

HAPPINESS TOOLKIT
(Extended Edition)

Evidence-Based Practices for Sustainable Wellbeing



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Introduction

Imagine having a science-backed roadmap to lasting happiness—one that doesn't require expensive retreats or complicated lifestyle changes. This toolkit synthesizes cutting-edge research from the New York Times interactive guide "How to Be Happy" (Doré, 2024) into practical strategies you can start using today.

Whether you're dealing with stress, seeking deeper connections, or simply wanting more joy in your daily life, these evidence-based practices can help you build genuine, sustainable wellbeing.

Throughout this toolkit, you'll find helpful notes about how specific practices can be extended and deepened through One Planet Thriving's training programs: the **Three Habits to Transform Conflict: From Storm to Stillness in 21 Days** mini-course for immediate relationship improvements, and the comprehensive **Kindness for a Change (KFAC)** program for complete life transformation. Look for the → symbols to discover how each happiness practice connects to deeper learning opportunities.

1. IMMEDIATE MOOD BOOSTERS

Quick Techniques (1-5 minutes)

When you need a fast emotional reset, try these proven methods:

a) **Gratitude Practice**

- Write 3 things you're grateful for
- Focus on specific details, not generalities
- Include one small thing often overlooked

→ *Three Habits expands this: Learn how gratitude helps you find common ground even during disagreements*

b) **Cold Exposure**

- Splash cold water on face
 - 30-second cold shower ending
 - Activates vagus nerve for mood boost
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→ *KFAC deeper dive: Understand the polyvagal theory behind why cold exposure regulates your nervous system and how that connects to your brain, habit change, and mindfulness.*

c) Movement Burst

- 60 seconds of jumping jacks
- Dance to one favorite song
- Quick walk around the block

→ *Three Habits connection: Movement helps you pause skillfully before reacting in conflicts*

Why These Work: Research shows even brief interventions can shift your emotional state when practiced consistently (Doré, 2024).

2. DAILY PRACTICES

Morning Rituals

Start your day with these foundation-building habits:

a) Sleep Optimization

- 7-9 hours nightly
- Consistent wake time (even weekends)
- No screens 1 hour before bed

→ *KFAC insight: Discover how sleep affects your ventral vagal system—your body's social engagement network – but also how it gives you more choice and less reactivity.*

b) Morning Light Exposure

- 10-30 minutes outdoor light within first hour
- Helps regulate circadian rhythm
- Improves mood and alertness

Light Exposure Effectiveness (Best to Least):

1. Direct outdoor exposure (100% effective)
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2. Open window/door (85-90% effective)
3. By closed window - direct sun (40-60% effective)
4. Light therapy box, 10,000 lux (70-80% effective)
5. Regular indoor lighting (5-10% effective)

Key insight: Even cloudy outdoor light (10,000+ lux) far exceeds typical indoor lighting (200-500 lux)

Throughout the Day

Weave these practices into your existing routine:

c) Social Connections

- Send one meaningful message to a friend
- Have one conversation beyond small talk
- Practice active listening in interactions

→ *Three Habits skill-building: Master the "Listen First" technique that transforms every conversation*

→ *KFAC framework: Understand the neuroscience of why social connection is central to all happiness*

d) Mindful Moments

- Three deep breaths before meals
- 5-minute meditation daily
- Notice one beautiful thing on commute

→ *Three Habits application: Use mindfulness for the "Skillful Pause" when triggered*

→ *KFAC depth: Explore how mindfulness rewires your brain for lasting emotional resilience*

3. WEEKLY INVESTMENTS

Build deeper wellbeing with these regular practices:

Relationship Building

a) Quality Time

- Schedule 2 hours of undistracted time with loved ones
- One new shared experience
- Express appreciation specifically

→ *Three Habits enhancement: Learn the "Conversation Blueprint" to make quality time even more meaningful*

→ *KFAC transformation: Discover how quality time relates to your own emotion regulation, nervous system, quality sex (and what that means), and the ability to communicate.*

b) Community Engagement

- Attend one group activity
- Volunteer for 1-2 hours
- Connect with neighbors

→ *KFAC vision: See how community engagement connects to creating sustainable cultural change and feeds back to increase individual thriving.*

Personal Growth

c) Flow Activities

- Engage in challenging hobby for 2+ hours
- Learn one new skill element
- Create something tangible

→ *KFAC mastery: Understand how flow states relate to finding your life purpose and practices essential to this.*

d) Nature Connection

- Spend 2+ hours in natural settings
- Notice seasonal changes
- Practice "forest bathing" or mindful walking

→ *KFAC integration: Learn how nature connection supports both personal healing and planetary sustainability*

4. MONTHLY REVIEWS

Track your progress and adjust your approach:

Reflection Questions

a) What brought the most joy this month? b) Which relationships need more attention? c) What habits served me well? d) What would I like to adjust?

