

13 AMAZING FACTS ABOUT SMILING TO BOOST YOUR HEALTH

You probably never thought about smiling as anything more than a result of happiness. Did you know it works the other way around, too? Smiling is an evolutionary tool and a biological wonder, and a great way to boost your well-being that tells people a lot about what we're thinking and can even give us a much-needed mental health boost.

Here are 13 facts about smiling that will up your body language game and possibly make you want to brush your teeth more often:

1. **The smile is the most consistently understood nonverbal cue across cultures as a sign of happiness.** Charles Darwin discovered that other gestures (thumbs up, hugging, handshakes, or flipping someone the bird) have more room for interpretation globally. So they're a universal language – after music of course (no one can resist a hot bass line.)
2. **Making yourself smile when you feel down really does help you feel better.** It might feel stupid at first, but it has been scientifically proven that practicing smiling improves mood and can even help alleviate depression.
3. **Smiling is how we connect with others.** We're hardwired to recognize smiles to differentiate friends from foes.
4. **Our ancestors were happier than we think they were.** Early cameras had a long exposure time, so people had to hold simple poses and straight faces for several seconds to avoid blurring.
5. **Smiling makes you seem more likable.** People who smile often tend to be perceived as happier; It's no coincidence that happier people attract attention – who doesn't want to enjoy themselves? (This trick can be especially helpful for job interviews.)
6. A smile a day keeps the blues away. At least, it helps. People who smile tend to evoke happy memories and can genuinely feel better than people who constantly think about sad or upsetting memories.
7. **A smile can even boost your immune system.** When your brain registers your smile muscles working, it tells your brain to create a happy emotion, and when you're happy, you relax more. And a relaxed nervous system means your body can focus more on keeping you healthy instead of sad.
8. **Smiling is contagious – no, really.** Specific neurons in our brains recognize someone else's smile makes us smile, because we want to join in the fun, too!
9. **Even an inauthentic smile can help your mood.** There's real science here, the University of Kansas conducted a study to actually prove this.

10. **There are 19 different kinds of smiles.** Each one tells you something different, and, surprisingly, only six of them indicate happiness. Carney Landis conducted a particularly creepy study to find out what each one meant.
11. **There is actually an “expert on smiling.”** Paul Ekman has dedicated his life to studying what our faces are doing, and why. Want to learn more about smiling and facial expressions? He’s your guy. Expert on teeth? Try this guy.
12. **There are four ways to decipher whether a smile is real or fake:** duration, assembly, location, and symmetry can all deceive a deceiving smile.
13. **The zygomatic major is the muscle responsible for our smiles.**

And there you have it! Now that you’re also a smile expert, go brush your teeth. You don’t want a dingy grin!