

# Science of Happiness

## Cadette aMAZE badge

In this badge, you are the test subject and your life is your laboratory. You'll find out how scientists measure happiness, and you'll put their results into action. You'll, also get to perform a happiness experiment on your friends or family – all with the goal of making your world a happier place.

### Steps

1. Make yourself happier
2. Think differently for happiness
3. Get happy through others
4. Do a helpful happiness experiment
5. Create a happiness action plan

### Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to make my world the happiest place it can be.

**"One of the best ways to make yourself happy is to make other people happy. One of the best ways to make other people happy is to be happy yourself."**

-Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project*

## The Three Keys to Happiness

Scientists have found that the three things that make people most happy are **pleasure** (doing things you enjoy), **engagement** (feeling interested in your activities and connected to others), and **meaning** (feeling like what you do matters). While most people spend their time trying to have pleasurable experiences, experiments show that pleasure is the least likely of these three to bring true joy.

The choices for step 1 – getting into flow, counting your blessings, and savoring the little things – are three ways that connect with yourself and others throughout your day. By doing these things, you'll often find that your activities are more meaningful.

## Tips Before Takeoff

- Sign your [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) before you begin this badge.
- In this badge, you're both the experimenter and the research subject! Keep a journal to record the results of your happiness experiments, so you'll end the badge with a record of the strategies that work for you.
- In each step, you'll experiment with one activity science says will increase your happiness. If you find the method doesn't work for you, you might go back and pick a different choice to see if another method is more effective. That's the scientific process.

# Step 1 Make yourself happier

What would make you happiest? Money? Cool clothes? Living in a mansion on a tropical island? Such things may make you happy for a while, but science shows they aren't what keep you happy in the long run. What is? Pleasure, engagement, and meaning (see the red box for more information). In this step, practice getting more engagement and meaning in your daily life. Do one of these choices for two weeks.

Taking good care of yourself is another factor in happiness – exercise is great for your body and your mood!

## CHOICES – DO ONE:

Get into a state of “flow.” When you hit your flow, you're really into whatever you're doing. You get so focused that you might not notice time flying by! Try getting into the flow of playing a sport, reading a great story, or doing a cool craft project for at least a half hour each day.

OR

Count three blessings. In a gratitude journal or in a video or audio recording, write down, draw, or record three things that went well each day and why you consider them blessings.

OR

Stop and smell the roses. Pay attention to the little things that make you happy. Try taking mental photographs of the things you love throughout your day – it might be a pretty sunset, a fuzzy dog, or a food that tastes really good. Record three to five things every day.

## More to EXPLORE

Focus on pleasure. During your two weeks, record how you feel after doing something you find pleasurable, like watching a movie, eating a piece of cake, or window shopping. Compare how happy these moments made you versus your happiness level while doing the choice you picked (which science says will make you happier – see the red box).

## Step 2 Think differently for happiness

Sometimes you can't change what happens in your day, but you can change how you react to it. Scientists say that people who stay positive, or are "optimistic," are happier, even if more bad things happen to them! Choose one of these ideas, and use it for **two weeks** each time something happens that upsets you. Don't forget to track your results!

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

Focus on what's realistic. Sometimes our worries make us focus on the very worst outcome, even when that's pretty unlikely to happen. 'during your two weeks, when you start to feel negative about something that's upcoming, write down what you think is the worst part could be, what the best part could be, and what you think will most likely happen. When you look at all sides realistically, does it help you feel more comfortable?

OR

Try to use your strengths. Maybe you're good at listening, a whiz at math, or have a great sense of humor (see the next page for strengths). Make a list of all your strengths. (If you're having a hard time thinking of them, ask your friends what they are!) Then, when you have to face something tough in the next two weeks, focus on what you're good at and think of how you could use one of your strengths.

FOR MORE FUN: With a trusted adult, go to [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org) and try their VIA Strength Survey for Children (8 – 17) to see what science says your strengths are.

OR

Be happy for others. Scientists say that if you celebrate with someone, you'll be happier. So, when a friend or family member tells you about something great in their lives, pay attention and try to be happy for them – even if you're busy or a little jealous. Celebrate with some kind words, by asking more about what's happening, or even by giving a short speech in their honor. See how you feel – are you more positive about your own situation?

