

[Home](#) » [Positive Psychology](#)

Three Good Things | Shortest Guide To What Went Well

The *3 Good Things* exercise is a scientifically proven gratitude task [to build a happier life](#). It can effectively increase your happiness level within days. It is simple and takes barely around 3 minutes.

By the way, experts call happiness a *positive affect* or *subjective well-being* (SWB).

This powerful happiness-boosting exercise comes from positive psychology—the science that explores the healthy side of mental health, like psychological strengths and [flourishing](#).

This is a short and uncomplicated guide to the Three Good Things (TGT) happiness exercise. We will consider various hurdles, and explain how to overcome them. You will learn with examples and scientific evidence.

What Are Three Good Things?

Three Good Things (TGT) or What-Went-Well is an end-of-the-day journaling exercise to help us shed our negative bias in seeing and remembering events. It prompts us to view things more often in a positive light and helps us cultivate gratitude, increase optimism, and boost happiness. Results show in a week.

What are good things? Good things are those that are beneficial to both you and others.

How To Do The Three Good Things (TGT)?

Here's how to do the Three Good Things (TGT) happiness exercise:



Three Good Things (TGT) or What-Went-Well boosts your happiness.

How to practice the Three Good Things, a proven happiness-boosting exercise?

Step 1. Look Back Upon Your Day

As you wind up your day and prepare to go to bed, sit down on your bed or a chair nearby. Now close your eyes for a while, and look back on your day. Ask yourself what went well today. Go over in your mind the things that happened in your presence and the things you did today.



Step 1. Look back on your day.

Step 1. Look back on your day.

Step 2. Think Of 3 Good Things That Happened

Think of three things that went well. Find three great highlights of your day. Remember, we are talking only about 3 *positive things* that happened during the day.

It is important to draw your thoughts away from any untoward event because that behavior is natural to us. In doing this, we force our minds to focus on the good things, so we learn to let go of our negative bias in remembering things.



Step 2. Think of 3 good things.

Step 2. Think of 3 good things.

Step 3. Write Down The Good Things

Once you find three such events that made you **smile and feel happy**, even if in a small way, write them down. You could use a paper or a digital journal. Write about the three feel-good happenings in your day.



Step 3. Write them down.

Step 2. Think of 3 good things.

Step 4. Reflect On The Good Things

Finally, spend 15 to 20 seconds reflecting on each event. Think about how it was different from any other event today and why you would remember it. Repeat it daily for a week. Thereafter, you could do it once a week for at least six weeks.

