

Natural Synergy

DAILY HAPPINESS BOOSTING HABITS



25 Attitude-Changing Routines That
Will Trigger Happiness On Auto-Pilot

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What is “happiness”?

There are three main types of “happiness” in general according to Martin Seligman, the founder of positive psychology.

First, the pleasurable, hedonistic kind, where you try to do everything that makes your senses feel good in a particular period of time and everything feels easy. It’s that “living in the now” sensation that provides immediate satisfaction. We tend to associate happiness more commonly to this concept.

This type of happiness rarely provides sustainable contentment. It provides temporary moments of intense joy that may add to life, but won’t contribute to building a happy life in general. It’s the latter two types that we should focus on instead, which take longer, involve more energy, and can cause moments of negative emotions such as anger, impatience, pessimism and doubt – but are par for the course. It’s also known as the hedonic definition of happiness, that pleasure and the pursuit of it and the avoidance of pain, is the highest good in life. It tends to be associated with physical needs being met, rather than emotional or intellectual ones. Famous political philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham propounded this concept.

Second, an engaging life, where things aren’t always easy, but you gain immense enjoyment from the network and involvement in work, relationships and leisure; and finally the meaningful life, where you test yourself and experience joy from the achievement of overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges and identifying and using your strengths for a greater good than your own individual desires and needs.

These last two definitions fit with the concept of eudaimonia, perhaps best defined as the flourishing of happiness. It describes being happy as living a life according to certain virtues and achieving your potential. It includes living a life with free will, being involved in activities both personal pursuits and in the community, and aspiring to understand a deeper purpose for living. The Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle is

the most famous advocate of eudaimonia.

Aristotle believed that happiness was a cumulative impact of several aspects of a good life - knowledge, health, friends, family, wealth and so on. However the achievement and maintenance of these entails tough choices, and oftentimes sacrifices and challenges. Yet overcoming painful situations and going through periods of difficulty, can often result in a greater, longer lasting contentment rather than easier, quicker choices that provide immediate happiness.

Cultural concepts of happiness

There are also key differences between Eastern and Western philosophies regarding happiness. Although both encompass widely diverse schools of thought on the subject – including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Sufism in Eastern thought – there are some general trends that each broad group shares.

It begins from what each philosophy sees as the main focus. In the West, the tendency is to assume that everything begins and ends with the individual, that each person is not only able to shape their own destiny, but is the most important agent in changing the world. In Eastern culture, identity and status centre on social networks and communities, so how a person is integrated in their family, school, workplace and broader social groups is the most important indicator of value.

Due to the Christian influence, Western culture tends to not to encourage a belief in the afterlife. This belief influences how the concept of happiness is perceived. If we do not believe we will continue living beyond our lives now, there is minimal incentive to try and be good to absolutely everyone. For some Eastern religions, there is a greater motivation to continue to have good relations with as many people as possible if there is a belief in reincarnation, or several cycles of them, and even more so if goodness is viewed as cumulative; that is, if actions and behavior in this life influence the position you have in the next, and the form your soul will take.

Apart from the individual taking precedence, Western culture values independence. Parents in a family unit are still considered to have independent lives from each other, and their children. When children reach a certain age, they are expected to leave home and start a life for themselves without the physical guidance or shelter of their parents. As such individual happiness is predicated on personal achievement and fulfilling one's own dreams, according to their own values and goals. Western societies accord happiness a status that is not only unprecedented, but sometimes unachievable in the way it has been shaped and manifested. Meanwhile happiness is not really valued in Eastern societies as it might be assumed. Some consider displaying happiness as selfishness, or superficial, or just not appropriate and a bit rude. Humility and discretion are more likely to be highly valued instead.

Contrast this to Eastern cultures where it is common for children to stay at home until they marry. Even then, they may simply move in with their parents and grandparents, or at least live in the same suburb or neighbourhood to maintain the same strong network. This is because family subsumes the individual, as does loyalty to one's community, tribe/ethnic group, religious affiliation, class level, and country. In this sense, conformity is crucial as happiness depends on social acceptance by the group. Personal achievements are not really viewed as such, as they're more likely to be formed and imposed by elders or parents as a means of reflecting honour to the family rather than attributed to the individual's own natural skills and capacities, or ambition and motivation.

