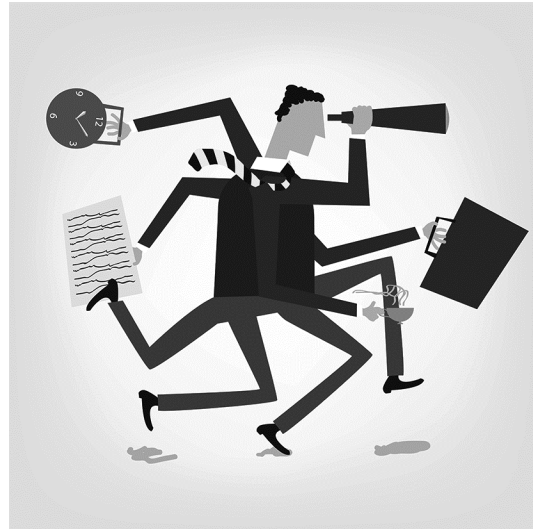


## Keeping Busy

By Emma Rowley

- 1 THE KEY to happiness is having lots to do, scientists have revealed. Even doing meaningless or unnecessary tasks makes you feel better than just sitting around getting bored.
- 2 Behavioural scientist Professor Christopher Hsee, of the University of Chicago, asked students to complete a questionnaire and then wait 15 minutes. They could drop off the completed survey nearby and wait out the remaining time or leave it at a place further away, where walking back and forth would keep them busy. Afterwards the students who decided to walk reported feeling significantly happier than the idle ones.
- 3 Professor Hsee believes it may be possible to use this principle to benefit society. “If we can devise mechanisms to keep people busy, I think it is better than destructive inactivity,” he said.
- 4 In fact, according to Professor Hsee’s team, such interventions already exist. Professor Hsee explained: “You need to be engaged, either physically or mentally. Even if there really is no point to what you are doing, you will feel better for it. That is why some airports have deliberately increased the walk to the luggage carousel so as to reduce the time passengers spend waiting.”



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