



123 WAYS TO
INSTANT SUNSHINE

VICKY BARKES

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Text by Vicky Edwards

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*For Lily; my most precious
little ray of sunshine*



Take a trip down (happy)
memory lane: read old
letters or meander through
old photo albums.



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Spend five minutes organising your pants drawer. Fling out the old, grey, elastic-rotten drawers and restock with new knickers. You might even find your favourite ‘lucky’ pair or, for the chaps, those once cherished *Star Wars* boxer shorts.

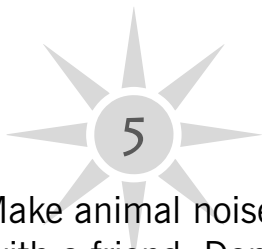


WISE WORDS

Life isn't a matter
of milestones, but
of moments.

Rose Kennedy





Make animal noises with a friend. Don't hold back. Embrace your inner moo-jo.



Sing. Even if you sound like a strangled tom cat, singing is a great way of boosting your mood. Put on your favourite CD, grab that hairbrush and make like *Stars In Their Eyes*.



Hug someone you love.
Research from Canada
points to hugging as a way
of releasing the calming
hormone oxytocin.



Sniff a baby's head. The smell of newborn baby and talcum powder has an 'ahhh' factor all of its own.



Give a friend or colleague a 'Happy Pedicure' by painting smiling faces on each of their toenails – or toes! Get them to return the favour.



Take a virtual holiday.
Close your eyes and
concentrate on the
sounds you would hear;
let your mind's eye
envisage the details of
your surroundings; get
your nose twitching by
conjuring up the smells
you associate with
your fantasy retreat.



Look up. Even in the town where you live you'll see things you never noticed before – an intriguingly shaped chimney or a beautiful window. Remember that your problems, like the view, are often just a matter of perspective.



Build a bonfire and
look for fairies and
goblins in the flames.



Play classical music.



Recall your five funniest
memories of all time.
Picture yourself doubled up
and helpless with laughter.



Do a good deed without getting found out, e.g. weed a friend's garden when they are at work, or pop a copy of their favourite magazine through their letterbox.



Take a dog for a walk
and play stickie. Fresh
air combined with
unconditional love from
Rover is a splendid soother
of frazzled nerves.



Girls: have your eyebrows professionally shaped.

Guys: go to an old-fashioned barber's.

A relatively cheap way to indulge yourself and lift your mood.



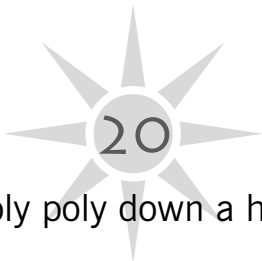
Clean your shoes.
The application of
elbow grease and the
resulting well-buffed
footwear is a strangely
satisfying experience.



WISE WORDS

Yesterday is a cancelled
cheque. Tomorrow is
a promissory note.
Today is cash in hand;
spend it wisely.

Author unknown



Roly poly down a hill.



Collect happy faces by smiling at everyone you meet. See how many grins you can get reciprocated in the space of ten minutes.



Make your bed and lie in it: clean sheets, a good book and crisp cotton nightwear never fail to provide a cosy sense of well-being.



Visit the seaside
and go for a paddle
– even if it's winter.



Read a story to a child or, better still, challenge your improvisational skills and make one up on the spot, including yourself and the child in the adventure.



Watch an old black and white movie – but in character. For instance, if *Casablanca* is your all-time favourite flick, dress up as Ingrid Bergman or Humphrey Bogart and prepare some Mediterranean nibbles.



WISE WORDS

Think of all the beauty
still left around you
and be happy.

Anne Frank



Wax lyrical with stuff and nonsense and read some silly poems such as Spike Milligan's *Silly Verses for Kids* or similar dafties by Ogden Nash and Edward Lear.



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Turn off the TV and
play a board game
or an old fashioned
parlour game instead.



Have a good stretch.
Reach as high as you can
and then hold the position
for five seconds. Repeat
ten times. By the time
you have finished any
physical tension will be
well and truly banished.



Be creative. Knit a scarf,
rearrange your furniture,
or paint a mug or a plate
at a ceramic café.



If you're feeling hard done by, write a gratitude list. Include everything from the basics (a roof over your head) to your talents and abilities, your friends and family, and the downright frivolous, such as that snazzy pair of shoes that you snapped up in the sales.



Visit your local pond or
river and feed the ducks.



Set the table with flowers
and your best cutlery and
crockery, and dine in style.



Hit the sweetie shop
and indulge in some
Pick 'n' Mix.



Organise a game of rounders with friends and insist that everyone plays wearing a silly hat.



Treat Time. Buy yourself the necklace, cufflinks or box of luxury chocs that you would usually only buy as a gift for someone else.



Go to the dentist and get
your gnashers cleaned.

Happy is he or she
who has a sparkling
set of pearly whites.



Visit your local art gallery or card shop and buy postcards of the pictures that make you feel most cheerful. Take them back home or to the office and start a 'Happy Gallery'.



Clean the windows
and let the sun in (or
so you can see the
rain being kept out).



If you are worried about impending change, stop fretting about it and embrace it instead. Think of it as an adventure rather than a daunting prospect, and remember that it's not change itself that causes pain, but our resistance to it.



Write a letter. In these days of e-mail and instant messaging putting pen to paper is a novelty that will distract you from your doldrums. Make sure that you use a nice pen and classy paper and envelope.



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Mowing the lawn is a great stress buster, as the smell of the chemical released when grass is cut is said to help you chill out.





Draw or paint. If you don't have an artistic bone in your body then go for an abstract. Use as many bright colours as you can.



WISE WORDS

My favourite thing
is to go where I've
never been before.

Diane Arbus



Read a classic kids' book. Gallop alongside *Black Beauty*, do it parrot fashion in *Treasure Island* or wave your red flannel petticoats with *The Railway Children*.



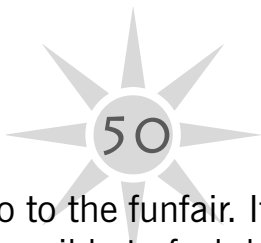
Make cakes that involve the sort of mixture that can be licked out of the bowl as you go.



Throw an impromptu theme party. Wigs, heroes, pyjamas and children's TV characters are all good themes.



Clean the house. The smell of furniture polish, the sight of a tidy kitchen and no unmentionable stains in the loo will have you doing the scuzz-buster two-step in delight of a job well done.



Go to the funfair. It's impossible to feel down in the dumps when you're up in the air and travelling at 70 mph.



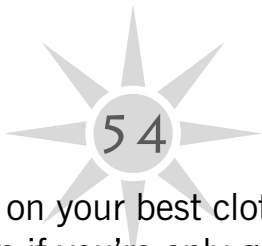
Swim. Get into a rhythm
and do as many lengths as
you can without stopping.



Watch tropical fish.



Do the thing that has been causing you sleepless nights. Whether it's having a difficult conversation with someone or talking to your bank about your overdraft, get it over and done with, and then enjoy the happy sensation of relief.



Put on your best clothes
even if you're only going
out to buy a paper.



Polish brass or silver.



Use your brain and do a crossword puzzle, or find a tricky jigsaw at the local charity shop.



Eating fish and chips
out of the wrapper on
a beach is hard to beat
as a moment of bliss.



Discreetly put clothes
pegs on the back of the
shirts of everyone at a
family gathering and
then sit back and giggle
at your own juvenility.



Volunteer for a good cause
– working in a charity
shop, hospital visiting or
baking cakes for a fund-
raising fête. Helping others
practically is a sure-fire
way to stop you dwelling
on your own troubles.