Some of the major Eastern philosophies view difficult situations not as issues to be avoided, but as

Hinduism: Gratitude, non-violence, non-interference, compassion, generosity, mental strength, persevering and enduring hardships are considered core virtues in Hinduism. An individual who lives a life according to these principles is said to eventually live in harmony internally and with the physical world. The dominant religion in India, Hinduism asserts that a peaceful mind and trying to practice the virtues are the foundation to a happy life. In contrast to Western values, elimination

of the ego, or self, and aspiration to be above and detached from the material world is emphasised. Hindus believe in reincarnation, and as such, in karma, where you receive what you give. This concept imbues moral accountability amongst people, a kind of spiritual justice system.

Buddhism: Diametrically opposed to the hedonists, Buddhists contend that happiness is not the opposite of suffering or sadness. A full life should encompass both, to truly understand what true happiness is. In fact, going through a tragedy or period of hopelessness is possibly necessary. Through the process of dealing with the negativity, people are tested to examine their reactions and dig deep to endure and finally release themselves from the pain. So adversity and suffering are considered experiments and lessons to evolve as human beings, to learn how to deal with pain better, and negative circumstances are seen as merely steps towards a better future and stronger person. Inner peace can be achieved by acknowledging that the division of self and the non-self is an illusory division.

Confucianism: Similarly to Buddhists and Hindus, a distinction between internal and external lives isn't desirable. Confucianism maintains that a fulfilling life is one in which the family unit is sustained by close, loving bonds that work at developing a harmonious environment in the household. This then builds a natural resilience when challenges arise. Values such as discipline, self-control and seeking a balance with the world and relationships with others, are upheld. Conversely, pleasure and positive emotions are not included in this concept of happiness, but rather are feelings that are subverted or should at least be controlled for the greater good of the family and group. If necessary, an individual life must be sacrificed if it furthers society's progress.

So concepts of happiness can differ depending on the kind of culture, religion, or worldview a person has. Nonetheless, several habits can be fostered that focus on the key facets of all of the definitions here. Different kinds of happiness – small bursts of joy, achieving a long-term goal, individual pursuits, and sacrificing for others – are equally valid and the tips that follow encompass all these aspects, acknowledging

that we can feel happy in different ways.

What are habits?

We need habits in order to function efficiently and effectively. Without them, our brains would not cope, not having the capacity to process the numerous tasks our body requires to operate. Habits are entrenched actions and behaviours learned by our brains, and then automated so less time and energy is spent on daily tasks that are routine and frequent. Studies show that people with head injuries that damage their basal ganglia find it far more difficult afterwards to concentrate, to carry out basic actions such as sitting down, knowing what to eat, recognize once familiar items and people, not to mention more complicated actions such as driving or playing a game of football.

When learning something new, our brains use a lot of energy to trigger what you should do, what pattern or action is appropriate in response to the trigger. Once the brain has established the sequence of actions that is more likely to result in a reward (feeling good), it will record this pattern and attempt to reuse it in future. Hence, the routine becomes more automated the more times it is done as a reaction to the initial prompt, and as long as there is a positive feeling attached. Note that the routine can be by a physical set of actions, emotional responses or mental processes.

Habits are also based on anticipation and an expected result of feeling good. Hence habits can be both good and bad – addicts for instance, find immediate yet temporary rewards in taking alcohol or drugs, or smoking despite it being bad for your health overall.

There are both mental techniques that help us to focus and concentrate on building habits, and physical rituals that help our bodies to be stronger and more durable. Both are intertwined, and have an effect on our emotional states of being as well.

How do we change them, or create new ones?

It depends on how difficult the habit is and what your starting point is- drinking a glass of water, flossing regularly, etc are considered simple habits to acquire. Drinking a glass of water could take only a few weeks to entrench as a habit, but trying to run 5kms daily starting from couch potato status is likely to require more motivation and focus. Making things more accessible - being close to a gym, having a friend to jog with, and perhaps rewarding yourself with a decent breakfast afterwards - can help you stick to the routine. If you know you work better with extrinsic cues, then monitor yourself and set incremental goals, or ask your partner or a friend to encourage you to run.

It also depends on how many habits you are trying to change. Normally it's best to stick with one or two, and try to focus on keystone habits which will have a domino effect for other areas of your life. For instance, if you have an addiction, you should focus on breaking it first as all other bad habits are likely to be a helluva lot easier to stop once you've kicked the big one.

