

*Maryland State Bar Association
Lawyer Assistance Program
Wellness Tip Sheet*

Start off the New Year Happier

Studies have shown that part of one's ability to be happy is inherited, just like your height, personality and eye color. Happiness is 50 percent genetic, 10 percent circumstances, and 40 percent effort. Everyone has a baseline of where their happiness falls. Think about the people in your life. Don't some of them just seem happier than others, regardless of what they are experiencing? Their outlook on life seems more positive and they have "the glass is half-full attitude." Now, think of the people in your life who don't seem very happy, even when their life is going well. They always have the attitude that the "glass is half-empty." The good news is that 40 percent of happiness is effort. By making the effort, you can be happier.

What Makes Someone Happy?

There isn't one simple answer to this question, although there are some common themes. Most people agree that happiness is achieved through a combination of family, friends, values and having meaningful work. Happiness is also how you choose to perceive your life and whether you view the glass as half-full or half-empty. How you perceive the events in your life will have a strong impact on how happy you are. Happiness is not passive. You can't sit back and wait for happiness to find you. You need to look at what you have control over and can change in your life to be happier.

Learning to Be Happy

- The number one step towards being happier is to stop comparing yourself to others. This may include what they are doing, the job they have or material possessions. Thinking that you should be doing certain things in your life just because "everyone else is" only causes you to feel anxious, overwhelmed and unhappy.
- Stop chasing the immediate pleasure. Immediate pleasures are time-limited.
- Have friends, in addition to your significant other, with whom you feel safe talking to about your feelings. Relationships change, and everyone needs more than one person in their life to support them.
- When setting goals, look for what it means to you and the purpose for setting that goal.
- *Acts of kindness* – It's easy to be self-absorbed. Focus on performing simple acts of kindness throughout the day: say hello, ask how someone is, etc. This will improve your mood and self-esteem.
- *Forgiveness* – Let go of resentment, and recognize your role in any challenging, difficult relationship.
- *Balance* – Write down what is important to you and what you can let go of.
- *Spirituality* – Surrender and recognize that there is something bigger than you out there.

- *Mindfulness* – Being present in the moment – fully on the now:
 - Meditate
 - Stillness
 - Focus
- Take care of yourself and make time for yourself:
 - Exercise
 - Eat right
 - Rest
 - Have fun

If you would like to talk more about happiness or need assistance please call the Lawyer Assistance Program for free, confidential assistance and speak to a counselor at

443-703-3041 or toll free at 800-492-1964 x3041