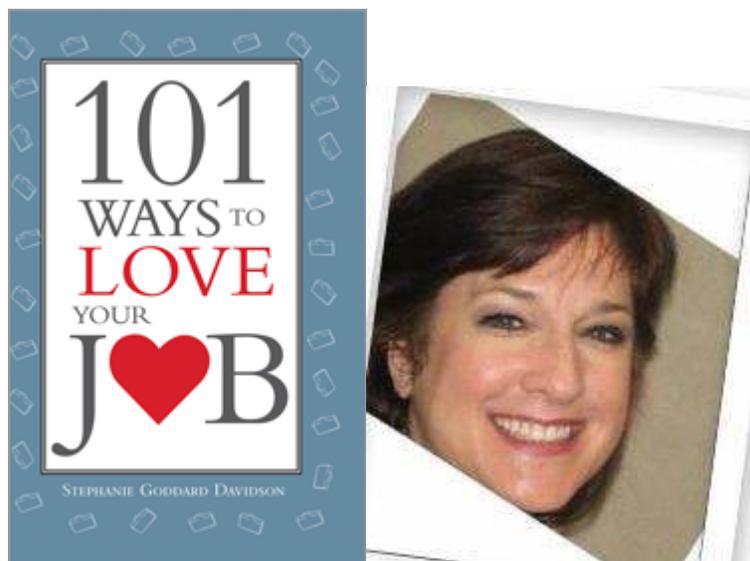


101 Ways to Love Your Job®

Stephanie Goddard

Author of
"101 Ways to Have a Great Day @ Work"



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An excerpt from

Work Stress Solutions

Praise for the "101 Ways at Work" Books

"A collection of simple yet powerful ideas to turn every workday into a great workday."

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"This knowledgeable author has "left no stone unturned" with her offerings in this book and her voice is real, practical and humorous. There is truly something for everyone at every turn of the page..."

~Peggy Hayes, jazz singer, ["The Songs That Got Us Through WWII"](#)

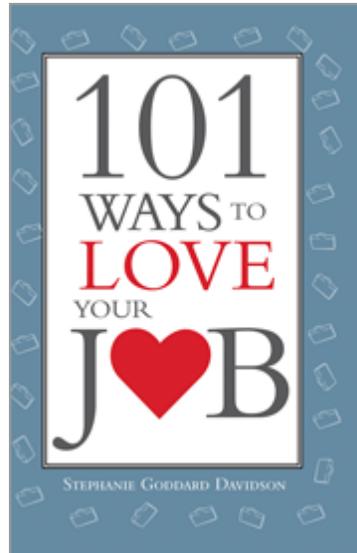
"...You can just pick it up and open to a page...and voila'...there is the perfect insight you needed to get you through the day. Stephanie has not only depth but humor and insight into what we all do to ourselves and this book can help bring you out of those little dark places we sometimes find ourselves in..."

~Jeannie Whyte, Certified Matrix Energy Practitioner

"...an inspirational yet practical guide to discovering (or remembering) why you love your job. The book is laid out in an easy-to-read format, and Stephanie has a straightforward, humorous, relatable writing voice. The advice, tips, and techniques are appropriate and applicable to most any industry."

~Caroline Hipple, Wake County Human Resources

101 Ways to Love Your Job ©



by Stephanie Goddard Davidson

Available on Amazon.Com or...



Published by Sourcebooks, Inc.
P.O. Box 4410, Naperville, Illinois 60567-4410
(630) 961-3900
FAX: (630) 961-2168
www.sourcebooks.com

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Introduction

I'm no different than anyone else reading this book. I've had great days at work and terrible days at work. I've been promoted and I've worried I'd get in trouble for making a mistake. I've lain awake at night reliving a conversation where I wasn't my best or someone else wasn't. I've gossiped, called in sick when I wasn't, and taken longer than I should have at lunch. So why am I writing this book and why should you read it?

