

# 10 happy shortcuts

QUICK FIXES TO SNAP YOU OUT OF A BAD MOOD IN SECONDS

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## 1 Snuggle up

Get into your softest pyjamas and wrap up in a fluffy blanket. Psychologists at Yale University found that the texture and feel of objects can affect mood, and that soft textures are especially emotionally comforting. Study author Christopher Nocera says this link, between touch and emotion, goes right back to early childhood.

## 2 Swap to pink salt

Himalayan pink salt not only looks pretty on your table, it contains 84 trace minerals, too. 'Its various minerals, such as potassium and magnesium, are traditionally known for their body-cleansing properties,' says Jane Clarke, author of *Nourish* (Collins & Brown, £20). 'The natural high-iron content is what creates the pink colour.' (£3.50, [himalayancrystalsalt.co.uk](http://himalayancrystalsalt.co.uk) ✉). Another way to get your pink-salt fix is in the luxurious Ila Inner Peace Bath Salts, where the crystals are infused with rose otto oil and sandalwood (£42, [ila-spa.com](http://ila-spa.com) ✉).

## 3 Clear out a drawer

'For most people, outer order contributes to inner calm,' says Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project* (HarperCollins, £16.99). 'If you're feeling overwhelmed, tidy up.' There's no need to

tackle the whole house; Rubin says small visible improvements, such as clearing surfaces or tidying your desk drawers, work.

## 4 Pay a stranger's parking ticket

Yes, really. Scientists from Mindlab International call this the 'helper's halo' effect. Their research, for Simplyhealth, shows carrying out random acts of kindness – including offering money for someone else's parking ticket if they have no change, getting the bill in a restaurant, or volunteering to look after a friend's allotment while she's away – can increase your positivity and reduce your stress levels by more than one third.

## 5 Sign up for karaoke

It takes just 50 milliseconds (that's 1/20th of a second) for music to change your mood, says Rich Wood, author of *Be Positive* (Morgan James, £22.95). 'We all have songs we instantly relate to and that pick us up,' he says. 'As you listen, levels of happy chemical serotonin elevate, and so does your mood.' The biggest boost of all? Singing along.

## 6 Book a duvet day

'You may assume a spa is the best place to recuperate, but they're better for a treat,' says Gael Lindenfield, author of *101 Morale Boosters* (Piatkus, £8.99). 'A quiet duvet day in the comfort of your own home is usually more beneficial.' Stock up on nutritious food and drink, feel-good DVDs and books (daytime TV is out of bounds). 'A day of self-indulgence in solitude gives you the much-needed freedom to be exactly who you are.'

## 7 Pick up a paintbrush

An hour or two of a meaningful and pleasurable experience can affect the quality of an entire day, or even a whole week, according to Tal Ben-Shaha, author of *The Pursuit Of Perfect* (US Adaptions, £9.99). So what are proven mood-boosting activities? Painting, photography, knitting and writing.

## 8 Buy a desk plant

A study in *Horticultural Science* found workers who had at least one plant in their offices rated themselves happier at work and more satisfied with life than those without shrubbery. Surprisingly, results showed desk plants were more important than sitting near a view. Choose a low-maintenance plant, like a bamboo palm or peace lily.

## 9 Play charades

Being forced to think quickly on your feet can bring happier feelings, according to a Harvard study. It found that, regardless of content, people felt more energetic, creative and powerful when they read statements at a fast pace, rather than a slower one. Experts say this explains why quick-thinking games are so much fun. Go for games with timers, such as charades or Boggle.

## 10 Change your password

'Change your most-used passwords to reflect a goal or hoped-for outcome,' says Caroline Adams Miller, co-author of *Creating Your Best Life* (Sterling, £14.99). 'Your brain is primed by stimuli from the outside, including the written word, as well as sounds, pictures and even aromas. You can feel happier by focusing on goal-directed behaviour. I've coached Olympians who have used the password "Olympic winner" to prime themselves to think goal-directed thoughts.' ✉

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