

Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness

Employee Packet



WIC WELLNESSWORKS

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WICWELLNESSWORKS



Dear Employee,

What is happiness? Experts define happiness in a variety of ways, but most say that being happy is a combination of feeling satisfied with your life and having more positive than negative emotions.

During the next five weeks you and your co-workers will discover how to add more positive moments to your life with the **Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness** challenge.

There are two main types of happiness – 1) feeling good in the moment, and 2) the long-term sense that we are content with our life. To feel long-term contentment, our brains need to regularly experience positive emotions like joy, calm, and gratitude.

Scientists have found that happy people experience positive emotion with certain behaviors. People who feel positive emotion most of the time:

- 1 Meet their Basic Needs
- 2 Participate in Supportive Relationships
- 3 Practice Positive Thinking
- 4 Fill their lives with Meaning
- 5 Give and receive Kindness

It might be helpful to think of each of these behaviors as a type of “seed” that can “grow” your happiness. The more seeds you select and tend to, the more likely you are to have many blooms (positive emotions like pride, interest, or hope) and fewer weeds (negative emotions like stress, worry, or fear).

And, just as with planting a garden, every single seed can make a difference in how much enjoyment you get from your efforts. Experts who study happiness say that it is the little things in life that bring us the most joy, and that the more enjoyable moments we have each day, the happier we are in general.

Let's get growing!

**The University of Texas at Austin
Health and Evaluation Team**

What you can do this month:

- ✓ **READ** the **Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness** packet. Review the descriptions and action steps for each of the five seeds, and begin thinking about which seed you'd like to work on first during the challenge and which action steps you'd like to take.
- ✓ **TRACK** each action step you make toward happiness by coloring in spaces on the mandala image found on page 9. The steps you take will allow you to grow a beautiful burst of happiness.
- ✓ **REVIEW** the Happiness at Work Tip Sheets found on pages 10 and 11. These group and individual strategies can have a big impact on your work environment and relationships.



Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness

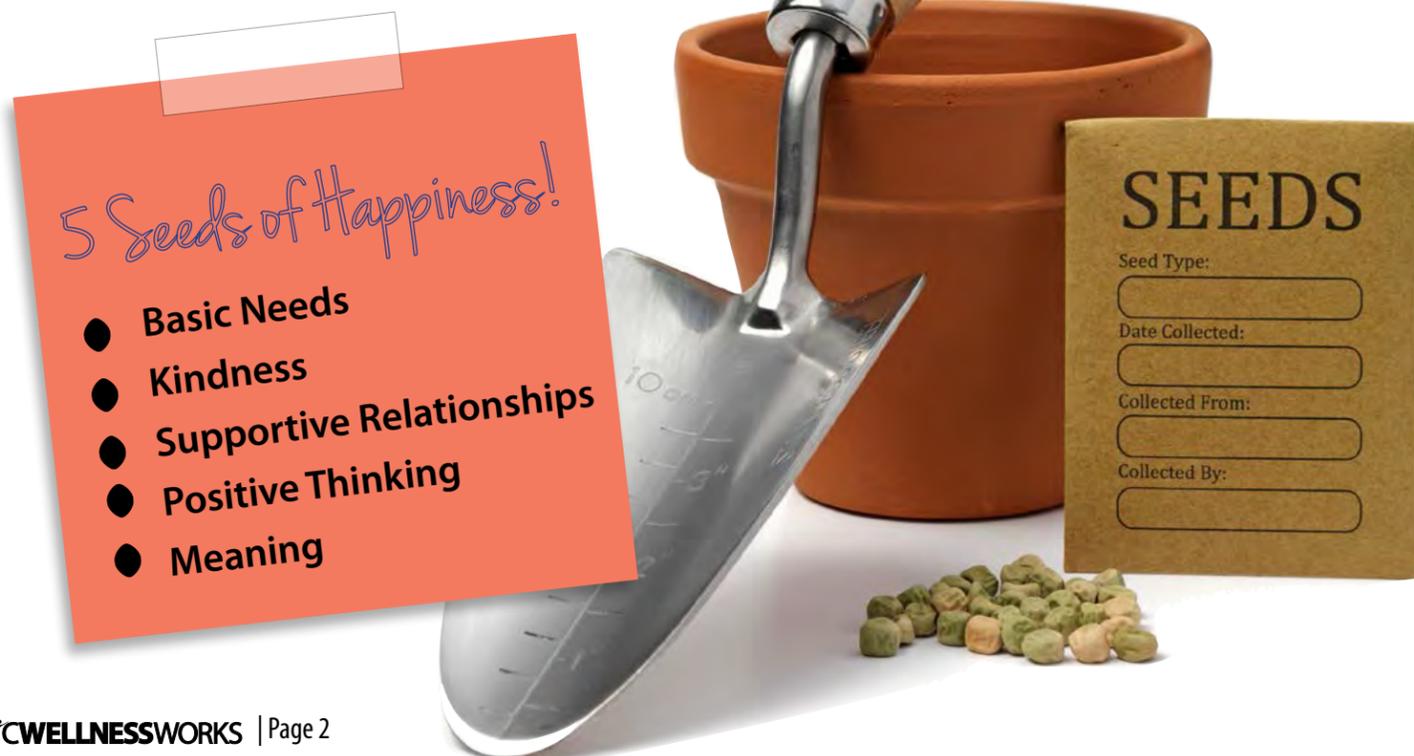
The Challenge

WHY: There are many ways to feel happier, but the five areas of behavior listed below are often recommended. We'll call them the "seeds" of happiness, because each one you "plant" grows good feelings. Every seed has value, no matter how small. Just saying thank you to someone who has helped you can make a big difference in your day.

WHAT: During the **Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness** challenge, your goal is to focus on planting one type of "seed" per week. You don't have to follow the suggested order below. If you would rather start with a different seed or even work on a seed for two weeks – Grow for it!

HOW: For each seed, take as many action steps as you can to grow happiness. Feel free to list additional steps you plan to take. Note: there are action steps throughout the packet. Look for the items with boxes and check those action steps you want to do. Every time you take an action step to increase happiness, color in a section of the image known as a mandala found on page 9. Use colored pencils or felt markers to grow a beautiful burst of happiness.

HELP your clinic share happiness. Challenge your co-workers to create a "Happiness Grows Here" clinic board during the five week challenge. Post notes about what "Happiness Is..." to you. In addition, perform and share Happy Acts by writing down and posting kind acts that you will do for yourself or others. See pages 12 and 13 for more information on the clinic's "Happiness Grows Here" board.



Planting Your Garden

● Basic Needs

In terms of growing happiness, this is a good place to start. When our basic needs for rest, safety, physical activity, healthy food, and relaxation aren't met, it's hard to feel positive emotion – and it's easier to feel stressed. Fortunately, healthy behaviors like regular exercise and eating nutritious meals reduce stress. Which action steps can you take to meet your basic needs?

- Walk _____ minutes a day or add in this physical activity: _____, _____ minutes a day.
- Increase fruit/vegetable intake to ___ serving(s) of fruits and ___ serving(s) of vegetables a day.
- Take three minutes twice a day for slow, relaxed breathing.
- Keep paper/pen near your bed to write down stressful thoughts that are keeping you up at night (example: to-do list, reminders, etc.).
- Keep healthy snacks at your desk and plenty of water to hydrate.
- Schedule time to relax and refresh (example: 15 minutes to stretch; 10 minutes quiet time).

Additional steps (feel free to make a longer list):

- _____
- _____



Track your growth: Every time you take an action step to increase happiness, color in a section of the mandala image found on page 9. Use colored pencils or felt markers to grow a beautiful burst of happiness.

All the
flowers
of all the
tomorrows
are in the
seeds of
TODAY.

- Indian Proverb





Planting Your Garden

Supportive Relationships

Studies show that having supportive people in your life like family, friends, and co-workers, matters more to your happiness than any other factor. Those with strong social support are happier, more productive, and more successful. They also have lower stress and fewer negative emotions. To gain these benefits – it’s the quality of your relationships that matters – not the quantity.

