

# Sunny Side Up

Do you know how to be happy? Take this quiz to find out.

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**1. Cheerful people generally:**

- a) Do only activities they enjoy
- b) Look for little ways to boost their mood during the day
- c) Don't give happiness much thought

**Answer: (c).** The pursuit of happiness can actually backfire, say experts at the University of Denver. People who place a high value on happiness have, on average, 17 more symptoms of depression than those who don't.

**2. Research shows that vacation-goers feel happiest:**

- a) A month before they take off for their destination
- b) In the middle of the vacation
- c) Right after they get back

**Answer: (a).** Sure, a week off is nice, but the elation you get from it is mostly in the anticipation, say Dutch researchers. They found that planning a vacation can improve your mood for up to two months before the actual trip. Unfortunately, the moment you get home, you're no more or less content than someone who hadn't gone away.

**3. True or false? How happy you are is determined by your genes.**

**Answer: False.** According to research, happiness is about 50 percent genetic, 10 percent influenced by life circumstances, and 40 percent influenced by how you think and act every day.

**4. To get the most enjoyment out of your work life, you should:**

- a) Make friends with your coworkers
- b) Be your own boss
- c) Ask for a raise
- d) Telecommute/work from home

**Answer: (a).** A Gallup-Healthways survey found that the biggest determinant of job satisfaction is having a best friend at the office, says Dan Buettner, author of *Thrive: Finding Happiness the Blue Zones Way*. He suggests getting to know your colleagues outside of work by organizing a happy hour or joining the office softball team.

**5. If you're sad, which of the following is most likely to cheer you up?**

- a) Watching reruns of your favorite sitcom
- b) Reading a novel
- c) Tuning in to the news

**Answer: (b).** People who read often are happier than those who watch more TV, according to researchers at the University of Maryland – even if the plot of their paperback is depressing.

**6. You have a little free time. Which activity will bring you the most pleasure?**

- a) Working in the yard
- b) Tackling home improvements
- c) Catching up on DVR'd TV shows
- d) Hitting the mall

**Answer: (a).** In a University of Rochester study, 90 percent of subjects got a boost in energy and had their outlook brightened by spending time outdoors around trees, grass, and living creatures.

**7. True or false? Optimists are happier than pessimists.**

**Answer: False.** Just because you see the glass as half empty doesn't mean you can't be happy. In fact, it turns out that expecting the worst can actually make you less prone to depression, particularly during difficult events, such as an illness, a divorce, or the death of a loved one. The reason: Lowered expectations mean less disappointment in life.

**8. Which genre of music is known as an instant mood booster?**

- a) Classical
- b) Reggae
- c) Jazz
- d) Top 40
- e) All of the above

**Answer: (e).** Many studies have found that listening to music can lift your spirits, and any genre will do the trick as long as it's one you enjoy. "For some people it's Bach; for others it's heavy metal," says Elizabeth Lombardo, author of *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*.

**9. Taking \_\_\_\_\_ every day can actually help battle depression.**

- a) Aspirin
- b) Fish oil
- c) A multivitamin
- d) Ginseng

**Answer: (b).** Studies have found that a daily fish oil supplement can be as effective as prescription drugs in treating depression. "Fish oil is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which increase your brain's ability to receive mood-boosting signals from 'feel-good' hormones like serotonin and norepinephrine," says Teresa Aubele, coauthor of *Train Your Brain to Get Happy*.

**10. Which piece of happiness advice from a Disney movie is actually backed by scientific evidence?**

- a) "Look for the bare necessities." – *The Jungle Book*
- b) "Just say Hakuna Matata (no worries)!" – *The Lion King*
- c) "What do you do when things go wrong? Oh! You sing a song." – *Snow White*
- d) "Think happy thoughts." – *Peter Pan*

**Answer: (d).** Just imagining yourself laughing can reduce sadness, according to research from Bowling Green State University. "We scanned subjects' brains and found that the areas that indicate happiness lit up whether the subjects were actually laughing or just thinking about it," says author Nakia Gordon.