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ISSUE 4 - NOVEMBER 2024



Open Heart

STORIES TO EDUCATE, INSPIRE AND EMPOWER YOU TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE.

THE BENEFITS OF **COFFEE** **CATCH-UPS**

For Mental Health & Wellbeing

POLYPHENOLS:
Your Secret Strategy
for Better Moods

**NEW YEAR,
NEW YOU!**

+ MORE!

MASTERING THE **THE ART OF** **CONNECTION**

*How to build meaningful
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EDITOR'S Welcome!

Open Heart Magazine is a FREE mental health publication. It is free because we believe all people should have access to the support and stories that resonate and validate them to ensure they can live their best life.

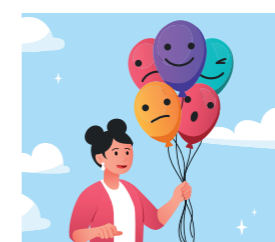
Our aim is to cultivate a nurturing environment where hearts are encouraged to open, stories find a voice, vulnerability is embraced, and connections thrive.

Through these narratives we hope to ignite inspiration and empowerment, fostering courage and resilience in our readers as they navigate life's journey, armed with an open heart and a toolbox of shared experiences to draw from. Happy reading!

- Amanda & Shawn

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IMPORTANT: This magazine discusses topics that may be triggering for some readers. Reader discretion is advised. If you are struggling, please consider seeking support from a mental health professional.

The Benefits of Coffee Catchups for Mental Health and Wellbeing

WRITTEN BY SHAWN MATTHEWS

In today's fast-paced, digitally driven world, finding time to connect with others in a meaningful way can be challenging. However, something as simple as a coffee catch-up—a casual conversation over a cup of coffee—can have profound benefits for mental health and overall wellbeing.

Whether with friends, family, colleagues, or even acquaintances, these informal meetups offer much more than just a caffeine boost. They serve as opportunities to foster connection, relieve stress, and improve emotional resilience. Here's how coffee catchups can contribute to better mental health and wellbeing:

1. Social Connection and Belonging

One of the most significant benefits of a coffee catch-up is the sense of connection it fosters. Human beings are inherently social creatures, and face-to-face interactions play a crucial role in our mental health. Meeting someone for coffee allows us to engage in real conversations, share stories, and simply enjoy another person's company. This interaction helps combat feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are major contributors to mental health issues like anxiety and depression. In a world where so much of our communication is digital, these in-person connections remind us of the importance of human touch and eye contact, reinforcing a sense of belonging.

2. Stress Relief and Emotional Support

Life can be overwhelming, and talking through issues with a trusted friend or colleague can be a great way to alleviate stress. A coffee catch-up provides a relaxed setting to open up about personal challenges, frustrations, or even small victories. Venting about a tough day at work, discussing family stress, or sharing positive news can be cathartic. Engaging in conversation helps clear the mental clutter and allows us to process emotions more effectively. The simple act of being heard can significantly reduce stress levels, offering comfort and emotional support that helps to boost resilience.

3. Enhanced Mood and Energy Boost

Beyond the emotional benefits of conversation, coffee itself can have a positive impact on your mood. The caffeine in coffee is a natural stimulant that can enhance alertness, boost energy, and improve focus. For many, a cup of coffee can brighten the day and provide the energy needed to navigate challenges with more clarity and optimism. Pairing this with a meaningful conversation creates a synergy that can lift spirits and leave both parties feeling rejuvenated and more positive.

“A coffee catch-up can serve as a mental workout, helping keep the brain sharp while fostering deeper interpersonal understanding.”

4. Improved Cognitive Function and Mental Stimulation

Engaging in casual yet meaningful conversation over coffee stimulates the brain in various ways. It requires active listening, processing of information, and formulating thoughtful responses. This mental engagement can help improve cognitive functions, such as memory and problem-solving skills. Additionally, sharing ideas, experiences, and perspectives often sparks creativity and new ways of thinking. A coffee catch-up can therefore serve as a mental workout, helping keep the brain sharp while fostering deeper interpersonal understanding.

5. A Break from Routine

Many people find themselves stuck in rigid routines, whether it's in their professional or personal lives. A coffee catch-up offers a break from this monotony, providing a refreshing change of pace. Stepping away from your daily tasks to enjoy a relaxed conversation in a cozy café or peaceful outdoor setting can create a mini mental reset. This break helps reduce burnout and allows individuals to return to their responsibilities with a clearer mind and renewed focus.

