



Increasing Your Happiness

ABSTRACT

Increasing one's happiness can be done through the power of positive thinking. That is one skill that this workshop will touch on to teach your participants how to be happier. Happiness will spread throughout your organization, and have a positive effect on everyone.

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We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.

Ann Frank

Preface

It might sound a little strange to say that we should be happy at work. After all, it's called *work*! But we spend more time at our jobs than we do engaged in almost any other activity. If we're unhappy at work, we're likely to feel the effects in other areas of our lives, too. Finding ways to be happy at work not only brings you greater productivity and greater job satisfaction, but will help you achieve greater overall mental, emotional, and physical health.

*Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes through
your own actions.*

The Dalai Lama

Chapter One: Plan Ahead for Happiness

Most of us spend more time at work than we do engaged in any other activity other than sleeping. If we consider how much of our lives we spend in our workplace, it quickly becomes clear that spending this time unhappy, unfulfilled, and just counting the days until the weekend is a waste of time and energy. Finding ways to be happier at work can not only lead to better mental health, but can improve your productivity and overall work performance. One key way to cultivate more happiness at work is to plan for it! Develop habits that get your workday off to the right start, and you'll see greater happiness throughout the day and week.

Have a Nightly Routine

Nothing gets your day off on the wrong foot like rushing around in the morning! Lost keys, skipping breakfast, discovering that the pants you wanted to wear are not back from the dry cleaner – all this can throw your morning into chaos. Taking time the night before to organize what you need for the next day can help avoid this morning rush and let you start your day centered, organized, and with everything you need. Create a nightly routine – and follow it! Choose your clothes for the next day, set up your coffee maker (especially if it has a timer and automatic brew!), pack your lunch. Take time to place the things you will need for work the next day in your briefcase or bag. You might even choose a space near the door to be your

“launch pad,” a space where everything you need for the day is in one place and easy to pick up. Your routine will vary depending on what you need each day, what your workday looks like, and what the needs of your family are. It might even help to make yourself a checklist until the routine truly becomes a habit.

Get at Least 8 Hours of Sleep

Sleep deprivation is bad for your mental, emotional, and physical health. It’s hard to feel productive, happy, and positive when you’re exhausted! Making sure that you get at least 8 hours of quality sleep per night is one step you can take to help prepare yourself to be happier and healthier, both at work and in the rest of your life. Many of us are used to running on just a few hours of sleep, or to getting sleep that isn’t truly restful. There are a few steps you can take to ensure that you get the most restful sleep possible and wake up ready to face the day with a positive attitude.

Steps to Quality Sleep:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day – including weekends.
- Have a nightly routine that prepares you for bed – shower, tooth brushing, prayer or meditation, etc.
- Put away the electronic devices!
- Make your bedroom a sanctuary.

Wake Up Early Enough for Some “Me” Time

Getting enough sleep is important, but waking up early enough so that you have time to transition into your day can also help foster happiness. If you usually hit the ground running and leave the house with just enough time to make it to the office on time, you are kicking your day off with anxiety. Waking up even 15 minutes earlier so that you can have some “me” time can help you ease into your day with a sense of centeredness instead of a sense of panic. Some people like to wake up very early and have an hour or more of “me” time, while others just need an extra 10 or 15 minutes to linger over a cup of coffee or tea. Figure out what works for you!

Ways to Use Your “Me” Time:

- Read the newspaper or a passage from a book you are enjoying.
- Pray or meditate.
- Do some light stretching or yoga.
- Linger over your coffee, tea, or breakfast.
- Spend time stroking your pet.

It’s important **not** to use your “me” time to get a head start on your work day by reading emails, working on projects, or checking voicemail!

Give Yourself Time to Arrive at Work Early

Commuting is often the most stressful part of the workday. Whether you drive, walk, bike, or take public transit to work,

delays and traffic jams can get your day off to a stressful start. Too often we make this worse on ourselves by leaving for work at the last possible moment, meaning there's no room for error, and that we arrive at work with only moments to spare before we have to jump into our first project or meeting. All this can leave us frazzled, anxious, and short-tempered. Altering your morning commute so that you can arrive 10 to 15 minutes early for work helps you ease into your workday instead of having to throw yourself right in. And giving yourself that cushion can also give you much-needed wiggle room in your commute to account for the unexpected. When you arrive early, you have time to transition gradually into your work -- check email, get a cup of coffee, check your schedule and to do list, or simply say good morning to your coworkers. This helps you meet the day in a positive frame of mind.

