

HEALTH POWER BY CHOICE

ENDORPHINS

The body makes its own feel-good substances—endorphins—that are both protective and health-promoting. Physical exercise and a positive mental attitude boost the production of these endorphins in the brain and increase the body's ability to fight disease.

The Happiness Quiz

Part 1

It's easier to be happy when you feel healthy. Which of the following are you doing to boost your state of mind physically?

-- *Exercise daily* (preferably in the fresh air): Studies show that exercise is one of the most effective cures for the blues. Certainly it is the least expensive.

-- *Avoid caffeine*: Too much caffeine shortens your fuse and decreases your tolerance to life's stresses. It can also cause insomnia, robbing your body of much-needed rest.

-- *Avoid Alcohol*: Alcohol is a depressant, yet many people turn to it during periods when they are experiencing negative emotions. That is like pouring gasoline on a fire. You don't need a depressant when you are feeling down.

-- *Eat a low-fat, cholesterol-free diet*: Build it around whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruits. On this diet you will feel better, look better, and have more energy. All of these benefits create an environment in which positive emotions can flourish.

-- *Get enough fresh air*: A well-ventilated house and frequent deep breathing helps keep your blood oxygenated. This is essential for being mentally and emotionally in top form. Fresh supplies of oxygen help keep you awake and alert.

Part 2

The mind and body are linked. Just as it is difficult to be happy when you are feeling the effects of physical illness, it's also hard to feel healthy when you are in conflict with yourself or others.

The following habits cultivate a happy, thankful attitude. How many of them are you developing?

-- *Count your blessings*: Every one of us has much to be thankful for. Paying attention to what is good in your life rather than being overwhelmed by troubles is one key to a joyful existence.

-- *Work toward harmony in relationships*: If you nurture the negative emotions of bitterness, envy, and jealousy toward others, you rob yourself of much joy. On the other hand, developing a forgiving, caring attitude brings happiness and friendship into your life.

-- *Work for the good of others*: Reaching out beyond yourself to touch others helps you as much as it does those whose lives you brighten. Your emotional focus moves away from your own problems, and you feel good about yourself.

-- *Take time for spiritual renewal*: The great men and women of all time have drawn strength and inspiration from their faith in something greater than themselves. This faith has helped them overcome obstacles and achieve greatness. Pausing from the rush of everyday life to contemplate the deeper things, reaching out to a power beyond one's self, may be the most effective means of bringing happiness back into your life.

Your Challenge:

Look back over the Happiness Quiz - are there things that you aren't doing that might give your emotional life a boost? Choose one item; focus on it a few days - then make it a habit.