

Four easy ways to be happier at work

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Not working in your dream job? Okay, maybe it's not the best job in the world, but it's a good-for-right-now job that pays decently, and you like your colleagues. And as it turns out, remembering to be grateful for a healthy paycheck and having colleagues you like to go for lunch with is one way to boost your happiness at work. So says Valerie R. Sheppard, a San Clemente, CA-based "happiness junkie" and CEO of [The Heart of Living Vibrantly](#), who tells us more about why happiness is critical at work and how we can find joy in our work days.

Q: Why is happiness important in the workplace?

A: Happiness is tied to many positive outcomes employers and employees want, including longevity, health, resilience and good performance. In his book, [The Happiness Advantage](#), Harvard University happiness expert Shawn Achor cites data from thousands of scientific studies as well as his own research with

students and Fortune 500 companies. This cutting-edge science indicates "happiness is the precursor to success, not the result of it."

Q: Can happiness at work be sacrificed for the sake of money, prestige or responsibility?

A: It certainly can, and I believe there are millions of people doing it this very minute, and I used to be one of them. I was fueled in the present moment by the promise of deferred happiness. That meant I worked hard, pushing myself to excel at everything, to gain prestige and build wealth, so that at some point in the future, I could retire a millionaire and get on with the "happy" part of my life. That way of thinking supported me for a long time, and I really believed I was happy along the way.

I know now I wasn't. I was experiencing conditional excitement. Even when I had the big title and an executive compensation package, something was still missing inside me. It became a never-ending cycle because before I'd even finished celebrating one success, I was feeling behind at accomplishing the next one. I was moving forward in my career and getting nowhere in my life.

True happiness is not conditional – meaning it isn't about accomplishments, lifestyle, financial status, marital status, or retirement plan. The longer we look for happiness in things outside us and that we can't control, the longer we'll be unfulfilled and unhappy, and that's definitely sacrificing true happiness in my book.

Q: So how can our readers to improve their workplace happiness?

A: Quiet the mind chatter: The conscious mind is a super-processor that can churn out thoughts incessantly. Often, the chum is negative, judgment-oriented and fear-based. Silence is a powerful way to quiet the conscious mind and alleviate the stress associated with the chum. So even a two- to five-minute meditation on a mantra of faith, resilience, or love can infuse us with hope and happiness that lasts for hours.

Give thanks every day: It's impossible to be happy when you're complaining. Studies have shown that gratitude not only increases happiness, life satisfaction, purpose and self-acceptance, it also lowers stress and depression. Keep a gratitude journal in your office and start each day capturing five workplace-related things for which you are grateful.

Be in the now: Often, things that sap our positive outlook and energy are either remnants from the past or worries about the future. Being present with what is, rather than what was or what might be makes us available to feel cheerful and confident in the here-and-now.

Make your office/cubicle your own happiness zone: Fill the space with engaging ways to recharge and release: incorporate your favorite colors and live plants or fresh/silk flowers; frame and hang your favorite optimistic quote or poem; keep a mini photo collection of your favorite happy times or keep your favorite citrus or other oil handy for some happiness aromatherapy.