- List your supportive relationships and find ways to nurture those.
- Consider negative relationships in your life and find ways to minimize those.
- Call someone who is a really good listener next time you need to talk.
- Let a co-worker know why you appreciate them.
- Spend time with someone important to you.
- Join a new club, organization, or other group that feels enjoyable.

Additional steps (feel free to make a longer list):

- _____
- _____



Track your growth: As you complete an action step, grab those colored pencils and start coloring. Reflect on the positive people in your life and how they make you feel.



Planting Your Garden

Kindness

By being kind to yourself, you pull a lot of “weeds” from your garden like negativity, fatigue, and stress. By being kind to others, you build stronger social bonds and are helping someone else feel good (and that will make you happier too!).

- Call someone who has made a positive difference in your life and let them know.
- Allow yourself to step aside from an activity when you are feeling overwhelmed.
- Give three compliments to three people you come across in your day.
- Make time for reading something you really enjoy.
- Connect with your clients on a personal level about their children, their life, or their interests.
- Make a “homemade” birthday card for someone instead of buying one.

Additional steps (feel free to make a longer list):

- _____
- _____



Track your growth: Use this quiet time to reflect on the happiness action steps that you are taking in the area of Kindness. How do your positive actions make you feel when you show kindness to yourself and others?

Planting Your Garden

Positive Thinking

Positive thought leads to positive emotion. For example, thinking, "I'm going to plan a trip for the weekend!" will probably result in feelings of excitement and interest. On the other hand, a negative thought like, "I have nothing to do this weekend..." will likely end in feelings of sadness or disappointment. Positive thoughts give you power – the power of feeling better.

- Show gratitude: List five things you are thankful for. You can use the gratitude sheet on page 17 or make a separate list.
- Seek out positive people: Their optimism is uplifting... and can be contagious.
- Remember that nobody is perfect: Look out for blaming or judging thoughts.
- Don't let yourself feel helpless: There is always something you can do to feel better.
- Try humor: Even when you are facing challenges, stay open to laughter and humor. Watching a funny sitcom, spending time with someone who makes you laugh, or reading jokes can help you think more positive thoughts.

Additional steps (feel free to make a longer list):

- _____
- _____

Track your growth: Color your mandala and think of the things you are grateful for today. Consider sharing these with others or simply reflect on your gratitude.



Planting Your Garden

Meaning

To build long lasting happiness, human beings need meaning in their lives. Meaning can come in many forms: joining a spiritual group, setting personal goals, volunteering, reading and learning, and so on. It's not what the meaningful activity is that matters; it's what is important to you. Consider which action steps you can add to your daily life that would hold meaning for you.

- Start making a family tree: Research your ancestry, interview a senior family member.
- Connect: Work with others on a shared goal or interest. Join a spiritual, educational, or volunteer group. Start a book club at your clinic. Take classes to learn a new skill.
- Embrace challenges: We often learn more from difficult moments than easy ones. View stress as a teacher. Keep a journal to reflect on what you're learning from challenging situations.
- Be mindful: It's very easy to get caught up in daily distractions. Challenge yourself to find "meaning in the moment" instead of allowing your mind to wander.

Additional steps (feel free to make a longer list):

- _____
- _____

Track your growth: After coloring your mandala, reflect on something particularly meaningful in your life and why it is important to you.



Track Your Growth with a Mandala

What is a Mandala? A mandala (Sanskrit word for completion or circle) is an abstract design that creates a circle of patterns with a center point. They have been used throughout history for meditation, stress relief, self discovery and simply having fun. Although you may not have colored in many, many years, you may discover your inner kid again.

How to Track Your Happiness: Every time you take an action step to increase your happiness over the five-week challenge, color in a section of the mandala on the opposite page. Use a variety of colored pencils/felt tip markers and discover how a beautiful burst of happiness grows from your efforts. It doesn't matter where you start or stop coloring. Just remember you will be tracking your happiness on this image for five weeks. When you are done, feel free to post your mandala on your clinic bulletin board, at your workstation, or on your fridge at home.



Tip Sheet:

Group Strategies for Happiness at Work

Small, positive action steps can have a big impact on your work environment and relationships. On these pages, you'll find group and individual strategies for growing happiness at work.

