Let’s Make Work Better: Evidence-Based Strategies for Improving Your Worklife

Professor Theresa Glomb

Toro Company-David M. Lilly Chair
Dept. of Work and Organizations
Carlson School of Management
WORK HARD. HAVE FUN. CHOOSE KIND. BE PRESENT.
WORK HARD.
HAVE FUN.
CHOOSE KIND.
BE PRESENT.
Accomplishing a goal or making progress on meaningful work is the most significant predictor of positive mood at work

(Bono, Glomb et al.; Amabile)
When depleted, we allocate less time than preferred to tasks that are complex, delay gratification, and do not lead to closure. This self-discrepant time allocation leads to worse work, well-being, and career outcomes.

(Dahm, Glomb, Manchester, Leroy, 2015)
Take Action
Create Routines for Peak Performance and Flow
### Parking downhill
- Schedule 60-90 min of uninterrupted work each morning
- Prepare resources at start of the day (or week) and plan what will happen
- Resist email first thing in the morning; tackle a work task
- Set up for small wins; think about one thing that you can accomplish that day and JDI (Just Do It)

### Make work times less fractured
- Email free times/days
- Meeting free times/days
- On call evenings rotated through team
- When someone interrupts; stand up & note next step

### Make meetings efficient
- Shorter or standing meetings (they are 1/3 shorter)
- Create agendas with time allocations
- Routinize meetings/status/crisis mgmt. with template
- Try being more decisive (OHIO—Only Handle It Once)
- Start adding “No Reply Needed” to your emails
### Track/analyze your time at work and home

- Are there any tasks you can cut back on? delegate/outsource? simplify? group together related tasks?
- Classify tasks and minimum, moderate, maximum in terms of energy/effort
- When you say yes to a request put time for it in your calendar

### Establish questions aligning activities with values

- Ask yourself: Is this how I want to spend my time?
- Ask yourself: Is this activity or request a “Hell Yes!” or “No”? 
- Write your obituary (or not so depressing, your 80th Birthday Speech) to reveal values/priorities
WORK HARD.
HAVE FUN.
CHOOSE KIND.
BE PRESENT.
Positive work events are 3 to 5x more frequent than negative events....

but negative work events have 5 to 10x the impact on mood.  
(Miner, Glomb, Hulin, 2005)

Being in a more positive mood can increase your objective performance by 5%.  
(Miner & Glomb, 2010)
Reflecting on three good things that happened and why at the end of each work day reduced stress, physical and mental complaints, inability to detach from work, and BP.

(Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013)
Work recovery efforts improve work and life outcomes

(Sonnentag; Trougakos)
Take Action
Create Positive Work and Recovery Routines
### Some ideas….

**Routines for reflecting on the good**
- Three good things exercise individually and in meetings
- Daily gratitude expression or email
- Share positive events with coworkers and family
- Rituals/celebrations around success
- Apps that promote greater reflection & recovery

**Routines for recovery**
- Build in micro-moments for recovery
- Build in transition routines (mindful walk to meeting, garage moment before going into house)
- Reclaim the lunch break and coffee hour
- Integration of nature may be particularly effective
- Ask employees when their next vacation is scheduled
- Get more sleep—the evidence is unassailable
WORK HARD.
HAVE FUN.
CHOOSE KIND.
BE PRESENT.
Helping others can repair negative moods…especially for extroverts.

(Glomb, Bhave, Miner, & Wall, 2011)
High performers are more likely to be envied and victimized…except when they are also high on communal traits.

(Kim & Glomb, 2010; 2014)
Take Action
Create Routines for Connection
Some ideas....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Underscore prosocial impact of actions</th>
<th>Opportunities to help others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Link work outcomes more directly to beneficiaries  
  • Consider routines (events, letters, feedback) to circle back beneficiary information  
  • Share experiences that underscore prosocial (“To whom were you a good friend today?”)  | • Help others; find ways to recognize support  
  • Gratitude emails  
  • Knowledge sharing  
  (I could provide advice for X...)  
  • Volunteerism |
WORK HARD.
HAVE FUN.
CHOOSE KIND.
BE PRESENT.
Mind Full, or Mindful?

From The Socks of Doom by Henck van Bilsen
Some questions for you...

To what extent do these statements describe your daily work life?

• It seems I am “running on automatic,” without much awareness of what I’m doing.
• I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
• I forget a person’s name almost as soon as I’ve been told it for the first time.
• I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
• I drive places on ‘automatic pilot’ and then wonder why I went there.
• Are you in a state of continuous partial attention?
Mindfulness, through improved self-regulation, promotes response flexibility, decreased rumination, empathy, self concordance, etc. leading to favorable work outcomes.

(Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011)
Health care workers randomly assigned to a mindfulness audio intervention (compared to active control condition of wellness podcast) had higher attentiveness, perspective taking, and flexible responding as *reported by patients*.

*(Yang & Glomb, in progress).*
Take Action
Create Routines for Mindful Awareness
### Some ideas....

#### Mindful Activities
- Try mindful breathing for 5 minutes, 3 minutes, even 1 minute!
- Try 4-7-8 breathing (4 sec in; 7 sec hold; 8 sec out)
- Walk to meeting, next room, etc. mindfully
- Try washing your hands or eating lunch mindfully
- Try driving without the radio or phone

#### Bodily Awareness
- Ask yourself: what’s up with my body right now? How you are holding your shoulders? Jaw? Or something in your hand? Are you tense?

#### Purposeful Pause
- Pause before answering a question, phone, or text or email
- Choose how to start your day. Can you visualize it? What you are looking forward to?
- Before going into a meeting or family event, consider how you want to viewed by the end. Open? Courageous? Reactive? What can you do to bring your vision into reality?
WORK HARD.
HAVE FUN.
CHOOSE KIND.
BE PRESENT.
Thank you!

tglomb@umn.edu

Watch my TEDxUMN talk “Let’s Make Work Better”