



It Starts With Me: A Manager's Journey to Joy In Work

Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel. — Eleanor Brown

Before you can effectively help others create JOY IN WORK, you must first create Joy in Your OWN work. This quick guide is intended to give you some tools to jumpstart your own journey to experiencing more joy at work. As you develop increased awareness of your own joy experience you will likely gain a higher level of comfort modeling, expressing and even prioritizing the importance of finding JOY IN WORK.



Begin With Gratitude

Tracking your own gratitude and reflecting on it over time often boosts your internal motivation at work. By focusing on what brings YOU joy – you can define what joy in work means to you. There are many ways you can promote gratitude into your daily work life including:

- **Affirmations:** Saying or writing positive statements or quotes.
- **Visuals:** Collecting images that represent things, people, places that you are grateful for and spending a bit of time looking at them regularly.
- **Mindfulness:** Finding 5–8 minutes of quiet time to breath, focus on the present moment, and think about things you are most thankful for.

- **Reframe:** Write down your three most pressing challenges and re-write them starting with “I am grateful for [X challenge] because it is [helping, facilitating, teaching] which is having [positive effect].

Activity

Keep a Gratitude Journal or video recordings. Choose a prompt every day, or create your own, and spend 5–10 minutes each day reflecting. Starting your day off with reflection can establish a positive mindset for the day ahead. Over time, reflect on what you have written or recorded.

- ♦ What was the best part of your workday yesterday?
- ♦ Who is someone in your work life that you are thankful for and why?
- ♦ What brings you comfort when challenges arise in your work?
- ♦ What memory from last week makes you smile?
- ♦ What is something new you learned recently that you’re grateful for?
- ♦ Reflect on a tricky challenge you faced and how it helped you grow.
- ♦ What unexpected, good thing happened to you at work recently?
- ♦ What is something nice you did for someone else that made you feel good?
- ♦ What technology or tool are you grateful for in your daily life?
- ♦ In what area of your work have you grown the most in the last year and how has that helped you?
- ♦ What piece of positive news uplifted you recently?
- ♦ What is something nice you did for someone else that made you feel good?
- ♦ What aspect of your health that supports your work efforts are you most thankful for?
- ♦ What snack, meal or food did you particularly enjoy at work over the last week?

Fill Your Own Cup First

As a manager you play a pivotal role in creating JOY IN WORK, yet it's crucial to recognize that you're not a robot devoid of personal needs. You too, deserve a sense of joy and fulfillment in the work you do. Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup.



We all come to work for different reasons. Understanding the “why” we come to work helps us better understand what we need. Understanding our needs helps us seek out things at work that will bring us joy. For example, if building positive relationships is your primary source of joy then you know it's very important for you to take some intentional lunches with colleagues and to not put that off. This self-awareness can help you make choices and decisions that are in alignment with what truly fills your cup.

Activity

Below is a series of questions designed to help you increase your awareness about actions that have potential to help “fill your cup” at work so that you can be best prepared to support your team. Place a check mark next to each question that resonates.

- ☐ **People:** *How do you prioritize spending time with people at work?*

You likely gravitate towards spending time with colleagues who lift you up.

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- ☐ **Favorite Tasks:** *What aspects of your work light you up and how can you find ways to integrate them into your schedule regularly?*

We all have favorite tasks or activities in our roles that give us that jolt of value that carries us through the more challenging or mundane aspects of our work.

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- ☐ **Space:** *How is your physical environment conducive to personal well-being?*

Is your desk or office cluttered? Is your light too bright? Do you have visual reminders of people, pets, places and things that bring you joy?

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- ☐ **Learning:** *How are you investing in your own learning and growth?*

Making your own learning goals a priority signals to your brain that you are important too.

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- ☐ **Creativity:** *How do you spark creativity for yourself?*

This could be as simple as listening to music, participating in a group brainstorm, trying a new tool or method.

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- ☐ **Laughing:** *Where are you finding opportunities to laugh?*

Some people like to keep “smile journal” where they capture small moments that brought them a laugh or a smile to reflect on later during more challenging times.

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- ☐ **Outside of Work:** *How are you finding joy outside of work?*

Joy outside of work is a way of spilling over and should always be prioritized and encouraged.

Find Your Joy

When you mention JOY IN WORK the immediate picture that often comes to mind is outwardly expressed happiness, smiling, skipping through sunshine, right? Happiness all the time. Never sad, discouraged, or disgruntled.

But that type of joy is fleeting and unrealistic. JOY IN WORK is an uplifting experience you feel at work. It's about finding fulfillment in what we do and in the connections around us. It means even on hard days you feel like you matter and that you as a manager are supported.



