

'Doing' Happy – 4 Steps for Pumping Up Your Joy in Life

Written by Ginny Grimsley
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'Don't Just Wait for It to Happen,' Says Former Executive

Happiness isn't a state of being, says former Johnson & Johnson executive Lynda Wallace; happiness is something happy people do.

"Some may say that mimicking people is not good enough – that simply wearing Michael Jordan's jersey doesn't make you Michael Jordan – and they're right. But if you behave more like Jordan in his playing years, including practicing, competing, and working out, then you'll be that much better as a basketball player, and more like Mike," says Wallace, a certified positive psychology coach and the author of "A Short Course in Happiness: Practical Steps to a Happier Life," (www.lyndawallace.com), which topped Amazon's Self-Help Best Seller list.

Wallace describes four steps we can all take to live happier lives:

- **Focus on the Positive:** If you have only five minutes a day to dedicate to becoming a happier person, here's a great way to spend it. Each night, before going to bed, write down five things for which you feel grateful. As you write your list, take a moment to reflect on each item. Call up a picture in your mind and experience your gratitude in a heartfelt way. This is a great way to jump start gratitude, optimism, and kindness, all of which have enormously positive effects on our happiness.

- **Cope Effectively with the Negative:** Wallace quotes Thich Nhat Hanh, who said, "Don't wait until you have no more suffering before allowing yourself to be happy." Negative

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experiences are a part of every life. We do best when we are able to acknowledge and accept the difficult emotions that come with the experiences, see what they have to teach us, and then use coping skills such as reaching out to others, gaining perspective on our troubles, and actively engaging in the things we do that give our lives meaning.

- **Develop Strong Relationships:** No matter how much we may enjoy and need our time alone, the fact remains that we are an intensely social species, and that meaningful connections with other people are essential to happiness. In fact, research makes it clear that the single most important characteristic of very happy people is that they have trusting relationships at the center of their lives. Wallace says that those relationships may be with romantic partners, family members, or friends; it doesn't much matter. "What matters is that we take the time and trouble to nurture and appreciate our most important relationships, and that we don't allow other priorities to crowd out our focus on them."

- **Pursue Meaningful Goals:** "When I first began studying the positive psychology research," says Wallace, "one of the biggest surprises for me was just how important goal pursuit is to happiness." Goals focus and motivate us. They increase our resilience by giving us reasons to keep going following setbacks. And they give us a highly gratifying sense of purpose, forward motion, and meaning.

"One of the most important things to understand about goals is that making progress toward them actually contributes even more to our happiness than achieving them does. So it's important that we choose our goals well. Pursuing them doesn't have to be easy or entirely pleasant. In fact, we gain the most happiness from working toward goals that demand a lot from us. But they do need to fit well with who we are and what we value."

About Lynda Wallace

After 20 years as a highly successful executive with Johnson & Johnson, where she was responsible for a \$1 billion portfolio of businesses including Band-Aid, Neosporin and Purell, Lynda Wallace changed careers to pursue her passion. She now helps individuals and groups apply proven insights and techniques to achieve greater happiness and success in their lives, families, careers, and businesses. She meets with local clients in her office in Montclair, NJ, and with clients from around the world by phone or at in-person engagements. Lynda holds an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and is a certified positive psychology coach. She is also a sought-after speaker and the author of the No.1 Amazon Self-Help Best Seller "A Short Course in Happiness: Practical Steps to a Happier Life." More information is available at her website: lyndawallace.com.

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