I've had an awareness from a very young age that work should be more than a paycheck. I watched the grown-ups around me get up day after day and put one foot in front of the other and complain most nights about their jobs and vowed I'd never spend 1/3 of my life that unhappy (especially when another 1/3 is spent asleep).

During these thirty-plus years (I started working at fifteen and have held a job ever since), I have read—and read and read—almost everything there is on workplace enjoyment. I specialized in college and in the workplace in human resources—the very work that focuses on making sure others enjoy their jobs and stay for the long haul with an organization. Morale, productivity, turnover, motivation, skill set development, career progression, salaries, benefits, intrinsic, extrinsic, legal versus moral... these are words I must discuss in detail DAILY, not just during a crisis.

I've been trained in almost fifteen nationally-recognized, award winning, college-accredited interpersonal and communication skills programs designed for the workplace (and continue to get certified in programs to this day). I teach these classes, and my own, every week. I've attended the lectures, the seminars, the retreats, the web conferences. In short, I've done the homework, so you don't have to.

Very few people who work full time can also devote this amount of energy to learning the advanced techniques of maneuvering through the workplace with success. If it weren't my chosen profession—in fact my calling, since I often do this studying for free—then I wouldn't have had the luxury of learning, trying, failing, modifying, and ultimately teaching what I have found works.

This book is set up to first address the areas of personal mastery—those skills and mindsets necessary to make sure you are grounded, stress-free, and clear about who you are and who you are not. I don't think we can work effectively with others without a firm foundation under ourselves first, otherwise those skills called "people skills" can come off as contrived or manipulative.

Once you feel sure about your motivations and abilities, the book then changes focus and provides those skills and attitudes needed to work effectively with other people—in a sense, how to "play well" with others in the workplace.

My advice would be to read through the entire book, front to back and skim the sections that don't apply to your situation. Then, when time permits, focus on the sections that interest you. The book is formatted to be read in one sitting, to be taken section by section, or used as a discussion group guide. Another option is to just crack it open to a random page each day and see how great a teacher coincidence can be.

One word of caution though: if you read an entry and say something to yourself like, "Boy, Joe sure could use this" or "I wish my boss had a copy of this," then my advice is that this is information you need to study for *yourself*. The tendency to identify a personal area of lack and then place this need onto someone we are having issues with is universal. It is also a great way to avoid doing the work we need to do to improve and overcome our own inability—to thoroughly examine those areas we most dislike in ourselves.

However you choose to take in this information, I wrote it with the sincere wish that you get that much closer to an enjoyable and meaningful career.

Part One
Personal Mastery in the Workplace

"Whatever you are, be a good one."

—Abraham Lincoln

Whatever You Are, Be a Good One

Jobs are more than just paychecks. They are social arenas, spiritual workshops, developmental playgrounds, group therapy, and one of the best tools for learning about ourselves. Anyone who has ever been fired from a job can tell you that this significant stressor was one of the best learning experiences of their life (albeit a painful one). Perhaps more importantly, when we are unhappy at work, we are unhappy at home too. And when we love our work, we spread that feeling around when we aren't at work.

People can't separate the two most important facets of the human existence: work and love. When one is suffering, the other suffers. You're at work eight hours a day (minimum). You are doing it for a paycheck, sure, but that won't keep you particularly productive or satisfied. What you need to keep you energized, stress-free, motivated, happy and loyal is more than just your paycheck.

Then what is the key to staying motivated day after day?

If you aren't sure if your life work is to make other's lives at least easier, then you are going to hit a wall at some point. In short, to make your work meaningful, you must see it through the eyes of working for the benefit of others. Much like volunteer work, except in this case you get paid.

For instance, I hope that what I do in my training classes makes a difference by the time my participants leave. My private goal is to ensure that they feel equipped to head back to work with a better understanding of how people tick, what ticks people off, and how to get results from themselves and others. Then, when applying these new skills back at their workplaces, this new way is modeled for customers, citizens, and even their families through example.

