



THE 10 HABITS OF A JOYFUL LIFE AND THE LIFE SKILLS TO ATTAIN THEM

Written by Jared Hippler

Inspiring the Progress of Humanity through the Power of Play

A
Primally
Playful
Foundation

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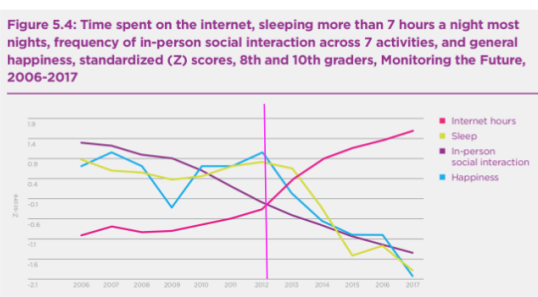
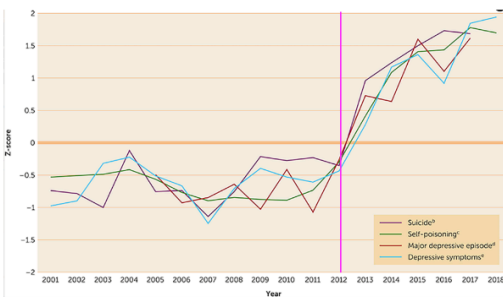
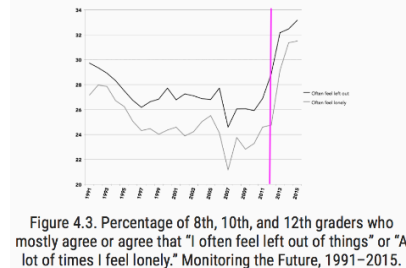
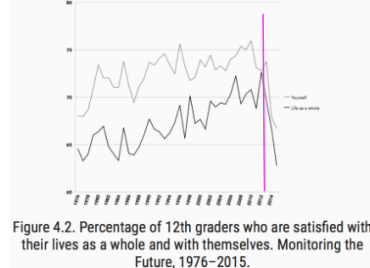
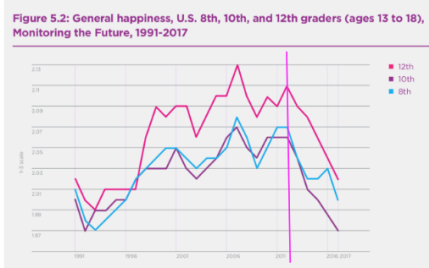
A Primer on Happiness

Hello! I am very happy that you have decided to read our happiness booklet. Before we get into the 10 habits I will touch on a number of aspects revolving around happiness. Discipline, balance, & habits are vital for reaching any goal. Your habits determine your success, health, and happiness. What you do consistently, you become: so, **be mindful of your habits and strive to align them with your priorities.** We will start out with why it is so important for people, especially youth, to be taught about happiness and mental health.

74% of all deaths, worldwide, are from lifestyle-related diseases (World Health Organization). The 'why' is because the vast majority of people are not thriving with their physical and mental health, and the trajectory of the mental and physical health of humans is on a steep downward trajectory. A Primally Playful Foundation wishes to change that trajectory. Our sustainable happiness program for schools and orphanages and this booklet are two ways we are changing that trajectory.

The Mental Health Crisis in the United States

I created this booklet because happiness among youth in the United States has experienced a drastic downward descent since 2012. Wherever my research on happiness led me, I kept seeing this 2012 trend. And not just happiness, time spent with friends—in person—started to plummet, as did self-esteem, well-being, exercise, and healthy sleep. Just about every conceivable activity that has a positive effect on mental health experienced a dramatic decline. Cases of depression, anxiety, suicide, and loneliness also exploded—and in some cases quadrupled—in the 7 years from 2012 to 2019.



Suicide, depression, and self-poisoning among girls aged 12-15. (CDC)

The pink vertical line marks the year 2012. This was the year that over half the US population owned a smartphone.

I also identified another trend that exploded and follows a practically identical ascent, which is time spent staring at a screen. **In 2012, over half the US population owned a smartphone.** This year was the tipping point. Now, in 2024, over half the world's population owns a smartphone. As smartphones proliferate in other countries, what happened (and continues) in the US, which is currently undergoing its worst mental health crisis, is beginning to happen in other countries. After reading the next 6 pages, you will not only have a better understanding of happiness, but you will also

understand why screen entertainment and social media are so addictive and why they are the biggest contributors to this mental health crisis.

When we engage with social media and most screen entertainment, these inputs are hyper-stimulating. In response, our brains produce a large amount of “happy chemicals,” which you'll learn about in the following section. One of those happy chemicals is called dopamine; dopamine is also known as the motivating chemical, because when we actively strive to reach our goals, no matter how big or small, our brain produces dopamine. However, when we engage with screen entertainment and especially social media for long to even moderate amounts of time, **our brain gets worn out by producing excessive dopamine, and then, when we put the phone down and need to get motivated to do whatever else we need to do to be successful, happy, and healthy, our brain isn't able to produce the dopamine needed to motivate us because it is worn out from earlier over-production.** Our brain functions as such, 'Why would I put effort into doing the things that will naturally produce dopamine when I can just look at this screen and get it?'