Get witty and read
the likes of Dorothy
Parker, Oscar Wilde
or Mark Twain.



Visit a church. Even if you're an atheist or an agnostic, churches usually have an air of calm that can soothe a heavy heart.



Light candles instead of
using the electric lights.



WISE WORDS

The more you praise and
celebrate your life, the
more there is to celebrate.

Oprah Winfrey

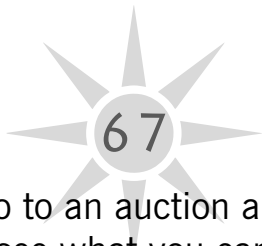




Watch a wildlife
programme and
marvel at nature.



Talk to your plants.



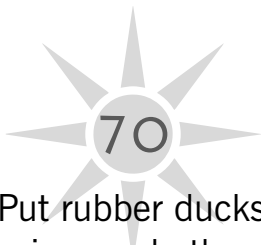
Go to an auction and
see what you can
buy for a fiver.



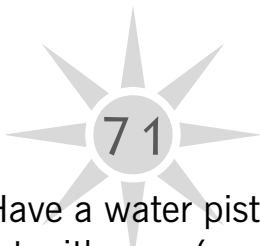
Grind fresh coffee and
inhale the aroma.



Make a compilation tape
or burn a CD for a mate.



Put rubber ducks
in your bath.



Have a water pistol fight with your (grown-up) friends. The wettest person buys the drinks.



After a good rainfall
brush the cobwebs off
your wellies and splash
through puddles.



Play with your food. Try different and unlikely toppings on your toast or jacket potato. Who knows? Maybe tuna and chocolate on wholemeal will catch on.



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Picture your boss slipping on a banana skin. Experts say laughing reduces high cortisol levels that are triggered by stress.



Buy doughnuts for your colleagues and declare an 'Eat a doughnut without licking your lips' contest.



Play hookie and spend
the day watching your
favourite movies in bed.



Pinch a pert bum.



Have a turkey sarnie
or a bar of chocolate.
Both release the happy
hormone serotonin.



Go to the cosmetic hall of a department store and see how many samples you can blag without spending any money.



WISE WORDS

There are only two ways
to live your life... One
is as though nothing
is a miracle, and the
other is as though
everything is a miracle.

Albert Einstein



Fake tan makes you
glow – quite literally.



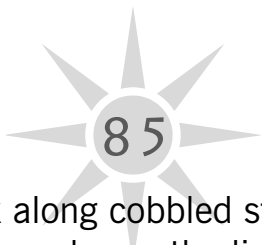
*Play If I won the Lottery I
would buy... with a friend.*



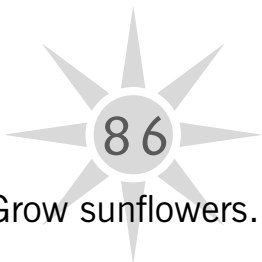
Dance to a feel-good
song that always sets
your feet tapping.



In good weather see if you can hitch a ride with a friend who owns a soft-top. With the wind in your hair, turn up the stereo and enjoy the ride.



Walk along cobbled streets
and ponder on the lives of
others who have walked
there over the centuries,
and how you're a tiny
speck in the great scheme
of things... as is whatever
you're worrying about.



Grow sunflowers...



... Or in spring, admire the daffodils. After the drabness of winter, those bright sparks of yellow evoke sunshine and the brighter days ahead.



Celebrate your friends. Be
it a cup of tea or a glass
of champers, drink a toast
to those who know you
best and whom you love.



A hot bath has got to be one of the best feelings in the world. Stay in until you resemble a wrinkled prune.



Go for a walk in the rain.



Go and watch lock gates.
They are such a simple
idea, but it's awesome
seeing them holding back
twenty feet of water.



Buy an inexpensive gift that's ideal to send to a friend 'just because'. Choose something that is significant to you both – e.g. a picture postcard of somewhere you visited together.



