



An action plan for working smarter – and happier

No matter what we do for work, we can choose to make the most of every learning opportunity that arises. If the opportunities aren't obvious, we may have to work harder to find them.

Experts at the Mayo Clinic have compiled the following strategies to make work more gratifying; each applies equally to the goal of enriching your brain at work.

Set New Challenges

With a little imagination, you can create new challenges and make the best of the job you have. Here are some ideas that may help.

Imagining yourself in your dream job. you might see yourself as an excellent project manager – a confident communicator and a highly organized person. Why not work on these skills in your present job?

Develop your own project. Take on a project that can motivate you and give you a sense of control. Start small, such as organizing a work-related celebration, before moving on to larger goals. Working on something you care about can boost your confidence.

Mentor a co-worker. Once you've mastered a job, you may find it becoming routine. Helping a new co-worker or an intern advance his or her skills can often restore the challenge and the satisfaction you desire.

Stay positive

Use positive thinking to reframe your thoughts about your job. Changing your attitude about work won't necessarily happen overnight. But if you're alert to ways your view of work brings you down, you can improve your job satisfaction. Try these techniques:

Stop negative thoughts. Pay attention to the messages you give yourself. When you catch yourself thinking your job is terrible, stop the thought in its tracks.

Put things in perspective. Remember, everyone encounters good days and bad days on the job.

Look for the silver lining. "Reframing" can help you find the good in a bad situation. For example, you receive a less than perfect performance appraisal and your boss warns you to improve or move to another job. Instead of looking for another job right away, find the silver lining. Depending on where you work, the silver lining may be attending continuing education classes, or working with a performance coach or mentor, and ultimately having the satisfaction of showing your boss you're capable of change.

Learn from your mistakes. Failure is one of the greatest learning tools, but many people let failure defeat them. When you make a mistake at work, learn from it and try again.

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