I am putting this in the very beginning of this booklet because you can know what to do to be happy, healthy and successful, and I think most people do know what to do, at least the basics of what they need to do to be more successful in any area of their life. But if you don't have the motivation or the willpower to DO those things, then it's all for naught. **And, by far, the leading drainers of dopamine (the motivating chemical) are screen entertainment and social media.**

The Physiology of Happiness

On a physiological level, happiness occurs when our brains produce certain chemicals called neurotransmitters, which make us feel happy. We produce these neurotransmitters naturally when we engage in certain activities. We can also get these happy chemicals through drugs, alcohol, and screen entertainment, especially social media. The four main happiness neurotransmitters are Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, and Endorphins. Luckily, they happen to make up the most perfect acronym of all time: DOSE! The difference between sustainable happiness and addiction is how you get your DOSE. One of the reasons why social media is so addictive is that it can trigger all 4 happy chemicals. Here is a little bit about each neurotransmitter, including the activities that trigger the production of each.

Dopamine The Motivating Neurotransmitter

This is the most important of the 4 neurotransmitters (NT) because one element it is associated with is motivation. When we set goals and are striving to reach those goals, our brain produces dopamine. It is known as the Motivating Chemical. Anytime we check something off our to-do list, we get rewarded with a hit of dopamine. The reason this is the most important of the 4 is because it's all good and well to know what you have to do in order to be happy, healthy, or successful in any area of your life, but knowing this is meaningless unless you can summon the discipline to DO what you need to do in order to be successful.

We also produce dopamine when we

- Meditate
- Exercise
- Experience something unique, something out of the ordinary
- When we are looking for something and find it, the brain will release dopamine.

Oxytocin The Cuddle Chemical

Our brain produces oxytocin when we

- Meditate
- Exercise
- Experience affectionate human touch. Or animal touch—when you pet and love on your pets.

- Spend quality time with friends
- Practice yoga
- Listen to certain types of music
- Sing

Serotonin The Sunshine and Nature Chemical

Our brain produces serotonin when we

- Meditate
- Exercise
- Get in the sun
- Get out in nature
- Experience mood induction. This happens when we consciously bring on a certain state. Focusing on gratitude, thinking of a fond or funny memory, looking at photographs that make you feel nostalgic, all trigger serotonin.
- Have healthy sleep
- Laugh

Endorphins The Exercise & Laughter Chemical

Our brains produce endorphins when we

- Meditate
- Exercise
- Laugh with friends
- Commit acts of kindness
- Make music
- Get into sunshine

The 3 Types of Happiness

There are three different types of happiness. Simply learning about the three different types is very helpful, because once you are aware of them, you can't unlearn them. When you get the vast majority of your happiness from one of them (that is, hedonic), that is addiction. Naming the three types also provides a vocabulary to help talk about happiness, and you will recognize why certain activities make you happy. Below are their definitions:

Hedonic Pleasure (Instant Gratification From External Sources)

Refers to pleasure we receive from external sources such as food, drugs, alcohol, screen usage, and so on. You must imbibe this type of happiness by eating it, drinking it, watching it, taking a pill, or taking it in some other manner. This kind of pleasure functions through instant gratification. You do not have to work for this type of happiness. When you receive the vast majority of your happiness from hedonic sources, you are addicted.

Eudaimonic Fulfillment

Eudaimonic happiness comes from activities that give you meaning and purpose, such as when you are developing skills and being authentic. You must *do* in order to *experience* this type of happiness, and it is a good way to help you remember the word. YOU must choose to exercise. YOU must choose to paint, or hang out with friends, or do whatever it is that lights you up. You must work for this type of happiness. This type of happiness makes you feel fulfilled. Sport is one example of eudaimonic happiness. When you are on the sports field, you have predetermined meaning and purpose, “you want that ball to go in the goal, more times than the other team.” Sports require skills, and

the more effort you put into learning the skills, the better your performances will become. Because sports are mostly nonverbal: you can't help but to be authentic while playing.

Chaironic Joy & Connection

Also known as spiritual or cosmic happiness. You experience this type of happiness whenever you engage in an activity that causes you to feel your connection with others and, or, a higher source of energy and power. Being in the present moment engages you with this type of happiness. Activities such as meditation, yoga, prayer, group dancing, and singing all connect you , to—and through— chaironic happiness.

Addiction – Simplified

When we get the vast majority of our happiness from hedonic sources and it has negative effects on our lives—and when our immediate response to stress is to seek out more hedonic happiness,—then we are addicted.

Our nervous system is homeostatic, which means that when we produce a lot of something, it wants to return to a normal level, and it does so naturally. But when we overstimulate our nervous system and our brain is pumping out exorbitant amounts of neurotransmitters for long periods of time, our brain gets burnt out from producing so many neurotransmitters. When that outside stimulus is taken away, our emotional system drops below baseline into sadness, depression, and loneliness. We want more of that external stimulus that will make us feel happy & take us above baseline once again. You can see why this is not sustainable: happy, sad, happy, sad, happy sad, and so on.

Humans are pleasure-seeking machines. Our brain wants to conserve energy, and it might ask itself, “Well, why would I go and try and generate these happy chemicals through natural means? I have to put effort into doing so, when I can just absorb them through this drug, screen, or food source?” When people who are struggling with addiction feel stress, their number one response is to take a hit of whatever their hedonic indulgence happens to be. We can also be addicted to certain behaviors as well.

