



Me Time Monday™ Tip Sheet for Caregivers in support of the Healthy Monday Campaign

Happiness Tips

How Caregivers Can “Get Happy”

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our forefathers said we have the right to be happy, but the question is how do you get there? Most scientists and philosophers believe that happiness is the journey, not the destination.

When it comes to caring for a loved one, your journey can be filled with stress, a sense of physical and emotional exhaustion or the anxiety of being overwhelmed. But, you can also feel love, joy, satisfaction and a sense of purpose. The magic is how to unlock the key to happiness. Is it a state of being or is happiness mere moments – touchstones of joy that we can look back on and fill us with peace?

As a caregiver, you need to find time to give yourself these moments of happiness. Being happy is a matter of choice – a very personal choice. What is it that brings a smile to your face?

Finding the Happiness Formula

Recent articles and studies have charted the path of happiness. Here are 10 tips on how to pursue your happiness:

1. **Go with the flow** – sometimes it is hard to let hurt feelings, anger or anxiety go but letting loose of these feelings actually can improve your mental and physical health. Try lying down for a few minutes, imagine each negative thing in your life as a balloon – one by one let them loose into the atmosphere and watch them float away.
2. **Pay it forward** – as a caregiver, you are already giving a great gift – the gift of care to someone you love. If you encounter another caregiver, share your secrets and advice on how to handle stress or other care-related issues – only by learning from each other can we make it better.
3. **Thanks for the memories** – focus on the positive and think of the silver linings in your caregiving situation. If you had a loving relationship with the person you are caring for – then this is your gift to them. If the relationship was not everything you wanted, now is your time to reconcile or re-define it. Keep visual reminders of whatever happy moments you remember around you – it is a constant reminder of the good.
4. **“Get Happy” a la Judy Garland** -- research shows that 30 minutes of getting physically active a day can increase the production of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor which actually has an antidepressant effect. And, science also shows that music can have a therapeutic effect by creating an endorphin rush. So, crank up the tunes and rock out for a few minutes (think Tom Cruise in “Risky Business” or the hit TV show “Glee”). If you are not feeling like Fred Astaire or Judy Garland, try taking the dog for a refreshing outdoor walk – breathe in deeply and clear your mind.
5. **Color code** – some studies show that yellow is one of the “happiest” colors evoking feelings of joy, intellect and energy, Whatever your favorite color is (mine is pink), put it on when you are having a particularly “blue” day – it will lift your spirits.
6. **Make your bed** – I know it sounds funny but author Gretchen Rubin of [The Happiness Project](#), found that this repetitive every day task was one of the most impactful changes people could make. It created a sense of accomplishment.
7. **Snack Attack** – In the afternoons when serotonin (the brain chemical that regulates mood) takes a nosedive, it is time to grab for a healthy snack. Try almonds or apples – both good for your mind and body.
8. **The thrill of chill** – researchers at the University of Michigan discovered that blowing cold air up participant’s noses put them in a better frame of mind than did blasts of hot air. Boost your mood by turning down the thermostat, hit some snow slopes or just drinking an iced cold beverage.

9. **Go for the giggle** – finding a few moments every day to goof off and have a laugh is a health and wellness trend getting support from celebrity doctors like Sanjay Gupta and Mehmet Oz. Studies are showing that laughter can have a liberating, transformative effect – so go ahead and have a chuckle – it's not laughing matter that it will lift your mood.
10. **Smile!** – Charlie Chaplin wrote, "Smile although your heart is breaking..." Sometimes caring for a parent or spouse or other loved is emotionally tough but try to smile about something they said or did or a past memory. Remember how good you feel when someone smiles at you? You inevitably smile back and for a few seconds all seems right with the world. It is hard to be mad or sad when you have a smile on your face. And, smiling at others will return the favor ten-fold – smiling is truly infectious – it catches on faster than the flu!

For other Me Time Monday Tips from the Caregiving Club, visit: <http://www.caregivingclub.com/me-time-monday/>

For more information about the Healthy Mondays campaigns, visit: www.mondaycampaigns.org

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