Rubin contends that being self-aware plays a big part in creating your own happiness. For instance, she tends to think that people can typify themselves as satisficers or maximisers, and there are four general personality types. Myers-Briggs profilers believe there are 16 main personality types that help us to understand the way we function and our tendencies, which could help us to predict our resistance or acceptance in taking up a habit and maintaining it.

- Start small
- Understand if you work better alone or with others externally motivating you
- Reward yourself in some way
- Have a trigger/cue to instigate the action

- Don't worry if you miss one day of doing that habit unless it is difficult for you to stick to something unless you do it religiously

If you can find out exactly what makes you happy - but not necessarily in just a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking way - but those things that are hard to do but in the end make us better human beings and thus happier, then it will help to form habits. This is easier said than done. For instance if you are self-aware and understand your weaknesses as well as strengths, and what your goals are in life, then it will be easier to know what steps to take to change routines and behaviour to achieve them.

Silver linings, golden moments, and staying green

1. Try to think optimistically

It's possible to boost your mood simply by thinking happy thoughts and imagining you are happy. Sounds kind of silly, but it's been demonstrated that by keeping positive about a situation and not letting it get you down or ruin your day completely, can help a bad situation. That's not to say you can't have a few moments of despair, frustration, or anger, but once the initial disappointment and negativity has hit you, try as hard as possible to keep it in context and focus on what you can control and let go of what you cannot.

2. Find the humour

It can be difficult at the time, but sometimes a situation is so absurd and seemingly unsolvable that you can only laugh. Other times you have to wait until that moment really has passed before you can even begin to see something in context, and understand exactly how ridiculous it was to be so irritated, upset or affected by a person's behavior, action, a piece of news, or an event.

3. Try to be present in the now

Consciously choose to have periods of quiet and stillness - whether that be meditation, swimming or walking, doing yoga or simply having a cup of tea and staring at the sky. Stillness and peace calm and soothe harried nerves and worried minds. Try not to be bothered by what “you have to do” - but leave some time for dreaming and reflecting on what exactly you are running around and doing all this for.

4. Be conscious of everything that is good in your life

Whether that be friends, family, your job, or simply the fact you can enjoy the sunshine, smell flowers, and have fresh air, a cup of good coffee, getting a nice message on your phone, an email with a funny joke, someone complimenting you on how you look or some job you did, remembering a moment with someone you love. One way to help with this is keeping a gratitude journal or a regular list of things that you are thankful for if not daily, then weekly. This gives a sense of accomplishment and focuses the mind on everything that is good in your life and puts you in a good mood.

5. Learn from others about what makes them happy and why

Some of us simply aren't hard-wired to analyse ourselves on a daily basis and understand what makes us tick. Luckily, there are a host of researchers, scientists, psychologists and social commentators that make this their full-time job. David Gilbert, Gretchen Rubin, Martin Seligman, and Charles Duhigg are just some of the contemporary authors that have helped the everyday person to understand exactly what it is that makes us happy - by measuring it scientifically through neurology, as well as qualitatively, by monitoring their own behaviour after trying to establish new habits and routines.

Their lessons show that it is entirely possible for humans to re-create their lives, and for our brains to somehow record and remember patterns that help us not only survive but experience contentment. For most of us, we don't need such radical changes, but we still want to improve some aspect of our characters. Whether that be communicating with others better, taking the time to reflect and recalibrate, or ensuring our physical well-being is maintained as well as our emotional health, we all

need help to understand what we can do to be happier.

6. Change things up

A change is as good as a holiday some people say - and that is true for some who need variety and diversity. If your job doesn't provide stimulation in the form of new tasks that are challenging, meeting new people, or different projects in teams, then you may need to find other activities that provide a change of people and environment to motivate you and facilitate different ideas.

Buy some flowers, move your furniture around, hang a new painting, cook something different, strike up a conversation randomly with a stranger. Try a new tactic of communicating with your colleagues, family and friends and see if you can't go deeper in these relationships. Or conversely, pare back some friendships that seem damaging or hurtful.

Hobbies, health and happiness

7. Do things that make you happy

What gives you joy? Listening to music, going to an art exhibition, watching a match with your favorite team playing, dancing with your friends, gardening, going on road trips, video games, cooking, or swimming...

If you feel constrained in doing these activities because you don't have enough money or time, then try and evaluate what your priorities are right now. If you are spending too much time at work or in commute, consider cutting down on time doing these things so you can start doing what you enjoy. If you love your job, that's definitely a positive, but it shouldn't consume your life.