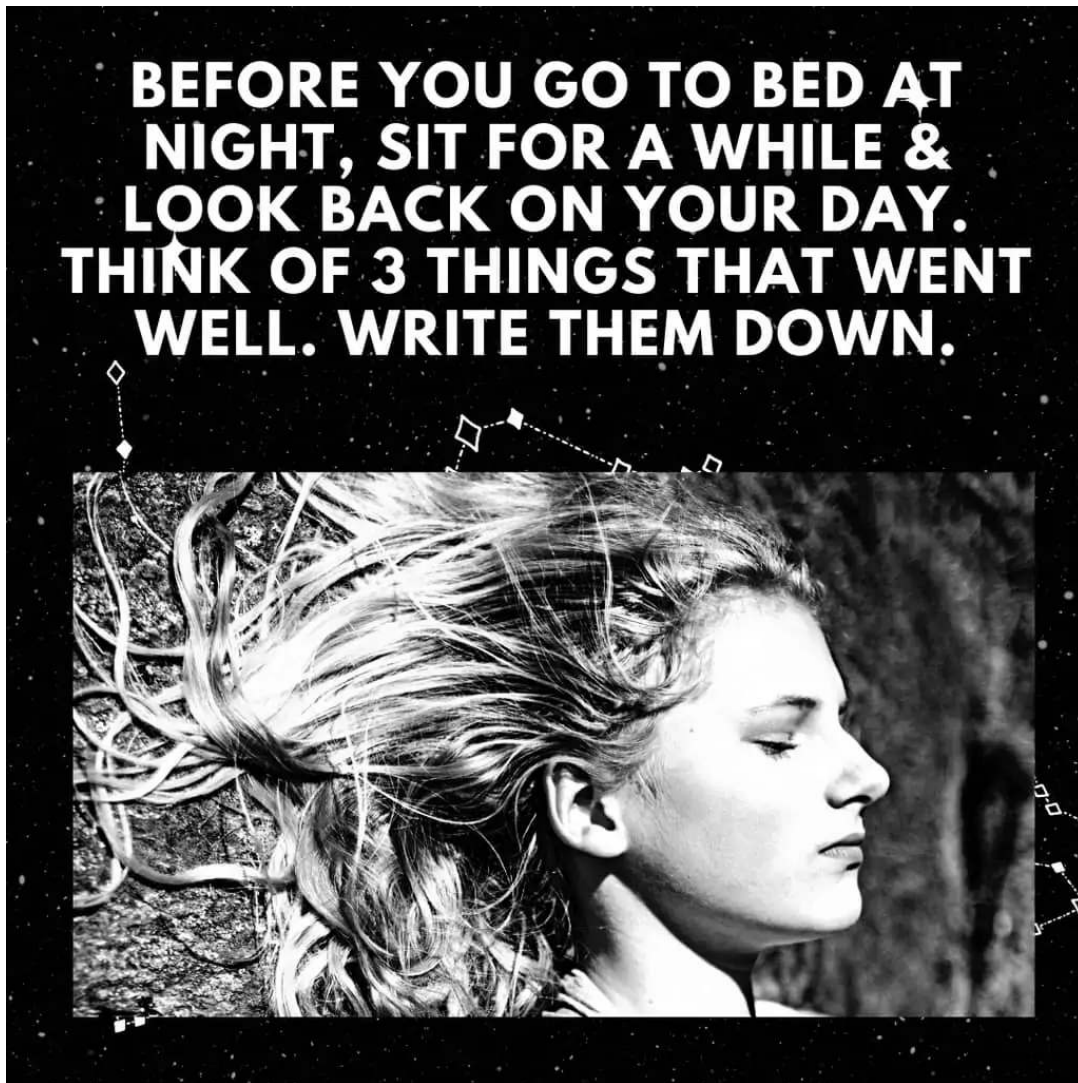


Step 4. Reflect on them.

Step 4. Reflect on them.

That's all there is to it. That is the shortest guide to TGT. Take up this positive challenge for your greater good—we urge you.

Want it still simpler? Here goes the **picture-quote version**:



3 things I did well today were...

Now, let's discuss a few issues in practicing Three Good Things. And how can you find your way around them?

Are There Any Rules For Practicing TGT?

TGT practice is subject to three conditions or rules for it to be most effective:

1. **Writing down** is vital as it helps you to focus on the events in a properly structured way.
2. **Reflecting on what you did** is essential, as it adds to your sense of control and perceived well-being.
3. **Timing is significant.** Research says to get appreciative results, either do it every day for one week or try it once a week for six weeks.

Important rules: Writing, Reflecting, Timing.

Remember that the real task is to do the TGT sincerely and consistently. It is a happiness-boosting exercise, and like any exercise, it needs repetition to reap the benefits.

Think of 3 things that went well during the day. Write them down. Reflect on them. See your happiness rise.

What Are Some Themes Of TGT?

If you're stuck with a journal in your hand, trying to pull out of your memory the good happenings in the day, then here are five *themes* you could explore. Ask yourself:

1. What is one way you made the most meaningful use of your time today?
2. What one helpful support did you have from your relationships today?
3. What one good thing happened at your work/school/college today?
4. What one good act of generosity or kindness did you do today?
5. What one thing brought a smile to your heart today?

3 Good Things That Happened Today Examples

Stuck still about how to do it? Well, take a look at these *examples* to help you:

- A great **feeling of love** you felt when someone checked to find out how you were doing.
- It could be a token of appreciation someone gave you at your workplace. Or good feedback from a customer.
- It could be a simple, enjoyable occasion, such as a shared time of conversation and laughter with your family during supper.
- It may be a fruitful discussion on a sensitive topic (like **relationship boundaries** or **personal space**) you had with your children, parents, spouse, friends, or online connections.
- A joyful moment when you stopped to see a fabulous flower in bloom or a few cute puppies playing in abandon.

