

28 pleasant life moments: doing what you enjoy

There are probably days when you are so busy or upset that you don't take the time to do things you enjoy. On the worst of days, you might even forget that there are things that bring you joy. Or perhaps you are doing these things, but not remembering to notice that they make you happy.

Mira got into a fight with her parents this morning before school. Then she got her algebra test back and she had flunked it. When she got her lunch, she dropped her tray on the floor, and everyone nearby turned to stare at her. She felt like her day was the worst ever!

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Brandon got a letter saying that he hadn't been accepted to the college he wanted to go to. He was very upset and was also worried about telling his parents. He wanted to contact his friends for support, but he couldn't. On top of everything, he had been grounded for coming home late last weekend, and his phone and computer privileges had been taken away.

When you have had a bad day like Mira's or Brandon's, it is the perfect time to think of things that bring a smile to your face or make you feel better. If you are down in the dumps, so to speak, you don't have to stay there; you can do something about it.

On the next page is a list of things that can be considered pleasant life moments. Put a check mark next to all the activities you enjoy doing. Then go back and put a star next to your top three.

activity 28 * pleasant life moments: doing what you enjoy

- spending time with pets
- being outdoors
- writing
- taking pictures
- doing a hobby
- playing or listening to music
- spending time with friends
- gardening
- drawing or painting
- exercising
- playing a sport
- meditating
- doing yoga
- reading
- taking a bath
- watching movies
- volunteering
- eating out
- going to a sporting event
- going to a concert
- camping out
- traveling
- talking on the phone
- texting
- shopping
- dancing
- singing
- cooking
- spending time on the computer
- playing video games
- spending time with family

Are there activities you enjoy that were not on the list? Write them here.

something more

You might think that you don't have time to enjoy activities like these. But no matter how busy you are, you can do things that are pleasant and don't take a lot of time: for example, noticing the sun or a pretty flower, enjoying the aroma and appearance of what you are about to eat, or appreciating a conversation with a friend. Learning to notice what little things in your life can bring you happiness—and focusing on them rather than on the negatives—will improve your mood and reduce your stress.

Write down the three activities you checked (circled) earlier. Then choose two more and add them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

This week, try at least two of these activities. After you do each, reflect on whether it made you feel better. Then write what it was like to take the time to do something you enjoyed.

Activity 1

Activity 2

focusing on the positive 29

Most people think they want to be happy and to enjoy their lives, and many express that desire in words. But actually being happy and enjoying your life takes more than just a passing thought or statement; it is about actively noticing and doing what makes you happy.

Olivia was really happy. She was going to get her braces off after two years, and she just found out that she got a B on her biology test, which had been really hard for her. When she left the class, she got a hug from her best friend.

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Nora was excited because her parents had agreed to let her go to a battle of the bands show, where her favorite punk band would be playing. She was content in general because she felt that her friendships were going well, without any of the drama that so often went on.

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Walking home from school, Tristen saw a rainbow and it brought a smile to his face. He had had a so-so day, and seeing that rainbow really made him happy. When he got home, he had a good talk with his brother and found chatting online with friends that night was really fun.

Many people allow one negative event to outweigh the positives of a day, but there are almost always good moments, even on days that might seem bad. You might not always notice these good moments if you are caught up in the negative or too busy thinking about the past or future. Like Olivia, Nora, and Tristen, you just need to look for the good moments and pay attention to the things that made you happy.

Notice one pleasant event every day for the next week and add it to the calendar on the next page. First, tell what the event was. Then describe any thoughts or emotions you experienced before, during, and after the event. Tell what you felt in your body before, during, and after the event. Finally, tell how you feel and what you are thinking right now.

activity 29 * focusing on the positive

Pleasant Events Calendar				
	The Event	My Emotions or Thoughts	What I Felt in My Body	What I Feel and Think Now
Example	I passed my driver's test.	I was really stoked. I can't wait to drive to school!	I had butterflies in my stomach during the test. Afterward I couldn't stop smiling.	I am still really happy and can see how it is going to change my life.
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

something more

What if a day could be just a day—not pleasant or unpleasant, not good or bad, but just a day filled with all types of moments? How would thinking this way change your perspective?

Write what comes to your mind when you think of the word “happiness.” If you prefer, take a separate piece of paper and draw what comes to your mind.

What is your most recent memory of something that made you happy?

What about you makes you happy?

What things outside of you make you happy, like friends, family, hobbies, and so on?

activity 29 * focusing on the positive

Why do you think happiness is so important?

What could you do right now or in the near future that would make you happy or happier than you already are?

Think of someone you know who seems happy. Ask what that person thinks happiness is. Write it here.
