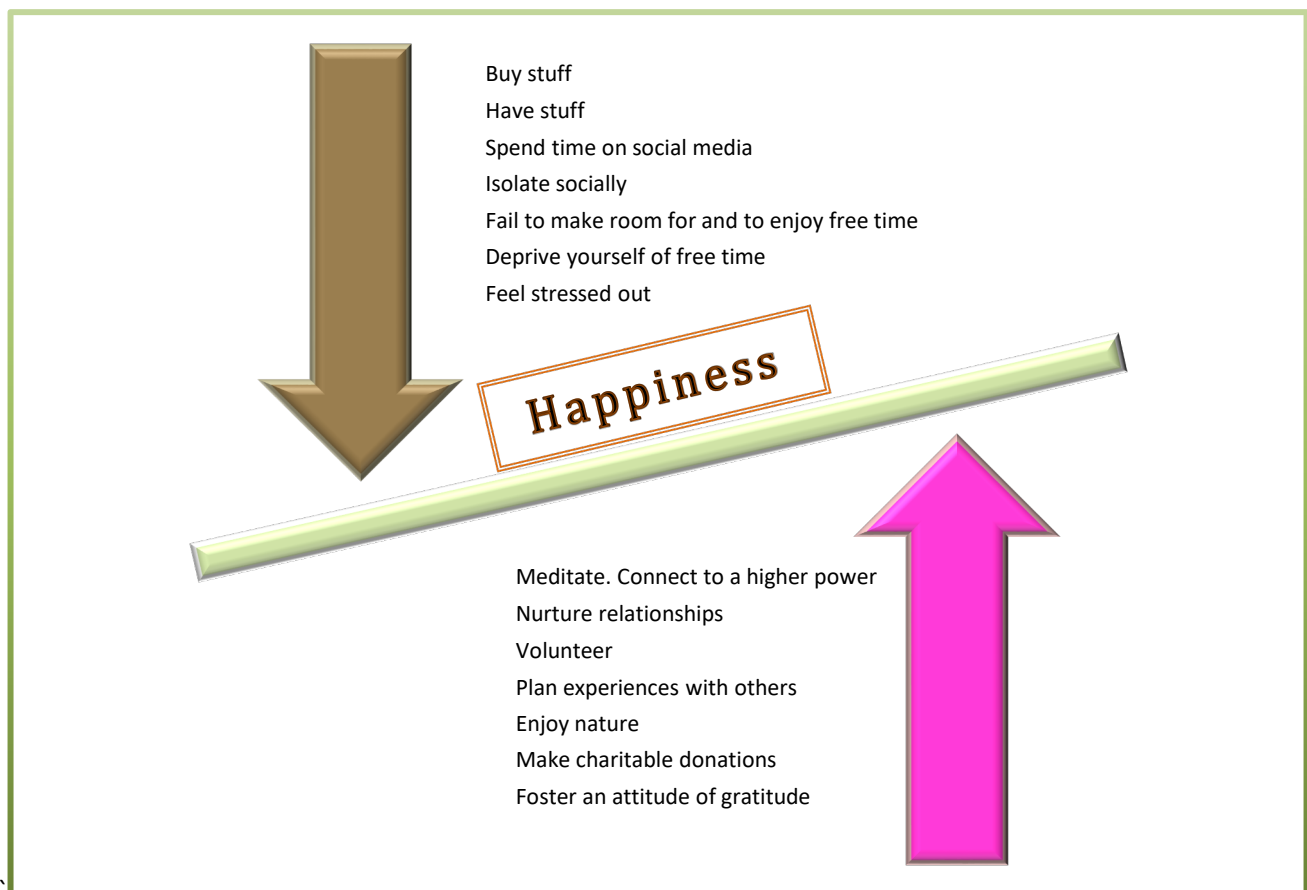


EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: WRINGING HAPPINESS OUT OF DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

This is a reminder of what you already know – some aspects of life will increase your happiness and some will not.

Increase or decrease your happiness



The lists in the figure above – what makes us happier and what reduces our happiness – are, of course, just partial lists – and are based on research (see “further reading” list below).

What should we do if we are feeling unhappy? We should work on doing more of what is in the bottom of the figure and on doing less of what is in the top .

The old truism is that money does not buy happiness. The current thinking is...it depends. Buying stuff/having stuff – consumerism does not buy happiness. But buying valuable free time for yourself may. Spending money on travel and other experiences (yes – limited now) may also. Also, giving money to help others may.

And especially, focusing on relationships, friends, and family—*people* lead to happiness.

Why seek happiness, now or at any time? Happiness is not necessarily an end in and of itself. However, happiness has positive effects on your productivity, performance, relationships, health, decision-making and creativity – on your overall mental health.

Right now, during a pandemic, we must try twice (10 times?) as hard to work on our happiness. The pandemic is making a lot of the things we should be doing to shore up our happiness either difficult or impossible. What can we do to wring happiness out of this difficult situation?

Meditate. Connect to a higher power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take some time every day to slow down, reflect, relax, recharge, clear your mind, breathe, listen, visualize.
Stay connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are reaching out to at least one friend or family member daily. This will benefit both you and the other person.
Utilize video (e.g., Zoom, Skype) often	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your personal interactions, use video when you can. Visual communication makes personal interactions much more meaningful, allowing participants to be reassured of one another’s health, caring and sincerity.
Schedule quality time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the very least, schedule quality time with the most important people in your life, your significant other or others you care about deeply.
Engage in more frequent social contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying across the country once a month to see your best friend may not be feasible now. Connecting via Zoom (or other telecom app) every two weeks may be quite feasible.
Set up some activities/experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy your social contacts. Set up outside activities if you can. Engage in enjoyable online activities: trivia contests; book clubs; college reunions; movie watch parties (e.g., Netflix and Prime both provide them); talent displays (music, poetry, dance, comedy...) and much more.
Exercise outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive for 120 minutes per week outdoors. That amount of time is necessary to improve physical and psychological well-being. • Exercise improves mood, both immediately and longer term.
Direct some of your disposable income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help others build experiences for you and your loved ones – either now safely, or in the future when safety comes more naturally.
Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly, journal a gratitude list.
Volunteer safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, you could make bag lunches for a local organization that feeds those in need, or volunteer for SCORE to foster a vibrant small business in your community via mentoring and education – share your expertise.

FURTHER READING

- [To find happiness forget about passion](#) (*Harvard Business Review*)
- [Are we trading our happiness for modern comforts?](#) (*The Atlantic*)
- [Time for happiness](#) (*Harvard Business Review*)
- [Why does happiness matter?](#) (*The Guardian*)
- [How immersion in nature benefits your health](#) (*Yale School of the Environment*)
- [More evidence that exercise can boost mood](#) (*Harvard Medical School*)

What are you doing to increase your happiness at this time? What can you do for yourself and suggest to your team to improve their mood, satisfaction and contentment during this health crisis?