

Hey! What's New? 2025-57

Expert Says That Money Can Absolutely Buy Happiness

Now here's a different way of looking at how you spend your money. An article on the *CNBC make it* webpage, written by Jessica Weiss – an executive coach who teaches people and businesses how to find more happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction at work – says that “scientists have found that money actually can absolutely buy happiness, we’ve just been spending it all wrong. The catch? You need to know what types of purchases actually trigger that lasting and sustainable kind of happiness.”

She adds that research shows that strategic spending absolutely pumps up your happiness levels, but not in the way you may think. As a happiness researcher, she knows that there are eight things you shouldn't feel guilty about spending money on. “I would argue that investing in these categories will actually benefit your well-being in the long run.”

1. Live music: Weiss believes that “there's something magical about belting out lyrics with thousands of strangers. It's not just fun, it's science. When we sing together, our brains release oxytocin (the bonding hormone) and endorphins that create what sociologist Émile Durkheim called “collective effervescence” — that buzzy feeling of connection that washes over a crowd. Studies show group singing reduces cortisol levels and creates a sense of belonging that can last for days after the final encore.”

2. Novel experiences: Our brains are novelty-seeking machines, Weiss points out. “Neuroscience shows that new experiences cause our brains to release dopamine and create denser memory formation, which is why time seems to crawl during your exciting vacation, but flies during your routine workweek. And when you share these experiences with friends? Neuroscience shows it supercharges the happiness effect — shared joy literally multiplies rather than divides.”

3. Time-saving purchases: “That shiny gadget you just had to have so often becomes forgotten within weeks. Possessions can just become background noise. Buying time, on the other hand, is akin to buying sanity. That meal delivery service or house cleaner isn't a luxury, it's a mental health investment. Research shows that time-saving purchases reduce stress more effectively than material splurges.

4. Activities that boost your relationships: After tracking people for more than 80 years, Harvard researchers discovered something surprising, Weiss says, “close relationships predict happiness better than genetics, wealth or fame. That dinner with friends or plane ticket to visit your sister? It's not just a purchase — it's a deposit into your emotional retirement account, paying dividends for decades.”

5. Being generous to others: Here's a brain hack, she suggests. “Your reward circuits fire more intensely when you spend on others versus yourself. Scientists call it the ‘helper's high,’ that warm rush when you cover a friend's lunch or donate to causes you care about. Your brain literally rewards generosity more richly than self-indulgence.”

6. Small joys: Weiss notes that “your brain's pleasure systems prefer multiple small hits over one big one. That \$4 specialty coffee twice weekly delivers more cumulative joy than one \$400

splurge. These modest, regular pleasures create happiness rhythms your brain comes to anticipate and savor.”

7. Counterintuitive challenges: “Counterintuitively, challenging experiences — plunging into cold water, completing tough hikes, mastering difficult skills — create lasting satisfaction. These ‘earned pleasures’ trigger achievement circuits in your brain that passive comforts simply can’t reach. The struggle literally becomes part of your identity story.”

8. Making plans in advance: Finally, Weiss notes, “booking experiences in advance creates a happiness triple play: anticipation joy, experience joy and memory joy. Your vacation starts delivering happiness the moment you book it, months before you pack your bags.”

According to Weiss, “the smartest money you’ll ever spend isn’t on things that impress others, but on experiences that transform how you feel about your life. That’s not indulgence — it’s intelligent investing in what actually matters.”

Learn how to bring more joy and happiness into your life by visiting [Happiness expert: Don't 'feel guilty' about splurging on these 8 things](#).