



HEALTHY HABITS FOR HAPPY LIVING

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Simple Steps
Ample Benefits

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Editor's Desk

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the August 2022 issue of KIMS e-newsletter on WELLNESS!
The theme for this newsletter is 'Healthy Habits for Happy Living'.

It emphasizes a lifestyle change towards a good quality of life. We have many things that we can do to take care of our physical and mental health which help in maximizing our vitality, productivity and happiness.

It is time to talk about preventive care and not sickness care. Here we do not talk about visits to doctors, prescriptive drugs, antibiotics, tests, surgery, procedure, and so on. We prefer to talk about preventive care in the health model focussing on fitness, exercise, sleep, nutrition, and shedding bad habits and deeply dwell on these things.

Let us adopt preventive care which is better than cure and march forward!

Last but not the least, we thank all our readers for their appreciation and encouraging feed back on our previous newsletter that dealt with the theme. "Stress is bad but the good news is it is manageable"

We wish you all well.

Dr. Bhujanga Rao Vepakomma

Chief Editor



- Radha says she wants to exercise more
- Sadhana wants to shed a few pounds
- Quality time with family for Sirisha
- Raja says it's time to stay better organised
- Luv wants to learn a new language
- Kush wants to practice a new game
- Enjoy the life the fullest seems to be the dictum for Johnny
- At any cost, 'say quits' to bad habits for Ganapathi
- Pious Padma sets her eyes on reading books.

Come New Year, personal resolutions galore! Life goes on. Years roll. Time passes.

People continue to make new year resolutions year after year and with equal consistency they break them.



Broadly speaking, all resolutions fall into 5 categories of goals, summarized as PEARLS which when we practice will become very good healthy habits as shown below.

- **P**hysical and mental exercise
- **E**at good diet
- **A**ttitude
- **R**elaxation and sleep
- **L**ease bad habits

If we nurture and cultivate them as part of daily life, we will reap rich rewards for a happy living.

What determines a state of human happiness filled with satisfaction?

In 2005 top positive psychology researchers – Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade – proposed a simple pie diagram model of what determines happiness (Figure 1). This is considered as a ground breaking research at that time in the subject of positive psychology.

The chart also suggests that the genes we inherited from our parents play a major role (50%) in how fulfilled we feel.

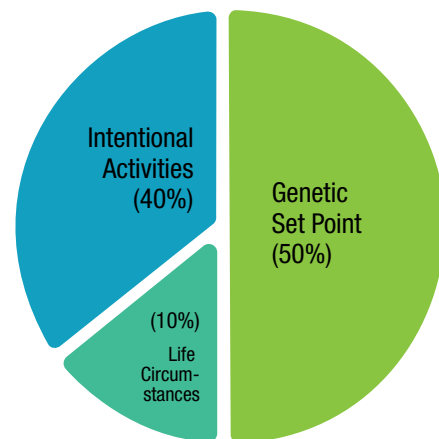


Figure 1: What determines happiness? (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

But there is good news. By practicing healthy physical and mental habits, we can create sufficient mental space to maintain a lot of control over our own happiness. According to this pie chart, 40% of happiness is derived from our own activities and contributes to our wellbeing. What we do is in our hand!

“As growing theory and research is revealing, the pursuit of happiness requires selecting self-appropriate and eudemonic (Conducive to happiness) - type activities (rather than chasing after positive emotions directly); investing sustained (rather than desultory) effort in those activities; and also, practicing them in a varied and changing manner (rather than doing them the same way each time). People can create for themselves a steady inflow of engaging, satisfying, connecting, and uplifting positive experiences, thereby increasing the likelihood that they remain in the upper range of their happiness potentials,” Sheldon and Lyubomirsky write. (Revisiting the Sustainable Happiness Model and Pie Chart: Can Happiness Be Successfully Pursued? as published in the Journal of Positive Psychology).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1689421>.

These habits promote a sense of wellness in you and make you stronger, healthier and happier. On the other hand vices play havoc with the body and mind. Good habits add zest to the life while bad habits can spell decay.