- It could be you looking at some old pictures of your friends and being flooded with positive thoughts and memories about them.

Don't limit yourself to the above. Explore your possibilities. *Many positive moments are waiting for you; seek them out.*

Even if you find it difficult to bring up some good things at first, keep a [glass-half-full attitude](#). Let's find out how you can get them sooner.

Why Is TGT Hard To Do At First?

It seems hard at first to dig out the 3 good things that happened in the day. Almost everyone faces this issue. Why is it so?

Martin Seligman, fondly referred to as the **Father of Modern Positive Psychology**, author of the groundbreaking book [Flourish](#), explains it:

“For sound evolutionary reasons, most of us are not nearly as good at dwelling on good events as we are at analyzing bad events. Those of our ancestors who spent a lot of time basking in the sunshine of good events, when they should have been preparing for disaster, did not survive the Ice Age. So, overcoming our brains’ natural catastrophic bent, we need to work on and practice this skill of thinking about what went well.”

To solve this problem, keep in mind that the 3 Good Things do not have to be grand. Any three simple good things are enough.

**Every day
may not be
good ... but
there's
something
good in
every day.**

ALICE MORSE EARLE

They need not be things like winning a state championship, grabbing a promotion to kill for, or getting engaged to your long-lost-found-again love.

Even finding marriage-heaven, whatever that means. Or something as earthshaking as escaping a prison sentence, though that counts.

Any three good things that happened in your day will count. Three things you were thankful for and glad that those happened. Eventually, after a few days of taking too long to think up the 3 good things, you will see the good things in your life light up on their own like tiny sparkles.

Beware: Your “monkey mind” may pull you towards a terrible event or a moment of stress. If you catch yourself going over an event loaded with **negative emotions** but cannot seem to let it go, tell yourself:

“Okay (your name), that happened. Let’s keep it away for another time. Right now, let’s find a good thing that happened today!”

The idea is to stay vigilant and not let your mind drift off with thoughts about an unsettling event. If that happens, the best strategy is to acknowledge it and then release it. This is an **attitude of mindfulness**—the proven practice to achieve more satisfaction in life.

THREE GOOD THINGS

Every night, just before you go to bed, sit down for a while and look back at your day.

Think of 3 things that went well during the day.

Write them down.

Good Things Need Good Thoughts!

Benefits Of Three Good Things

The TGT happiness exercise has been proven to increase your positive emotions, happiness, **hope, and optimism**. It helps you be more grateful, improve your physical health, better your behavior toward others, and get a strong positive mindset.

Three Good Things (TGT) or What-Went-Well is an end-of-the-day journaling exercise to help us shed our negative bias in seeing and remembering events. It prompts us to view things more often in a positive light and helps us cultivate gratitude, increase optimism, and boost happiness.

It is basically a writing or journal exercise. Once you adopt it as a daily habit for at least a week, it helps you cultivate an [attitude of gratitude](#), lets you flourish, and increase your life satisfaction, hope, and optimism levels.

Since the TGT is a positivity-focused activity, it makes you more grateful for things you might otherwise take for granted.

And, because it is done at the end of the day, it does not demand a rearrangement of your daily routine, and you can do it while going about your ordinary daily life.



Something that went well today was...

What Are The Happiness Benefits Of TGT?

Sheldon and Lyubomirsky ([PDF](#)) investigated the effects of three good things in 2004, and [Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson](#) in 2005.

An advertisement for Audible. The background is dark blue with a large, lighter blue circular graphic. In the top left, the Audible logo is displayed. Below it, the text reads "Try the new Audible" and "Now, get unlimited listening to thousands of select Audible Originals, podcasts and audiobooks included in your membership." A yellow button with the text "Start your free 30-day trial" is positioned below the text. On the right side, several audiobook covers are shown, including "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" by J.K. Rowling, "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind" by Yu. N. Harari, "Sherlock Holmes" by Stephen Fry, "The Girl on the Train" by Lucy Flett, "The Martian" by Andy Weir, and "The Martian" by Frank Herbert.

