

# come on, get

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT DEEP SATISFACTION COMES FROM CONNECTING, CREATING AND CARING.

BY DENISE DAMRON

# happy!

## IF YOU GOOGLE "HAPPINESS" YOU'LL FIND

368 million results. On Amazon, there are nearly 80,000 books on happiness. So why are so many people seeking happiness?

According to Amit Sood, MD, professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, "we seek happiness for its biological, health, emotional, relationship and spiritual benefits. Happiness depends on present moment experience and overall life satisfaction."

## An Elusive Emotion

Dr. Sood says happiness may seem elusive because our brains are hardwired for suffering. "In our evolutionary struggle for survival our species had to make a lot of compromises to help us survive. These include our brain's obsession and predominant attention on threats and imperfections. We absolutely needed that to survive in the treacherous forest.

"I believe if you had to design a brain to maximize emotional suffering that would be the human brain," says Dr. Sood. "Our brain was designed for survival and safety and now we want it to give us peace and happiness."

## Happiness and Your Health

Dr. Sood says unhappiness leads to distress, anger, illness and even premature death. "What research shows is when you're happy your genetic expression is less inflammatory, your blood markers are better, your blood pressure is lower, you have a lower risk

of heart attacks, you have better relationships, you're more creative, you sleep better and you live longer."

## Make the Choice to Be Happy

Happiness is a choice and can be learned, according to Dr. Sood. His positive psychology research revealed five key things people can do to increase happiness:

1. Be grateful, compassionate and forgiving.
2. Instead of chasing happiness, chase meaning in life.
3. Engage in creative, immersive activities where you forget about yourself for a period of time.
4. Make meaningful relationships with friends, loved ones and others, and prioritize your time and resources in these relationships.
5. Comfort and help others. The best way to become happy is to make someone else happy. ::



## POINTS OF CONTACT

To learn more about Dr. Sood's work, visit [stressfree.org](http://stressfree.org).

For general information about positive psychology, visit the University of Pennsylvania's Authentic Happiness website at [authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu](http://authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu).