

BALANCING TOMORROW, TODAY™

by Stacie L. L. Morgan, Ph.D.



In my last column, I looked at "happiness issues" and how they are related to our expectations for our lives. This week I want to look at our happiness at work. I know, many of you may think that "happiness" and "work" don't even belong in the same sentence, but here we go....

The first question I want to pose is, "Can we really expect to find happiness in, at, or through our jobs?" If this is indeed possible, then can we actually increase our "happiness level" when we are *on* the job? And finally, I will ask my favorite question, "How can we balance tomorrow's happiness today...at work?"

Let's first look at what happiness in, at, or through work might look like. I find that being happy *in* the work you do often implies a "calling" or passion for a type of work that you enjoy doing, such as carpentry or teaching. Finding happiness *at* work, on the other hand, is associated with the pleasure found in social interaction, teamwork, and the feeling of accomplishment you experience when you are at work. Happiness *through* work then, is the satisfaction of serving others and knowing that the work you do makes other people's lives better.

Let's break these areas down a bit further. Finding happiness *in* the work you do means the joy is rooted in the doing. You enjoy the act of performing your job and using your gifts. Finding happiness *at* work is the result of enjoying being in the work setting in general; you just like going to a job and being around other people and useful. Finding happiness *through* work means the reward for your daily labor is in the results you achieve for your business, organization, and its customers.

Whether your focus is on doing work, being at work, the results of your work, or any combination of the three, you *can* find happiness at work. So how can you actually increase your happiness level on the job?

You can increase your happiness in the three areas we just discussed, by first focusing your awareness on where you feel good—in/at/through the job. Once you can identify the source(s) of your fulfillment at work, you can then begin to increase your enjoyment at work today *and* tomorrow.

Trying to increase your happiness at work is grounded in your ability to identify the areas you enjoyed, but is dependent upon your expectations and perspective. If you expect to find pleasure in performing your job, you will. If you look for aspects of your job that you find rewarding (i.e., in/at/through) you can work on enhancing how you experience those activities in your daily routine and seek opportunities to increase your time and efforts in these areas.

But my big question still remains: "How can you balance tomorrow's happiness today...at work?" Balancing your happiness is not as difficult as it may seem, but it does require a little thought and a tiny bit of discipline. Here is what it looks like:

- Take some time to think about what areas you enjoy on the job today—the in/at/through questions.
- Use this knowledge to think of ways to increase that enjoyment at work. Often, just realizing what you enjoy can allow you to enjoy it even more. Another approach you can take is to talk with your employer and make yourself available for more opportunities in the areas you find most satisfying.
- Now comes the balancing part...think about your future work-life and ask yourself, "How do I envision being happiest at work in five, ten, twenty, (you fill in the number) years?" *Is it using more of your talents? Or is it working more with others? Maybe it is working for more people? Or it could be a combination of these.*
- Ask yourself, "What can I do today, that would make my work-life happier tomorrow?"
- And here comes the "tiny bit of discipline"... You now need to take responsibility for tomorrow's happiness at work by taking deliberate action today! Have that talk with yourself and then have that talk with your employer. Take the time to figure out what you enjoy doing and determine a way to do it better and do it more!

Look for my next column where we finish this series on "happiness issues" with tips on how business owners can increase their profits by spreading a little happiness!

Remember, balance is a process...not a destination. Feel free to email me and let me know what you find difficult to balance and I'll take a crack at it.

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