

Health & Well-being

RoodlaneMedical
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Dr Gill's Blog



I regularly ask patients, and myself: are you happy? If not, why not? What makes you happy? How could you be happier?

If you recognise you aren't happy in your life

and in your choices, it is a moment to challenge yourself and re-evaluate, asking if the life journey you are on is really the one that you want and whether you have the power to change it.

This fundamental revisiting of your sense of purpose and your decisions about how you want to live your life is both an essential part of practicing happiness and an essential part of practicing acceptance. Sometimes we genuinely don't have control over aspects of our lives or are obliged to do things for the greater good of our family. If that is the case, we can accept our decisions and practice acceptance as part of our practice of happiness. Acceptance can reduce resentment and unhappiness.

The main things that make us stick with situations which may make us unhappy are usually financial stability and fear of change. Sometimes you really don't have a choice, however this can be an illusion if you look at what your true financial needs are and adjust these you may find you have more flexibility than you thought. If, on the

The Mayo Clinic has developed a little book called "The Handbook for Happiness" which promises not only to improve your psychological wellbeing but also to help you with many aspects of your physical health.

There is also a great website I have used for many years called "Action for Happiness" that has a great range of resources available. It is full of tips including [10 keys to happier living](#) and a number of actions to help support you in making small positive changes.

Action 1: Take the Action for Happiness pledge

Action 2: Do kind things for others

Action 3: Create a local action for happiness group

Action 4: Thank the people you are grateful to

Action 5: Find three good things each day

Action 6: Look for the good in those around you

Action 7: Bring mindfulness into your day

Action 8: Find your strengths and focus on them

Action 9: Get help if you are struggling

other hand the block you have is fear of change, try asking yourself how you would feel in 5 years if you don't make the change compared with if you do. This can be quite shocking if you engage in it with imagination and can really help you find clarity on what you are more afraid of: the change or the consequence of not making a change. When I do this exercise with patients their realisation can be stark. Doing nothing has consequences just as much as taking action does.

In the pursuit of happiness we accept what we cannot change. The next step is to take a re-look at life and rather than focusing on what is not good in your life, identify what makes you happy both in the immediate smaller things and in the longer term. Then think about how you will meet those needs in yourself. Your own enhanced happiness will in turn undoubtedly improve the happiness of those around you and those who love you, which of course reflects back more happiness for you in better relationships.

This can involve painting a picture in your mind of how you want your future to look and then working through a process of how you achieve that, preferably not making choices that make you miserable for the intervening period, but by building on small pieces of happiness and contentment whilst focusing on your goal and purpose.



Action 10: Help kids build emotional resilience

Action 11: Use positive parenting techniques

Action 12: Volunteer your time, energy and skills



I love the fact that a lot of the advice is built around being part of a community and the joy that we get from positive interactions with others in addition to the feeling that we add value in the world. More joy to be had from that for no financial exchange than from a glass of wine or a spending spree.

Finally I commend to you a publication called "positive news". It focuses on positive and uplifting news stories, reminding us that what we see in papers and on the news is not representative of the massively positive nature of most people.

The great news is that by being more positive, we share happiness and pleasure with others, we improve the state of mind and health of those around us as well as our own, and we can also live longer and add more value to society. What could be better?

Looking after your Lifestyle

'Great minds..'

There are many terms used to describe mental health and the ways this is perceived. Over recent years, the taboo surrounding mental health and the stigma attached to this has continued to break through barriers in a variety of mediums to include charities, media and awareness days. It's great to see the conversation on mental health becoming more acceptable within organisations and many are now recognising the importance of creating a culture of openness and promoting mental health as widely as physical health.

Emotional wellbeing is also a term that has seen an increase in use in recent times. The implications of decreased emotional wellbeing can relate to mental health concerns such as stress, depression and anxiety. These can also be key contributing factors to physical ill health such as digestive disorders, poor sleep habits and lethargy. Enhancing your emotional wellbeing can positively improve your ability to cope with pressures, physical issues and help manage behaviours.

There's no getting away from it- we are an ageing population and with that can bring further responsibilities, whether it be caring for dependants and/or an elderly relative. It is commonly known as, 'The Sandwich Generation'. Over the last few years there have been reports on more young children with mental health issues and, as a carer, this can have a huge impact on the home environment. In fact, 10% of children aged 5 to 16 have a diagnosable mental health issue. Equally, coping with an elderly relative with dementia or alzheimers can be distressing and exhausting, in addition to your daily work routine and so the importance of looking after yourself mentally and physically is key to building resilience and good mental health.



Why highlight this? The easy answer is because help is out there and you are not alone. World Mental Health Day was promoted on 10 October this year and provoked lots of activity, discussion and education for many employers and we were extremely proud to have supported this and helped raise awareness with clients. For further information you should contact your GP, Occupational Health Services (where applicable)/or Employee Assistance Programme provider.

Listed below are some additional supporting materials:

<https://www.elefriends.org.uk>

<https://www.headspace.com/>

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mindfulness.aspx>

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

For further support or to discuss how we can support your health and wellbeing programme, please contact us.

Doctors Corner

Dear Doctor,

We are planning a charity climb up Mount Kilimanjaro and are keen to understand more about Diamox for mountain sickness. We recently had a friend who used this medicine on hike up Kilimanjaro and found it effective.



What would you advise?

Proper acclimatization to altitudes of 2,500m (just over 8,200 feet) or above is the best way to prevent altitude sickness. Ascending slowly will give your body time to adapt to the change in altitude.

When booking a trip yourself, try to include two or three days to acclimatize. If you're booking a package holiday, check the itineraries of different providers to find a package that allows a few days for acclimatization. If possible, you should try to avoid flying directly to a high altitude.

Some itineraries are more likely to cause problems with acclimatization than others. For example, a trekking holiday that involves crossing ridges or low peaks but sleeping in the valleys is less likely to give rise to problems with altitude sickness than a climb up an isolated peak such as Kilimanjaro.

It's unusual to get severe altitude sickness during most walking, climbing or skiing holidays to the Alps.

Prevention:

Once you're above 3,000m (10,000 feet), don't increase the altitude at which you sleep by more than 300-500m a night. You can go up higher during the day, but each night go back down to a camp that's no more than 300-500m higher than the previous night's camp.

Some holiday companies offer trips to climb a mountain in a short space of time, such as climbing Mont Blanc over a couple of days. If you're not already acclimatized, climbing at this rate is likely to lead to symptoms of altitude sickness. It would be better to attempt the climb at the end of a two-week holiday after you've acclimatized by climbing a few lower peaks first.

Treatment:

Diamox (Acetazolamide) is a drug licensed to treat glaucoma and some other conditions. Acetazolamide can be taken to prevent symptoms of altitude sickness. This is an unlicensed administration but can be given safely off label to prevent the serious forms of acute mountain sickness HAPE and HACE (high altitude pulmonary oedema and high altitude cerebral oedema) developing. These can both be fatal. Acetazolamide works by making the blood more acidic

which increases the respiratory drive. This allows more oxygen into the lungs which helps speed up acclimatization.

Travellers at high risk that should consider taking acetazolamide as a prophylaxis include those undertaking rapid accents such as Kilimanjaro treks, those with pre-existing medical conditions at altitude, ascending above 2,800 meters in a day.

Please discuss your trip and any medical condition including pregnancy with your doctor.



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Why not try emailing us in confidence and you could see your question answered by a qualified Doctor in our next newsletter!

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