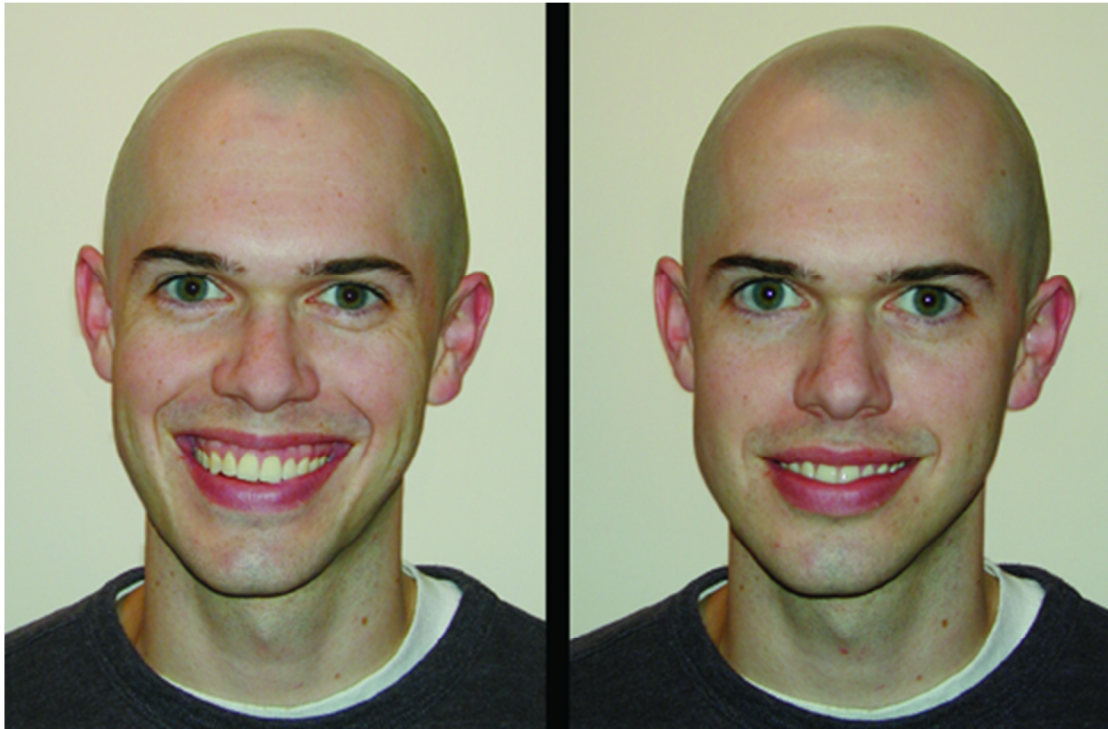


7. Practice smiling--it can alleviate pain

Smiling itself can make us feel better, but it's more effective when we back it up with positive thoughts, according to this study:

A new study led by a Michigan State University business scholar suggests customer-service workers who fake smile throughout the day worsen their mood and withdraw from work, affecting productivity. But workers who smile as a result of cultivating positive thoughts – such as a tropical vacation or a child's recital – improve their mood and withdraw less.

Of course it's important to practice "real smiles" where you use your eye sockets. It's very easy to spot the difference:



According to PsyBlog, smiling can improve our attention and help us perform better on cognitive tasks:

Smiling makes us feel good which also increases our attentional flexibility and our ability to think holistically. When this idea was tested by Johnson et al. (2010), the results showed that participants who smiled performed better on attentional tasks which required seeing the whole forest rather than just the trees.

A smile is also a good way to alleviate some of the pain we feel in troubling circumstances:

Smiling is one way to reduce the distress caused by an upsetting situation. Psychologists call this the facial feedback hypothesis. Even forcing a smile when we don't feel like it is enough to lift our mood slightly (this is one example of embodied cognition).

One of our previous posts goes into even more detail about the science of smiling.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3015486/how-to-be-a-success-at-everything/10-simple-science-backed-ways-to-be-happier-today>