There are multiple methods and choices to optimize the benefits in the key areas. You can select step by step and prioritize what suits you best and follow the same. Think, you may want to have a six pack body but it may not suit you best! So, it is always advisable to start with things which you are confident of doing. It is even better to start with one habit. When you have adopted- say 'physical exercise' -as the change driver into your lifestyle, you can go for the other or increase intensity of your present change. Some people prefer to start with exercise, because the results will be evident faster. When you see good result, it motivates you to take on further in the key areas. Success succeeds success!

The chemistry of habits and how to make lasting changes

Changes that seem small or insignificant in the beginning will snowball into remarkable results, when we persist with them. To start small is the key for any change otherwise the burden of change will deter you from progress.

By making changes in our habits, we can see sea-changes in life. Small changes accumulate into rewarding results over a period of time. **Quality of our life depends upon the quality of our habits!**

Think clearly about the change

Think of the benefits the new change will herald. When you think and feel that benefits are overwhelming, it works as a constant motivator. You will have better impetus to give up old habits that were harmful though enjoyable at the moment like smoking, over eating, drinking etc

Connect and commit

There are people whom you care and love. Make a promise to them about proposed change. It can be your family, friends or colleagues or social groups. It works as a support system to strengthen your nerve during tough times. It can be a compliment from your spouse or a friend whenever you have reached the mark. The cheer from near and dear will boost your confidence.



Reward yourself

Reward yourself at every stage of improvement. Celebrate with a sweet or a pat on your back or buying a new shirt or some thing else.

Don't feel let down

It may not be roses all the way. When you fail there is no need to feel dispirited or discouraged. Each failure is to be taken as progress towards your goal. Let not a fail, fail you. You should look back and take stock of the situation. Is it because you have taken too much of load? Then divide your target into smaller parts and go ahead. If you are not able to allot time for morning walk, break it into smaller schedules of 10 minutes each, thrice a day. For a habit to take shape, one should not focus on the goal, but on the process of achieving it.

Do we have to allow a break to cause a break down?

It may not be possible to have 100% consistency. There may arise a gap in continuing. No need to lose heart, just get back into the steam.



Instead of doing exercise at a stretch for 30 minutes, you can break into sessions of 10 minutes each, by fixing a time slot, by fixing activity of specific manner like from 6:30 am to 6:40 am do push-ups for 10 minutes, lunchtime walk for 10 minutes from 1:30 pm to 1:40 pm and after dinner walk for 10 minutes from 9 pm to 9:10 pm.

There are other options for achieving the same goal. Instead of swimming you can start playing a game or do cycling. If you are not ready for exercise, go for another different goal like developing 'positive attitude'. **Ultimately, know that if you don't change, nothing changes.**

Now let us examine each of the possible goals in detail.

Physical exercise

Exercise enlivens the body and mind. Everyone benefits from exercise regardless of age, gender or physical ability. It offers a host of benefits.

- Reduces the risk of health problems like heart diseases, diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol.
- Strengthens the muscles, lungs and heart.
- Regular exercise may decrease the risk of developing various types of cancer.
- Helps in reducing the weight.
- Improves the mood. Immediately one would feel better. It boosts the self-confidence.
- Makes one feel and look better.
- Improves the quality of sleep.
- Improves the sex life as a result of increased energy levels.



Aerobic activities like walking, cycling and swimming helps in toning up the cardiovascular system. Vigorous aerobic exercises include running, aerobic dancing, heavy back yard work etc. It is advised to get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week or a combination of both. Increasing the span of moderate activity from 150 minutes to 300 minutes per week fetches you additional health benefits. The risks of premature deaths and developing chronic ailments like heart diseases, diabetes and high blood pressure reduce further. The extra exercise will also help in shedding the excessive fat around tummy.



