Improving Employee Emotions and Emotion Regulation

Carolyn Winslow, Ph.D.

June 6, 2018

Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces

healthyworkplaces
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTER

Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Learning Objectives

2

- Explain the relationship between employee emotional experiences and several organizationally-valued outcomes
- List several organization- and person-focused strategies for improving employee emotional experiences
- Review research on the effectiveness of self-guided emotion regulation strategies
- Discuss opportunities for future research on employee affect and emotion regulation

Employee Affect

3

Term	Formal Definition	Examples
Discrete Emotions	Emotions focused on a specific target or cause; relatively intense and short-lived.	Anger, fear, pride, sadness, joy, grief, gratitude, frustration
Mood	Global pleasant or unpleasant feeling. Tends to be diffuse and not focused on a specific cause. Medium duration.	Feeling generally pleasant, negative, cheerful, irritable, etc.
Dispositional (trait) Affect	Overall tendency to respond to situations in stable, predictable ways. A person's "affective lens" on the world.	"She is always so upbeat." "He's such a downer."

Adapted from Barsade & Gibson (2007)

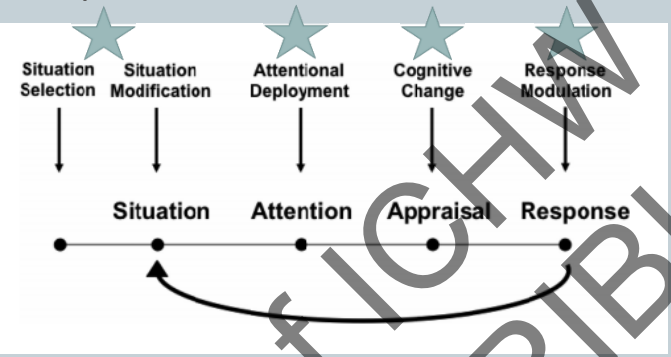
4

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Emotion Regulation

5

- "What people do to alter the experience, expression, and future course of affective experiences" (Beal et al., 2005, p. 1061)



Gross & Thompson (2007)

Why does affect matter in organizations?

6

- Affect as a **component in theoretical models** of employee health and well-being

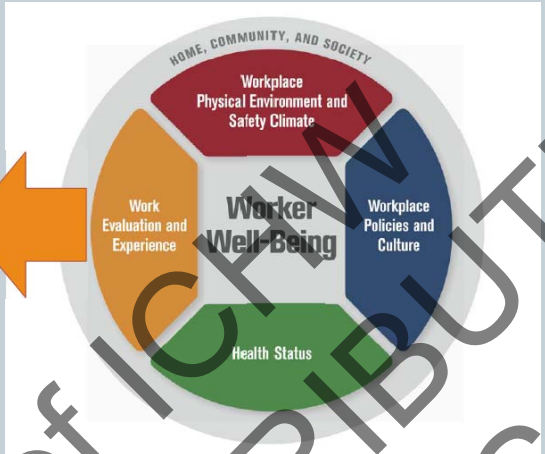
https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Emotional-Intelligence-Work-Emotions-768x382.jpg

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Proposed Worker Well-Being Framework

7

- Satisfaction
- Meaning/purpose
- **Affect**



Chari et al. (2018)

Why does affect matter in organizations?

8

- Affect as a **component in theoretical models** of employee health and well-being
- **Empirical connections** between affect and valued individual- and organizational-level outcomes

https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Emotional-Intelligence-Work-Emotions-768x382.jpg

Property of ICPW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

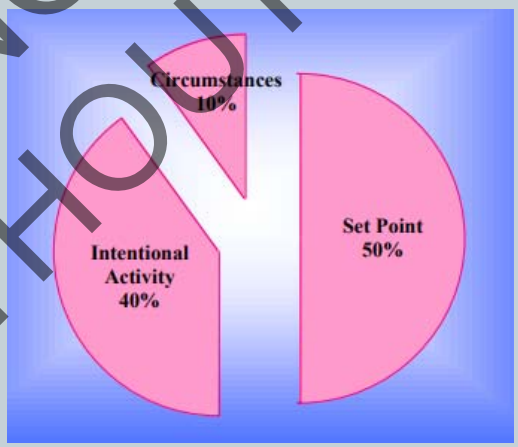
Affect and Organizational Outcomes

9

- Work performance metrics (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005)
- Decision-making (Isen & Labroo, 2003)
- Creativity (Isen, 1999)
- Group dynamics (Barsade, 2002)
- Leadership (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005)
- Turnover/absence (-) (Thoresen, Kaplan, & Barsky, 2003)

Determinants of Employee Affect

10



Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade (2005)

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Organization-Focused Interventions

