



The WORLD BOOK of
HAPPINESS



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'Those who feel good, do good.'

The Ten Commandments of Happiness

Imagine you have been a specialist in happiness studies for more than fifteen years and you have written more than seventeen books. Then 'The World Book of Happiness' dares to ask you to summarize your research in something like twenty lines. **David G. Myers** sighs and tries to do so with a smile in *The Ten Commandments of Happiness*.

Want a happier life?

Realise that enduring happiness doesn't come from success. People adapt to changing circumstances – even to wealth or disability. Thus, wealth is like health: its utter absence breeds misery, but having it (or any other circumstance we long for) doesn't guarantee happiness. **Give priority to close relationships.** Intimate friendships with those who care deeply about you can help you to weather the difficult times. Confiding in someone is good for both soul and body. Resolve to nurture your closest relationship by *not* taking your loved ones for granted, by displaying to them the sort of kindness you display to others, by affirming them, by playing together and sharing together. To rejuvenate your affections, resolve to *act* lovingly. **Seek work and leisure that engage your skills.** Happy people often are in a zone called 'flow', absorbed in tasks that challenge but don't overwhelm them. The most expensive forms of leisure (sitting on a yacht) often provide less flow experience

than gardening, socialising or craft work. **Take control of your time.** Happy people feel in control of their lives. To master your use of time, set goals and break them down into daily aims. Although we often overestimate how much we will accomplish in any given day (leaving us frustrated), we generally underestimate how much we can accomplish in a year, given just a little progress every day.

Act happy. We can sometimes act ourselves into a happier frame of mind. Manipulated into a smiling expression, people feel better; when they scowl, the whole world seems to scowl back. So put on a happy face. Talk *as if* you feel positive self-esteem, are optimistic, and are outgoing. Going through the motions can trigger the emotions. **Join the 'movement' movement.** An avalanche of research reveals that aerobic exercise can relieve mild depression and anxiety, whilst at the same time promoting health and energy. Sound minds reside in sound bodies. So get off your bums, couch potatoes! **Give your body the sleep it wants.** Happy people live active vigorous lives yet reserve time for renewing sleep and solitude. Many people suffer from a sleep debt, with resulting fatigue, diminished alertness, and gloomy moods. **Focus beyond the self.** Reach out to those in need. Happiness increases helpfulness (those who feel good, do good). But doing good also makes you feel even better. **Nurture your spiritual self.** For many people, faith provides a support community, a reason to focus beyond self, and a sense of purpose and hope. Study after study finds that actively religious people are happier, and that they cope better with crises. **Keep a gratitude journal.** Those who pause each day to reflect on some positive aspect of their lives (their health, friends, family, freedom, education, senses, natural surroundings, and so on) experience heightened well-being.

The keys

- **Give priority to close relationships instead of success.**
- **Engage your skills, control your time.**
- **Smile. Move enough and sleep enough.**
- **Do good to others, nurture your spiritual self and keep a gratitude journal.**

Social psychologist Professor David G. Myers has written specialized articles and popular books including 'The Pursuit of Happiness: Who Is Happy and Why'. The ten commandments are a summary of the ideas in this book. His scientific writings have been recognized by the award of the Gordon Allport Prize. David G. Myers is an all-weather bicyclist and works in a university with a perfect name for happiness research: Hope College (Michigan, USA).