# 20 Simple Ways to Live a Healthy, Happy Life



This year, you may have made a variety of [New Year’s resolutions](https://www.moneycrashers.com/top-new-years-resolution-tips-ideas/) to improve your mind, your finances, or your health.

Many people, however, tend to lose focus of their goals, and the promises made on the first of the year are soon forgotten.

You don’t need to make a resolution to improve your life, as there are many  simple changes you can make at any time. To be happy and healthy does not require a lot of money or time – just a little desire and motivation

## Be More Social

**1. Reach Out and Touch Someone – Literally**
Being in physical contact with someone you care about is an automatic stress reliever. Hugs and holding hands with the people you care about are therapeutic for the both of you. In fact, a study conducted by [The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20809811) found that a massage can actually boost your immune system and make you more content.

You can also gain immune system benefits from a professional massage. Consider treating yourself if a massage from a friend or loved one just isn’t an option.

**2. Be Giving**
Find ways, even if they are small, to give to others. Stop to talk with someone and lend an ear, offer to assist a friend in need, or [volunteer](https://www.moneycrashers.com/reasons-volunteer-time-work-free/) at a local charity. You will begin to view your own problems with a new perspective, and you will feel better about yourself by realizing that you can make a difference in the lives of others.

**3. Nourish a Network of Friends**
Just like a loving relationship, friendship takes nurturing. Neglect a friendship and you will lose a friend.

Try to see your friends on a regular basis as it fits your schedule. If you are single or a couple, you might like a weekly get-together to watch football or a favorite TV show, while people with families might prefer a monthly dinner club. The important thing is that you have strong friendships to help buffer life’s challenges.



## Do Something Different

**4. Get Out of Your Weekend Rut**
Weekend activities are like mini-vacations, and they are important to recharge your mind and body. They do not need to be expensive to be effective. The important thing is to do something new and have a change of scene: A hike at a nearby park with family or friends is a great way to get some exercise, fresh air, and social interaction.

**5. Create Memories**
Research shows that [experiences make us much happier](http://articles.cnn.com/2009-02-10/health/happiness.possessions_1_leaf-van-boven-experiences-psychological-research?_s=PM:HEALTH) than things. Even when activities and outings don’t turn out as perfectly as we’d hoped, people will remember the good times, not the disappointments.



## Reconnect

**6. Explore Your Spirituality**
Would you call yourself spiritual? Going to church or temple, for example, is a way to increase the social interactions in your life. It provides many affordable activities for families, and serves as a network for support and assistance in a crisis. It can also be a good place to make contacts when you are looking for a job.

**7. Enliven Traditions**
Family traditions build a feeling of solidarity with your extended family, which creates a feeling of security that can help see you though difficult times. Feeling that you are not alone is a huge confidence booster. Holidays offer many opportunities to continue family traditions and to start some of your own.



## Be Active

**8. Move More**
Sitting all day is unhealthy for both the mind and the body. Get up and walk around every waking hour for at least a couple of minutes, and take a walk everyday during your lunch hour.

You can also start a walking group with friends or coworkers, or try some sports that you might enjoy. Sign up for an exercise class or start your own. Try Tai Chi, or explore YouTube to [create your own home workout plan](https://www.moneycrashers.com/create-free-workout-plan-routines/).

When you elevate your fitness level, add jogging to your walking routine. Jogging causes endorphins to be released, which gives you a natural “runner’s high.”

**9. “Exercise” Your Smile**
You can trick your brain to feel happy with a very easy exercise: Just smile. Don’t believe it? Try it. This result is due to neuro-linguistic programming, where an “anchor” or trigger (in this case a smile) cues the brain to feel the same feelings it had the last time those muscles were used.

**10. Declutter Your Home and Your Mind**
Find a way to do a little [decluttering](https://www.moneycrashers.com/why-downsizing-can-save-you-money/) every day. Declutter your bedroom for a more comfortable, relaxing place to sleep, and clean your desk or bill paying area for better financial peace of mind. Declutter your closet and your dresser drawers to make the mornings easier. There are plenty of places in your house or office that you can tidy up.

Set aside 15 minutes a day for decluttering, and remember, the most difficult step is getting started. You will be amazed at how great you’ll begin to feel as your life becomes less cluttered.



## Sleep Well

**11. Find Your Magic “Sleep Number”**
For most adults, seven seems to be the magic number of hours of sleep needed a night, according to a study reported in the [Harvard Business Review](https://blogs.hbr.org/schwartz/2011/03/sleep-is-more-important-than-f.html). Getting enough sleep will enable you to do your best work and help you handle daily challenges. If you sleep for less than seven hours per night it can greatly affect your health, even if you are just a little sleep-deprived.

