

Fostering a Positive Vision

By Susan Schilke; October 1, 2020

A leaders' outlook is rooted in optimism. To keep that upbeat attitude, start with an active approach to your personal happiness. The opening of the Happiness Museum in Copenhagen prompted me to revisit the "[10 Simple Science-Backed Ways to be Happier Today](#)" from Fast Company we shared. Try these approaches to keep your energy high to continue to paint a positive vision of the future for your team.

1. **Exercise More.** Exercise can cure depression, help you relax, increase your brain power, improve your body image, and release endorphins in the brain that make us happier. And you can't claim you don't have enough time when there's a proven workout you can do in 7 minutes.
2. **Sleep Enough.** Less sleep leaves your brain conserving energy, looking for danger and ignoring the positives. It makes you more sensitive to fear and anger. Studies show people live best when they sleep between 6.5 and 7.5 hours a night, with women needing about 20 more minutes on average than men.
3. **Move Closer to Work.** Shorter commutes reduce stress, increases overall health and balance.
4. **Spend Time with Friends & Family.** All happiness revolves around our relationships with other people. This is challenging this year, but many are spending more time with family and finding creative ways to stay connected to friends.
5. **Go Outside.** Spending just 20 minutes outside can increase positivity, broaden thinking, and improve working memory, creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving skills. Going outside can also decrease depression, anxiety, and stress, lowers the risk of diabetes, increases energy, immunity, and fitness.
6. **Help Others.** Performing an act of kindness gives an immediate mood boost. In fact, it produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise scientists have studied.
7. **Smile More.** Studies show smiling makes you happier, more likeable, and better looking! It helps improve attention and performance on cognitive tasks and can reduce pain and stress. Smiling can also reduce stress hormones, increase mood and health enhancing hormone levels, and lower blood pressure.
8. **Plan a Trip.** Vacation anticipation can boost your happiness for up to 8 weeks. 'Light at the end of the tunnel' concept, daydreaming releases almost the same amount of 'feel good' chemicals the real experience would.
9. **Meditate.** Meditating is proven to be one of the most effective ways to increase happiness in your life. Regular meditation has shown to rewire our brain structure, increasing concentration, focus and performance. It decreases blood pressure and can help you lose weight, and reduces pain, anxiety and depression. Meditation leaves you calm and content with more awareness and empathy.
10. **Practice Gratitude.** Simply taking note of things you are grateful for can improve your happiness, decrease depressive symptoms and improve positive thoughts while making you more aware of happiness in your life. Create a list of '100 Things You are Thankful For' or take gratitude walks to reflect.

Remember Covey's advice to schedule your priorities versus prioritizing your schedule, and put time on your calendar and daily strategies in place to do more of these. Consider working on one of these each week for the balance of the year. Share this with your spouse and team to support each other in focusing on personal happiness, because everyone performs better when they're happy. And though the world is disrupted, these are all things we can do now.