Practical Illustration

Laura was a night owl. She was always most productive very late at night, she said. Some nights she only got 3 or 4 hours of sleep. She would hit the snooze button on her alarm clock until the last possible moment every morning, and then would have to hurry through her shower. Often she went to put on an outfit only to discover that parts of it were still in the laundry, meaning she had to choose something else. With no time for breakfast, she'd grab a coffee and a bagel on the way to work, but since she was leaving at the last possible minute, this stop often made her late. She'd come rushing into work and have to jump right into her first meeting or project or, more disastrously, make people wait for her to arrive. Her manager suggested that she try a nightly and morning routine to make her mornings less stressful. Laura was skeptical, but agreed to try. She set up her coffee maker and chose her clothes the night before. She even packed a lunch. Instead of staying up late on the computer, Laura went to bed earlier than normal and set her alarm for the morning. In the morning, instead of hitting snooze, she got up, ate breakfast, and dressed for work. She managed to arrive 15 minutes early, and was able to start her day with a cup of coffee and a chat with the receptionist. She was amazed at how much better she felt throughout the day.

Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Abraham Lincoln

Chapter Two: Plan Your Day

Taking a few minutes to plan your day can help alleviate stress and promote happiness at work. You don't have to plan every minute, but having a sense of what needs to be done, what expectations need to be met, and what time and resources you'll need throughout the day can make your workday run much more smoothly.

Arrive 10-15 Minutes Early

Arriving at work early is one simple step you can take to foster your happiness at work. When you arrive early, you have time to think about your day and make a plan, rather than having to immediately start with tasks and meetings. Planning ahead so that you arrive early means that you can get settled into your day by greeting coworkers, checking mail, email, and voicemail, take a look at your calendar, and otherwise get an overall picture of what your day will involve.

Check for Action Items

It sounds like common sense, but the most important thing you can do to plan your day is to check for action items. Use your time immediately after arrival at work to check your mail, voicemail, email, and calendar or agenda for action items. Being sure to check all these places helps ensure that you don't miss

an important item. Once you know what your action items for the day are, you are better able to plan your time and resources. Additionally, knowing what must be acted on helps you fit in longer-term projects into your schedule. Taking even 10 minutes each morning to check for action items can go a long way towards reducing stress and promoting your workplace happiness.

Create a To-Do List for the Day

Once you've checked for action items, take a few minutes to make a to-do list for the day. This gives you a picture of how your time will be used, what resources you will need, and any other people you may need to involve. How you set up your to-do list is up to you – whether it's by most pressing items first, "low hanging fruit" (easily completed items) first, or some other system. What's important is that you create a list so that you have a plan for the day. While your plan may have to change to accommodate emerging needs or unexpected events, having a plan means you can get back on track when the immediate crisis has passed. Keep your list manageable, and limit it to just what you will work on today – that way the list doesn't become overwhelming and discouraging.

Build in Breaks

We all want to be productive at work. While it might at first seem counterintuitive, building breaks into your day can help you be more productive and happier at work. Building short

breaks into your day helps to break work into manageable chunks. It also gives you guideposts to aim for – and if you make a break something to look forward to, you may find yourself working more efficiently to get to it. Breaks give you time to reset, relax, and tune in. They also help you as you transition into different projects or other aspects of your work. Build regular breaks into your workday as you create your to do list – and put those breaks on your list or schedule, just like you would any other appointment! You can use your breaks to check email, take a walk around the office or even get outside for a few moments, get yourself a drink or snack, or even just take a few moments to not think about work. You might build in different types and lengths of breaks as well, or consider having a coworker who is your “break buddy.” Breaks should be long enough to give you time to reset but not so long that you get completely distracted – 5 to 15 minutes is a good guideline, with a lunch or dinner break being longer. Even if you can’t get up from your desk or out of your office, taking a quick 5 minute break can leave you feeling refreshed and recharged.

Practical Illustration

Samira was always “just in time.” She had a long commute via train, and so she always took the last possible train to get to work. She would arrive on time, with a few minutes to spare. She usually just attacked whatever project was first on her mind, and sometimes missed deadlines. She always said she liked to get “in the zone” and work straight through a project, even skipping lunch. She was always tired and was often short with colleagues, though. Her manager suggested she try arriving a little earlier and planning her day by checking her schedule, email, and voicemail. Then she should break her day up into chunks, with short breaks to recharge. Samira was skeptical, but tried it for one week. She found that she actually enjoyed having a roadmap for the day, and was better able to finish work in timely fashion. She met all her deadlines for the week. She also found that taking time to transition between projects helped her improve her focus.

Happiness depends on ourselves.

Aristotle

Chapter Three: Relate to Others

Even if we work well independently, it is important to take time to relate to others in the workplace. Building work relationships helps us feel less isolated and creates a support network. Relationships also help us feel part of a team or workplace community, which can promote happiness. When we have strong relationships with our coworkers, we may even look forward to going to work! Instead of being a place where we are disconnected, work can become another place where we connect with others.