11

- "Planned, behavioral, theory-based actions to remove or modify the causes of job stress (stressors) at work and aim to improve the health and well-being of participants" (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 152)
- Focus on changing:
  - Task characteristics
  - Working conditions
  - Social relationships

Further reading: Semmer (2006), Nielsen et al. (2010)

Person-Focused Interventions

12

- "Treatment methods or intentional activities that aim to cultivate positive feelings, behaviors, or cognitions" (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009, p.468)
  - Self-administered/initiated
  - Relatively brief
  - Non-stigmatizing
- Goal = enhance positive outcomes in addition to reducing negative ones

Property of ICHW DO NOT DISTRIBUTE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Person-Focused Interventions

13

- Gratitude
- Acts of Kindness
- Job Crafting
- Personal Strengths

Gratitude Activities

14

- **Gratitude**: "recognizing and responding with grateful emotion to the roles of other people's benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains" (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002, p. 112)
- Types of interventions
  - Gratitude lists
  - Grateful contemplation
  - Direct expressions of gratitude

http://www.latestseotutorial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Thank-you-cute-girls.jpg

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Gratitude Activities – Efficacy

15

- Initial support from primary studies (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Kaplan et al., 2012)
- Recent meta-analytic findings (Davis et al., 2015):
  - Gratitude interventions:
    - Outperform measurement-only control conditions
    - Perform marginally better than the matched-activity comparison conditions
    - Perform no better than psychologically active conditions

Kind Acts

16

- Acts that benefit others, typically at some cost to oneself (e.g., Tkach, 2006)
  - Includes altruism, prosocial behavior, "paying it forward"
- Types of interventions
  - Isolated/brief vs. repeat/long-term acts
  - Autonomously vs. non-autonomously motivated
  - Reciprocal vs. other-focused

http://learningcooperatives.org/2017/09/25/knowledge-pay-forward/

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Kind Acts – Efficacy

17

- Six random acts of kindness 2x weekly for 4 weeks → increases in positive affect compared to neutral control (cognitive change) and psychologically active (behavioral experiments) conditions (Alden & Trew, 2013)
  - Effects not attributable to differential compliance or frequency of social contact
- A variety of acts of kindness for 10 weeks → decreases in negative affect and stress compared to neutral control condition (reporting recent life events) (Tkach, 2006)
  - Gratitude as a key mediator (the "kindness effect")

Kind Acts – Efficacy

18

- Participants who were randomly assigned to spend $5 or $20 on others were happier at the end of the day than those who spent the same amount of money on themselves (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008)
- A one-time 'forced altruism' "Pay it Forward" activity increases emotional well-being in the giver (Pressman, Kraft, & Cross, 2015)
  - Female-identified individuals benefit more
- Autonomous motivation of the volunteer is necessary for both the giver and receiver of the good deed to experience well-being benefits (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010)

Property of ICHW DO NOT DISTRIBUTE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Job Crafting

19

- "Changes individuals make in the task and relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniekski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179)
  - **Task boundaries**: altering the form or number of activities engaged in while doing a job/how one sees the job
  - **Relational boundaries:** exercising discretion over with whom one interacts while doing the job

Job Crafting – Examples

20

Form	Example	Effect on Meaning of Work
Changing number, scope, and type of job tasks	Design engineers engaging in relational tasks that move a project to completion	Work is completed in a more timely fashion; engineers change the meaning of their jobs to be guardians or movers of projects
Changing cognitive task boundaries	Nurses taking responsibility for all information and "insignificant" tasks that may help them to care more appropriately for a patient	Nurses change the way they see the work to be more about patient advocacy, as well as high-quality technical care
Changing quality and/or amount of interaction with others encountered in the job	Hospital cleaners actively caring for patients and families, integrating themselves into the workflow of their floor units	Cleaners change the meaning of their jobs to be helpers of the sick; see the work of the floor unit as an integrated whole of which they are a vital part

Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001)

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Job Crafting – Efficacy

21

- The extent to which employees engage in job crafting predicted psychological need satisfaction, which in turn predicted positive affect and psychological functioning (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014)
- Those engaging in a job crafting intervention report less negative affect and increased self-efficacy pre-post intervention (van den Heuvel, Demerouti, & Peeters, 2015)
- Crafting structural and social job resources is associated with higher levels of work engagement (Tims et al., 2013)

Personal Strengths

22

- Identifying and building one's inherent or natural strengths (Ko & Donaldson, 2011)
- Three main programs:
  - Clifton StrengthsFinder (strengthsfinder.com)
  - Reflected Best Self Exercise (Roberts, Dutton, & Spreitzer, 2005)
  - Values-In-Action (VIA) Classification (viacharacter.org)

https://balancedworklife.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/work_place_confidence.jpg

