**READING COMPREHENSION SECTION**

## How to lead a happier life

For thousands of years humans have been searching for the secret to happiness, but we know that there isn't a magic solution waiting to be found. However, we do know of many ways to lead a happier and more satisfying life. Here are some of our favourite ones.

### Regular exercise

Anyone who does regular exercise knows that it's one of the quickest ways to cheer yourself up. Doing exercise has an important effect on the way your body works. As your blood starts to circulate faster, your body releases endorphins, which send signals to your brain and immediately make you feel happier. Not only that but long after you've done exercise, your body will feel the benefits. For instance, studies have shown that regular exercise can also help you get a good night's sleep. The best thing is that you don't have to do much exercise for it to have a positive effect. In fact, just half an hour a day will be enough.

### Eat your greens

Generations of children have been warned by their grandmothers that if they don't eat up their greens they won't grow big and strong. Scientists have also known for some time that fruit and vegetables are vital for our physical health. However, researchers have recently discovered that they can also have an important effect on your mood. Some greens like spinach contain large quantities of nutrients which help your brain stay positive in the most difficult of situations. In fact, researchers found that when people started consuming more greens, they quickly reported feeling happier and more satisfied.

### Get outside

There are a number of reasons not to stay inside when you're feeling down. One reason is because being out in the sun helps our bodies produce vitamin D. If you don't have enough vitamin D in your body, it can lead to feelings of unhappiness and fatigue. The good news is that just 30 minutes spent outside can improve your mood. But remember that while spending time outside can make you feel happier, you shouldn't spend too long in the sun. Too much sun will result in sunburn and that definitely won't help you achieve happiness!

### Smile

Our last piece of advice is the best one of all ... smile! You might think you smile because you're happy. However, the latest research suggests that the act of smiling may itself put you in a better mood. In this research, groups of people were asked to perform different exercises which made their mouths form different shapes. Those whose mouths formed the shape of a smile reported increased feelings of happiness. No one knows why this is but it could be that our brains associate smiling with happiness so just by smiling we feel happier. Although more research is needed, there can't be any harm in smiling every now and again.

1. **Read the text and find the words (1-5). Choose the correct meaning.**
   a. endorphins (paragraph 2):
      animals / natural chemicals / negative feelings
   b. warned (paragraph 3):
      asked / advised against / approved
   c. lead to (paragraph 4):
      be caused by / result in / stop
   d. sunburn (paragraph 4):
      an emotion / a hot day / damage to the skin
   e. associate (paragraph 5):
      avoid / connect / imagine

**2. Read the text again. For questions 1–5, choose the best answer (A, B, C or D).**

a. What does the writer mean by 'cheer yourself up' in paragraph 2?
**A** increase your blood circulation
**B** improve your mood
**C** sleep better
**D** increase your brain power

b. What do we learn about exercise in the second paragraph?
**A** It takes a long time for exercise to have an effect on your body.
**B** You need to do a lot of exercise for it to have any effect on your body.
**C** Doing exercise on a regular basis can help improve your mood.
**D** Exercise is more important for your health than sleeping well.

c. Talking about vegetables, the writer says that
**A** we have only just discovered how important they are for our bodies.
**B** our grandmothers' warnings were old wives' tales.
**C** they only have a positive effect if you eat fruit as well.
**D** they can have a positive effect on our mood.

d. According to the writer, people should spend time outdoors because it
**A** can have a positive effect on your body.
**B** is good to be exposed to the sun.
**C** can sometimes put you in a bad mood.
**D** can help you sleep better at night.

e. What does the writer say about smiling in the final paragraph?
**A** Making certain facial expressions made people feel happier.
**B** Our brains almost certainly associate smiling with happiness.
**C** It can be harmful to spend too much time smiling.
**D** Smiling is not the most effective way to improve your mood.