

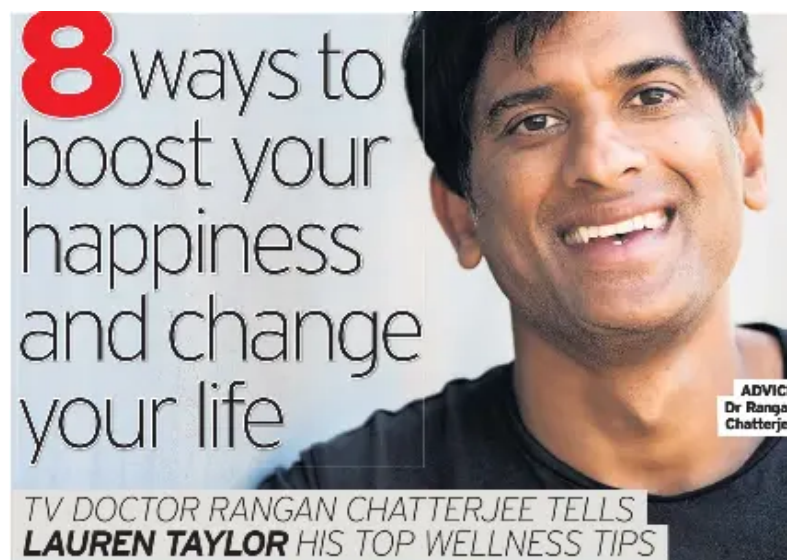
- Habit / Lifestyles

8 ways to boost your happiness and change your life

LAUREN TAYLOR HIS TOP WELLNESS TIPS

Rutherglen Reformer · 12 Mar 2025 · 16 · TV DOCTOR RANGAN CHATTERJEE TELLS

and author Dr Rangan Chatterjee says happiness isn't as complicated as we might think.



“The biggest mistake people make about happiness is they think that someday they’re just going to stumble across it,” says the resident doctor on BBC Breakfast.

“I think it’s an unhelpful way to think about happiness.

“Happiness is a skill, and it’s a skill we can all get better at if we know what to work on.”

The 47-year-old, whose new book, *Make Change That Lasts*, has shot to the top of the bestsellers list, is embarking on his first UK-wide tour this month. He describes The Thrive Tour as a “fun, transformative and immersive evening” aiming to “help people understand what it truly means to thrive”.

Here’s his advice..

1. ‘Work’ on your happiness

The three ingredients for happiness are alignment, contentment and control, Dr Chatterjee says. “Alignment is basically when your inner values and your external actions start to line up more; contentment is about regularly doing things that give you that sense of contentment and calm and peace, and control is not about controlling things, it’s about doing things regularly that give you a sense of control over your life.”

Examples include, five minutes of journaling each day, or 10 minutes of yoga. “Things that give you a sense of control in a world that’s fundamentally uncontrollable,” says Dr Chatterjee.

2. Include more joy

We often don’t think about joy and passion as part of health, says Dr Chatterjee, but we must.

“We know that people who regularly do things that they love are more resilient to stress, it’s very good for your health.”

From dancing in your kitchen, getting into a hobby or putting on your favourite comedian for 10 minutes – “these are things that we often don’t think about through the lens of health and happiness.”

3. Dare to be disliked

The fear of being disliked and therefore moulding yourself to be who you think others want you to be, could really impact our health.

“It was something that affected me negatively for much of my life, until recently, I would change who I was in order to be liked by people,” admits Dr Chatterjee.

“We shouldn’t feel bad that we do this or have these tendencies.

“I find it quite easy now to go, ‘if that person doesn’t agree with what I decided to do or not do, that’s OK. They’re entitled to not agree but I don’t need to change who I am to get their love and acceptance’”

Plus: “If you can just get better at saying no, you will automatically have more time for the things that nourish you.”

4. Breathe through stress

“A breathing practice that works for you is one of the best things you can do because it’s free, and nothing changes your state quicker than breathing,” says Dr Chatterjee says.

“My favourite one that I’ve been teaching to patients for over a decade now is called the 3-4-5 breath.

“You breathe in for three, you hold for four and you breathe out five. Any time your out breath is longer than your in breath, you literally switch off the stress half of your nervous system, and you activate the relaxation part of your nervous system. And so you can lower anxiety, lower stress, improve your digestion, improve your focus.

“I teach that to loads of business leaders and lots of school teachers for example. It’s so effective.”

5. Carve out alone time

“One of the most important practices for any of us in 2025 – whether you’re talking about health, happiGP

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Dr Chatterjee on how breathing techniques can help fight stress

ness or relationships – is a daily practice of solitude. You have to have time with yourself each day.”

Dr Chatterjee adds: “I think phones, for all their benefits, [mean] we’re no longer having to spend any time with our own thoughts, because we can just distract with emails, news, Instagram... and you’ll never get to know yourself, and you’ll never know if you have a reliance on being liked unless you’re spending a bit of time with yourself each day.”

6. Ask yourself two questions every night

“Having some self awareness is 90% of the game,” Dr Chatterjee says.

Therapy isn’t accessible and affordable for everyone, so asking yourself two simple questions each evening will help you get to know yourself and your patterns.

“They are: what went well today? And what can I do differently tomorrow?”

“This sounds so simple but I challenge anyone if they do that for seven days in a row, and it will take them minutes each night to do it, they will start to change their relationship with life” he says.

For example, “When I got home from work. I was really tired, but I didn’t order [takeaway]. I still got some things out of the fridge and made a home-cooked meal, even though I was tempted. OK

great, that went well.

“What can I do differently tomorrow? I was really tired today, [had] loads of sugar and caffeine, and I think the reason is I stayed up until midnight watching Netflix.”

7. Look into the root of your habits

Dr Chatterjee doesn't need to tell us all about the negatives of sugar – “You already know that,” he says.

“You need an understanding of why you keep going to sugar, [asking] when I'm stressed? When I've had a row with my partner? When I've been on Zoom calls all day?”

“Now we know the role sugar plays, we can start to explore what else we can use instead to play that role. When we're too focused on the behaviour and not the energy behind the behaviour, we don't think about the role that behaviour plays in our life.”

8. Get uncomfortable

Modern life is very comfortable. We can roll out of bed, open a laptop and work in our pyjamas, and order cooked food straight to our door.

“You literally don't have to do anything physical anymore in order to live – or many of us don't – and it comes at real cost. Because we're never regularly doing things that challenge us or we find physically tricky, we start to lose trust in ourselves,” he says.

By including “micro doses” of discomfort into your day – think about turning the shower cold for 10 seconds at the end or vowing to always take the stairs – “you remind yourself that you're a capable human who can do difficult things”.

The Thrive Tour is on now. For tickets see drchatterjee.com