Why screen entertainment/social media is the most prevalent and fastest growing addiction in history:

Social Media & screen entertainment drains our motivating chemical (This is the most important to understand)

When we engage with social media and screen entertainment—particularly for long periods of time—our brains become exhausted from the endless production of dopamine. Then, when we try to generate motivation to complete the more mundane activities we know we need to finish in order to be successful in any area of life (happiness, health, success, etc.), our brain is tired of producing dopamine (the motivating chemical) and wants a break. Consequently, you do not lack the motivation to do the activities that will improve your life in practical ways. This is why screen entertainment addiction is the number one contributor to the mental health crisis among youth in the US.

We can get our needs met...artificially

We all have needs. We have the need for community, for success, expression, celebration, intimacy, and so on. When we look at anything on a screen, our brain cannot differentiate between what's on the screen and what is real. So, when we watch a video of people laughing, our brain believes that those are our friends, that those are real social bonds. When we watch a video of Lionel Messi winning the World Cup, we experience the emotional jubilation of success. But it's fake. It is not, of course, our real lives. More and more people get their needs met artificially through screens. After they put their phones down, they're likely to feel hollow inside; they have depleted their happy chemicals and have nothing concrete to show for it.

Easy & constant access

As mentioned in the previous section on addiction, whenever someone is addicted and feels stress, their first response is to go to their addictive source of hedonic happiness to relieve. A critical element of addiction is easy access to the hedonic source. A smartphone is a happy chemical pump that most people in developed countries, and now many developing countries, have with them 24 hours a day. Whenever a person feels stress, they always have their “drug supply” in their pocket—and just a swipe away.

There is a never-ending supply

Social Media is a never-ending scroll of hyper-stimulating content. New content is uploaded, literally every second of the day.

The Importance of Community, Mentors, & Coaches

It is extremely rare for a person to accomplish anything without the help of others. Community (your tribe) is vitally important—not only for your happiness, but also in helping you accomplish your goals and change your behavior. Community helps to keep you accountable. There is such great power in sharing your true self with others, in being seen and witnessed by others, especially in times of struggle. So, I highly recommend finding a tribe, or tribes, that light you up and with whom you can laugh with easily, and which can hold space for you.

“Holding Space” happens when someone is emotionally present to listen to you and be a conduit for love and kindness. A person who is holding space is not trying to solve anyone's problems or give advice. Someone who is holding space doesn't even have to talk. They are there to share whatever the burden their friend is feeling—to witness that friend, to hear them, and see that person and their emotions. It's very powerful.

Habits and Routines

Our habits dictate our lives, who we are, and who we wish to become. A routine is a chosen habit or set of habits that we choose to complete on a regular basis. Making a routine, especially a morning routine (win the morning, win the day!) is crucial to vibrant health and happiness.

These are 10 lessons—or 10 habits—that I believe can help all individuals live optimally, with vibrant health and happiness. These are not the be-all-and-end-all of habits that will ensure you live joyously. Everyone, including myself, should always be learning and growing. These are simply 10 lessons that work for me, and that have encountered again and again during my studies of health, happiness, success, and my study of self-help books and articles.

Discipline

Know that without discipline, it does not matter how much you know about health, happiness, or behavior change. Plainly put, we each need to have the willpower to do the things we *know* that we need to do. Willpower cannot run 24/7; you need to allow yourself downtime, time to be not “on,” time to be undisciplined. Don't beat yourself up if you experience some lapses in discipline. People often get burned out trying to do too much too quickly, with too little practice.

Pareto's Law, or the 80/20 Principle

Vilfredo Federico Damaso Pareto was an Italian economist who believed that 80% of a person's success is produced by 20% of what that person does. This theory has been tweaked over the years as one lens through which to consider success in multiple ways. For instance, with respect to weight loss, most personal trainers, including myself, will tell you that weight loss is 80% *what* you eat and *when* you eat, and 20% your movement and exercise habits.

For our purposes, I want to bring the 80/20 rule to life in general. As long as you are following good, healthy habits 80% of the time, you should be okay, unless the remaining 20% is egregiously bad. It's important to allow ourselves some "time off" from model, or ideal, behavior. In the section on willpower, I discuss how willpower can ebb and flow and why we should honor this reality.

Balance

Balance is vital to vibrant health & happiness. Many people who are unhappy or feel unfulfilled live a life that is imbalanced. Some parts are not 'fulfilled' as the word literally means.

For example, someone may be well off financially, but they don't have very many intimate relationships & are not thriving emotionally. Or perhaps someone is happy with their family & friends, has money, but is feeling they are not serving humanity or not connecting with a higher purpose.

Be conscious of your energy field and respect that there is an ebb and flow to your rhythms and the rhythms of nature. You need to have your Yin & your Yang.



Yang Qualities

Doing, being active, expressing, thinking, the day and the sun, animals, masculine, aggression, hard, dog-like qualities etc.

Yin Qualities

Receiving, being, stillness, the night and the moon, plants, feminine, soft, nurturing, cat-like qualities.

Puer and Senex

An archetype is a "universally understood symbol, term or pattern of behavior, a prototype upon which others are copied, patterned, or emulated"(Wikipedia). Archetypes are universal symbols that express the essence of our human experience. There are many different archetypes, such as the ruler, the hero, the jester, and the lover, among others. When I talk about happiness, I believe two archetypes are especially important to be aware of: Puer & Senex. To achieve true and sustainable happiness, we need to establish a balance of puer and senex in our lives.

- Puer is the childlike side of our psyche and revolves around play, pleasuring ourselves, spontaneity, leisure and relaxation, stargazing, and daydreaming.

