

14

**Simple
Ways**

Be Happy In Life



Happiness is ephemeral, subject to the vagaries of everything from the weather to the size of your bank account. We're not suggesting that you can reach a permanent state called "happiness" and remain there. But there are many ways to swerve off the path of anxiety, anger, frustration, and sadness into a state of happiness once or even several times throughout the day. Here are 14 ideas to get you started.



Way # 1 : Practice mindfulness.

Be in the moment. Instead of worrying about your checkup tomorrow while you have dinner with your family, focus on the here and now — the food, the company, the conversation.



Way # 2 : Laugh out loud.

Just anticipating a happy, funny event can raise levels of endorphins and other pleasure-inducing hormones and lower production of stress hormones. Researchers tested 16 men who all agreed they thought a certain videotape was funny. Their levels of stress hormones dropped significantly, while their endorphin levels rose 27 percent and their growth hormone levels rose 87 percent.



Way # 3 : Declutter.

It's nearly impossible to meditate, breathe deeply, or simply relax when every surface is covered with papers and bills and magazines, your cabinets bulge, and you haven't balanced your checkbook in six months. Plus, the repetitive nature of certain cleaning tasks — such as sweeping, wiping, and scrubbing — can be meditative in and of itself if you focus on what you're doing.



Way # 4 : Just say no.

Eliminate activities that aren't necessary and that you don't enjoy. If there are enough people already to handle the church bazaar and you're feeling stressed by the thought of running the committee for yet another year, step down and let someone else handle things.



Way # 5 : Do one thing at a time.

People who multitask are more likely to have high blood pressure. Take that finding to heart. Instead of talking on the phone while you fold laundry or clean the kitchen, sit down in a comfortable chair and turn your entire attention over to the conversation. Instead of checking e-mail as you work on other projects, turn off your e-mail function until you finish the report you're writing.



Way # 6 : Scent the air.

The benefits of aromatherapy in relieving stress are real. In one study people exposed to rosemary had lower anxiety levels, increased alertness, and performed math computations faster. Adults exposed to lavender showed an increase in the type of brain waves that suggest increased relaxation.



Way # 7 : Visit a quiet place.

Although relationships are one of the best antidotes to stress, sometimes you need time alone to recharge and reflect. Libraries, museums, gardens, and places of worship provide islands of peace and calm in today's frantic world. Find a quiet place near your house and make it your secret getaway.



Way # 8 : Volunteer.

Helping others enables you to put your own problems into perspective and also provides social interaction. While happy people are more likely to help others, helping others increases your happiness. Volunteer work enhanced all six aspects of well-being: happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, sense of control over life, physical health, and depression.



Way # 9 : Walk mindfully.

Exercise is better than tranquilizers for relieving anxiety and stress. But what you do with your mind while you're walking can make your walk even more beneficial. Practicing mindfulness showed declines in anxiety and had fewer negative and more positive feelings about themselves.



Way # 10 : Give priority to close relationships.

Those who had a lot of supportive friends were much more likely to have healthier blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood sugar metabolism, and stress hormone levels than those with two or fewer close friends. People who feel lonely, depressed, and isolated are three to five times more likely to get sick and die prematurely than those who have feelings of love, connection, and community.



Way # 11 : Take care of the soul.

Actively religious people are happier and cope better with crises. For many people faith provides a support community, a sense of life's meaning, feelings of ultimate acceptance, a reason to focus beyond yourself, and a timeless perspective on life's woes. Even if you're not religious, a strong spirituality may offer similar benefits.



Way # 12 : Take a dog for a walk.

There are numerous studies that attest to the stress-relieving benefits of pets. In one analysis researchers evaluated the heart health of 240 couples, half of whom owned a pet. Those couples with pets had significantly lower heart rates and blood pressure levels when exposed to stressors than the couples who did not have pets. In fact, the pets worked even better at buffering stress than the spouses did.



Way # 13 : Garden.

