

Insights from *The Happiness Advantage* by Shawn Achor

“We become more successful when we are happier and more positive.” – Shawn Achor

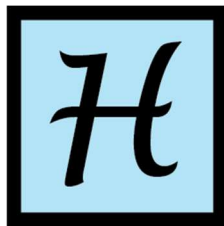
Why it's important to be happy *before and during* work:

- Doctors primed with positive emotions perform an accurate diagnosis 19% faster (Estrada 1997).
- Optimistic sales people outperform their counterparts by 56% (Seligman, 2006).
- A 2005 meta-study looked at over 200 studies on 275,000 people worldwide and found that happiness led to success in nearly every domain, including work, health, friendship, sociability, and creativity (Lyubomirsky, 2005).

“Happiness gives us a real chemical edge on the competition. How? Positive emotions flood our brains with dopamine and serotonin, chemicals that not only make us feel good, but dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels. They help us organize new information, keep that information in the brain longer, and retrieve it faster later on. And they enable us to make and sustain more neural connections, which allows us to think more quickly and creatively, become more skilled at complex analysis and problem solving, and see and invent new ways of doing things.” – Shawn Achor (all bold italic quotes shown below are by Shawn Achor)



5 Ways to Build Your 'Happiness Advantage' This Week

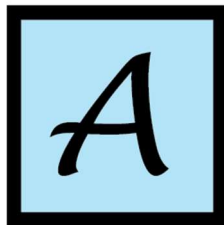


Help someone by using a signature strength

“Each time we use a skill, whatever it is, we experience a burst of positivity. If you find yourself in need of a happiness booster, revisit a talent you haven’t used in a while.”

My signature strength is learning. I exercise my signature strength by reading books, learning new ideas, and sharing those ideas with others. Finding one great idea provides a happiness boost that lasts the entire day. Your signature strength might be giving advice on a specific topic.

→ Determine what you're particularly good at and enjoy doing. Each night, before you go to bed, think about how you're going to use your signature strength to make a small difference in someone's life.

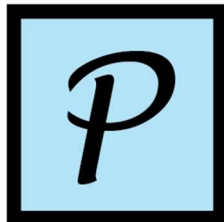


Arrange something to look forward to

“One study found that people who just thought about watching their favorite movie actually raised their endorphin levels by 27 percent. Often, the most enjoyable part of an activity is the anticipation. If you can't take the time for a vacation right now, or even a night out with friends, put something on the calendar—even if it's a month or a year down the road. Then whenever you need a boost of happiness, remind yourself about it.”

Schedule 3 exciting experiences this week. These experiences might include:

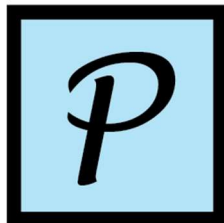
→ Watching a movie you've been dying to see, playing a round of golf with a friend, or watching a local concert or comedy show.



Practice gratitude

“When researchers pick random volunteers and train them to be more grateful over a period of a few weeks, they become happier and more optimistic, feel more socially connected, enjoy better quality sleep, and even experience fewer headaches than control groups. Countless other studies have shown that consistently grateful people are more energetic, emotionally intelligent, forgiving, and less likely to be depressed, anxious, or lonely.”

→ Keep a journal near your bed. Before going to sleep at night OR before getting out of bed in the morning, write down 3 things you're grateful for.

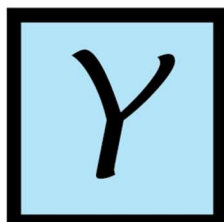


Perform deliberate acts of kindness

“Sonja Lyubomirsky, a leading researcher and author of The How of Happiness, has found that individuals told to complete five acts of kindness over the course of a day report feeling much happier than control groups and that the feeling lasts for many subsequent days, far after the exercise is over.”

Make a conscious decision to help 3 people today:

→ Buy someone a cup of coffee, offer your time to simply listen to someone's struggles, or send a message of encouragement to a friend or family member.



Earn for social support

“In the midst of challenges and stress, some people choose to hunker down and retreat within themselves. But the most successful people invest in their friends, peers, and family members to propel themselves forward. This principle teaches us how to invest more in one of the greatest predictors of success and excellence—our social support network.”

As an introvert, I could go weeks without talking to friends. This behavior is destructive to my happiness and my work performance. I've learned to make plans with friends at the start of each week to ensure my social support bucket stays full. I often schedule:

→ Coffee dates, dinners, and game nights (card games, board games, etc.)