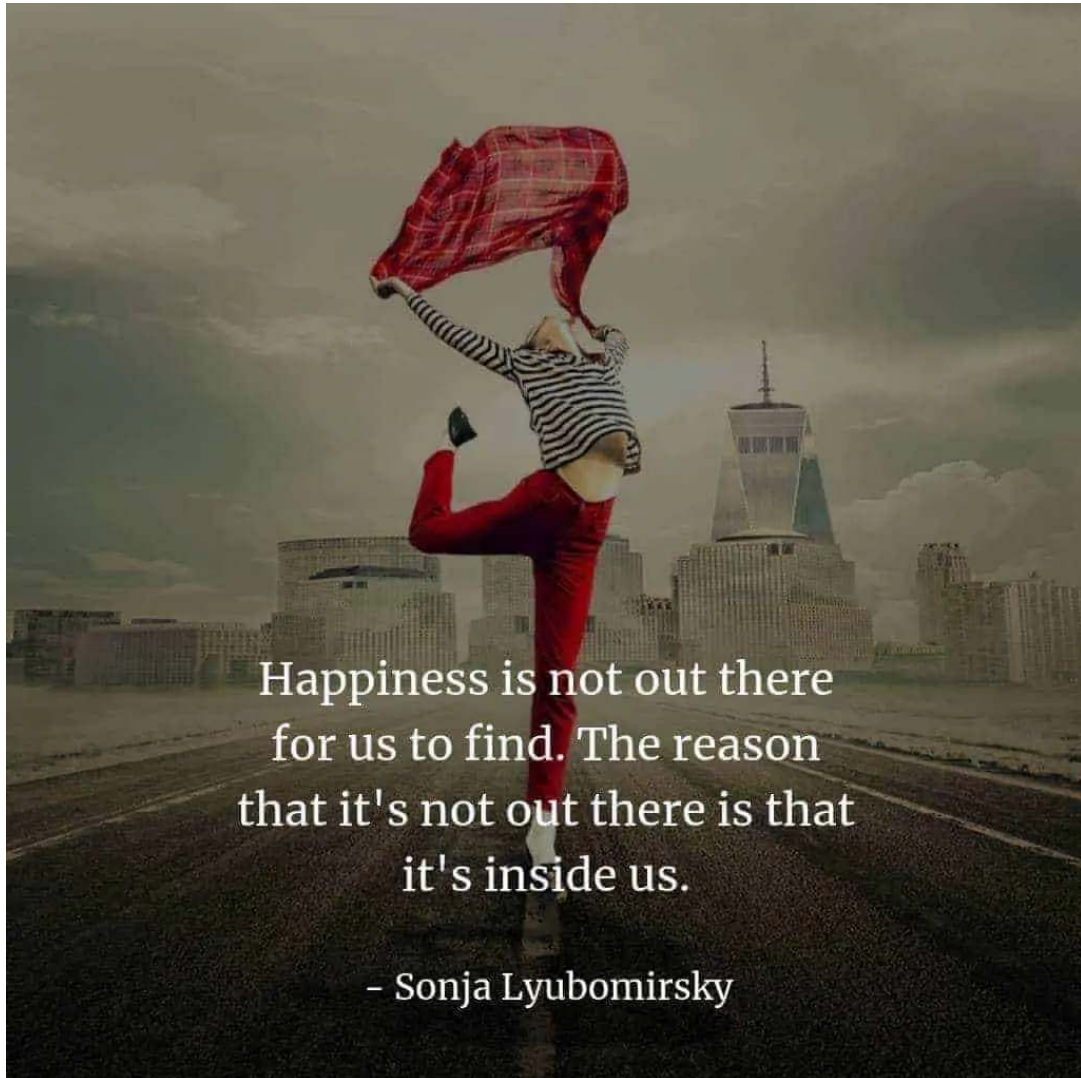
Try Audible Premium Plus and Get Up to Two Free Audiobooks

- Three Good Things (TGT) is one of the most powerful positive psychological interventions to raise happiness and well-being levels. However, it may not be helpful in improving symptoms of depression.
- TGT increases both *hope* and *optimism* (those are two different things). It also helps build a stronger immune system and greater job satisfaction.
- A Japanese study found the 3 Good Things can effectively increase the general trust level in the participant.
- TGT practice also seems to increase a person's psychological resilience.