→ *Three Habits reflection: Add "Which conversations went better using the Three Habits?"*

→ *KFAC practice: Use the DREOSK principle (Deal with Reality Early, Often, Skillfully, with Kindness) for deeper reviews*

Happiness Audit

Rate 1-10 in each life domain:

- Physical health
- Relationships
- Work/purpose
- Personal growth
- Fun/recreation

→ *KFAC comprehensive assessment: Expand to include nervous system regulation and social impact measures*

5. THE SCIENCE BEHIND HAPPINESS

The NY Times guide reveals four key principles (Doré, 2024):

a) **Hedonic Adaptation:** We adapt to both positive and negative changes

- Solution: Vary pleasurable activities and savor experiences mindfully

→ *KFAC science: Learn the neurobiological mechanisms behind adaptation and how to work with them*

b) **Social Connection Priority:** Relationships are the #1 predictor of happiness

- Solution: Invest time in deep connections, quality over quantity

→ *Three Habits focus: Transform difficult relationships into sources of connection*

→ *KFAC foundation: Understand why humans are neurologically wired for connection*

c) **Mind-Body Integration:** Physical and mental wellbeing are interconnected

- Solution: Regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress management

→ *KFAC expertise: Master polyvagal theory to optimize your mind-body connection*

d) **Purpose and Meaning:** Goals beyond self correlate with life satisfaction

- Solution: Identify values, contribute to something larger

→ *KFAC calling: Connect personal purpose to planetary thriving*

6. COMMON HAPPINESS TRAPS

Avoid these research-identified pitfalls:

a) **Comparison Trap**

- Limit social media exposure
- Focus on personal progress
- Practice gratitude for what you have

→ *Three Habits antidote: Learn to appreciate differences rather than compare during conflicts*

b) **Perfectionism**

- Aim for "good enough" in most areas
- Celebrate small wins
- Learn from setbacks without self-judgment

→ *KFAC healing: Address the root causes of perfectionism through trauma-informed practices*

c) **Materialism Focus**

- Prioritize experiences over possessions
- Invest in relationships, not things
- Practice voluntary simplicity

→ *KFAC vision: Explore how shifting from materialism supports both personal and planetary wellbeing*

7. YOUR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Start Small & Build

1. Choose ONE practice from each timeframe (immediate, daily, weekly)
2. Track for 2 weeks before adding more
3. Adjust based on what works for you

→ *Three Habits method: Apply the same "start small" approach to transforming difficult conversations*

Make it Stick

- Link new habits to existing routines
- Use environmental cues/reminders
- Find an accountability partner
- Review and adjust monthly

→ *KFAC support: Get a full community of practice partners for lasting change*

8. CUSTOMIZE FOR YOUR LIFE

Happiness isn't one-size-fits-all. Consider:

a) Personality Type

- Introverts: Solo activities, smaller gatherings
- Extroverts: Group activities, larger social events

→ *Three Habits adaptation: Learn communication styles that work for both introverts and extroverts*

→ *KFAC Live programs provide in-depth Q&A to tailor essential transformation tools to your unique personality and situation.*

b) Natural Rhythms

- Adjust timing to your chronotype
- Work with, not against, your energy patterns

→ *KFAC wisdom: Understand your nervous system's unique rhythms and regulation needs*

c) Life Stage

- Parents: Include children in practices
- Students: Integrate with study schedule
- Retirees: Focus on structure and purpose

→ *KFAC flexibility: Access age-appropriate practices for every life stage*

9. GOING DEEPER: FROM HAPPINESS TO THRIVING

While these practices can significantly boost your happiness, imagine having:

- A complete framework for understanding why certain practices work better for you than others
- Advanced skills for navigating life's inevitable challenges with grace and resilience
- A supportive community of like-minded individuals on the same journey
- Expert guidance tailored to your specific needs and goals

We offer two pathways to deepen your practice:

(1) Three Habits Mini-Course: Transform Conflict in 21 Days

Ready to apply happiness principles to your most challenging relationships? The Three Habits mini-course teaches you proven communication skills that work even in difficult conversations.