Pipe dream? Maybe.

But it sure keeps me from hitting the snooze alarm nine times every morning.

Be a Good One Today

2

Have you considered what your direct impact is on co-workers, customers, or citizens? People in such positions as police officers, firefighters, or school teachers can easily connect their jobs and their impact, but what about the rest of us?

What about sewer workers or garbage collectors? Well, we gotta have clean water. What would happen if the garbage was *never* collected? Finance and accounting types? We all expect our paychecks in a timely and accurate way and this is probably the number one reason you work. Any copy machine sales reps out there, wondering about your purpose? I defy any of us to go one DAY, much less a week, without making a copy of something.

I often hear people say things like, "At least I'm not flippin' burgers." What's wrong with flippin' burgers? I go through a drive-thru at least once a week to feed myself or my family. I consider that important and I hope the guy on the grill that week does his job well.

Getting the point? Dig deep today and see where you contribute to the larger whole, the larger good. Don't resist this because it seems too pie-in-the-sky. It's critical that you find your calling and not just work to get paid—that you see your impact on your organization and how this carries over into impacting the city you work in, and then your state...and maybe even the world (okay—did I go overboard?).

If you don't feel lucky to have your job and get a sense of satisfaction regularly from contributing to making others lives work better...then my advice is to start digging (hey—don't forget ditch diggers—where would we be without them?)

The Power of Habits

As mentioned in the introduction, I am an insatiable reader of self-help, and I have managed to define an entire career based on the sentence "I just read this incredible book. Let me tell you all about it...!" Interpersonal skills, motivation, self-improvement, setting and meeting goals—all of these are subject matter I just can't get enough of. However, I recently started to see a repetition in my reading. The "new" books were all saying essentially the same thing. Yet, I wasn't feeling that same "high" that I usually felt after hitting on some new knowledge that would improve my life. I was already doing what the books recommended, yet I wasn't seeing the usual results. I wasn't losing my Christmas weight. I wasn't increasing my productivity from last year. I couldn't seem to make it down to the Humane Society for my usual volunteer time. I was, well, stuck.

One of my favorite standards in self-help/business skills development is the classic, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Now, I have read this book more than once, and have taught it as a workshop, maybe forty times as of this writing (it's a three day workshop, by the way, so that's 120 sessions). It's safe to say, I know this program inside and out.

But it wasn't until I read a book called *The Power of Focus* that something really important clicked for me. Even though I was teaching a class called "The Seven Habits" I never really "got" that this program was talking about setting habits. It wasn't called "The Seven Philosophies" or "The Seven Theories" but still, I was not clear that the message was to set (or break) habits. In reading just the first chapter of "The Power of Focus," I finally had that "a-ha" moment I had been seeking for so many months.

Instead of setting goals, set habits. What I mean specifically is look at your repeated actions and decide if these are getting you the results you want. When we set goals, we tend to start from a place of lack or judgment, i.e., "I need to get more organized." Well, in setting that goal, I would attempt new behaviors like setting up filing systems or trying to de-clutter my office, but this was leading to mixed results.

The problem was not so much the activity as the mindset. I saw the goal as a thing to be achieved like an item on a "to-do" list. I wanted to check off the "errand" and get back to the fun stuff. Consequently, I saw the goal as a burden, a chore, and my enthusiasm was revealed in this thinking. I either did what I "had" to do and then took a day or two off from this effort (and lost any progress) or I avoided it altogether. Only after switching my thoughts about the goal, to one where I was creating a new habit, did I have that much-needed shift. This shift allowed for increased enthusiasm, an ease in completing a day's activities, and, finally, results.

