**7 Keys to Happiness and Success in Life**

Most people want to be happy. But they also want to be successful. And, while each person might have an individualized definition of just what each of those things means to them specifically, the overall desire to lead a life that’s free of stress, worry, anxiety and fear, while being replete with happiness and success, is constant.

Still, although we might want to be happy and successful in life, that’s often far from the case. Usually, we spend more of our time steeped in negative emotions than we do in the positive ones. From our relationships, to our finances, our careers, our health, and our goals, we often can’t seem to overcome the stress associated with everyday concerns.

Couple all of that with our hopes and our dreams for the future, and the constant failures that we face along the way while trying to achieve anything notable, and it’s no wonder we spend much of our time unhappy and feeling unsuccessful. So how do we go about doing the opposite? What are the keys to happiness and success? And is that something that’s *actually* attainable in life?

If you’re reading these words right now, then there’s no doubt that you’ve been disappointed in some aspect of your life. You’ve likely been through the ringer, had your world turned upside down, and suffered through an immense amount of pain and failure. I have too. And by no means does it feel good whatsoever.

But there is a pathway to happiness. There’s a highway to success. It’s just that many people choose not to travel along those roads. They’re less traveled because they’re harder to navigate. The beginning is always rocky and steep, enough to make most people turn back. And parts of the road are downright impassable.

But for those willing to put in the work, those seemingly impassable roads eventually lead to easier streets. But navigating along them at the outset might feel treacherous at best. But with the right amount of focus and grit, it happens, one step at a time, and one day at a time. Happiness and success are there for the taking as long as we’re willing to do some work at the outset.

**What does it mean to be happy and successful?**

When we talk about happiness and success, we’re talking about two different things. What makes a person feel happy and what makes a person feel successful don’t always coincide with one another. But sometimes they do. The thing about happiness and success is that, in order to achieve either of them, you first need a definition in place on what they actually mean to you.

Some people will say, “Sure that’s easy, to be successful I need a lot of money.” And, that wouldn’t hurt in the happiness department either. But, what people don’t always realize is that money doesn’t always bring happiness. Sometimes money brings more problems. It all just depends who you ask and what your experiences have been like that have shaped your beliefs.

Either way, you need to define what they both mean to you. [Want to be happy](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/the-happy-habits-12-habits-to-improve-your-overall-happiness-in-life/)? No problem. You could actually be happy in this very moment. Right here and right now, happiness is attainable, no matter what’s going on in your life. Whether you believe that statement or not, you’ve likely heard it before more times than not. And for good reason.

Consider what will make you happy, and write it down. Consider what will make you feel successful, and right it down. This is a prerequisite for achieving either. Without writing it down, they’ll remain in the abstract. And goals that remain in the abstract are always unattainable. So, put some definition behind them both.

Once you figure out what both of those mean to you, you’re already a step ahead. But then you need to put some fuel into that fire. You need to institute a few actions and create a few habits that will help to get you there. Overall, there are 7 essential keys to happiness and success that will help to materialize both those things in your life.

**#1 — Gratitude**

Happiness and success are preceded by gratitude. We need to happily succeed rather than try to succeed to be happy. Success should not breed happiness. Happiness should bread success. Once we’re happy, and we’re doing something we love in life, success becomes a byproduct. However, when our happiness hinges on our success, good things never come.

It’s also a matter of focus. What are we focused on in life? What do we want the most? And what are the reasons for focusing on and wanting those things? When we focus on what we don’t have, we live in a state of lack. We realize just how much we’re missing out on or how much we lack the resources to do the things that we really want.

Living in a state of lack is a huge disservice to us. Everything about our focus shifts to a state of lack. We only see the negative that comes from not having what we want in life. Alternatively, when we focus on abundance, and being grateful for what we have, even when we have to go through pain and failure, we live in an abundant state.

Happiness and success will never come until we’re completely grateful for what we have. Even if we think that all we have are problems, we have to be grateful for them. Because, if we were to throw our problems into the ring with those of others from around the world, I can assure you that we would take our problems back.

There are always others that are living in a far worse alternative to life than we are. There are unspeakable atrocities occurring at this very moment in places where people don’t have the same opportunities as you and I do. But, regardless of that, we always have to be grateful for what we’ve been given, no matter what hand we’ve been dealt. Without that, we have nothing.

When we can live in a state of abundance and gratitude, happiness and success will eventually transpire. But if we can’t emerge from that state of lack, happiness and success will forever be fleeting. Even if we achieve them, it will only be a momentary state of bliss or success, and it will disappear as soon as the next want or desire sets in.

