



| BY KELLY KONRAD |

## The Secret to Happiness on the Job: A Positive Attitude

Burnout can happen anywhere—at home, on the job, or even just on the hunt for one.

And sometimes, that stuck-in-a-rut feeling can be difficult to shake, leading to struggles with self-esteem and even depression. What's the most important step in reinventing yourself? It may be your attitude.

"The key is, before you can make a change, you need to believe

your behavior matters," says psychologist, author and lecturer **Shawn Achor**, whose wildly popular TED talk tackles the concept of positive psychology.

"It's all about creating positive habits," he says.

### What is positive psychology?

"Positive psychology is a movement that studies things like happiness, optimism, passion and hope," Achor says. In his TED talk, he points out that the lens through which our brain views the world shapes our reality, and that 90 percent of our long-term happiness comes from how our brain processes our environment. With that in mind, the real work isn't necessarily in finding our next success, a better job or a bigger home, but instead in rewiring our brain to seek out the positive.

All it takes? Just three weeks of actively seeking out the positive in simple ways (think gratitude journaling or offering kind words to others in your social and professional networks). "People struggle for so many reasons, and happiness is so difficult," he says. But according to Achor, you can literally rewire your brain in just 21 days.

### Lose the negativity.

"People have no idea how a positive habit can be transforming in your life," Achor says. "Even trying to decrease the amount of negative information coming in by just 10 percent can change success rates dramatically."

**Jan Leahy**, executive director of *Career Resource Center* in Lake Forest, echoes the sentiment. "Avoid the news channels," she says, since so much of it is negative—from foreclosure and layoff rates to murder and violence. "You do need to stay current on news, but you can do that by gathering it electronically."

### Make "being positive" your personal manifesto.

"I think it's critical," says **Mary Beth Barrett-Newman**, president of Evanston-based *2nd Career Consulting*. "And the reason why is when you take a step back and think about people you have known and worked with, people with the positive attitudes are the can-do people."

Achor points out in his TED talk that 75 percent of job successes are predicted by your optimism level, social support and ability to see stress as a challenge, instead of a threat. "Your brain realizes success when you can better look at how far you've already come."

### Think becoming more positive is hard to do? Think again.

"One of the things I do with my clients is a self-assessment," says Barrett-Newman, who asks clients to focus on their job responsibilities instead of the company at which they worked. "I have them look at their current position and think about,

'What did you like and what didn't you like, what did you do all day—the tasks and responsibilities versus where did you do it.'"

"Even in the worst job, I can guarantee there was something you liked about it," Barrett-Newman says.

Re-focus, Leahy says. "Instead of looking at the angst of being RIFed (Reduction In Force) and downsized, think about if you liked what you were doing. Look at it as an opportunity." ■