

## JOYFULNESS PRACTICE

*The article provides a comprehensive set of suggestions. However, it is important to begin with a few simple ones that you think are most important for you and do not take much time. Try these for a week or two. After you see beneficial results of these, you may like to include some more.*

This article shows how to use the principles in the article "Be Joyful To Be Successful" for Joyfulness Practice. Hence, it is expected that you have read that article before reading this one. Since there are separate articles on "attending classes," "studies," "exam preparation," this article focuses on the activities in the remaining time slots. What we do in these slots sets the tone for all the major activities during the day.

What you do between 6 P.M. and 8 A.M. on working days, and the entire weekends and holidays decide the efficiency during working hours.

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage." Anais Nin

"The day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom." Anais Nin

### **CHECK MOTIVATION AND GOALS:**

We need to find out what we want to be in a life carefully. This does not change with time. What we want to achieve keeps changing at different stages in life. If you are not clear about the former, we have a painful life. For joyful living, these must be in harmony with each other.

Every day keep a sharp focus on the following commitments:

- Your Purpose in Life: Always do your best joyfully.
- Your Purpose in IIT: To learn how best to learn and acquire the best life skills and academic knowledge.

Remind yourself about these in the morning, lunchtime, and evening.

For best outcomes, we need wise planning and time management. Please read a detailed article regarding Goals and Time management to integrate long-term, medium-term, and short-term goals. Since it is important to take loving care of yourself throughout the day by remaining happy for the best efficiency, we must allocate time for these activities in the plan itself.

When you wake up to the time you sleep, you need to engage in thoughts of love, prayers, affirmations, and gratitude when not doing a specific activity (i.e., free time). This approach starves the negativity and strengthens positive thinking, making you peaceful, happy, and efficient. The moments just before you go to sleep and after you wake up in bed are crucial as these set the tone for a relaxed sleep and a positive mindset for the day, respectively.

Time multiplies what you feed the mind daily.

**Shutdown Routine:** (30 minutes) This period is extremely important for setting the tone for a peaceful sleep and the efficient and joyful next day.

As per scheduled and allocated time, drop all other work and keep phone and laptop off at the end of the day. Do not see any content on TV or any other device (horror, violent movies or serials, political debates, etc.) which will excite the brain and prevent peaceful sleep.

Keep your separate journals for planning, recording thoughts and self-awareness, and gratitude readily available near a place where you are likely to use them.

### **Daily Time Allocation & Utilization Chart: About 10 minutes before sleep**

In the beginning, this task may appear to be daunting. However, it becomes easier once you do it for a few days and the format is ready. Although this activity takes some time, it is one of the most critical activities providing vital feedback during the day.

In the time allocation chart, mark all the activities in 24 hours, with 15 minute blocks, as per the Goal Setting, Planning, and Time Management task done earlier during the previous weekend. You can even modify the plan made earlier.

In a format similar to the previous chart, the Time Utilization Chart for the day shows the actual sleep period and class hours (lecture/tut/lab) attended. For the remaining period, indicate what you exactly did. This includes study, lunch, rest, time with friends, sports/games, hobbies, network/phone/computer. You may write remarks if you like. This vital step brings out whether you are spending your time wisely or not. Once you know this, corrective actions are possible.

The next step is to review the plan for the next day. If required, you may modify the plan as well, keeping in view the recent developments. Prioritize the work elements, and as per the 80-20 rule, list three significant outcomes you are looking for across all areas. Realistically, allocate the best time and energy slots for such work elements. To conserve willpower, limit your choices, and as far as possible, make a list of even small decisions like which clothes to wear, the sequence of each morning chores with strict sequencing and time frames. It is also essential to prepare "If-Then Rules" for countering bad habits or distractions. With these plans, you feel confident to tackle time and energy thieves.

