



## THE BRIGHT SIDE® OF CHANGE

Written by Donna Rae Smith

### Focused Versus Frivolous Fun At Work

When you talk to people about healthy behaviors, often a knee-jerk reaction is that healthy equals no fun. I discovered this recently while working with a global client around creating a healthy office culture. It seems people worry that adopting healthy behaviors will limit or constrict them, that it will deprive them of the fun in life.

In fact, just the opposite is true. Healthy behaviors energize and vitalize us. Healthy behaviors create happier, more satisfied, more productive employees, who enjoy coming to work in the morning. While we often think of health in terms of eating right and exercising, that's only part of it. A healthy work environment is also one where physical, mental and emotional wellbeing are valued, and where employees are at their best.



Below are some of the myriad ways that employees and employers can contribute to healthy workplaces:

1. **Give credit where credit is due.** Recognition [goes a long way](#) to boosting employee morale. Recognize employees for a job well done.
2. **Retreat when needed.** Off-site retreats are a great way to team build, focus on improvement, and let everyone relax a bit. If you can't afford an off-site retreat, consider creative ways to stage a retreat in the office. One non-profit did this to great effect – staff was buzzing about the impact for weeks. People “retreated” throughout the day, coming into a room that was set up for various activities. One exercise asked staff to anonymously write three positive qualities for each team member; in the end each staff person received their own box of praise. It's a major boost to have written positive feedback from your colleagues!
3. **Communicate.** It's a recurring theme of my blogs, and that's because it's fundamental. A healthy work environment by definition is one in which a

premium is placed on open and honest communication. [Here are some tips](#) for promoting communication in the workplace.

4. **Promote healthy living.** Consider offering incentives for those who quit smoking or exercise regularly. Employees who turn in log sheets of exercise activity or meet individual health goals receive incentives in the form of cash, time off, coupons, or discounts on health premiums.
5. **Go a step further.** Bring exercise and/or chair massages into the workplace at lunch, or before and after work. Encourage employees to hang around or come early to socialize and feel better.
6. **Lighten up.** If you ever visit Bright Side's offices, the first thing you'll probably notice are the walls. Painted in a variety of – you guessed it – bright colors, they're a far cry from drab white. The walls represent an important part of our ethos: an environment where energy and enthusiasm are valued and encouraged. Whatever colors your office is, there are countless ways to promote and encourage a lively and fun atmosphere. Not long ago I wrote about the importance of [healthy workplace humor](#). We spend too much time at work for the environment to be humorless. Allow people to laugh and relax. They'll feel more motivated and be more likely [to excel](#).
7. **Take a laugh break.** Humor doesn't need to be risqué or slapstick to be funny. Try sharing stories from the past, present and future. Encourage stories that let people laugh at outrageous acts of innocence or misdirection.
8. **Safety first.** A healthy environment is [a safe environment](#). Employees need to be encouraged and enabled to be responsible for and identify safety issues when they emerge. Include a safety moment in all of your meetings to help people focus on how they can create a safe physical, mental and emotional environment for themselves and others.
9. **Build relationships.** We're human after all. We're hard wired to be in relationships with others. Your colleagues don't have to be your best friends but work will be more enjoyable if you have good relationships with those around you. Eating lunch with co-workers, commemorating birthdays, and finding other opportunities to engage during breaks or after hours promotes camaraderie and facilitates working relationships. Sponsor good clean fun away from the office: go bowling, take a hike, or visit the zoo. Share an activity and mingle while having fun.
10. **Remember whose team you're on.** Ever have that experience of trying to accomplish a goal, and the people who should be helping you seem to

be hindering you? You're all on the same team. Pitch in to help your colleagues as needed. Do your part to foster an atmosphere of support and collegiality. Show your thanks and appreciation to colleagues for their contributions. Avoid the negative talk and criticism that breeds distance between people.

If you want people to thrive, create an atmosphere where they are allowed to engage in healthy and fun behaviors. A healthy workplace allows everyone to enjoy the moment, release tension and stress, find the humor in shared experiences, and build connections.

#### **THE EXPERIMENT:**

1. Identify three ways you can inject fun into your workplace.
2. Implement one or two of them and let us know how it went.

**THE CONVERSATION:** Share the results of your experiment in the comments below or contact the author directly at [donnarae@bright-side.com](mailto:donnarae@bright-side.com).

#### **ABOUT DONNA RAE SMITH**

Donna Rae Smith is a guest blogger for Smart Business. She has forged a career, enterprise and an applied discipline on the practice of teaching leaders to be masters of change. She is the Founder and CEO of Bright Side, Inc., a transformational change catalyst company with an emphasis on the behavior-side of change. For more than two decades, Donna Rae Smith and the Bright Side team have been recognized as innovators in executing behavioral strategies coalesced with business strategies to accelerate and sustain business results. Bright Side®, The Behavioral Strategy Company, has partnered with over 250 of the world's most influential companies. For more information, please visit [www.bright-side.com](http://www.bright-side.com) or contact Donna Rae at [donnarae@bright-side.com](mailto:donnarae@bright-side.com).

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