

Finding Joy in the Workplace: Cultivating Well-Being, Connection, and Performance

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Why Joy, Why Now?

We live and work in a time when **people are tired**—not just physically, but mentally and emotionally.

- Burnout is common.
- Focus is fragmented.
- Connection is harder to sustain.

Something is calling for change.



Why Joy, Why Now?

Joy offers a different path.

- It restores clarity, presence, and possibility
- It strengthens how we think, work, and relate.

Joy makes work feel human again—and more effective.



Joy Is Not a Distant Destination

Joy isn't accidental or elusive.

It's a skill—something we can learn, grow, and practice.

It expands with attention, habits, and intention.



Learning Objectives—Part 1

You will leave with the ability to:

- Understand the **difference between happiness and joy**—and why joy matters for sustained wellbeing and performance.
- Recognize how **joy is rooted in purpose, gratitude, connection, and meaning**.



Learning Objectives—Part 2

Through interactive practice and real-world examples, you will:

- Engage in **joy-building exercises** you can use personally or with your teams.
- Explore **nine strategies** for cultivating joy at work.
- Identify **small wins** and next steps to create positive, energized, and resilient work culture.



What Is Joy?

Joy is associated with:

gladness • pleasure • bliss •
celebration • gratitude • contentment
excitement • wonder • serenity

**Joy is a renewable resource—
a skill we can cultivate for
resilience and wellbeing.**



Why Joy Matters

Joy strengthens our **wellbeing**, sharpens our thinking, and anchors us during stress.

- It's not soft—it's strategic.

Joy is a **renewable source** of:

- cognitive performance
- creativity and collaboration
- resilience and professional fulfillment



Joy helps us think better, work better, and live better.

Joy vs. Happiness

Happiness:

- **Fleeting**, outcome-driven, dependent on circumstances



Joy

- **Eudaimonic wellbeing**, renewable, skill-based, rooted in purpose, connection, and meaning



Joy Can Coexist With Challenge

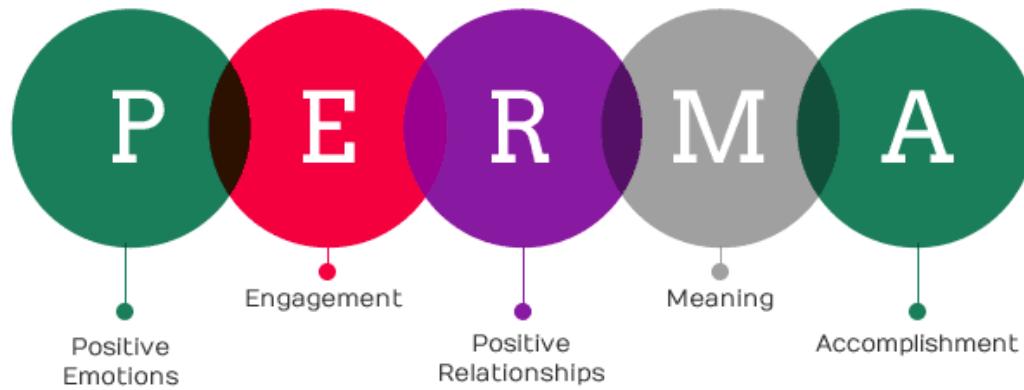
It's a **choice**, a **practice**,
and a source of
sustainable wellbeing.



Joy Is a Skill We Can Cultivate

PERMA Model (Martin Seligman)

Introducing a New Theory of Well-Being



Joy Is a Skill We Can Cultivate

PERMA Model (Martin Seligman)

- **Positive Emotion:** Cultivating joy in daily life
- **Engagement:** Fully immersing in meaningful work
- **Relationships:** Building trust and connection
- **Meaning:** Serving a purpose larger than yourself
- **Accomplishments:** Celebrating progress and achievements



Nurturing these five elements strengthens resilience, flourishing, and sustained wellbeing.

Positive Emotions Expand Your Mind

- Joy broadens thinking and creativity
(Fredrickson: Broaden and Build Theory)
- Encourages **flexible problem-solving** and adaptive thinking
- Opens **possibilities for innovation** and collaboration

With joy, our minds see more possibilities.



Joy Fuels Resilience and Performance

- Speeds **stress recovery** and reduces cognitive load
- Sets the **emotional tone** for teams—joy is contagious
- Happiness **drives success**, not the other way around
(Achor: Happiness Advantage)



Joy is not a perk—it's a performance enhancer.

Joy Strengthens Social Bonds

- Joy fosters **trust, empathy**, and psychological safety
- Teams with higher **positive** emotional tone collaborate more effectively
- Small **moments of joy** build belonging and connection

Joy is the glue that strengthens relationships and teams.



