

Make your own luck!



Experts reveal the simple habits that set you up for success

That friend who always snags the best parking space, the cousin with the fortuitous meet-cute story, the coworker who is always winning 50/50 raffles and radio contests...the charmed people we know make us wish for their secret to serendipity. But luck is just random and outside of our control, right?

Not so, asserts psychotherapist Mel Schwartz, author of *The Possibility Principle*. "You can bring more good fortune into your life. Opportunities are always there, but you have to first remove the blinders blocking your view." These "blinders" might include things like the time pressure of a busy day, when Schwartz says you could be hurrying down the street and checking your phone, only to miss a chance connection with an old friend or a new acquaintance.

In fact, research at the University of Hertfordshire in England found that lucky people tend to be more attuned to their surroundings. In one experiment, participants had to count the number of photos in a newspaper. Folks who self-identified as "lucky" were more likely than their less-charmed peers to spot a large ad halfway through that read: "Stop counting. Tell the experimenter you have seen this and win \$250."

Says Schwartz, "By opening up to new ways of thinking and widening your gaze, you can learn to get out of your own way and see the opportunities that are right in front of you."

To uncover more luck in your own life, read on for the expert tips that'll put you on a winning streak in no time.

It's YOUR turn to live a charmed life!

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Embrace experimentation

You want to forge connections in a new industry, hoping for a "right place, right time" encounter that'll land you a new job, but you find yourself clamming up at networking events. "It's understandable that you don't want to make a mistake and say the wrong thing," says Al Levin, coauthor of *Luck Is No Accident*. "But the 'happenstance approach' says go ahead and make mistakes—once you set things in motion, unexpected events lead to opportunities you couldn't have anticipated."

Putting yourself out there is easier said than done, but a mind-set shift can help, says Levin. "Lower the stakes by telling yourself, *I'm exploring this and just trying things out*. Treat it as an experiment: If you approach someone and it doesn't go as positively as you'd hoped, what have you learned? What can you do differently next time?" By focusing on the process (connecting with people) instead of the outcome (nabbing a job offer), Levin says you'll be less deterred by slipups and more likely to keep reaching out until you're shaking hands with your lucky break.

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While working on a grant proposal for your volunteer group, you're feeling anxious about whether or not it will be approved. "You don't know what the outcome will be and you don't have bad news yet, so instead of feeling anxious, you could feel anticipatory—it might all work out quite well," says Schwartz. "As a culture, we're taught to ward off uncertainty, but uncertainty brings opportunity."

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Turn the blues into gold

You're happy for the colleague who got a bonus, but sometimes it seems there's only so much good luck to go around, and you never catch a break. "Negative thoughts trick you into believing they're telling the truth," says Schwartz. "They act like filters that bias the way you see things." So thinking you're unlucky can cause your mind to filter out anything positive or potentially fortuitous.

To see the golden opportunities obscured by a blue mood, Schwartz advises changing the language of your thoughts: "Instead of thinking, *I am unlucky*, replace that 'to be' verb with *I feel unlucky*." Then reflect on why. For example, maybe your desires are always on the back burner. "Removing the 'to be' verb moves you out of victimhood by opening a way to consider changes to make," he says. Next, take action using this empowered mind-set. Whether you decide to prioritize a personal need or advocate for yourself, changing your behavior increases the likelihood that you'll feel happier—and luckier.

Tap into the power of a talisman

Still, it can be tough to get those worst-case scenarios out of your head. The simple solution? Rely on a good-luck charm, like your lucky pen, as you complete the application. In a study published in the journal *Psychological Science*, golfers who played with a "lucky" ball performed 35 percent better than their counterparts, who played using "normal" balls. Why? The study authors found that the mere

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Pick the door that's most open

Torn between financial investments, you fret over which one is "best," wanting to land on the most secure. "You get anxious when you can't predict the future," says Schwartz. "But operating out of fear will limit luck because it narrows your thinking." Out of fear, you could latch on to a premature decision instead of fully weighing the pros and cons or tuning into hunches.

To position yourself to take advantage of lucky leads that might arise, Levin advises taking an exploratory approach. "Ask yourself, *Which of these doors to go through is currently the most open? What seems to be a current opportunity that I could move through to create luck?*" Perhaps your retirement advisor flagged a 401(k) option that's performing well, or a savvy friend mentioned a lucrative stock. Start by investigating those possibilities and branch out from there. Explains Levin, "By adopting a flexible, open-minded attitude, you're able to invite and take advantage of more happenstances, or unexpected opportunities, in your life."