

VOLUME FOUR:3 THE MAGAZINE OF PASSIONATE PURSUITS

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Panama's native drink
is so much more than sweet
cocktails with umbrellas.

A TASTE OF RUM

DISCOVERING RIO

THE CREATIVE
OFFICE

FINDING
HAPPINESS

JW MARRIOTT 

WELL-BEING



Happy people are less likely to get into conflicts, to commit crimes, to want to go to war and to pollute the environment," declares award-winning filmmaker Roko Belic, who has explored the subject in his documentary *Happy*. "They are more likely to find a creative solution to a problem and to help a stranger in need. In other words, when we look in the newspaper and we see war, famine, injustice, crime, poverty, inequality—all of these things we care about, that we wish we could change—all of them are improved

with happiness." Over years of interviews and filming, Belic's findings echo those of positive psychologists who make a study of what makes us happy.

And if you want to be happy, here's the key: make the world a better place. Give of yourself: your money, your time, your compassion. "Prosocial giving is the clunky psychological term," says Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener.

"Economically it weakens you to spend money on someone else, it actually seems like you're lowering your net worth, but giving money or gifts to others pays back happiness dividends. Experiment with this, it's an easy



KEEP A JOURNAL NEXT TO THE BED AND WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR.

thing to do. Buy the coffee for the next person in line, or pay the toll for the person in the car behind you. It's funny how good it makes you feel."

Paying it forward is just one way to boost your happiness. The following are a few more happy suggestions. Forget the chore wheel; consider this a bliss list.

Hug It Out

Unsurprisingly, sharing love is crucial. "It's the thing that separates the happiest people from the least happy people," says Biswas-Diener. Strength doesn't come in numbers either; a few significant relationships are all it takes, as long as they are maintained and cherished.

And held close. Keri Glassman, founder of Nutritious Life, a private nutrition and counseling practice in New York, points out that holding hands, hugging and walking arm-in-arm with friends and loved ones releases oxytocin, the same hormone that is released after orgasm. "This is called the calm-and-connection hormone," she says. "And it's an antioxidant."

Go for the Flow

The concept of flow means feeling fully immersed in what you're doing—painting, chess, gardening—to the point of losing track of time. Glassman finds that flow when she cooks dinner for her family. An athlete would call it being in the zone. "There's an equation for it," says Biswas-Diener. "It's when your skills and the challenge are optimally suited to one another."

Appreciation Proclamation

Expressing gratitude to others boosts your own happiness exponentially. For Glassman, that can translate to something as simple as putting notes in her kids' lunchboxes. Belic recommends tracking down someone

you appreciate and thanking them for past kindnesses. Biswas-Diener suggests practicing three blessings. Keep a journal next to the bed and write down three things you're grateful for. "Humans are so built to adapt to our circumstances," he says. "Gratitude serves as a positive antidote to that adaptation."

Have Faith

Religious people are happier. "There is something in our brain called the God molecule," explains neuroscientist Moran Cerf. "If you experience a spiritual moment, this spot is very active in your brain. It's the same part that's active when you do other things that make you happy." But non-believers needn't feel left out. "If you're looking at a mountain vista and having a spiritual experience, it's because you're experiencing awe, which is a sense of being connected with something larger," says Biswas-Diener.

Joy in Motion

"I was athletic when I was growing up, and yet

THE RIGHT TO HAPPINESS

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon recently issued a statement for the International Day of Happiness. In part, he said:

"Happiness may have different meanings for different people. But we can all agree that it means working to end conflict, poverty and other unfortunate conditions in which so many of our fellow human beings live. Happiness is neither a frivolity nor a luxury. It is a deep-seated yearning shared by all members of the human family. It should be denied to no-one and available to all. This aspiration is implicit in the pledge of the United Nations Charter to promote peace, justice, human rights, social progress and improved standards of life."

reading the research made me realize suddenly that I had not been exercising," says Belic. "I had accepted the cultural hum that says as an adult, you should stop surfing because surfing is a waste of time. It's not going to help your career. In fact, they're wrong; exercise is hugely beneficial to your long-term happiness."

Glassman concurs. "It doesn't matter if I have three deadlines. Taking time to exercise has to be part of my job, because at the end of the day, whatever work I do will be better, and the release of endorphins will make me happier." Her advice: "Find things you're excited to do and schedule them in daily. You wouldn't skip a daily priority like taking a shower, so don't skip your exercise!"

Bed Down

Exercise also improves sleep, another indicator of happiness. However, Cerf notes that causality is hard to measure. "It's unclear whether people who sleep better are happier, or people who are happier sleep better," he says. "But it's a high correlation. It doesn't have to do with the time spent; they felt the sleep was good."

A Happy Jumble

Sleep affects exercise, as well; in fact, all the behaviors overlap. "Social connections make our brains process things better, and this means when we sleep we sleep better. That affects our energy level; we have more ability to exercise," Cerf notes. When Glassman cooks, it's not just a flow activity; it also serves as social interaction and prosocial giving. A regular yoga practice combines exercise, flow and spiritual connection. "Looking at the brain, they're all affected by each other," says Cerf.

And they're already affecting us, even if we don't know it. "Our data shows that about 80% of the people are mildly happy most of the time," says Biswas-Diener. "So start savoring the happiness you already have. This is what I call bringing the finish line to you, rather than running the race." And everyone wins. □