**12. Monitor Your Caffeine Intake**
If you have difficulty sleeping, caffeine could be the culprit. Try cutting back on caffeinated drinks, and limit yourself to drinking them early in the day. And if that doesn’t help, try cutting out caffeine altogether and substituting caffeinated beverages with products such as decaf coffee or herbal tea. Remember, many sodas and energy drinks contain caffeine, as do many energy bars and foods with chocolate.

**13. Relax for at Least an Hour Before Bedtime**
To really relax, shut down the Internet at least an hour before bed. And don’t exercise just before bedtime, as that increases your circulation. You need to clear your mind, so watch television or read a book or magazine to wind down. Some people think a shower wakes you up, so consider switching your shower to the morning and take a relaxing bath instead.



## Eat Well

**14. Avoid Trans Fats**
Research cited by [Consumer Reports](https://news.consumerreports.org/health/2011/01/trans-fats-and-depression-transfats-harmful-for-your-heart-and-happiness.html) shows that eating foods containing trans fats can make you [feel depressed](https://www.moneycrashers.com/deal-depression-anxiety-naturally/). Trans fats are used in many processed foods, but you have to read the food labels to be sure.

Trans fats are contained within the ingredients with the word “hydrogenated” in them. Many brands of margarine are now trans fat-free, and prominently display this information on the label. However, many baked goods and even cake mixes contain trans fats.

In lieu of processed foods, choose to eat [fresh fruits and vegetables](https://www.moneycrashers.com/how-to-save-money-buying-fruits-and-vegetables/), such as those you can find at a farmers’ market. Also, try your hand at baking from scratch, not using mixes.

**15. Eat More “Superfoods”**
Plan to include more vitamin-packed [superfoods](https://www.moneycrashers.com/list-best-superfoods-healthy/) in your diet. These foods not only keep you healthier and  more energetic, but many of them may also combat stress.

Once a week, try a new recipe using a superfood to find new favorites to add to your [meal planning](https://www.moneycrashers.com/family-meal-planning-tips-ideas/) rotation. For example, you can try preparing foods such as salmon, kale, mushrooms, broccoli, avocados, [beans](https://www.moneycrashers.com/easy-rice-beans-recipes/), walnuts, and whole grains.



## Spend Time With Nature

**16. Take a Walk in the Wild**
A park is fine, but the less manicured and the more “natural” the area the better. Pay attention to the sounds, sights, and smells. Find five things that are unusual enough to tell someone about, and take photos or videos. Even if you are in the city, take the time to look up and notice how the sky looks that day.

**17. Dig in the Dirt**
Get your hands dirty. Whether landscaping or [starting a home vegetable garden](https://www.moneycrashers.com/how-to-save-money-with-a-home-garden/), it doesn’t matter – it may make you feel happier. This strange effect comes from M. vaccae, microscopic organisms in the soil that get onto your skin. They can trigger the brain to produce more seratonin, a neurotransmitter which can [help improve mood](http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/news/1154/how-gardening-could-cure-depression).

When people tell you they are never happier than when they are digging in the dirt, they are telling you the truth. So put the gardening gloves away and start moving dirt around.

**18. Get Some Sun**
Many people have [seasonal affective disorder (SAD)](https://www.moneycrashers.com/frugal-ways-to-treat-seasonal-affective-disorder/), as they become depressed during months with little sunshine. Even if you aren’t afflicted with SAD, you can be affected by lack of sunshine. Go outside for at least 15 minutes; on a cold day you can walk briskly and at least get some sun on your face. The sun helps your body produce vitamin D, which many people have a deficiency of.



## Lighten Up

**19. Blow Off a Little Steam Occasionally**
Whether it’s cheering for your team or getting crazy during a holiday, it helps to let loose for a little while on a regular basis. In the Middle Ages in Europe, holidays (literally “holy days,” honoring a saint) served as days for peasants to vent their frustrations, thereby preventing revolts.

You don’t want to be a revolting peasant. Have a party and get a little wacky. Don’t take yourself too seriously.

**20. Go Play**
Play with your family and friends. Have a watergun fight, run a race for fun, blow bubbles, throw a Frisbee, go sledding, skip rope, or make mud pies. Have a [family game night](https://www.moneycrashers.com/family-game-night-ideas-board-games/) and play board games that make you laugh, or play tug-of-war with the dog. Whatever it is that makes you smile spontaneously, do it.



## Final Word

If you’re trying to lead a happier, healthier life, making the necessary changes is up to you. Start with the items on this list that appeal the most to you, and work some of the others into your life a little at a time. Keep a notebook and write about which changes you made and how they worked for you – following the example set by the author of “[The Happiness Project](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/006158326X/ref%3Das_li_qf_sp_asin_il_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=monecras-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=006158326X).” When you get discouraged, read back over your entries to remind yourself of all you have accomplished.

What kinds of things make you happy? Do you have any tips you’d like to share that improve health and happiness?