Medical Minute - Happiness



Happiness isn't really about material things. Says the person pulling into their Siesta Key driveway in a Bentley with a bag of lobster tails for dinner in the trunk, while checking the weather to see if it's a good afternoon to take the yacht out "just for a little spin." But sure—tell us more about how joy is found in the simple things.

Real happiness comes from relationships. The more social interactions you have—and the more meaningful those connections are—the happier and healthier you tend to be. So get involved in your community. Join activities. And even better, get involved in your church. Here's a thought: VOLUNTEER! Not that I'm twisting your arm. I would never do that. I'm just gently pointing you toward the sign-up sheet while blocking the exit with a casserole dish.

If you're looking for meaningful relationships, there's a whole church full of people who could probably use help stacking chairs, serving food, teaching a class, ushering, greeting, singing, ringing, cleaning up, carrying things, finding things, moving things, or pretending they know where the extra napkins are kept. And remember: volunteering is good for the brain. At least that's what I'm telling you, and you know I NEVER steer you wrong. Right? Please don't answer that.

And finally, get outside! Studies have found that people who live near green spaces have lower rates of hospitalization for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Living near parks, green spaces, and bodies of water has also been associated with lower hospitalization rates for Parkinson's disease. In other words, your brain apparently likes trees, grass, lakes, and anything that does not require fluorescent lighting.

So, basically, go play golf every day! You're welcome. I have just turned your tee time into preventive medicine. If anyone questions it, tell them your doctor said you need "more green space." No need to mention riding in the golf cart, the hot dog at the turn, or the 19th hole cocktails!

Just be careful in the sand traps. The researchers specifically mentioned green spaces and bodies of water. They did not say anything about sand being good for the brain. In fact, too much time in the bunker may trigger a condition known as "I've had it with this stupid game." Symptoms include heavy sighing, staring into the distance, blaming the club, and announcing that you're "never going to play again." If you want sand, go to the beach. At least there, nobody makes you count your strokes.