Examples could include positive events that happened to you that day (e.g. “I’m grateful to have gotten my bonus”), general things for which you are grateful (e.g. “I’m grateful for my wonderful kids”), or positive aspects about yourself (e.g. “I’m grateful that my intelligence helped me to complete my report so quickly”).
- b) As an additional exercise, you might also include something not-so-positive that occurred that day, along with a reflection about how it might be a blessing in disguise or an opportunity to make it more positive (e.g. “I’m grateful for the challenging exchange I had with my colleague, because it provides me with an opportunity for me to work on my conflict management skills”).

In addition to improving one’s mood, what many people find this exercise does is increase their awareness of things in their environment for which they should be grateful. It can be very easy to overlook all of the positive things going on around us if we are not paying attention, but the simple act of redirecting our attention can increase our level of appreciation in our lives.

Are you ready to give it a try? Take a moment to reflect, and write down three to five things for which you are grateful right now:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Now write down something less positive that happened in the past week, along with the “blessing in disguise” it may provide, or how you can work it to your advantage:



“Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.”

John Milton

Exercise 2: Savoring

“I wondered how it was possible to walk for an hour through the woods and see nothing of note. I who cannot see find hundreds of things: the delicate symmetry of a leaf, the smooth skin of a silver birch, the rough shaggy bark of a pine. I who am blind can give one hint to those who see: use your eyes as if tomorrow you will have been stricken blind. Hear the music of voices, the songs of a bird, the mighty strains of an orchestra as if you would be stricken deaf tomorrow. Touch each object as if tomorrow your tactile sense would fail. Smell the perfume of flowers, taste with relish each morsel, as if tomorrow you could never taste or smell again. Make the most of every sense. Glory in all the facets and pleasures and beauty which the world reveals to you.”

This quote, from Helen Keller, exemplifies what savoring is all about. In a nutshell, savoring involves “being present” during a positive moment so that you can fully enjoy it and take in all that it has to offer. As the quote suggests, savoring involves using all of your senses so you can appreciate all aspects of whatever it is that you are experiencing. Research suggests that people who engage in savoring are more likely to experience positive emotion.

A good example of someone engaging in savoring would be an expert wine taster. Upon being given a glass of wine, she visually examines it, taking in the color of the liquid and its clarity. Then, she swirls the glass to aerate it, and holds the glass up to her nose, taking in the aroma of the wine. Is it fruity? Earthy? Floral? Spicy? She takes a sip of the wine, letting it flow over her tongue, assessing the flavor, body, and aftertaste. She is fully engaged in tasting the wine, appreciating all the different aspects of it, and completely enjoying the experience.

Try out savoring yourself as a means of improving your mood. To do so, pick out one of your simple pleasures. Some examples might include eating a

delicious meal, walking your dog, sitting out in nature, or spending time with your significant other. As you are involved in the activity, really try to activate all of your senses. Take in the sights around you – what do you see? What sounds do you hear? What smells do you pick up? How is your tactile sense engaged in the process? Are you tasting anything in the process?

After you are done, take out a journal, and write down some notes on your experience as a means of allowing the savoring to last even longer. Talk about your experience with someone you are close to as another means of relishing the savoring. Try to make it a habit to engage in savoring a few times a week.

And, when you are engaged in positive experiences, make a habit of savoring them. Research indicates that we derive more happiness from spending our money on experiences than on things, so when you are engaging in an experience on which you have spent money, get your money's worth by fully immersing yourself in the experience. For example, when you are on vacation, fully unplug from work so you can take in all that your destination has to offer. When you are spending quality time with your kids, turn off the television so you can be fully present with them.

Here are some additional suggestions for enhancing your savoring experiences:

- a)** Try to share your experience with others. If you are unable to share it while it is happening, tell others about it after the fact.
- b)** Try to pick out a few moments in the experience to remember as a means of lengthening the incidence.
- c)** Do something to help you remember the experience in the future. Buy a souvenir, take pictures, or write about it in your journal. Doing so will allow you to better relive the experience in the future.