Fill the day with spells of exercise

- Take stairs instead of elevator
- Walk to the nearby grocery shop instead of driving
- Make it a point not to use the vehicle for short distances
- Park your vehicle some distance away from the destination
- Try to walk for 5 to 10 minutes during lunch break
- Rather than watching them play, play with your kids and grandkids
- While watching TV, take short walks or do spot jogging during breaks
- Walk your pet
- Enjoy gardening

Good thing about walking!

Walking is a simple and safe mode of exercise that gives many benefits. It involves no cost as it requires no equipment and it is safe. It is observed that people stick to the habit of walking longer periods when compared with other types of exercise. The dropout ratio or attrition is less. Nowadays many gadgets are available to keep track of the number of steps. Keeping track of steps will work as a strong motivator. Walking 10,000 steps a day is considered an ideal form of exercise.

Yoga

Another important health segment is yoga which helps in all-round fitness. It improves the immunity and flexibility. It boosts the energy and beat the stress. It also promotes inner peace. There are various kinds of postures (asanas) to promote various health benefits. Suryanamaskar is a comprehensive yoga exercise that yields a variety of health benefits, for example.



The most important thing is regularity. When you stick to any exercise regime and do regularly, you are bound to see bountiful results. It is important to take doctor's advice before embarking on any exercise, if you have any health issues.

Leave bad habits

We can see that many of the resolutions revolve around shedding bad habits rather than cultivating a good or healthy habit. The focus is more on giving up bad habits so as to stall the erosion to health, money and personality.

While good habits add value and quality to your life. Bad habits can be compared to leakages to the water tank. Our first priority is to plug the leakages and then strengthen the walls further. That's how many people resolve to give up the bad habits rather than embarking upon good habits. This is only to highlight the need for giving up harmful habits.

In case of certain habits like smoking and drinking the consequence/ repercussions are too glaring to ignore. We can only afford to ignore them at our own peril. There are other habits which are seemingly harmless, but surely are a drain on your time and productivity, like excessive watching of TV, spending time on social media etc. You have to judge for yourself whether such habit is causing trouble to you.

It is time to break the habit. If has turned into an addiction. You may need professional help to stem the rot. We are not asking you to lead a monk's life unless we are dealing with serious addiction of smoking, drinking, etc which have direct impact on your health and social being. In other areas you can mould the habit in such a way that it is not affecting your work, productivity and

family ties. Supposing it is to drive away loneliness, try meeting friends or keep yourself occupied in those hours. If you are bored or upset you can take a walk. Find some healthy alternative to replace your habit.

Support

Take the support of family and friends by declaring your intention to break away from the habit. Knowing that someone is watching you can be powerful motivator.



Make it difficult

Increase the number of steps between you and your bad habits. For example, don't keep any stock of cigarettes or drinks at home. Going out each time will make the process difficult. Not keeping a TV remote handy can reduce TV watching. Not stocking the fridge with junk food can reduce the eating.

Make it unattractive

When you vividly think of the repercussions the habit can cast on your health, finances and family, the compelling habit will start looking less attractive.

Immediate rewards

When the rewards are immediate that keeps us going. In bad habits you don't see any immediate reward. Here also we can use the technique. Start saving the money, you would have otherwise spent on your habits. Supposing you are spending Rs. 500 a day on smoking and drinking or gambling, keeping the money in saving account with projects like buying jewellery for spouse or going on a family vacation can work as an immediate award to disassociate from the bad habit.

Revamp the routine

We are slaves of patterns, more particularly in bad habits. The lingering smell of cigarette can prompt the smoker to smoke. Keeping the car and house clean of such smell can reduce the desire to smoke. If you are following particular route to go home after office where it is convenient to park and go for a drink, changing the itenary can help. Familiar smells, sounds and surroundings breed the habits. The solution is breaking away from such set patterns linked to the habit can set you out of the trap and overcome the urge.

Reduce the frequency

You can try step by step but steady reduction in frequency of the habit and then try giving large gaps by abstaining at a stretch for some days continuously.