In order to institute the habit of gratitude, take a piece of paper and jot down everything you’re grateful for in your life. Do it for at least 15 minutes each day. And be sure to write it down. Don’t just think about it in the mind. Why? Writing things out takes them from the abstract into reality. It sets off a chain of commands in the neurons in the brain that lend itself to experiencing something in an entirely different way than just thinking about it.

Even if you say you have nothing to be grateful for, find something. You can be grateful for being 6 feet above ground. You can be grateful for the ability to read and write, have reason and logic. You can be grateful for friends, family members, pets, food on your plate, clothes on your back, roof over your head and so on.

**#2 — Be Present**

There’s nothing like getting caught up in the past or constantly worrying about the future that more than ruins the present moment. But, then again, many of us have trouble simple being present. We’re unable to appreciate the here-and-now. Usually, we’re more worried about what will happen tomorrow or what happened yesterday rather than stopping and [being present](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/how-to-be-present-the-5-steps-for-living-in-the-here-and-now/).

But what does it mean to be present? And why is this one of the keys to happiness and success? Well, similar to the simple act of gratitude, being present grounds us in the moment. We stop to appreciate the miracles that exist in every direction we look, the beauty of all the things around us, and the journey that we call life. It helps us transcend the fears of tomorrow and the regrets of yesterday.

There’s an inherent appreciation for life that sets in when we’re present. It doesn’t mean that we get to ignore our problems. Problems are a sign of life. And we will always have problems. If you’re thinking that you’ll be happy or achieve success when your problems will disappear, think again. We will never be problem free. Ever.

And while problems might cause us some pain, great or small, those same problems allow us to grow as humans, learn, understand, become more empathetic, and reach new epiphanies about life. Being present acknowledges that we have problems, but it doesn’t allow those problems to interfere with our peace-of-mind.

**#3 — Manage Time Effectively**

One habit that will influence both your happiness and your overall success in life, is the ability to manage time effectively. Effective time managers have a handle on their obligations in life, and know just how to juggle things in order to get ahead. They focus on their long-term goals and prioritize the activities that will help move them forward instead of leaving them behind.

When we don’t [effectively manage our time](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/how-to-effectively-manage-your-time/), we increase our likelihood for stress, anxiety, fear, and worry. We get so caught up in the day-to-day act of responding to life’s stressors, that we’re unable to preemptively tackle the things that will help to avoid crises and emergencies in the future. We miss bill payments, forget about meetings, and fail to organize our activities to pursue our long-term goals.

We also tend to do things like procrastinate, over-socialize, and binge-watch television when we don’t manage our time. Those time-wasters take precious moments away from our bigger, longer term goals. In turn, we become unhappier when the things that we really want in life aren’t fulfilled, and even begin to wallow in misery when we take several steps back rather than moving forward and advancing towards our goals.

Everyone in this world has the same amount of time. We have just 24 hours a day, which equates to 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds. Not one person, no matter how rich or poor, tall or short, the color of their skin, their religion, or their geographic location, has more time than the other. It’s the greatest equalizer in life.

So it’s clearly not about how much time we have that breeds unhappiness or offers up a deterrent towards our goals, it’s what we do with the precious little time that we do have. Find a good system to manage your time and make it habitual. Don’t allow life to knock you down. Focus your energy and your enthusiasm, find a system that works for you and work it.

**#4 — Set SMARTER Goals**

Often, what holds us back from achieving success in life, whatever we might define that as, is our inability to set goals the right way. In a [recent study](http://www.statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolution-statistics/), it was determined that only 8% of people who set goals on New Year’s Eve actually achieve them. But beyond just those New Year’s goals, we all know that many people often set goals but don’t achieve them.

Surely, you’ve set a goal in the past and you gave up on it. All of us have. But, it’s the goal-setting process that got in the way. When we set passive goals, in that we don’t actually set the goals on paper and don’t define them out in detail, nor create a plan for their attainment, we tend to either fail or give up on it. But for people who set goals the right way, [the SMARTER way](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/setting-s-m-a-r-t-e-r-goals-7-steps-to-achieving-any-goal/), success is far more attainable.

When you set SMARTER goals, you’re setting Specific (S), Meaningful (M), Achievable (A), Relevant (R), and Time-Based (T) goals that are Evaluated (E), and the approach is Re-Adjusted (R) until you succeed. This is an important process in the success recipe and people who don’t follow along find goal achievement far more difficult.

If you want to set SMARTER goals, grab a sheet of paper and start writing. It won’t work without writing it out. What do you want? Specifically, what do you want? Describe it in great detail. Don’t leave any stone unturned. Don’t just say you want millions of dollars or to be skinny. Say an exact number of dollars and an exact amount of pounds or kilos that you want to lose, with a specific date for its achievement.