Activity

Without judging your own thoughts as good or bad or right or wrong, put a checkmark next to the narratives that you connect with. Consider reframing selected narratives so that you can become more open to refining your internal mindset that may be limiting your JOY IN WORK experience.

Current Narrative	Reframed Narrative Example
<input type="checkbox"/> Work is work; joy is for personal life.	→ JOY IN WORK is important and valued.
<input type="checkbox"/> I've had enough "fun" for now, I've used up my joy quota.	→ JOY IN WORK is expansive and can be integrated throughout many aspects of our work.
<input type="checkbox"/> Managers facilitate JOY IN WORK, not participate in it.	→ Managers' JOY IN WORK experience is paramount.
<input type="checkbox"/> JOY IN WORK should be effortless.	→ JOY IN WORK takes intention, courage, and practice.
<input type="checkbox"/> Seeking JOY IN WORK is self-serving.	→ Managers' JOY IN WORK experience is a model for staff and that modelling is a way of giving.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm too serious to be joyful at work.	→ I can be both serious about my work and in my demeanor while also experiencing and promoting joy.
<input type="checkbox"/> You have to earn joy.	→ I deserve joy in my work.
<input type="checkbox"/> The mission of the work is joy enough.	→ I deserve to experience JOY IN WORK in other aspects of work beyond the mission.

Current Narrative	Reframed Narrative Example
<input type="checkbox"/> Joy looks like smiles and laughs.	→ It's ok if I experience and express JOY IN WORK in ways different from smiles and laughs.
<input type="checkbox"/> JOY IN WORK is the absence of negative feelings.	→ I can have negative feelings and JOY IN WORK at the same time.
<input type="checkbox"/> JOY IN WORK is a destination... something to be reached.	→ JOY IN WORK is a journey that takes time, practice, and iteration.
<input type="checkbox"/> JOY IN WORK is associated with big events like parties.	→ JOY IN WORK can be powerfully experienced in small, everyday moments.
<input type="checkbox"/> JOY IN WORK should be constant.	→ JOY IN WORK has ups and down and isn't a permanent state, it's an overall sense.

What Matters to You

It is also important to be mindful of the small, day-to-day things that are a source of joy. Again, being more self-aware provides good information so that small improvements can be incorporated into our daily activities. For example, if feeling organized with color coded systems sparks joy for you- having a rainbow of colors marker set on desk can enhance your JOY IN WORK experience. This process also helps managers acknowledge the things that feel draining or frustrating. Awareness helps us better navigate those things and find support to better deal with them.



Activity

Take a moment for self-reflection, a practice often overlooked in the whirlwind of daily responsibilities. Use these questions to get you started.

- ♦ What matters to you in your daily work?
- ♦ What makes for a good day for you?
- ♦ What makes you proud to work here?
- ♦ When we are at our best, what does that look like?

Activity

And if you are up for a deeper dive, get more specific. Think about joy in terms of “Joy Boosters” — things that make your work meaningful and “Joy Depleters” — aspects that drain your energy and diminish your joy.

In the coming week, be intentional about observing these joy boosters and depleters. Jot them down and pay attention to the patterns. Understanding what matters to you will set the stage to aligning your daily work with joy. Ask yourself questions such as:

- ♦ What matters to you in your daily work?
- ♦ How does it relate to the things I value at work?
- ♦ How can I do more of what brings me joy?
- ♦ How might I partner with a colleague at work who finds joy in what depletes my joy?

Joy Boosters

Joy Depleters

♦	♦
♦	♦
♦	♦
♦	♦
♦	♦
♦	♦

Taking Care of YOU!

You matter, too! Managers are often the first line of response for staff facing challenges and this along with all the other responsibilities and competing priorities can take a toll on managers' emotional capacity. It's critically important for managers to continuously be monitoring their own physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and mental health needs as it directly impacts their ability to support their teams.

Demonstrating self-care sets a positive example, encouraging a culture that prioritizes personal wellbeing. Ultimately, a well-cared-for manager is more likely to inspire, motivate, and support their team and is better positioned to create a positive JOY IN WORK experience for their team.

Activity

Reflect on these questions:

- ♦ What does self-care at work look like? This could involve taking walking meetings, eating well, giving your eyes screen rest, taking stretch and movement breaks or something else.
- ♦ Do I pro-actively seek care and support for myself regularly or wait until there is an overwhelming challenge?
- ♦ How would my staff describe my personal commitment to self-care?
- ♦ How does my leadership and peers encourage self-care for me?



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1201 I Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20005

Phone: 202.783.5550 • Fax: 202.783.1583

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