

# The Science of Being Happy & Productive at Work!

Presented to



Training tools for developing great people skills.

by

Happy Brain Science

## Choose Happiness

Happiness is defined as positive emotions with meaning *and* satisfaction. Studies show that happier people are more productive, creative, insightful, engaged and resilient. They are also healthier and more sociable. Grounded in solid scientific data, and organized around the themes of stress, attitude, goals, and relationships, this presentation covers dozens of actionable techniques to increase job happiness. You will gain insight into how to develop and sustain happiness, reboot your workflow for increased focus and creativity, and more!

*Solid science tells us that yes, happiness comes from our genes, but also from the choices and thoughts going on between our ears. Happiness is impacted surprisingly little by our life circumstances.*

- Page 2 – Notes and Doodles** ----- Some brains are happiest with the opportunity to doodle or take notes while hearing new information.
- Page 3 – Talk Summary** ----- Some brains are distracted by taking notes, but want notes to refer to later.
- Page 4 – Happiness Activities** ----- A variety of activities that can be applied to boost happiness at work.
- Page 5 – Happiness Action Plan** --- An Action Plan to identify where, when and how you will actively choose happiness at work.

*Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be. – Abraham Lincoln*

**NOTES & DOODLES**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin teal border, intended for taking notes or creating doodles. It occupies the majority of the page's vertical space.

## TALK SUMMARY

According to various studies, happier people are healthier and more creative, energetic, productive, resilient, cooperative, social, and engaged at work. Happiness widens the scope of attention and increases behavioral repertoire. You will do better work if you are happier!

**Subdue Stress:** When we work toward goals, we will experience inevitable stress and hardship. Science



tells us that how we cope has a huge effect on our well-being. Our natural fight, flight, or freeze reaction is usually not the most helpful response in the workplace. More effective coping strategies include physical exercise, connecting with a friend, mindfulness meditation, and viewing stress as energizing.

**Flow to Goals:** Progress toward clear and meaningful goals fuels happiness. If we savor and celebrate our



progress, we can get much more happiness from that progress than the occasional completion of a major goal. When we focus completely—with no multi-tasking—for 20 minutes or more on a task that is challenging but possible, we end up in a state called flow. When we're in flow, we feel invigorated. Many of us think multi-tasking is a sign of being good at your job, but it turns out it's usually making us less effective and takes us out of flow.

**Revitalize Relationships:** Quality relationships are a major source of happiness. We are social creatures;



we need real connection to other people to be at our best. We all have mirror neurons which give us that ability to understand each other—and also catch emotions from each other. This means happiness is contagious. Spending more quality time and attention focusing on other people will bring you happiness. This might be carpooling to work in the morning, forgiving others, being kind to colleagues, or expressing gratitude to coworkers. Even just acting like a happy person can make you and others around you actually feel happier!

### BONUS CONTENT:

**Practice Positivity:** Our brains become happy when we practice positivity. As cheesy as it may sound,



having a positive attitude works. Science tells us that practicing positivity by being actively optimistic, imagining our best possible future, focusing our attention on positive things, and minding our ratio of positive to negative comments can significantly affect our happiness. The way you approach your work will have a large effect on your happiness in it; are you thinking about your work as a calling, a career or a job? Those with a calling mindset experience the most meaning and happiness through their work.

## HAPPINESS ACTIVITIES AT WORK

A wide variety of intentional activities can boost your happiness, but that doesn't mean you should try to act on the whole list. To the contrary, you should start by picking 2-3 techniques that sound like the best fit for you, and focus on doing more of those.

### The activities that can be applied most often at work include the following:

- ❑ Get exercise. It's fantastic for **managing stress**, improving your thinking, and boosting your mood.
- ❑ Talk with a friend when under stress. Connecting with people who care about you is a great coping strategy.
- ❑ Meditation and mindfulness are fantastic for reducing stress, improving self-control and relationships, and increasing happiness.
- ❑ Cope effectively with stress and hardship. Try to avoid fear, over-thinking, obsessing about choices, and excessively comparing yourself to others.
  
- ❑ Do your best to maintain a **positive attitude**. (Yes, this sounds cheesy, but science tells us it works!)
- ❑ Be "actively optimistic"—write down your best possible future.
- ❑ Feel and express gratitude.
- ❑ Notice the best in people and things around you (including the work of others), and really take it all in.
  
