



Employee Retention and the Pursuit of **Happiness**



EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

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RESEARCH ON WHAT DRIVES RETENTION, ENGAGEMENT AND HAPPINESS

Why focus on Retention?

The focus on employee retention has always been important to organizations, but it is becoming increasingly important today. Research shows that one of the biggest priorities and concerns for employers is retaining their top talent. One study by Future Workplace and Kronos found that 87% of employers said that improving retention is a critical priority for their organization. As the economy improves and employees have more job options, companies will have to be ever diligent to keep their best and brightest.

In fact, finding a new job has never been easier. There is no more blind loyalty to an organization. Younger workers are expected to have nine jobs by the time they are 32 and the Internet has opened new avenues for connecting with prospective employers.

Why focus on Happiness?

What does employee retention have to do with such an intangible thing like happiness? The bottom line is that companies that actively seek to engage their employees and make them happier just make more money. In the article “Why Employee Engagement is the Secret to Workplace Happiness” by G & A Partners, it is revealed that “Companies who averaged 9.3 engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee experienced 147% higher earnings per share than their competition”.





What's the difference between Retention and Happiness?

Collective research shows that although there is a connection between the concepts of happiness and engagement, they are not the same. For example, someone can be happy in their personal life but not be engaged at work. Just because they are happy does not mean they are working hard on behalf of the company.

Engagement, on the other hand, is seen when an employee feels like an extension of the company and is truly invested in helping the company achieve its goals. To create workplace happiness, it is clear that employee engagement is a necessary ingredient. Happiness and employee retention are the results of a highly engaged workplace culture.



*Happiness and employee retention
are the results of a highly engaged
workplace culture*

Formula for Success

Shawn Achor, the author of “The Happiness Advantage” says our most commonly held formula for success is broken. Conventional wisdom holds that if we work hard, we'll be more successful and if we are more successful then we'll be happy. If we can just find that great job, win that next promotion, lose those five pounds, happiness will follow. But recent discoveries in the field of positive psychology have shown that this formula is actually backward. Happiness fuels success, not the other way around.

Happiness “Perks”

When we are positive, our brains become more engaged, creative, motivated, energetic, resilient, and productive. Here is what the researchers are telling us about the benefits of being happy:

- Happy people are three times more creative
- Experience 23% less fatigue



- Are 31% more productive
- Are 40% more likely to get a promotion
- Have 56% greater sales productivity and
- Are 39% more likely to live to age 94!

We also know that companies that are high on employee engagement and happiness have 90% better growth trends than their competition according to Bersin and Associates. Gallup found that employees who are engaged are 27% more likely to report excellent performance and their teams are 21% more productive.

Challenges to happiness and engagement

While there are many benefits to creating a happier, more engaged workplace, there are also some key challenges. One of the first challenges to overcome is stress. Research by Tower Watson has found that 57% of employees who said they were very stressed at work felt less productive and were disengaged. However, only 10% of low stressed employees reported feeling this way.

Another challenge to employee happiness is feeling overwhelmed by one's workload. Research by Cornerstone has found that work overload decreases productivity by 68% when employees feel they don't have enough hours in the day to complete their tasks.

However, one of the biggest reasons for unhappiness at work can inadvertently be caused by managers themselves. You have probably heard it said that people don't leave companies; they leave managers. The flip side of this is that they will stay for the same reason.





STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE NOW TO REDUCE STRESS, MANAGE TIME AND CREATE A HAPPIER CULTURE

The manager's role to create a happier culture within your organization is extremely significant. There are four keyways a manager can create a happier workplace culture as listed below.

Happiness Fuels Success, Not the Other Way Around

1. DISCOVER EACH PERSON'S UNIQUE NEEDS AND DESIRES. Why do we ask great questions at exit interviews, but neglect asking early enough until it is too late to make a difference? The obvious is often overlooked. Instead of conducting exit interviews, we need to conduct "Stay Interviews". A stay interview is designed to identify what is needed to keep a good employee and what would entice them away.

We resist conducting Stay Interviews for these reasons:

- We may fear putting people on the spot.
- We may fear putting ideas in their heads... as if they never thought about leaving?
- We may also fear that they will request things we can't control, so why ask?
- We may also think we don't have time... and then forget how long it takes to interview, select, orient and train a person's replacement.

