



Happiness on the Clock

UNLOCK CONTENTMENT AT WORK TO FLOURISH AND GROW WITH ADVICE FROM A HAPPINESS EXPERT.

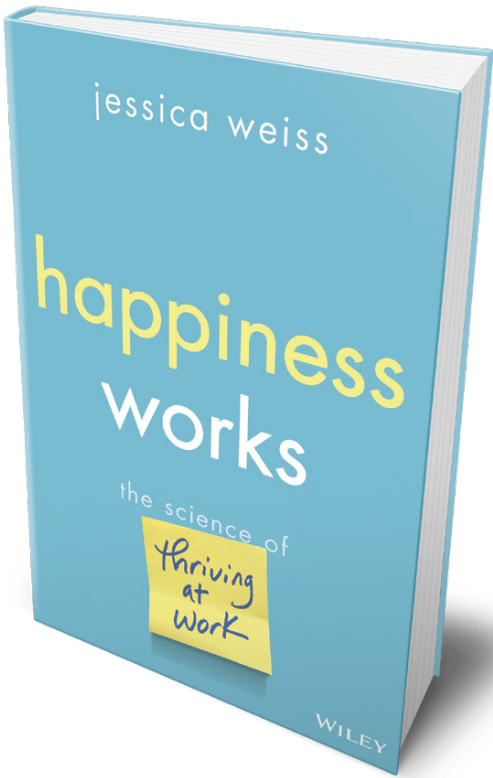
BY KAREN MARLEY

What can you feel but never touch, is free yet priceless? The answer is happiness, and thriving in life requires internalizing this feel-good emotion. We discover happiness in many ways, but for most Americans, finding it in the workplace remains a persistent and formidable riddle. That’s distressing news, especially given that we spend nearly one-third of our lives on the job. “Nine out of 10 people would take a pay cut to have more happiness at work,” reports Jessica Weiss, author of *Happiness Works: The Science of Thriving at Work*. After spending 15 years embedded in Fortune 500 companies and interviewing thousands of workers across all income levels, Weiss says American workplaces are in crisis. The main culprit? Lack of happiness. But she has solved the riddle and is sharing answers. Her blueprint for instilling it into the workplace empowers managers, leaders and workers to boost productivity, performance and personal well-being.

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MORE THAN A MOOD
Time spent on hobbies, giving a gift or watching a beautiful sunset can be joyful moments. Lifelong happiness, however, is foundational and less about daily mood swings. “It’s this sustainable, long-lasting satisfaction or contentment with your life,” Weiss explains. “Just because you’re in a bad mood one day doesn’t mean that you don’t live a life of happiness, right? Because those negative feelings are sort of necessary in order to have the good feelings.” Challenges and frustrations are a normal part of any job, but individuals armed with an undercurrent of contentment can weather these emotional downturns and still feel a general sense of happiness. Sadly, most workers lack this positive emotional underpinning.

COURTESY OF JESSICA WEISS



Weiss compiled a snapshot of the American workplace with data. She reveals:

- In 2021, 47 million Americans quit their jobs during the Great Resignation.
- In 2026, 46% of people are still considering quitting.
- Only 20% of employees have genuine workplace friendships.

“We know from decades of research that if you don’t have a friend at work, [you are missing] the key to happiness and satisfaction at work,” Weiss explains. “And 67% of Americans report they are not happy at work.” For Weiss, the signs are obvious: People miss more days of work; stress levels are elevated; there are fewer promotions; and productivity, efficiency and work ethic are decreased. Happiness is the antidote to all this malaise, and friendship is the way to attain it. Friendship begets trust, satisfaction and emotional engagement. As for productivity, a key performance indicator for any organization, 78% of workers are less likely to miss work when they’re fully engaged, according to Gallup’s 2024 *State of the Global Workplace* report. These types of correlations are not new. Citing an earlier iteration of Gallup’s global study from 2018, Weiss adds, “Those sales teams where people reported higher levels of happiness and satisfaction were 37% more productive, more profitable.”

FRAMEWORK FOR FRIENDSHIP
Building a friendship at work takes effort and strategy. Weiss says creating conditions for personal connections in a work environment is the manager’s responsibility. She has identified accessible techniques that help foster friendship. Hint: They do not include pizza parties, games or forcing employees to overshare during meetings. She describes three:

1. Natural camaraderie. Taking a page from psychology and drawing on the “mere exposure effect,” which suggests that consistent proximity fosters friendship, Weiss encourages managers to hold meetings in the same place at the same time. The effect is similar to

what happens when we go to school and see the same faces day after day. Those repetitive shared experiences strengthen bonds and connections.

2. Point to purpose. People want to feel their work matters, that their efforts are having an impact on the world, however small. “If managers were trained on this idea of helping people understand what the impact is of their work on the team and on their organization, that would be a game changer in terms of happiness at work,” Weiss declares.

3. The “done” list. Savoring a positive emotion reinforces the brain’s neural pathway related to that emotion. Emotions also influence behavior. Weiss hacks the classic “to-do” list into a “done” list. By acknowledging a team’s accomplishments in a project, positive energy and motivation will replace discouragement.

LIVING THE DREAM
The hindrances to a happier workplace are significant. Not only is it difficult to get organizations to train managers properly, but massive layoffs are decimating middle manager roles. Don’t fret. Resiliency is also part of the happiness equation. Perseverance, adaptability, resourcefulness—these are the ingredients that help you navigate rough spots and find your way.

No one should stay in a toxic environment, but it is possible to create your dream job. Weiss advises finding the work you love and doing more of it. Connect with people and develop trustworthy relationships. Approach work with strategic optimism, trusting that fairness, transparency and helping others are part of the culture.

Happiness at work doesn’t mean everything is perfect, but by focusing on what you can control and finding meaning in your efforts, you’re on your way to lasting growth and satisfaction in the workplace. ♦

MARLEY IS A WRITER WHO LOVES FINDING INSPIRATION HIDDEN IN NEW PLACES.

RESEARCH-BASED RESILIENCY TRAINING

“Resiliency isn’t an innate personality trait,” Jessica Weiss says. “It’s a skill that can be taught, mastered and practiced.” Strengthen yours with her tips.

Practice micro-decisions. Building confidence through low-stakes decisions creates neural pathways for decisive action when it really counts.

Reframe stress. Labeling nervous energy as “excitement” can boost performance by 22%, Weiss says.

Use the “temporary, specific, nonpersonal” method. With setbacks, remind yourself that it’s not permanent, not everything and you’re not the problem.

Build a support system. **Deliberately.** Identify those you can turn to for help.

Recharge yourself by helping others. Small acts of support activate your brain’s reward pathways and help stress recovery.

Keep a joy journal. Log three work successes each day, noting your contribution. It only takes 15 days to rewire your brain for more resiliency.

Use all your PTO. Disconnecting from work resets the brain and reduces stress hormones.

Intentionally create small wins. Success momentum comes from frequency, not size.

Develop a “North Star goal.” A sense of purpose pulls you toward your ultimate objective and gives perspective to challenges.