

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1045-1062.

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Fredrickson and colleagues tested to see if loving-kindness meditation (LKM) would increase positive emotions, and in turn, increase personal resources, resulting in increased life satisfaction as well as decreased depression. Participants who worked at a large software company were randomized to a 7-week LKM course (n = 67) or waitlist control group (n = 72). The loving-kindness course consisted of 6 weekly hour-long instruction periods conducted during the work day, as well as practicing at home for 15-22 minutes with a guided meditation CD at least 5 days a week. Before and after the course, participants self-reported their levels of personal resources (such as mindfulness, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and illness symptoms), as well as their satisfaction in life and depressive symptoms. During the 7-week course, participants reported their levels of positive (e.g. awe, contentment, joy) and negative (e.g. anger, contempt, sadness) emotions daily. They also reported on daily life events and rated the emotions they experienced. Practicing LKM was found to increase positive emotions over the course of the study compared to the control group. Furthermore, across all participants, the more time they spent in meditative activity, the more positive emotions were experienced. For people who practiced LKM, effects built over time, so that by the end of the study, one hour of meditation resulted in greater positive emotions compared to one hour of meditation practiced at the beginning of the study (that is, the effect of meditation on positive emotions had increased three-fold over 7 weeks). People also reported emotions experienced during daily life events, and time spent meditating predicted how much positive emotions were experienced, particularly during social interactions. These increases in positive emotions predicted self-reported increases in cognitive, psychological, social, and physical resources. These increases in personal resources seemed to impact how a person perceives his or her own life: they were associated with increases in reported life satisfaction. Increases in positive emotions and personal resources were also directly associated with decreases in depressive symptoms. However, LKM practice did not alter people's reported negative emotions. This study suggests that LKM is an effective way to increase experienced positive emotions in one's life, which then has the potential to increase one's personal resources and overall life satisfaction. In addition, these effects may be enhanced by regular practice.