



COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Simple Ways to Improve Your Mood

Happiness is when you feel good about yourself without the need for anyone else's approval.
~ Anonymous

In our fast paced lives, we often look for quick fixes and easy ways to feel better (physically, mentally, or emotionally). There is, however, a very simple way to feel better: choose to be happier. You can produce whatever chemicals of emotion you choose to create; you choose your mood, not the environment you are in or the people you are around (although we usually blame them for our bad moods). Regardless of the situation, you get to decide how you want to feel. The problem is that most of us get into an “emotional rut.” We practice the same types of emotions, feelings, or moods (anger, anxiety, frustration, etc.) and then become addicted to them. Over time, these practiced patterns become our personality and can change how we view the world around us. Rather than mindfully respond to situations or people, we go on “auto-pilot” and react in ways that add to our stress level.

The next time you react in a predictable way that is negative to a stimulus or situation, ask yourself if that is how you want to feel. If it is, then carry on; but if not, mindfully choose a different way to feel in response to the situation. In so doing, you begin to “choose your mood.” For most of us, being “happy” is not necessarily the goal. While happiness sounds ideal, it’s a foreign concept to some because it is so difficult to maintain. If this sounds like your pattern, strive for feelings of gratitude, appreciation, contentment, peacefulness, safety, love or joy instead. As we increase our tolerance for more positive emotional states, the frequency with which we experience negative moods begins to lessen.

Other simple ways to improve your mood include:

1. Move more throughout the day: you don’t have to do a triathlon every day to feel the benefits of exercise. Simply moving throughout the day, or doing short work-outs, can increase the release of chemicals that improve your mood.
2. Eat foods that improve your mood: foods like chocolate, fruits, vegetables, fish, coconut, tea, and nuts can all positively impact your mood. Of course, moderation is the key!
3. Listen to music: listen to music that you enjoy and that fits the mood you are trying to achieve, and you will get there faster!
4. Smile: smiling, and laughter, produce chemicals in the body that not only improve mood, but also improve the immune system and your overall health.
5. Play with your pets, spend quality time with your children, or engage in hobbies that you enjoy!

6. Spend more time with people who care about you and understand you – the experience of being with people who you can be authentic and honest around, and people you can laugh with, produces chemicals in the body that counteract the damage of stress.

Increase the time you spend on activities you enjoy, and mindfully begin to choose how you respond to situations, rather than reacting to them - you will be amazed at how much you can improve your mood!

*By Sarah Myers, JD, LMFT, LAC
Clinical Director, Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program
December 2015
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