If you are afraid that you don't have a life outside of work, and your career is filling the gap of a 'life' then it's definitely time to make some big changes. What kind of person do you want to be remembered as? What kind of life do you want to look back on

when you're older?

Try to set aside an hour a day to focus on these activities - new music to listen to, walking outside in nature, cooking, reading, seeing a friend for a meal or a coffee, watching a movie. None of these activities cost a lot of money, if any at all. If you're creative and like doing projects, plan an activity and work a little bit each day towards it - write a novel or a song, paint, start a vegetable garden, find some recipes and start experimenting, join a chess club, running group, etc. You don't need to do everything, just choose one thing you like doing and start it.

8. Eat well

There's no doubt that sugar and salt highs from junk food produce immediate pleasure. For long-term satisfaction, it's best to try and eat a balanced diet. That doesn't preclude eating fast or processed food entirely, but eating regular meals that have green vegetables, legumes, fish and chicken, and wholegrain cereals help your body function so you have more energy and concentration capacity. This makes you happier simply because you can fit more into a day. Start with just eating one decent meal a day, or cooking a healthy meal at home.

9. Exercise

There's absolutely no need to go to the extremes signing up for a triathlon immediately, or five classes of spinning a week and a couple of weight sessions if you aren't accustomed to exercising. Start with something fun and easy like dancing or yoga, walking, or a step machine.

You'll soon notice that apart from more energy, and feeling less stressed, you want to keep doing more exercise. The endorphins and adrenaline we receive from exercise provide a natural high, and relax us after a long day at work or a situation that is overwhelming. Additionally, focussing on expending physical energy can relieve our minds from working overtime about things we often cannot control.

10. Get enough sleep

Sleep is another important habit that many of us attempt to do without in the name of being 'supermen and women'. But the body requires that your mind and heart and limbs shut down temporarily in order to rejuvenate and repair, ready for another day. Without this necessary habit, we become stressed, irritable and unpredictable. While it's possible to function without sleep for a long spell of time, or even prolong staying awake with artificial stimulants, it will eventually catch up with you in some way.

11. Hug someone daily

We all need to feel as if someone else cares about us, and nothing's better than a hug to make us feel warm, safe and loved. Physical contact for humans is important in establishing and maintaining emotional connections. Words can only do so much, and a hug between loved ones conveys understanding, affection, trust, and comfort.

It could also be a reason many people own a pet – in lieu of a loved one, we can derive great joy from taking care of a dog or cat, and patting them and having them next to us on the couch or at the foot of the bed as we sleep is reassuring.

Heart (hard) stuff for happiness

12. Express your feelings clearly, but diplomatically

No doubt you know people who are passive-aggressive, blunt or rude, or others that are just too nice. Some people can be easy to talk to but want to complain all the time or gossip. No one's perfect, and we all fall into the trap sometimes.

Yet the better way to deal with difficult situations, no matter how uncomfortable it might be or how terrified you are of initiating the conversation, is to be direct. This doesn't mean being rude. It simply means having an open, honest but amiable discussion about expectations, perceptions and assumptions and clarifying differences. Oftentimes there is no real issue, it's rather one of communication. Following through on this with the important people in your life can do wonders for all your relationships,

and your own emotional and mental well-being.

13. Try to cultivate an attitude of listening consciously

Some people think they need to assert dominance and authority by talking and expecting others to listen and follow. But genuine leaders listen; not just simply nodding to what you say, but ask pertinent questions and follow up on key comments. And they go further than that - by acting on what you said, or responding later to something you mentioned that made them think more. It's a verb - it's an act, not a passive gesture. Listening connects you to people and cements relationships. Rather than just talking, listening indicates an exchange between one or more people and that creates a bond of respect and equality.

14. Go for quality, not quantity, and deep rather than trivial, in conversation.

While we all feel the need to let off some steam, talk about the weather, what you watched on TV, and the new outfit you're wearing, studies show that having more meaningful conversations about our hopes, fears, dreams, beliefs and passions lead to greater levels of satisfaction. Sometimes it seems difficult to initiate conversations regarding such heavy topics even with our loved ones. But if we want people to truly understand us, to understand others, and even more than that, it often serves as a process of understanding ourselves better, then we need to have these discussions more often than less.

