

50 Simple Ways to Add a Little Joy to Your Life



STUDIES SHOW THAT SIMPLE ACTIVITIES DO INCREASE JOY
AND JOY INCREASES YOUR LIFE SPAN

1 Create ambiance. For tonight's dinner, put out your best linens, create a centerpiece, or simply light a candle. A festive setting makes for a festive mood.

2 Get outside. Whenever you feel bored, antsy, or gloomy, go for a walk. The fresh air, changing scenery, and exercise will boost your mood.

3 Bow out gracefully. The next time you argue with someone, be the first person to relent and acknowledge the other person's point of view. You'll both be smiling sooner.

4 Pat a pet. Rub a good dog. Scratch a cat. Pets love us unconditionally and relieve our stress.

5 Hit the sack sooner. Go to bed an hour early tonight. Tomorrow, you'll wake up with a brighter outlook.

6 Build someone's future. Volunteer with a local charity. To find a nonprofit or tax-exempt organization near you, visit www.volunteermatch.org

7 Buy something beautiful. Place a small but exquisite painting, handmade vase, or other piece of art prominently in your home. Admire it often.

8 Take lessons. When you were a kid, did you always want to try horseback riding or sailing? Do you wish you could take up a hobby, like knitting or piano playing? Now is the time to learn how. Hobbies are fun and relieve stress.

9 Add greenery. Adorn your desk and kitchen counter with cut flowers, houseplants, or potted herbs. Plants are proven mood enhancers.

10 Know you're loved. There's no greater joy.

11 Look to the heavens. Whenever you have a chance to relax under the stars, do it. Gazing at the night sky makes you feel more connected with the world.

12 Relish a juicy read. When you start a book and know that it's going to be good, take a moment to enjoy the tingling in your toes.

13 Revel in simplicity. Buy a single rose, tulip, or daisy. Admire the color and shape of the petals and remember how beautiful life can be.

14 Awaken your inner Julia Child. Create a dish without a recipe from just the ingredients in your pantry. Discover your creative power.



15 Care for yourself. Gently brush your hair or massage your scalp every night before you go to bed. This simple ritual will relax you.

16 Keep in touch. Write a friend. Use your best pen and beautiful stationery. Realize that you are actually sending love.

17 Start a tea party. Schedule a regular tea date with your friends and honor it like any other appointment. During stressful weeks you'll have something to look forward to.

18 Climb something. Find a tree, a monument, or the highest point in your town. Take in the view from the top and forget your worries.

19 Redo a room. Paint a bureau, a door, four walls, or even a ceiling anything but white. A new color brings change and beauty into your life quickly and with little effort.

20 Crack yourself up. Conjure up the funniest movie scene you know or a silly true story starring yourself. Laugh out loud.

21 Play Jeopardy. Watch a game show with your spouse, your kids, or your best friend. Yell out whatever answers come to mind. Laugh when you're right, and laugh when you're wrong.

22 Day trip. Wake up at 5:30 one weekend morning to commune with nature, whether you climb a mountain or walk a shoreline. Enjoy the thrill of breathing fresh outdoor air all day long.

23 Sleep in. Allow yourself at least one lazy weekend morning a month.

24 Take a detour. Stray from your usual route. Be stimulated by new neighborhoods and people, and appreciate the challenge of finding your way home.

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25 Bear gifts. Keep little presents like scented candles or homemade jams on hand. Offer them to friends for no reason in particular. When you give to others, the world seems more generous.

26 Jump for joy. Literally. Hoping up and down in place for 30 seconds infuses you with energy and youthful vigor.

27 Make a joyful book. Fill a small album with photos and stories that evoke your happiest memories.

28 Plan a picnic. Call some friends and then pack fresh fruit, sandwiches, and maybe a bottle of wine. While away the afternoon under the shade of a tree.

29 Play the game “New or Good.” At the end of each day, ask your partner to tell you about one new or good experience. Then offer your own response. Maybe you noticed blooming roses or a bluebird in your backyard, or your cranky neighbor smiled.

30 Learn how to use a tool. Grind whole spices in a mortar with a pestle, find Saturn’s rings with a telescope, or cut wood shelves with a circular saw. Feel good about your competence.

31 Send birthday joy. For their birthdays, write your friends letters recounting favorite memories or telling them what they mean to you. Hint that you like receiving mail, too.

32 Meditate while you walk. Stroll through a familiar part of town and focus your mind on its sights, smells, and sounds. If other thoughts pop up, acknowledge them but return your concentration to what’s around you.

33 Be an active constituent. Take steps to resolve a political issue that worries you by writing your congressperson. Log on to www.congress.org.

34 Remember kindness. Recall a situation in which a friend treated you kindly. Mentally extend the feelings of joy she inspired.

35 Practice relaxation. Regular use of progressive muscle relaxation can increase feelings of joy. To try it, lie in a quiet place. For 10 to 20 minutes, slowly contract and release every muscle in your body, starting with the muscles in your toes and ending with those on your face.

36 Paint a picture. You don’t have to create a masterpiece. Buy some inexpensive watercolors and a pad of paper, and let the colors guide you.

37 Tidy up your bathroom. You wince. But a spotless toilet, shining sink, and clean fluffy towels are a joy for the next visitor—even if it’s you.

38 Croon in your car. Create a play list of songs you know by heart. When you’re stuck in traffic, play it and sing along as loud as you can.

39 Marry beauty and practicality. Next time you need an everyday object, like a cereal bowl or coffee mug, choose the most pleasing replacement you can afford. When you use it, notice its simple elegance.

40 Finish off a to-do list. Set reasonable goals so that by the end of your work week, you can complete all your tasks. When Friday comes, feel the weight of worry lift off your shoulders.

41 Personalize gifts. Whenever you buy a book or frame a picture for someone else, write a kind note to the recipient on the flap or the back.

42 Honor your appetite. Eat no snacks today. When dinnertime comes, you’ll truly appreciate the tastes, smells, and textures of your meal.

43 Learn elementary botany. Buy a book about your state’s native trees and plants. When you recognize all the trees in your neighborhood, you’ll feel close to nature.

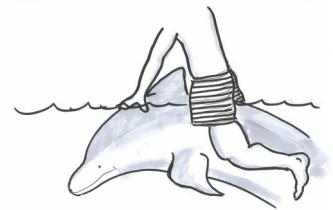
44 Answer slowly. Take a deep breath before responding to a question from anyone, whether it’s your boss, your mother, or your lover. Chances are you’ll say something smarter (and kinder).

45 See the sun daily. The sun’s rays may encourage your body to produce natural chemicals that induce joy. (Don’t forget the sunscreen.)

46 Do the Twist. This dance style is fun, silly, and easy, and it will make you laugh.

47 Bake cookies. And bring them to work.

48 Get active instead of watching TV. Exercise that increases your heartbeat improves your mood. Those benefits apply to the whole family. So instead of watching a video, jump rope with your kids or chase them around a playground.



49 Make time to prioritize. If you have three nonstop days in a row, take one hour on the fourth day to list all your obligations, and then eliminate the least important tasks. Even if your load is still heavy, you’ll feel in much greater control.

50 Throw a theme party. Invite friends over to a “blue dinner” (blue corn chips and salsa, blue potato gratin, blueberry pie) or any fete of your own creation. Themes put guests at ease and are fun to plan.