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

viacharacter.org

23

Personal Strengths – Efficacy

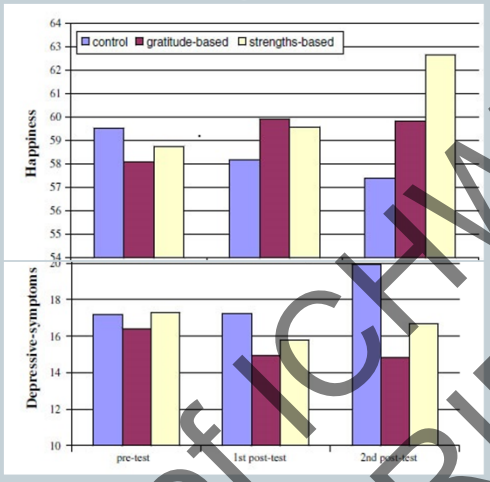
24

- Those participating in a strengths intervention reported an increase in overall subjective well-being – but not positive or negative affect – as compared to a placebo control group (Mitchell, Stanimirovic, Klein, & Vella-Brodrick, 2009)
- Completing a Best Possible Self exercise for 4 weeks has a larger initial effect on positive affect than a gratitude intervention, relative to a control condition ("life details"); all 3 exercises have beneficial effects in terms of reducing negative affect (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006)

Property of ICHW DO NOT DISTRIBUTE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Personal Strengths – Efficacy

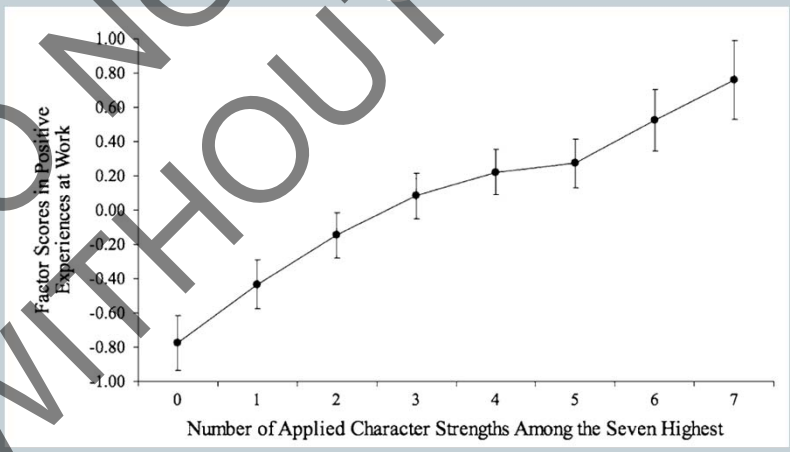
25



Senf & Lau (2013)

Personal Strengths – Efficacy

26



Harzer & Ruch (2013)

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

Other Person-Focused Interventions

27

- Mindfulness (see Giluk, 2009, for a review)
- Goal-setting (e.g., Macleod, Coates, and Hetherton, 2008)
- Psychological Capital (e.g., Luthans, Avey, & Patera, 2008)

Research Agenda

28

- Understand **causal mechanisms** through which interventions are effective
- Propose and evaluate **moderators** (e.g., for whom, under which conditions, and when) interventions are effective
- Evaluate how the effects of **decay over time** may be countered by follow-up sessions
- Identify linkages between interventions, **discrete emotions** (e.g., gratitude), and organizational outcomes
- Continue to implement **rigorous research designs** for properly evaluate the efficacy of a given intervention – and in the workplace!

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

THANK YOU!

c.winslow@berkeley.edu

healthyworkplaces
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTER

Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

29

References

30

- Alden, L. E., & Trew, J. L. (2013). If it makes you happy: Engaging in kind acts increases positive affect in socially anxious individuals. *Emotion, 13*(1), 64–75.
- Barsade, S. G. (2002). The ripple effect: Emotional contagion and its influence on group behavior. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 47*(4), 644–675.
- Barsade, S. G., & Gibson, D. E. (2007). Why does affect matter in organizations?. *The Academy of Management Perspectives, 21*(1), 36–59.
- Chari, R., Chang, C., Sauter, S.L., Petrun Sayers, E.L., Cerully, J., Schulte, P., ...Uscher-Pines, L. (in press). Expanding the paradigm of occupational safety and health: A new framework for worker well-being. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.*
- Davis, D. E., Choe, E., Meyers, J., Wade, N., Varjas, K., Gifford, A., ... & Worthington Jr, E. L. (2016). Thankful for the little things: A meta-analysis of gratitude interventions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63(1)*, 1-12.
- Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science, 319*, 1687-1688.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84(2)*, 377-389.
- Giluk, T. L. (2009). Mindfulness, Big Five personality, and affect: A meta-analysis., *Personality and Individual Differences, 47* 805-811.

