



Happiness: 4 top tips

Ken Blanchard

1. Happiness is a fleeting emotion largely dependent on external circumstances –

Happiness comes and goes, it's not something I want to build my life around. Happiness is too dependent on circumstances beyond my control for me to make it my goal. However, I *can* control how I respond to the circumstances of my life and I can choose to have a positive attitude.

There are many times when work and life deal us a crummy hand. We have to work overtime, business travel takes us away from important family events, or we make a mistake and get reprimanded out by the boss; none of those things make us happy. But if we have the right attitude and perspective on work and life, we can put those situations in their proper place and learn and grow from the experience.

2. Happiness should be a pleasant outcome of good leadership and organizational culture, not the goal –

My job as a leader is not to make you happy. If that was the case, then I'd serve ice cream every afternoon and cater to your every need. No, my job is to help you develop to your fullest potential while accomplishing the goals of our team and organization.

If I'm smart, I will lead in a way that builds your commitment to the organization and fosters engagement in your work. I'll also strive to create a culture that supports your health and well-being and makes your work enjoyable. Oh, and by the way, if you're happy as a result, then great!

Your happiness is not my goal, but you're free to make it your own.

3. Happiness is negatively correlated with meaning –

It's a fundamental truth: pursuing happiness as your primary goal is like a dog chasing its tail.

Studies have shown that people who place more importance on being happy end up becoming more depressed and unhappy. Rather than happiness, we need to pursue **meaning and purpose**.

One American study (Centre for Disease Control) found that 40% of Americans either do not think their lives have a clear sense of purpose or are neutral about whether their life has purpose

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The same study also reported that nearly 25% of Americans feel neutral or do not have a strong sense of what makes their lives meaningful. Having purpose and meaning in life and at work increases overall well-being and satisfaction, improves mental and physical health, enhances resiliency and self-esteem, and decreases the chances of depression.

As a leader, your efforts at helping employees understand and connect to the purpose and meaning of their work will reap more benefit than striving to make them happy.

4. Happiness is self-focused; true fulfillment in life (and work) comes from being others-focused –

- At its core, happiness is a pretty selfish motive when you think about it. Psychologists explain it as drive reduction.
- We have a need or drive, like hunger, and we seek to satisfy it. When we get what we want to meet the need, we're happy.
- However, lasting success and fulfillment in life comes from what you give, not what you get and the demonstration of servant leadership.

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Adam Grant, in his book *Give and Take*, identifies three ways people tend to operate in their relationships: as givers, takers, or matchers.

Not surprisingly, although givers may get burned occasionally, they experience higher levels of fulfillment, well-being, and success in life compared to takers or matchers.

Those who chase happiness as their primary goal tend to be the most selfish and unhappy people I know. Those who give to others tend to be the most fulfilled, joyful, and happy people I've seen.