- Senex is the older, more mature side of our psyche that revolves around responsibility, self-discipline, service, getting things done, planning, work, and doing the things we know we need to do in order to be successful in an area of our life. Maturity, reliability, and grounded realism are hallmarks of the senex archetype.

Transformational Trackability & SMART Goals

If you desire transformation in some area of your life, it is helpful to know where you are now, what changes you want to make, & to identify measurable indicators of change. How will you know when you have reached certain goals?

Remember to define SMART goals: These goals are

- S** **Specific**
- M** **Measurable**
- A** **Attainable**
- R** **Realistic**
- T** **Time-Bound**

Routine & Incremental Change

As I noted earlier, a routine is a chosen set of habits. Identify and name the part of your life that needs the most amount of work or attention to increase your overall health and happiness or success. Focus on this part and design a routine that serves to bring that area into conscious control—especially in the morning, if you can.

Please don't try to do too much too soon! Often, people start out very excited and with ambitious plans when they start a new venture, stack a lot of new habits on their plate, and, when they falter, they give up completely. Change isn't easy. Our brain has shaped our personality to seek comfort, & often change isn't comfortable for our psyche. We can subconsciously rebel against change. Change happens incrementally: aim for small, manageable changes. These will build on each other.

Below are 10 habits that can help anyone become vibrantly healthy and happy. If you need help with implementing any of these habits that you are struggling with, find a mentor or a coach. The right mentor or coach can be life-changing.

Jared Hippler

CFO Chief Fun Officer

A Primally Playful Foundation

The 10 Habits for Sustainable Happiness

Discipline, balance, & habits are vital for reaching any goal. Your habits determine your health, happiness, and success, so be mindful of your habits and strive to align them with your priorities.

- Habit 1**
Action Step **Take radical responsibility for your health & happiness**
Don't blame outside factors that are beyond your control: accept them. You are the only one who determines your health, happiness, and success, and what to do about it. Own it.
- Habit 2**
Action Step **Practice yoga and meditation**
Get into the habit of practicing meditation and yoga. These 2 practices, when done consistently, will have the greatest positive effect on your overall health & happiness.
- Habit 3**
Action Step **Practice gratitude**
Practice gratitude. For example, take a moment before each meal to be grateful, maybe you can start and end each day with gratitude.
- Habit 4**
Action Step **Play**
Get into the habit of being primally playful and living with a playful mindset. Make sure you have healthy play outlets, especially social play.
- Habit 5**
Action Step **Seek balance & actuate all your “bodies”**
Make time for exercising all your “bodies”: physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual.
- Habit 6**
Action Step **Expose yourself to nature & sunshine**
Make time to connect with nature. Even if this means just spending some time with your plants or touching the earth at a park.
- Habit 7**
Action Step **Spend quality time with people that light you up**
Our greatest moments of joy come from our relationships with others. Make sure you are genuinely laughing each day.
- Habit 8**
Action Step **Serve a higher purpose**
How are you helping this planet and the beings on it? What is your meaning? Your purpose? Know it, spend time on it, and serve it through your actions.
- Habit 9**
Action Step **Know your priorities & align them with your habits**
Know your priorities, write them out. Put them where you see them every day until you know them intrinsically.
- Habit 10**
Action Step **Focus on love & forgiveness**
Love in its purity is formless & an infinite source of energy. If you make mistakes or don't reach goals, forgive yourself & learn from it.

The 10 Habits for Sustainable Happiness

Habit 1 Take radical responsibility for your health & happiness

Action Step Don't blame outside factors that are out of your control. Accept them. You are the only one who decides your health & happiness & what to do about it. Own it.

The most impactful book I've ever read is called *The Four Agreements*. I have not had drama or overt interpersonal problems with anyone since I read this book 15 years ago. The 2nd agreement is "Do not take anything personally." The author explains how everyone lives in their own reality, their own world. If a stranger walks by you in the street and curses at you, that stranger has so much anger within them that they feel the need to impose it on others. While I would have felt anger before reading this book, I now only feel pity and love for that troubled person.

As long as you believe that your state of being is dependent on outside influences, you will never be truly free and in control. You are the only one who can assess how you feel, and what you plan to do with those feelings. The first step in working toward vibrant health and happiness is knowing that you are in control. Others are not in control, and neither are outside influences.

Habit 2 Yoga & Meditation

Action Step Get into habit of practicing meditating & yoga.

There are simply too many studies that espouse the overwhelming benefits of meditation and yoga to ignore. A google search of "benefits of meditation" yields 21 MILLION hits. From relieving stress, lowering blood pressure, boosting happiness, increasing willpower and discipline, to increasing self-awareness, weight loss, and slowing the effects of aging... I could go on and on. There are different types of meditation, such as yoga, chanting, sitting, walking, and hymns. The general idea of meditation is that you focus entirely on one thing. Whether your focus is your breathing, your movement, a sound, staring at something.... As you set your focus on this singular thing, the rest of your brain and energetic body settles. The brain has been called a drunken monkey, or an untamed horse. Meditation is the practice of sobering up that monkey, taming that horse. There's no doubt about it: your brain rules everything you do. The greater the control you have over it, the more you will be able to focus it to help you create the life you desire. **Your thoughts create physical reality. So, be mindful, and train your brain. It will help every single aspect of your life.**

While we exist on the physical plane in this life, we should absolutely focus on our physical well-being. I espouse the importance of balance, and yoga is about, among other things, balance—and connecting mind and body. If people practiced yoga their whole lives, they could easily be moving freely and joyfully into their 100's.

