

# What makes you happy?



Advertising and TV promise happiness if only we had the right car, the right brands of clothes, won lotto, or holidayed at an exotic resort. These sorts of things can make us feel good—at least for a time.

But here's the catch. It's often a very short time. These things don't lead to lasting or 'true' happiness.

We spend a lot of time striving for things that we know can't make us truly happier, while ignoring the things we know will: like the satisfaction of a job well done, fixing the mower or taking the risk with a new recipe, scoring a goal in our final game of footy or netball, helping a home-bound neighbour with their housework or a young child with their homework, completing a difficult TAFE course or crossword puzzle. Just being with friends and people we love can make us happy.

These things make us happy because they provide meaning in our lives, feelings of accomplishment and a sense of belonging. They boost our self-confidence and make us feel good about ourselves. In short, they boost our self-esteem.

The good news is that we can do a lot to make ourselves happier just by doing ordinary things. And there's a bonus: many of the things that make us truly happy also make us more mentally healthy and better able to cope with life's stresses.

Think about the things that have made you feel really, truly happy—and take time to do them more often.

Doing things to be more truly happy is as easy as A-B-C...

**Act:** try an activity you haven't done before: clean out the shed or that spare room, establish a garden, learn to dance...

**Belong:** join in a festive event: feel part of the crowd, enjoy the togetherness feeling, get back in touch with old friends...

**Commit:** enrol in a challenging course or set yourself a difficult but realistic task: offer to help a neighbour, help out at the school or meals on wheels...

**Being active, having a sense of belonging, and having a purpose in life all contribute to happiness and good mental health.**

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