

An Excerpt from: Top Ten Happiness Boosters

The Mind/Body Connection

Those of us with desk jobs tend to think all day long, subconsciously blocking out our body's feelings. We can get so caught up with head stuff that it's like we don't even have bodies. Intellectuals do this a lot. Sandi calls this being disembodied! We can't feel happiness when we're disembodied.

What does happiness feel like?

In *The Science of Happiness*, Stefan Klein describes the feeling of happiness:

- Blood circulation improves
- Heart rate is three to five beats a minute faster
- Skin temperature rises about a tenth of a degree Centigrade
- Muscles relax and become more flexible
- Skin is slightly damper
- Fingers very slightly tremble (a tenth of a millimeter)
- There is an excitement
- There are also autonomic changes, such as hormone levels¹

These are extremely subtle changes, but if you become attuned to them, you may be able to begin picking them up.



□ Happiness Boosters

What exercise do you love the most? Schedule a time for it on your calendar at least once a week, and start doing it.

What exercise have you not done in a long time? Is there one you did as a kid? For Sandi, it's swimming. Growing up with a pool in her backyard allowed Sandi to become part fish. Swimming in the water now is one long luxurious massage. Find the exercise that resonates with you. It may very well be the one you did as a kid.

What routine can you create around exercising? Perhaps you can take a weekly walk with a neighbor. Is your bank or grocery close enough to walk to? Can you join a soccer or tennis league?

Get involved in races. Enter a 5K or 10K run, or if you're more ambitious, a triathlon or marathon (they have half-marathons too). This adds a goal-setting component, which is a double-happiness dip. For a triple-happiness dip, run a race with a friend!

Waking up the body

If you feel like you might be one of those who is always “in your head,” start with your heart area. Push your chest out, breathe deeply and feel.

What do you feel? If you feel nothing or very little, try these ideas to get the energy circulating:

- A slow form of yoga, such as Hatha Yoga.
- A relaxation meditation where you focus attention on each body part and dissolve the tension (look for meditations in future newsletters)
- A massage by a professional body worker who understand how to balance the energy in your body. If you're really blocked, this could take several sessions.
- Meditation classes (see Section 10)
- Watch a movie that makes you cry and/or laugh and fully experience your feelings. Really increase your awareness of your feelings as if you were an observer of them (for tips, see Section 6)
- Find a friend whom you can discuss your feelings with and talk with them from your heart, not your head.
- Watch the spontaneity of children and let your heart follow their actions.
- Journal. Write three pages nonstop from your heart, and see what comes up.



It takes repetition and practice to fully feel your body again if you have been disconnected for a while. Keep practicing until it becomes a natural habit.

Even if you feel very connected to your feelings, you can expand them to the next level. It's like exercising your “compassion muscle;” you'll get stronger and stronger every time you feel. You'll be able to feel deeper and deeper the more you practice.

¹ Klein, Stefan, *The Science of Happiness: How Our Brains Make Us Happy – And What We Can Do to Get Happier*, 2002.