Greet Your Colleagues

Something as simple as taking the time to greet your colleagues when you come into the office can make all the difference! Can you remember a time when someone just saying “Hello” improved your day? When we take the time to greet others, we make a connection. It is likely that your colleagues will greet you back, spreading the good feeling. Starting the day with a positive interaction with another human being helps you feel connected and can turn a rough morning into a productive, happy day. You don’t have to stop to have lengthy conversations with every person you meet, but taking the time to smile and wish them a good morning is a worthwhile investment of your time.

Smile! Fake It If You Have To!

Remember to smile! Even when you don't feel like smiling, the act of using your muscles to smile releases happy chemicals into your brain. And as the saying goes, when you smile the whole world smiles with you – you'll see smiles in return, which can improve your mood. You don't have to always be jolly when you're at work, but remembering to smile when you interact with others, or just to yourself, can improve your mood. Smiling also makes you seem more approachable, which means you may be able to more effectively connect with others. It might help to have a mental list of things that make you smile so you have think of these throughout the day!

Build Your Support Team

Having a support team at work is key to success and happiness. Your support team isn't just the team members or coworkers who provide administrative or other support for your work. A good support team is made up of people you can turn to for advice, help, feedback, or just a kind word. As you build relationships with your coworkers, consider who you want on your "support" team (and who you can offer support to). You might include your manager or supervisor, people with whom you often collaborate or cooperate, or colleagues who you have built more personal relationships with. Once you have built your support team, check in with them often. Checking in with your support team might be something you build into your breaks, as it gives you a chance to bounce ideas or seek support if you are struggling. However, be sure to check in with your support team

when things are going well, too!

Take Time to Socialize

It may sound like exactly the opposite of what you should be doing at work, but take the time to socialize with others during your day. Take a few minutes to chat with a colleague when you refill your coffee cup. Ask a coworker how her day is going. You want to keep these interactions relatively brief so that you are still accomplishing work, but also long enough to make a meaningful connection. Many people also find they are happier at work if they take the time to socialize with coworkers outside of work hours, whether by meeting for dinner regularly or otherwise sharing non-work time together. Whether you choose to limit your socialization to work hours, or you choose to spend time with coworkers away from the workplace, it is key to have interactions that aren't wholly centered on work. Getting to know your colleagues as people, and letting them get to know you as a person, helps you feel connected. This can make you a much happier person at work!

Practical Illustration

Jose was a loner at work. His projects tended not to involve a lot of collaboration with others. He spent most of his time in his office, with the door shut to prevent distractions. Often he even took lunch in his office, as he preferred to read a book or catch up on news while he ate. When he did leave his office, he typically did not interact with others – he went to the area or office he needed. While he was very productive, he often felt lonely or disconnected from the rest of the office. His coworker Eva suggested he try eating lunch in the break room, taking the time to say hello, or just smiling more – she said that some of their coworkers got the impression that Jose didn't like them or his job very much since he kept to himself and often seemed hurried or angry when moving about the office. Jose agreed to try it for one week. He found that many of his coworkers were very friendly and funny, and some even had resources or ideas that would help his projects. He found himself happier and more willing to reach out.

You can be happy where you are.

Joel Osteen

Chapter Four: Go to Your Happy (Work) Space

No matter what steps we take towards happiness, if our workspace is uninspiring or depressing, it can bring us down. There are many simple steps you can take to create a workspace that promotes happiness. While you must keep in mind your workplace’s rules about workspaces, as well as take into account any colleagues with whom you share space, you can personalize your space and make it part of your happiness plan.

Create a Workspace That Makes You Happy

Does your workspace – your office, cubicle, or desk – make you happy? Why or why not? What steps could you take to improve it? Once you know what rules are in place about decorating or changing workspaces think about what changes you could make to create a happy space for yourself. Every person’s needs are different, so don’t be afraid to think about what makes you happy. Revisit your “smile list” from Module Three for inspiration.

Clear the Clutter

One of the easiest things you can do to create a happier workspace is clear the clutter! Clutter is any unnecessary or distracting items in your space. A clutter-free space doesn’t

have to be bare – things just have to have a place, and unnecessary or unloved and unused items should be removed. An item is clutter if it distracts you or you have to constantly move it to get to things you do need. Every person has a different level of preference for clear spaces – some work best with a totally clear desk, while others find the empty space depressing. Spend time looking around your office or workspace for clutter, then remove it (or make a plan to remove it, if the items are big). Keep inspirational items and items that make you smile, as well as those things you use every day. You cannot organize clutter – get rid of it! Then find ways to organize what you have left.

