

Pippa's Advice on How to be Happy at Work

Mindfulness – mindfulness is what's known as a 'buzz' word at the moment. Anyone who's anyone is focusing on it, reading about it or trying to achieve it, so if you've not heard the term then forgive me for asking, but how have you managed to avoid it?

If you are reading this and really haven't heard anyone talking about mindfulness it would suggest to me that you are incredibly lucky and perhaps don't *need* to be aware of it. I'd hazard a guess that you don't work in a big city, in an office where the pressure is on, where the day is tough and the journey home more akin to being in a rugby scrum than sat on a train.

Personally, in the last month, I've attended a meditation class with one friend in a bid to unclutter our minds, done yoga with another for the same reason and been told by a colleague about a course she attended which has changed her life and made her, you guessed it, more mindful. In other words to be able to live in the moment and to appreciate the small things. Essentially we're all paying people to tell us to occasionally switch our phones off and chill out, stare at a wall, think about nothing and stop freaking out. Easier said than done! Most people I know are always stressed about something apart from the two weeks of the year when they're sunning themselves on a beach drinking pina colodas.

I have to admit there are days when I look around the tube at the glum faces which surround me and my feet are aching, my suit's itching, and I'm tired and desperate for my dinner, bed, telly and a bath (only not in that order) and I wonder what it's all about. Wouldn't it be nice if we could be a little bit cheerier generally as we went about our working day? A bit more like how the dad was at the end of Mary Poppins when he had stopped being grumpy and started flying a kite. Only without looking quite so unhinged.

And that got me thinking..... You see, maybe there are some small things we can do that will help keep our moods buoyant, which will cheer us up and improve our outlook? Small things which could go a long way in making our days better. So, for anyone who works but doesn't necessarily have time to attend courses or classes or to be reading weighty tomes on the subject of being, here are some tips on how to become happier in the workplace.

1. Live to work, don't work to live – a bit.

Now, I hope you don't misconstrue this one because I am all for a healthy work/life balance and am certainly not advocating letting work become *everything*. BUT we all have to work to pay the bills and for the majority of us that means having a five day a week job. That in turn means a lot of our precious life simply must be spent at work, so it's a terrible shame if you're wasting all that time away wishing you were at home watching Neighbours, or that it was Friday. In truth, I think much of the population do tend to wish Monday to Thursday away, but it's such a shame.

Personally I genuinely love what I do, I rarely get that back to school feeling on a Sunday, and if I did, I like to think I would try to change what I was doing. So, my first tip is to try to have some sense of pride in your job, try to enjoy it and to do it as well as you can. If you've got to be there, make sure you're getting the most out of it that you can. Aim to impress, to climb the ladder or to fulfil your role brilliantly well and perhaps you will feel happier about being there. Start saying 'actually my job is pretty good' and maybe you'll start to feel like it really is.

2. Tidy up your Work Station

Last week I lost forty eight minutes of my life to looking for my house keys and it wasn't the first time either. I'd say on average I have a key based stressful episode at least twice a month, during which I stomp around my flat, knowing I've gone from being on time to late, usually in a 'too warm for inside the house' coat, feeling panicked and stressed and irritated. I always find my idiot keys somewhere in the end but it's so frustrating . Or at least it *was*. Yes..... ladies and gents, please NB the use of the past tense there because I have finally solved how to avoid these stompy scenes and have invested in a key hook. Said key hook is now drilled into the wall next to the door in the hallway and I hang my keys there every single time I come in. And funnily enough they stay there too so I always know exactly where they'll be until I want to leave again. Marvellous! Has this made me happier? Hell yeah. I mean we're not talking winning the lottery hysteria, but this small act of DIY has certainly helped to avoid a load of unwanted high blood pressure and makes going out a far more enjoyable, less sweaty experience. So, my next tip is that if you work surrounded by clutter and find it difficult to find documents, your stapler or wallet or to lay your hand on important paperwork as and when you need it, then it might be time to have an office clear out. Tidy up and marvel at how it lifts your mood. That saying 'tidy house, tidy mind' well it turns out it's true! When I cleared up my desk recently I realised I had four different Costa cards in total and that I was entitled to a free latte. There...happy.

3. Listen to your body.

I have a friend, for the purposes of this let's call her Cynthia (clearly not her real name...who the hell calls their child Cynthia?) Anyway, Cynthia is a real dynamo, an energetic, party lover who also works an astounding amount of hours every week. Around Cynthia I sometimes feel like a bit of a boring fart because I tend to limit my 'going out' nights to the weekend with perhaps the odd Wednesday or Thursday thrown in occasionally for good measure. The reasons I am rather routine are two-fold. Firstly, I don't earn enough to go out in London every single night and pay my rent and bills. DOES ANYONE?? Sorry, my Northern roots are still flabbergasted by how much it costs to live in this great city. But I digress.....The second reason I don't burn the candle at both ends all week is because, despite being young and in my

twenties, I don't have the energy. When I have had one of my 'occasionals' I end up yawning my way through the following day, wishing the hours away, achieving little and ultimately regretting my silly ways. So I just prefer going out knowing I've got the next day to recover. But not our Cynthia. Oh no. Cynthia is incredible and has been known to go out every night of the week and yet still be at her desk at 8.30 am the next morning looking bright and breezy. I used to be in awe of what seemed like her super powers until last month when Cynthia's body decided to give her a sharp reminder that she is in fact only human and gave her shingles. Ouch.

So my point is that in order to be happy, we need to look after ourselves. We have to have fun but also get sleep, eat right, and then we'll feel good. Until that gets really dull of course and we need a right good blowout on a Saturday night followed by a kebab and chips at 3 in the morning. See, it's all about what I said earlier.

Balance.....

4. **Manage your inbox - (is it just me or does this always sound like a euphemism?)**

This is something I've mentioned before. If you can find an hour to sit and wade through your emails, deleting anything you don't need (there will be thousands of emails you really can get rid of, I get at least 25 a month from the girl who sits opposite me asking if I want a tea or a biscuit) you will feel lighter, cleaner and looking for anything you need in the future will be less of a tedious chore. Happier!

I know they're only small but I hope these tips help! 'Don't worry be happy' as the song once said and if all else fails I suggest a date with handsome Colin in accounts which is precisely where I'm headed now. Happy! (hopefully.....)

See you soon,

Love Pippa xx