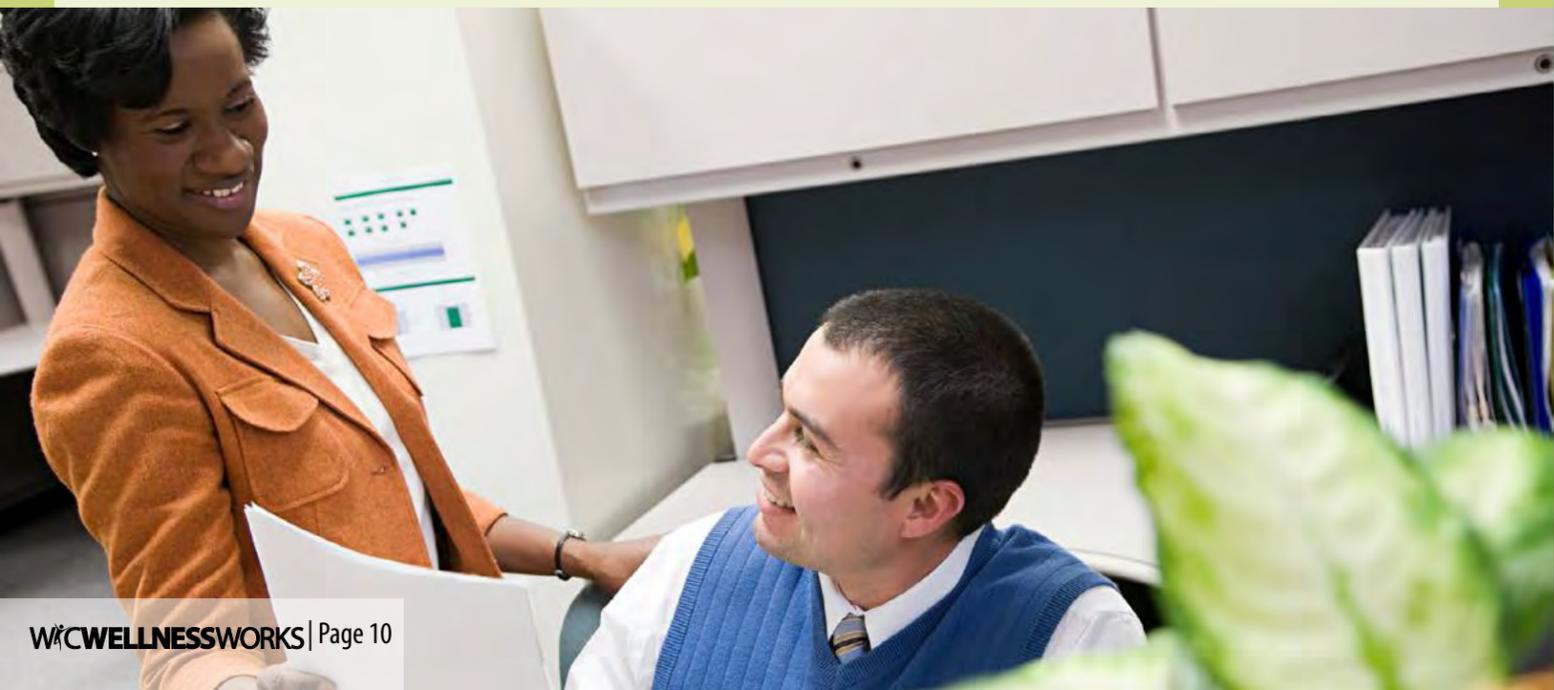
Smile: Smiling increases positive thoughts and emotion. Several studies have shown that smiling more can decrease feelings of stress and lower heart rate and blood pressure.

- When interacting with clients, be mindful of your facial expression.
- Smile at every person you work with (colleagues and clients), and see how it changes your day (and the person who is receiving your kindness.).

Show Clients & Co-workers Care: By giving of yourself, you encourage other people to give. A caring environment can increase group morale and job satisfaction.