6. Encouragement of Positive Habits

Regular coffee catch-ups can promote positive habits, such as intentional socialising and mindfulness. Setting time aside to meet with others encourages individuals to prioritise social connections and foster healthy relationships. Additionally, the relaxed nature of a coffee meeting can encourage mindfulness—allowing individuals to be present in the moment, savor their drink, and engage in meaningful dialogue without the distractions of technology or the rush of daily tasks.

7. Building Trust and Strengthening Relationships

The informal setting of a coffee catch-up is perfect for deepening personal and professional relationships. Sharing a cup of coffee creates a neutral ground where people can connect without the pressures of formal settings. It encourages vulnerability and open communication, which builds trust over time. Whether it's with a colleague discussing work-related topics or a friend catching up on life's latest events, these interactions strengthen bonds, which in turn enhances emotional wellbeing.

8. Increased Sense of Community

Regular coffee catch-ups, especially when part of a larger social circle, foster a sense of community. Meeting at the same coffee shop or with the same group of people can build a supportive network. This feeling of community is crucial for mental health, as it provides a support system where individuals feel valued and connected to something larger than themselves.

This feeling of community is crucial for mental health, as it provides a support system where individuals feel valued and connected to something larger than themselves.

Communities that prioritise these kinds of meetups are often more cohesive and supportive, contributing to a collective sense of wellbeing.

Final thoughts...

Incorporating regular coffee catch-ups into your routine can be a simple yet effective way to improve mental health and wellbeing. The combination of social connection, emotional support, and a mental break, alongside the mood-enhancing properties of coffee, creates a powerful tool for maintaining emotional balance in today's hectic world.

Whether you're catching up with an old friend, bonding with a new colleague, or simply taking time for a meaningful conversation, a coffee catch-up can be the perfect antidote to stress and isolation—one cup at a time!



New Year, New You?

Why Resolutions Fail and How to Set Goals That Stick!

WRITTEN BY AMANDA HARGREAVES

Every January, we dust off our notebooks, scribble down a list of resolutions, and dive headfirst into a fresh start. This will be the year, we tell ourselves.

The year we finally lose weight, save more, or conquer that ever-elusive work-life balance. But by February? The gym is empty, the savings account looks suspiciously light, and Netflix is back to being our BFF.

So, why do resolutions so often crash and burn? And more importantly, how can we set goals that actually stick? Let's explore.

1. Why Resolutions Fail: The All-or-Nothing Trap

Here's the thing: resolutions tend to be big, bold, and...unrealistic. They often come with an "all-or-nothing" mindset. Miss a workout? Fail. Eat a slice of cake? Fail. Forget to journal one night? Epic fail. This kind of thinking leaves zero room for real life—and real life is messy.

According to personal development icons like Brené Brown, it's this perfectionism that trips us up. We set sky-high expectations and then beat ourselves up when we inevitably fall short. The result? We quit entirely. Why bother if we can't do it perfectly, right?

2. Shift from Resolutions to Intentions

Instead of rigid resolutions, consider setting intentions. Intentions focus on the journey rather than the destination. They're less about hitting a specific target and more about fostering ongoing growth.

For example:

Resolution: "I'm going to lose 10 kilos by March."

Intention: "I'm going to prioritise movement and nourish my body in ways that feel good."

See the difference? One is a rigid demand, the other is a flexible, self-compassionate approach.

3. The Power of Small, Sustainable Habits

James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, argues that small, consistent actions are the secret sauce to lasting change. Want to start reading more? Commit to just one page a day. Looking to save money? Transfer \$5 a week into a savings account.

These micro-changes might feel insignificant, but over time, they snowball into remarkable transformations.

The key? Make it so easy that it's impossible to fail. Then, once that habit feels second nature, you can build on it.

4. Anchor Your Goals to Your Values

Ever wonder why some goals light a fire under you, while others feel like a chore? It's all about alignment with your core values. Brené Brown talks a lot about the importance of living authentically. When your goals reflect what truly matters to you—whether it's connection, creativity, or health—they naturally feel more compelling.

Ask yourself: Why does this goal matter to me? If your answer feels shallow or external (e.g., "because everyone else is doing it"), you might need to dig deeper or reframe it.