The Power of Habits in Action



If 90 percent of my activity will always be habit, as *The Power of Focus* says, then what habits do I want/need to set in place to achieve the results I want? This thinking makes a huge difference in getting results. Here are some things I have noticed that changed my thinking once I incorporated this reality:

- When I have setbacks, I don't tell myself what an undisciplined person I am or give up altogether in an attempt to seek perfection. I realize that my old habit is just still more ingrained than my new one. This will simply take more repetition of the new habit until the old is "erased."
- Once I get passed the typical three to four week period that establishes a habit, I will find the new habit harder to break. My "mental tug" will not be to the old behavior, but the new one.
- I created the old habit, and I can reprogram myself to follow the new one instead. For instance, has anyone just *loved* wine at the first taste? How about cigarettes? These "habits" took *effort* to become a way of life. Let's face it: these things taste awful and probably had nauseating effects at first. And yet, those who have these habits pushed passed the negative side effects in the beginning to establish a love and even a need for the behavior! Why can't anyone do the same for, say, a workout?

So my suggestion to you is to start taking an account of your current habits (not your current failures or lack of progress). Then insert the new habits needed to change your results. The bad habits you have in place feel "normal" because you have done them over and over. Changing your behavior for at least three to four weeks will feel *very odd*, but so did the current habits during the first few weeks.

5 The Power of Habits Maintained

You may not remember your initial struggle with a habit that isn't providing current-day benefits, but it's likely the struggle existed. Even if you can swear there was no effort, the negative side-effects were likely there and ignored (How could a potato chip cause a zit? Can't be true! Let's break out the Lays!).

Once your new habits start providing the good benefits, they will become even more ingrained. That will be all the motivation you will need to keep the new habit and lose the old one when temptation comes around.

Our lives are created from what we do every single day. These quotes about habits continue to underscore the importance of making sure your everyday actions are ones you want to keep.

"It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing, but the habits he has accumulated during the first half."

—Fyodor Dostoevsky

"A nail is driven out by another nail. Habit is overcome by habit."

—Desiderius Erasmus

"First we form habits, then they form us. Conquer your bad habits, or they'll eventually conquer you."

—Dr. Rob Gilbert

6 How to De-Stress Right Now

1. Eat.

Seriously. I see many people right around lunchtime getting anxious, irritated, or sending out snappish e-mails. Once they eat, they almost seem to say, "What was *that* all about?" We usually don't see the connection between low blood sugar (caused by hunger) and our stress levels.

2. If you have a door, shut it at least once a day.

I know this can seem standoffish, but it can make a huge difference. Not only can you concentrate better, but you lessen the typical external noise associated with any office environment. Add to this another stressor that is minimized: self-consciousness. Whether you are aware of this or not, no one is exempt from feeling a little tense knowing our co-workers can hear our calls or our conversations. If you feel that others will wonder why you are shutting your door, just communicate with them why you are shutting the door. All presumptions of *People* magazine reading will be dispelled! A final note to those with doors: those *without* doors would *really* appreciate it if you would use them during loud conversations or speakerphone calls. No kidding.

3. If you don't have a door, get creative.

Many of us *don't* have a door, so #2 may feel like a kick in the shin. So what if you don't have a door? Some ideas:

- Try to build an environment around you that feels private or enclosed. Moving a desk or chair can block traffic, drop-bys, and noise. Plants, bookshelves, and turning your chair so that you don't face passers-by can also work well.
- Can you wear a headset? If you aren't working directly with customers, you may be able to play soothing music on a headset to block the noise. Just make sure you can hear your phone.
- Send an e-mail, if possible, to your co-workers alerting them to special projects or high-stress times. Just letting them know that minor items requiring your attention would be best put on hold for now will help your stress level until things get back to normal. Many people aren't aware that you are under

pressure. You may feel that your frantic pace and frazzled appearance are obvious...but others may think you've just had too much caffeine! Make your workload clear, and most people will understand (and steer clear for now!).