Research suggests people can increase their happiness through **intentional positive activities**, like practicing kindness, being altruistic, or expressing gratitude.

A study that combed through 51 studies on positive psychology interventions (like being asked to count their blessings) found that people became noticeably happier when they were given individual positive interventions.

(Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009)).



Happiness is not out there
for us to find. The reason
that it's not out there is that
it's inside us.

- Sonja Lyubomirsky

50 Greatest Quotes of Positive Psychology

Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2004) **found that after one week of TGT, the participants were 2% happier.**

But the magic started here on. The researchers followed up with the study participants and kept checking their happiness

levels over the next six months. To their surprise, the participants were getting happier with time.

Their happiness rose to 5% at the end of one month. And to 9% by the end of six months.

The authors of the study wrote: *“At the one-month follow-up, participants in this exercise were happier and less depressed than they had been at baseline, and they stayed happier and less depressed at the three-month and six-month follow-ups.”*

To sum up, Professor Sonja Lyubomirsky, one of the first modern positive psychologists and author of the immensely popular science book [The How of Happiness](#), says:

As we expected, our simple exercise was effective in producing higher levels of thankfulness and appreciation. More important, those participants who counted their blessings on a regular basis became happier as a result.

Compared with a control group (i.e., people who did not practice any kind of exercise), the gratitude group reported significantly bigger increases in their happiness levels from before to after the intervention.

Interestingly, this effect was observed only for those who expressed gratitude every Sunday night.

Three Good Things (TGT) increases happiness and decreases depression, as research finds. TGT practitioners

found their happiness rise to 5% in one month, and to 9% in six months.

‘What Went Well’ In Positive Psychology?

Martin Seligman's groundbreaking work in behavior psychology led him to later find revolutionary ideas like "that can boost life satisfaction and lower depression levels.

Widely known as the *Father of Positive Psychology*, Seligman explains the "What-Went-Well" happiness intervention in the video below:



How To Practice TGT by Martin Seligman

Transcript of the video (slightly edited for reading ease):

"The Three Good Things exercise has you write down for a week, before you go to sleep, three things that went well today, and then reflect on why they went well.

"It works because it changes your focus from the things that go wrong in life to the things that you might take for granted that go well. And focusing your attention on things that go well breaks up depression and increases happiness.

"I don't need to recommend it beyond a week, typically for three good things, because when you do this, you'll find you like it so much. Most people just keep doing it.

"We ask people to write down the causes because we want people to reflect on and immerse themselves in the good events."

Three Good Things From Positive Psychology PDF

Final Words

TGT is simply finding and writing down three things that went well each day.

Try the TGT tonight—it may be the best 3 minutes of your day!

...



Mindfulness For Beginners: 7-Step Guide

...

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by **Sandip Roy** — medical doctor, psychology writer, and happiness researcher. Founder and Chief Editor of The Happiness Blog. Writes on mental well-being, happiness, positive psychology, and philosophy (especially [Stoicism](#)).

• **Our Happiness Story!**

✓ If you liked it, please spread the word.

Revisit A Section:

What are three good things?

How to do the Three Good Things (TGT)?

Step 1. Look back upon your day

Step 2. Think of 3 good things that happened

Step 3. Write down the good things

Step 4. Reflect on the good things

Are there any rules for practicing TGT?

What are some themes of TGT?

3 Good Things That Happened Today Examples

Why is TGT hard to do at first?

Benefits of Three Good Things

What Are The Happiness Benefits of TGT?

'What Went Well' in Positive Psychology?

Final Words

Disclosure: This post may include affiliate links.