

Hacking Happiness

5 Practices to Boost Your Happiness at Work

When stress, busyness and overwhelm set in, it can be challenging to see the brighter side of things. Here are some ways to “hack” into your happiness right at your desk.

1. ***Release Dopamine by Celebrating Small Milestones***

Dopamine, released from the brain, helps us stay motivated by giving us a little surge of “feel good” as we achieve goals. To maximize this boost, you can celebrate small milestones in projects (vs waiting until the larger project is completed). High-fives, sending an encouraging email, celebrating at lunch or over a coffee are all great ways to encourage a release of Dopamine.

2. ***Release Serotonin by Practicing Gratitude***

Serotonin, another feel-good chemical in the body, is released when you feel noticed, important or needed. And, the brain has a hard time distinguishing between actual or imagined/recalled events so recounting an experience when you felt appreciated or acknowledged will give you a Serotonin release. Proactively reach for gratitude in times of overwhelm; call to mind past achievements/victories or recall helping someone or being loved and supported by someone you care about.

3. ***Get a Hug and Your Oxytocin at the same time!***

Oxytocin is sometimes referred to as the “cuddle” drug. It gives us that sense of “we are loved, appreciated and part of a community”. Along with the obvious benefits of feeling loved and accepted, a hug reduces cardiovascular stress and improves your immune system. Research recommends 8 hugs a day! If you aren’t a hugger, your oxytocin levels also rise when you receive a gift so take time to enjoy the benefits when this happens.

4. ***Release Endorphins with Laughter***

Endorphins help the body to alleviate anxiety and depression. A surge of these is what some athletes refer to as a “runners high” or “second wind”. If you aren’t up for a big run how about taking your sense of humour to work, openly share funny things that have happened to you, even a good joke email. Knowing that laughter releases these helpful endorphins you can be sure to “take it all in” and have a good belly laugh.

5. ***The Smell of Grammas Apple Pie.....mmmmm***

Studies show that there are certain smells and even some foods that cause our body to release endorphins. If not apple pie, you can try keeping vanilla or lavender at your desk (there are essential oil “roll ons” at many health shops). Also, keep some dark chocolate handy at your desk as it will do the same (2 squares, 1/3 of a bar or a couple Hershey’s kisses). When the overwhelm sets in, stop and enjoy some aromatherapy for a few minutes or a chocolate break or BOTH!