

# Wellness

## Wednesday



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## The 1 Thing Almost Everyone Gets Wrong About Happiness

According to the 2024 World Happiness Survey, the United States is no longer one of the 20 happiest countries. It's pretty glum news, but not necessarily surprising.

While some of our stressors and sources of grief are out of our control, or might constitute a "permacrisis," there's also a common misunderstanding about happiness that's plaguing us. This belief often stands in the way of us truly experiencing regular, daily joy.

The misunderstanding in question: that happiness is an end goal, or something we can't have right now.

In reality, we can cultivate happiness every day and before our goals are met. So why do we think otherwise? Why do we see happiness as an end goal? Here are a few reasons, according to therapists.

### The 'American dream' ideology.

This viewpoint is partially rooted in cultural and societal norms, according to Hayli Evans, a therapist who specializes in trauma. In the U.S., many of us see productivity and hard work as top-tier. It leads us to constantly chase after the elusive "American Dream" — the idea that if we're productive all the time, we'll be successful, happy and financially stable.

"People are taught that work and play are to be kept separate, and often, we do not prioritize rest at all," Evans said. "We commonly 'live for the weekend,' perpetuating the idea that happiness is something to be chased, or something reserved for later."

Thanks to this mindset (and thanks to capitalism), there's always something we feel we should "fix" before we're "allowed" to be happy, whether it's our bodies, our relationship status or our job titles.

Then, when we get to that point, we may confront the arrival fallacy, the illusion that meeting a goal brings lasting happiness. Or we might discover that the happiness doesn't last.

"Our society has turned achieving happiness and reaching your full potential into a way to measure success," said Aurisha Smolarski, a Los Angeles-based therapist, certified co-parenting coach and author of "Cooperative Co-Parenting for Secure Kids: The Attachment Theory Guide to Raising Kids in Two Homes." "Thus, you might feel happy for a moment when you achieve one success, but then you immediately jump to the next goal. And whatever happiness you found evaporates."

## The 'happily ever after' ending.

Further, we've grown up hearing that "happily ever afters" only come at the end of a story.

"Hollywood has sold us an idea of 'happily ever after,' from fairy tales to rom-coms," said Jenny Maenpaa, a licensed psychotherapist, author and founder of the Forward in Heels coaching practice. "We have grown up with the idea that happiness is a destination that we reach and then we hang on to for dear life."

## It's easier and more comfortable.

Envisioning true happiness as something that's coming — rather than something already at our fingertips — gives us hope. It gets us through less-than-ideal times. Basically, it's self-protective.



"In many ways, it's easier to live in the future, because if you're not happy in the present moment, then all you need to do is think about how your life will be better when you lose weight, make more money, have a partner, own a home, etc.," said Tess Brigham, a licensed therapist, certified coach and author of "True You: A Step-by-Step Guide to Conquering Your Quarter-Life Crisis."

## Constant encouragement to set yourself up for success...

...which means you can't take time for pleasure now. "We're told by our parents over and over again, 'Work hard in school so you can get into a good college.' 'Work hard in college you can get a good job,' and so on," Brigham said. "We're told that we have to do these things that we don't want to do and don't enjoy so that our future selves will be happy."

## Why It's Unhelpful To Think Of Happiness As An End Goal

For starters, this type of thinking makes us more likely to feel unhappy (and when happiness is so close!).

Evans said many people think they'll be happy once they've attended to their (never-ending) responsibilities. But besides robbing us of the joys of the present moment, this can lead to a plethora of negative emotions.

We end up being more anxious, more depressed and less satisfied in our lives," Evans said. "Chronically postponing enjoyment increases our impulse to numb ourselves when we feel overwhelmed or too stressed to function." In an attempt to avoid the dreariness, she said, we may reach for substances or social media, which keeps us from "investing our time and energy in the relationships and activities that will bring true fulfillment."

Next, this kind of mindset can keep us from having complete, intimate relationships. Smolarski has heard many people say they "just want to be happy," and she'll challenge them to see the upside of occasional negative emotions.

"[Just being happy] makes it difficult for them to be empathic to their own or someone else's experience that conflicts with or threatens their protective stance around being happy," she explained. "For some people, this becomes an avoidance strategy, whereby they push aside the full range of emotions, and instead aim to keep the peace with people who may be afraid of conflict."

Ultimately, this mentality inhibits you from living your life in the moment. Have you ever looked at a picture of your body years ago, or recalled a memory, and wished you appreciated it more? It's easy to forget to be mindful and grateful, but that's one thing that keeps us stuck in discontentment.

## Better Ways To Feel Happiness, According To Therapists

There are several solutions, both in the short and the long term, that can help you think of happiness differently and feel it more regularly. They include:

### Recognizing that happiness can exist in any moment.

In hard times, happiness requires more work — but it's doable. "Happiness exists in the moment that we experience it," Evans said. "Happiness is experienced through mindfulness ... When we are mindful, we are able to tune in to pleasure, gratitude, joy — the ingredients that make up 'happiness.'" This could involve taking a moment to appreciate nature, or being grateful you have a job (even when it's stressful).

### Knowing that constant happiness isn't actually the goal.

Emotions are supposed to change, and they all have a purpose. Anger, for example, tells us that something isn't OK. "We need to experience a full range of emotions," Evans said. "However, if we find that we are sitting in stress, sadness or anxiety, but never allow ourselves to experience happiness, we might need to investigate what's going on." She recommended addressing this with loved ones and a trusted mental health professional.