### Careers to Explore

Day care worker	Career counselor	High school guidance counselor	Novelist
Psychiatrist	Advice columnist	New product developer	Copywriter
Clergy person	Physical therapist	Art or music therapist	Cartoonist
Social worker	Sports psychologist	Motivational speaker	Pediatrician
Conflict mediator	Medical researcher	Wedding photographer	Psychologist

# Signature Strengths

Your “signature strengths” are the things you’re good at. Positive psychologist Dr. Martin Seligman has found that people are happiest when using their strengths, and that these strengths tend to fit into 24 categories. Which strengths are yours?

1. **Creativity**: You love finding new and interesting ways to do things
2. **Curiosity**: You take an interest in new experiences
3. **Open-mindedness**: You’re able to see things from all sides
4. **Love of learning**: You love to learn new ideas and skills
5. **Wisdom**: You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to other people
6. **Bravery**: You do not back down from a challenge if you know you are right
7. **Persistence**: You finish what you start, no matter what stands in your way
8. **Integrity**: You present yourself in a genuine way and take responsibility for your actions
9. **Vitality**: You approach life with excitement and energy
10. **Love**: You value your relationships with family and close friends, and they value you
11. **Kindness**: You’re generous; you enjoy doing favors and good deeds for others
12. **Social intelligence**: You’re aware of the feelings of yourself and others
13. **Citizenship**: You work well in a group or team, and you’re loyal to your group
14. **Fairness**: You treat all people fairly; you aren’t biased
15. **Leadership**: You like leading groups; you’re comfortable motivating people and helping
16. **Forgiveness**: You feel comfortable giving people second chances
17. **Humility**: You don’t seek attention, letting your accomplishments speak for themselves
18. **Prudence**: You weigh your choices carefully and think before you act
19. **Self-regulation**: You’re able to control your impulses
20. **Appreciation of beauty and excellence**: You notice the beauty in everyday life
21. **Gratitude**: You’re aware of the good things in your life and take the time to express thanks
22. **Hope**: You expect good things to happen; you believe the future is in your control
23. **Humor**: You love to laugh and make other people laugh
24. **Spirituality**: You have strong beliefs in a higher purpose

## Step 3 Get happy through others

One of the most common ways to find engagement and meaning is in our relationships. A good way for you to be happy on the inside is to care about others and focus on relationships with people on the outside. In steps 1 and 2, you worked on yourself, so, now, it’s time to work on your relationships with others. Do one of these activities at least twice so you’ll know if it works for you. Record the results in your journal.

### Tip:

Even doing “small” things for others can increase our happiness – stuff like complimenting a friend’s outfit, helping someone carry their books, or putting away the family groceries without being asked. All these little things you do for others can add up to big happiness for you.

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

Make a gratitude visit. Thank a mentor, friend, teacher, coach, or family member who has helped you in some way. Visit them face-to-face, and tell them why you’re thanking them and how they helped. After you have done that, ask yourself how you feel. What was hard or easy about this? How long did the effect last?

OR

Write a forgiveness letter. In a handwritten note to a mentor, friend, teacher, coach, or family member, ask them to forgive you for something you might have done wrong. If you stop feeling bad about what you did, the science of happiness says you’ll be happier. Send the letter and see how you feel. What was hard or easy about this? How long did the feeling last?

OR

Make something meaningful. Make a collage, video, or painting that shows how much someone means to you. Explain to them why you made it and what it means. Once you give it to them, see how you feel. What was hard or easy about this? How long did the feeling last?

“The best way to cheer up yourself is to try to cheer somebody up else.”

-Mark Twain,

## Step 4 Do a helpful happiness experiment

The science of how you think, or psychology, used to focus only on mental illnesses. Now, scientists, also, try to find out what makes people stay well – just as exercising keeps your body strong, staying happy keeps your spirit strong. So “positive psychologists” test people’s happiness. In this step, do your own experiment to test the happiness of a group. Share your results so the whole group can be happier!