The most important step is your ability to recognise when you are not able to handle it in spite of your best efforts. It means you require more guidance and direction in the form of professional help and hence, contact support group: alcoholics' anonymous, gamblers anonymous or similar organisation.

Attitude

How to make the life more joyful?

Happiness is your birth right. Nobody can snatch it from you unless you surrender it. It is of your own making. It is a choice one makes whether to be happy or otherwise. You don't have to own a big house or a car to be happy. Money can feed your needs but cannot ensure happiness. By learning to appreciate small things in life and by counting our blessings, we can make our lives happier. Here are certain clues.

Smile

It is the best ornament bestowed on mankind by God. It is simple, Indeed Priceless. It can make anyone look beautiful.

Wake up smiling and continue to smile at the first ten people you come across. Mostly they will smile back and you will find that already you are feeling better. Smile is contagious. It is the best unspoken word ever. It can convey recognition, appreciation, acceptance, empathy, affection and support more powerfully than words. Even disagreement looks congenial when conveyed with a smile. It is an ornament that suits all shapes and sizes. **It is the most effective natural cosmetic.**



A smile is happiness you find right under your nose. It is the smile that can turn a stranger into a friend, a meal into a feast and a house into a home.

So, don't wait, don't postpone, start smiling now and you have already begun looking happier. It makes others happier too.

To see clearly, we wear glasses. To be seen clearly, wear a smile. You will look distinct and better.

Even a fake smile can trick your mind to feel that you are happy by releasing feel good hormones called endorphins.

Gratitude

Being grateful is one of the simplest, and yet most powerful habits one can cultivate. Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It is the spark that lights a fire of joy in your heart. By counting your blessings daily, you can make your mind to look for good in everything. Soon you will unconsciously begin to see the bright side of things and feel better about life.

Greatness starts with being grateful.

You can't feel joy without being thankful. To be thankful is a vital requirement for being happy. Saying thanks without meaning it makes it mere ritual. The key of showing gratitude is to FEEL thankful. The more you count your blessings, more blessings you will have to count.

Each of us has many things to feel grateful about but we take them for granted. If only we have time to pause and ponder, we will realise that there are many things to be thankful in life. These things can seem very small, but they are significant when you care to register them in your mind.

Know of a gentleman holding a top-level management job in a big corporate who is always in a happy mood and his productivity is high. He is happy for having had a good breakfast, happy that climate was good when he went for morning walk, happy because his plant had started flowering, happy to see few dew drops in his garden. It looks as if anything is capable of making him happy and feel grateful. This attitude of gratitude has filled his life with happiness and a new zeal.

Company of positive people

Be in the company of positive people. Be around those who are feeling better than you are. Likewise, you find some people emanating positive vibes and energy. So always try to build a lasting relationship with positive people. Their positive energy rubs off on you as well and you also in turn will keep attracting positive people. When we are harbouring positive emotions on account of other people, we will attract even more positive people to our life because of the positive vibrations surrounding us. You would have come across people whose presence will not make you feel comfortable. Thus, when you seek positive people, he will become positive and that energy in turn will attract more like minded people. You get engulfed in a sea of positive energy.

Even in spiritual life, "Holy Company" is an essential ingredient in addition to solitude and chanting.



Born in Arles, France in 1875 Jeanne Calment lived until 1997, making her, at 122, the oldest person of verifiable age in history. She said on 120th birthday “I see hardly, I hear hardly, and I feel bad, but everything is fine”. That is positive spirit.

Help others

Helping others generates happiness. It is scientifically proved that those who volunteer in service activities display better state of happiness. There are number of opportunities where one can offer one’s services. We can enlist in groups that help senior citizens, street children, and destitutes. The opportunities are plenty. If you are good at music, you can teach music to others. Such service will have a magical effect on you. Some temples like Tirupati have provision for utilising services of volunteers. Those who participated in such services returned with a sense of lasting contentment.

The crux is to voluntarily take part in some service activity and put your heart and soul into it. The results are immense and immediate. Conscious cultivation of above qualities makes a wonderful difference to the quality of life.

