



ACTIVITY: What Brings You Joy?

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to:

- Highlight what brings meaning to our lives.
- Spend time focusing on the positive.
- Build understanding and communication between team members.

ESTIMATED TIME

10-15 minutes

MATERIALS

Required:

- A. Handout
- B. Pen or pencil

Background

Human beings are wired to pay attention to the negative. This helps us avoid danger and also alerts us to problems that need solving. But we often get “stuck” on the negative and forget about all the positive aspects of our lives. When we feel overwhelmed by the negative we also can begin to lose sight of what is important to us.

We can counteract this by routinely and intentionally taking time to focus on – and talk about – the positive. When we share the positives, or the things that bring us joy, with others, it has several benefits. First, by opening up and sharing with others we create strong connections. Second, we remind ourselves what is truly important. And third, we spend time focusing on and celebrating the positive. By doing this more often, we are creating new habits and actually changing our brain to scan for the positive rather than always gravitate toward negatives.



Activity

1) Using the handout attached (or blank paper), ask participants to write down as many things as they can think of that bring them joy.

Ask them to be specific. For example, don't just write "vacations" -write what you specifically like about vacations, such as being off work, seeing new places, being in nature, etc. Instead of writing "family" or "friends", try to write down specifics – such as getting to talk to my best friend when I'm stressed out and feeling supported, reading to my daughter at bedtime, etc.

Also ask them to list small things as well that we may often take for granted – e.g., my coffee in the morning, sitting on my back porch on a nice day, the co-worker who always smiles at me in the morning.

Give them about 5 minutes to write.

2) Instruct participants to share their answers with each other. Ideally, this can be done in small groups (3-5 people).

Let's Try This!

Ask the group to begin to take note of small things throughout the day that bring them joy.

If the group repeats the activity in the future, they may come up with all kinds of things they didn't think of the first time.

Follow-up

This activity can be repeated periodically, especially if you mix the small groups or add new members in the department.

You can also incorporate smaller versions of this activity. For example, at a staff meeting or huddle, have everyone list one thing that brought them joy within the past week.

The Greater Good Podcast: Rick Hanson on the Neuroscience of Happiness

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/the-greater-good-podcast/id377254819?mt=2&i=110170065>

OR

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg_live/gg_podcast/podcast/rick_hanson/

