

Taking a positive approach at work

Thinking about your job in a positive way can make a big difference in how happy you are at work. 'Positive psychology' is a way of looking at life as a process that helps you grow and become stronger when faced with challenges.

A positive outlook doesn't take away from the obstacles you face on a daily basis. It simply gives you a way of looking at difficult situations as experiences that make you stronger and more resilient. It's a way of treating each difficult moment as a chance to become better at what you do. And it replaces negative thinking with more optimistic thoughts.

How to get started with a positive outlook:

1. **Accept that things aren't always easy.** If you're in an environment where there is a lot of tension brought on by deadlines, conflict between employees, or a challenging financial situation, you may feel overwhelmed by the events around you. Feeling angry, worried about your future and anxious is normal. Try to see past the current situation and understand that what's happening at the moment will change over time. It won't always be this difficult. Instead, focus on your performance and how you can do the best job possible.
2. **Look at what you've learned so far.** Looking back at what you've learned over a period of time or just recently can help motivate you and give you the support you need going forward. Have you gained a new skill or language? Are you earning more than others you know? Have you learned how to manage many things at once? Identify your new successes and strengths - it will make you feel like you're moving forward and give you confidence.
3. **Determine what you like about your role.** What are the best aspects of your job? Do you enjoy your co-workers, projects you work on, your immediate environment? By listing the things you like the most, you will be less likely to focus on those you don't.
4. **Change your routine.** If you're doing the same things every day and feel that your job is becoming too much of a routine, change your pattern. By adding new elements to your day, such as taking a new way to work, talking to a new co-worker or eating lunch in a new locale, you can begin enjoying your day more, seeing the positives of your workplace once again.

Get support - give support

If you're feeling isolated and unhappy - maybe you're far away from family or are having trouble socializing at your workplace - take steps to turn that isolation into a feeling of belonging. Seek out co-workers who have also found themselves in your situation - make efforts to engage them in conversation or join a group that socializes regularly. By meeting up with like-minded employees, you'll feel more empowered and supported. You can observe how others cope with the challenges they encounter, and give each other tips on how to handle stressful events in different ways.

If you have any questions about this topic, or if you wish to discuss a personal situation you may be experiencing, we invite you to contact your EAP. Contact details can be found on your EAP brochure or, you can call Canada collect to reverse the charges, by calling your local operator and asking to speak to an operator in Canada. Then request to place a collect call to Canada at 905-886-3605. You'll be put in touch with our Care Access Centre who can help arrange for help closer to home.

Stay in contact with your family. If you're living away from home and your hours at work have lengthened, reducing the amount of time you speak and visit your family, make time to reconnect with them. A regular conversation on the phone or through email can make you feel supported - and give you a fresh perspective on issues you are facing.

If you've got the time and want to help others, find out if your organization has partnerships with local charities or groups. Giving of yourself can be an excellent way of bringing more meaning into your life and reminding of all the things you have – that others do not. It can make you more appreciative of the things you have acquired, regardless of the difficulties you are facing.

Acknowledge what makes you happy, and your setbacks

At the end of each day, ask yourself - what did I like best about today? Putting these points into words, perhaps writing them down, can make you actually see the good things about your day.

And accept your setbacks. Ask yourself - what didn't I like about today and what would I do differently? Experiences are rarely 100 percent bad or 100 percent good. Do not feel as if you have to be happy even if you're not at the moment. Through the trying situations that you face, along with your ability to adapt, you will gradually evolve into an employee with the resilience to face anything that comes along.

Did you know?

- People in Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands were ranked as being happiest in a recent survey of European countries.
- Research shows that happiness is found in social relations and not in money.
- The largest decline in overall job satisfaction in the past 25 years has been among those 65 and over, where the rate of job satisfaction fell to 46.1 percent in 2011 from 70.8 percent in 1987.
- In a study of employees who described themselves as “thriving,” 16 percent had better overall job performance (as reported by their managers) and 125 percent less burnout than their co-workers. These employees were 32 percent more committed to the organization and 46 percent more satisfied with their jobs.

Resources:

<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/newsletter.aspx?id=1554>
<http://www.expatechange.com/lib.cfm?networkID=&articleID=3365>
<http://www.cicollective.com/blog/2012/8/7/positive-psychology-has-good-news-for-expats.html>
<http://www.expateexplorer.hsbc.com/files/pdfs/overall-reports/2011/report.pdf>
<http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/05/world-happiest-places-lifestyle-travel-world-happiest.html>
<http://hbr.org/2012/01/creating-sustainable-performance/ar/1>

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