5. Celebrate Progress, Not Perfection

One of the biggest game-changers in goal-setting is learning to celebrate the small wins. Did you exercise twice this week instead of your planned three? That's still two more workouts than zero! Progress is progress, and acknowledging it keeps you motivated and moving forward.

6. End-of-Year Reflection: Your Secret Weapon

Before you dive into goal-setting for the new year, take a moment to reflect on the year that's passed. What worked? What didn't? What are you proud of? This isn't about dwelling on failures but learning from them. Reflection gives you clarity and helps you set goals rooted in wisdom and experience.

A New Kind of New Year

This year, let's ditch the "new year, new you" pressure and embrace a mindset of growth over perfection. Set intentions that align with your values, start small, and give yourself the grace to stumble and restart. Because real change doesn't happen overnight—it's built one small, intentional step at a time.

Here's to a year of meaningful progress, self-compassion, and goals that actually stick!

POLYPHENOLS: Your Secret Strategy for Better Moods.

WRITTEN BY SARAH ROCK

When our mood dips low, many of us dive onto a block of chocolate like it's a life raft. Are we drawn to the comfort of its rich sweetness or does your body know something you don't?

Turns out chocolate, along with foods like tea, coffee, berries, vegetables, spices, and red wine, is high in polyphenols. Recent research links diets rich in polyphenols to a reduced risk of mental health disorders and improved treatment outcomes, suggesting our bodies might have been onto something all along. So, what are polyphenols, and how can they boost your mood?

Understanding Polyphenols

Polyphenols are compounds naturally found in plant foods. There are thousands of types, categorised into four main families based on their chemical structures: flavonoids, lignans, stilbenes, and phenolic acids. All polyphenols bring antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits, keeping your brain sharp, calming the fire of inflammation, supporting heart health, balancing blood sugar, and even supporting your gut microbiome!

The Mood Boosting Benefits of Polyphenols

Polyphenols enhance mood in several ways. Their antioxidant properties protect the brain from oxidative stress, contributing to mental health issues like anxiety and depression. They also battle brain inflammation—often a sneaky villain behind mood swings. Plus, they help your brain whip up feel-good neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and GABA, keeping your vibes high and stress low. Polyphenols also play a crucial role in maintaining the gut-brain axis—the communication network between your gut and brain—by nourishing the gut microbiome.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Sarah Rock is a clinical nutritionist and food educator dedicated to helping anyone and everyone build a lifelong friendship with food, one tasty bite at a time! Armed with her professional experience in nutrition and a passion for supporting families, Sarah whipped up The Foodie Academy, a fun-filled haven where children and adults alike can kick their food fears to the curb and begin a lifelong friendship with food. At her academy, she transforms cooking into an adventure, empowering everyone to prepare healthy meals and enjoy a friendship with food that allows them to grow and glow!

Polyphenols act as prebiotics, feeding beneficial gut bacteria that, in turn, produce compounds that positively influence brain function and mood regulation.

Sources of Polyphenols and Easy Ways to Include Them

Where can you find these mood-boosting polyphenols? Check your spice cabinet! Spices like turmeric, sage, rosemary, cloves, and star anise are rich in polyphenols. While the list of fruits and vegetables is extensive, notable options include berries, oranges, apples, plums, peaches, grapes, globe artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, celery leaves, olives, onions, soybeans, legumes, spinach, and red cabbage. Grains, nuts, and seeds are also great sources—think rye, oats, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, pecans, flaxseeds, and cacao seeds for chocolate. And yes, tea (both black and green), coffee, and a moderate splash of red wine make the list too!

To incorporate more polyphenols into your diet, try adding an extra coloured vegetable to meals, using extra virgin olive oil for cooking and salad dressings, and topping porridge with flaxseed meal and berries. Opt for dark chocolate (70% cocoa or higher), add spices to your cooking, enjoy mixed nuts as snacks, and remember to eat the skins of fruits and vegetables, where polyphenols tend to concentrate.

Incorporating polyphenols into your diet is a delicious way to boost your mental health and mood. By enjoying a variety of polyphenol-rich foods—from colourful fruits and vegetables to spices, tea, and dark chocolate—you nourish both your brain and gut. Small changes in your meals can lead to big smiles, so next time you reach for that chocolate or cozy cup of tea, remember—you're not indulging; you're giving your mood a fabulous lift!