Exercise 3: Perform Acts of Kindness

Another scientifically-tested method for improving one's experience of positive emotion is to perform acts of kindness for others. The research indicates that doing nice things for others not only feels good, it is also associated with longer life. Read below for some tips on how to derive the greatest benefit from intentionally performing acts of kindness:

- a)** It has been found to be more beneficial to perform all of your acts of kindness on one day, as opposed to spreading them out across time. Therefore, we recommend that you set aside one day per week for your kindness activities.
- b)** On your "kindness day," strive to perform five acts of kindness for others. They should be different from what you would normally do (e.g. if you usually compliment your assistant on her outfit, then you wouldn't count that as one of your acts of kindness). Try to include at least one act of kindness in your work environment.
 - i.** Complimenting a stranger sincerely
 - ii.** Paying the toll(s) for others behind you
 - iii.** Bringing in a treat for your colleagues
 - iv.** Giving someone a card or a note for no reason
 - v.** Giving a large tip to a waiter
 - vi.** Making a donation to a homeless shelter
 - vii.** Inviting a co-worker out to lunch
 - viii.** Helping someone on a project

At the end of your first “kindness day,” make a list of the acts of kindness you performed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How did it feel to perform these acts for others?



“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”

Aesop

Exercise 4: Apply Your Character Strengths

In their work, psychologists Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson described character strengths as a group of positive qualities that contribute to “the good life.” Historically, studying character was something from which psychologists shied away, as it was seen as value-laden. However, in their work, Peterson and Seligman argued that there are certain qualities that are valued across cultures, religions, and ethnic groups, and thus, seem to be universal. As a result, they came up with 24 strengths of character, broken down into six virtue categories, as outlined below:

- 1) Strengths of Wisdom and Knowledge
 - a) Creativity – coming up with innovative approaches to doing things
 - b) Curiosity – having an interest in a variety of things; asking questions
 - c) Love of Learning – seeking out new information
 - d) Open-mindedness – being open to different ways of perceiving issues
 - e) Perspective – being able to keep the big picture in mind
- 2) Strengths of Courage
 - a) Authenticity – being open and honest in one’s presentation
 - b) Bravery – being willing to take on challenging or daring activities
 - c) Persistence – being determined and following through on tasks
 - d) Zest – enthusiasm and passion for life
- 3) Strengths of Humanity
 - a) Kindness – being thoughtful and considerate of others
 - b) Love – valuing connectedness and intimacy with others
 - c) Social Intelligence – being empathetic and sensitive to others’ needs

- 4) Strengths of Justice
 - a) Fairness – having consistent principles that drive how you treat others
 - b) Leadership – taking charge in leading a group towards a goal
 - c) Teamwork – being a collaborative and supportive member of a group
- 5) Strengths of Temperance
 - a) Forgiveness/Mercy – being compassionate and forgiving to those who have mistreated you
 - b) Modesty/Humility – viewing yourself as similar to others; no better than or worse than them
 - c) Prudence – thinking things through and using judgment in decision-making
 - d) Self-regulation – moderating your emotions and behaviors
- 6) Strengths of Transcendence
 - a) Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence – being able to value beauty and outstanding achievement in a variety of domains
 - b) Gratitude – being thankful for positive occurrences
 - c) Hope – believing in a positive future and taking steps to realize it
 - d) Humor – having a playful and light-hearted approach to life
 - e) Religiousness/Spirituality – having a belief about your purpose in life

Upon reading the list, reflect on your five greatest strengths. You can also go to the website for the Values in Action (VIA) Strength Finder at <http://www.viacharacter.org> and take a free test that will indicate your top five strengths based on your responses. Research suggests that people who engage in behaviors that allow them to leverage their strengths are happier. Therefore, every day, make a conscious effort to do something that plays to your strengths.

Here are some examples of ways you might apply various strengths:

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Go to a play or a sporting event.