What You'll Learn:

- **The Skillful Pause:** How to catch yourself before reacting and choose a better response
 - **The Conversation Blueprint:** A simple framework for staying connected during disagreements
 - **Listen First:** The counterintuitive approach that transforms conflict into understanding
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Perfect for You If:

- You want practical communication tools you can use immediately
- Your relationships could benefit from better conflict resolution
- You prefer a focused, shorter commitment (just 21 days)
- You're looking for an affordable way to start your transformation journey

Course Features:

- Daily 10-minute lessons
- Practice exercises with real-world applications
- Email support throughout the course
- Lifetime access to materials

Learn more at <https://oneplanetthriving.com/three-habits/>

(2) Kindness for a Change (KFAC): Complete Transformation Program

For those ready for deep, comprehensive change, KFAC is our flagship 10-module program that takes these happiness practices to the highest level.

What Makes KFAC Different?

Beyond Individual Happiness While this toolkit focuses on personal wellbeing, KFAC teaches you how happiness connects to relationship quality and even planetary health. You'll discover why true thriving requires integration across all life domains.

The Neuroscience of Lasting Change KFAC provides deep understanding of how your brain and nervous system work, including:

- Why some days these practices feel impossible (hint: it's not your fault)
- How to regulate your nervous system for sustainable wellbeing
- The science of creating lasting neural pathways for happiness

Transforming Stress & Conflict Learn advanced techniques for:

- Turning triggers into opportunities for growth
 - Communicating skillfully during disagreements (building on Three Habits skills)
 - Building resilience that serves you in all situations
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Community Support & Expert Guidance Unlike solo practice with a toolkit, KFAC offers:

- Live sessions with Dr. Donal MacCoon, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist with 20+ years of experience
- A community of practice partners for mutual support
- Personalized feedback on your unique challenges

Integration with Life Purpose KFAC helps you connect happiness practices to:

- Your deepest values and life purpose
- Creating positive change in your relationships
- Contributing to a more sustainable world

Learn more at <https://oneplanetthriving.com/kfac-action/>

Which Program is Right for You?

Choose Three Habits if you:

- Want immediate help with relationship conflicts
- Prefer a shorter, focused program
- Are looking for practical communication tools
- Want to test the waters before a bigger commitment

Choose KFAC if you:

- Want to understand WHY these practices work, not just HOW
- Seek comprehensive transformation across all life areas, including individual thriving, a deeper dive into relationships, and how both connect to cultural and planetary change
- Value live instruction and community support
- Are ready to invest in deep, lasting change
- Want to connect personal wellbeing to larger purpose

Your Growth Journey: Free Toolkit → [Three Habits \(21 days\)](#) → [KFAC \(10 modules\)](#)

Many students start with Three Habits to build confidence and skills, then progress to KFAC for complete transformation.

QUICK REFERENCE CARD

Daily Happiness Checklist:

- ☐ Morning sunlight (10-30 min)
- ☐ Gratitude practice (3 things)
- ☐ One meaningful conversation
- ☐ Physical movement (30+ min)
- ☐ Mindful moment
- ☐ Acts of kindness
- ☐ Quality sleep (7-9 hours)

Ready for More?

Start with Communication Skills: Visit <https://oneplanetthriving.com/three-habits/> to transform conflict into connection in just 21 days.

Go Deep with KFAC: Visit <https://oneplanetthriving.com/kfac-action/> to learn how our comprehensive program can help you:

- Master these practices with expert guidance
- Understand the deeper science of wellbeing
- Join a supportive community of growth-minded individuals
- Create lasting transformation in all areas of life

START YOUR HAPPINESS JOURNEY TODAY

You don't need to wait for perfect conditions to begin. Choose one practice from this toolkit and start today. Small, consistent actions create big changes over time.

Remember: Happiness isn't a destination—it's a skill you can develop. And when you're ready to deepen your practice and accelerate your growth, the KFAC program will be here to support your next steps.

REFERENCES

Doré, B. (2024, April 28). How to be happy. *The New York Times Magazine*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/04/28/magazine/how-to-be-happy.html>

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This free resource is brought to you by One Planet Thriving, dedicated to helping individuals and communities create sustainable wellbeing.

Want to dive deeper? Learn more about the Kindness for a Change program at
<https://oneplanetthriving.com/kfac-action/>

Connect with us:

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