

THREE FUNNY THINGS

Difficulty: **CASUAL** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **10 MINS**



WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Many of us spend our days on serious matters, doing serious work and having serious conversations. Taking some time to reflect on the silly could help you reclaim some playful lightheartedness in your life.

Indeed, research shows that humor is powerful: It can drive bonding between people and learning in the classroom. Laughter has physical effects on our bodies: It releases dopamine, increases blood flow, and strengthens the heart. And seeing the humor in a tough situation can even be a healthy way to cope.

Perhaps that's why Three Funny Things, in particular, has been shown to reduce depression and boost happiness for months after just one week of practice.

TIME REQUIRED

10 minutes/day for at least one week.

HOW TO DO IT

For one week, take 10 minutes every day to complete the following:

1. Write or type out the three funniest things you heard, saw, did, or experienced today. Think about the things you found really funny and describe how they made you feel (like warm, amused, or giggly).
2. Also write or type out the reason why these things were funny. In other words, answer the question: "Why did this funny event happen?" It may be a bit tricky to think about the "why" of the funny things in your life, but it will get easier with practice.

It is important to create a record, physical or digital, of your "funny things"; it is not enough to just remember them in your head. Your record can be in a notebook, a notes app on your phone, or a Word document—you can even voice type. Use what works best for you.

Here are some other tips you may find helpful:

- Give the event a title (e.g., "joked with my friend about parenting").
- List any funny things you like. They can range from small moments (e.g., "my partner made a silly face") to important events (e.g., "I went to a comedy show").
- Remember to describe exactly what happened in detail. Include what you did or said, where you were, what was going on, and, if others were involved, what they did or said.
- Try not to worry about grammar and spelling. Use whatever writing style you prefer.
- To make this exercise part of your daily routine, consider writing before bed.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Wellenzohn, S., Proyer, R. T., & Ruch, W. (2016). [Humor-based online positive psychology interventions: A randomized placebo-controlled long-term trial](#). *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(6), 584-94.

In this study, participants who journaled about Three Funny Things every evening for a week decreased in depression immediately afterward, and increased in happiness up to six months later, compared to a control group who journaled about their early memories.

WHY TO TRY IT

Three Funny Things encourages us to focus on the good things in life—in particular, those entertaining, absurd, or knee-slapping moments. Rather than ruminating about problems, we direct our attention to particularly fun and pleasant experiences, often ones that involve other people. By spending time reflecting in this way, we have the opportunity to relive that amusement in the present.

Journaling about Three Funny Things could also shift our long-term perspective. Over time, we may become quicker to laugh and more open to seeing the humor in everyday life.

SOURCES

[Willibald Ruch, Ph.D.](#), University of Zurich

Sara Wellenzohn, University of Zurich

[René Proyer, Ph.D.](#), Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg

FOR MORE

Proyer, R. T., Gander, F., Wellenzohn, S., & Ruch, W. (2015). [Strengths-based positive psychology interventions: A randomized placebo-controlled online trial on long-term effects for a signature strengths- vs. a lesser-strengths intervention](#). *Frontiers in Psychology* 6: 456.

Wellenzohn, S., Proyer, R., & Ruch, W. (2016). [How do positive psychology interventions work? A short-term placebo-controlled humor-based study on the role of the time focus](#). *Personality and Individual Differences* 96: 1-6.

This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

