

# EVERYDAY GENIUS

Everyday genius is about developing yourself to focus on what's important and enhancing your ability to be optimistic and positive towards everything you do. In order to do that you need to feel happy. Here are 16 tips to develop that sense of contentment.

## 7. CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES WISELY

Emotionally intelligent know how important it is to pick your battles. In work there can often be heightened anxiety and outbursts of emotion when the pressure is on. These kind of battles leave scars that are hard to heal. In conflict, unchecked emotion makes you dig your heels in and fight the kind of battle that can leave you severely damaged and unhappy for some time to come. When you read and respond to your emotions, you're able to choose your battles wisely and only stand your ground when the time is right.

## 8. STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF

Crossing moral boundaries in the name of success is a sure-fire path to unhappiness. Violating your personal standards creates feelings of regret, dissatisfaction, and demotivation. Know when to stand your ground and express dissent when someone wants you to do something that you know you shouldn't. When you're feeling confused, take some time to review your values and write them down. This will help you to locate your moral compass.

## 1. YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF YOUR OWN HAPPINESS

No one else can make you feel something – only you. Many people complain about their jobs and state they have to stick at it. But that's not true. You can make a choice. You can choose to stay at a job that you aren't completely content with because it provides you with something that is important. Maybe it pays well or provides family friendly flexibility, maybe you have a great friend. If you are going to stay make a conscious decision to stay and value your reasons why. Just making that decision can change your focus. Or you can choose to leave. Either way choose don't just put up with it. You do control your own happiness.

## 2. DON'T OBSESS OVER THINGS YOU CANNOT CONTROL

It is easy to get sidetracked and lost in today's complex world and the first step in increasing your effectiveness is to concentrate on the things you can do something about and stop worrying or second guessing the things that you can't. We each have a wide range of concerns - our health, our family, problems at work, the national debt, etc., and it is these things in our lives that make up our Circle of Concern – some of which we can influence and some we can't. Focus solely on things that you can influence.

## 5. EXERCISE

Getting your body moving for as little as 10 minutes releases GABA, a soothing neurotransmitter that also limits impulsivity. A University of Bristol study showed that people who exercised on workdays reported improvements in time management, mood, and performance. The benefits of exercise always outweigh the time lost in its pursuit.

## 9. CLEAR THE CLUTTER

I don't need to remind you of how much time you spend at work. Take a good look at your workspace. You should create a space that's soothing and uplifting. Whether it's a picture of your family, a plant, or an award that you're proud of, display them prominently to keep them on your mind. Get rid of the junk and clutter that hold no significance and do nothing positive for your mental state.

## 6. DON'T JUDGE OR GOSSIP

Judging other people and speaking poorly of them is a lot like overindulging in a decadent dessert; it feels good while you're doing it, but afterwards, you feel guilty and sick. When you're tempted to speak of someone else in a way that might be negative, just ask yourself if you'd want someone saying the same about you.

## 10. LAUGH AT YOURSELF

When you take yourself too seriously at work your happiness and performance suffer. Don't be afraid to show a little vulnerability. Something as simple as laughing at yourself draws people to you because it shows them that you're humble and grounded (it also keeps them from laughing behind your back). Happy people balance their self-confidence with a good sense of humour and humility.

## 3. DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF TO OTHERS

When your sense of pleasure and satisfaction are derived from comparing yourself to others, you are no longer the master of your own happiness. When you feel good about something that you've done and don't allow anyone's opinions or accomplishments take that away from you, you become the master of your happiness. If you feel you are comparing yourself to others just refocus on yourself. Build a daily list of your successes and read this through to remind yourself what an awesome human being you are every day.

## 4. REWARD YOURSELF

Working hard is important, but never allowing yourself to take a break is detrimental to your happiness. A study of radiologists found that they made more accurate diagnoses when they received small rewards prior to reviewing patients' charts. A Cornell study found that small rewards make people more generous, friendly, and happy. These small "thrills" also made people more productive and accurate in their work. Rewards activate the pleasure pathway in your brain, even if they are self-induced. Effective rewards can be small things such as taking a walk down the hall or eating a snack. Have a think about what little treats you can reward yourself with to help give you that thrill!

## 11. GIVE SOMEONE A HAND

Taking the time to help your colleagues not only makes them happy, but it also makes you happy. Helping other people gives you a surge of oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine, all of which create good feelings. In a Harvard study, employees who helped others were 10 times more likely to be focused at work and 40% more likely to get a promotion. The same study showed that people who consistently provided social support were the most likely to be happy during times of high stress. As long as you make certain that you aren't overcommitting yourself, helping others is sure to have a positive influence on your happiness.

## 12. LET YOUR STRENGTH FLOW

A University of Chicago study of peak performance found that people who were able to reach an intense state of focus, called flow, reaped massive benefits. Flow is the state of mind in which you find yourself completely engrossed in a project or task, and you lose awareness of the passage of time and other external distractions. Flow is often described as an exhilarating state in which you feel euphoria and mastery simultaneously. The result is not just happiness and productivity but also the development of new skills through a heightened state of learning. The key to reaching flow lies in organizing your tasks such that you have immediate and clear goals to pursue that play to your strengths. As you begin working on these tasks, your focus increases along with your feelings of adequacy. In time, you reach a flow state, in which productivity and happiness flourish. Set clear goals each day and experiment with task order until you find the secret formula that gets you flowing.

## 13. SMILE AND LAUGH MORE

A study at Mannheim University in Germany demonstrated that we can actually manipulate our emotions by changing our facial expressions. One group of participants held a pen in their mouth horizontally, which forces a smile. When asked to rate how funny a cartoon was, the participants holding pens in their mouths found the cartoons much funnier than participants without pens.

As the study shows, it doesn't matter if your smile is genuine because your facial expression can precede the feeling. If you find yourself in a negative spiral at work, slow down and smile or watch a funny video on YouTube. This mood boost can turn your day around.

## 15. CULTIVATE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

It's all too easy to get caught up in things that could have been different or didn't turn out the way you wanted them to. Sometimes the best way to pull your mind away from negativity is to step back and contemplate what you're grateful for. Taking time to reflect on the good in your life improves your mood because it reduces the stress hormone cortisol by 23%. Research conducted at the University of California, Davis, found that people who worked daily to cultivate an attitude of gratitude experienced improved mood, energy, and physical wellbeing

## 14. STAY AWAY FROM NEGATIVE PEOPLE

Complainers and negative people are bad news because they wallow in their problems and fail to focus on solutions. They want people to join their pity party so that they can feel better about themselves. People often feel pressure to listen to complainers because they don't want to be seen as callous or rude, but there's a fine line between lending a sympathetic ear and getting sucked into their negative emotional spirals. You can avoid getting drawn in only by setting limits and distancing yourself when necessary. Think of it this way: If a person were smoking, would you sit there all afternoon inhaling the second-hand smoke? You'd distance yourself, and you should do the same with negative people. A great way to set limits is to ask them how they intend to fix their problems. The complainer will then either quiet down or redirect the conversation in a productive direction.

## 16. BELIEVE THE BEST IS YET TO COME

Don't just tell yourself that the best is yet to come—believe it. Having a positive, optimistic outlook on the future doesn't just make you happier; it also improves your performance by increasing your sense of self-efficacy. The mind has a tendency to magnify past pleasure to such a great degree that the present pales in comparison. This phenomenon can make you lose faith in the power of the future to outdo what you've already experienced. Don't be fooled. Believe in the great things the future has in store.