



Love Your Work!

Two people at work: *“You wouldn’t believe what Department X just did!” “Again?” “Yeah, another banner day for teamwork.” “Are you going to ask management to talk to them?” “Why bother? They’re a bunch of prima donnas – untouchable when it comes to accountability.” “I get it. Improving efficiency isn’t very popular around here. It’s best to just keep our heads down and get through the BS as best we can.” The same two people 30 seconds later: “Hey, did you see that awesome game last night?” “Yeah! What an amazing finish against the best team in the league!”*

Even if this conversation only occurs a few times per week, it signals you have a big problem and a huge opportunity. Leaders call it a lack of engagement. Employees say leaders don’t care or listen to them. No one talks about it in the presence of the “other.” Passion and enthusiasm are devoted to spectator sports when there’s little room for it at work. This is a big problem if attracting and retaining quality people is important to you.

Almost a hundred years ago, Sufi poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran said, “Work is love made visible...”¹ We all know it can sometimes seem like a curse, but who doesn’t want to love what they do for a living...and love the people they work with...or love hearing that their efforts made someone’s life better?

We invest up to half of all waking hours working, thinking about work, and recovering from work. We also know that once our basic needs are met, more money does not make us any happier.² So, how do we unleash our untapped potential for joy and fulfillment?

It begins with awareness. While our glass is often more than half-full, we let the actions of others define our mindset. We take for granted what we have, and overly focus on what we don’t have.

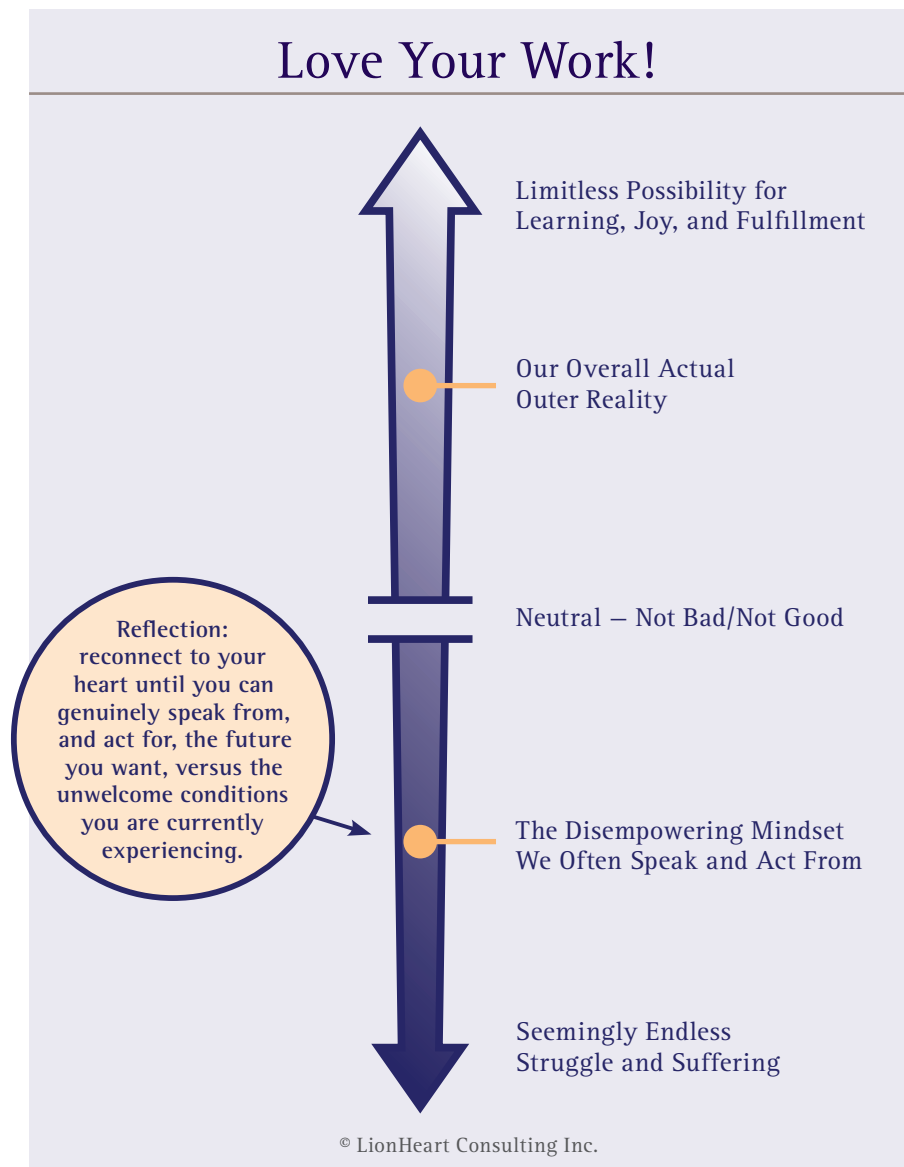
¹ The Prophet, Kahlil Gibran, Alfred A. Knopf Publisher, 1923

² The Economics of Happiness, Mark Anielski, New Society Publishers, 2007

We stop seeing, speaking, and acting for the future we want. Worse yet, we use up our precious energy to complain about what others are doing or not doing. We avoid potentially uncomfortable conversations and miss out on the value and learning that comes with them.