### Considering other perspectives.

Do you have perceptions of what happiness is, or ideas about when you can or can't feel it, that might be holding you back? "Shifting our mindset about happiness and about our present moment can help us to give permission to experience it more frequently," Evans said. She loves Zabie Yamasaki's trauma-informed yoga affirmation card deck.

### Being more mindful of the present moment, and practicing gratitude.

Evans said the purpose is to "be here, now." Silent walks, meditation, breath work and journaling are all ways to practice this. Along the way, Evans encouraged noticing and exploring any thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations that arise.

Additionally, gratitude can bring happiness through similar actions and pursuits, such as journaling, spirituality, bringing your mind to the present and listing what you're thankful for — for example, a supportive friend, an apartment or a sunny day.

### Creating meaningful daily rituals.

First, consider what makes you happy and aligns with your purpose (if you have an idea of what that is). Then, brainstorm how to turn that into a ritual. "Focus on the little things, such as a morning cup of coffee, hugging your kid, writing for a half hour per day, fixing a plumbing issue or planning a date night with your partner," Smolarski suggested.

### Reminding yourself of what is in your control.

Happiness is created within, but it can be affected by external events — anything from a friend's betrayal to a health diagnosis to oppression. It's OK to validate that; there's no need for toxic positivity.

What might be more helpful after validating yourself, though, is focusing on what you can do. "If you're not happy and you've identified the reasons why are in your control, great — you can now start doing things to change it," Brigham said. "If you determine that your happiness or unhappiness is out of your control, then you can acknowledge this is how you feel and accept it."

In short, don't wait until you get married or promoted to be happy. Engage in micro-acts of joy every day with gratitude.





# JUICY LUCY (STUFFED TURKEY CHEESEBURGER)



## INGREDIENTS

4 slices part-skim cheddar cheese slices,  
or 2% American cheese (0.7 ounces each)  
1 pound 93% lean ground turkey  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
black pepper, to taste  
4 hamburger rolls  
4 Iceberg lettuce, leaves  
red onion, sliced into rings and separated  
ripe tomatoes, sliced  
sliced pickles  
ketchup and mustard, optional, or your favorite  
condiments, if desired

The Juicy Lucy, a delectable twist on the classic cheeseburger, has captivated burger enthusiasts worldwide. This unique creation, where the cheese is ingeniously nestled within the patty, promises a burst of molten goodness with every bite. Whether you're a seasoned grill master or a novice cook, mastering the art of the Juicy Lucy can elevate your culinary repertoire and impress your guests. We'll show you how to perfect the stuffed turkey cheeseburger, from ingredient selection to cooking techniques, ensuring you can replicate this mouthwatering delight in your own kitchen.

### GROUND TURKEY: THE FOUNDATION

The foundation of a Juicy Lucy lies in the quality of the ground turkey. While leaner options may seem tempting, the 93% lean variety offers the optimal balance of flavor and juiciness, ensuring your burgers remain moist and tender throughout the cooking process. Avoid the ultra-lean 99% ground turkey breast, as it can result in a dry, lackluster patty.

### CHEESE: THE MOLTEN HEART

The cheese filling is the star of the Juicy Lucy show. While cheddar and American cheese are classic choices, don't be afraid to experiment with a variety of melty options. Swiss, Fontina, Colby-Jack, Mozzarella, and Havarti all make excellent alternatives, each imparting its unique flavor profile to the dish.

### Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 burger, Calories: 309 kcal, Carbohydrates: 20.5 g, Protein: 33 g, Fat: 11.5 g, Saturated Fat: 4 g, Cholesterol: 90 mg, Sodium: 766 mg, Fiber: 5 g, Sugar: 7.5 g



## INSTRUCTIONS



### HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Set grill to medium heat. Clean and oil the grates.
2. Fold each slice of cheese into quarters to create 4 short stacks.
3. Divide the ground turkey into 8 equal balls then flatten into 1/4 inch thick patties.
4. Place a stack of cheese in the center of 4 patties and top with the remaining 4 patties. Pinch the edges to seal, then push the up the sides so they are an even thickness. Season both sides with salt and black pepper.
5. Place patties and oiled grill and cover, cook about 6 minutes per side over medium heat, or until the center is cooked through. Transfer to buns with toppings and be sure to let it cool before biting into the center so you don't burn your mouth.

### PAIRING PERFECTION: SIDES FOR THE JUICY LUCY

No Juicy Lucy feast is complete without the perfect accompaniment. For a classic pairing, serve your stuffed turkey cheeseburgers with crispy sweet potato fries, golden-brown onion rings, or a refreshing side salad. For a low-carb twist, opt for grilled asparagus, creamy cucumber salad, or a crisp coleslaw.

<https://www.menshealth.com/fitness/a25620352/best-bodyweight-back-exercises/>

# Featured Exercise ▶ Inverted Row

## HOW TO DO IT:

- Place a barbell at about hip height on a power rack or Smith machine.
- Lower yourself under the bar, then grab the bar with an overhand (pronated) grip with your hands at about shoulder width apart.
- Straighten your arms to hang from the bar. Straighten out your legs for more of a challenge.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades and upper back together to pull your chest up to the bar.
- Pause at the top position, squeezing your core and glutes to keep your body straight if your legs are fully extended, then straighten your arms to return to the starting position.
- Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 8 to 10 reps

## THE BENEFITS:

The inverted row is a fantastic exercise for targeting and strengthening the major muscle groups of the back, including the lats, traps, and rhomboids. Because it's a bodyweight exercise, you can perform high-rep sets to stimulate muscle growth and hypertrophy. The time under tension and the controlled nature of the movement further contribute to building a stronger, more defined back.



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*Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.*



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