

Easy Self-Care Advice

October 1, 2022

At Body Mind Spirit we are big advocates for self-care. So we'd like to present to you a very simple, easy and fast way to take better care of yourself. Can you guess what it is? It is smiling. In this blog we are going to discuss all the myriad of benefits to smiling.

First and foremost, there are serious physical benefits. When one smiles, the brain releases molecules of all the wonderful neuropeptides and hormones that we discussed in our September 2022 blog on exercise. Unfortunately, not to the extent that exercise does however, but Serotonin, Dopamine and endorphins all come into play. Which means, you can fight off stress, anxiety, mild depression and mild pain better. Which in turn can lower your blood pressure, reduce your heart rate and strengthen your immune system. All very important to longevity.

Second, smiling increases our attractiveness. Studies show that positive facial expressions are unconsciously perceived by others as signals that we are trustworthy. They also convey that we are friendly and more approachable. While the opposite is correspondingly true as negative facial expressions such as scowls and frowns repel us. Smiling is likewise an aid to make us look younger. The muscles used to smile actually lift the face for a more youthful appearance. In a study where participants were asked to guess the age of people in photographs, the age of those in pictures where the subjects were smiling were consistently underestimated. Wow, a no cost facelift!

Another benefit to the grin, can be the positive effect to one's success. Smiling helps us to appear more courteous, confident and competent. Facial feedback hypothesis is a theory that proposes that our facial expressions not only communicate how we feel to others but also to ourselves. So if we feel more confident, we become more confident.

So what do you do when you don't feel like smiling? Smile anyways. Smiling can be a conscious intentional choice, not just an involuntary response. While we are not advocating that one is not authentic with one's feelings (if you are grieving or angry, be present with those emotions until they are properly processed) however, whether or not your smile is genuine does not detract from the positive effects on your emotional and physical state.

Consider that at times when positive thinking can be very difficult, starting with a smile can be just the jump start needed. Another helpful idea is to pay attention to how you go through your day. Are there times when you catch yourself not feeling anything in particular? These are great opportunities to practice smiling because why not choose to feel happy?

An additional great time to practice is waiting in line at the grocery store. See if you can notice your smiles being mirrored back to you. Lastly, why not set an intention to smile as soon as you wake up? What a great way to start the day and can you imagine what would happen if we all did that?

Fun fact - the first Friday in October is World Smile Day. This holiday was started by Harvey Ball of Worcester, Massachusetts. He was the commercial artist who in 1965 created the Smiley Face. He became concerned over the years by the over-commercialization of his Smiley Face. He wanted people to get back to the original purpose of his famous symbol which was to remind people to smile!

"Do an act of kindness, help one person smile." - Harvey Ball

"A warm smile is the universal language of kindness." - William Arthur Ward

"If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours." - Unknown

"A smile is a curve that sets everything straight." - Phyllis Diller

"Wear a smile and have friends, wear a scowl and have wrinkles." - George Eliot

"Life is short. Smile while you still have teeth." - Unknown