

Embrace Joy With Vorfreude

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Joy is one of the most powerful metrics for making decisions that empower and enrich your life
- › Improving mitochondrial health boosts cellular energy, which is crucial for making empowered decisions and aligning with your authentic self. Effective decision-making is energy-intensive, requiring robust cellular energy to function optimally, underscoring the link between health and mental clarity
- › Recognizing and altering negative thought patterns is also crucial for fostering a more joyful mindset and embracing life's opportunities
- › The concept of "vorfreude," or anticipatory joy, significantly improves happiness and well-being by allowing you to savor the anticipation of future pleasures
- › Strategies to enhance joy include consciously appreciating the brief moments just before experiencing something pleasurable, treating yourself, writing down your plans, unleashing your creativity and much more

Joy and health share a deep and intricate connection, which is why I am now starting to shift my focus toward the weak link in this relationship, namely Joy or, more accurately, the lack of Joy that most people experience.

What many fail to realize is that Joy is one of the most powerful metrics for making decisions that empower and enrich our lives. "Joy" is capitalized here to emphasize the

deeper, more profound state of contentment that I want to convey. It's a type of fulfillment that transcends fleeting moments of happiness.

Joy Will Guide You Toward Your Unique Purpose

While Joy and happiness may seem synonymous, their essence diverges significantly. Happiness often manifests as a passive state, fleeting and dependent on external circumstances. Joy, on the other hand, emanates from within, transcending the realm of sensory gratification.

Unlike pleasure, which is ephemeral and tied to immediate sensory stimuli, Joy represents a deeper, enduring fulfillment — the ultimate pursuit and realization of life's purpose. Joy gives you the confidence to know that all is well, regardless of external circumstances.

Optimizing Your Metabolism Facilitates Brave Decision-Making

There are many ways to increase Joy in your life, but as I've mentioned in previous articles, [optimizing your mitochondrial energy production](#) is a central factor, as the energy produced by your mitochondria is virtually identical to the energy that created the material universe.

When you increase your mitochondrial health, you automatically augment your ability to connect with the Source of your own Self, which is where true Joy resides. It's also the storehouse of your intuition and inner knowing, which is always nudging you along in the direction of your authentic self and, hence, that which brings you the most Joy.

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When you trust your instantaneous knowing and prioritize Joy in your decision-making, you align yourself with your authentic Self, and pave the way for a life filled with purpose and fulfillment. Ashley Armstrong, cofounder of Angel Acres Egg Co. and the Nourish Cooperative is a perfect example of this.

In the video above, she describes her journey to reclaim her Joy. By setting aside the advice of others she discovered her own truths. Ashley embodies the essence of courage and the resulting success such decisions offer.

Choosing to walk away from years of academic pursuits that were influenced by the expectations of others, she was able to identify her own unique path to Joy, and in the process created something that now benefits thousands of people.

It is my sincere desire and hope that you will consider allowing her journey to inspire and empower you to make similar choices in your own life to reclaim the Joy that you deserve.

Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, "Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen." This expression encapsulates the power of your decisions, implying that the universe aligns itself to facilitate and realize your dreams once you've committed to them. Indeed, your decisions wield immense power to reshape your reality – and the reality of others.

Without Sufficient Energy, Decision-Making Is a Struggle

It's crucial to realize that your body prioritizes energy for essential tasks, and decision-making requires significant energy. Your brain consumes about 20% of your body's energy despite being only 2% of its weight.

Ashley simply would not have had enough cellular energy to supply her brain to make a decision like she did unless she improved her health. Factors like **excess linoleic acid**, **estrogen** and **endotoxins** were depleting her cellular energy, which is crucial for making energy-intensive decisions.

Her transformation underscores the power of nurturing your health to gain the energy necessary for making significant life changes. Avoiding dietary pitfalls like seed oils played a key role in this journey, enabling her to tap into a newfound capacity for brave decisions – a testament to the profound impact of regaining cellular energy on her ability to navigate life's choices.

All of that said, learning new mental habits is also important, which is where the central topic of this article comes in.

Vorfreude – Anticipating Joy

"Vorfreude" is a German noun that describes the joyful, intense anticipation that comes from imagining future pleasures. It translates directly to "pre-joy" or "anticipation joy" in English. This concept is often associated with the emotions experienced before positive events, be it a vacation, a holiday, a reunion with loved ones or simply a delicious meal.

Unlike the English counterpart "anticipation," "Vorfreude" specifically captures a sense of delightful expectation. If you can't remember the last time you felt this way, read on, because vorfreude is something you can cultivate. In an April 9, 2024, article¹ in The Guardian, Rachel Dixon explored the concept of vorfreude and the ways in which you can learn to anticipate and savor Joy.

Vorfreude Enhances Happiness and Improves Wellbeing

Rory Platt from The School of Life and Karen Neil, a health coach and founder of Mindful Medicine, both of whom were interviewed by Dixon for her article, note that intentionally creating small moments of anticipation can significantly enhance your overall happiness. A 2017 study² also confirmed that anticipating positive events activates your brain's medial prefrontal cortex, which improves wellbeing.

“Doesn't getting your hopes up risk disappointment? Perhaps it's safer to keep expectations low,” Dixon writes.³ “Emma Mills, a mindfulness expert and the author of Inhale Exhale Repeat, begs to differ.