Property of IOHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

References

- Gross, J. J., & Thompson, R. A. (2007). Emotion regulation: Conceptual foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Isen, A. (1999). On the relationship between affect and creative problem solving. In S.W. Russ (Ed.), *Affect, creative experience and psychological adjustment* (pp. 3–18). Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.
- Isen, A.M., & Labroo, A.A. (2003). Some ways in which positive affect facilitates decision making and judgment. In S.L. Schneider, & J. Shanteau (Eds.), *Emerging perspectives on judgment and decision research. Cambridge series on judgment and decision making* (pp. 365–393). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, S., Bradley-Geist, J. C., Ahmad, A., Anderson, A., Hargrove, A. K., & Lindsey, A. (2014). A test of two positive psychology interventions to increase employee well-being. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 29*(3), 367–380.
- Ko, I., & Donaldson, S. I. (2011). Applied positive organizational psychology: The state of the science and practice. In S. I. Donaldson, M. Czikzaentmihalyi & J. Nakamura (Eds.), *Applied positive psychology: Improving everyday life, health, schools, work, and society* (pp. 137–154). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., & Patera, J. L. (2008). Experimental analysis of a web-based training intervention to develop positive psychological capital. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 7*(2), 209–221
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin, 131(6)*, 803–855.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology, 9*(2), 111–131.

References

- MacLeod, A. K., Coates, E., & Hetherton, J. (2008). Increasing well-being through teaching goal-setting and planning skills: Results of a brief intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 9*(2), 185–196.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 112–127.
- Mikkelsen, A. (2005). Methodological challenges in the study of organizational interventions in flexible organizations. In A. M. Fuglseth & I. A. Kleppe (Eds.), *Anthology for Kjell Grønhaug in celebration of his 70th birthday* (pp. 150–178). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.
- Mitchell, J., Stanimirovic, R., Klein, B., & Vella-Brodrick, D. (2009). A randomised controlled trial of a self-guided internet intervention promoting well-being. *Computers in Human Behavior, 25(3)*, 749–760.
- Nielsen, K., Randall, R., Holten, A-L., & González, E.R. (2010) Conducting organizational-level occupational health interventions: What works?, *Work & Stress, 24*(3), 234–259.
- Nix, G. A., Ryan, R. M., Manly, J. B., & Deci, E. L. (1999). Revitalization through self-regulation: The effects of autonomous and controlled motivation on happiness and vitality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 35*, 266–284.
- Pressman, S. D., Kraft, T. L., & Cross, M. P. (2015). It's good to do good and receive good: The impact of a 'pay it forward'style kindness intervention on giver and receiver well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 10*(4), 293–302.
- Roberts, L. M., Dutton, J. E., Spreitzer, G. M., Heaphy, E. D., & Quinn, R. E. (2005). Composing the reflected best-self portrait: Building pathways for becoming extraordinary in work organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 30*(4), 712–736.

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION

References

33

- Semmer, N.K. (2006). Job stress interventions and the organization of work. *Scandanavian Journal of Environment & Health, 32*(6), 515–527.
- Senf, K., & Liau, A. K. (2013). The effects of positive interventions on happiness and depressive symptoms, with an examination of personality as a moderator. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 14*(2), 591–612.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 1*(2), 73–82.
- Sin, N. L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2009). Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: A practice-friendly meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 65*(5), 467–487.
- Slemp, G.R., & Vella-Brodrick, D.A. (2014). Optimising employee mental health: The relationship between intrinsic need satisfaction, job crafting, and employee well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*(4), 957–977.
- Sy, T., Côté, S., & Saavedra, R. (2005). The contagious leader: Impact of the leader's mood on the mood of group members, group affective tone, and group processes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90* (2), 295–305.
- Thoresen, C.J., Kaplan, S.A., & Barsky, A.P. (2003). The affective underpinnings of job perceptions and attitudes: A meta-analytic review and integration. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*(6), 914–945.
- Tkach, C. T. (2006). Unlocking the treasury of human kindness: Enduring improvements in mood, happiness, and self-evaluations. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 67*(1-B), 603.

References

34

- Tims, M., Bakker, A. B., & Derks, D. (2013). The impact of job crafting on job demands, job resources, and well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 18*(2), 230–240.
- Van den Heuvel, M., Demerouti, E., & Peeters, M. C. (2015). The job crafting intervention: Effects on job resources, self-efficacy, and affective well-being. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 88*(3), 511–532.
- Weinstein, N., & Ryan, R. M. (2010). When helping helps: Autonomous motivation for prosocial behavior and its influence on well-being for the helper and recipient. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*, 222–244.
- Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review, 26*, 179–201.

Property of ICHW
DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
WITHOUT PERMISSION