Authenticity: Strive to go through a whole day without telling any lies (even “white” lies).

Curiosity: Ask questions of people with whom you interact to learn more about them.

Love: Write a letter to a significant other or family member telling them how much you care about them.

Love of Learning: Read a book about something you have always found interesting, but haven't previously made the time to look into.

Persistence: Set a challenging goal for yourself (e.g. lose 15 pounds) and stick to it.

Prudence: During a conversation, think carefully about how your words might be received by the other person. Strive to frame your communication in a way that will result in the best outcome.

To enhance the effects of applying your strengths and hold yourself accountable, make sure to write about your experiences in your journal, as a means of keeping track of your activities.

"The final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."

Anne Frank



Exercise 5: Write a Gratitude Letter

The gratitude letter is another activity that has been shown to increase positive emotion and feelings of well-being. In fact, this activity has been shown to provide a lot of “bang for your buck” in terms of increasing positive emotions. In one study, after engaging in this exercise, participants reported an increased sense of well-being one month later! Please read below for instructions on how to write a gratitude letter:

- Think of someone who you have not properly thanked, to whom you owe a debt of gratitude. Examples could include a family member, friend, co-worker, former boss, teacher, or an old coach. Write him or her a letter in which you express your gratitude and appreciation to them. Talk about what they did for you and how it impacted your life.
- If possible, hand-deliver the letter and read it to the individual in-person. You might choose a special day to do this (e.g. Mother’s Day, a birthday, anniversary), but that is not necessary. Also, if you are unable to do this exercise in-person, try to call the person and read your letter, or perhaps do it via skype or some other online service. Follow up by mailing or emailing the letter.
- Some people have also found it improves their mood to write a letter to someone they may not know personally, like the security guard at their office or a public figure who has had a positive influence on them.
- If you are too shy to share your letter with the individual to whom you wrote it, some research has also indicated that the mere act of writing the letter can increase positive emotion. In one study from Sonja Lyubomirsky’s lab, individuals were asked to spend fifteen minutes a week (over two months) writing letters of gratitude to people, without sending them. The study

participants experienced a boost in happiness both during and after the task.

If you choose to do this task, brainstorm about some individuals to whom you can write letters of gratitude in the space below. Then, work your way through the list over the coming months.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

“Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone.”

G.B. Stern



Exercise 6: Dream About the Future

Studies indicate that taking some time to think about a positive future is another strategy that can contribute to greater happiness. It has been shown to boost positive emotions in the moment, instill a greater sense of hope and optimism, increase your expectations about the future, and improve your coping skills. Follow the steps below to do this exercise:

Pick a time period in the future (i.e. 6 months, 12 months, 5 years) and imagine you are embodying your best possible self at that time. Assume everything in your life has gone as positively as you would want it to. Take a moment to visualize it, being as detailed as you can. What have you accomplished? Is there a goal you finally achieved? Have you accomplished a life dream? The goal is to envision something positive, but also believable and potentially attainable.

After you have a clear picture in mind, write it down in detail. You can choose to write it in the present tense (“I am in the job of my dreams”) or as if it happened in the recent past (“I have just gotten back from my book tour”).

What one commitment can you make to yourself to take a step closer to making this ideal self come about?

The key to using this exercise properly is to use this visualization as a guide for thinking about the future and what you would like to come about. Then, make sure to come back to the present, and use it to take empowered actions in your present life.



"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

C.S. Lewis

Exercise 7: Additional Happiness Practices

- Connect with nature - Aim for 20 minutes outside at least a few times a week when the weather is Fall or Spring-like.
- Meditate - Start small and work your way up. A good book to get started is “Wherever You Go, There You Are” by Jon Kabat-Zinn. You might also use guided meditations from Youtube.
- Exercise and eat right - A healthy body contributes to a healthy mind. In some studies, exercise has been as effective as medication in combating mild depression.
- Nurture relationships - Love and social support has been shown to have a beneficial impact on health, productivity, creativity, discernment, and stress management.
- Spend money on experiences - The effects of money spent on experiences last much longer than the effects of money spent on things.
- Smile - It’s contagious and provides an instant mood boost. You benefit both from the effect smiling has on your own physiology, as well as the positive reinforcement you are likely to get from others as a result of smiling at them.