Bring in Personal Touches

When you've removed the clutter from your workspace, bring in some personal touches. Bring in only things that make you smile or otherwise evoke pleasant feelings. This might include pictures of your family, a favorite coffee mug, awards that you have received, or a piece of art that you enjoy. If your workplace allows, you might even be able to “wallpaper” with cloth and liquid starch to bring in some color – but ask first! Even if you can't make large-scale changes to your workspace, taking time to personalize it will make it a happier place to be. You can also bring in personal touches that are functional – a type of pen that you prefer, or notepads in a soft pastel shade work just as well as less personal options. Given the amount of time you spend in your workspace, taking the time to make it reflect you and your personality is an investment in your overall happiness. A personalized workspace also helps your colleagues

connect with you!

Add Some Green!

Studies show that green is a color that promotes happiness. One of the easiest things you can do to promote happiness in your workspace is to bring in some green! Green plants literally bring life to a space – in Feng Shui, they are thought to bring positive energy into a room where they are placed. If your workplace allows, and your workspace has enough light, bring in a potted plant or two. Pothos and ivies are good, low-maintenance plants, as are cacti. Having a live plant in your workspace gives you something to care for as well, which can promote happiness. And green plants create oxygen, which contributes to your overall health! If you can't bring in a live plant, even silk plants add a touch of life and green to your workspace.

Practical Illustration

Steve really hated his workspace. It was furnished in dull grey office furniture. Things tended to pile up on the desk and floor because he lacked shelves and a filing system. Even when he was feeling pretty positive on the way to work, walking into his workspace brought him down. He tried to tell himself that this was silly, because it was just a workspace – his home was decorated in a way that he enjoyed, and after all he only spent 40 hours a week at work. His wife suggested he take a few pictures from their last vacation to put on his desk as inspiration – they would remind him why he was working so hard. Steve took the framed photos and found that they made him smile every time he looked at them. Then his manager offered him a bookshelf. Steve was able to organize the things that were scattered on the floor and desk, and the clear space made him smile even more. He hung some awards he'd been given, which had gotten lost in the clutter. Finally, Steve's direct reports gave him a hanging ivy as a Boss's Day present. Steve was amazed at how much happier he felt walking into his workspace.

Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will.

Zig Ziglar

Chapter Five: Accentuate the Positive

It's hard to feel happy at work when we focus on the negative. Making the small shift to accentuating the positive can go a long way toward greater happiness at work. Finding ways to focus on the positive aspects of your life, your job, and your workplace, even when negative things happen, can foster your workplace happiness. Positive thinking is in many ways a choice – when we choose to see the positive rather than the negative, it attracts positive experiences to us.

Use a Daily Affirmation

One way to start your day off on a positive note, and to focus on positivity throughout the day, is to use a daily affirmation. Affirmations are simple, positive statements that you repeat throughout the day, either mentally or out loud. A simple affirmation could be, “Today is going to be a great day.” You can write your own affirmations, or use affirmations written by others – there are many books and websites that offer up daily affirmations. You might use the same affirmation each day, or choose a new affirmation every morning, once a week, or once a month. An affirmation gives you something to focus on when you are tempted to drift into negative thinking or you are faced with other people's negative attitudes. Some people find it helpful to print out or write their affirmation and keep it somewhere visible. There are also beautiful pieces of art with affirmations available, if you choose to put your affirmation in your office.

Surround Yourself with Positive People

One way to stay positive is to surround yourself with positive people. While you may have to interact with people who are less than positive in order to accomplish tasks at work, you can choose to surround yourself with positive people whenever possible. Choose to interact with coworkers and colleagues who have a positive outlook. When you put together your support team, choose people who have a consistently positive outlook. This doesn't mean choosing people who will never tell you hard truths or who never have a bad day, but it does mean choosing people who attempt to find the positive in even difficult situations, who act with compassion, and who seek to lift others up rather than bring them down.

Limit Your Negative Interactions

Another way to keep yourself focused on the positive at work is to limit your negative interactions. There will be times when you will have to interact with negative people, but it is important to limit these interactions if at all possible. Avoiding office gossip is another way to limit negative interactions. Once you have a list of positive people to surround yourself with, seek them out instead of engaging in negative interactions. It can be tempting to vent or join in when others complain, but this can bring negativity into your day. It's understandable to want to vent frustrations, but if possible you should find a way to turn this into a positive interactions. If there are people in

your workplace that are consistently negative and with whom you do not have to interact, keep your interactions with them professional and pleasant, but brief. Another way to limit negative interactions is to be aware of the type of media you consume – we can't avoid bad news and negative images totally, but being sure to also feed your mind positive images is key to staying positive and happy.

Build Friendships

Building friendships at work also helps keep you focused on the positive. Having strong friendships at work gives you a built in support network. When you choose positive people to build friendships with, it is easier to avoid negative interactions and choose positive ones instead. The time you spend socializing with colleagues helps to lay the groundwork for work friendships. Seek out colleagues and coworkers who share your interests, who make you smile or laugh, or who appear to share your goals and values. Collaborate with these people when possible, and seek to spend time with them that is not focused on work.