Your Attitude is Your Altitude:

How to Stay Motivated and Give Your Best Without Deflation

WRITTEN BY SHAWN MATTHEWS

“All big things come from small beginnings. The seed of every habit is a single tiny decision. But as that decision is repeated, a habit sprouts and grows stronger.” — James Clear.

This quote encapsulates how small, consistent actions lead to significant results over time. But what drives these actions? Our decisions, which are shaped by our mindset and attitude. Your attitude is what determines how far you go in life, or as the saying goes, “Your attitude is your altitude.” With the right mindset, you can maintain your momentum and stay motivated, even through the highs and lows.

So, how do you stay motivated and give your best without deflating? Let’s explore three essential strategies to elevate your mindset and keep you pushing forward.

1. When Things Are Going Well

Let’s start with the highs—those times when everything seems to be going your way. It’s easy to maintain motivation when life is smooth sailing, and the positive momentum can carry you forward. But can you push too hard when things are going well? Absolutely.

We are not machines. Even during the most successful periods, it’s crucial to strike a balance between ambition and self-care. Here’s an example from my personal experience: Years ago, I worked as a travel agent at Flight Centre, putting in 12-hour days, often without taking a lunch break. My income was commission-based, and when business slowed, I worked even harder, thinking it was the only solution.

I was successful for a while, but over time, my energy plummeted. I was neglecting my physical and mental health, pushing through exhaustion until I was completely burned out. This experience taught me a critical lesson: You cannot give your best to

others—whether family, friends, or clients—if you’re not taking care of yourself first. Passion is important, but without self-care, it quickly leads to burnout.

The takeaway? When things are going well, enjoy your success, but also recognise when you need to step back and recharge. Boundaries and self-care are essential, even during the good times.

2. When Life Throws Challenges Your Way

We all face challenges, and how we respond to them is critical. Do you allow frustration to take over, or do you step back and assess how to improve the situation? Challenges are tough, but they also present opportunities for growth.

When I’m facing difficulties, the first thing I do is ask myself, Why am I feeling this way? Often, it’s not just the external challenge but my internal reaction to it. Acknowledging my feelings allows me to regain control over the situation and come up with constructive solutions.

Some strategies I use when overwhelmed include:

- Taking a break to clear my mind.
- Engaging in physical activity like walking or yoga.
- Reading a few pages of an inspiring book.
- Writing down a step-by-step plan to overcome the challenge.
- One of my favourite tools for managing stress is the STOP method:
- Stop what you’re doing.
- Take a deep breath.
- Observe your body, mind, and emotions.
- Proceed with a clear, mindful approach.

This simple but effective technique helps reset my attitude, allowing me to navigate challenges with clarity and composure.

When I’m facing difficulties, the first thing I do is ask myself, Why am I feeling this way? Often, it’s not just the external challenge but my internal reaction to it.

The takeaway? When life gets tough, take a step back, reset your mindset, and then approach the situation with intention. Challenges are not just obstacles—they’re growth opportunities in disguise.

3. When You Feel Like Giving Up

Let’s be honest—there are times when life feels overwhelming, and giving up seems like the easiest option. Whether it’s work, relationships, or personal goals, we all hit that breaking point where we want to throw in the towel.

In my line of work as a counsellor, I frequently come across the concept of emotional labor—the effort required to manage our emotions, particularly in professional settings. Emotional labor can be just as exhausting as physical labor, and without proper boundaries, it can lead to emotional burnout.

One of the best ways to prevent this burnout is by setting boundaries—both with yourself and with others. Here’s how I apply boundary-setting in my life:

With loved ones: I have open conversations about when I need alone time or space to focus on my own needs.

With clients: I establish clear working hours and expectations from the start, ensuring that they understand when I am available and when I’m not.



5 Festive Financial Fixes!

WRITTEN BY ROSIE HARGREAVES (CPA)

The holidays are upon us, and you know what that means: festive cheer, endless parties, and the unmistakable ka-ching of money flying out of our wallets faster than you can say "Secret Santa."

But as we sip on our eggnog and revel in the season's joy, it's worth pausing to reflect on our financial health. With a new year on the horizon, now's the perfect time to set some money goals and instill habits that'll make your future self fist-pump with pride.

1. Get Clear on Your Goals (Because YOLO Wisely)

What's your dream for next year? A European getaway? Finally clearing that credit card debt? Maybe you're eyeing a house deposit or want to start a little rainy-day fund for life's unexpected curveballs. Whatever it is, write it down. Getting crystal clear on what you're working towards gives your money a purpose beyond that fleeting dopamine hit of an impulse buy.

