

## THE POWER OF A SMILE

*Can a gesture as small as a smile really change someone's day or make a difference? Vera Wade investigates how we feel when we give or receive a smile, the health benefits that come with smiling and how to smile even when you don't feel like it.*

Smiling is indeed important in our everyday lives. To begin with, a smile is one of the most obvious and effective methods of non-verbal communication. It is one of the first things someone will notice about you. A smile, both physically and subconsciously, transmits the message, "I'm happy you're here and that I'm happy to see you". Smiling overcomes barriers and opens doors for people. A sincere smile is a message of goodwill, and is considered a sign of hospitality and confidence. A recent survey revealed peoples true feelings when giving and receiving a smile. A survey respondent said " It makes me feel good and special when I receive a smile and puts me in a happy mood. It's a chain reaction effect to smile back." Another survey respondant says that "When I smile at someone I feel like it's a good deed done for the day. You never know what a smile could mean to someone." So we know that a smile is all well and good but what happens if you don't feel like smiling? Well, emotions can be controlled to a certain extent, both physically and emotionally. (para 1)

### How to smile even when you don't feel like it

#### *Physical Method*

The human body associates physical responses with the associated emotion. For example, if you slouch a lot, your body will naturally feel more sluggish, as compared to a person who maintains good posture. Similarly, even if you feel sad, you can still draw your lips together and lift up the ends to form a smile. You might find your mood improving naturally. Smile with your eyes. This technique involves concentrating your smile on your eyes instead of your lips. Think of your eyes smiling or twinkling. You will find your cheekbones lifting up and the tip of your lips lifting up to form a smile. (para 2)

#### *Emotional Method*

Our emotional state is all in our state of mind. As cliched as it sounds, you've got to want to be happy in order to be happy. When you want to be happy, think happy thoughts. Think about a calm meadow, about a loved one or a joke maybe. To keep your emotions balanced and to avoid feeling down, think happy thoughts, a smile is bound to follow. (para 3)

### Reasons to smile:

#### *Smiling makes us attractive*

Naturally we are drawn to people who smile. There is an attraction factor involved. We want to know a smiling person and figure out what it is that is making them so happy. We want a piece of their happiness. Whereas frowns, scowls and grimaces all push people away. It is more likely that someone will make an effort to get to know you if you are wearing a smile. (para 4)

#### *Smiling changes our moods*

Smiling can trick the body into helping you change your mood into a happy, more relaxed one. Next time you are feeling down, try putting on a smile. There's a good chance that your mood will improve and you will feel happier. (para 5)

#### *Smiling is contagious*

When someone is smiling they lighten up the room, change the moods of others and generally make things happier. A smiling person brings happiness with them, so if you

smile a lot you will draw people to you and hopefully pass your smile onto someone else. “If you see a friend without a smile, give them one of yours”. (para 6)

### *Smiling relieves stress*

Stress can really show up on our faces. Smiling helps to prevent us from looking tired, worn down and overwhelmed. When you are feeling stressed out about something, take the time to put on a smile. The stress should be reduced and you will be able to deal with things in a more relaxed manner. (para 7)

### *Smiling boosts your immune system*

Smiling helps the immune system to work better. When you smile, immune function improves because you are more relaxed. The better it works the less likely you are to be hit with the cold or flu. (para 8)

### *Smiling lowers your blood pressure*

When you smile there is a measurable reduction in blood pressure. (para 9)

### *Smiling releases endorphins and natural pain killers*

Studies have shown that smiling releases endorphins and natural pain killers. Together these two make us feel good because smiling is a natural drug. (para 10)

### *Smiling lifts the face and prevents aging*

The muscles we use to smile lift the face, making a person appear younger. Don't opt for a face lift; instead just try smiling through the day. You'll look and feel younger. (para 11)

### *Smiling helps us to stay positive*

When we smile, our mind is sending the rest of our body a message that 'life is good'. To help stay away from depression, stress and worry - start smiling. (para 12)

Remember, happiness is frequently a choice. Abraham Lincoln once said, “Most folks are about as happy as they make their minds up to be”. We can choose to be happy or miserable. Do choose happiness to fill your life. There is the saying “smile and the whole world smiles back at you”. Well sayings like this are actually grounded in fact. When you smile, it does tend to trigger off smiles in others around you. Even in the most stressful of situations, a smile can easily brighten up anybody's mood. The value of a smile is priceless. And it is one of the most powerful and heart-warming gestures out there. (para 13)

It costs nothing to give, but is the most sincere gift that one might be able to give to one another. A smile brings rest to the weary, and is the best antidote for discouragement. It brings sunshine to the sad and hope to the hopeless. Many people do not realize the power of a smile. A smile can work magic, it can heal emotional pain, and it can remove physical pain. When you smile at another person you not only let them feel appreciated and wanted, but the smile can also offer support and encouragement too. A single smile has the power within it to change the world because smiles can be shared. Even if you're not a naturally smiley person, give a gift of a smile to a friend, loved one or even a complete stranger, for it may be the only bit of sunshine that they see all day.”A smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive it without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None is so rich that he cannot get along without it and none is so poor that he cannot be made rich by it. Yet a smile cannot be bought, begged or stolen for it is something that is of no value until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a smile. Give them one of yours, as no one needs a smile so much as he who has no more to give” - Author Unknown (para 14)