After completing the Review/Audit of how the day was spent compared to the planned one, tell yourself that you are doing your best and enjoying the work irrespective of the results. During this exercise, list and visualize the three best things that happened across all areas done today. These need not be big things; anything which brought a smile of satisfaction on your face is O.K. This gives you repeat of joyful moments and subconsciously programs your mind for more of such things. It improves your self-confidence and self-image. To improve this much more, look at your Diary of Excellence (your past best performances in all areas) and read and visualize the highlights of some achievements. All these make you feel good before sleep.

During the audit, check how you performed regarding various performance parameters you have adopted to measure your daily progress. Write down comments about possible causes of underperformance and what can be done to rectify the same. A similar review needs to be done for a week and a month.

Remind yourself of the immense benefits of reading, and read a few pages (at least one page) of good books/articles to inspire you in this journey. On weekends and holidays, at

least half an hour of reading is recommended. Keep this selected material near your bed for easy access.

Forgive those who might have hurt you during the day. The poison of the hurt hurts you most. Hence, you are not doing a favor to others by this action; you are doing a favor to yourself. If you have hurt others, seek forgiveness. These actions make you more peaceful.

Have a conversation with God/Higher Power like sharing the joys and frustrations with a loving parent. Then do mindful deep breathing for a few minutes, and after that, offer prayers, show gratitude, and make affirmations described in the end. You can even ask for help and guidance in tackling some specific problem or a troublesome person. Then pray for peaceful sleep and wake up in a cheerful and confident mood. Remember that the thought you sleep with is the thought you wake up with. Fatigue heavily impairs our ability to remain positive. Hence, about seven hours of peaceful sleep is essential. Students rarely understand the critical importance of sleep and rest. In this period, the body and mind get recharged for efficient functioning the next day. Just no. of hours is not essential, which hours are also crucial from body cycle point of view. It is said that each hour in 9-12 P.M. is equivalent to two hours of sleep, between 00-03 A.M. each hour is equal to one hour, and beyond that, every hour counts lesser and lesser.

**Start-Up Routine:** (15 minutes) Whether you wake up feeling energetic or tired, it significantly affects success during the day.

Try to wake up between 5:30-6. If you are used to getting up very late, you may have to change it by 15 minutes early every week until you reach 6. Very soon, after seeing the benefits of this routine, you will never want to sleep late. Hitting the snooze button in the morning means you are beginning your day with resistance, sowing seeds of indiscipline. Every such thought or action is a choice that sets the trend for the quality of your life. How you do anything is how you do everything because of the habitual patterns you develop. Doing the right thing repeatedly, even if you don't feel like doing it, results in extraordinary discipline resulting in extraordinary results. The inertia may not allow you to feel good while waking up, but once you do, you feel good.

When you wake up, it is a significant time to start on a positive note. You must avoid using your phone or laptop during this period. Before getting up from bed, express gratitude for good things in life. Then pray to God, "You are giving me strength and wisdom to be loving, harmonious, and happy under all circumstances." Also, make some of the affirmations given in the end. Then pray for others' welfare. Don't rush out of bed. Your body was out of action for 7 hours, and hence you need to start unwinding slowly. When you get out of the bed, fold the blanket/comforter and neat the bed. This small, positive act of discipline creates momentum for more such things in the day. It immediately uplifts your mood.

Since 7 hours of sleep has dehydrated you substantially, it is essential to hydrate yourself with at least a glass of water. Make a cup of coffee or tea mindfully, and enjoy every sip of it in a relaxed way, preferably in the balcony or open spaces. If the weather is bad, you can open the curtains or shades and observe the morning scene outside. Be mindful of the things outdoors, the taste of coffee, and the peace and joy inside. This deliberate 10-15 minutes of relaxed period energizes you for the day ahead.

**Mindful Morning Chores:** No extra time

When you go to the washroom, first, look at yourself in the mirror, bring a loving smile on your face (put your hand over the heart if you like), and say, "Good morning (your name), I

love you as you are, with your strengths and weaknesses. You are very good and look good". Look outside and say, "What a beautiful day." While brushing, pay attention to the small things around like, the condition of the brush bristles, the color, texture, and taste of the paste. Pay attention to the teeth and the face, the feeling of cold or hot water in the mouth.

