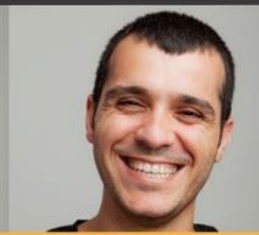
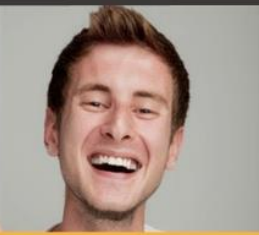
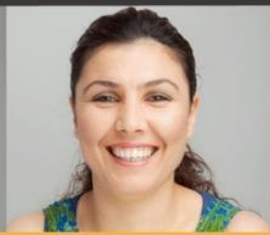
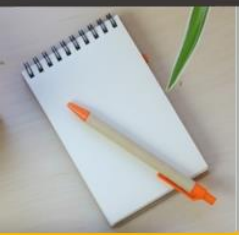


Happy Brain Science

Fostering productivity, creativity & happiness through
the application of cutting-edge brain science.



WHAT IS THE REAL VALUE OF HAPPINESS IN THE WORKPLACE?

TRANSCRIPT

Choose Happiness

Thrive From Nine to Five: The Science of Happiness at Work

Just so that we are all talking about the same thing, let me tell you how scientists, and therefore I, define happiness. As positive emotions. Positive emotions are wonderful and short-lived, and then you're back to a happiness set point we all seem to have that varies from person to person. Positive emotions are wonderful, and positive emotions are part of what we're talking about all day, but they tend to be short-term. We're talking about those short-term positive emotions. We're also talking about a longer-lasting, more meaningful sense of contentment, meaning in life, satisfaction with work and life. Depending on how you were raised, that may sound more like joy to you, or happiness. Depending on how you're raised, the two seem to mean almost the opposite of each other. Just know that I mean that deep, real, lasting, meaningful sense of happiness. I'm going to keep using the word happiness because it's a lot easier than the phrase scientists use, which is "subjective well-being."

Three basic things I want you to know about happiness before we dive into those themes. The first is that, according to the data, it is much better to pursue happiness frequently than intensely. That is, if you are waiting for one big thing to make you happy in your life, science says stop waiting because it probably won't make as much difference as you think, and the effect won't last very long. Red Sox are World Series Champions, and then last place in the American League East and having the worst season in a long time. With very few exceptions, events don't make as much difference on our happiness as we believe they will. We overestimate the importance of events, good and bad, on our lives.

Excellent quotes all around the room. This one from Groucho Marx speaks to this, "I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet. I have just one day, today, and I'm going to be happy in it." It's better to get your happiness from lots of little things than one massively intense moment or event. Sorry I have no cash for any of you, but as one example of many, if I gave you all \$1000 according to science, you would get more happiness out of it spending it \$20 at a time, than all \$1000 on one thing.

Anybody happened to see the San Diego 2012 fireworks by chance? Either live or on video? A few knowing smiles. So, for the rest of you, picture your leadership expo is in San Diego, 2012. You pile out of a van, you spread out the blanket, you await an hour-long extravaganza coming your way. And due to a malfunction, you get this. This is not time lapse, due to a malfunction all of the San Diego 2012 fireworks went off in under one minute. You are seeing 99% of the San Diego 2012 fireworks, and that's about it. Your colleague who's one minute late comes running up, "Dude, I missed the fireworks? How were they?" You say, "Really intense." He says, "So, they were awesome?" You say, "No, they were kind of lame and disappointing." Decent analogy for happiness. Don't go for it all in one really intense bang, spread it out and you will end up happier. Pursue happiness frequently, rather than pursuing very intense happiness.