Joy-Driven Leadership Behaviors

- **Recognition** and appreciation that uplift
- **Authenticity** and vulnerability in daily interactions
- **Empathy** and curiosity as leadership habits

**Leaders who cultivate joy
inspire engagement, trust,
and resilience.**



Organizational Culture Powered by Joy

- Joy signals a **thriving**, human-centered culture
- **Reduces burnout**, enhances creativity, strengthens retention
- **Everyday joy** is a measurable organizational asset

A culture infused with joy elevates performance and well-being simultaneously."



Joy Temperature + Micro-Gratitude

Quick assessment:

"How joyful are you right now?"

- List a few things you're grateful for—big or small
- Experiencing **gratitude strengthens joy**, resilience, and your impact at work.



The Nine Ways to Cultivate Joy at Work

Nine Ways to Cultivate Joy at Work

While challenges like stress, heavy workloads, and disconnection can get in the way of joy, these **nine strategies** help you build the pillars that support flourishing, resilience, and connection—both for yourself and your team.



1. Focus on Strengths

- Align tasks with individual talents
- Recognize strengths publicly
- Use strengths-based assessments

Impact: Engagement, productivity, retention



2. Find Flow

- Encourage **deep focus** on challenging-yet-manageable work
- **Reduce interruptions** and multitasking

Impact: Creativity, efficiency, learning



3. Seek Awe

- Inspire **wonder** through achievements, stories, or experiences
- Highlight organizational impact

Impact: Innovation, broadened thinking, purpose



4. Purpose Beyond Paycheck

- Connect work to meaningful outcomes
- Share organizational mission and vision

Impact: Commitment, resilience, engagement



5. Grow Yourself

- Support skill-building and professional development
- Encourage reflection and goal-setting

Impact: Adaptability, satisfaction, retention



6. Strengthen Social Connections

- Foster **collaboration** and peer support
- Encourage informal **check-ins** and recognition

Impact: Psychological safety, trust, collaboration



7. Celebrate Others' Success

- Recognize **achievements** authentically
- Share team and individual **wins**

Impact: Morale, motivation, positive culture



8. Show Appreciation

- Express **gratitude** consistently
- Encourage peer-to-peer **recognition**

Impact: Loyalty, engagement, joy at work



9. Help Others

- Offer **mentorship** and support
- Promote collaboration and **acts of service**

Impact: Connection, trust, organizational cohesion



Case Vignettes

Brené Brown— Courage and Authentic Leadership

- Joy emerges when leaders show **vulnerability and authenticity**.
- Embracing **imperfections** and celebrating effort strengthens trust and engagement.



Organizational impact:

Teams feel safer taking risks, collaboration improves, and innovation thrives.

Chip Conley— Meaning + Emotional Intelligence at Work

- Joy is cultivated when leaders and employees find **purpose** in their roles.
- **Emotional intelligence** helps leaders notice and amplify moments of joy for others.



Organizational impact:
Higher morale, stronger retention, and enhanced performance across teams.

Nellie Borrero— Belonging and Inclusive Culture

- Joy is rooted in **belonging** and recognition of diverse perspectives.
- Leaders who actively foster **inclusion** create environments where everyone feels seen and valued.



Organizational impact:
Inclusive cultures yield higher engagement, better decision-making, and resilient teams.

Shawn Achor— Happiness Advantage in Action

- **Positive emotions** enhance creativity, productivity, and problem-solving.
- **Micro-gratitude**, strengths use, and acts of kindness cultivate joy systematically.

Organizational impact:
Greater performance outcomes and reduced burnout.



Reflection and Application

Prompts:

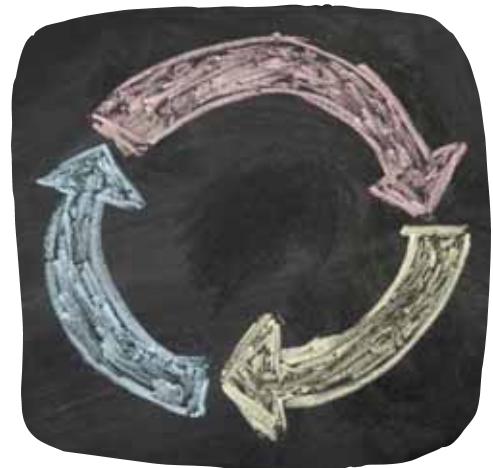
- “Where in your workflow or team culture could a **small infusion of joy** have the biggest impact?”
- “What’s **one change** to elevate connection or appreciation?”
- “Which of the **Nine Joy Strategies** will you pilot in the next 30 days?”



Designing Joy Into Systems—Key Concept

Sustained joy isn't accidental—it's designed.

