



### Happiness, we need more moments of happiness. Right now. What science is telling us:

The new lockdown has Europe in its grip. Can the same be said of the virus? We'll see. The only good news is that this time, things will be easier for us. Quite simply because we've had time to get used to it and we've acquired new skills. Turning the microphone off during Zoom meetings. Checking that there's enough toilet paper and yeast in stock. Remembering that we don't just have to eat pizza.

Despite this: many people feel that the lockdown measures pose a huge direct and indirect threat to their livelihoods. Whether you're a star musician or a sex worker, a hotelier or a hotel maid: things are looking tough. Some, however, such as the civil service, have proven to be winners in the lottery of working life. Even if you're in an objectively safe position, you could still be very concerned about your own health and that of your loved ones. A condition that very few are likely to get over without suffering psychological and physical damage until the first, liberating days of spring. Anxiety, depression, alcohol, pills, drugs, domestic violence.



The world of neuroscience can help, seeing happiness as requiring exercise, like your muscles. Our personal sense of happiness is partially determined by our genes.

Wide-ranging resources are also available to us of which we can make active use, however. First of all, it is helpful for us to realise that the strength of our negative feelings doesn't provide any proof of the likelihood of that the threat will occur. Our brain is our survival mechanism, and focuses all of its energy on protecting us from real and imagined dangers. That is why we assess possible dangers about five times more intensively than the moments of happiness in everyday life. Our happiness falls short.

I won't list my "10 best tips for immediate happiness" here, but will focus on the area in which the lockdown hits us the hardest – our relationships. A well-known 80-year-long Harvard study<sup>1</sup> of former male students addressed people's lives from every angle, from their lifestyles to their political views, to find out what makes people happy. The most important finding of this study is that social relationships are the only thing that matters if an individual wants to have a happy and fulfilled life. The only thing!

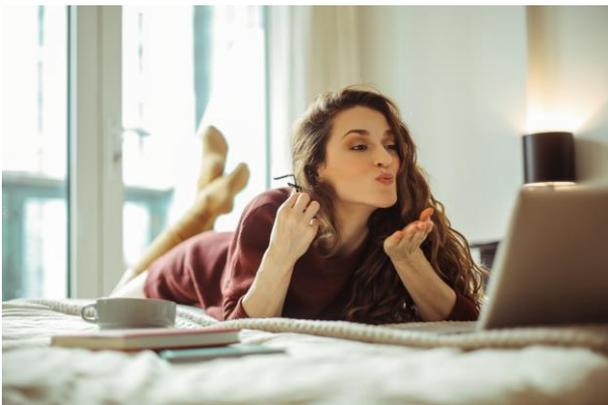
Professor of Psychiatry George Vaillant reached the same conclusion: "The key to healthy aging is relationships, relationships, relationships." Social bonds strengthen both our mental health and our physical health. They help us to keep everything in check, from memory loss to the possibility of a fatal heart attack.

In a lockdown, therefore, the following applies: nurture your closest relationships and allow toxic ones fall by the wayside. Work on nurturing a few close relations each day. Stay in touch with your family and close friends, including digitally.



As one author put it in such a typically American way: knowing that there are people who care for you, who love you, makes you sleep with a lighter heart.

Nicholas Christakis, an HMS professor of medical sociology and medicine, has investigated how emotions can be passed on to others in one's personal social network. He learned that happiness is a collective phenomenon. If you have a happy girlfriend who lives a kilometre away, this increases the likelihood that you will be happy yourself. Happiness isn't a single major event, but the accumulation of small, uplifting steps, such as feeling genuine gratitude and helping others out.



Rather than asking ourselves how we can become happier, we should ask ourselves how we can increase the happiness of those around us. A good concept here is to make a point of performing random acts of kindness. Praise your colleague for once, do the shopping for your neighbour, help an elderly person out by loading his DIY-shopping into his car. Or better still, offer to pay for someone else's shopping at the supermarket checkout if it is clear that they are hard up. Emotions at their most pure.

