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CONNECTIONS

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HAPPY PEOPLE ARE HEALTHY PEOPLE

Medical science now has the evidence to support something we've all suspected: happiness, including feelings of joy, pleasure, contentment, and our physical health are linked.

A recent study found that happiness leads to lower levels of stress chemicals in the body. Stress chemicals, like cortisol, are linked to serious health problems like abdominal obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and autoimmune disorders. People who report feeling happy more often throughout the day, have lower levels of stress chemicals in their bodies. So their risk of developing these diseases is smaller.

For the participants of this study, leisure time away from work and engaging in enjoyable activities were most often associated with feelings of happiness. A review of research studies on

happiness from around the world, revealed that having positive family relationships, social networks, support networks, and a sense of belonging were key aspects in ensuring one's happiness.

While the meaning of happiness may vary from person to person, the good news is there are things we can do to help us achieve a happier life. Things such as day-dreaming, collecting positive emotional moments, exercising, hobbies, keeping a journal, sharing humour, volunteering and treating oneself well are all simple practices that will get us on the road to a healthier and happier life.

But probably one of the very best things we can do for ourselves is laugh. As Mark Twain put it: *The human race has only one really effective weapon, and that's laughter. The moment it arises, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.*



Happy New Year

CONNECTIONS

At the beginning of each year, like most people, I like to establish some new year's resolutions and figure out what I would like to achieve in the coming year. But I have also realized that this is a perfect time to look back over the past year and take stock of all the good things that happened. It is a time to be grateful for all of the many blessings, large and small, in my life.

"Gratitude," says Sarah Ban Breathnach, author of *Simple Abundance*, "is the most transformative force in the cosmos. When we offer our thanks," she says, "gratitude rewards us with renewal, reflection and re-connection."

Certainly for me, when someone thanks, appreciates and acknowledges me, in return I just want to do more for them. So I can see how whatever we appreciate and give thanks for will increase in our lives.

Sara Paddison in her book, *The Hidden Power of the Heart, Discovering an Unlimited Source of Intelligence*, says, "The word 'appreciation' means to be thankful and express admiration, approval or gratitude. It also means to grow or appreciate in value. As you appreciate life, you become more valuable—both to yourself and others."

Another well-known 'self-help' author Melody Beattie says, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a

house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

It is my experience that gratitude is healing to the emotions. When we experience emotionally a sense of deep gratitude, it is very calming and allows us to achieve a more peaceful and serene state of mind so that any negative emotions fade away.

Sarah Ban Breathnach believes that being grateful is the first step on the road to joy. That being the case, this year my resolution is to adopt an attitude of gratitude so that I may experience the full magnificence of life.

Have a joyful and safe 2006 everyone!

Nancy Lee,

Focus Editor

"Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put into words is all that is necessary."

Margaret Cousins

ANNOUNCEMENT

EFAP/North welcomes the
NIPISSING DISTRICT HOUSING
CORPORATION

to our growing list of members.

We look forward to serving their employees
and loved ones.