- Joy becomes **durable** when it is embedded into workflows, rituals, and communication patterns.
- **Small systemic shifts** can amplify wellbeing, belonging, and performance across an organization.



Designing Joy Into Systems— People Feel Seen

Recognition + Appreciation

- Meaningful, specific recognition systems
- Peer-to-peer appreciation rituals

**Being seen fuels joy,
motivation, and engagement.**



Designing Joy Into Systems— People Feel Connected

Community + Belonging

- Connection time **built into meetings** (short, intentional, energizing)
- Staff **learning circles/joy roundtables**



**Joy grows between people—
not just within them.**

Designing Joy Into Systems— People Can Grow

Learning + Development

- Coaching and mentorship **pathways**
- Professional development that uplifts strengths

**Growth builds confidence—
and confidence fuels joy.**



Designing Joy Into Systems— Workflows Support Wellbeing

Reduce friction + honor humans

- Workload improvements that **prevent overload**
- Flexibility + wellbeing-aligned **scheduling**

**When stress decreases,
joy has room to rise.**



Final Reflection + Micro-Commitment

Think of **one joyful action** you're willing to try this week— a micro-shift that could spark connection, gratitude, or ease.

Share your commitment with a neighbor or table.



Key Takeaways

- **Joy is a skill**—and a workplace strategy.
- It fuels **wellbeing**, connection, and performance.
- **Small actions** create measurable impact.
- **Joyful leadership** builds thriving teams and culture.

Session Evaluation



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Finding Joy in the Workplace

Cultivating Wellbeing, Connection, and Performance

Presented by: Annie Barrett, M.A., NBC-HWC

Conference: 35th Annual Health Benefits Conference & Expo (HBCE)

Why Joy, Why Now?

Modern workplaces are navigating unprecedented levels of burnout, cognitive overload, and disengagement. Joy is not a soft extra or a fleeting emotion — it is a **renewable resource** that supports wellbeing, strengthens relationships, and enhances performance.

Research from positive psychology and organizational science shows that joy supports:

- Cognitive flexibility and creativity
- Stronger collaboration and connection
- Greater resilience under pressure
- Sustainable performance over time

Joy Is Not a Distant Destination

Joy is a **skill we can cultivate**.

It is central to:

- Wellbeing and resilience
- Focus, engagement, and motivation
- Meaningful and fulfilling work

When nurtured intentionally, joy becomes a powerful antidote to burnout and a foundation for thriving individuals and organizations.

Joy vs. Happiness

While happiness is often fleeting and circumstance-dependent, **joy is deeper and more durable**.

- **Happiness**: pleasure-based, external, temporary
- **Joy**: purpose-driven, relational, renewable

Joy is closely connected to meaning, gratitude, connection, and contribution.

The Science of Joy: PERMA

Joy and wellbeing are supported by five evidence-based elements (Martin Seligman):

- **Positive Emotion** – experiencing joy, gratitude, hope
- **Engagement** – being absorbed in meaningful tasks
- **Relationships** – connecting with others
- **Meaning** – serving a purpose beyond oneself
- **Accomplishment** – making progress toward goals

By strengthening these areas, individuals and teams build resilience, fulfillment, and sustainable performance.

A Simple Practice: Gratitude

Take a moment to ask yourself:

How joyful am I right now?

List a few things you are grateful for — big or small.

Experiencing gratitude strengthens joy, resilience, and your positive impact at work.

Nine Ways to Cultivate Joy at Work

These strategies are practical, research-informed, and applicable at individual and organizational levels:

1. **Focus on Strengths** – Align work with what people do best.
2. **Create Flow** – Design work that allows deep focus and absorption.
3. **Invite Awe** – Make space for inspiration, reflection, and perspective.
4. **Connect to Purpose** – Link daily work to meaningful impact.
5. **Encourage Growth** – Support learning, curiosity, and development.
6. **Strengthen Relationships** – Foster trust, belonging, and connection.
7. **Celebrate Progress** – Acknowledge effort and wins, big and small.
8. **Practice Appreciation** – Express gratitude regularly and authentically.
9. **Help Others** – Create opportunities to support and uplift colleagues.

Designing Joy Into Systems

Joy is most sustainable when supported by workplace systems and culture:

- How meetings are run
- How work is recognized and rewarded
- How people are supported during change
- How values are modeled by leaders

When joy is designed into systems, it becomes shared, scalable, and enduring.

Reflection: A Micro-Commitment

What is one small action you will take this week to cultivate joy for yourself or your team?

Small, consistent actions create meaningful change.

Key Takeaways

- Workforce wellbeing is a competitive advantage
- Psychological health supports organizational health
- Joy contributes to resilience, retention, and performance
- Joy is an evidence-based leadership skill with measurable impact

Thank you for your participation and commitment to cultivating more joyful, human-centered workplaces.