

# A WEEK IN *Learning*

## Reversing Our Success Formula

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*If I just get that raise, then I will be happy. If I hit my sales target, I will be happy. I just need to pass this test, and then I will be HAPPY.*

Admit it - this is a trained behavior of ours. It fuels a social formula, taught to us by our schools, parents, society, and the organizations we work at. A majority of the time, we truly believe that happiness is a result of our successes. We think that if we work hard, we will become successful. When we become successful, only then will we become happy. This is a formula we have chosen to follow, despite it never working.

What is wrong with this mentality? If we are constantly setting these goalposts in life, and making happiness a cognitive horizon, we will get nowhere. Because if success truly causes happiness, then that promotion you got, the deadline you met, or the good grade you received would make you endlessly happy. However, it is short lived. You hit that sales target? Well, there's another one to meet. You were promoted? Someone is higher up than you, making more money. You got an A on that test? You will want another A on the next test. You have now officially hardwired your brain to push happiness further away from your reach.

This is where positive psychology comes into play. (Yes, positive psychology is a thing.) In a traditional sense, psychology has focused a lot of its efforts on studying either the abnormal or the average. Science in general has always done this, right? Trends and patterns are a gold mine! When an abnormal person falls below the normal trend – what do we want to do? Find out how to bring them up to the average! But, what about the person who falls above the average? Why not study them? Instead of focusing solely on the average, or the ones who fall below, positive psychologists want to study the ones who fall above, and figure out what makes them so ahead of the others.

What does this have to do with our personal and professional lives? Why does studying happiness, this fluffy feeling, so important? It's because the 'success' formula we keep following is making us underperform our brains' actual potential in terms of intelligence, creativity, and productivity. Our brain is meant to perform at its best when it is in a positive state, not neutral and certainly not negative.



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**-Trisha Martin**

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Shawn Achor is a psychologist who has studied positive psychology for over ten years and has effectively applied his research based techniques to college students, families, and organizations all around the world. What he, and many others, have found time and time again is that HAPPINESS is what drives success – not the other way around. Through his research, as well as working with hundreds of organizations, Shawn came up with the seven principles of positive psychology that fuels success and performance. If I covered all seven principles in this article, there would be at least another ten pages to read, but I won't do that to you. Plus, I haven't had nearly enough coffee for that.

Shawn's first principle, known as the happiness advantage, dives into how positive psychology works through countless research techniques, backed by neuroscience. Happiness tends to be thought of as a simple emotion. Just a word taught to us by some frog puppet on TV, or a word used in every TOP 10 BuzzFeed article. Most of us forget that this emotion has a lot of control over the functions of our brain. Research has shown that your greatest competitive edge in the workforce, and in all other aspects of your life, is a positive and engaged brain. To be fully engaged and positive, we must activate the learning centers of our brains. Dopamine is a neurochemical that is released into our brains, allowing us to experience happiness, which turns on those learning centers located in the prefrontal cortex. Based off current research, ways to activate this are through:

- Meditation, or a focus on breath for two minutes a day
- Committing conscious acts of kindness
- Exercise
- Spending money on experiences (not on stuff)
- Exercising a signature strength of yours

From these techniques, as well as several others, Shawn has found these outcomes through his research on happier and more positive brains at work:

- 31% rise in productivity
- 37% increase in sales
- 40% increase in the likelihood of promotions

Shawn states, "If we can find a way of becoming positive in the present, then our brains work even more successfully, as we are able to work harder, faster, and more intelligently." Forget that old formula. Take simple steps to re-wire your brain. Happiness is more than a feeling. Advances in positive psychology and neuroscience have the proof, so make the change today and I promise you will see it affect not only yourself, but also your team, and everyone else in your life. *Happiness is a precursor to success. Not the result of it.*

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