My blog posting on Meditation can be found here: (<https://www.primalplay.org/single-post/benefits-of-meditation>)

Habit 3

Gratitude

Action Step

Be grateful. This might mean giving thanks before you eat, or perhaps establishing a morning and, or, evening routine of gratitude.

Almost every self-help book out there discusses gratitude and actively engaging in a state of gratitude. Tony Robbins, the renowned master of self help, has a routine every morning in which he focuses on gratitude. Being in a state of gratitude gets us in the habit of always looking at the positive side; this, in turn, influences our entire energetic field, right down to the biochemical level. When you have a co-worker whom you can't stand, find something to be thankful for in connection to that person. Most people for whom we have an aversion have something about them that we subconsciously see in ourselves...something we dislike about ourselves. "I am grateful for this opportunity to learn and grow"; this is my fallback for almost any difficult person or situation I have had to deal with.

Habit 4

Play!

Action Step

Get into the habit of being primally playful and being in a playful mindset. Healthy play outlets are very important. Put emphasis on social & physical play.

This lesson is bound to lesson #2 about laughing. The quickest and healthiest way to generate laughter is through primal play with others. Playing is not only the quickest way to create laughter and bond with other people, it is also how mammals, including humans, learn. Many new tech organizations realize the importance of play in the workplace as a means to foster teamwork and creativity.

In this day and age, I believe the vast majority of adults lack healthy primal play outlets. I say "primal play" because playing on a screen is completely different from primally playing with others. Yes, it is still play, but it is completely different and has nowhere near the amount of benefits as primally playing with others. I am not not saying that playing on a screen is bad for you; however, too much playing on screen is bad for you because it means a person isn't interacting with anything living.

Explore all different types of play! Physical play, mental play, musical play, artistic play, performance play, verbal play, aaalll different types. Make sure you're regularly in a playful mindset and have play outlets! Again, I will bring up **Meetup** (www.meetup.com) if you are looking for play outlets. Other people are looking for play outlets too!

Habit 5

Seek balance & actuate all your "bodies"

Action Step

Make sure you are making time for all of your "bodies" (physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual) and that your 7 chakras are balanced.

All of our “bodies” are interconnected: when you actuate one, all of them benefit.

Physical Body: Eat good, move good, sleep good

This is the name of a book on health, and it effectively sums up the basic keys for maintaining a vibrant physical body. Focus on getting quality and enough of those three elements plus sunshine & nature—and you will be good physically! My Blog posting on the key to understanding weight-loss, in which I talk about why the body stores fat and how it burns it, can be found here:

[Weight-Loss blog posting \(www.primalplay.org/single-post/weight-loss-explained\)](http://www.primalplay.org/single-post/weight-loss-explained)

My blog posting on [Primal Movement for Longevity](http://www.primalplay.org/single-post/2016/08/22/primal-movement-for-longevity)

[\(www.primalplay.org/single-post/2016/08/22/primal-movement-for-longevity\)](http://www.primalplay.org/single-post/2016/08/22/primal-movement-for-longevity)

Think “movement” more than “exercise.” Exercising is great. Exercises are specific routines that help you reach specific goals. But moderate movement and pace throughout the day is good for you no matter your goals.

Ayurvedic Medicine

Ayurvedic medicine—also known as Ayurveda—is one of the world's oldest holistic (whole-body) healing systems. It was developed thousands of years ago in India. It is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. In general, every human has similar bodies, but we are all unique. We all have unique metabolisms, predispositions, shapes, skin, and so on. Ayurvedic medicine asserts that we are all one of three main body, or energy, types. We have a bit of each kind of energy in us, of course, but one form, and sometimes two, usually dominate. Once you know your body type, Ayurvedic medicine can help you understand which foods and activities will help you achieve balance and not cause you to lose balance. Of all the different types of health perspectives I have read about, Ayurvedic is by far the most interesting and helpful I have come across. In order to discover your body type, fill out this [questionnaire](#).

Intellectual body: Challenge and feed it

There is sooooo much cool stuff out there! Sooo much to learn—it's incredible! Always be learning, always be feeding your brain interesting knowledge. And challenge it. There is a group of nuns in Maine that regularly live into their 100s with nearly zero cases of Alzheimer's, dementia, or other diseases of the brain. These nuns are involved in debate clubs, chess, sudoku, riddles, and many other games that test and train the mind. So, play games that make your mind work in new and different ways.

Emotional body: Socialize, Use Needs-Based Communication

Our greatest joys in life come from primally engaging with others. Make sure you have healthy social circles, that you surround yourself with people who brighten your day, people that are easy to laugh with. Jim Rohm, the famous success coach, said that you are the sum of the 5 people you spend the most time with. Do you surround yourself with people who bring you down, or lift you up? Needs-Based Communication is th best system I've found for helping people understand their emotions and from where they arise.

Spiritual Body: Your Why

The spiritual body guides your actions. What is your Why? Why are you on this planet? Why do you want to become happier and healthier? If you don't know your Why, it is easier to not follow through with commitments. What is your purpose? Why do you believe what you believe? Most of our beliefs are passed down to us by our parents and our

surroundings when we were children during our most critical period of development, which is the period from birth until about puberty. Do you think a child raised in a Klu Klux Klan family made a conscious decision to hate? No, they did not; they were conditioned to hate. We are all conditioned in many ways by our families and social surroundings. The first step toward a healthy spiritual body is to take control of our beliefs by becoming aware of our conditioning.