While taking a bath, pay attention to the feel, aroma of the soap, shampoo, water, etc. Express love to your body while applying soap. Thank it again for being such an excellent ally.

For Males: While shaving, pay attention to the feel, aroma, color of the shaving cream. Notice the brush bristles. Notice the sharp blade, their condition, good/bad. Feel the touch of the razor and the feeling of smoothness as it removes the hair. When you apply the after-shave lotion, again feel the smell and its difference on the skin.

For Females: While at the dressing table, pay attention to the pleasant changes brought in by every make-up item. Check how your face and body feel with their application. The very purpose of this exercise is to feel good the whole day. But you must feel the best during this period itself.

Feel and look attractive not for others but yourself. Wearing clean, ironed clothes, comfortable shoes, and keeping good, confident posture make you feel good. This feeling has a positive effect on actions and thinking throughout the day.

#### **Meditation:** (10 minutes)

As described in the main article, meditation is one of the most important activities for being joyful. It not only provides much-needed rest to the ever-busy mind by quietening it naturally, but it also connects us to the consciousness within, which provides us with strength and wisdom to face the challenges.

Remind yourself daily about the benefits of meditation. Choose a place that is as conducive to it as far as possible. Do some meditation that suits you best. For beginners, a simple Pranayama (deep, mindful breathing exercise) for 5-10 minutes gives benefits of both. If morning time is inconvenient, do it in the evening. But keeping a fixed time slot and fixed place helps in this good habit formation. As far as possible, do not skip it even for a single day. Do it just for a few minutes if you are under time pressure or not in a good mood. You can also alter the slot and place under special circumstances.

**"Just Like Me"** meditation involves noting common things between you and others. It helps to understand others better and enhances harmony. It just takes a few seconds.

**"Loving kindness"** meditation takes just 15 seconds and can be done even in the classroom. Just look at a person and say sincerely, "I wish you happiness. I wish you happiness." You can even look at some random person walking outside and wish the same. It can be done for some friends, even in imagination.

In **"Loving Compassion"** meditation, you say to someone who is undergoing suffering due to bad health or due to any reason like bad performance, "I wish you to be free from suffering. I wish you to be free from suffering." This also takes just 15 seconds and can be done anywhere.

All these meditations instantly make you feel happy by releasing the brain chemical Serotonin.

#### **Meditation on Resilience:**

For 4 minutes, recall a memory of failure. As a third person, without judgment, feel the arising and waning of emotions in the body. This helps in developing Emotional Intelligence. Once you become familiar with these through repeated practice, you can learn to take steps to prevent unconscious aggravation of the situation due to emotional upheaval.

Write a happy experience in a journal for 15 minutes. Doing it a few times a week results in a definite rise in happiness levels.

Likewise, writing an experience that has caused deep pain or hurt for 10-15 minutes takes out the poison from the system considerably.

### **Positive Imaging and Planning:** 5-7 minutes

Read or visualize your one or two past best performances to feel confident and positive. Review plan for the day with priorities and three best expected outcomes as discussed earlier. Let the detailed plan, including time slot allocation for each activity, be with you throughout the day. You must also know how to use off periods productively. Visualize doing each activity mindfully, in a cheerful mood.

### **Mindful Meals:** No Extra time

While taking a meal, thank the cook and others who help in bringing the meal to you. Also, thank all those involved in getting the food to you. Feel the taste of the food while eating, notice the way the food looks, the plates, spoons, as many details as you can. Have a deliberate, relaxed smile on your face throughout the meal.

### **Mindful Journey to/from Class:** No extra time

While walking or cycling to the classroom/lab, or going back to the hostel, do walking meditation (deep breathing, or step counting, or saying "Thank You" with every step). Otherwise, pray for others walking with you. Smile at them and have a positive chat if required. Notice the ground, trees, in fact, everything that you can. All these are elements of "living in the now."