Practical Illustration

Helen found herself often drawn into gossipy, negative conversations with her coworkers. Even if she was having a good day, a few minutes talking to these people left her feeling irritable and negative. She would resume her day in a very bleak state of mind. She started dreading going to work. One day she was working with another coworker, Kenya, who always seemed to be smiling. Helen asked her what her secret was. Kenya told her that she used a daily affirmation to keep herself focused, and she tried to avoid negative conversations. Kenya invited Helen to try one of the affirmations in a book she kept on her desk, and to use it when faced with negative people. Helen tried the affirmation for a day or two, and found she felt better. She also started seeking out Kenya instead of spending time with the negative group, and felt her spirits rise.

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.

Mahatma Ghandi

Chapter Six: Use Your Benefits

How many of your benefits do you use? Many of us have benefits through our workplace that we don't even know about. Taking full advantage of these benefits can help you be happier, healthier, and more productive. We are often reluctant to use our benefits, but it is important to remember that these are earned. Your employer or workplace provides benefits because they can help keep employees happy, healthy, and loyal to the organization. Learn about your benefits and use them to help promote your workplace happiness.

Use Your Vacation and Paid Time Off!

Many people feel guilty about taking vacation or paid time off. When they do take time off, they take it all in one chunk for a big vacation, or decide to not take it at all and instead cash it out when they leave a job. Studies show that people who take time off throughout the year are happier at work because they have breaks to look forward to. Using your vacation and paid time off is the same principle as building breaks into your workday – it provides time to reset, refresh, and relax. Be sure to take your paid time before it expires, if your workplace has a limit on how long you can accumulate time. Plan time off and look forward to it. It provides a respite from work, and will allow you to return to work refreshed and centered.

Gym or Health Club Memberships

Studies show that exercise is one way to increase serotonin, the feel good hormone. Many workplaces include gym or health club memberships in their benefits packages, or have partnerships with such places where employees get a discount. Explore whether these benefits are available to you. Gyms and health clubs aren't just for exercise, either – many offer yoga, massage, saunas, and other services which promote overall physical, mental, and emotional health. If you have access to such benefits, use them! You will benefit from the greater physical and mental health that results from exercise, and knowing that you can schedule a treat such as a massage or pedicure for yourself can also give you something to look forward to after a long week at work.

Employee Assistance Programs

Many workplaces have Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). These programs offer referrals to counseling services for employees in crisis, as well as information on other mental and psychological health services. Your EAP may also offer legal advice, information about resources such as gyms and health clubs, and other key resources that foster employee well-being. Many people only draw on their EAP when they are in crisis, but the EAP can be leveraged even in the best of times. Explore the benefits available through your EAP and take advantage of those that can increase your happiness and well-being.

Explore Other Benefits

Employee benefits extend beyond health insurance and the EAP. Take the time to review your benefits package. Many workplaces offer membership to a credit union, direct deposit, and automatic savings deposits from your paycheck, discount memberships at wholesale clubs, and more. Many of these benefits can streamline otherwise stressful activities like banking. Your workplace may also have access to travel discounts and other services which you can use to make your life easier. Using your benefits to save money, time, and stress can contribute to greater overall happiness at work. In addition, knowing that your workplace values its employees and seeks to better their lives can make you feel more positive about the organization. These additional benefits often go unused – look over your benefits package or make an appointment with your Human Resources representative to find out what benefits might be hiding in plain sight.

Practical Illustration

Heath was a hard worker, and prided himself on not having taken a sick day or day of vacation in 5 years. He was the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave in the evening. On the weekend, he spent Saturday running errands like the bank and the gym, which often left him exhausted. He was often frustrated with his team mate Carole, who seemed to take vacation time at least every three months. He thought she was not dedicated to the team and only cared about her next trip. Carole told Heath that having frequent vacation and downtime helped her be productive – she used the time off as a reward. She asked if he knew that his paid time off expired periodically, and challenged him to schedule a week of vacation as a reward for finishing the next big project. He reluctantly did so. As the vacation got closer, he realized he was working more efficiently so that he would complete the work before his vacation started. When he returned to work, he was refreshed and less stressed.

Happiness is not a goal – it is a by-product.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Chapter Seven: Take Control of Your Career Happiness

It sounds simple, but one of the best ways to take control of your happiness at work is to take control of your career happiness. Seek out opportunities to improve your performance, take on new responsibilities, or otherwise engage in work that is rewarding and fulfilling. Investing time and energy into your career growth and development can result in greater workplace happiness because you feel like you are growing or working towards goals and aspirations.

