

## Choose Happy

### The Science of Training Your Brain to Walk on the Sunny Side of the Street

#### How much of our personal happiness is within our control? As it turns out, it may be more than you might think.

For some time, the scientific community has been aware of a happiness set point that determines how consistently happy we generally are. You can think of it as your happiness equilibrium: sometimes you might surpass it, other times you might dip below, but you'll eventually return to it.

That point was once thought to be unchangeable, but new research suggests that we have more influence over it than previously believed. With a little conscious effort, we can nudge our happiness baseline upward.

So, what can we do to increase our happiness? As you'll read below, a large part of our happiness can be influenced with mindful thoughts and actions we can incorporate into our daily routine.

### The Happy Factor(s)

Recent discoveries in the field of positive psychology have helped to demystify the mechanics of happiness. Studies comparing the happiness levels between identical twins concluded these levels are influenced by three factors: (1) genetics and upbringing; (2) thoughts and actions; and (3) current situation.

Because of genetics and how they were raised, certain people are more or less predisposed to happiness than others. That slice of the happiness pie — about 50% — is largely out of our control. Surprisingly, studies show that situational circumstances such as occupation, marital status, and income, only account for 10% of a person's overall happiness. That leaves a whopping 40% of happiness that's under the influence of our thoughts, actions, and outlook.



## 快樂是一種選擇

### 訓練大腦選擇陽光面的科學依據

我們的幸福快樂，有多少是掌握在自己的手裡？事實上，可能遠比您想像的多。

過去一段時間，科學界認為幸福感有一個設定點(happiness set point)，決定我們能否經常感到快樂和幸福。您可以把這個設定點想成是您的幸福感天平：有時高有時低，會來回擺盪，但最終會回到設定點。

這個設定點一度被認為是無法改變的，但新的研究顯示，我們其實比自己以為的，擁有更多影響力。只需要多用一點心力，就可以把我們的幸福基準線往上提升一些。

那麼，我們該怎麼做來提升幸福感呢？請您讀下去就會了解，我們的幸福感有很大一部分，可以透過在日常生活中融入正念的念頭和行動來加以改變。

### 幸福的要素

正向心理學領域近期有些新發現，幫助我們揭開幸福感神秘的運作機制。有些研究將同卵雙胞胎對於幸福的感受程度進行比較，發現幸福感受到三個因素影響：(1) 遺傳基因和教養方式；(2) 思考和行動；以及(3) 現在的處境。

有些人因為他們的遺傳基因和教養方式，多多少少比其他人不容易快樂。美味的幸福大餅有一大半，大約百分之五十，是無法控制的。然而出人意料的是，外部環境因素例如職業，婚姻，和收入，對個人整體幸福感的影響僅有百分之十。這表示有整整百分之四十的幸福感，可以操之在己，受到我們的思想，行動，和世界觀的影響。

## Make the Most of Your 40%

The day we can dramatically change our genetics is likely far off, and the day we can change our upbringing is long gone. But with 40% of our overall happiness levels to play with, there's a lot that we can do to boost our mood in the here and now. Here are a few ideas:

**Make Happiness an Intention.** A happy attitude comes easier to some than others. But by actively choosing to be happy, everyone can position themselves to adopt new attitudes and behaviors that increase happiness. Try making happiness a top priority and see how things start to change.

**Engage in Meaningful Activities.** People tend to be happier when in the flow or immersed in activities that are meaningful or enjoyable to them. To some, this could mean working with their hands or engaging in a favorite hobby. Since we often lose track of time when we're in the flow, think of activities that make you forget the clock and make time for them as often as you're able throughout the week.

**Practice Gratitude.** When negative thoughts threaten our state of happiness, we can offset them by practicing gratitude exercises. That involves thinking about the things in your life you're grateful for, and maybe reaching out to those people who matter most and telling them "Thank you." You might be surprised at how much of an impact this has on your happiness—and theirs.

**Meet Negativity with Mindfulness.** If the mind is like a sky, then we can think of negative thoughts like dark, passing storm clouds. The more we practice mindfulness strategies like meditation and breathing, the better we'll get at identifying and clearing stormy skies.

## 善用百分之四十的影響力

距離人類能大幅改變基因的那天，可能還很遙遠，而我們如何被扶養長大也無從扭轉，但是還有百分之四十的幸福掌握在自己手中，我們此時此地就可以好好用來提振心情，增進幸福。以下提供幾個方法：

**讓快樂成為目的。**保持快樂的心態對某些人較容易，某些人較困難。但主動選擇快樂，每個人都可以做到，調整自己，採取新的態度和行為讓自己快樂。試試把追求幸福放在最優先，看看事情會如何開始轉變。

**從事有意義的活動。**人們通常在做自己感覺有意義或愉快的活動時，會比較快樂。對某些人來說，可能只需要從事一些手作或嗜好的活動，就可以渾然忘我。想想哪些事會讓您沈浸其中，把時間拋諸腦後，盡可能在一個星期裡，撥出時間來做這些事。

**練習感恩。**當負面的念頭危及我們的快樂心境時，我們可以運用正念感恩練習來應對。這些練習包括回想生活中讓您感謝的人事物，也許還可以向您最在乎和重要的人說「謝謝」。您可能會很驚訝，這麼一個動作對您，以及對方的快樂有多大的影響力。

**用正念迎戰負面。**如果人的心靈和天空一樣，我們可以把負面思想看成是暴風雨欲來的烏黑雲層，我們越常做正念練習如靜坐和呼吸，我們越善於辨識並且掃除這些烏雲，讓天空恢復澄淨。

**Money Can't Buy Happiness.** Research shows that once income surpasses a certain amount, making more money has less of an effect on overall, long-term happiness levels. Buying stuff might be followed by a jolt of excitement, but it doesn't promote enduring contentment as cultivating positive thoughts and actions can.

**Foster Friendships and Relationships.** Friendships and relationships are essential to happiness. One study found that people over 70 with strong networks of friends lived longer than those who didn't. Dedicate time and attention to building a lasting network for sharing and amplifying the happy times and support during the not so happy times.

Start each day with an affirmation that you are more in control of your own happiness than you might have thought.

**金錢買不到快樂。**研究顯示當收入超過一定金額後，賺更多的錢，對於整體且長久的幸福感的影響會減少。購物也許可以帶來一陣子的興奮，但對於促進持久的滿足感反而不如培養正向的思考和行動。

**維護友誼和人際關係。**友誼和人際關係對幸福感至關重要。有一項研究發現，人際關係活躍的七十歲以上長者比較長壽。多花時間和精力，為自己打造一個能長久維持的人際網路，快樂時一起分享，悲傷時互相支持。

請用這個信念展開您的每一天：您的快樂與幸福，掌握在自己手裡，超乎您的想像。