Thank the Institute you are studying in, the city where you live, the State, mother India, mother Earth, and mother Universe.

While going from one classroom to the other, again, do similar things as mentioned above. In addition, if you feel stressed, go to a washroom to wash your face, look into the mirror, and with a smile on your face, say, "I love you, you are doing good."

### **Time For Relationships:** No extra time, as per plan

When it is time to be with friends or family, first think about improving your relations by doing something to make them happy.

Remain in touch with your family members. Share good and bad experiences with them.

If you want good friends, try to become one first. Patient and mindful listening shows love and respect, which improves bonds. Whenever you are with friends, greet them with warmth and a smile. Enjoy healthy jokes and laugh a lot. Crack jokes about yourself as well. Such a person can never be a target of jokes. Never reduce the self-esteem of others by dirty jokes. Compliment others about every small good thing they do. Express sincere gratitude for any small help they render to you. Celebrate your success and that of others at every opportunity. Instead of asking for a party, first, offer to celebrate with just a cup of coffee. Always help any friend who is down for any reason to the extent possible. If nothing else is

possible, at least pray for him and hug him, or pat on his back, run fingers through hair. Helping others is the most significant buffer against depression. These actions release a brain chemical, Oxytocin which makes you feel happy. This establishes empathy and rapport. Social investment is the most significant investment for bad times.

It is essential to keep minimal interaction with negative persons who waste your time, spoil your mood, and disempower you. Seek out and spend more time (as per plan only) with positive persons. You can share your goals, joys, and sorrows with them.

Try to find wise, happy, and successful mentors in different areas of life and seek advice from them frequently.

It is also essential to do an apprenticeship with experts (Professionals or senior students) to learn critical skills in studies, sports/games, or career-related matters.

At your young age need for a relationship with the opposite sex is natural. However, it is essential not to get obsessed or desperate for the same. Such an approach has been found to destroy careers. The best way to attract others is to invest in becoming an attractive person. The joyfulness practice is designed to precisely achieve this objective.

### **Utilizing off periods:**

This must also be strictly as per plan, which may have unwinding and/or studies components. These are the most valuable slots which generally go to waste if you are not careful. How to utilize it for studies is described in the Study article.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities: 30 minutes**

Studies have shown that those who develop proficiency in at least one extra-curricular activity and good in studies are far more successful in life than one-dimensional persons.

In the evening, as per plan, for about 30 minutes, try to go to the field or courts for games, a gym, or do some jogging. Don't miss it without solid reasons. Go for at least 5 minutes, if not in a mood or slightly unwell. Affirm when, what, where, and how long you will do it in the evening and morning, and keep sports gear ready and visible. Go with positive friends; they lift your spirits when down and improve regularity. One to two months of exercise helps remove other bad habits and helps in studies as well. It releases a brain chemical, Endorphin, which makes you feel happy. Physical activities are three times more enjoyable than passive leisure activities like TV, the net, or phone.

If you can't do this, at least have some other hobby like playing music, singing, or painting. These are 2.5 times better than passive leisure activities.

Joining some creativity activity clubs is a great learning experience. Likewise, whenever an opportunity arises, try and participate in competitions or conferences. There is a lot of learning as well as joy in this. Balance is crucial in all extra-curricular activities and studies.

We all know of Steve Job's genius in taking Apple to the top. But very few know that while selecting persons to work for Apple, he used to look for talent and interest in arts, music, etc. The most creative scientists had some artistic or musical background. Fields Medal winner (Equivalent of Maths Nobel prize), Manjul Bhargava, says that when he is stuck in Maths, he plays Tabla for a while and then comes back with his mind cleared.

## **Self-Awareness: Very Important Activity**

This is the foundation for Emotional Intelligence which is essential for happiness and success. The following activities can be done whenever you feel the need for the same. In the beginning, you may do most of these once a week and later once in two weeks. Keep a separate journal for this. These help you bring your deeper thoughts and concerns in a sharp focus. With this, you can think of the best ways to improve. It can be included in the Shutdown Routine.