The Chakras

The Chakras come from Eastern medicine. They are 7 energy vortexes along the center of your body, from the base of your groin to the tip of your head. They deal with different levels of consciousness and different parts of the body. They are fascinating and definitely worth checking out. If one is blocked, you will struggle in the realm of your life linked to that chakra, and it will affect other areas as well. There are methods to unblock any chakra.

Whether you believe in them or not isn't as important as the mental health benefits you can get when you ask yourself if you are balanced in the 7 areas that each chakra deals with:

Root:	Stability, security, survival	Sacral:	Creativity, sensuality, pleasure, emotions
Solar Plexus:	Power, confidence, personal identity	Heart:	Love, compassion, forgiveness
Throat:	Communication, self-expression, truth.	Third Eye:	Intuition, insight, wisdom
Crown:	Spirituality, enlightenment, connection.		

There is a lot of information available about chakras. The links below include a description of each. There is also a chakra test you can take to see if you have imbalances or blockages:

[The Chakra Test \(www.eclecticenergies.com/chakras/chakradotest.php\)](http://www.eclecticenergies.com/chakras/chakradotest.php)

[The Chakras explained \(www.eclecticenergies.com/chakras/introduction.php\)](http://www.eclecticenergies.com/chakras/introduction.php)

Habit 6 Expose yourself to nature and sunshine

Action Step Make time to connect with nature. Even if you just spend some time with your plants or touching the earth at a park.

Shinrin-Yoku is Japanese for “Forest Bathing.” There are now hundreds of studies that show the overwhelming benefits of spending time in nature. Even having plants in your house or a view of nature has been shown to drastically increase happiness and, even, healing.

[This is an article](#) that cites many such studies:

www.motherearthnews.com/natural-health/herbal-remedies/forest-bathing-ze0z1301zgar?pageid=2#PageContent2)

[15 benefits of Sunshine \(www.msn.com/en-in/health/medical/15-health-benefits-of-sunshine/ss-BBsywOI#image=4\)](http://www.msn.com/en-in/health/medical/15-health-benefits-of-sunshine/ss-BBsywOI#image=4)

Habit 7 Spend time with people that light you up

Action Step Make sure you are genuinely laughing each day. Other people are key ingredients to gut-busting laughter.

The quickest and healthiest way to laughter is through primally playing with others. You should be laughing each day. A sense of humor and being open to laughter is, without a doubt, one of the most important traits to have when it comes to being happy. Find groups of friends, family, or strangers who make you laugh, and if your current friends and family don't, find new friends and family! Seriously! Meetup (www.Meetup.com) is a fantastic source for finding groups of like-minded people.

Priming yourself for laughter is doing the healthy physical and mental habits (see habit #5: Actuate all your bodies.).

An article with studies that outline the benefits of laughter can be found here:

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/emotional-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm>

Laughing is contagious! Just hearing other people genuinely laugh primes your brain to laugh. I personally like listening to the "Ricky Gervais Show" podcast. Ricky Gervais has a GREAT laugh and it always gets me. Pandora also has a station that features stand-up comedians. Laughter is how we bond with others: "The shortest distance between two people is laughter" – The Dalai Lama.

This [article](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanganyika_laughter_epidemic) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanganyika_laughter_epidemic) is about the Tanzanian laughing epidemic that happened in 1962 in which schools had to be closed down because of a laughing epidemic. It spread to neighboring villages, the red cross had to be called in because people were fainting from exhaustion!

Habit 8 Serve a higher purpose

Action Step How are you helping this planet and the beings on it? What is your meaning? Your purpose? Know it, spend time on it, and serve it through your actions.

What is your meaning? Your meaning guides your actions. Victor Frankl was a psychotherapist, author, and survivor of several German work concentration camps in World War II. In his book, 'Man's search for Meaning' he writes about the difference between those who survived and those who did not. He believed that those prisoners who were able to find meaning in their suffering, were the ones who survived. Find meaning in everything you do. Have a higher purpose that is worth living for. This will guide all of your actions if you believe in it.

Habit 9 Know your priorities and align them with your habits

Action Step Know your priorities, write them out. Put them where you see them every day until you know them intrinsically & have them dictate your habits.

The more you intrinsically know your priorities, the easier decisions become. It becomes a matter of asking yourself, “Do my habits fall in line with my priorities?”. If they don't, you will feel an internal imbalance. A vision board is useful as well. Having a board that has images of the things you wish to accomplish or become. Put it somewhere where you will see it every day.

A note on your top priority. Your priorities are your priorities but I do want to recommend thinking about making your top priority your health and happiness. I say this for two reasons, number one, this is something that is 100% in your control. And reason #2, you will only be better for your family and friends or any of your other priorities if you are at your healthiest and happiest! Just being around someone who is vibrantly healthy and happy, makes other people feel better without even saying a word.

I am always blown away when someone says “I don't have time to exercise.” Which is the same thing as saying, “I don't have time for my health.” If you don't have time for your health, what do you have time for??

Habit 10 Focus on love & forgiveness

Action Step Love in its purity is formless & an infinite source of energy. If you make mistakes or don't reach goals, forgive yourself with love & learn from said 'failures.'