4. Go to bed early.

My favorite personal de-stressor. Many people find they get a second wind about 10 p.m. and stay up reading or watching TV (Letterman CAN be TIVO'ed, ya know). Consequently, people are tired the next day. That alone is a *huge* burden to carry around for the day. Force yourself to turn off the lights once a week by 9 p.m. When you wake up (sometimes *without* the alarm) you will be glad that you gave yourself the time, simply by sleeping.

Try at least one of these tips this week and stress less.

7 Stress Can Be Managed...But Cured?

The term "stress" has become a badge of honor in our current world of faxes, e-mail, and back-to-back schedules. When asked how we are doing, we inevitably answer, "Oh, I'm so busy; I am so stressed out." To imagine answering: "Just feeling relaxed and enjoying today's workload," would likely mean being labeled a slacker, or at best, odd.

In developing a stress management program we often mean exercise, eating differently, meditating, and getting enough sleep. It may be more useful to ask why these things would have to be "managed" or even mandated by a physician. Why do we have to take a class to do these things? The answer is likely that you do not see yourself as a priority. You have not incorporated into your to-do list that you are also an important relationship that needs attention. You are a valuable tool in your life and you need to be "recharged" if you are to effectively run that life.

Once you see yourself as valuable and irreplaceable, you will naturally and effortlessly begin to maintain and exercise your body. You will not, however, follow your best friend's regimen or the latest infomercial's suggestion. You will find what works for your body, your life, and your abilities. You will like what you do to make sure your body is moved regularly and fed correctly.

While fat is stored, fitness is not. Natural principles govern our bodies, like the notion that we are not built to sit behind a PC all day and in front of a TV all night. Stress isn't something to be fixed or cured, but an indicator that you are not listening to your body and that you are not listening to yourself.

Stress Management Defined



What happens when we finally make up our minds that we are a valuable tool in our own lives? That we need the same type of preventive maintenance as our computers or our cars? What might our activities look like once the thought that we have individual and unique value and should be treated as something with value has settled in for good?

Perhaps your activities will look something like this:

When you decide to eat differently, it will not be just to lose weight and then resort back to family-sized bags of potato chips in one sitting. You will eat what you like and you will eat what makes you feel good afterward (versus tired or nauseous). If you do not like low-fat rice cakes, find what you do like and what you know is quality fuel and eat that instead.

You will sleep because it's fun to sleep. It feels good to wake up rested. To see how much sleep you need, it is recommended that you note the time you go to sleep on a day when you don't have to be up at any particular time. Once you awaken naturally, note the time and the number of hours you slept. This is the correct amount of sleep for you.*

Take time to slow down and check in with yourself, silently and often. You may write or just close your eyes and breathe, but do not let your day get away from you through others' demands or your own unreasonable expectations without checking in with yourself.

This is ultimately stress management.

*Normal sleep times vary from six to ten hours. Experts typically state eight hours as the norm because it falls in the middle of these two extremes. You may need more. How do you know if you're sleep deprived? One clue: you don't remember your dreams.

Stress and Simplicity

One of the best stress-busters is to weed out the chaos and complexity of your work world. Here's a quote from Elaine St. James, the best-selling author of *Simplify Your Life* and *Simplify Your Life at Work*:

"Maintaining a complicated life is a great way to avoid improving it."

Are you finding yourself at the end of a workday unsure of where the time went? You know you were busy, but you just aren't sure what you accomplished? If you answered "yes," then chances are your work life is too complicated. The complexity is creating distractions, reactive responses on your part, a dull roar constantly in the background with no time for planning, thinking, assessing.

To start minimizing the distractions and simplifying your work life, try a few of these suggestions adapted from St. James:

- Keep asking the question "Is this activity going to streamline and simplify my work flow?"
- Ask, "What is it that's most complicating my life?"
- Always estimate the time it will take to get a project done—and then double it.