- ❑ Make **progress toward goals** that are important and meaningful to you (it's the journey, not the destination).
- ❑ Discover and use your strengths at work.
- ❑ Get into 'flow' by focusing, undistracted, on challenging work.
  
- ❑ Focus on **people and relationships** (good relationships are especially important for happiness).
- ❑ Shorten or alter your commute to work (typically an unhappy time).
- ❑ Be kind.
- ❑ Forgive.
- ❑ Savor life's joys (past, future, and especially present).
- ❑ Act like a happy person (the "fake it until you make it" strategy has been scientifically shown to work!)
- ❑ Give happiness to get happiness; happiness is contagious!

Again, the suggestion is not to try to do everything above. Instead, find what fits best for you, and do more of that. It will help if you are persistent, have social support (tell people you're working on this and want their help), and mix it up with variety. For example, one day you can express gratitude with a recognition in a staff meeting and the next day do it with a little award, followed by the next day with a handwritten note. Science suggests you'll become a happier person—and more successful.

## ACTIVITY: HAPPINESS ACTION PLAN

Instructions: Select one or two activities from the above lists that you and/or your organization will act on. You might pick one or more of the following ways:

- Choose an activity that fits a source of unhappiness.** If you multi-task, you might work on focusing and getting into flow. If you tend not to have great relationships at work, you might invest more time getting to know people.
- Choose an activity that fits with your strengths.** This takes the opposite approach. If you are already good at pursuing meaningful goals, do more of it. If you are already good at expressing gratitude at work, do more of that. Whatever sounds most natural and easy to you, do more of it.
- Choose an activity that fits with your lifestyle.** If you don't have any time to spare, you might choose an activity that doesn't take any extra time, like avoiding multi-tasking or focusing on the positive.

Write the happiness activities you choose in the space below; in whatever way they sound best to you. Then choose a person or people you trust with whom to review this plan. (We know this may sound corny to some, but reviewing your plan with someone will really help you make the change you desire.) Ask for their help: does the plan seem like a good one to them? Will they help you track your progress and remind you to act on your plan?

If you act on your plan fairly often, it will make a difference in your happiness and job performance. If you manage others, you might create a plan like this with each of your reports.

### My Personal Happiness Action Plan

To be happier I will do the following things:	When and where I will act on these things:

*Consider sharing your plan with others, in person or online.  
When you share a plan publicly, research shows you are more likely to follow through.*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Recommended Reading:

For more information about the brain, learning, stress, and happiness, the science behind them, or the details of implementing strategies, we highly recommend the following books. Written by respected researchers, all of the books below base their findings to some extent on experimental data.

***Your Brain at Work***, by David Rock  
***The How of Happiness***, by Sonja Lyubomirsky  
***Happiness***, by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener  
***Flourish***, by Martin E.P. Seligman  
***Stumbling On Happiness***, by Daniel Gilbert  
***Happier***, by Tal Ben-Shahar  
***The Happiness Hypothesis***, by Johnathan Haidt  
***The Happiness Advantage***, by Shawn Achor

You will find a more thorough (and role specific) reading list at <http://www.happybrainscience.com/resources/>. Please visit for our suggestions on where to learn more.

For a summary of The Science of Happiness, complete with quotes and audio, visit First Round Review's summary of the workshop at <http://firstround.com/article/Heres-Why-Founders-Should-Care-about-Happiness>.

**Free Newsletter:** You can sign up for Happy Brain Science's monthly newsletter for more happiness activities and brain science news at [www.HappyBrainScience.com](http://www.HappyBrainScience.com). It always contains thoughts on how to apply the latest science. We never share your email with anyone for any reason.

**Stay in Touch:** You can find Scott on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/HappyBrainScience](http://www.facebook.com/HappyBrainScience) or follow him on Twitter at [@ScottCrab](https://twitter.com/ScottCrab).

**Coaching:** Through coaching you will achieve better results sooner. Coaching is an investment in yourself. We will help you achieve your current goals, and also empower you to continue succeeding in the long run. You can find more information about executive coaching at [www.HappyBrainScience.com/offerings/coaching](http://www.HappyBrainScience.com/offerings/coaching).

*We would love to hear from you on how this works for you, any questions you have, and anything else related to your mind; please feel free to contact us using the information below.  
 If you know of someone who might want to schedule a workshop or coaching, please let us know.*

*To your happy brain!  
 -Scott Crabtree and the Happy Brain Science Team*

Thank you



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