

Five Tips for a Happier Life

by Pat Barton

1. Take Your Sunshine Vitamin

Vitamin D increases serotonin, the mood neurotransmitter. It boosts your immunity, promotes healthy neuromuscular functions and helps protect you from some forms of cancer. The easiest way reap the benefits of this nutrient is to spend 15 minutes in the sun a few times a week. Be mindful that sunscreen will prevent you from getting adequate vitamin D outdoors; try skipping sunscreen for just 15 minutes.

If the weather isn't cooperating, get your vitamin D from milk, egg yolks or supplements (1000 units per day.)

2. Cut the Caffeine

Coffee increases anxiety levels, especially if you're getting more than 300 mgs a day. Increased anxiety means increased irritability. Try substituting your coffee with green tea. It has 1/4 the amount of caffeine found in coffee - and it's a young tea, which means it packs some powerful antioxidants.

You don't have to cut caffeine completely, but if you're having more than 300 mg a day and find yourself fighting headaches and fatigue when you try to cut back, you may be physically dependent.

3. Express Gratitude

Take the time to truly savor the good things in your life; things others have done for you, things you've done for others and all those small acts of kindness that make you smile. A written expression of thanks helps prohibit us from taking things for granted. So sit down with a steaming mug of green tea and express yourself.

4. Practice Acts of Kindness

It's the little things. It's not what you say, it's what you do.

These expressions may be cliches, but there is truth in their message. By practicing small acts of kindness, you will perceive yourself and others more positively. You'll also appreciate your good fortune in comparison.

Pick one day a week and carry out three small acts of kindness. Research suggests that this provides a longer-lasting boost to the giver than practicing random acts of kindness spread out over the week.

5. Just Smile

Even when you don't feel like it, the simple act of smiling makes you feel better. A response called facial feedback indicates that, when you smile, you send a signal to your brain that says, "I am happy." Additionally, if you're smiling, you're likely to seem more approachable and happy to others - and people are more likely to smile back.