Ideally, you want to conduct stay interviews at the start of each quarter. Another time to conduct them is right after the person has been hired at orientation. You'll want to ask right away what is important to them and why they accepted the position. Another time to conduct a stay interview is as part of a development discussion.

During a Stay Interview, it's important to ask an employee to think about their answers to the following questions and to come prepared to discuss during your meeting:

- What will keep you here?
- What might entice you away?
- Are we fully utilizing your talents?
- What is inhibiting your success, and
- What can I do differently to best assist you?



Then you will want to schedule a meeting about two weeks after you request their ideas. At that point, you will be able to have a really targeted, good discussion and Stay Interview.

2. REDUCE CHALLENGES WHEREVER YOU CAN. In the US workforce today, we see it a lot of symptoms caused from the faster and faster pace we live in, such as:

- **Information overload.** The advent of technology has kept us always connected. We can't get away from telephones, email, and voicemail. There is so much information coming in at us all the time that it's hard not to be overwhelmed.
- **Demanding deadlines.** Not only do we have more access to information with a faster pace, clients expect immediate answers and responses. Some of them can be very demanding.
- **Burnout.** This can all lead to employee burnout.

The impact that companies across the country see from this kind of environment is rising rates of absenteeism (which can be an early warning sign of turnover to come). You can see the tightness and stress on people's faces. People can become short-tempered and argumentative with one another or they get in cliques and whisper about other people or point fingers. You can also see it when people just aren't smiling or laughing very much. You know it when you see this kind of thing and it impacts everyone.

Employee Actions that Lead to Burnout. We know as leaders that taking care of people is an essential way of taking care of business, but in this fast-paced environment with high client demands, it can sometimes be a challenge. So, we must be looking out for some of the warning signs and symptoms that our people may be experiencing burnout. These include:

- Consistently working late
- Working through lunch
- Working through illness
- Seeming more tired than usual
- Taking work home
- Expressing frustration Being afraid to take vacation due to work demands, and
- Appearing increasingly cynical, forgetful, or irritable

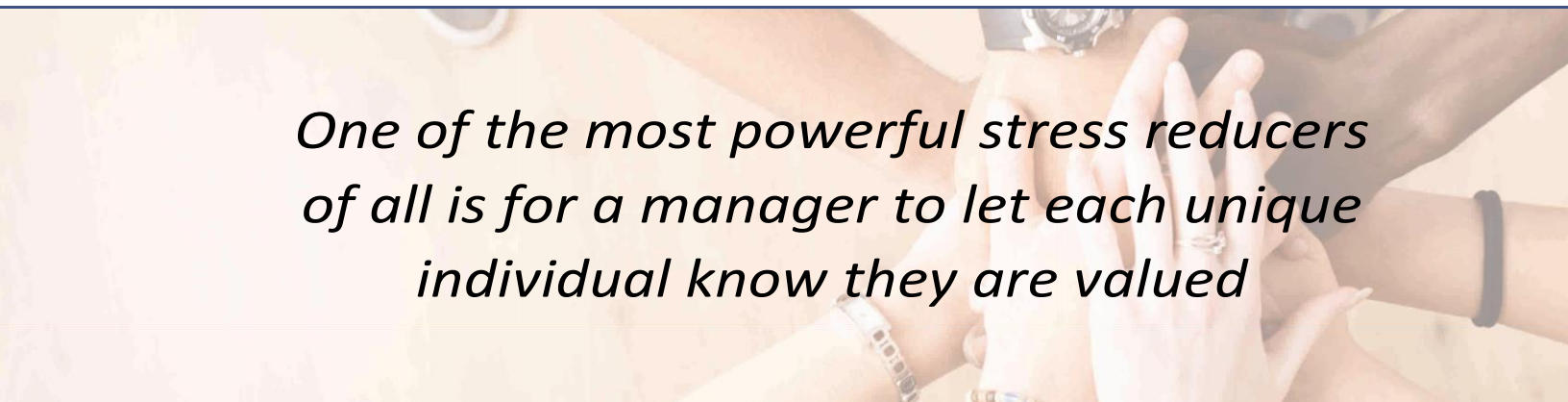




What You Can Do to Help Your Team Overcome These Challenges

Ask yourself if you see many of these, and if you do, you'll want to take some steps now to try to make it better. Below, please find several ideas that might help you:

- **Value Spontaneous Acts of Caring.** These can include things like providing lunch for the team with the condition that they don't talk about work. It can also mean providing a sympathetic ear for an employee who's going through a personal crisis. When possible, allow employees the flexibility to work from home when needed and pitch in to help with their workload on busy days. Stop communicating just by email and offer a sincere apology when it's important for you to do so.
- **Build Social Connectedness.** Human beings have a basic need for belonging. Relationships employees have with each other and the “family feeling” they develop from the people in the office is a key motivator for retention. And although managers and supervisors cannot expect their staff to always get along, they can work to actively encourage harmony and social connectedness. Here's some ways to do that:
 - Create cross-functional teams to allow employees to get to know each other better.
 - Provide organized group outings.
 - At staff meetings, ask each member of the team to introduce themselves by mentioning one fact about themselves that most people would not know. This will allow them to get to know each other better as unique individuals.



One of the most powerful stress reducers of all is for a manager to let each unique individual know they are valued

- **Help Employees Better Manage Stress and Their Time.** There are many ways a manager can encourage their staff to manage their time and stress more effectively. Some of them include:



- Encouraging them to not hesitate to let you know when they need help and when they're trying to handle peak workloads.
- Show them how to organize the work to be done the day before so that they feel more in control when they start each day
- Discourage them from trying to do two to three things at the same time.
- Encourage them to keep their desk and work organized. People feel more in control and they can get more done with less stress as a result.
- Encourage them to take a break occasionally. Relaxing for a few minutes at a time really helps to clear the mind and reduce stress
- If something is bothering an employee, really encourage them to speak up. If they gunny sack frustrations and just stuff them inside, they will build up and increase stress levels until they come out in inappropriate ways. Ask them to tell you what they really need and want.
- And last but not least, make sure employees take all their allotted vacation time.

However, one of the most powerful stress reducers of all is for a manager to let each unique individual know they are valued. Let them how grateful you are for each of them personally and when they've done a good job. Also, let them know you hear them and that you understand their needs, are on their side and want to help them.

3. INCREASE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES. The third way that managers can help increase a happier workplace culture is to increase more positive experiences. The higher stress the work environment, the more need for fun to keep it in balance. Good people will move on when work stops being fun. Look for ways to encourage more levity, positivity, and energy at work while also utilizing each individual's unique personal strengths.





- Monthly lunch where everyone brings something to eat or order a huge submarine sandwich for your entire office to share.
- Breakfast where the manager and supervisors cook and serve everyone in their office.
- Present the Felix and Oscar Award to those people who had the neatest and messiest work areas.
- Attach cartoons or humorous anecdotes to the more mundane memos that need to be circulated.
- Have a contest for a specific dress day for Halloween, a Hawaiian day, or any other kind of theme day.
- Have a holiday desk decorating contest and do this for any holiday or make up a holiday yourself
- Off premise gatherings. Go somewhere and do something fun as a team away from the office. Dinner at a restaurant is always a good idea.
- We saw one of our clients make a campaign button out of each employee's baby picture and have the staff wear one another's buttons. Then they had to try to figure out who is who. This became a contest and became a creative way to encourage camaraderie.
- Creating a Fun Committee can help employees feel as if they have some input and control into their work environment. Ask for volunteers to come up with more ways to build in positive experiences and reduce stress at work. This can be one of your best ways to generate new ideas.

It has been found that employees who exercise their strengths on a daily basis are 8% more productive and 6 times more likely to be engaged

Identify the Impact. You'll want to take a pulse of your office in a few months to see the impact from the ideas that have been implemented. Do people seem more relaxed? Are they smiling more? Are they good-naturedly teasing each other and spending more time together? Overall, are they finding the workplace more enjoyable or positive? Ask what seems to be the differences you've noticed between now and when you first started implementing ideas to make the workforce more positive. Get some informal feedback about how well the fun committee is working and some of the other ideas that have been implemented. Make the support of an enjoyable and fun