- Challenge yourself to do one kind act per day for someone you work with. Tell a client, "You look great..." or share a good book with a co-worker.
- Shift your thoughts from frustration, to care and concern the next time you find that someone at work is in a negative mood. They are most likely in special need of your kindness. Your thoughtful response to them will lower stress for both of you.
- Kindness is contagious! If you compliment a client or co-worker, they are more likely to "pass it on" with kindness toward someone else.

We shall
never know
all the good
that a
simple smile
can do.
- Mother Teresa



Tip Sheet

Individual Strategies for Happiness at Work

Taking care of your "personal garden" is even more important than tending your community garden. Sometimes we're so busy taking care of everyone else that we forget to take care of ourselves. By paying attention to your own needs, including while you are at work, you are practicing self-kindness.

Practice Self-Kindness: You can be more successful helping others if your own needs are met.

Self-Kindness Exercise 1: Practice Forgiveness – When you make a mistake, the best thing you can do is try to learn from it, forgive yourself, and move forward. Sometimes, that can be hard to do. These strategies can help:

- Avoid critical self-talk that blames or harshly judges your actions.
- Highlight what you did right instead of focusing on what you did wrong.
- Think of what you might do differently next time you're in a similar situation.
- Remember a time when you handled a challenge in a way you felt good about.
- Remember that each mistake is a learning opportunity.

Self-Kindness Exercise 2: Care for the Caregiver – Be good to yourself, particularly after a challenging day. Before taking any of the following actions, ask yourself, "Do I recharge better with others or on my own?" Take that into account to make the most of your self-care time.

- Each day, set aside at least 10 minutes to recharge. Taking only five minutes to slowly, calmly breathe can greatly lessen stress. Taking ten minutes to peacefully stretch can do the same.
- Take a quiet walk or find another relaxing activity during your work break.

- Have a plan in place for treating yourself with at least one kind act on difficult days.
- Have a "Happy Place" in mind. When things get stressful, think of something that provides relief, even for a moment. It can be something you're looking forward to, a happy memory, etc.



The "Happiness Grows Here" Board

Your co-workers can challenge each other to share as many good thoughts and kind acts as will fit on your clinic bulletin board!

☀️ The "Happiness Grows Here" board will feature two sections: "Happiness Is" and "Happy Acts." Both activities ask that you and your co-workers post hand-written notes to the board.

☀️ With your co-workers, choose materials for decorating the board and note cards or "sticky notes" to write on and post. Your staff can also use the templates provided in the coordinator packet to print happiness note cards.

☀️ Feel free to personalize your board with other happiness cues – like a funny bumper sticker, a silly staff photo, a recommendation for a happy movie, an inspirational quote, etc.

Send a photo of your clinic's board by November 20, 2015 to Debbie.Lehman@dshs.state.tx.us and be entered to win a Happiness Gift Basket.

See pages 14 and 15 for more information on creating your board.

For more ideas and an inspiring look at happiness boards across the world, visit: happyacts.org/mosaic



The "Happiness Grows Here" Board

Section 1

Happiness Is...

In this section of the "Happiness Grows Here" board, you and your co-workers will share what makes you feel good by writing down joyful moments.

The What: What is happiness to you? Is it a good movie on a rainy day? Is it a song you can't help but dance to? Share what makes you happy. You may give your co-workers and clients some good ideas.

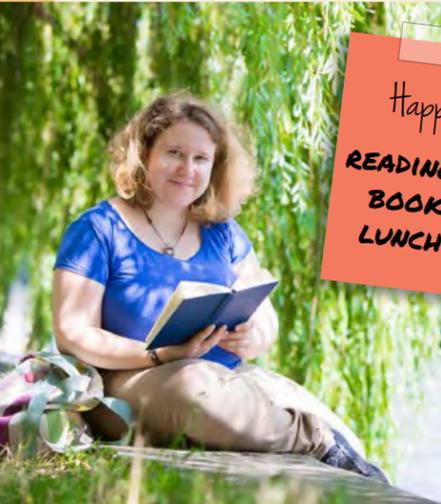
The Why: Sharing something that makes you happy (a memory, a tip) actually... makes you happy. Just repeating something good that happened to you or sharing good news with someone else makes you feel good.