*'There is a saying: 'If you worry, you suffer twice.' Anticipatory joy is the opposite of that.' Even if an anticipated event turns out to be a letdown, vorfreude helps people bounce back. 'Optimists have improved coping abilities when dealing with unplanned distress and they tend to recover far faster,' says Tania Taylor, a psychotherapist and **vorfreude** advocate ...*

[V]orfreude ... shouldn't feel like a chore. 'Mostly, it will involve exploring what you already have in your life that you look forward to,' says Taylor. Willem Kuyken, a professor of mindfulness at the University of Oxford, has researched the benefits of cultivating joy.

*In his book *Mindfulness for Life*, he writes: 'It takes only a small step out of habit and into awareness to enjoy the people we love around us, to savor food or to dance to music in our kitchen while cooking. These moments are available to us all the time.'"*

Thirty Ways to Get More Vorfreude in Your Life

In her article, Dixon lists 30 different ways to boost your vorfreude quotient with minimal effort.⁴ First of all, start small. If you're not used to thinking positively and are prone to fret over everything that could go wrong rather than what could go right, begin by taking note of one joyful thing each day.

As suggested by Neil, frame it as a photo challenge. "Spend a little time every day looking for one beautiful flower, interesting sight or cute dog to photograph." A morning affirmation, such as "Today, I will actively seek out and welcome the joy that life offers," can also help set you on the right track.

Ritualizing routines, such as enjoying your morning cup of coffee and/or establish a special greeting ritual to connect with loved ones when you come home from work, is another technique that can bring great rewards. If you live alone, identify a small, enjoyable activity to look forward to each day and making it a part of your homecoming routine. Other strategies suggested by the experts in Dixon's article include:⁵

Anticipate everyday occurrences — Identify three things you look forward to tomorrow. Examples could include taking a stroll through a park, listening to a favorite podcast during your commute or taking a hot bath before bed.

Break out of automatic mode — As Karen Atkinson, CEO of Mindfulness UK told Dixon, “Perhaps you have a hobby such as gardening, or a pet to spend time with. Coming out of autopilot and consciously looking forward to these moments is an achievable way for anyone to experience *vorfrende*.”

Avoid mental pitfalls — Atkinson also emphasizes the importance of recognizing and altering negative thought patterns to foster a more joyful mindset. She identifies “mind traps” like catastrophizing and focusing on the negative, suggesting a shift in perspective to appreciate small joys and social opportunities.

For instance, rather than minimizing an overnight trip, view it as a delightful break. She also warns against the trap of comparison. Appreciate and relish occasional outings without succumbing to the stress of FOMO (fear of missing out).

Savor moments of anticipation — Consciously focus on appreciating the brief moments just before experiencing something pleasurable. This will train you to begin to recognize imminent joys. Savor these instants and reflect on your good fortune.

Treat yourself — Platt suggests planning short outings and treats, such as leaving work early on Fridays for dinner, visiting an art gallery, or going to the movies alone. Don’t feel guilty about these indulgences. Allowing yourself to anticipate these pleasures enhances the enjoyment of them.

Write down your plans — “Even the simple act of putting pen to paper can make plans feel more real and increase excitement,” Dixon notes.

Keep a Joy journal in which you write down what has brought you joy that day, week, or month. Over time, a theme will emerge, which will provide you with valuable clues about how to bring even more Joy into your life.

Schedule physical movement – Whether you have a regular exercise routine or not (and I encourage you to have one!), schedule some kind of physical movement into your day, such as a daily walk after lunch.

Try meal planning – Taylor recommends meal planning as a way to anticipate and enjoy upcoming meals throughout the week.

Make a date with a friend.

Cherish the beauty of nature – Taylor emphasizes the benefits of finding joy in nature, supported by research highlighting its value. She illustrates this with a personal anecdote, describing a moment of appreciation in her own garden where she noticed daffodils beautifully intertwined with a fallen leaf, demonstrating that one doesn't need to venture far to experience nature's wonders.

Unleash your creativity – Set aside time to engage in creative activities. You don't need to be a skilled artist to benefit. Painting by numbers, making collages from magazine images, writing poems or short stories, and learning origami from YouTube tutorials are all accessible ways to explore your creativity.

Expand your horizons – Enrolling in a new dance class or craft workshop is a way to inject excitement into the week through the thrill of learning. Sometimes, such experiences can be truly transformative.

Find happiness in the joy of others – Neil discusses the concept of "sympathetic joy," which is finding happiness in the joy of others. She mentions that even small acts can generate anticipatory joy, or *vorfreude*. Taylor exemplifies this by describing how she looked forward to hiding Easter eggs for her adult children, enjoying both the preparation and the pleasure of seeing their reactions to the fun activity.

Make time for silence – Even a few minutes of meditative silence can rewire your brain towards positivity and alter your perspective. Create peaceful moments by lighting a candle and embracing stillness, looking forward to the tranquility each

session brings. Platt also emphasizes the importance of taking breaks from negative news to focus on the positive and hopeful aspects of the present.

Sources and References

- ^{1, 3, 4, 5} [The Guardian April 9, 2024](#)
- ² [Frontiers in Psychology 2017; 8: 2199](#)