

# 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

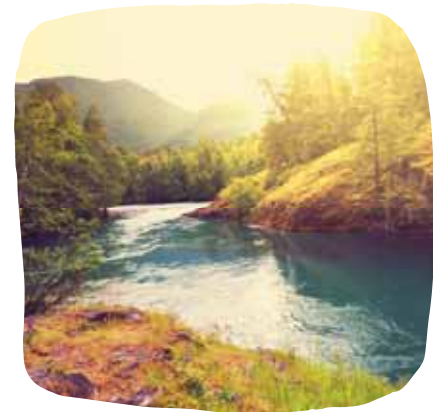
## Happiness:

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



## Joy

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



# Joy Can Coexist With Challenge

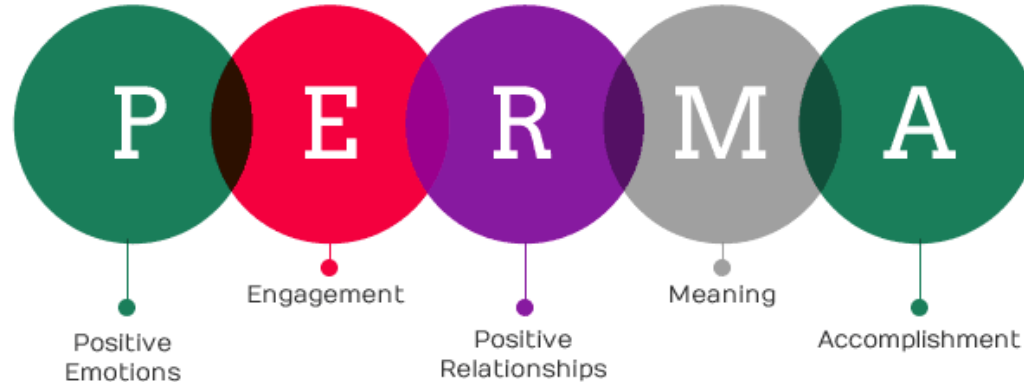
It's a **choice**, a **practice**,  
and a source of  
sustainable wellbeing.



# 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  
(Anchor: 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 wellbeing 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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Program Evaluation



# 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)

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### 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
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### 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.

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### 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.
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## 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.

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### **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.

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