

## Living in the moment really does make people happier

### Level 1 • Elementary

#### 1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

wanders	volunteer	participant	daydream	wellbeing
evidence	miserable	exercise	distracted	productive

1. A person's \_\_\_\_\_ is the acceptable state that they should be in, involving things like their health and security. (para 1)
2. Facts that help to prove something are called \_\_\_\_\_. (para 2)
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who offers to do something without being forced or paid to do it. (para 2)
4. If you \_\_\_\_\_, you do a physical activity such as walking, running or swimming. (para 2)
5. If you \_\_\_\_\_, you spend time thinking about something pleasant, especially when you should be doing something more serious. (para 3)
6. If you feel \_\_\_\_\_, you feel extremely unhappy or uncomfortable. (para 3)
7. A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who takes part in something. (para 3)
8. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it gets good results. (para 4)
9. If you are \_\_\_\_\_, you can't concentrate on something. (para 6)
10. If your mind \_\_\_\_\_, you stop concentrating and start thinking about other things. (para 7)

#### 2 Correct the information

Look in the text and correct this information as quickly as possible.

1. People spend 64.7% of their time thinking about other things and not about what they are doing.
2. Psychologists at Oxford University carried out the study.
3. 22,500 volunteers took part in the study carried out by the university.
4. Participants in the study were thinking about something else at least 90% of the time while they were performing the most interesting tasks.
5. Participants had to choose from a list of 32 activities.
6. More than 500 people have signed up for the happiness study.

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Ian Sample  
11 November, 2010

- 1 According to a new study into mental wellbeing, people are happiest if they live for the present moment, particularly if this involves having sex. But the study also found that people spend almost half their time (46.7%) thinking about other things and not about what they are actually doing.
- 2 Many philosophical and religious traditions tell us that we should live for today. However, until now there has not been much scientific evidence to support this idea. Psychologists at Harvard University collected information on the daily activities, thoughts and feelings of 2,250 volunteers to find out how often they concentrated on what they were doing, and what made them most happy. They found that people were happiest when having sex, exercising or having a conversation. People were least happy when working, resting or using a home computer. They also found that people were not concentrating nearly half of the time and that this made them less happy.
- 3 The researchers found that thinking about the past, thinking ahead and daydreaming make people more miserable, even when they are thinking about something pleasant. Even the most interesting tasks did not make people concentrate all the time. Participants in the study said they were thinking about something else at least 30% of the time while they did these tasks, except when they were having sex, when they were concentrating around 90% of the time.
- 4 “Humans are the only creatures that can think about things that aren’t happening right now. They can think about the past and learn from it; they can think about the future and plan for it; and they can also imagine things that might never happen,” said Matthew Killingsworth, the main researcher. “At the same time, human beings often use this ability in ways that are not productive, and it can also make us unhappy,” he added.
- 5 Killingsworth and his colleague Daniel Gilbert developed a web application for the iPhone that contacted participants at different times while they were awake. When they received a message, the participants had to say what they were doing, by choosing from a list of 22 activities, such as doing housework, shopping or watching TV. They then graded their happiness on a scale from zero to 100, and said whether they were concentrating or daydreaming about something positive, negative or neutral.
- 6 The results showed that levels of happiness depended more on how often people thought about something else than on what activity they were doing at the time. The researchers say they’re sure that being distracted makes people unhappy, and not the opposite idea, that unhappiness makes people distracted.
- 7 The authors write in the *Science* journal: “The human mind wanders and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind. We can think about what is not happening right now but this can have a negative effect.” Killingsworth was asked why people seemed to concentrate particularly hard during sex and said: “If you received a message during sex it probably wouldn’t be a good idea to take out your iPhone. Some activities require our full attention and sex is one of them.”
- 8 More than 5,000 people have signed up for the happiness study and the researchers want to attract more so they can study mental wellbeing in different geographical regions and differences between the sexes. “We hope to get a lot of new participants from all over the world and to answer questions we’ve not really been able to ask before,” Killingsworth said.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

Match the sentence beginnings with their correct endings to make sentences about the text.

- |                                                      |                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. People are happiest when ...                      | a. ... that can think about things that are not happening right now. |
| 2. Thinking about the past ...                       | b. ... concentrating all the time.                                   |
| 3. Many people have difficulty ...                   | c. ... their happiness from zero to 100.                             |
| 4. Humans are the only creatures ...                 | d. ... were working, resting or using a home computer.               |
| 5. People in the study were less happy when they ... | e. ... they live for the moment.                                     |
| 6. Participants in the study graded ...              | f. ... can make people unhappy.                                      |

#### 4 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- half their almost time
- about thinking pleasant something
- least time 30% of the at
- the 90% around time of
- a to on scale from 100 zero
- world from the over all

#### 5 Two-word expressions

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. scientific | a. application |
| 2. daily      | b. evidence    |
| 3. home       | c. effect      |
| 4. right      | d. computer    |
| 5. web        | e. now         |
| 6. negative   | f. activities  |

#### 6 Spelling

Rearrange the letters to make key words from the text. The first letter of each word is given.

- wleilgn eb
- rseacreh
- cnoncettrea
- practiipnta
- mbsrleiae
- dtacrsidet

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#### KEY

##### 1 Key words

1. wellbeing
2. evidence
3. volunteer
4. exercise
5. daydream
6. miserable
7. participant
8. productive
9. distracted
10. wanders

##### 2 Correct the information

1. 46.7%
2. Harvard University
3. 2,250
4. 30%
5. 22
6. 5,000

##### 3 Comprehension check

1. e
2. f
3. b
4. a
5. d
6. c

##### 4 Chunks

1. almost half their time
2. thinking about something pleasant
3. at least 30% of the time
4. around 90% of the time
5. on a scale from zero to 100
6. from all over the world

##### 5 Two-word expressions

1. b
2. f
3. d
4. e
5. a
6. c

##### 6 Spelling

1. wellbeing
2. research
3. concentrate
4. participant
5. miserable
6. distracted