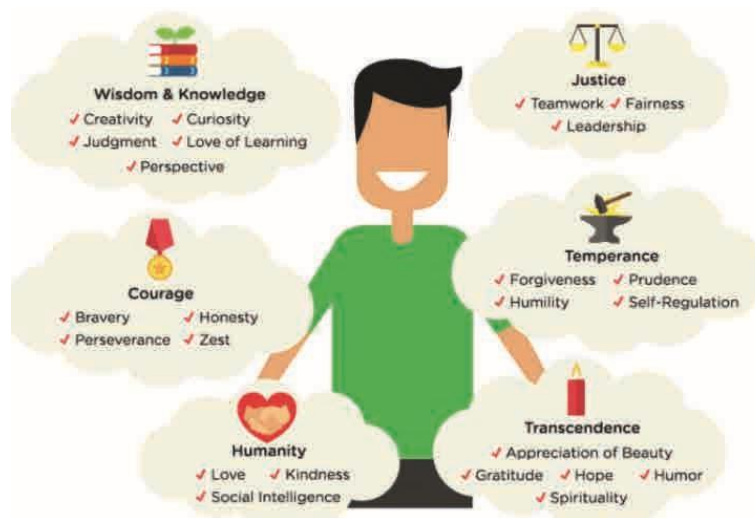


workplace climate part of your everyday responsibilities as a manager. When you do, it is bound to result in a more enjoyable, happier workplace. This, in turn, should help you with your retention efforts.

4. ENCOURAGE USE OF PERSONAL STRENGTHS. The fourth and last way that a manager can create a happier workplace culture is to encourage the use of individual strengths. Character strengths are defined as the traits of character that people can acquire and build. Talents, on the other hand, are inborn gifts. I could be a very talented engineer and enhance my talents there, but it may not really charge me up as much as the strength that is really touching my core values. Our strengths represent those things that we deeply and authentically care about. They give us a sense of purpose and meaning.

The research on character strengths originated from Dr. Martin Seligman (University of Pennsylvania) and Dr. Christopher Peterson (University of Michigan). After researching people of all ages, nations, and cultures, they were able to identify common character strengths among people in the world at large.

There are 24-character strengths under six categories, as the diagram below illustrates:



Once you know your key strengths, you are encouraged to find more and more ways to employ them in all arenas of your life. It has been found that employees who exercise their strengths daily are 8% more productive and 6 times more likely to be engaged. Those numbers are significant.

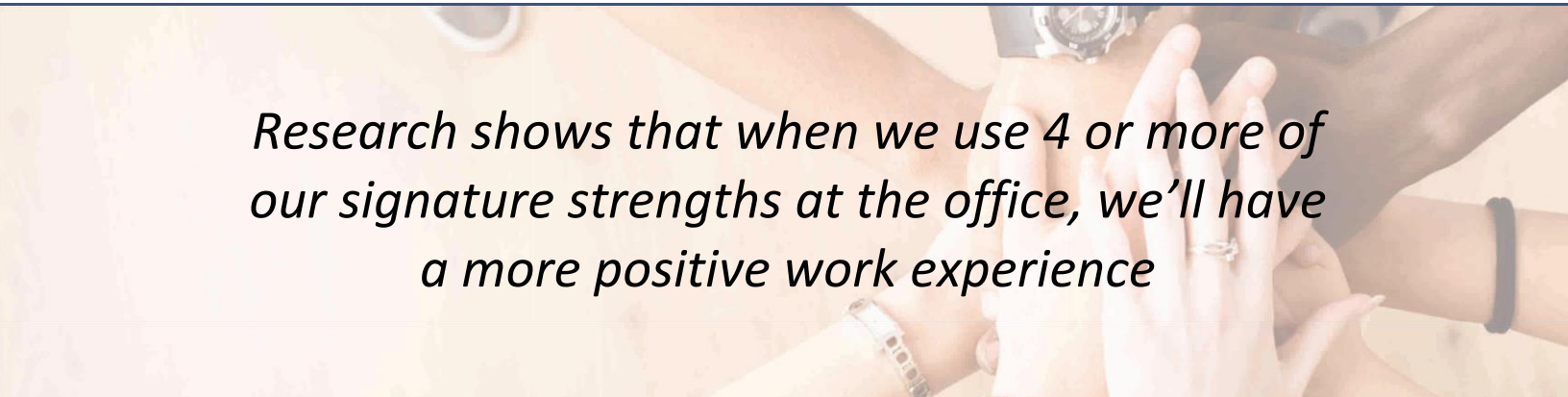


Interestingly, research has found that the most prevalent character strengths among all cultures are:

- Kindness
- Fairness
- Judgment
- Honesty, and
- Gratitude

The least common strengths across the globe are:

- Prudence
- Modesty, and
- Self-regulation



Research shows that when we use 4 or more of our signature strengths at the office, we'll have a more positive work experience

Suggested Ways to Use Your Strengths at Work:

Research shows that when we use 4 or more of our signature strengths at the office, we will have a more positive work experience. Here are some suggested ways to do that:

- If you're feeling swamped, the strengths that are determined to be a high match with work demands are honesty, judgment, perspective, fairness and zest. So, when you use some of those, it will really help you overcome some of the challenges around feeling overloaded at work or stressed out.
- To boost your mood, use the strengths of curiosity, zest, hope, gratitude, and love.
- Use the strength of kindness by volunteering to help another team member out when they are struggling with something
- Show the strength of honesty by owning up to one area in which you also need help yourself.
- Use the strength of love by letting someone know that you really value them at work.



- Use the strength of showing loyalty by looking for a way that you can step in and help someone out and when you notice that they feel stressed or overwhelmed too.
- Use the strength of optimism by thinking of one positive outcome that you could experience as a team from a negative challenge or event you've experienced.
- Use the strength of leadership by organizing a team-building activity with your coworkers
- Use your strength of humor by learning and telling one new joke a day
- One of the biggest ways to give yourself a happiness boost at work is to send a nice email to someone you appreciate. One study shows that this amplified the mood boosting effects of using your strengths beyond probably more than any other type of thing you can do at work.

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Using the Strength of Gratitude

We'd like to delve deeper into using the one strength of gratitude and provide more information about this strength because it's the one thing that seems to have had the most positive impact on men and women across the globe. And what's good to know is that in the study of gender differences and character strengths, both women and men scored high on the strength of gratitude. It was in the top five most frequently used strengths for both genders.

One of the reasons that gratitude is so profound is that it keeps us focused on the present. When we're focused on the past, we find that we're stuck in a situation we just can't control. It's already occurred. When we're focused on the future, then we are delaying the positive experiences we could be having now. Gratitude keeps us focused on the present. When we begin to focus on those things that we take for granted every day, we can begin to see how much there truly is to be thankful for. I love this thought that I heard that said "I cried because I had no shoes until I saw a man who had no feet".



So, if you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have now that money cannot buy. An example of that is good health, all the parts of your body that are working well, the air you breathe and the food you eat. You will find that there really are many things that we easily, easily forget about and take for granted.

It's important to also realize that the things we take for granted someone else is praying for. One of my girlfriends went to work in a remote village of Africa on a volunteer mission to help people living in a remote village harvest rainwater. They had no clean water and there was a lot of illness and disease in the village because of that. When they showed them how to harvest rainwater and have more pure drinking water, the people in that village were so grateful and so thankful. When my friend came back and showed us the pictures of the expressions on the faces of the people in the village, it truly touched me.

How You Can Experience More Gratitude

It really helps to make Gratitude a structured daily habit. One way to cultivate it is with a Gratitude Journal. This is something that I've been doing for a long time and have personally found to have a profound impact. You can dedicate any small notebook for this use. Then identify three things to be grateful for each morning. Some people prefer to focus on their 3 things before going to bed at the end of the day. This has been found to improve your sleep by creating more positive thoughts in your mind and ridding yourself of negative ones. Research has shown that people who practice gratitude by jotting down three good things that happen each day for one week felt happier and less depressed. They reported better sleep quality and they were more likely to engage in healthy behaviors like exercise.





One very powerful strategy for managers is to let your team know how grateful you are for each one of them as a unique individual. When you've seen something that you especially want to express gratitude for, write it on a thank you card as a handwritten note. This will make quite an impression on them. They will tell their families about it; they'll tell other coworkers about it and they'll hang on to that note because it has that much value to them. So, don't ever underestimate how important it is to your people that they know you find them valuable and their contributions mean something. This will be a wonderful way to generate more happiness at work and it will definitely help you retain your team

Benefits from Using Our Strengths. There's a good reason to have an attitude of gratitude. Counting your blessings is linked to fewer physical symptoms, increased optimism and more time spent in improved well-being and self-care. If you're sick, tapping into your strengths, especially braveness, kindness and humor, can help. Research shows that physical disorders take less of a toll on life satisfaction if someone is high on these character strengths.