For knowing what's going on in your mind, for 3 minutes, write down "What I feel right now is-----" "Don't think, just keep on writing whatever comes to your mind. If there is nothing right now, write "Nothing to write" until you remember something. This activity is beneficial almost every day.

For being mindful of your thoughts and emotions, take each of the following prompts, one at a time, and write for 3 minutes. You may wish to take only one prompt per day or more as per your comfort level. Otherwise, you can take up all these on the weekend.

"What hurts me is-----", "I wish-----", "What motivates me is---", "I am inspired by---", "Today, I aspire to---", "Love is---", "Things that give me pleasure are---", "My strengths are---", "Things that annoy me are---", "My weaknesses are---", "I am afraid of--- "

Keep promises to yourself and others. Start with tiny ones. Never give big promises which you can't keep.

Work smarter, not harder. Abraham Lincoln says that if he has 6 hours to cut a tree, he will spend 4 hours sharpening the axe. Happiness practice is precisely that.

Be confident and assertive. Ask what you want, say what you want. To develop this skill, start with small things and then progress to more difficult ones. It is suitable for improving your self-esteem.

Whenever you feel like doing something negative or not as per plan, ask yourself whether it will take you towards your goal or away from it and the associated costs.

Psychology Prof. Richard Wiseman says that what we think of as luck arises from attitude. He says that luck finds those who embrace chance opportunities. You experience that when you do not expect to find a parking lot, you don't. The reason is simple, you are anxious, so your vision narrows instinctively, and you miss vacant slots that another person who is not anxious will see. This applies everywhere.

Laugh heartily at least three times a day. Moreover, make a habit of smiling at every possible opportunity (at least five times a day). Keep a check whether you are doing it daily.

Believe in your capacity to do well and, more importantly, to improve your ability as well.

## **Accountability Partner:**

If you can have a positive person you trust (parent, elder sibling, friend), share your plans, and make them ask how you are performing against the plans. Do it at least once a week. Research has shown that this helps a great deal in sticking to the plans.

## **Prayers:**

Following are some of the examples of the prayers. You may use what suits you best and modify the language as well. Feelings are far more important than words.

- God, please give me strength and wisdom for doing my best every day.
- God, you are giving me strength and wisdom to be loving, harmonious, and happy under all circumstances.
- When all doors appear to be closed, you open doors that surprise me with new opportunities.
- You are the doorkeeper of my thoughts; you welcome only those thoughts that would flood my mind with love, harmony, hope, health, and happiness.
- You can achieve great things through imperfect people like me.
- I will never let you go; you will never let me go. We will see through everything together.
- Let there be peace around me. May the vibrations which come out of my body and mind spread the message of peace. Let there be peace. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.
- Let my voice be sweet and convey love and affection. Let it become better every day. Let my gaze and touch also convey love and affection.

### **Affirmations:**

Following are some of the examples of affirmations. Depending on what you want to focus on improving, you may use what suits you best and even develop ones specifically for yourself.

- I am inspired, disciplined, and energized.
- I am strong, able, and calm.
- I am happy; I am love; I am healthy and filled with energy every day. I have unlimited ideas to respond to all situations in life.
- I am creative in all aspects of life.
- I am serene, tranquil, and happy. I am in love and harmony with everything around me.
- I am strong, healthy, and active.
- I have tremendous energy and vitality.
- I am incredibly healthy and vital; I feel so fit today.
- Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better.
- I look forward to doing my best in every activity today.
- When feeling down, say loudly, "I can do it through God's grace."
- When facing tough times, say, "This too shall pass."

### **Gratitude:**

Thank God for being alive and healthy. Then, thank the body and mind for the love and harmony with the soul. Also, thank them for their massive contribution to life since birth. Assert that it has been a wonderful journey so far with them, and I hope to continue the same in the future. Thank the universe for the love and harmony with the soul. Thank the bed and the house for all the loving comfort.