

e-Health: The power of a smile

Feeling stressed? Feeling blue? Or maybe you see someone else who's looking down. Believe it or not, you've got the power to give yourself and others a quick mood boost. Simply turn your frown upside down. The late great Phyllis Diller once said, "A smile is a curve that sets everything straight."

Want a reason to smile? Check out these health benefits.

Number one, smiling makes you feel happy.¹

It releases feel-good hormones like dopamine, endorphins and serotonin. In fact, research done by Hewlett Packard suggests a smile stimulates your brain better than up to 2,000 bars of chocolate. And it generates more positive energy than if you'd received \$22,000 cash money.

Number two, believe it or not smiling makes you more attractive.²

Pictures of smiling people are rated as more attractive than those who don't smile in their pictures. And people will think you're more likable, courteous and competent when they see you smile.

Number three, a famous song lyric says, "When you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you." And it's true.³

Smiling is contagious. In fact, it can be hard to frown when you're looking at someone who is smiling. When you see someone smile, it triggers an unconscious automatic response in you that makes you want to smile, too.

Number four, smiling is good for your health.⁴

It helps you fight off stress, relaxes your body and lowers your blood pressure and heart rate. In fact, when studying major league players baseball cards, researchers found that players with big smiles lived seven years longer than those who didn't smile in their pictures.

But what should you do when a smile doesn't feel natural? Is it okay to fake it till you make it? Putting on a forced smile has both good and bad effects. In fact, research shows that while a fake smile can reduce your stress, it can also hurt your mood and make you withdraw from others.⁵

Instead, aim for a real genuine smile.

- Think happy thoughts.
- Remember happy or funny memories.
- Hang out with happy people.
- Call an old friend.
- Ask someone to tell you a joke.
- Make a gratitude list.

And if you find that smiling still feels out of reach, you can call us. We'll help you find your smile once again.

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Sources:

1 Gutman, Ron. [The hidden power of smiling](#). TED Talk. Accessed May 2018.

2 [One smile can make you feel a million dollars](#). The Scotsman. Accessed May 2018.

3 Riggio, Ronald. [There's magic in your smile](#). Psychology Today. Accessed May 2018.

4 O'Connor, Anahad. [The claim: A fake smile can be bad for your health](#). Accessed May 2018.

5 Dooley, Roger. [Why faking a smile is a good thing](#). Accessed May 2018.

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