



In times of great stress and uncertainty, drawing from the principles of positive psychology and coaching can be incredibly grounding. Here are a few ideas to share with you from the coaching world:

- 1) **Deep Breaths:** everything going on can feel very overwhelming, pausing to take slow deep breaths can help. Try Square Breathing to calm your nervous system and decrease stress – breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breath out for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds. Repeat a few times, or until feeling calmer.
- 2) **Happiness Boosters:** What is your happiness booster? That thing you reach for when you need a pick me up? Mine is a favorite song. Others use videos, photos, a few quick jumping jacks or squats, a little dance...Try using yours when you are feeling stress building up. See below for more ideas.
- 3) **Offer gratitude to a colleague!** Deliver authentic praise for a job well done or positive feedback – this strengthens connections between us, sparks motivations in both individuals, and boosts our happiness. This is easy, can be done in person or by email, and can make someone’s day! When you do, be specific - give thanks and express your appreciation. Other ways to express gratitude – keep a gratitude journal, give back in service to someone, send positive energy to others, meditate, practice forgiveness of self and others, venmo someone a few bucks for a snack/drink/coffee, buy gratitude cards on amazon and leave them for people with a quick note, send something (candy/treat, favorite book, gratitude plant).
- 4) **3 Good Things:** Rather than scrolling through the news or thinking about what was challenging that day, spend a few moments jotting down 3 good things that happened that day with a little bit of detail about what it was that happened. This can boost positivity, creativity, resilience, efficiency and mood. I buy little journals at the store to do this and leave them next to my bed or in my work bag. No matter what life throws at us, there is always something to feel grateful for. Sometimes we just have to work harder to find it, but it will always be there.
- 5) **Share a good story!** We often don’t share our good stories with colleagues. Why? Because we think they are too busy, fear we’d sound boastful, or feel silly thinking “why would anyone care?”. When we do have a few moments to talk, we tend to complain! The truth is – people love hearing good stories, and there is actually science behind what it can do! Sharing positive stories connects us to those we are talking to and boosts happiness, creativity, and open-mindedness in both parties. Sharing your positive story allows you to re-live the experience and unpackage what was great about it. The listener gets a chance to experience your positivity and are also reminded of their own positive experiences. Set up Zoom or FaceTime groups to do this, even for 15 minutes!
- 6) **Reach out and talk to someone!** The next time you are really busy or overwhelmed at work, consider talking to someone about something non-medical for just a few moments, rather than burying yourself further in your work. Use Zoom or Facetime!
- 7) **Try laughing** – at yourself or something funny. Laughter is contagious, and data shows that even if it is not authentic, it still makes you feel better by improving coping, resiliency, and health! Check out this video for a happiness booster or a laugh! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1veWbLpGa78>
- 8) When you aren’t sure how to act or what to do, **ask yourself, “what would my positive role model do?”** It is incredibly helpful to guide you during tough times.
- 9) When you are really overwhelmed, focus on the baby steps and **put one foot in front of the other**. Ask yourself, “what is the next thing I need to do?”
- 10) It is ok to be afraid, in fact, we should be! The trick is in the mindset! One of my favorite quotes, from Mark Twain, can be incredibly helpful in times like this – **“Courage is not the absence of fear, it is acting in spite of it.”**



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## Happiness Booster Examples

- 3 Good Things
- Gratitude moments, express gratitude
- Have a belief mindset, visualize success
- Have something to look forward to
- Be a positive role model
- Connect with others, take a few moments to speak to someone else
- Perform random acts of kindness, offer help to someone else
- Listen to a song, read something meaningful to you, look at a photo/video that makes you smile
- Call your best friend or close family member
- Meditate, take a deep breath, laugh
- Have something to look forward to, daydream
- Complete an unfinished task
- Set goals that have meaning to YOU
- Quick exercise or dance break!

## References

There are so many helpful references and resources for this. Here are a few that I found that support the evidence behind many of these theories, but there are many more beyond this.

- 1) Square breathing - Ma et al, [Front Psychol.](#) 2017; 8: 874.
- 2) Laughter - Kuiper, N. Europe's Journal of Psychology, 2012, Vol. 8(3), 475–491,
- 3) Gratitude - Kaplan et al [Journal of Business and Psychology](#) volume 29, pages367–380(2014); Chopik et al [J Posit Psychol.](#) 2019; 14(3): 292–302., Di Fabio et al [Front Psychol.](#) 2017; 8: 2025.
- 4) 3 Good Things - [Sexton and Adair; BMJ Open.](#) 2019; 9(3): e022695.
- 5) Happiness Boosters – Scott et al <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.59215086>; Wildschut et al, [Current Directions in Psychological Science](#) 17(5) · October 2008
- 6) Social Isolation/Loneliness in the Workplace - Soler-Gonzalez et al [Front Psychol.](#) 2017; 8: 1475.
- 7) Wheel of Needs – Manske <http://radicalcompassion.com>

## Helpful Books on Happiness:

- [Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman](#)
- [Stumbling on Happiness by Daniel Gilbert](#)
- [The Happiness Advantage by Shawn Achor](#)
- [Happiness Is an Inside Job: Practicing for a Joyful Life by Sylvia Boorstein](#)
- [The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin](#)
- [The Happiness Hypothesis by Jonathan Haidt \(+ Summary\)](#)
- [The Happiness Equation by Neil Pasricha](#)
- [Happiness by Design: Finding Pleasure and Purpose in Everyday Life by Paul Dolan](#)
- [The Happiness Factor: How to Be Happy No Matter What! by Kirk Wilkinson](#)
- [The How of Happiness by Sonja Lyubomirsky](#)
- [Solve for Happy by Mo Gawdat](#)
- [Happiness: Lessons from a New Science by Richard Layard and Baron Layard](#)