



Cadette Science of Happiness

In this badge, you are the test subject and your life is your laboratory. You'll find out how scientists measure happiness, and you'll put their results into action. You'll also get to perform a happiness experiment on your friends or family—all with the goal of making your world a happier place.

Steps

1. Make yourself happier
2. Think differently for happiness
3. Get happy through others
4. Do a helpful happiness experiment
5. Create a happiness action plan

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to use the science of happiness to make my world the happiest place it can be.

Step 1: Make yourself happier.

What would make you happiest? Money? Cool clothes? Living in a mansion on a tropical island? Such things may make you happy for a while, but science shows they aren't what keep you happy in the long run. What is? Pleasure, engagement, and meaning (see the box for more information). In this step, practice getting more engagement and meaning in your daily life. Do one of these choices for two weeks.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Get into a state of "flow." When you hit your flow, you're really into whatever you're doing. You get so focused that you might not notice time flying by! Try getting into the flow of playing a sport, reading a great story, or doing a cool craft project for at least a half hour each day.

OR

Count three blessings. In a gratitude journal or in a video or audio recording, write down, draw, or record three things that went well each day and why you consider them blessings.

OR

Stop and smell the roses! Pay attention to the little things that make you happy. Try taking mental photographs of the things you love throughout your day—it might be a pretty sunset, a fuzzy dog, or a food that tastes really good. Record three to five things every day.



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Step 2: Think differently for happiness.

Sometimes you can't change what happens in your day, but you can change how you react to it. Scientists say that people who stay positive, or are "optimistic," are happier, even if more bad things happen to them! Choose one of these ideas, and use it for two weeks each time something happens that upsets you. Don't forget to track your results!

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Focus on what's realistic. Sometimes our worries make us focus on the very worst outcome, even when that's pretty unlikely to happen. During your two weeks, when you start to feel negative about something that's coming up, write down what you think the worst part could be, what the best part could be, and what you think will most likely happen. When you look at all sides realistically, does it help you feel more comfortable?

OR

Try to use your strengths. Maybe you're good at listening, a whiz at math, or have a great sense of humor (see page 4). Make a list of all your strengths. (If you're having a hard time thinking of them, ask your friends what they are!) Then, when you have to face something tough in the next two weeks, focus on what you're good at and think of how you could use one of your strengths.

For More FUN: With a trusted adult, go to www.authentichappiness.org and try their VIA Strength Survey for Children (8-17) to see what science says your strengths are.

OR

Be happy for others. Scientists say that if you celebrate with someone, you'll be happier. So when a friend or family member tells you about something great in their lives, pay attention and try to be happy for them—even if you're busy or a little jealous. Celebrate with some kind words, by asking more about what's happening, or even by giving a short speech in their honor. See how you feel—are you more positive about your own situation?

Step 3: Get happy through others.

One of the most common ways to find engagement and meaning is in our relationships. A good way for you to be happy on the inside is to care about others and focus on relationships with people on the outside. In steps 1 and 2, you worked on yourself, so now it's time to work on your relationships with others. Do one of these activities at least twice so you'll know if it works for you. Record the results in your journal.



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CHOICES – DO ONE:

Make a gratitude visit. Thank a mentor, friend, teacher, coach, or family member who has helped you in some way. Visit them face-to-face, and tell them why you're thanking them and how they helped. After you have done that, ask yourself how you feel. What was hard or easy about this? How long did the effect last?

OR

Write a forgiveness letter. In a handwritten note to a mentor, friend, teacher, coach, or family member, ask them to forgive you for something you might have done wrong. If you stop feeling bad about what you did, the science of happiness says you'll be happier. Send the letter and see how you feel. What was hard or easy about this? How long did the feeling last?

OR

Make something meaningful. Make a collage, video, or painting that shows how much someone means to you. Explain to them why you made it and what it means. Once you give it to them, see how you feel. What was hard or easy about this? How long did the feeling last?

Step 4: Do a helpful happiness experiment.

The science of how you think, or psychology, used to focus only on mental illnesses. Now scientists also try to find out what makes people stay well—just as exercising keeps your body strong, staying happy keeps your spirit strong. So “positive psychologists” test people's happiness. In this step, do your own experiment to test the happiness of a group. Share your results so the whole group can be happier!

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Design your own five-question happiness survey. Happiness surveys usually include statements that subjects agree or disagree with on a scale. Use what you've learned about happiness to make some statements for your survey (see the box for tips). Give it to a group of friends—maybe you can help them find their strengths, point out where they might be more optimistic, or share the power of gratitude!

OR

Try quick polling. Through e-mail, IM, texts, or verbal questions, ask 10 schoolmates or Girl Scout sisters to rate how happy they feel at three different moments throughout the day on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being very happy and 1 meaning they're not happy at all. Also, ask them what they are doing at each moment and who they're with. The science says if



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they're doing something they find meaningful with people they care about, they'll be happier than if they're alone or disinterested. Is that true for your group? Afterward, make a chart to share with your friends. Explain what you measured, and share ideas about what could make them even happier. (If you're going online for this choice, remember to do so with an adult!)

OR

Focus on one friend. Talk to a friend who seems sad, and ask if you can help them become happier with what you've learned. Suggest an activity to do together, and try one of the tips for being happy. For example, you could help them find their strengths or count their own blessings. Which tip helped them feel better?

Step 5: Create a happiness action plan.

Now that you're becoming an expert in what makes you happy, take what you've learned about yourself and put it into action. Look back over your journal and use your notes as you do this step.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Find a happiness helper. Share what you discovered with a friend or family member, and together make a list of five ways that person can help you stay happy. In the process, list five things that make your helper happy, too—so you can look out for each other's happiness! For More FUN: Create a Happiness Club! You might include a happiness check-in at the beginning of your Cadette meeting or find friends who want to support each other in finding pleasure, engagement, and meaning in their lives.

OR

Create an inspiration collage with the five top tips that help you stay happy. Hang it beside your desk or bed or post it in your locker—wherever it's most helpful to you.

OR

Create a Bliss Box. Write the happiest moments from your journal on scraps of paper—an activity you were doing, a reason you're thankful, something a friend said, or one of your strengths. Then search for photos, quotes, souvenirs—anything that will make you smile. Now put them all into your Bliss Box. When you start to feel down, open it up and read your happy moments! Keep adding to it as what makes you happy changes. For More FUN: Start a family or group Bliss Box to remind others why they should stay happy. You could use it to leave positive notes for others, which will make you feel good, too. Then anyone can open the box when they need to lift their spirits.



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Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Pointing out the signature strengths of my friends and family members so they can use their strengths to increase their happiness
- Practicing keeping myself at my happiest so I have energy and presence of mind to help others
- Helping a friend put together their own Bliss Box

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