The Greeks believed in 9 different types of love, and they are as follows:

- Philos** Friendship, Camaraderie.
- Agape** Selfless love, love for everyone. A universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance. Holding everyone in high regard. Charity, kindness, compassion, empathy. Also known as cosmic or divine love. We experience this when we are truly in the present moment. Meditation and meditative activities cultivate this type of love. If we were to focus on connecting with agape love, that infinite source of energy & creativity, it can enliven & rejuvenate every aspect of our life, from the physical to the metaphysical.
- Pragma** Partnership. Working really well with someone. You can make any task fun. Successful parents have this type of love. This can also mature over time, or be instantaneous.
- Storge** Familial love. Affection, love for babies, children, and pets. Pronounced 'Stor-ga'
- Mania** Infatuation. Dependent, obsessive, jealous.
- Philautia** Healthy self-love. When it becomes unhealthy, it is called narcissism. You must have healthy philautia before you can have a truly healthy and interdependent relationship with someone else.
- Ludus** Playful. Flirting, teasing, socializing. Building sandcastles, and then destroying them, throwing snowballs at friends, just for the ludic fun of it.
- Biophilia** Love of nature, the natural world and it's organisms. Lying in the grass of an open field, admiring the beauty of nature, is a way to experience this type of love.
- Eros** Physical attraction for another, carnal love. The word, 'erotic' derives from this Greek word.

A regret is simply a situation you have not learned from. Even past 'failures' have much to teach us. In the present, we can change how we look at or frame our past experiences, and thus change how we feel about past 'failures' or traumas. When we look at any situation with love, it makes the world and this universe a much brighter place.

In Conclusion

These are not the be-all, end-all habits of vibrantly happy & healthy people. We should always be learning and spending time on how to be vibrantly healthy and happy. Change isn't easy. We have all been conditioned, from while we were in the womb even. We are creatures of habit, and habits are not always easy to change. Be aware that you have been conditioned and that it will take effort to become aware of your conditioned responses, this is the first step in changing and evolving ourselves. We all have such great capacity for love and peace, our egos are what keep us from actualizing ourselves.

Needs-Based Communication

A Language of Life

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a process of communicating that significantly improves all relationships because it espouses a way of communicating that strengthens our emotional and social intelligence. The Nonviolent Communication (NVC) process is a 'needs-based' model of communicating created by Marshall Rosenberg. It holds that if you or someone else is upset, a deep need of yours/theirs is not being met. His seminal book on the technique is called Nonviolent Communication, A Language of Life.

Emotional Intelligence is the ability be in control of our emotions, and understand from where they arise.

Social Intelligence is to be empathetic, and aware of other people's energy, and how this energy interacts with others, and how to affect group energy.

The 4 components of NVC: Observations Feelings Needs Requests

The 2 parts of NVC:
1) Expressing honestly through the 4 components.
2) Receiving empathically through the four components.

The Process

The concrete actions we **observe** that affect our well-being

How we **feel** in relation to what we observe

The **needs**, values, desires, etc. that create our feelings

The concrete actions we **request** in order to enrich our lives

Step 1: Observing

For most, it is difficult to make observations, especially of people and their behavior, that are free of judgment, criticism, evaluation, or other forms of analysis. People often mix up observing with evaluating. "John talks too much" is an evaluation, whereas "During the last meeting, John told 3 personal stories" is an observation. The first step in NVC is observing, not evaluating.

Step 2: Identifying & Expressing Feelings

Most people are not adept at expressing feelings, and oftentimes are actually expressing thoughts, instead of how they feel. A common confusion, generated by the English language is our use of the word 'feel' without actually expressing a feeling. "I feel like a failure." "I feel Amy slighted me..." "I feel like they should know better..." etc.

Second step is distinguishing what we are feeling, from what we are thinking. Of the 4 ways to respond, 3 & 4 are imperative for NVC.

4 ways to respond to a negative message:

- 1) Blame ourselves
- 2) Blame others
- 3) Sense our own feelings & needs**
- 4) Sense others' feelings & needs**

Step 3: Identify the Need or Value that is not being met

Judgements, criticisms, diagnoses, and interpretations of others are all alienated expressions of our needs. The moment people begin talking about their needs rather than what's wrong with one another, the possibility of finding ways to meet everyone's needs is greatly increased.

Here are some basic human needs we all share:

Autonomy Integrity Celebration Interdependence Play Physical Nurturance

Step 4: Clearly Requesting that which would Enrich our lives without demanding

Use positive language. Saying "I don't want you to do this or that," is not stating what you would like, but what you would not like someone to do. Making requests in clear, positive, concrete action language reveals what we really want, while vague language contributes to internal, & external confusion.

Exercise: Think of a time you weren't getting along with someone, what needs were not being met?

In Conclusion

I promise that if you use NVC, you will be able to see through drama and misunderstandings, and see the root of your, and anyone else's distress. I have not had drama or an argument with anyone for over 10 years. Another book that is very helpful in reaching that end, is 'The 4 Agreements' & habitually practicing meditation. Every time I see someone having issues with anyone, I wish they knew about this process! It is extremely useful. I hope you find it helpful!

About Marshall Rosenberg

Marshall Rosenberg, creator of the Non-Violent Communication process, pioneered it in the 1960s, using it in federally funded school integration programs to provide mediation & communication skills training. The Center for Nonviolent Communication now has hundreds of certified NVC trainers and supporters teaching NVC in more than sixty countries around the globe. His book has been translated in more than 30 languages. The NVC process has and is being used with educators, managers, peacemakers, health care providers, lawyers, prisoners, police, government officials, & individual families. He very much believed that humans are naturally compassionate, but have been conditioned away from this compassion. In his studies, he was struck by the crucial role of language and our use of words in remaining compassionate.