Here's the kicker: give each goal a timeline. Want to save \$5,000 in six months? That's about \$833 a month (or \$192 per week). Breaking it down makes it less overwhelming and way more doable.

2. Pay Yourself First

Before you roll your eyes, let me explain. Paying yourself first isn't just for finance nerds; it's a life hack that actually works. Here's the gist: every time you get paid, stash a portion of your income away for savings and investments before you even think about spending. You're essentially treating your savings like a non-negotiable bill.

Start small if you're new to this—maybe 10% of your income—and gradually increase it. Automate it, so you don't even have to think about it. Out of sight, out of mind, right?

Here's the kicker: give each goal a timeline. Want to save \$5,000 in six months? That's about \$833 a month (or \$192 per week).

3. Set Realistic Living Expenses (And Stick to Them!)

It's time to face the music: Are you living within your means, or are you hoping your bank balance magically replenishes itself? Let's fix that. Start by creating a budget that covers your essentials—think rent, utilities, groceries, and transport—while still allowing for a bit of fun. Life's too short to skip that occasional brunch with friends.

Here's a handy tip: create a 'splurge' account. Allocate a set amount each week for guilt-free spending, so you can indulge without derailing your goals.

4. Tame the Impulse Buy Beast

We've all been there: you pop into the store for milk and walk out with a scented candle, three bags of chips, and a decorative Christmas gnome. It happens. But here's the thing—those sneaky purchases add up.

Combat impulse buys by introducing a 24-hour rule. If you spot something you must have, wait a day before pulling the trigger. Chances are, you'll realise you don't actually need it (or even remember it!).

5. Survive the Silly Season Without Going Broke

Christmas is a notorious budget-buster, but it doesn't have to be. Start by setting a clear holiday budget—gifts, food, decorations, the lot. Then, stick to it like your life depends on it. Embrace thoughtful, low-cost gifts (handmade or experience-based ones are winners) and remember, the holidays are about connection, not the price tag.

A Fresh Financial Start

As we wrap up the year, let's commit to a healthier relationship with money. It's not about being stingy; it's about being intentional. You're building a life where your money works for you, not the other way around. So, take a deep breath, set those goals, and head into the new year ready to save, spend, and thrive—on your terms. Cheers to financial freedom in 2025!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Rosie Hargreaves is a CPA Accountant and Profit First Specialist, proudly serving as one of only a few in Australia. With a deep passion for helping businesses and families thrive, Rosie founded Amarose Group Accounting, where she empowers clients to take control of their finances and achieve sustainable profitability. Drawing on her expertise and the transformative Profit First methodology, Rosie guides her clients to make smarter financial decisions, turning stress into confidence and chaos into clarity. Contact Rosie for more information via amarose.com.au.

The Science of Happiness

WRITTEN BY SHAWN MATTHEWS

"Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present." — Jim Rohn

In reflecting on happiness, I often wonder how people around the world experience it. While everyone's pursuit of happiness looks different, the desire for it is universal. However, what does happiness truly look like?

Positive psychology has taken a scientific approach to understanding global well-being and the essence of living a meaningful life. According to Webster's Dictionary, happiness is defined as a state of well-being and contentment. In scientific literature, it's often referred to as hedonia (Ryan & Deci, 2001)—the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative ones.

This raises an important question: Can we be happy even when we experience negative emotions? The short answer is yes. Negative emotions can serve a purpose, encouraging us to reflect, grow, and innovate.

So how can we cultivate happiness in the present moment? The key lies in choosing happiness even as we pursue our goals and navigate life's challenges. Unfortunately, many people have a distorted view of what it means to live a fulfilling life.

True contentment is not a destination, but a continuous process. As psychologists have noted, finding satisfaction requires us to embrace curiosity, take risks, and tolerate anxiety to discover new passions and dimensions of our identity (Psychology Today).