Use One Strength Today, Reap the Rewards Tomorrow. One study found a relationship between using signature strengths the previous day and feeling positive the following day. Using your signature strengths, those strengths most essential to who you are, in a new way each day has been shown to increase happiness and decrease depression significantly.

Summary

In summary, don't ever underestimate how important it is for you to look for ways to increase more happiness in the work environment. This will help you also enhance employee retention and create a more pleasant working experience for everyone.



Just remember:

Most people chase success at work thinking that will make them happy.

The truth is that happiness at work will make you successful.



LIST OF PERSONAL STRENGTHS

The manager's role to create a happier culture within your organization is extremely significant. There are four keyways a manager can create a happier workplace culture as listed below.

Wisdom and Knowledge

- **Curiosity/Interest in the World:** You are curious about everything. You are always asking questions, and you find all subjects and topics fascinating. You like exploration and discovery.
- **Love of Learning:** You love learning new things, whether in a class or on your own. You have always loved school, reading, and museums – anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn.
- **Judgment/Critical Thinking/Open-Mindedness:** Thinking things through and examining them from all sides are important aspects of who you are. You do not jump to conclusions, and you rely only on solid evidence to make your decisions. You are able to change your mind.
- **Creativity/Ingenuity/Originality/Practical Intelligence/Street Smarts:** Thinking of new ways to do things is a crucial part of who you are. You are never content with doing something the conventional way if a better way is possible.
- **Social Intelligence/Personal Intelligence/Emotional Intelligence:** You are aware of the motives and feelings of other people. You know what to do to fit in to different social situations and you know what to do to put others at ease.
- **Perspective (Wisdom):** Although you may not think of yourself as wise, your friends hold this view of you. They value your perspective on matters and turn to you for advice. You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others and yourself.

Courage

- **Valor and Bravery:** You are a courageous person who does not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain. You speak up for what is right even if there is opposition. You act on your convictions.
- **Perseverance/Industry/Diligence:** You work hard to finish what you start. No matter the project, you “get it out the door” in a timely fashion. You do not get distracted when you work, and you take satisfaction in completing tasks.
- **Integrity/Genuineness/Honesty:** You are an honest person, not only by speaking the truth but by living your life in a genuine and authentic way. You are down to earth and you without pretense; you are a “real” person.



Humanity and Love

- **Kindness and Generosity:** You are kind and generous to others, and you are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds for others, even if you do not know them well.
- **Loving and Allowing Oneself to be Loved:** You value close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing, and caring are reciprocated. The people to whom you feel most close are the same people who feel most close to you.

Justice

- **Citizenship/Duty/Teamwork/Loyalty:** You excel as a member of a group. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, you always do your share, and you work hard for the success of your group.
- **Fairness and Equity:** Treating all people fairly is one of your abiding principles. You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance.
- **Leadership:** You excel at the tasks of leadership: encouraging a group to get things done and preserving harmony within the group by making everyone feel included. You do a good job organizing activities and seeing that they happen.



Temperance

- **Self-Control:** You self-consciously regulate what you feel and what you do. You are a disciplined person. You are in control of your appetites and your emotions, not vice versa.
- **Prudence/Discretion/Caution:** You are a careful person, and your choices are consistently prudent ones. You do not say or do things that you might later regret.



- **Humility and Modesty:** You do not seek the spotlight, preferring to let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You do not regard yourself as special, and others recognize and value your modesty.

Transcendence

- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence:** You notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.
- **Gratitude:** You are aware of the good things that happen to you, and you never take them for granted. Your friends and family members know that you are a grateful person because you always take the time to express your thanks.
- **Hope/Optimism/Future-Mindedness:** You expect the best in the future, and you work to achieve it. You believe that the future is something that you can control.
- **Spirituality/Sense of Purpose/Faith/Religiousness:** You have strong and coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. You know where you fit in the larger scheme. Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.
- **Forgiveness and Mercy:** You forgive those who have done you wrong. You always give people a second chance. Your guiding principle is mercy and not revenge.
- **Playfulness and Humor:** You like to laugh and tease. Bringing smiles to other people is important to you. You try to see the light side of all situations.
- **Zest/Passion/Enthusiasm:** Regardless of what you do, you approach it with excitement and energy. You never do anything halfway or halfheartedly. For you, life is an adventure.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