"Most of us have been educated from birth to compete, judge, demand, and diagnose-to think and communicate in terms of what is "right " and "wrong " with people. At best, communicating and thinking this way can create misunderstanding and frustration. At worst, it can lead to anger, depression, and even emotional or physical violence." -Marshall Rosenberg

"NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves & hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting." -Marshall Rosenberg

Meditation

Why Meditation is Important and How it Can Help You

'Benefits of Meditation' in a google search comes up with over 67,000,000 hits. There is not one aspect of health, happiness, learning, and a myriad of other aspects of anyone's life, which meditation doesn't positively influence. The amount of studies that have proven its effectiveness are too numerous to count.

Due to size constraint, I cannot list all of the benefits of meditation, but here are a sampling:

Positivity	Efficient	Learning	Memory/Recall	Emotional Control & Intelligence
Stress	You laugh easier!		Curing Addiction	Longevity
Success	Circulation		Focus	Creativity

How Meditation has Helped Me

I was diagnosed with a learning disability and ADD when I was young. The drugs they prescribed me worked great, but I no longer felt the need for them after being consistent with my meditation practice. It has helped me step out of my ego. I have not had drama with anyone for over 12 years; for that feat, I give credit to meditation and 2 books called 'The 4 Agreements' & 'Non-Violent Communication, A Language of Life.' I am one of the least stressed people I know. Very hard to ruffle me. Being in nature is conducive to meditation, as well as a plethora of other health benefits.

How to Practice Meditation

There are countless interpretations of what meditating is and how to define it but from my experience and readings, the practice of meditating is about putting your focus on one thing. When we do this, the rest of our mind and body relaxes into a state of balance/serenity. Your brain also strengthens neural connections and syncs your left and right brain while in a state of meditation. When your attention waivers and goes elsewhere, simply bring it back to the one thing you were focusing on. Observing thoughts and feelings when they come to you instead of attaching yourself to them, let them go.

The thoughts that repeatedly keep popping up in your mind are your habitual thought patterns. What we consistently do, think, & say, we become. So be aware of your habitual thought patterns, meditation sheds light on these patterns, and who we are.

That one thing is often the breath, because we will always have that on this physical plane of existence. That one thing could also be something you are looking at or tracing with your eyes, or a repetitive chant, the Whirling Dervishes reach a meditative state of euphoria through movement, cyclists have also reported reaching a meditative state through the repetitive act of pedaling.

There are countless resources online for 'How to meditate.' I suggest you start a meditation practice, whatever that may be. That is how you should think of it, a practice. Thoughts still sift into my head when I am meditating, it is something I practice, like any other skill.

It is also good to meditate at the same time or part of the day, each day. (People trained in transcendental meditation, like every one of Oprah Winfrey's employees, meditate when they rise in the morning, and at supper, 20 min each session, Hugh Jackman does 25 minutes) To realize the benefits of meditation, 20 minutes is great, but if you feel 20 is too much at first, start with a lower number, and build up to it.

The 3 Breaths Exercise

You do not need any specific amount of time to meditate, you can calm your reactive mind, and feel the benefits of meditation with only three breaths! Simply bring your focus to your breath, and take 3 conscious, long breaths. You can do any activity meditatively. Washing your clothes, walking in nature, cleaning, riding on a bus, etc. If you are totally present with what you are doing, you are in a meditative state. Athlete's call this being in 'The Zone.' It is a practice of being present.

Meditation has Stopped Crime!

1993, Washington DC, the murder capital of the United States at the time. A study was to be conducted in which large groups of life-long meditators would meditate on positivity for long periods of the day throughout that summer. It was predicted in advance that the violent crime rate would drop by 25% during this two month period. The chief of police said it would take a foot of snow for the crime rate to drop that much. By the end of the study, the Police Department became co-authors because the crime rate did in fact drop by 24.6%.

http://istpp.org/crime_prevention

Meditation Improves Learning

Studies conducted at Wake Forest, University of North Carolina & William Paterson University, just to name a few, found that brief mindfulness meditation "significantly improved working memory, focus, executive functioning and visual-spatial processing." (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2010.03.014>)

What Others are Saying about Meditation

"Meditation dissolves the invisible walls that unawareness has built" -Sadhguru

"The thing about meditation is: you become more and more you."
-David Lynch

"Be here now. Be somewhere else later. Is that so complicated?"
-David Bader

"I meditate so that my mind cannot complicate my life."
-Sri Chinmoy

"The more regularly and the more deeply you meditate, the sooner you will find yourself acting always from a center of inner peace."
-Donald Wal

The 4 Agreements

By Don Miguel Ruiz

This book changed my life. Since I've read it and have been following these agreements, I have not had serious drama with anyone. I hope these agreements are as useful for you as they have been for me. I wish you all the best. You all have great potential & everything you need in order to help change this world for the better, and this world really needs your help.

1 Be impeccable with your word.

- Speak with integrity.
- Say only what you mean.
- Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others.
- Use the power of your word in the direction of truth & love.

2 Don't take anything personally.

- Nothing others do is because of you.
- What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream.
- When you are immune to the opinions & actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

3 Don't make assumptions.

- Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want.
- Communicate with others as clearly as you can (**Needs-based Communication!**) to avoid misunderstanding, sadness and drama.
- With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.

4 Always do your best.

- Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick.
- Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you can minimize self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

A Primally Playful Foundation

***Inspiring the Progress of Humanity
through the Power of Play***