

## 10 SIMPLE, SCIENCE-BACKED WAYS TO BE HAPPIER TODAY

### 1. EXERCISE MORE--7 MINUTES MIGHT BE ENOUGH

You might have seen some talk recently about the scientific 7 minute workout mentioned in *The New York Times*. So if you thought exercise was something you didn't have time for, maybe you can fit it in after all.

Exercise has such a profound effect on our happiness and well-being that it's actually been proven to be an effective strategy for overcoming depression. In a study cited in Shawn Achor's book, *The Happiness Advantage*, three groups of patients treated their depression with either medication, exercise, or a combination of the two. The results of this study really surprised me. Although all three groups experienced similar improvements in their happiness levels to begin with, the follow up assessments proved to be radically different:

*The groups were then tested six months later to assess their relapse rate. Of those who had taken the medication alone, 38 percent had slipped back into depression. Those in the combination group were doing only slightly better, with a 31 percent relapse rate. The biggest shock, though, came from the exercise group: Their relapse rate was only 9 percent!*

You don't have to be depressed to gain benefit from exercise, though. It can help you to relax, increase your brain power and even improve your body image, even if you don't lose any weight.

A study in the *Journal of Health Psychology* found that people who exercised felt better about their bodies, even when they saw no physical changes:

*Body weight, shape and body image were assessed in 16 males and 18 females before and after both 6 × 40 mins exercise and 6 × 40 mins reading. Over both conditions, body weight and shape did not change. Various aspects of body image, however, improved after exercise compared to before*

We've explored exercise in depth before, and looked at what it does to our brains, such as releasing proteins and endorphins that make us feel happier, as you can see in the image below.