Take Control of Your Professional Development

Often we wait for our employers, supervisors, or bosses to suggest professional development. If they do not do so, we remain in the same position and do not grow. To be happy at work, take control of your professional development. Set goals for yourself in terms of new skills to master, new roles to try on, or new positions to aspire to. Don't be passive – be active! Seek out opportunities for new training or education, and enlist your supervisor or manager's support. Be willing to develop new skills, and look for opportunities to do so. Create a professional development plan for the next year or even five years for yourself, and actively seek ways to implement it.

Seek Frequent Feedback

Seeking frequent feedback is another way to take control of your career happiness. Being aware of what we are doing well and what we can improve helps us as we set professional goals. Draw on your support team to seek out feedback regularly. Rather than relying on yearly or quarterly reviews, or waiting for a supervisor or colleague to come to you with feedback, ask for feedback on the completion of projects, after presentations, or when collaborating with others. Make an agreement with members of your support team that you will regularly ask for their feedback, and that you will listen carefully to what they have to say. When you receive feedback, listen respectfully rather than preparing to respond. Then decide how best to act on feedback, both developmental and positive.

Practice Professional Courage

One of the greatest things you can do for your own professional development and workplace happiness is practice professional courage. Professional courage involves directly and productively addressing conflicts, advocating for yourself and others on your team, and otherwise dealing directly and proactively with potential problems. It can be difficult to practice professional courage, as it involves taking risks – it can seem easier to let a conflict go unaddressed or to accept the status quo. However, allowing conflict to be unresolved or your needs to go unmet can breed resentment and undermine productivity and happiness. Professional courage helps to promote open communication in the workplace. It also assures that

resentments and grudges do not fester. Learning to practice professional courage is a leadership skill which can help prepare you for, and make you a candidate for, more responsibility or promotions. But even if it does not lead to job advancement, practicing professional courage marks you out as a leader and someone who wants to promote the healthiest workplace.

Seek Mentoring, and Seek to Mentor Others

Mentoring is a key aspect of professional development. When taking charge of your own professional development, seek mentoring. You might choose one mentor or several, depending on your development needs and your goals. Spending time with a mentor and getting his or her feedback can amp up your professional growth. Actively seeking mentoring also demonstrates that you take your professional development seriously. Having a mentor to help guide your professional development also helps create a positive, beneficial relationship. Seeking out opportunities to mentor others is also a way to take charge of your professional development. Seeking out opportunities to mentor others is one way to build leadership skills and share your knowledge and development. Mentors and mentees can be valuable parts of a support team, as well as creating personal connections in the workplace.

Practical Illustration

Martina wanted to move up in her organization, but she didn't know how. She felt stagnant and bored in her current position, but didn't know what she needed to do to advance. Her boss was very distant – he gave her a yearly review, but otherwise seldom checked in with her. She noticed that her coworker Paige seemed to be on a fast track to the kind of position Martina herself wanted. She asked Paige how she did it. Paige explained that she had found a mentor in the department she hoped to work in, and they met regularly to discuss the steps Paige would need to take in order to gain the job she wanted. Paige also told Martina that she and her boss checked in once a week, at Paige's suggestion, for a feedback session. Based on these sessions and her time with her mentor, Paige had begun taking a night course and also seeking opportunities to develop new skills. Martina asked her boss about setting up the same type of weekly session. He agreed and even suggested a mentor for her. Martina began to believe she might just advance after all.

If you want to be happy, be.

Leo Tolstoy

Chapter Eight: Set Boundaries

A lack of boundaries can be a major contributor to unhappiness in the workplace. When we do not set boundaries, we may find that our time is not our own, our plan for our day gets derailed, or we spend too much time dealing with other people's problems. We may also take on too much, which can lead to resentments and conflicts. Learning to set good boundaries around your work and your time is a key skill to fostering happiness in the workplace. Strong boundaries can also help alleviate conflicts and other problems which can undermine everyone's happiness!

Learn to Say No

It can be hard to say no, especially to people who we depend on in the workplace. We may feel guilty, or we may fear that the person will refuse us the next time we need help. However, learning to say no is one way of protecting your own work time and downtime. While we all sometimes will have to say yes to something that causes upheaval in our day, learning to say no when we really don't want to or are not able to do something is a key skill. When we say yes when we really mean no, we may end up resentful of the task and the other person. This can lead to passive aggressive interactions or outright conflict, which undermines everyone's well-being. Trust that saying no will not convey that you are a bad person, not a team player, or otherwise a poor colleague. Learn to say no firmly but kindly, and be very clear about what you can and cannot do in any given situation.