Studies have found that when we are retelling something positive, endorphins and other "happy hormones" are just as high as when living the positive moment. Go ahead, post some joy!

The How: Write down and display "Happiness Is" notes on the "Happiness Grows Here" board. Personalize your board with other happiness "mementos" (photos, cards, etc.). See if you and your co-workers can fill the entire "Happiness Is" section.



Happiness is...
**SPENDING
TIME WITH
MY SON**



Happiness is...
**READING A GOOD
BOOK ON MY
LUNCH BREAK**

Happiness is the only thing that doubles when you share it.

- Albert Schweitzer

The "Happiness Grows Here" Board

Section 2

Happy Acts

In this section of the board, post as many Happy Acts as possible during the 5-week challenge.

The What: Happy Acts (happyacts.org) is part of an international movement to spread happiness by doing something kind for yourself or others. The Happy Acts slogan is: We challenge you to do and share #Happy Acts to help make the world a happier place.

The Why: Being good to yourself or others grows happiness. Kindness increases positive thought, and when done for others, social support. If your Happy Act also meets a basic need, like more physical activity with a regular walk, than you just planted another seed. If you walk while training for a fundraiser, you added in meaning.

The How: Choose an act of kindness (Happy Act) that you feel will make someone else feel good. Note: You can also do a Happy Act for yourself as "self-kindness." Some examples of Happy Acts can be found below. Every Happy Act you do matters, no matter how small.

You can post a Happy Acts note before you do it (like a pledge or promise), as in these examples:

- Bringing a healthy snack for myself and my colleagues to share in the break room
- Training with my staff for a 5K walk or run that will raise funding for a cause close to our hearts
- Volunteering with my family at our library book drive
- Returning the shopping cart for a mother carrying a baby
- Really listening to a friend in need

You can also post a note showing a Happy Act you recently did, like, "I babysat for my sister yesterday."



I will share happiness by...
**READING WITH MY
DAUGHTER EVERY
NIGHT**



I will share happiness by...
**REMEMBERING TO
SMILE AT CLIENTS
MORE OFTEN**



Keep On Growing!

Congratulations! Over the last five weeks, you've planted many good moments in your life. Don't stop now! Here are some additional resources to help you "keep growing."

Resources:

Books:

- *Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy*, by Tal Ben-Shahar
- *The Happiness Advantage*, by Shawn Achor
- *The Four Agreements*, by Don Miguel Ruiz
- *Happiness is: 500 Things to be Happy About*, Lisa Swerling
- *The Daily Book of Positive Quotations*, by Linda Picone
- *Instant Happy: 10-Second Attitude Makeovers*, by Karen Salmansohn

Web Links:

- **happify.com**: This site says it's "turning the latest innovations in the science of happiness into fun activities and games that help you lead a more fulfilling life." You can also download their happiness app.
- **pursuit-of-happiness.org**: provides information on the history and science of human happiness and mental well-being. They offer a free introductory webinar and on-site workshops.
- **gretchenrubin.com**: Rubin is a bestselling happiness author. Her website provides podcasts tips, quizzes, and instructions for starting your own "Happiness Project."
- **livehappy.com**: From *Live Happy* magazine, this site shares "inspiring features, relatable stories, and advice to help people discover their personal journey of happiness in life."
- **happyacts.org**: Happy Acts is spreading the happiness movement with ideas for happy acts, how to start a Happy Acts board, and the option to see other happy acts around the world.



The World's Happiest Playlist:

For "International Day of Happiness 2015," the United Nations and a group of globally known artists launched #HappySoundsLike. This campaign uses the favorite songs of people all over the world to inspire hope and joy. To learn more and to find the "world's happiest playlist," visit: www.happysoundslike.com

Gratitude Notes

Showing gratitude is being aware of the good things that happen in your life and not taking them for granted. Researchers have found that people who feel and express the most gratitude are happier, healthier, and more energetic. Being thankful grows positive thinking and reduces negative thinking.

Use this page to reflect on what you are thankful for in your life. Refer to the list when you need a healthy reminder about the "positives" in your life.

Handwriting practice lines for the Gratitude Notes section.

When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around. - Willie Nelson



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