

December 21, 2017

Ampifying Life

Shandi Andres, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent
K-State Research and Extension, Flint Hills District

Hope, Joy, and Happiness

With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, don't forget to take a breath and enjoy the moment. My last article focused on ways to make the holidays special. These special moments are unique for each person. It is important to take time for the things that make you smile and bring you joy. Take time for moments of kindness towards others. Often we don't think about the joy we might bring others by simple acts of kindness not just during the holidays but all year long.

There is a large body of research that supports the impact hope and joy have on a person's level of happiness and well-being. The pursuit of happiness is intrinsic to human nature. Our human nature desires to be happy and when we feel we are in a "funk", there are a wide variety of tools we can use to change our perspective and give us a more positive approach to daily living.

The Greater Good Science Center, in Berkley, California, was established in 2001 for the purpose of exploring the roots of happy and compassionate individuals. They look at the cognitive, physiological, emotional, and physical impact that happiness has on our overall health and well-being. As a result of their ongoing research, they have identified six ways happiness is good for your health. Here is a summary of what they have discovered at Greater Good Science Center.

- 1) Happiness protects your heart. One study revealed that participants who were the happiest at the initial questionnaire, had lower heart rates and had lower blood pressure, even three years following the initial questionnaire.
- 2) Happiness strengthens your immune system. Research has found that there is a link between happiness and a stronger immune system. A 2003 study of 350 adults found that participants with the most positive emotions were less likely to have contracted a cold.
- 3) Happiness combats stress. Studies have found that stress not only affects us psychologically, but has biological implications as well. Our hormones and blood pressure are two of these effects.
- 4) Happy people have fewer aches and pains. Being unhappy can literally be painful. Over time, happier people demonstrate a healthier lifestyle and improved

well-being. Unhappy people tend to experience a decline in health and well-being over time.

- 5) Happiness combats disease and disability. Severe and long-term conditions as well as the shorter-term aches and pains can be faced head on more successfully by those with a happy disposition.
- 6) Happiness lengthens life. A 2010 study followed almost 7,000 people from California's Alameda County for nearly three decades, finding that the people who were more satisfied with life at the beginning were less likely to die during the course of the study."

Source:

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_ways_happiness_is_good_for_your_health

Many indicators point to a healthier and longer life for those who report high levels of hope, joy, and happiness. When we feel better emotionally and mentally, it transfers to all the systems of our body and helps improve our lives in ways we may not realize. I hope you enjoy the things that bring you hope and joy that leads to happiness, not just during the holiday season, but the whole year through. I hope you had a Merry Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year!

For more information feel free to contact me, Shandi Andres, at the Flint Hills District Extension Office in Council Grove, 620-767-5136 or sdandres@ksu.edu.