Learn to Say Yes

We may be hesitant to say no, but we are sometimes equally hesitant to say yes. We may be afraid to say yes to things that are a stretch of our skill set or which pose a risk. Learning to say yes to things we really want to say yes to is as important as learning to say no! Be willing to change your plan to take advantage of a good opportunity. Based on the professional development plan you create, be willing to say yes to projects or experiences which take you out of your safe zone and into your development areas. When we are willing to say yes – whether to a new project or to a little time off – we are also setting good boundaries for ourselves. Saying yes allows us to grow and experience new things, even if we may be a little fearful of the risk of trying something new or unexpected.

Protect Your Downtime

One of the most important boundaries we can set at work is around our downtime. Often we find ourselves working through lunch, answering emails on weekends, staying late to finish one last thing, or going without a break all day. When we do take a break, we might cut it short to help a coworker or address an issue that could have been handled by someone else. This can breed exhaustion, burnout, and resentment. Learn to protect your downtime. Start simply, if this is hard for you – make yourself take a full lunch, or close your door when you take a five minute break between projects. Let your team members

and clients know that you do not check email on the weekend, or that you only check a set number of times. Be firm, clear, and polite about the fact that you are protecting your “you” time so that you can better serve your clients or colleagues’ needs.

Know When to Call It a Day

In this age of smart phones and tablets, even if we leave the office at our regular time, work can follow us home. It’s important to know when to call it a day! Checking and responding to email late at night (or even just after dinner) extends your workday into your downtime. Set a boundary with yourself that you will not check email or voicemail after a certain time. If you can avoid taking work home with you, do so. And don’t stay late at the office unless it’s a true emergency. When work bleeds into all other aspects of our lives, we can quickly become burned out or overly stressed. While there will always be occasions where work has to intrude on non-work time, making a practice of ending your workday at a regular time can help you avoid overload and burnout.

Practical Illustration

Riley just couldn't say no when it came to her colleagues. Whenever someone asked her for help, she would drop what she was doing and offer a hand. This meant she often stayed late at work or took work home with her on the weekends so she could catch up. Even when she left the office, she would check her work email on her smart phone and respond, no matter how late it was. She felt that this showed she was dedicated to her career. However, she sometimes resented that her colleagues didn't seem to have the same dedication. She was also often tired, as it felt like she never really left work. Her husband complained that Riley's job was intruding on their family life, as she would even check emails on the weekends or on vacation. Her husband asked Riley to try, for one week, not answering emails outside of work hours. It was hard, but by the third day Riley felt much more relaxed. And she also noticed that the work or problem was still there during work hours, and could be addressed then. Riley began to feel more comfortable not being available all the time.

Happiness is the only good.

Robert Ingersoll

Chapter Nine: Practice Positivity

Positivity is like a muscle – you have to use it and build it. One way to help foster happiness at work is to practice positivity. There will be days this is easier than others! But with continuous practice you will find yourself in a positive mindset more often than not. When we practice positivity, people respond to us positively – it creates a feedback loop. Taking the time to learn some basic skills for practicing positivity is a worthwhile investment in your own happiness.

Keep Your Interactions Positive

By surrounding yourself with positive people and limiting your negative interactions, you are already taking a major step towards practicing positivity. Find ways to keep your interactions positive. Avoid office gossip and rumors, as these feed on negativity. Avoid complaining or participating in “whine fests” as well, as these interactions focus solely on the negative. When you do need to voice your dissatisfaction with something, try to find a positive note. If you are interacting with someone who is negative, suggest a more positive spin on the situation, or simply end the interaction politely. You don’t have to become Pollyanna – simply cultivate a tendency to look on the bright side or find the positive in the situation.

Practice Gratitude

Gratitude is one way to find the positive in every day. Taking the time to practice gratitude helps focus you on your blessings and the positive aspects of your day and your life. A gratitude journal is one tool used by many people as they learn to practice positivity. Take the time each day to list three, five, or ten things you are grateful for. These can be major or minor, large or small. You can share your gratitude journal with others, via a blog or social media, or you can keep it private. Some people like to have a list of things they are thankful for handy, so they can review it on a day when gratitude is harder to come by. The continuous practice of gratitude helps keep you in a positive mindset even when life is challenging.

Address Conflict and Misunderstandings Directly

Nothing can poison the atmosphere in a workplace like unaddressed conflict! But conflict and misunderstandings are a natural part of working with other humans. Even with the best intentions, conflicts and misunderstandings can arise. One way to practice positivity is to address these things directly and positively when they occur. Approach the person or people with whom the conflict or misunderstanding has occurred. Express that you want to find the best solution and clear the air. This may mean apologizing or seeking to make amends. Rather than seeking to place blame, keep the focus on finding a way to

resolve the situation and restore the relationship. Directly and positively addressing conflict and misunderstandings prevents them from festering into resentment and grudges.