10

Stress and Simplicity: Part II

According to bestselling author Elaine St. James (*Simplify Your Life*), you can only have three priorities in life. If you work, that's one. If you have a family, that's two. What is your third thing? Working out? Church? Volunteering? You have to get rid of four, five, six (and so on) if you want to be truly excellent in this life. You can't do everything well.

Some of my own suggestions:

1. Get rid of clutter.

Visually it's a stressor. We seem to take a deep breath and lower our shoulders a notch when we can survey our work area and find it in order. Not to mention most of us spend an average of almost thirty minutes a day searching for something we've misplaced in the clutter.

2. Stop being compulsive about e-mail.

Set certain times during the day to check e-mail. The inbox doesn't have to be empty before you can relax and focus.

3. Life is not a race—slow it down.

This will lower your stress levels and your error rate.

4. Learn to say "no."

Remember the "top three priorities" (St. James suggestion above) and only say "yes" to those.

Part Two

Mastering People Skills in the Workplace

"The most important single ingredient in the formula for success
is the knack of getting along with people."

—Theodore Roosevelt

49 Do You Really Mean It?

One book I would recommend for anyone serious about making a difference in their career would be "Leadership and Self-Deception" by the Arbinger Institute. It's very light reading (despite the daunting name of the author). I'd like to share a concept from this work and then expand on it so that you can immediately incorporate the information into your work today:

When you are going out of your way to do things for a co-worker so he'll know you are interested in him—active listening, managing by walking around, asking about family, or using any other learned skill in order to be more effective—ask yourself this question: What are you most interested in—him or his opinion of you?

We can tell how other people feel about us, and it's to that that we respond. Revealed through voice, gaze, posture, and many other signals, we can almost smell how others are feeling toward us. We can always tell when we're being coped with, manipulated, or outsmarted. We can almost feel the judgment concealed beneath veneers of niceness; or a desire to get something from us with little regard for our wants or needs. What others know and respond to is: how a person is regarding us when using "people skills."

50 Do You Really, Really Mean It?

Consider how you sincerely feel about another before using the techniques in this section of the book or skills you may be learning in your workplace training programs. Do you like this person, care about them and their future, or are you “techniquing” them to make the conversation easier for you?

Ultimately, the truth will be felt, so check out your own motivations first, then add in the techniques of communicating effectively. Using a technique is not manipulation when done in the spirit of developing a better relationship. It’s only manipulation when you are using a technique to get what you want from someone, with little or no regard for the impact on them.

51

The Mirror Exercise

There is an old saying that points out "We dislike most in others, what we dislike most in ourselves." With that in mind, to remove excess negativity, resentment, judgment, or tension in a relationship, use the mirror exercise. The next time you feel angry, frustrated, or judgmental of another, *flip it*. In other words, ask yourself where you behave like the other person (or worry that you may lapse into that behavior and so spend lots of energy trying hard to *not* be "that way"). Instead of looking at them and labeling, look at yourself and make a mental shift.

For instance, let's say you are very conscientious about being on time. You wake up earlier than you'd like; you speed sometimes to make it there on time; you get upset with slow traffic; you start the morning frantic and frustrated with your family... all to make it there at the stroke of your start time. Now, let's also say that you have a co-worker who consistently "slides in" at least 5 minutes late on a regular basis. Chances are *great* that you highly resent this behavior. After all, you are really making timeliness a priority and this person clearly doesn't care, right?

What's likely happening is that you are realizing that you *too* have an issue with punctuality. Otherwise, you would find yourself easily getting to places in plenty of time. That this other person is *seemingly* not going through the pains that you are to be on time angers you. This is because you feel you are giving up a great deal in terms of peace of mind and lowered stress levels to honor your priority of punctuality.

Instead of resenting the latecomer, try instead to see that you are capable of being late...you are in fact sometimes late (if not often). *We are all* sometimes late! Realize that you are transferring your own self-judgment on the other person ('cause that's easier and more fun).

Read on for some areas where this phenomenon is commonly found.