Watch classic Disney films
and recall the excitement
you felt when you first
saw them as a child.



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WISE WORDS

Think big thoughts but
relish small pleasures.

H. Jackson Brown Jr.



Go to the park and
play on the swings.



Have an 'ahhhh' kit in your car. Put a photo of a person or a place you love on the back of your sun visor and fill door pockets with sweeties, a stress ball and scented wet wipes.



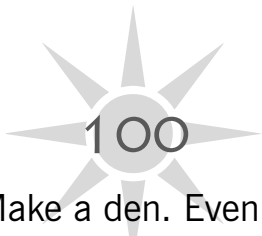
Remember your first
passionate kiss in
minute detail.



Make a special birthday card for a friend. Grab the sticky-back plastic and revisit your days as a *Blue Peter* fan.



Write cheerful messages on some balloons before blowing them up. Go to your favourite local beauty spot and release them into the air.



Make a den. Even if you don't have kids, grab a mate and hole up in the manner of Enid Blyton heros, with slabs of chocolate and lashings of ginger beer.



Watch live theatre.

123 WAYS TO INSTANT SUNSHINE



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Share your problems with
someone else who is in
need of an emotional
exfoliation. Be each
other's agony aunt.



103

A good cry is a great tension reliever as tears contain stress hormones including adrenalin. Grab a hanky and get blubbing.



Get someone to wash your hair. Unwind as their fingers massage your scalp.



105

Learn the words of a happy song such as 'Bring Me Sunshine' and sing it in the shower.



106

WISE WORDS

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I
cannot change, the courage
to change the things I
can, and the wisdom to
know the difference.

*Attributed to
Dr Reinhold Niebuhr*



107

Hand-pick and arrange a posy of flowers – and then present them to yourself. Researchers have found that flowers put genuine smiles on 100 per cent of recipients' faces.



108

Get up before first
light and watch the
sunrise. As dawn breaks
make three wishes.



109

Stand up straight. You breathe better when adopting good posture, and when you breathe better you shrug off tension more efficiently.



Wear blue. Psychologists
tell us that this is
the colour of calm
and serenity.



If it's TLC you are hankering after try wearing pink. Research suggests that shades of rose inspire tenderness in others.



Make yourself a boiled egg and soldiers. Don't forget to draw a happy face on your egg.



1 1 3

Arrange to meet an old friend. Stop procrastinating and set a date.



1 1 4

*'I am a gorgeous,
talented, compassionate
and lovable person and
I wear the best shoes.'*

Make up a positive
affirmation and repeat it
out loud to yourself every
morning and evening.



Believe in miracles.



1 1 6

Eat a cheese sandwich.
Nibbles that combine
protein with complex
carbs will help keep you
calm as well as boosting
your energy levels.



1 1 7

Explore different cultures.
Start by listening to some
world music. Clear a
space on your coffee table
or desk and beat in time
to the African drums.



1 1 8

A little praise goes a long way (remember that teacher who managed to get the best out of you just by encouraging you?).

Watching someone blossom from your cheering them on is a wonderful feeling.



1 1 9

Do something completely new. Whether it's skydiving, visiting a nudist camp or learning to play polo, challenge yourself as you have never done before.



The sky on a clear night is a magnificent sight. Look for the man in the moon and wish upon a star.



When you're wrong, own up pronto and apologise.

Nagging discomfort at our own misdeeds is a real sunshine stealer.



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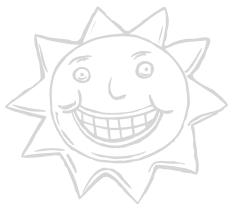
Keep a joy diary. Every time something makes your heart rejoice, write it down. Compliments, kindness, surprises, random observations – include anything that when you read it back will allow you to tap into happiness.



WISE WORDS

In heaven the only
art of living
Is forgetting and forgiving.

William Blake



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