



Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

## Being happy

Have you noticed how some people just seem to be happier than others, even though they have many of the same problems and challenges? A positive frame of mind has been proven to have a direct relationship to good health, so happiness is more than just a nice feeling—it's a state of well-being that seems to actually strengthen our immune system, protecting us against illness. It's no wonder so many  of us strive so hard to find it!

But take heart—deciding that we want to be happy is one huge step on the path. A positive frame of mind opens us up to receive positive emotions. Think of it as a cycle of happiness—and what better time to start that cycle than now?

### Tips and tools you can use

In the same way that our brains develop learning patterns, we can also pick up healthy emotional habits. The more you laugh, the easier you'll find it; the more you visualize happy tomorrows, the more they are likely to happen. Here are some great tips to help you lighten up and get in the mood for happiness:

### Planning on happiness

- Reflect on the things that have brought you joy in life.
- Plan a list of enjoyable things you'd like to do more often. Schedule them into your calendar.
- Make a list of people who make you happy. Plan on spending more time with them.
- Consider personal growth and things you've always wanted to learn.
- Make a resolution to learn at least two new skills every year.
- Join a walking club or fitness club—exercise releases endorphins, which lead to a sense of well-being.
- Begin "positive self-talk". Tell yourself that things are going to go well and that you have much to be grateful for. Be aware when you have negative thoughts, which likewise can become self-fulfilling.
- Reflect whether you are trying to do too much. What can you change?

### Being grateful

- Make a mental list of all the big things you can be grateful about in life.
- Then make a list of all the little things that you could be grateful about today.
- Be grateful when the sun shines. Then be grateful for the garden when it rains.
- Force yourself to keep feeling grateful, even if it's just because you didn't run out of sugar.

### The power of laughter

- Remember that, like exercise, laughter releases endorphins.
- Watch a comedy with your partner or read the comics together.
- Watch re-runs of old comedies or your favourite TV series.
- Visit web sites of the TV shows you loved as a child.
- Sign up for improv classes.
- Go to a karaoke bar with friends—and join in.
- Go on the rides at your local theme park.

- Look back through your old year books.

### **Time for yourself**

- Make a little time just for yourself every day.
- Soak in the tub with your favourite oils.
- Walk in the park.
- Cook a gourmet dinner just for you.
- Treat yourself to a massage.
- Buy yourself flowers.
- Buy a new CD and listen to it in the office at lunchtime.
- Plant a new shrub—gardening can be healing.

### **Time for others**

- It's a truism, but helping others often brings happiness.
- Spending time with people you like is important to emotional well-being.
- Invest in your relationship with your partner—book a surprise night away.
- Have lunch with a friend you haven't seen for ages.
- Visit an aging relative.
- Volunteer your services at a hospital.
- Take the children off a busy friend's hands for an hour and treat them to ice cream.
- Volunteer at your local food bank.
- Become a Big Brother or a Big Sister.

Happiness and fulfillment don't have to be out of reach. Understanding where your joy comes from is the first step to achieving good health and well-being.

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