Mirror, Mirror on The Wall

52

Here are some areas where the “mirror concept” described in the above entry might present itself:

- Judging someone who is overweight when you are dieting
- Judging someone’s grammar mistake
- Being angry at someone who cancels your plans (though you have canceled on someone, at some time, in your past—or would have liked to, but went even though you didn’t really want to)
- Resenting a co-worker for going out to lunch (while you are grabbing a bite at your desk so you can keep working through your impossible to-do list)
- Gossiping to co-workers about how “persnickety” your colleague with the neat-as-a-pin workspace is about keeping things well maintained (and you are lucky to *find* your desk!)

The list could go on and on. Find your “hot buttons” and start noticing your self-talk about others. As soon as you find yourself thinking negatively about someone or labeling him or her, immediately ask yourself “Where do I do this in my life?”

Are You Buggin'?

Most of us have figured out that we spend at least as much time with our co-workers as we do with our families (eight hours work; eight hours home; eight hours asleep). Though we choose whom we live with, we usually don't choose our co-workers. If you are as lucky as some, your co-workers may become like family, but even in such an ideal situation, there will still be irritations: a poor choice of words or a snippy e-mail from time to time. If you are working with others that you already have some tension with, these events will be even more likely.

What to do? As with all the communication skills and interpersonal skills tips in this book, the focus is on what *you* can do, not the other party. We can't change others (though we may persuade, it's still another's decision to make a change). With that in mind, here are a few considerations for keeping the "buggin'" to a minimum:

1. Keep your voice down.

Whether on the phone or in the hallway, when another is trying to concentrate, this is an extreme annoyance. We are likely not aware of our increased volume—either due to enthusiasm about the topic or just because we talk loudly without realizing it. For those of you who are not sure if you are a loud talker...assume you are. If you are sure you're not, then you are probably already conscientious about your volume in the workplace.

2. Whispering.

While talking too loudly can be an obvious annoyance, whispering is also something that can rub people the wrong way. You are probably *not* talking about me, but that is what I will assume, at least initially. Shut the door or take it to the break room! And never do this in meetings or training classes. It irritates everyone, not just the meeting leader or trainer.

3. Interrupting.

This can mean interrupting someone who is talking, but it also holds for interrupting someone in the middle of a task or a phone call. Ask permission before interrupting. Many people also forget to ask

when they call a co-worker if it's a good time. Instead they launch into a long discussion and may have to be interrupted to reschedule the conversation for a better time.

54 A Different Kind of Body Language

The main reason we work in a workplace is that we have to take our bodies wherever we go. Our brains may be able to work out of the spare bedroom just fine, but most organizations want to see you too. This brings up all kinds of issues like dress code, start and end times, etc. But there are some even subtler items that can cause irritation among your co-workers if not attended to. Read on...

1. Cool the perfume (cologne).

Headaches, allergies, clouds of fragrance hanging in the air for hours...these are the side effects of too much cologne or perfume. Remember: you can't smell yourself. After a few minutes, your fragrance doesn't register with *you* anymore, but it does with everyone else. (P.S. I have complimented someone's fragrance to be polite and secretly was overwhelmed by the scent. Don't assume numerous comments or compliments means your fragrance isn't too powerful. In fact if you are getting regular comments, it *is* too strong by definition!)

2. Being late.

Being late for work is a different story. We know that's not okay. But for meetings, lunch, this behavior on a regular basis, is really just disguised arrogance (yeah, I said it!). It says, "My time is more valuable than yours." Now, the occasional emergency with an apology is one thing (So sorry! I got held up on a phone call.). But a habitual latecomer is sending a very disrespectful message to others.

3. Let people have a bad day.

Sometimes we have a bad day, a quiet day, a focused day...a day where we are not acting as we normally would. Instead of stopping someone and saying something like, "Wow. Seems like you're having a bad day" or "Is there anything wrong?" or "What's the matter?" just let 'em have a "different" day. These questions may seem caring, but to the receiver they are likely irritating. The message is really: "I don't like how you are acting" or "Your behavior is making me uncomfortable." Any way you slice it, the question is coming from our own discomfort with the behavior, not an attempt to soothe.