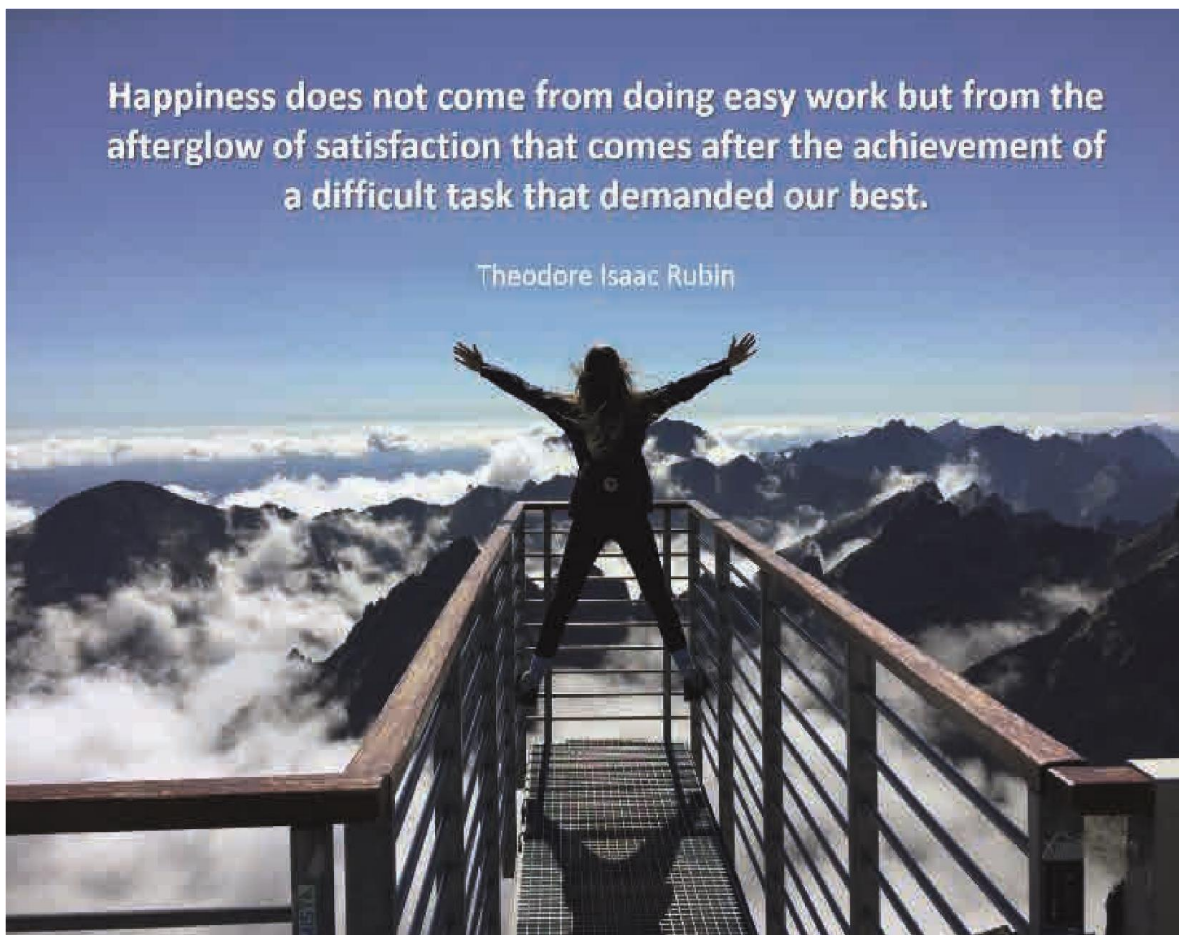
- To take the free Character Strengths Test:
<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>
- Other assessments and more about Positive Psychology:
<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>
- Online program to enhance habits and strengths:
www.happify.com

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Happiness does not come from doing easy work but from the
afterglow of satisfaction that comes after the achievement of
a difficult task that demanded our best.

Theodore Isaac Rubin