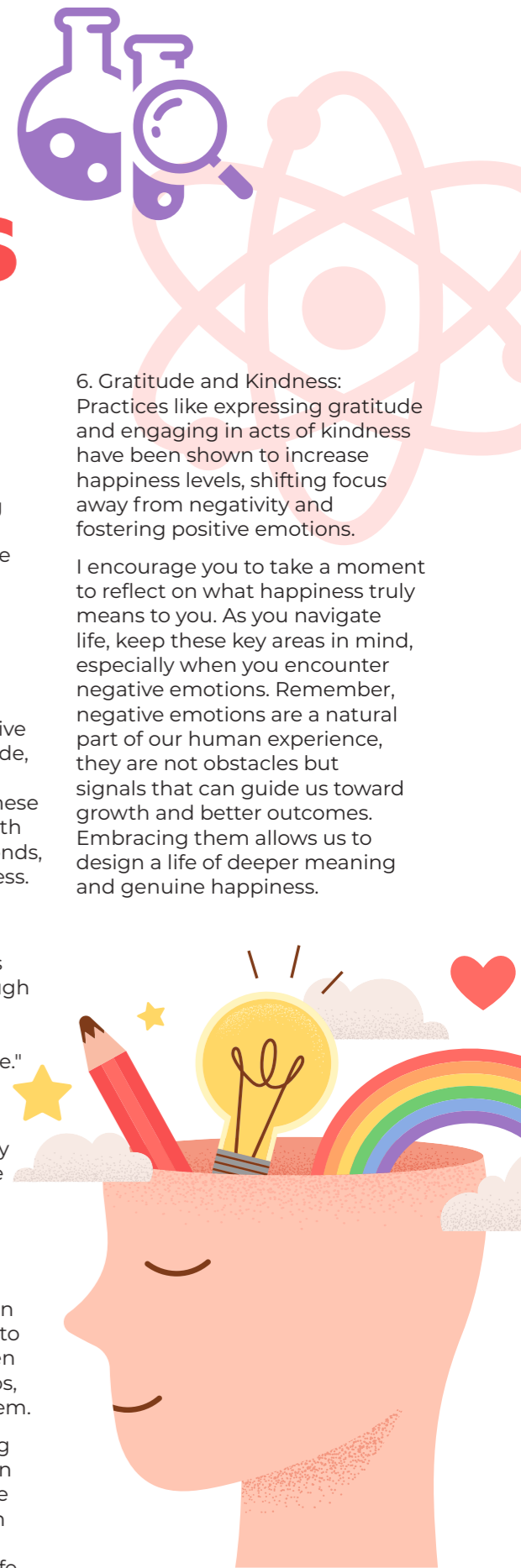
In my research, I've found that happiness includes the ability to acknowledge and embrace all emotions, even the unpleasant ones. This self-awareness and understanding how we feel and perceive the world—helps shape our unique paths toward well-being.

Here are some of the key elements in the science of happiness:

- 1. Positive Emotions:** Research underscores the value of positive emotions—such as joy, gratitude, and hope—in improving both mental and physical health. These emotions help people cope with adversity, strengthen social bonds, and act as a buffer against stress.
- 2. Engagement (Flow):** People often feel happiest when they are fully immersed in activities that challenge them just enough to match their abilities. This state, known as "flow," is often described as being "in the zone."
- 3. Relationships:** Strong, supportive connections with family, friends, and community are crucial to happiness. Those with healthy relationships tend to experience higher life satisfaction.
- 4. Meaning and Purpose:** A sense of meaning or purpose in life is a significant contributor to long-term happiness. This often comes from work, relationships, personal goals, or a belief system.
- 5. Accomplishments:** Achieving goals and making progress can boost happiness, but the sense of accomplishment must align with personal values and be balanced with other areas of life.

6. Gratitude and Kindness: Practices like expressing gratitude and engaging in acts of kindness have been shown to increase happiness levels, shifting focus away from negativity and fostering positive emotions.

I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on what happiness truly means to you. As you navigate life, keep these key areas in mind, especially when you encounter negative emotions. Remember, negative emotions are a natural part of our human experience, they are not obstacles but signals that can guide us toward growth and better outcomes. Embracing them allows us to design a life of deeper meaning and genuine happiness.



References and Resources:
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 Very Well Mind: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-happiness-4869755>

Mastering the Art of Connection

How to Build Meaningful Relationships for Life

WRITTEN BY AMANDA HARGREAVES

Making new connections can be exciting, nerve-wracking, or sometimes a little awkward!

Whether you're walking into a new job, a networking event, or even just a room full of strangers at a friend's party, social situations often come with a side of 'What do I say next?'



But here's the thing: building relationships isn't just about surviving the moment—it's about thriving in it. Let's dive into some practical strategies to help you flex your social muscles, no matter the setting, and even explore how young people can master this art too.