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

Design your own five-question happiness survey. Happiness surveys usually include statements that subjects agree or disagree with on a scale. Use what you’ve learned about happiness to make some statements for your survey (see the box for tips). Give it to a group of friends – maybe you can help them find their strengths, point out where they might be more optimistic, or share the power of gratitude!

OR

Try quick polling. Through e-mail, IM, texts, or verbal questions, ask 10 schoolmates or Girl Scout sisters to rate how happy they feel at three different moments throughout the day on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very happy and 1 meaning not happy at all. Also, ask them what they are doing at each moment and who they're with. The science says if they're doing something they find meaningful with people about whom they care, they'll be happier, than if they're alone or disinterested. Is that true for your group? Afterward, make a chart to share with your friends. Explain what you measured, and share ideas about what could make them even happier. (If you're going online for this choice, remember to do so with an adult!)

## How to Make a Survey

What do you think is something a happy person would say – and why? Choose five different happiness factors you want to test. Then, for each one, create a statement that your test subjects will rate from 1 to 5 – 1 meaning it isn't at all true and 5 meaning your subject feels that way all the time. The factors your subjects rate the highest are likely those that make them happiest.

Here are some example statements:

"When I'm doing something I love, time seems to fly by." 1 2 3 4  
5

(a high score means this person gets happy through "flow")

"Even if someone hurts me, I forgive them if they apologize." 1 2 3 4  
5

(a high score means this person gets happy through forgiveness)

"I like to share my talents with others." (meaning) 1 2 3 4  
5

"Even when things look bad, I try to see the bright side." 1 2 3 4  
5

(staying positive)

"My family and friends are the most important things to me." 1 2 3 4  
5

(being with other people)

OR

Focus on one friend. Talk to a friend who seems sad, and ask if you can help them become happier with what you've learned. Suggest an activity to do together, and try one of the tips for being happy. For example, you could help them find their strengths or count their own blessings. Which tip helped them feel better?

## Step 5 Create a happiness action plan

Now that you're becoming an expert in what makes you happy, take what you've learned about yourself and put it into action. Look back over your journal and use your notes as you do this step.

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

Find a happiness helper. Share what you discovered with a friend or family member, and together make a list of five ways that person can help you stay happy. In the process, list five things that make your helper happy, too – so you can look out for each other's happiness!

FOR MORE FUN: Create a happiness Club! You might include a happiness check-in at the beginning of your Cadette meeting or find friends who want to support each other in finding pleasure, engagement, and meaning in their lives.

OR

Create an inspiration collage with the five top tips that help you stay happy. Hang it beside your desk or bed or post it in your locker – wherever it's most helpful to you.

OR

Create a Bliss Box. Write the happiest moments from your journal on scraps of paper – an activity you were doing, a reason you're thankful, something a friend said, or one of your strengths. Then, search for photos, quotes, souvenirs – anything that will make you smile. Now, put them all into your Bliss box. When you start to feel down, open it up and read your happy moments! Keep adding to it as what makes you happy changes.

FOR MORE FUN: Start a family or group Bliss Box to remind others why they should stay happy. You could use it to leave positive notes for others, which will make you feel good, too. Then, anyone can open the box when they need to lift their spirits.

**"I believe in pink. I believe in being strong when everything seems to be going wrong. I believe that happy girls are the prettiest girls. I believe that tomorrow is another day and I believe in miracles."**

**-Audrey Hepburn,  
American actress and philanthropist**

Cornell University professor Alice Isen worked on a well-known positive psychology experiment. In the experiment, Isen and other researchers randomly placed coins in the return slots of pay phones. They, then, observed the behavior of people after they used the phones – some found coins, some did not. They found that people who found coins were more helpful to others. People with coins were far more likely to help others carry their bags or pick up things they'd dropped. So, it only takes a small boost in our mood to encourage us to be a little kinder!

## Add the Badge to Your Journey

When you do step 2, add a tip about building happy relationships to your Peacemaker Kit. Then, ponder this: What do making more happiness and making more peace in the world have in common?

Not that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Pointing out the signature strengths of my friends and family members so they can use their strengths to increase their happiness
- Practicing keeping myself at my happiest so I have energy and presence of mind to help others
- Helping a friend put together their own Bliss Box

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*I'm inspired to:*