



Realise Potential

## Three Good Things To Build Your Happiness!



### What Would You Give To Be Happy?

What would you give to be happy? Most people say happiness is more important than money, good looks, and being top dog at work, home or school. You are the expert in you though, so I'm curious. How important is happiness to you? Take a moment - if you are at work, how much of your salary would it be worth if someone gave you a life hack which science had proven could make you significantly happier? £5 a day? £10? £100 or even a £1000? And, if you are studying, which tech item would you be prepared to part with for a few minutes each day if practicing a life hack made you happier? Your mobile? Your Ipad? These sound like big sacrifices, but happiness is the biggest prize of all isn't it?

Well, the great news is you don't have to give up anything!! Martin Seligman, arguably the most influential psychologist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has developed a simple life hack which has been scientifically proven to significantly improve people's happiness with just a few minutes of practice each day for a week! It's called *Three Good Things*.

In this post we'll share with you the key details of how to use *Three Good Things* to improve your level of happiness and wellbeing. Don't stress it's actually really simple, and can take as little as 2 or 3 minutes a day!

We'll also share a couple of stories around the technique so you really get it, and finally we'll give you the scientific evidence and research which make this perhaps the most powerful psychological hack of all time to improve your happiness!



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Based on the research by wellbeing experts, this tool might just improve your happiness by more than winning £10, 000 (which has been shown to only increase people's happiness by 2% after the initial euphoria).

It might improve your happiness more than living in Costa Rica (which has been shown to be one of the happiest places on earth). It may improve your happiness more than getting married (which has also been shown to have a positive effect on many people's happiness), or even getting to go on an indulgent holiday to a beautiful Caribbean island of your choice!

But don't take my word for it. You've got to try it!



### What You'll Walk Away With...

We first want to explore whether this tool is worth the effort? Well, it can help you:

1. Improve your wellbeing by focusing on positive events
2. Train your mind to look for the positive in situations
3. Focus on your role in creating positive things in your life



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### How To Do The Three Good Things Life Hack

*Three Good Things* is a gratitude exercise, which focuses on what has gone well in your day. It's incredibly simple to do. Every night for a week, sometime after dinner and before you go to bed, set aside a few minutes to look back at your day. Then identify three things that have gone well for you in the day, and write them down. It only needs to be a sentence or phrase for each. It doesn't have to be an essay! Then, think of what your role was in making these good things happen. That's it. Three Good Things really is that simple!



After you've practiced *Three Good Things* every day for a week, you can just do it when you feel like a boost, or perhaps do it once a week, if you like having a structure. A friend of mine, for example, has done it every Sunday evening since early March 2020! It's also worth knowing not to force yourself to continue doing it every day for weeks on end, as this can actually weaken its power. You don't want to make it a chore!

There are a couple of things to look out for in the hack. Firstly, when you start practicing it can be hard to think of one, let alone three good things, but persevere. Our minds have a habit of focusing on what has gone wrong, and you are learning a new positive pattern here. The three things you chose don't have to be special or remarkable in any

way. They can be as small as going for a short walk, doing a press-up, or even taking the time to really savour your favourite cup of coffee!

It's also important to chose things where you have had a *role* in what happens. In the examples above this would be *choosing* to walk, exercise or to savour the coffee. Selecting events which we have been actively involved in encourages us to recognise that our own actions contribute to our happiness!



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### Three Good Things In Action

As a coach and behavioural change researcher I was intrigued when I first came across the *Three Good Things* life hack. Before trying it, I imagined it would be the simplest thing imaginable, but the first few times I tried it I did have to wrack my brains to come up with three things! My mind was just so used to searching for the downside, and also putting a really high standard on what qualified. What I soon realised was that some days something very small, like taking the time to smile at my partner, or complimenting one of my children, or *not* having an extra helping of chocolate cake was enough! A 'good thing' doesn't have to be creating world peace here. Though if you do let me know about it!!



When my partner saw the positive effect *Three Good Things* was having on my mood, she started practicing too, and we also played around with it with the kids. We didn't do it with them too formally. When we put them to bed after stories, we'd chat about the good things which had happened that day, and their role in them. It became fun, and before long they told me they were actually looking out for the positives each day so they could include them in our chats at bedtime.

At work many of our individual clients have also found *Three Good Things* helpful. Don't get me wrong, they don't view it as a cure all, but it resonates with many of them, and seems to have a positive impact on their wellbeing. And for those it doesn't resonate with we'll look for something different – after all, they each know if something just doesn't land with them. More broadly, there's even a number of top FTSE companies who now teach *Three Good Things* to their colleagues and leaders and use it in their team meetings to check in and build positivity!



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## The Science

*Three Good Things* was developed by Martin Seligman who is one of the founders of the positive psychology movement. Martin Seligman in his research observed:

*“We think too much about what goes wrong and not enough about what goes right in our lives. Of course, sometimes it makes sense to analyse bad events so that we can learn from them and avoid them in the future. However, people tend to spend more time thinking about what is bad in life than is helpful. Worse, this focus on negative events sets us up for anxiety and depression. One way to keep this from happening is to get better at thinking about and savouring what went well.”*

*Three Good Things* was first researched around a decade or so ago and it was found to arguably be the most powerful positive psychology tool of all for building peoples' happiness and wellbeing.

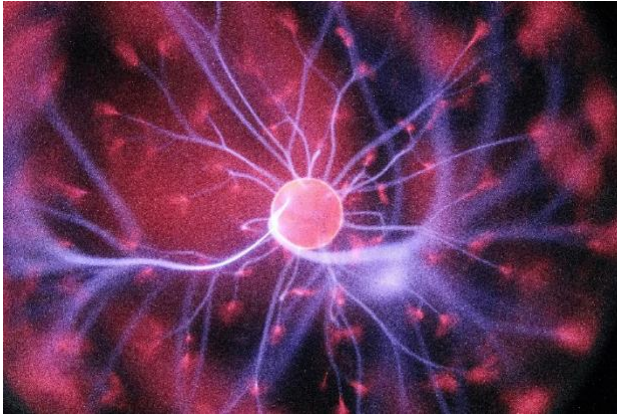
The hack was found to significantly increase happiness and wellbeing – not just when the hack was practiced, but for the whole period researched – which extended to six months after the week of practice. More recent research has found that the impact of the tool improves happiness even beyond this six-month period.

The scientific basis for the success of *Three Good Things* is based on the human brain's ability to change. As recently as a few years ago neuroscientists believed the adult brain was relatively fixed. However, in the last three years neuroscientists have discovered that the adult brain remains surprisingly malleable, meaning all of us can change our behaviours much more significantly than was previously imagined. The malleability of the brain is often called 'plasticity' or 'neuroplasticity'. Indeed, rather than being fixed, recent neuroscientific research has shown that up to 20% of our synapses – the pathways responsible for our thinking in our brains - are replaced on a daily basis, giving each of us a real ability to change.



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## What Now?



What's important now is you don't just take our word for it. Why don't you try it? It'll literally take you as little as 2 or 3 minutes.

So here goes. Take a moment to jot down three good things that have happened to you today.

1. \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_.

Now take a moment to consider your role in them.

How did that feel?

It's just a few minutes for seven days. Are you ready to take this simple step to improve your happiness?



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