Relaxation and Sleep

Those of us who are contented and peaceful sleep well. They drift into sleep easily, sleep soundly and wake up refreshed. Conversely, people who are anxious and stressed don’t sleep well. The sleep and mood are closely related.

A healthy sleep can enhance emotional wellbeing while a disturbed course of sleep can have adverse impact on one’s work performance, outlook and health. Sleep is essential for keeping good health and optimal functioning. Deprivation of sleep will affect one’s concentration, productivity, performance and overall functioning.

All adults require a sleep of 7hours or more. You can’t sleep over the problems of sleep as it is as important as diet for a healthy living. People with sleep deficiency have a greater risk of health issues like heart and kidney diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke and

obesity. The sleep related disorders impact professional, family and social life.



A sound sleep

- Enhances concentration
- Improves performance
- Keeps the body healthy
- Strengthens the brain
- Ensures better emotional well being
- Makes the heart strong
- Helps in keeping weight under check

Sleep spoilers

- Stress and anxiety
- Alcohol consumption
- Caffeine consumption
- Wrong food consumption
- Use of electronic devices before sleep
- Excess light in the bedroom
- Unpleasant ambience

How to sleep well

Distance yourself from digital devises. Switch off your TV and phone at least half an hour prior sleep so that it prepares the body to slowly drift into sleep.

Stick to a timely routine of eating timely and sleeping timely. It develops an automatic rhythm. Listen to soothing music. Have a sleep friendly bedroom. Proper bed and good ambience will go a long way. If some tasks to be done are worrying you, jot them down. It reduces the anxiety.

Sources of happiness

It is not only difficult to define happiness but even more difficult to identify a list of sources of happiness. The list will be arbitrary and there will be no limit for adding items to the list. However here is one short list, which we might summarize as SOARS

Security: feeling reasonably secure - enough time, money, not under threat, etc.

Outlook: having the right attitudes - positivity, acceptance, caring for others, etc.

Autonomy: being having a sense of control over one's life and daily activities

Relationships: having and enjoying good relationships, including a sense of community

Skilled and meaningful activity: regularly exercising your competence at worthwhile activities

(Taken from book of Daniel Haybron titled 'Happiness: A Very Short Introduction' (2013) and blog of John Templeton Foundation, Saint Louis University)



What is to be done to remain happier?

Again a difficult question to answer since what works best in one case will depend on his personality and situation. Different people experience different states of happiness under similar conditions and influencing factors. But there is good evidence to show that various interventions proposed in this newsletter can help to boost happiness, such as expressing one's gratitude, body exercises, or meditation, or Yoga or sleep.

It is advisable to practice PEARL interventions described in this newsletter while considering improvements in areas suggested in the SOARS to be a happier human being.

One plausible thing is creating or placing oneself in a situation where the sources of happiness mentioned in SOARS and sensible list of goals mentioned in PEARL interventions tend to occur naturally. A simple example - it may be better to live in a gated community where facilities are available that encourage an active lifestyle like walking or exercising daily which harmonizes your requirement to be physically fit by daily walking or biking.

Wrapping the discussion

We've learned that the habits and behavior we practice give enduring satisfaction, contentment and happiness. We now have an understanding of what we can do to give ourselves the best chance of happiness in life. We have to give importance to qualities of kindness, gratitude, mindfulness, etc and have to choose activities natural and enjoyable befitting our disposition and interests. More important is to live a meaningful life which gives a sense of purpose, competence, generosity and autonomy.

With more commitment and effort put into one's new habits, one would experience a greater improvement in well-being. Instead of practicing in mundane manner, one should bring in variety in the routine to reap better benefits. Though there is no cook book like procedure to predict how much happier you are from a specific change in life, but it tells you that it is worthy of doing and you climb and remain in the upper range of happiness potential.

A firm belief and a strong will are necessary for positive change.



Note:
The other key area in PEARL list 'Eat Good Diet' will be covered in our forth coming issues.



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