

Some Steps to a More Satisfying Life

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1. **Count Your Blessings.** One way to increase the fulfillment in your life is to start a “gratitude journal” in which you write down 3-5 things for which you are currently thankful—from the mundane (you balanced your check book) to the wonderful (you got that promotion). Do this once a week, say, on Sunday night. Keep your journal fresh by varying your entries as much as possible.
2. **Practice Acts of Kindness.** These should be both random (let that harried mom go ahead of you in the checkout line) and systematic (bring Sunday supper to an elderly neighbor). Being kind to others, whether friends or strangers, triggers a cascade of positive effects—it makes you feel generous and capable, gives you a greater sense of connection to others, and wins you smiles, approval, and reciprocated kindness—all boosters to your well being.
3. **Savor Life’s Joys.** Pay close attention to momentary pleasures and wonders. For instance, focus on the sweetness of a ripe strawberry or the warmth of the sun when you step out from the shade. Take “mental photographs” of these pleasurable moments to revisit in hard times.
4. **Thank a Mentor.** If there’s someone whom you owe a debt of gratitude for guiding you at one of life’s crossroads, don’t wait to express your appreciation—in detail and, if possible, in person.
5. **Learn to Let Go.** Let go of anger and resentment by writing a letter of exoneration to a person who has hurt or wronged you. Inability to exonerate is associated with persistent rumination or dwelling on revenge, while exoneration allows you to move on.
6. **Invest Time and Energy in Friends and Family.** Where you live, how much money you make, your job title, the kind of car you drive have surprisingly small effects on the satisfaction you experience with your life. The biggest factor for most people is the strength of the personal and family relationships they have in their life.
7. **Take Care of Your Body.** Getting plenty of sleep and exercise. Smiling and laughing can all also enhance your mood in the short term. Practiced regularly, all of these things can help make your daily life more satisfying.
8. **Develop Strategies for Coping with Stress.** There is no avoiding hard times. Religious faith has shown to help people cope, but so do secular beliefs enshrined in axioms like “this too shall pass” and “that which doesn’t kill me makes me stronger.” The trick is that you have to believe them.