



## 10 Things Successful People (Who Are Actually Happy) Do Differently

By Travis Bradberry, Ph.D.

Achievement rarely produces the sense of lasting happiness that you think it will. Once you finally accomplish the goal you've been chasing, two new goals tend to pop up unexpectedly.

We long for new achievements because we quickly habituate to what we've already accomplished. This habituation to success is as inevitable as it is frustrating, and it's more powerful than you realize.

The key to beating habituation is to pursue, what researchers call, *enduring accomplishments*. Unlike run-of-the-mill accomplishments that produce fleeting happiness, the pleasure from enduring accomplishments lasts long after that initial buzz. Enduring accomplishments are so critical that they separate those who are successful *and* happy from those who are always left wanting more.

Researchers from the Harvard Business School studied this phenomenon by interviewing and assessing professionals who had attained great success. The aim was to break down what these exceptional professionals did differently to achieve both long-lasting and fulfilling success.

The researchers found that people who were both successful and happy over the long term intentionally structured their activities around four major needs:

**Happiness:** They pursued activities that produced pleasure and satisfaction.

**Achievement:** They pursued activities that got tangible results.

**Significance:** They pursued activities that made a positive impact on the people who matter most.

**Legacy:** They pursued activities through which they could pass their values and knowledge on to others.

Lasting fulfillment comes when you pursue activities that address all four of these needs. When any one of them is missing, you get a nagging sense that you should be doing more (or something different).

The behaviors that follow are the hallmarks of people who are successful and happy because they address these four needs. Try them out and see what they do for you.

**1. They are passionate.** Jane Goodall left her home in England and moved to Tanzania at age 26 to begin studying chimpanzees. It became her life's work, and Goodall has devoted herself fully to her cause while inspiring many others to do the same. Successful, happy people don't just have interests; they have passions, and they devote themselves completely to them.

**2. They swim against the current.** There's a reason that successful and happy people tend to be a little, well, *different*. To be truly successful and happy, you have to follow your passions and values no matter the costs. Just think what the world would have missed out on if Bill Gates or Richard Branson had played it safe and stayed in school or if Stephen King hadn't spent every free second he had as teacher writing novels. To swim against the current, you have to be willing to take risks.

***"To be normal is the ideal aim of the unsuccessful" ~ Carl Jung***

**3. They finish what they start.** Coming up with a great idea means absolutely nothing if you don't execute that idea. The most successful and happy people bring their ideas to fruition, deriving just as much satisfaction from working through the complications and daily grind as they do from coming up with the initial idea.



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They know that a vision remains a meaningless thought until it is acted upon. Only then does it begin to grow.

**4. They are resilient.** To be successful and happy in the *long term*, you have to learn to make mistakes, look like an idiot, and try again, all without flinching. In a recent study at the College of William and Mary, researchers interviewed over 800 entrepreneurs and found that the most successful among them tended to have two critical things in common: they were terrible at imagining failure, and they tended not to care what other people thought of them. In other words, the most successful entrepreneurs put no time or energy into stressing about their failures as they see failure as a small and necessary step in the process of reaching their goals.

**5. They make their health a priority.** There are an absurd number of links between your health, happiness, and success. I've beaten them to death over the years, but the absolute essential health habits that successful and happy people practice consistently are good sleep hygiene (fights stress, improves focus, and is great for your mood), eating healthy food (helps you to focus), and exercise (great for energy levels and confidence).

**6. They don't dwell on problems.** Where you focus your attention determines your emotional state. By fixating on your problems, you create and prolong negative emotions and stress, which hinder performance. However, by focusing on actions to better yourself and your circumstances, you can create a sense of personal efficacy that produces positive emotions and improves performance. Successful, happy people don't dwell on problems because they know that they're most effective when they focus on solutions.

**7. They celebrate other people's successes.** Insecure people constantly doubt their

relevance, and because of this, they try to steal the spotlight and criticize others in order to prove their worth. Confident people, on the other hand, aren't worried about their relevance because they draw their self-worth from within. Instead of insecurely focusing inward, confident people focus outward, which allows them to see all the wonderful things that other people bring to the table. Praising people for their contributions is a natural result of this.

**8. They live outside the box.** Successful and happy people haven't arrived at where they are by thinking in the same way as everyone else. While others stay in their comfort-zone prisons and invest all their energy in reinforcing their existing beliefs, successful people are out challenging the status quo and exposing themselves to new ideas.

**9. They keep an open mind.** Exposing yourself to a variety of people is useless if you spend that time disagreeing with them and comforting yourself with your own opinions. Successful, happy people recognize that every perspective provides an opportunity for growth. You need to practice empathy by putting yourself in the other person's shoes so that you can understand how their perspective makes sense (at least, to them). A great way to keep an open mind is to try to glean at least one interesting or useful thing from every conversation you have.

**10. They don't let anyone limit their joy.** When your sense of pleasure and satisfaction are derived from comparing yourself to others, you are no longer the master of your own happiness. When successful, happy people feel good about something that they've done, they don't let anyone's opinions or accomplishments take that away from them. While it's impossible to turn off your reactions to what others think of you, you don't have to compare yourself to others, and you can always take

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people's opinions with a grain of salt. That way, no matter what other people are thinking or doing, your self-worth comes from within. Regardless of what people think of you at any particular moment, one thing is certain—you're never as good or bad as they say you are.

### Bringing It All Together

People who are successful *and* happy focus on activities that address a variety of needs, not just immediate achievements.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning coauthor of [Emotional Intelligence 2.0](#) and the cofounder of TalentSmart® the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence [tests](#) and [training](#) serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries.

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