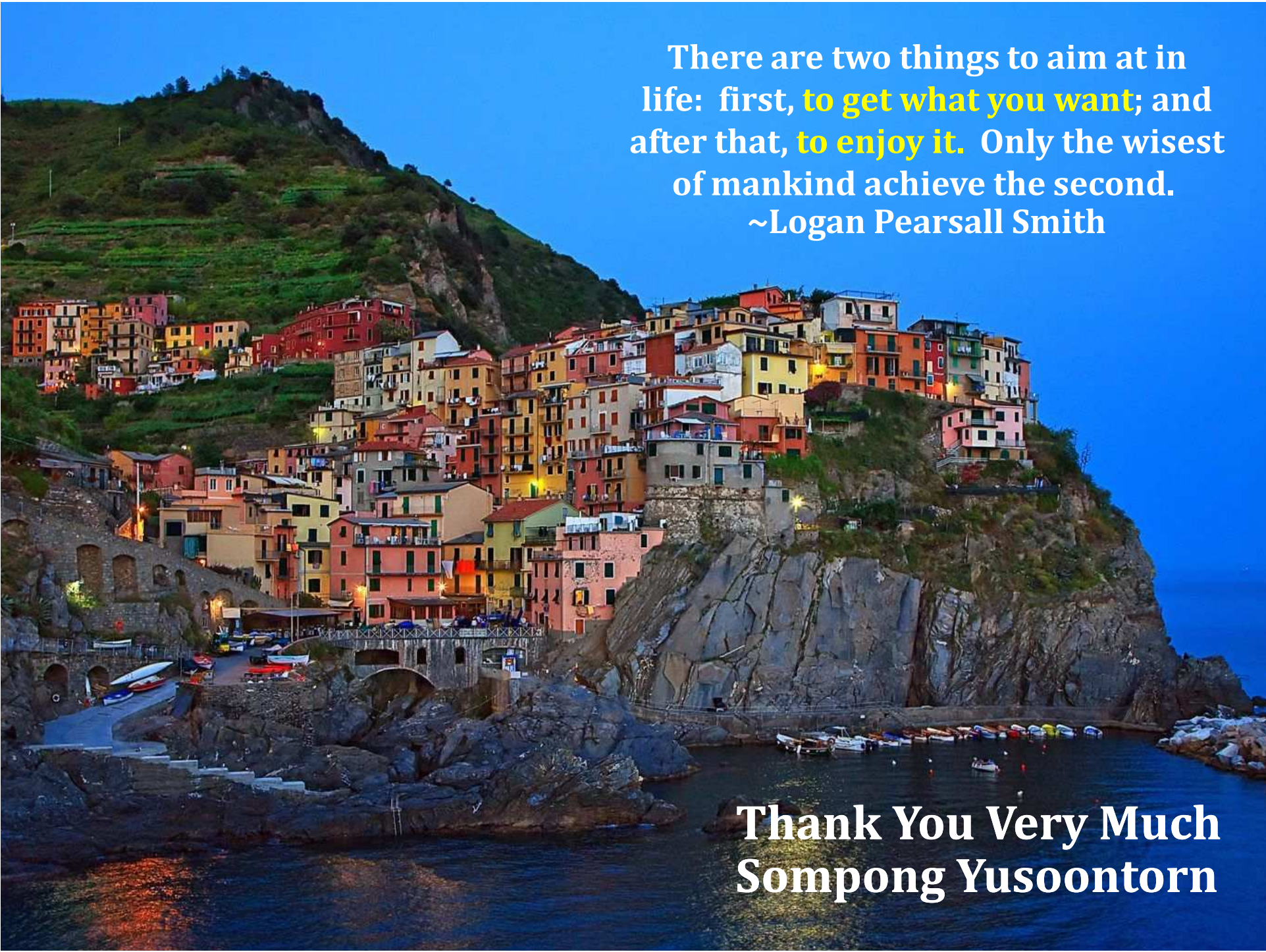
Not only will the fresh air and exercise provide their own stress reduction and feeling of well-being, but the sense of accomplishment that comes from clearing a weedy patch, watching seeds turn into flowers, or pruning out dead wood will last for hours, if not days.



Way # 14 : Count your blessings.

People who pause each day to reflect on some positive aspect of their lives (their health, friends, family, freedom, education, etc.) experience a heightened sense of well-being.



A photograph of a picturesque coastal village, likely Cinque Terre in Italy, built into a steep, rocky cliffside. The houses are densely packed and painted in vibrant colors like red, orange, yellow, and pink. The village is illuminated by warm lights, contrasting with the deep blue twilight sky. In the foreground, the dark, calm sea reflects the lights from the buildings. Several small boats are moored in a cove at the base of the cliff. The overall atmosphere is serene and beautiful.

There are two things to aim at in
life: first, **to get what you want**; and
after that, **to enjoy it**. Only the wisest
of mankind achieve the second.
~Logan Pearsall Smith

Thank You Very Much
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