Look for the Silver Lining

When we practice positivity, we attempt to find the silver lining in any situation. It can be difficult, but finding the learning opportunity or other positive aspect of even the worst situation can keep us from sliding into negativity. One way to do this is to give people the benefit of the doubt. In a conflict or misunderstanding, assume that the other person has everyone's best interests at heart. Do not assume that he or she meant to be hurtful or cause problems. This small shift can help us keep the focus on the positive, as well as give us the courage to address problems or conflicts as they arise. When we look for the silver lining, it helps us refocus on the good in a situation rather than fixating on the negative. This is a technique that can be useful when interacting with a negative person and attempting to turn the interaction into a more positive one.

Practical Illustration

Brian is known as someone who finds the negative in everything. He is often in conflict with colleagues, but does not address it with them. Instead, he stewes about how they are out to sabotage his career. Even when he reaches a great accomplishment, he finds the negative in it – that he is older than he thought he'd be, or that others have accomplished more. His mentor suggested that Brian try reflecting for just 5 minutes a day on things he was grateful for. Brian thought it was a silly idea, but agreed to try it if only to prove it wouldn't work. He spent 5 minutes each day for a week listing 5 things he was grateful for. He discovered he had many blessings. He started to wonder if he could be more grateful in his workday.

Happiness is an inside job.

William Arthur Ward

Chapter Ten: Choose to Be Happy

Ultimately, the most important thing we can do to promote happiness at work is to choose to be happy! We will all face difficult days and situations, but we choose how we react to them. We can choose to be miserable or choose to be happy. By practicing positivity and otherwise choosing happiness, we go a long way toward fostering happiness and contentment in our work lives – and our whole lives.

Happiness is a Choice

Happiness is a choice. We choose every day whether we will be happy or not. We may have unhappy, angry, or difficult moments, but overall we choose whether we will focus on the positive and stay happy. When we choose to be happy, we focus on the good in our lives, including our work lives. Make a conscious choice that you will be happy in your workplace, and act on it. Decide what you would need to do to be happy – even if that means seeking other work! – and do it. Know that from moment to moment you can choose to be happy or choose to be miserable!

Choose Your Stress Response

One of the things that undermines happiness is stress. We cannot choose whether we will have stress in our lives, though we can limit it. However, we can choose our stress response. We can choose responses like anger or panic, which will make

us negative and unhappy. Or we can choose positive responses, such as focusing on solutions, taking a time out, or even sleeping on a stressful decision. Explore different stress responses and choose some that help you stay focused. Not giving in to a negative stress response will help you stay happier and healthier. Learning to navigate stress in a positive way will lead to greater workplace happiness as well. Stressful situations will always arise, but when we choose a positive response, we can emerge from those situations with our happiness intact!

Do One Thing Every Day That You Love and Enjoy

Taking time each day to do one thing you love and enjoy goes a long way toward fostering happiness. Whether you do yoga in the morning, drink a cup of your favorite tea, visit a funny website, or engage in a rewarding hobby, finding something you love and making time to do it is key to your well-being. It is not even necessary to do the thing you love in the context of work – just knowing it will be part of your day fosters happiness. When we don't take time to do things we love, our lives become a series of obligations. Taking time to engage in something you love and enjoy activates parts of your brain associated with joy and pleasure, and this fosters an overall sense of mental and emotional well-being.

Seek to Make Positive Changes

Happiness is a process. Even when we decide to choose happiness, it won't happen overnight. Seek to continuously make positive changes in your life, and you will find your happiness growing. Whether it's implementing the suggestions from this course such as a nightly routine or doing something you love each day, or you seek to make wider changes such as eating more healthfully or limiting your interactions with negative people, every step you take towards a more positive life leads to greater happiness. Adopt a continuous improvement mindset and constantly look for ways in which you can make positive changes. Also reward yourself for making changes! Happiness is a journey!

Practical Illustration

Wendell always said he wanted to be happy, but the deck was stacked against him. His job was stressful, his children were ungrateful, and his ex-wife was miserable. Every time he tried to be happy, he said, something happened. He was just born under a bad star, he guessed. No matter what happened, Wendell could find the downside. One of his friends suggested that he could choose to be happy. Wendell laughed. But the friend said Wendell should try it. He should decide each day that he would be happy. Wendell agreed, if only to prove her wrong. By the end of a week, he was feeling better. He still has bad days and still sometimes sees a dark cloud over him, but he is learning to make changes to choose happiness.

*Research has shown that the best way to be happy is to make
each day happy.*

Deepak Chopra

Closing Thoughts

- **Richard Bach:** Every gift from a friend is a wish for your happiness.
- **Andy Rooney:** Happiness depends more on how life strikes you than on what happens.
- **Sydney J. Harris:** Happiness is a direction, not a place.
- **Lucinda Williams:** People let their own hang-ups become the obstacles between them and personal happiness.