15. Be organised, but also allow yourself to go with the flow sometimes...

Sometimes you've planned your day or weekend to the *nth* degree. Work, dropping off kids, picking them up, groceries, gym, etc. But sometimes you might find yourself enjoying spending time with your children outside so much, that you don't bother going to the theatre event you already booked and paid for. Or you planned a date to see a band play, but ended up having a great conversation over dinner beforehand that stimulated new ideas and made you think, and just skipped the concert. When something is meaningful and energising but also challenging to a certain degree, we

experience a phase of time that seems endless as we get lost in the moment. And that's a good thing.

16. Understand what stresses you and catch yourself before you get too down

Being aware of how stress manifests itself - either in your behaviour, physically, or both - is key to understanding how to be happier. If you know that having a messy or dirty house makes you feel annoyed, or you find driving long distances to work irritating, then try to find strategies to cut out unnecessary stresses like these from your life. Tidy up the dishes even if you don't have time to actually wash them, or make sure you at least put dirty clothes in the hamper even if you can't wash them right then. Negotiate with your boss to work from home one day a week, or try to find a similar job that is closer to your house, or take a route by public transport or carpool with a colleague. If you aren't aware of being more worried or frustrated, then identifying comfort cues is another good indication you're stressed. Put into practice each day, some time to counteract these annoyances and don't try to ignore them.

17. Focus on your purpose

Some days you may feel a little frantic – running around doing a million things. That can be pretty normal. But if you are finding yourself trying to attend to too many people, issues, and tasks that are widely divergent and it's difficult to reconcile them all, it might be time to take a breath.

While this is a life-long goal that needs to more work than just a day, reflecting on it for a few minutes daily will save you oodles of time; instead of wasting your efforts on things that don't fit into your purpose, you can just say no and move on.

Ask yourself - is what I'm doing and who I think I should be consistent? Are my values matching my actions?

If people often tell you that they don't know what you really think or feel most of the time, or have seen you act differently depending on the situation or people who are around, it's a good sign that you are pretending to be someone else. In a nutshell, you're not being true to yourself.

There are obviously times when you dampen your opinions for the sake of not seeming rude, but you can still have an opinion without offending others, and stand by your principles despite what others may think. Even if they don't agree with you, they will more often than not gain newfound respect for you. Take the time to understand your own values and how you can live them out. There's no need to vocalise them, but simply by the way you do things, people will soon realise you walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

Gratitude and giving

18. Allocate some time to giving and helping others

Formal volunteering also has proven benefits for givers - it improves both emotional and physical well-being, and volunteers tend to be more resilient against depression or at least experience fewer bouts of the blues. People who donate money tend to get a real adrenaline rush similar to those who practice charity; making a financial contribution to a good cause tends to trigger the reward nexus in our brains that produces dopamine and gives a sense of euphoria.

It doesn't have to be grand act of assistance, like saving someone from a burning house or from drowning in the ocean. I'm talking about giving a seat to an elderly person or a woman who is pregnant on the train or bus; offering a hand to someone who is sight-impaired, or giving spare change to homeless people. Or you might want to give a lift to a friend who needs to get to an appointment, or show up for an event that they really want you to support, or babysitting your sister's kids so she can have a night off. There's no need to be doormat and let people take advantage of

your time, but these very small gestures not only help the person who needs it, but gives you practice in the art of compromising and giving without the expectation of receiving. Often we help someone because we know we'll get it back in some way or another. Helping people doesn't necessarily mean that will happen, and that's a good lesson to learn.

19. Hang out with other happy people.

This one is pretty obvious. Happiness can be infectious. Seeing someone else smile, hearing someone laugh, or having a conversation with someone who is expressing their joy about something, makes us feel good. Watching a football match together, going dancing, going to the park with your kids or joining a local community event, positive social interaction can be uplifting, engage our senses and open new ways of thinking while building connections.

Strengths and Virtues

20. Cultivate your own sense of self

Rather than let external forces determine who you are unnecessarily or unconsciously, make a concerted effort to shape your own story about who you are, which will determine who you will become. You have the power to determine your own identity and are responsible for the values you develop and manifest. Ensure the story you tell to others, is not only authentic but is one you believe in wholeheartedly.

21. Don't get caught up in the productivity loop

Efficiency and output are valued in today's society, but often at the expense of quality and without accounting for everything else that should be considered valuable in human beings and their lives. What you earn, your capacity to achieve production goals, etc don't necessarily make us more valued or valuable.

