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I look forward to going to work. When I get to my office, I have a little ritual. I light a gently scented candle and play some soft classical music. I take a few minutes to center myself from the commute, and start my day. The time I spend making my office feel like home seems to hold an appeal for my coworkers, as they frequently stop by for a few minutes to talk. Maybe it's the welcoming energy, maybe it's my willingness to "listen." All I know is my office is a pleasant place to be, and that makes me happy.

Minx Boren coaches people on how to live authentic lives, and she consults with companies on how to have happier, more productive employees. Happy employees. That struck me as an incredibly novel concept, perhaps even an oxymoron. But being happy at work is what authentic living is all about, so I invited her to tell us more.

Donna Mosher, editor

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THE KEY TO AN AUTHENTIC LIFE

THE HAPPINESS FACTOR BY MINX BOREN MCC PERSONAL AND BUSINESS COACH

YES, Donna, happiness matters... and NO, happiness at work is not an oxymoron, any more than the term Emotional Intelligence is. Actually, as a coach, I like to say that I am in the happiness business! Why????? Because, ultimately, happiness is a wonderfully productive state. Just think about it. When we're happy...

- * we have a greater sense of well-being
- * our negative feelings are inhibited and our energy and enthusiasm increased
- * our mind is able to think clearly, creatively, productively
- * we can respond to life's challenges in a more hopeful and optimistic way
- * we attract others to us and more readily create positive relationships in our personal and business lives

Bottom line is that, when we are happy, content, and in a positive frame of mind, our potential for greater achievement is enhanced... which, in turn, affects the bottom line. Corporations and other organizations all over the country are paying attention to the research on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and hiring coaches and workshop leaders to bring this cutting edge technology into the workplace. In this competitive and challenging financial environment, they can't afford not to.

SO THE GOOD NEWS IS...

Happiness makes us more productive, effective, resilient, and creative. The bad news is that people are not happy. Consider this assessment from the Journal of the American Medical Association:

"Each successive generation worldwide since the opening of the century has lived with a higher risk than their parents of suffering a major depression – not just sadness, but a paralyzing listlessness, dejection, and self-pity, and an overwhelming hopelessness – over the course of life."

**"The Changing Rate of Major Depression:
Cross-National Comparisons," JAMA 12/2/92**

What makes this even worse it that this sense of malaise is affecting not only adults but also children. A survey of parents and teachers points out that the present generation tends to be more troubled emotionally than the last. More lonely and depressed, more anxious, aggressively reacting to circumstances with anger and unruliness, their temperament and behavior is troubling indeed. (p.xiii EI need to find the source) Since *our children are our future* this is not a trivial or indulgent conversation.

THE EXTRAORDINARY VALUE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Learning emotional intelligence is a process that can change the way we look at life, at possibilities, at choices. Ultimately, one of the basic aims of EI is to recognize the emotions that we are experiencing at any given moment and to determine what is needed to increase our sense of happiness and contentment. ***Since happiness can only be found in the present it is a choice we must continually learn to make.*** If we don't know how to fully enjoy today, we won't know how to enjoy tomorrow either. And, if we're not genuinely happy, we cannot possibly inspire others to be.

However, this is not simply a conversation about putting on a happy face. Nothing could be further from the true basis of EI. While laughter is the most contagious of all emotions, false laughter never rings true. Rather, EI is, first and foremost, about being truly aware of the emotional sea inside and all around us and skillfully navigating our way through the many and diverse feelings that come and go in response to whatever is happening. It's about being realistic and sincere while continually adjusting our sails to catch the favorable winds of optimism and enthusiasm. Moods are contagious and studies of great leaders show that *"high levels of emotional intelligence create climates in which information sharing, trust, healthy risk-taking and learning flourish."* (from "Primal Leadership: the Hidden Driver of Performance," Harvard Business Review, December, 2001)

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE EXPLAINED

"Emotions are a source of information, energy, creativity, achievement and connection."

*- Robert Cooper, PhD.
EQ and Executive Intelligence*

Author Daniel Goleman calls emotional intelligence the "basic flair for living": being able, for example, to rein in emotional impulse, to read another's innermost feelings, to handle relationships smoothly. Emotional Intelligence comprises a set of *learnable* skills that increases our capacity for happiness and success. While most of us are familiar with IQ, it only measures our capacity for reasoning and logic. There are other ways and types of knowing. In the 1980's Howard Gardner, a psychologist at the Harvard School of Education, identified a dozen different human intelligences including musical, spatial, somatic, and emotional.

Emotional Intelligence encompasses the ability to be aware of our feelings and to use them to help guide us in making appropriate decisions and choices throughout our lives. To do so skillfully, we must learn to manage negative reactions and moods even as we continually motivate ourselves by envisioning and setting positive goals and pursuing

them with an optimistic and hopeful mindset. With these individually oriented skills in place we can further develop our EI muscle by expanding our awareness to include an increased awareness of the feelings of those around us. It is only from that perspective that true empathy and meaningful connection become possible. Ultimately, those with the greatest emotional intelligence are able to inspire and motivate others, thus stepping naturally into roles of responsible and responsive leadership. The result is stronger motivation, resilience, and commitment in life and on the job.

Imagine being excited about going to work everyday. Imagine if happiness were part of our job description. What a concept. Yet, all too often, we don't feel heard, understood, appreciate, acknowledged or allowed to explore our creative gifts and talents. Our authentic selves are not invited to show up at work and so we are left with a feeling of malaise. The world needs leaders who understand and are skilled at sensing and influencing the emotional climate of the workplace in positive and inspiring ways.

THE FIRST STEP

If we want to impact our business environments, we first have to understand our own feelings. It all starts with us. To be authentic and, therefore, the authors of our own lives, we must first know who we are, in the fullest sense possible, and what really matters to us. We need to develop a heightened awareness about what turns us on (and off), what makes us tick. That awareness begins with getting in touch with our emotions, with how we truly feel about anything and everything. This is the beginning of Emotional Intelligence. And it has profound implications for the quality of our lives, our relationships, and the work we do in the world.

Here are a few things you can do now to begin to be more aware of your personal *happiness factor* and its impact on your environment:

1. **Attention** is a basic EI skill. Create a “Happiness Journal” and spend time each morning and/or evening writing about what brings you joy. Notice what can lift you right out of a sullen mood (and what triggers you to spiral down into one).
2. **Intention** also plays an important role in EI. Take Donna’s example to heart. Think of one or more ways you could create a happier, more welcoming environment at work (and at home) and test it out. Notice how it shifts the quality of your day (and, perhaps, as in Donna’s story, the moods of those around you.)
3. **Prevention**. In a future article I’ll explain how we get “triggered” and wind up in an emotional tailspin. For now, simply think about people and circumstances that drain your energy or negatively impact your environment and prepare a strategy to address these *bubble bursters*” before the pin pricks.

Further articles will explore the enormous value of developing emotional intelligence and present tools and experience to do so. This article is based on information that is part of a program titled “The Emotionally Intelligent Organization – A Coach Approach” developed by Minx Boren, Susan Klein, MCC and Ellen Fredericks, MCC. They, in turn, stand on the shoulders and gratefully acknowledge the groundbreaking work of Howard Gardner, Daniel Goleman, Robert Cooper, Doc children, and others.