

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Successful Pursuit of Happiness Linked to Good Health, Long Life

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we evaluate what brings you happiness.***

You may have heard that the pursuit of happiness was considered an unalienable right by our country's founding fathers. Right alongside life and liberty, the ability to chase your bliss claimed a lofty spot in our Declaration of Independence.

It was with that revolutionary spirit that the Society of Happy People declared the third full week of January as the Hunt for Happiness Week. The timing makes perfect sense. The holidays are over, and the long winter lies ahead. Credit card bills from the holidays are coming due. New Year's resolutions are becoming more difficult to maintain. Though we don't suffer nearly to the extremes of those who live in colder climates, even Floridians can experience seasonal affective disorder.

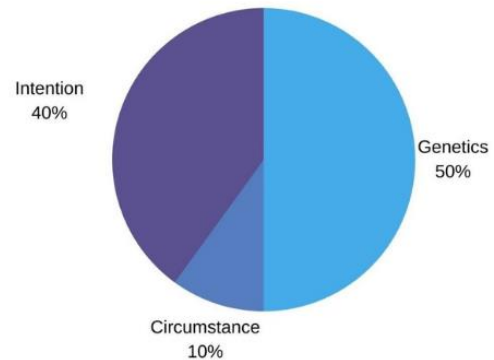
In fact, the third Monday in January, which falls on January 17 this year, is known as "Blue Monday," the most depressing day of the year. If ever there is a time to go hunting for happiness, it's now.

So, if you're not a naturally cheerful person, how do you go about seeking out happiness? Is it possible to make yourself happy, even during trying times such as these?

Before we get there, it's important to acknowledge the brain and body health benefits of happiness. According to a [Harvard Health post](#), people who describe themselves as happy tend to have fewer health problems, a lower risk of depression and longer lives. Clearly, happiness is a brain health worthy pursuit.

The Harvard Health post indicates most people can increase their happiness. Research suggests that, on average, 50 percent of people's general level of happiness is determined by genetics. Forty percent is under people's control, and the remaining 10 percent depends on circumstances. "This implies that even if you don't consider yourself happy, there is a good chance you have some power to change it," says Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of the longest-running study on happiness, the [Harvard Study on Adult Development](#).

What Determines Happiness?



WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Following are some strategies to try when seeking to increase your happiness. Visit the Harvard Health post for details on each idea.

- Stay connected to family and friends.
- Volunteer to gain a sense of purpose and improve your mood.
- Perform regular acts of kindness
- Revisit the activities that gave you joy as a child or young adult.
- Opt to spend money on time-saving measures, such as delegating chores, over material goods.
- Invest in experiences to create happy memories.
- Spend time with happy people.
- Visit green spaces, such as parks or gardens, often.
- Break up stale routines.
- Count your blessings on a regular basis.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).