We disengage enough to shield the immediate pain. We forget about everything we have going for us and suffer inside of our minds. Our highest intentions are replaced with wishing for a 'not bad' experience of work, "If I could just stop worrying...reduce my headaches...not have to deal with Department X."

In LionHeart language, we lose heart – sometimes momentarily, sometimes forever.



Thankfully, you can do better. Before addressing the remedy for these self-inflicted disempowering narratives, however, it must be said that sometimes you have more serious problems to contend with: a challenging illness, suddenly becoming a single parent, losing your job, having your company go bankrupt and so on. The path to loving your work can be longer and tougher in these scenarios, but fortunately, the path is the same.

The Path to Loving Your Work More Thoroughly:

- 1. Habitually Focus on What's Going Right.** The antidote to forgetting your glass is more than half-full is to stop for 30 seconds every couple of hours and take note of your own good news, what others are doing well, and what you are thankful for. Build 3-5 minutes into every meeting for people to describe their successes since your last meeting. Make a team-practice of proactively and explicitly building upon the positive momentum that your

current success makes possible. As your head hits the pillow when you go to bed, invest a few minutes being grateful for what you normally take for granted. Remember that entitlement and complacency creep in when you do not appreciate what is going right. This disempowering mindset is not what fuels your heart to create your next round of good news.

2. **Consider Yourself a Student and Teacher of Lifelong Learning.** Challenges and difficulties will always come along for everyone. Loving your work and loving to learn about your work seem to go hand in hand. Expand your curriculum to staying calm under duress, and using each obstacle in your path as a stepping stone to stronger communication skills. Remember that you can learn to improve any relationship and find creative ways to approach any problem. This will ring true and provide meaning to your work forever. Once you have mastered this mindset for yourself, you will be able to support others to do the same when they overreact to their difficulties. Imagine the value of this intangible benefit to your employees who embrace this approach to learning.
3. **Find as Many Ways to Help Others as Possible.** Most people are doing the best they can, and have overall positive intentions that accompany their blind-spots when it comes to working well with others. Refrain from writing people off when they cause you extra work or don't have time for you. Instead, take the time to make someone's day go better and you will often get paid back twice – with a smiling thank-you, and later when you need a hand. It feels great to work with people you enjoy being with. It also feels great to make a difference with those around you. Remember that you can develop meaningful relationships that are larger than the work you are doing. These meaningful relationships also have a dual payback: better cooperation to get the job done and a happier community of people to work with.
4. **Speak and Act towards Your Highest Intentions.** Stop exhausting your energy talking about what's wrong and how powerless you are to make things right. Put your creative energy into the future you desire. While temporary setbacks and failures are inevitable, define who you are by the positive declarations and actions you consistently take to overcome your disappointments. Notice your language when it is disempowering or disapproving, and reframe your communication towards where you are going. Remember that your thoughts, words, and actions are the intentions that pull you toward whatever you are consciously or unconsciously creating. Wherever you find yourself today is, in large part, a reflection of your mindset from many yesterdays.
5. **Invest in a Reflective Practice to Illuminate Your Focus.** Your sense of possibility is critical to loving your work; and there are innumerable opportunities to lose your sense of possibility to negative self-talk. There are also innumerable ways you can reframe your thought process, or open your heart, or align with your values and highest aspirations. You need to find your own way, of course. Your reflective practice will allow you to recover from whatever darkens your mood and outlook on life from time to time. Remember that happiness is an inside job. Mastering your mind and emotions involves exploring the secrets of the universe you've read about or seen dramatized in action-packed movies. You make these practices real and available when you sincerely search for and embrace the [door to your own heart](#). Your special practice can illuminate and clear away the darker aspects of your humanity that inhibit the joy and fulfillment you most long for.

6. Set Your Sights on Flourishing at Work with Meaningful Learning, Joy, and Fulfillment.

Whether you have the job of your dreams or something that simply pays the bills, you have a choice to make every day. You can aspire to minimize your discomfort and protect what you have; or you can deepen your own vitality and spiritual prosperity by showing up as your best, and ever-improving self. Every job has its positive elements and its drudgery. Every job has real people impacted by your performance. You are the active ingredient in how you use your job opportunities every day. Remember, on a scale of 1-10, that it's better to strive for 9 and achieve 8, than it is to strive for 5 and achieve 6.

Organizational culture experts are recognizing that engaged people in a healthy work environment are required for lasting business success. You are wise to look for and invest in people who have learned these lessons, and are committed to ongoing practices that keep them alive. Your own internal rewards come first when you embrace these lessons for yourself; however, your larger rewards in the marketplace are not to be underestimated.

If you resonate with these ideas and the possibility that your work is love made visible, then you have a life-changing opportunity before you.

Don't let anyone dismiss these ideas as the "soft stuff." You know very well that what we are suggesting requires hard work. Take up your journey. Embark upon the Way of Transformation. Use each day to enlighten yourself and those around you. Experience the joy and fulfillment of facing your inevitable obstacles with our simple, but powerful recommendation. Whether you have a moment of joy or difficulty to embrace, just do the next good thing with love!