Self-Monitoring Your Positive Emotion

Make sure to experiment with the various approaches outlined in this workbook to find the ones that are best-suited to you. The research indicates there are a number of factors that influence how much benefit one derives from these happiness interventions. The factors include:

1. Variety – Just as your body can get used to doing the same exercise program over and over, you can adapt to engaging in the same positive psychology activities repeatedly. Therefore, mix things up! For example, if you are doing the acts of kindness intervention, use some creativity each week so you are not just replicating the same acts over and over. If you are working to leverage your character strengths, choose a different strength each time to prevent boredom.
2. Motivation and Effort – Again, similar to an exercise program, it is not surprising that those who put the most effort into engaging in the activities get the most benefit from it. Make increasing your positivity ratio one of your priorities, and you will be rewarded for the energy you put into it.
3. Person-Activity Fit – This means that you will get the most benefit from activities that are well-suited to your personality, goals, and interests. Therefore, do the activities you are drawn to and enjoy. In turn, the more this is a pleasant experience for you, the more motivated you are likely to be, and the more effort you are likely to put into the activities.

You enhance your chances for success when you engage in self-monitoring. Thus, keep track of your efforts to increase your positive emotion in a journal or on a calendar. And, don't forget to give yourself a pat on the back for all of your self-care efforts!

“Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

Abraham Lincoln

Closing

While we have covered a lot of ground in this workbook, it is important to keep in mind that these exercises are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of utilizing positive psychology in your work and life. The greatest benefits will come through consistent application of the skills and insights you have picked up. For example, one can have an intellectual understanding of the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. Still, without actually taking the time to work out, one will not derive any of the benefits. Similarly, understanding the importance of leveraging positive psychology techniques is a critical first step; however, it will not result in long-lasting changes without committing to making it a priority to apply what you have learned.

Therefore, I encourage you to make a concerted effort to make the time in your schedule to cultivate positive emotion. Taking these steps are an investment in your relationships, your health, your career, and your overall life satisfaction. What could be more important than that?

And, if I can be of any help in assisting you in creating a happy and fulfilling life in which you are your best self, please feel free to contact me at www.patricia-thompson.com. I would be honored to partner with you to achieve the life of your dreams!

“In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

About Patricia Thompson, PhD

Dr. Patricia Thompson is an award-winning corporate psychologist, life coach, and author who draws on her expertise in psychology and business experience to help her clients flourish. For over a decade, she has worked in a variety of settings, assisting a range of clients in cultivating their innate talents to accomplish their personal and professional goals.



Based on her passions and a strong sense of purpose, she founded Silver Lining Psychology to share her knowledge about how to use the science of positive psychology to transform her clients' lives. She also wrote *The Consummate Leader: a Holistic Guide to Inspiring Growth in Others...and in Yourself*, to teach how a mind-body approach that is grounded in research leads to success in the workplace and beyond.

Dr. Thompson has been featured in CNN.com, Fast Company, Entrepreneur, The Network Journal, iVillage, Elephant Journal, Tiny Buddha, Investor's Business Daily, Monster.com, CareerBuilder, and others, sharing her expertise to help others to live fulfilling lives. She was also named by MindBodyGreen and Athleta as one of the 100 Women to Watch in Wellness, along with other notable women such as Arianna Huffington, Cameron Diaz, Gabby Bernstein, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kris Carr, Jane Goodall, and Shailene Woodley.

On the way to earning her PhD in psychology, Dr. Thompson was educated at the University of Toronto, Georgia State University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Emory University's School of Medicine. When she is not working with clients, you can find her working out, practicing pilates, playing the piano, reading, playing tennis, or enjoying the outdoors with her basketball-obsessed husband and their exuberant toddler.