Keeping a "gratitude journal" is surprisingly effective in drawing one's attention away from the threat and toward the positive in the here and now. This is another area in which there have been new developments. Until now, the rule was that each day, you should write down three things for which you have been grateful. This can be quite difficult to do without repeating yourself regularly. It is probably better done just once or twice a week. It is better to hold on to a something and to feel it really deeply than to simply jot things down in a list. Focusing on a person to whom you are grateful is a more intensive experience than the please you find in your new pair of shoes. And focus on the situations that have surprised you, at least a little. This makes your feeling of gratitude all the more intense. Even with the dark cloud of Covid, it is still possible to bring in some warmth. Do you think you'll give the gratitude journal a try this winter? How about Wednesdays and Sundays?

One more tip: the dark cloud will get much smaller if you try and ignore the media and politicians. There is too much fake news and media, and many politicians know that we devote more of our attention to bad news. It only compounds our anxiety. So step back from the news and save yourself the negative experiences. Avoid watching current affairs programmes and Corona talk shows. You'll still find out about the most important developments. Incidentally, a study from China has shown that if people believe that they know more about the virus than others, they also feel happier during the pandemic. After all, this kind of knowledge makes you feel as though you have control over your life.



I'm glad that you've made it this far. Therefore, here's another exciting tip: when we're in a bad mood, we like to do easy things, like to relax, watch TV and follow social media. However, it takes a little effort to do the things that make us fulfilled and give us feelings of happiness, such as keeping a gratitude journal. Use the lockdown to gather new experiences, such as learning a language (Duolingo), improving your cookery skills (NYT Cooking) or finding out about plants on a woodland walk (Plantnet).

And watch this series! No, not Netflix, but use the most-visited course at Yale University – and available for free in the pandemic. Professor Laurie Santos began teaching the course “Psychology and the Good Life” in the spring of 2018 in response to alarming levels of depression, anxiety and stress among students. It became the most popular course at the university and gained international attention.

The online course combines positive psychology with the framework of behavioural science. Students learn better habits and a more accurate understanding of the concept of happiness. The topics addressed by the course are: *Misconceptions about happiness. Why our expectations are so bad. How we can overcome our biases. Stuff that really makes us happy. Putting strategies into practice.*

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being>

This is where binge watching is guaranteed to make you happy. You'll feel better pretty soon.

Please stay healthy – especially mentally.

### Helping to prevent Covid

Still paying attention? More and more studies are available that show you what you can do to help reduce your risk of contracting Covid. Your vitamin D level (25-hydroxy-vitamin D) should be at least 30 ng/ml, and ideally between 40 ng and 60 ng/ml. Values below 20 ng/ml correlate with *far* worse outcomes. Covid does indeed appear to be a causal relationship, and not just a correlating one. It is best to determine your personal status with your doctor or to simply determine your level by means of a self-test (e.g. Cerascreen). Otherwise, 2,000 units per day are recommended, preferably combined with vitamin K2. I know of doctors who are now giving high doses of Vitamin D to their at-risk patients. The risk of an overdose is very low.

And a longstanding active substance is available which has been tested with very positive outcomes in initial studies (in vivo!). The course of the disease has been significantly shortened – without side effects. Further studies are currently underway, but regrettably, only in developing countries and Spain. It hasn't had much attention yet. It is generic, which makes it of interest for developing countries. If you're interested, google Ivermectin. At least one doctor is available on Youtube who presents it in an understandable and scientific way. Vets have it in stock at particularly favourable prices.

### Sources:

<https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org>

Good content is available here



## Recommended reading

By Ralph Ohnemus:

**Markenerleben.** Die Strategie im Hyperwettbewerb und Informationstsunami [> Order here](#)

**Markenstaunen.** Gewinnen im Informationstsunami [> Order here](#)



Please send any feedback, suggestions or criticism on this article to:  
[braincandy@ka-brandresearch.com](mailto:braincandy@ka-brandresearch.com)

The Author

**Ralph Ohnemus, CEO.** Director and majority shareholder of K&A BrandResearch since 2001. Previously a K&A BrandResearch client for 15 years. Nationwide and international marketing and sales experience in senior management roles, including in FMCG, fashion, media and telecommunications, most recently as Consumer Sales SVP in charge of marketing, sales and chains at Viag Interkom O2.

Contact: [r.ohnemus@ka-brandresearch.com](mailto:r.ohnemus@ka-brandresearch.com)