22. Be patient

Anything worth anything takes some time to develop. The pressure of immediacy - in garnering information, processing it, responding to something and acting on something, is great and often unwarranted. Often the most rewarding and satisfying moments in our lives is when we have taken the time and effort to invest in someone, a personal activity or piece of work and achieved what we set out to. These days, the emphasis on instant gratification is difficult to resist, yet sacrificing the short-term joy and delaying the feeling in order to gain a longer-lasting more substantial contentment is not just more difficult but ultimately more deeply fulfilling.

23. Foster curiosity

In this day and age, we tend to position 'us' as the centre of the entire universe. But once we start looking beyond ourselves, we can see there are innumerable worlds waiting to be explored. Not just physically, although travel can be a wonderful incubator for curiosity, but intellectually as well. The amount of knowledge existing cannot be absorbed by one person in a lifetime, but making a point of learning more about a specific topic can not only broaden your mind and perspective, but open entirely new worlds by connecting to others who hold that knowledge. It keeps our minds and hearts young, by taking on the perspective of children who experience everything new.

24. Strive for integrity.

Why is integrity important to our happiness? First, it appears to be in short supply and anyone who has integrity can be sure it will be regarded as valuable and rare. Second, because being a person of integrity will signal to everyone in your life that you are to be trusted, respected and otherwise listened to when you speak. That is some kind of power indeed.

If you're not sure if you know how to become someone of integrity, there are a few basic indicators that can help you develop it. Try as far as possible, all things being equal, to not do anything for prestige, money or external approval on their own. Although it may seem as if the world works in a completely contradictory way to this, and people

who pursue power via prestige, money and approval get ahead, stick to your own truth. Don't confuse this with having prestige, money and approval if these are simply by-products of following your own path in accordance with your own principles and values. It's simply to say that these goals in themselves are meaningless and you may get caught up in doing things you don't like just to maintain a façade.

25. Build resilience

I know, resilience and 'grit' seem to be the buzzwords of the moment. But what do they mean exactly and why is it so important? It basically means you're able to get up after a fall. Or two. Or ten...

The only thing we have control of in these situations is our attitude and response to the difficulties. This doesn't mean being cheerful all the time if you don't feel it, but it does mean you need to grit your teeth and persist. Focusing on getting through small things each day, having a routine and a social network and developing a mental fortress so negativity is kept at bay, are all strategies that help you build resilience. Developing these daily habits will help to deal with bigger problems when they arrive.

Having the guts, willpower and stamina to pick yourself up after a long hard-fought battle that you lost, getting fired, getting cancer, going through a divorce, or losing a loved one are some of the biggest challenges we can face. Things can get exceptionally tough, especially if you cannot see when the pain will end. Meditation and seeing a good therapist can also help deal with the emotional rollercoaster you may feel you are on during intense blue periods. Practice persisting and persevering daily and you'll find you have the tools at hand for when crisis comes.

Other sage advice: create a worldview that helps you foster and keep these habits

It's also important to note that this guide does not advocate trying to be happy all the time. Don't try to neglect or ignore when you're feeling sad, angry, jealous or any other "negative" emotion - these are simply part and parcel of being human and repressing these emotions is also not healthy. We're all human and go through periods of feeling unloved, insecure and hopeless. Frustration and stress ensue, and can create whirlwinds of negativity in other areas of our lives. Accepting this as a given, and letting ourselves feel and process these emotions is necessary in order to confront them and deal with them.

In general, try not to let the 'real' world get you down. It's ok to be an idealist – as creators of our own destinies, it's possible to shape the world in the way we see fit. There's no need to feel exceptionally overwhelmed by modern, mainstream culture and external influences that seem to tell us to be one way or another. Build your own dreams and means to achieve them. Don't worry about what others say is the "best" way to do something, and find your own rhythm.

And on the flipside, take a stance against cynicism. While it may seem more comfortable, easier, and give you a sense of satisfaction to be scathing and critical, it quickly turns into a soul-crunching and spirit-drenching monster that serves no purpose except to keep people from being genuine and open. Cynics often argue that without them, nothing would get done, and nothing would get done the right way. Yet it is far harder to be generous and forgiving than it is to be constantly suspicious and disagreeable, and only the former acts result in long-term improvement.