

Happy Habits for Hard Times

John Sommers-Flanagan, Ph.D.
University of Montana

- I. Three Good Things
 - a. Every evening, write down (or think about) three good things that happened during the day
 - b. Then track down in your mind “Why” those things happened
- II. Attentional Control
 - a. The mind is a yapping dog – Give it a bone – Mantra
 - b. Balance how much you care about being mindful with not caring AT ALL about being mindful
 - c. Extend your outbreath (or use a soothing object) to engage the parasympathetic nervous system (and be less mentally jumpy)
 - d. Practice. But remember, practice DOES NOT make perfect
- III. Savoring
 - a. Deliberate effort to extend and expand positive experiences [improves mood; increases satisfaction]
 - b. Try practicing mutual savoring
- IV. Gratitude
 - a. Write a **postcard or letter or email or text or IM** of gratitude to a person you value
 - b. Even better: Tell the person directly
 - c. Results?? Not about the response.
- V. Dealing with Triggers (Social Comparison)
 - a. You will get emotionally triggered and upset. Accept that as a part of life.
 - b. But you can make an emotion trigger response plan (How do you WANT to deal with the triggers? Self-regulation coping skills)
 - c. You can also use distraction – temporarily, not habitually
- VI. Best Possible Self
 - a. If you write about specific positive things that you want in your future, people tend to feel more hopeful and satisfied with life