As long as these goals are meaningful, in that they aren’t just superficial goals, and you have some driving force behind them that’s bigger than you, then you’re part of the way there. And, by achievable, we’re not trying to discourage lofty goals. But you also don’t want to set yourself up for disappointment by saying you want to make a billion dollars in 12 months, especially if you’re currently heavily in debt, for example.

**#5 — Embody an Empowering Morning Routine**

Everything begins and ends with an [empowering morning routine](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/how-to-build-an-empowering-morning-routine/). What you do in the morning, sets the pace for the rest of the day. In turn, it dictates the outcome of your life. If you want to be happy and successful, create a set of habits in the morning to help foster that in your life. The right combination of habits executed day-in and day-out can make all the difference.

We’re such creatures of habit, that we forget to do the things that will benefit of our lives because we get caught up doing the things that we’re so used to. We’re steeped in habit and routine, and not necessarily ones that serve us. Usually, we’re too busy responding to life and its overwhelming demands on us, in order to take the bulls by the horn, so to speak.

But if we want to get ahead, succeed, and feel mentally at peace with ourselves, we need an empowering morning routine. These good morning habits need to be front-loaded at the start of the day because that’s when our minds are so fresh and we have so much clarity. And, by waking up early enough to tackle a list of good habits, we’re setting ourselves up for success and happiness.

Create a routine that will help empower your life rather than hinder it. Wake up early, eat a good breakfast, work out for 20 minutes, do yoga or meditate, write out a set of daily goals, and so on. Don’t live life in neutral. Take control, grab the reins, and be inspired and motivated to do and achieve something while helping others and yourself in the process.

**#6 — Tackle the MITs**

MITs, also known as the [most important tasks of the day](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/defining-the-most-important-tasks-mits-of-the-day/), are an integral part of success. They offer one of the most crucial keys to achieving our goals in life over the long term. It’s not always easy to go after the MITs, especially when we feel so stressed out or overwhelmed by life. But it’s a necessary act if we’re going to get where we need to go.

Going about identifying your MITs is a crucial part of this process. In time management, we call these quadrant-two activities — the important but not urgent things necessary to achieve your long-term goals. Once you’ve identified your MITs, chase after them first thing in the morning. Once your empowering morning routine is completed, get to these first.

Every single day, there’s some action, big or small, that we can take to help advance us towards our goals. As long as you can identify those, and you can implement those actions day after day, you can succeed in time. The biggest problem? It won’t happen overnight. And that’s where most people get frustrated with things.

Make a list the night before of your MITs that you want to tackle the next day. Then, when you wake up the following day, ensure that you get after that list. Keep the list handy with you throughout your morning routine and focus on the MITs once that’s complete. Don’t start your “busy work” that day until you get the MITs out of the way.

**#7 — Focus on Health and Wellbeing**

Health and wellbeing are an important part of the happiness-and-success formula, and one of the biggest keys to achieving them both. When we do things to harm ourselves by overeating, over-drinking alcohol, taking recreational drugs, and the like, not only does it have an adverse effect on our bodies, but also on our minds.

The chemical makeup and neurochemistry of the brain, which will excrete stress hormones when we tax the body with substance abuse or don’t take care of the way we look by indulging in a variety of hedonistic pleasures, can alter our motivation and desire to improve our lives. While it’s okay to indulge every now and then in certain pleasures, for the most part, people have difficulty quitting while they’re ahead.

The overall focus has to be on health. The day needs to start and end healthy. It doesn’t mean that life has to be boring. But if you want to get ahead, be happy and successful, you need to ensure that you’re putting the right things into your body. Clean body, clean mind. That’s how it goes. From lean proteins to reduced caloric intakes, non-alcoholic and non-carbonated drinks, and less-fatty foods, we need to focus on what goes in, whether it’s solid or liquid.

We also need to get grounded mentally. We need to do things like meditate and relax the mind. Take up a yoga class or institute an exercise regimen so that you have something that starts incorporating healthy habits into your life. It isn’t easy. But it does get easier over time as long you continue to repeat the right behaviors.

One [study](http://repositorio.ispa.pt/bitstream/10400.12/3364/1/IJSP_998-1009.pdf) found that habit formation takes anywhere from 18 to 254 days to form with an average of 66 days to solidify, so keep that in mind. Whether you’re trying to [quit a bad habit](https://www.wanderlustworker.com/how-to-quit-your-bad-habits/) or institute a new one, it’s going to take time. Don’t get discouraged if it doesn’t happen right away.