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5 habits that lead to more happiness

Written by Chris Bailey × October 30, 2013

✓ **Takeaway:** Happier people are 31% more productive. To become happier by living more positively, every day recall three things you're grateful for, journal one great experience you had, exercise, meditate, and perform a random act of kindness.

Estimated Reading Time: 2 minutes, 9s.



Happier people are more productive. *Way* more productive.

According to psychologist (and happiness researcher) Shawn Achor, when your brain is happy, it “performs significantly better than it does at negative, neutral, or stressed. Your intelligence rises, your creativity rises, [and] your energy levels rise”.

Achor has deeply explored the topic, and has uncovered that happy people:

- **Are 31% more productive** (*this one's my favorite*)
- Have 37% better sales figures
- Have better, more secure jobs
- Are better at keeping their jobs
- Are more resilient
- Have less burnout

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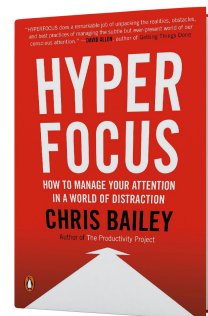
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A practical guide for managing your **attention**—the most powerful resource you have to get stuff done, become more creative, and live a meaningful life.

And more. Happy doctors are even “19% faster, [and] more accurate at coming up right the right diagnosis at positive instead of negative, neutral, or stressed”.

According to Achor, “if we can find a way of become positive in the present, then our brains work even more successfully as we’re able to work harder, faster, and more intelligently.” Luckily, there are a number of scientifically-proven ways that you can rewire your brain to become happier.

Achor suggests **five of them you should do every day**:

- **Recall three things you’re grateful for.** In Achor’s studies, after doing this for 21 days, people’s brains begin to “retain a pattern of scanning the world not for the negative, but for the positive first”, making them much happier.
- **Journal one great experience you had.** “Journaling about one positive experience you’ve had over the past 24 hours allows your brain to relive it.”
- **Exercise.** “Exercise teaches your brain that your behavior matters”, and it helps you solidify the connection between your actions and their rewards. Exercise is also a great way to **focus better**.
- **Meditate.** Achor: “We find that meditation allows your brain to get over the cultural ADHD that we’ve been creating by trying to do multiple tasks at once. It allows our brains to focus on the task at hand.”
- **Perform a random act of kindness.** It doesn’t matter if your act of kindness is buying a coffee for the person after you in line, volunteering, or sending a positive email. Achor gets “people, when they open up their inbox, to write one positive email, praising or thanking someone in their social support network.”



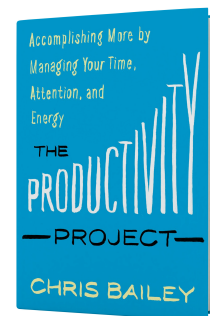
According to Achor, these activities done “in just a two-minute span of time, [for] 21 days in a row, [can] actually rewire your brain, allowing your brain to actually rework more optimistically and more successfully. Happiness “turns on all of the learning centers in your brain, allowing you to adapt to the world in a different way”.

Even though two minutes appears to be enough to rewire how you think, I personally think that’s the *least* you can do, particularly when happier, positive people are 31% more productive.



Written by **Chris Bailey**

Chris Bailey has written hundreds of articles on the subject of productivity, and is the author of two books: *Hyperfocus*, and *The Productivity Project*. His books have been published in 20 languages. Chris writes about productivity on this site, and **speaks to organizations** around the globe on how they can become more productive, without hating the process.



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