

The **S.T.A.G.E.** Model of Happiness

STAGE	Core Psychological Process	Underlying Mechanism	Primary Benefits	Common Practices
Savor	Mindful awareness & positive attention	Training the brain to notice and amplify positive experiences rather than scanning for threats. This builds new neural pathways toward optimism and presence.	Increases positive affect, resilience, and life satisfaction; lowers anxiety.	Mindfulness, slowing down, sensory engagement, “3 good things” reflection.
Thank	Gratitude & cognitive reframing	Shifts focus from what’s missing to what’s present. Rewires cognitive biases toward appreciation and abundance instead of scarcity and comparison.	Enhances mood, strengthens relationships, reduces depression.	Gratitude journaling, expressing thanks, prayer, letter writing.
Aspire	Goal-directed motivation & meaning-making	Activates intrinsic motivation and purpose systems in the brain (especially PFC and dopamine pathways). Promotes self-efficacy and growth mindset.	Increases sense of direction, confidence, and future orientation.	Value-based goal setting, visioning, affirmations, personal growth plans.
Give	Altruism & prosocial behavior	Engages the brain’s reward and bonding circuits. Giving activates oxytocin, endorphins, and the ventral striatum — producing the “helper’s high.”	Deepens social bonds, enhances self-worth, and fosters community trust.	Acts of service, generosity, volunteering, mentoring.
Empathize	Emotional attunement & compassion	Uses mirror neuron systems and limbic resonance to connect emotionally with others. Builds emotional intelligence and relational security.	Strengthens connection, intimacy, and compassion; reduces loneliness.	Active listening, compassion meditation, perspective-taking, supportive communication.