


# THE *happiness* FIX

A sunnier outlook on life boosts your wellbeing and health, but how can you achieve it? Here's how to take that first step towards the Holy Grail of happiness

# FIX

**H**appiness might be the buzz word among medics and politicians alike right now, but that doesn't make it any easier to achieve. 'No one can make you happy except yourself,' says Alexandra Watson, author of *The Happiness System For Women* (£12.99). 'It's an inside job.' But can we really *attain* happiness – especially when life is more stressful than ever? 'If you're fundamentally happy with who you are, the stresses and strains of life are

easier to cope with,' adds Watson. David Cameron clearly agrees, launching his £2m-a-year National Wellbeing Index after deciding that happiness and quality of life should be measured alongside gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of how well the nation is doing. While there's nothing more irritating than being told to smile when you don't feel like it, there are ways to feel happier no matter what your circumstances. Turning this page and reading *Top Santé's* guide is a good start. 

# Boost your happiness

Being happy is life's most cherished goal, says Dr Robert Holden (robertholden.org), director of The Happiness Project and author of *Be Happy* (£9.99, Hay House). 'On every continent, in every country and in every culture, when people are asked, "What do you want?" the most popular

answer is "to be happy", he says. 'Happiness is the goal that makes other life goals - such as success, prosperity and relationships - feel meaningful and enjoyable.' So where do you stand on the smiley scale? Take Dr Holden's happiness test below, add up your score then multiply by two, to find out.

**1** I know who I am, and I like myself

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**2** My most important relationships get most of my attention

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**3** I have a strong sense of purpose and/or I love my work

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**4** I choose my attitude most of the time

Not true (1)

Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**5** I appreciate my life as it happens

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**6** I'm good at letting go of past hurts and disappointments

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**7** I know how to have fun, and I do

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**8** I look after myself and take care of my health and wellbeing

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**9** I know what inspires me, supports me and gives me strength

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)

**10** I believe that happiness is a journey rather than a destination

Not true (1)  
Rarely true (2)  
Sometimes true (3)  
Mostly true (4)  
Very true (5)



## Your happiness 'Top 10'

Most of us have a vague idea of what would make us happy - a gite in Provence, a cure for cellulite, a few more zeros on our pay cheque... However, would these things really change our life for the better? Ian Lynch, project manager and a fellow 'happiness facilitator' at Dr Robert Holden's Happiness Project, has this tip for finding your answer: 'Write down the things you have in your life that, if taken away, would hurt you,' he says. 'List the top 10, whether it's people, experiences, miracles in nature or things that money can't buy, and they'll be the key to what really makes you happy.'

*Happiness is in your own hands - once you learn this you can do the things in life that make you feel happier*

## BORN GRUMPY?

OK, so now we know the theory behind happiness but what if we're just naturally, you know, grumpy? 'A gene has been identified to show that some people are born with a naturally sunnier disposition than others,' says Watson. 'But no one should use not having it as an excuse. Happiness is your choice. You can be happy being miserable - unhappy people don't take responsibility for their lives, they blame others - or you can decide to change your thought process.' But how? 'Like and accept yourself, know what you're capable of and understand your potential - don't wait for approval from others. We women are especially hard on ourselves. I've coached people who should on paper be the happiest on the planet, but it is what's on the inside that matters and when you accept who you are you're more able to cope with life's dramas.' As Ian Lynch accurately points out, 'Your happiness is up for grabs and the choice to be happy starts with you.'

If you scored 84 to 100 points:

### CALL TO JOY

Inside every one of us is a call to joy - and you're answering it. The more effort you make to answer this call, the more you discover the truth about who you really are, what is important and what your purpose is in life. By following your joy, you then experience the fullness of your being and you also discover a depth of creativity and talent that inspires the world.

If you scored 68 to 83 points:

### GETTING THERE

This is a healthy score. To take your happiness score to the next level, recognise the difference between chasing after happiness and choosing happiness. It is not outside you; it's not a destination, and it's not about 'getting there'. When you stop chasing happiness, you allow yourself to be more present, more available and more open. This way, you find happiness wherever you are.

If you scored 52 to 67 points:

### SEMI-HAPPY

So, how are you? Watch out for answers like 'I'm fine', 'Can't complain', or 'Mustn't grumble!'. Yes, you are surviving; but now it's time to start thriving! Imagine if you raised your happiness levels by another 10% immediately - what do you think you would be doing more of, less of or differently? Being semi-happy is safe, but it's ultimately unfulfilling. Maybe it's time to take a risk.

If you scored 36 to 51 points:

### SELF-CARE

This score is a sign that you could be looking after yourself better. Beware of unhealthy self-sacrifice. Notice the cost of self-neglect. Acknowledge the help you need. Recognise how you might be limiting your own happiness. Remind yourself that it is not someone else's job to make you happy. Also remember that your healing and your happiness is a gift to others.

If you scored 20 to 35 points:

### SHIFT HAPPENS!

You probably knew that you were going to score this low before you even took the test. You need to take an honest look at why you feel the way you do and how to increase your level of happiness. You can get help in putting together a plan of personal recovery. The good news is that just a small change will make a big difference to your overall score.

## HOW HAPPY ARE YOU?

When Top Santé and leading cognitive behavioural hypnotherapist Avy Joseph (avyjoseph.com) ran a survey on Facebook asking you this question, the results were surprising. Even though we're still in the grips of the recession, most of you describe yourselves as 'moderately happy'. However, your 30s and 40s are your least happy decades. When asked the question, 'Do you feel cheerful and in good spirits' the 18-25, 51-55 and 61-65 age groups answered 'almost always'; the 26-50 age group was the only one that answered 'somewhat frequently'. With the stress of younger children, careers and often caring for older parents too, it's probably not surprising that these decades are the most happiness challenged - all the more reason, then, to take charge of your happiness today.