1. Start with a Smile and a Compliment

A smile is your social Swiss Army knife—versatile, approachable, and instantly disarming. When paired with a sincere compliment, it becomes a powerful tool for connection. Whether it's "I love your jacket!" or "Your presentation was fantastic," a compliment not only starts the conversation but sets a positive tone.

And here's the beauty: this works in any context. Networking event? Compliment their insights. First day at work? Praise the office vibe or their helpfulness. A simple, genuine comment can be the spark that ignites a meaningful conversation.

2. Embrace the Art of Small Talk

Small talk often gets a bad reputation, but it's the bridge to deeper connections. Think of it as warming up before a workout—it's necessary to ease into the main event.

Instead of the dreaded "How's the weather?", try more engaging openers like:

- "What's been the highlight of your week?"
- "What got you into [their field or interest]?"

The trick is to steer the conversation toward topics they're passionate about. This not only keeps things interesting but also allows you to build rapport quickly.

3. Find Common Ground, Fast

Every social interaction has hidden opportunities for connection; you just need to uncover them. Maybe you both binge the same Netflix series, share a love for spicy food, or are equally baffled by the latest tech trend.

Finding shared interests creates an instant bond. Keep your ears open for clues and, if all else fails, ask, "What do you like to do for fun?" It's a great way to pivot into more personal and engaging territory.

4. Lean Into Active Listening

One of the most underrated social superpowers is listening. And no, I'm not talking about the kind where you're just waiting for your turn to talk. Active listening means fully engaging with what the other person is saying—nodding, maintaining eye contact, and responding thoughtfully.

Phrases like "That's so interesting—how did you get into that?" or "Wow, that must've been challenging. How did you handle it?" show genuine curiosity and make people feel valued.

In a world where everyone's eager to be heard, being the one who truly listens can set you apart.

5. Know When to Take a Breather

Let's face it—socialising can be draining, especially if you're an introvert or if the event is a long one. Learning to pace yourself is essential. It's okay to step outside for fresh air, grab a drink, or find a quieter spot to recharge.

In fact, taking a break can sometimes lead to the most meaningful connections. You might bump into someone doing the exact same thing and strike up a conversation that feels more relaxed and authentic.

"Every social interaction has hidden opportunities for connection; you just need to uncover them..."

In a world where everyone's eager to be heard, being the one who truly listens can set you apart."

6. End on a High Note

Leaving a lasting impression is easier than you think. When it's time to move on, wrap up the conversation with a warm, "It's been great chatting—let's stay in touch!" If you've bonded over something specific, suggest connecting again: "I'd love to hear more about your project sometime."

Even if you don't exchange details, ending the conversation on a positive note ensures they'll remember you fondly.

Connection Is for Life

Flexing your social muscles isn't just about surviving parties or networking events—it's a lifelong skill that enriches every part of your journey. From making new friends to building professional relationships, the ability to connect is invaluable.

So, next time you find yourself in a room full of strangers, take a deep breath, smile, and dive in. The more you practice, the easier it gets. Remember, everyone is just as human as you are, and most people are more than happy to meet someone who shows genuine interest in them.

Some Social Tips for Teenagers and our Young People

Navigating social situations as a young person comes with its own set of challenges. Whether it's making new friends at school, finding your place in extracurricular activities, or stepping into the world of part-time jobs, every interaction is a learning opportunity.

1. Start Small

Begin with low-pressure situations. Say hi to someone new at school or compliment a teammate on their game. These small gestures build confidence over time.

2. Use Your Interests as a Bridge

Your hobbies and passions are great conversation starters. Love gaming? Ask someone if they've tried the latest release. Into art? Compliment a classmate's drawing or share your own. Common interests make connecting easier.

3. Don't Fear Awkward Moments

Awkwardness is part of the process, and guess what? Everyone feels it. If a conversation doesn't flow perfectly, laugh it off and move on. Social skills, like any other skill, improve with practice.

4. The Power of Asking Questions

Curiosity shows you care. Ask about their favorite music, what they like to do after school, or even what they find challenging. People love sharing their experiences, and you'll learn more about them in the process.

5. Know When to Walk Away

Not every connection will stick, and that's okay. If someone isn't receptive or the vibe feels off, it's perfectly fine to politely move on. Focus your energy on those who appreciate your effort.

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