We force the already-stressed party into responding forcibly with, "No, I'm fine. Thanks for asking," or some other polite response that probably just adds to their burden.

4. We noticed!

A loud snort to clear your sinuses, yawning aloud, burping semi-quietly? Come on! An "excuse me" will always do the trick.

Three Secret Weapons

Turning Around a Bad Day at Work



Secret #1—Admit your mistakes.

This doesn't mean you walk out into the corridor, stop the first person you see, and start confessing everything you've done wrong since starting with your employer. It means that many times our stress is just a bad conscience. One of the most effective ways to alleviate the burden of guilt and worry that a mistake can bring, is to just own up to it.

Your underlying concern is the fallout from being caught, right? Why not just meet it head-on and on your own terms? Have a game plan for fixing what you broke, and you will not only feel better, but you will be amazed at the impact this courageous act will have on your reputation and trustworthiness.

Secret #2—Count your blessings.

Trite and true. The reason this advice has been around so long is that it works. Human nature is to problem-solve; consequently, we tend to focus on what isn't going well, so that we can go about fixing it. Sometimes we have to force ourselves out of problem-solver mode to see the things that are going right. When you are absolutely sure that things couldn't get any worse, take out a pen and paper (or just try this silently in your head) and find ten things that are going just fine. Don't stop until you get to ten! Around number five you will feel a shift in your thinking that will get you back on track for the day...or at least until the meeting is over!

Secret #3—Stop gossiping.

Ouch! This one is going to hurt a little, but the payoff is big. When you gossip, you are telling the person you are gossiping to that you will do the same thing to him/her when he/she is not present. It really adds up to appearing (and being) untrustworthy. Not the best trait to cultivate as a co-worker! Gossip is mostly laziness in making small talk anyway. Instead of relying on this old standby to spark up the lunch table chat, have a few topics prepared before you get there. What if someone else starts gossiping? Don't respond judgmentally. Just acknowledge the person's concerns ("He really bugs you, huh?") and switch topics gracefully.

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Two More Secret Weapons

Turning Around a Bad Day at Work

Secret #4—Dress for success.

This is a different take on another reliable piece of classic business information. If you are wearing things to work that make you feel fat, old, frumpy, or just uncomfortable, you are unwittingly causing yourself a bad day at work. We are directly influenced by how we feel about ourselves... including our physical appearance. You really only need five outfits. I know this flies in the face of every high school's popularity criteria, but it's true. Instead of trying to look like you have on a new set of clothes every week, just jazz up the ones that fit perfectly—and look great on you—with a scarf, earrings, different tie...you know the drill.

Secret #5—The workplace is just an adult's playground.

Keep in mind that we are all seventh-graders in our hearts. The workplace is just the schoolyard for adults. There will always be the Bully, the Nerd, and the Show-Off. Maybe more importantly, there will also be the New Kid, the Scaredy Cat, and the Valedictorian. To turn around your bad day, get to know these last three "kids" in your department.

The first two (New Kid, Scaredy Cat) will make you feel really great for helping out a frightened kid in a big person's body; the Valedictorian is your second chance to get some great tutoring (mentoring) from the co-worker who really seems to be climbing the career ladder (especially if your ladder seems to be propped up against the wrong wall!). So take the new kid or the planning whiz to lunch or ask her to join your table at the next meeting.

The payoff to these small acts of courage and kindness will be a better day at work.

About the Author



Stephanie Goddard (Davidson) is considered a subject matter expert in workplace communications and specializes in leadership and interpersonal skills training. Her clients include many Fortune 500 companies as well as non-profit and public sector employers.

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Published by Sourcebooks, Inc.

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