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## EXECUTIVE VITALITY: HAPPINESS, SERENITY, AND PRODUCTIVITY

The concept of "happiness in the workplace" has come into vogue over the past five or six years (see ["Thinking Happy Thoughts at Work," Wall Street Journal, January 27, 2010](#)).

Currently, major corporations are engaging in large-scale programs to foster happiness in the workplace. At Executive Coaching Network (EXCN), we think these programs are hugely important and believe that people who are "happy" will likely achieve better results, be more effective team players, and create a more empowered environment. Research on happiness supports this view. For example, researchers found that the "inner work life has a profound impact on workers' creativity, productivity, commitment and collegiality. Employees are far more likely to have new ideas on days when they feel happier."<sup>1</sup>

Let's explore this topic and develop a series of steps to ensure that senior executives see the benefits *for themselves* as well as for the people around them.

At EXCN, we believe that happiness can be learned or enhanced with practice. We also believe that the techniques used to practice one's personal happiness are equally applicable to increasing happiness in the workplace.

The more time and effort you spend on something (practice), the more important it becomes to you, and the better you become at it; this is a truism. Don't let useless, negative ideas siphon off your time and energy and infect your life and work. You have the ability to be self-aware and realize when you are thinking negatively. Stop and ask, "How do I reframe these thoughts in a positive way?" Direct your mind to think about the gifts in your life.

A way to focus on the control we have to find happiness daily—mind over matter—is to remember the good. Think about someone or something in your life that brings you joy. For me, it is the memory of the most important person in my childhood and the role she played in guiding and supporting me in very difficult circumstances. Whenever I think of her, I am suffused with happiness. How do you feel when you recall a similar memory of yours?

We believe if you initiate routines to achieve and stay in a state of happiness that you will accelerate your path to that psychological state.

Vitality, happiness, resilience, bliss, serenity, joy—call it what you will—we highly recommend the following "Five Alive" steps for staying in a positive state in the workplace, even when there are difficulties at work or at home:

1. Practice well-known happiness techniques like mindfulness and affirmations. Do you have techniques in place that allow you to direct your attention to everyday gifts such as the sun on your face or an unexpected effort on your behalf by strangers? Do you practice mindfulness? Ellen

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<sup>1</sup> Amabile, Teresa and Steven Kramer, "Do Happier People Work Harder," *New York Times*, September 3, 2011

Langer's research shows that mindfulness—paying attention to what is going on around you—reduces stress and boosts performance.<sup>2</sup>

2. Know your values and live them. Do you know what your personal values are? Acting in accordance with your personal values creates serenity. Going against your core personal values creates dissonance.
3. Develop routines to simplify your life and improve your efficiency. Do you have processes in place that enable you to simplify the way you do things and ensure you are organized and saving time?<sup>3</sup>
4. Develop a level of acceptance about things that are simply out of your control. Or, think about what a “higher power” might be in your life and what that means to you when something appears to be out of your control.
5. Learn techniques that you can keep at hand so that you can be “ready-now” for the moments when you really need them. We also highly recommend that you read the writings cited in this article.

*What steps can you take to re-train your brain toward happiness? Do you lose energy to “useless thinking?”  
What can you do to get more in tune with your personal values?*

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<sup>2</sup> “Mindfulness in the Age of Complexity,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 2014

<sup>3</sup> “The Daily Routines of Geniuses,” *Harvard Business Review Blog Network*, March 19, 2014