The next thing I want to get out of the way is, yes, there is too happy, and, good news, I am not it. I also find those constantly super, super cheerful people just a little bit annoying sometimes. To drive this home, let me tell you a quick story from my marriage. I'm working at Intel, experiencing some of that stress that I described. I drive home on Route 26 and traffic is bad. I get home and kids are running around, and toys are everywhere. Despite it being a fairly rare beautiful sunny day in Portland. Despite the sun beaming through my windows hitting me on the chest as I lie on the couch, I am talking to my wife and essentially whining. Then, waking up. I hadn't planned on taking a nap, so I turned to my wife and I said, "I think I fell asleep there." She said, and I should add, with love in her heart and smile on her face she said to me, "Oh yeah, you fell asleep. You want to know how I know you were asleep? You weren't complaining." That's my anecdotal evidence to you that I am not just Pollyanna positive all the time.

Now we're at the very fuzzy correlation only end of the data, but science suggests none of us should be pursuing constant bliss. Those who report themselves to be about 8 out of 10 happy are most healthy, most successful, live the longest. Why? Well, we're into speculation from scientists now, but the speculation starts that if you report that you are 10 out of 10 happy all the time, you may not be completely engaged with reality. Because life is hard, right? Bad things happen to us and the people we care about, and the appropriate response when bad things happen to us and people we care about is to feel bad. And please, the last thing I am here to do is make anyone feel bad for feeling bad. Those unpleasant emotions are healthy and helpful. Among other benefits, those unpleasant emotions move us forward. They give us the full range of experiences. They give us something to contrast happiness with.

Scientists like to make up words, so a recent word scientists have been making up is emo-diversity. Which means those who experience the full range of life's emotions actually thrive the most. Please don't take the rest of this workshop as, "I should never feel unhappy." Please don't take this workshop as, "I should constantly be pursuing happiness in every moment of my life." If you get desperate about pursuing happiness, it starts to backfire. If you're worried about being happy when you're feeling happy, you're trying too hard. Don't try too hard, let yourself feel bad. It's part of life, it's normal, healthy, and helpful. The rest of this presentation is how to be happier if you choose to be.

At work and in life, don't pursue constant bliss all the time. Eighty percent happy is a sweet spot, according to the data. If you're thinking you are either born happy, or not, you are very roughly about half right. We know this from studies of genetically identical twins separated at birth, and

adopted and raised in different families. Some of scientists' favorite people on the planet. "Mine just bought a cherry Popsicle, over, what'd yours do?" Because they're our best source of information about how human genetics effect behavior. What we find is extremely messy, which is why I have overlapping colors here in this pie chart. If you go home and tell your loved ones, "Hey, your happiness is exactly fifty percent genetic". Not quite, not exactly. What the data suggests, is that again for most of us, most of the time, the average difference between one person's happiness and another person's happiness is very roughly about fifty percent due to genetic factors. Some of you are born looking at the glass half full, some of you are born looking at the glass half empty. Some of you are born thinking, "Who drank half my milk?"

Those genetic factors are there, and they affect our happiness. What was very surprising to me, and maybe to many of you, is that by some scientists estimates all of your life circumstances is only about a ten percent impact on your happiness. "What?! All I'm doing is working on my life's circumstances so I can be happier. How can that possibly be only a ten percent impact on my happiness?" Because fundamentally you are getting use to everything in your life. With very few exceptions, something changes, an event happens. You buy a new car for example, and your happiness goes up, and then comes back down. Shortly after I bought my 2008 Prius, first new car of my life. You should have seen my driving down I-5, so happy. You smell that new car smell? Mmmmm, aren't I environmental driving along with my 48 miles per gallon? This is awesome. In under a month I'm like, "Screw you buddy, you cut me off." It's just a car. With very few exceptions you get use to everything you have in your life. All of your life circumstances have a fairly small impact on your happiness.

As always, there are exceptions. Again, science produce averages. If you put me in a war zone and torture me, I will be miserable; but for most of us most of the time, the difference between one car and another, one desk and another, one project and another, all those circumstances are only about a ten percent impact on your happiness.