

## Happiness



April brings sunny and longer days, but it also brings some added stress as many of you are facing finals and the end of the academic year. Thus, addressing how to maintain a state of happiness would be an important goal at this academic crunch time. I was lucky that I could turn to one of our wonderful graduating medical students, **Fiona Scott**, to take a thoughtful reflection on happiness. Her honest and balanced approach to the topic will resonate with many of you.

Do we learn anything from being happy? The pursuit of happiness teaches us many things, namely struggle. But actually being happy doesn't require the hardships and struggles or the insight that it takes to get there. Don't get me wrong, I'm not anti-happiness, rather pro-happy-awareness.

As an avid film watcher (and studying avoider) the best films—both documentaries and dramas alike—are where the conflicts and struggles are the most acute. It is these plot lines where we learn and imagine how to handle similar situations in our own lives.

In an episode of *Modern Family*, the oldest daughter has to write her college admissions essay. Having lived a comfortable middle class life (and being a sitcom character) she laments that she cannot write it as she has never experienced struggle or hardship. So her mom leaves her at the side of the road 10 miles from home and let's her find her way back—just so she has something to write about. While fitting with the humor and fluff consistent of a television show, the episode brings up an important point. If we find ourselves in harmonious sitcom bliss—should we go searching

By Dr. Margaret Rea

for struggle? If you're like most of us and don't always find yourself in harmonious union with every aspect of life, what are you going to do about it?

We humans have such an incredible drive to continually alter our circumstance. Frustration, sadness, fear, anxiety lead us to action. Sometimes self-destructive actions, and sometimes to the opportunity for us to show the world what we are really made of. Which one you choose is up to you.

Use your frustration, your anger, your fear, your sadness to your benefit. That's what those feelings are there for. Stress, worry, anxiety keeps us working, keeps us moving forward like happiness never could.

I don't wish a life of uphill battles for you. But I do wish that you are never completely satisfied, so that you keep pushing, keep moving forward, keep wanting. I wish you joy—but also sadness, so you may know and cherish the good times better. I wish you success, but also failure, so you can know how truly great your accomplishments are. And I wish you peace of mind, tempered by worry, so you may better know how rare it is that any of us are here at all. Out of all of the things that can go terribly wrong in life, here you are, reading this, you amazing miracle you.

Think about what you wrote in your personal statement for school. I bet you wrote honestly about your life. And I bet the most interesting parts were when things weren't all sunshine and lollipops. Hardships make us. How boring would it be if we were always happy? We would have so little to talk about. No substance. No way of relating to people. No drive to work hard to achieve the important things, or to strive to improve our communities or ourselves.

Happiness is nice. But it must be earned to be truly appreciated. From the worry lines across your forehead, to the scars no one can see, to the heaviness in your heart, embrace your struggle, your conflict. Let it motivate you as much as it scares you. And when you feel joy, embrace it too, for it was hard fought.

### Wellness Events

#### Work Life and Wellness Events

<http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/index.html>

#### UC Living Fit Forever

[http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living\\_fit\\_forever.shtml](http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml)

#### Wellness Workshop

Maintaining Balance as You Push to the Finish Line  
Maggie Rea, Ph.D.  
April 25th, 2018  
Education Bldg 2206  
Lunch provided for the first 30 people



## Wellness Tip: Using Personal Strengths to Promote Happiness

A way to promote happiness is by honoring your strengths. Students can tend to focus on shortcomings which is understandable as they look for areas for growth and learning. However, pausing to identify strengths can balance out the focus on challenges and it is an important place to turn to in times of stress when maintaining resiliency is important:

### USE YOUR STRENGTHS

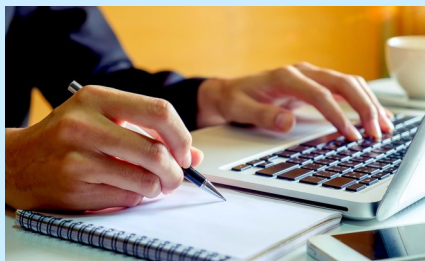
Take a moment to think about one of your personal strengths—for instance, creativity, perseverance, kindness, modesty, or curiosity. Consider how you could use this strength today in a new and different way. For example, if you choose the personal strength of perseverance, you might make a list of tasks that you have found challenging recently, then try to tackle each one of them. Or if you choose curiosity, you might attempt an activity that you've never tried before.

Describe in writing the personal strength you plan to use today and how you are going to use it. Then, go ahead and do it—act on your strength as frequently as possible throughout the day.

Repeat the steps above every day for a week. You may use the same personal strength across multiple days, or try using a new personal strength each day.

At the end of the week, write about the personal strengths that you focused on during the week and how you used them. Write in detail about what you did, how you felt, and what you learned from the experience.

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/use\\_your\\_strengths#](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/use_your_strengths#)



*It was wonderful to have two of our students contributing to this month's newsletter. I encourage all students, staff and faculty to consider contributing thoughts about wellness whether it be a recipe, a wellness strategy or a reflection on what promotes well-being. Sharing thoughts is a way to build community and help each other stay well.*

### Monthly Recipe from the UC Davis Community

This month's recipe is from Rachel Jensen, a 4<sup>th</sup> year medical student who will be starting her general surgery residency at UC San Diego in July. She loves "feeding the people" and making meals/desserts with friends! She has particularly enjoyed testing baking recipes on her third-year doctoring group. This month, she is sharing a recipe that she hopes people can use during times of stress! "I know that during busy exam times, eating healthy (or at all) is one of the first things to go. I have found a few pretty simple recipes that can be made in large quantities, and can easily get you through a busy week. Plus, they're plain enough that you can switch things up by adding a fried egg, sautéing some vegetables or chicken on the side, etc. if you're one of those people that gets easily bored eating the same thing every day." A few of the ingredients are things that you might not have on-hand, but I promise they're delicious and you won't regret the investment.

You can find the recipe [here](#).



### Wellness App: Happify: for Stress & Worry

"How you feel matters. Whether you're feeling stressed, anxious, depressed, or you're dealing with constant negative thoughts, Happify brings you effective tools and programs to take control of your emotional wellbeing. Our techniques are developed by leading scientists and experts who've been studying evidence-based interventions in the fields of positive psychology, mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy for decades. Get ready to reduce stress, overcome negative thoughts, and build greater resilience. 86% of people who use Happify regularly report feeling better about their lives in 2 months! Struggling with everyday challenges and being gripped by negativity is toxic to your emotional and physical wellbeing, your relationships, your performance at work. So when you start to turn the corner, and begin to learn the new habits of successful engagement with life, everything starts to look brighter and better."

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/happify-for-stress-worry/id730601963?mt=>

