What Leaders Can Do to Diminish the Destructive Effects of Workplace Depression and Anxiety

Dr. Mel Whitehurst
Psychologist

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help leaders (executives, managers, supervisors, team leaders) of organizations create work environments that diminish the destructive effects of depression and anxiety in the workplace. I based this book on my experiences with clients in private practice and on what I learned while working with leaders in thirty-seven organizations to create positive work environments.

It has been estimated that 73% (Wang, 2015) of workers suffering from clinical anxiety or depression remain in the workforce. These workers enter the workplace each day functioning at a reduced capacity. Unfortunately, work environments often worsen depression and anxiety in workers.

Researchers rank depression and anxiety among the top three workplace problems for employers. In addition to underperforming, workers suffering from mild to moderate depression and anxiety infect other workers with anxiety and depression, spreading it throughout the organization like a communicable disease. Entire work groups and even whole organizations can be contaminated with varying levels of productivity-impairing depression and anxiety.

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 17 million people suffer from depression every year. Occurrence of anxiety is more difficult to estimate because it takes so many different forms, but it is believed to be even more prevalent than depression.

Depression and anxiety cost organizations immense economic loss. The University of Michigan Depression Center reported that depression is associated with more than a $44 billion yearly

economic loss due to reduced productivity. Employers lose on average 27 workdays per depressed worker each year. According to numerous sources, about
$42 billion is spent on medical care for anxiety and $26.1 billion on medical care for depression yearly (ADA, 2009).

Creating a work environment that actually reduces anxiety and depression in the workplace is a great source of productivity improvement. If leaders put concentrated effort into applying some of the individual management strategies in this book, I believe they will find an increase in productivity---thus a significant rise in profits for their organizations. Leaders I helped in my private practice told me these strategies were not complicated and were rather easy to apply.

Warning Signs of Workplace Depression and Anxiety

Workers in organizations will demonstrate a variety of behaviors which warn leaders that depression and anxiety are contaminating the workplace. The following are some observable behavioral warning signs that a work group or organization may be infected with excessive depression and anxiety.

- ❖ significant amounts of time hedging: coming to work late, asking to leave early, missing deadlines, absenteeism, taking longer to perform routine activities and forgetting details.

- ❖ indifference and apathy toward ongoing problems.

- ❖ excessive conflict.

- ❖ disinterest, disengagement, low energy and tiredness among workers.

- ❖ short-fused and cynical attitudes.

- ❖ erratic variations in workers output: downward swings in productivity followed by upward swings**,** then downward again. Significant amounts of disorganized behavior.

Who is Responsible?

It is not the responsibility of leaders to diagnose clinical depression or anxiety, or to become therapists for troubled workers. Leaders are not expected to be skilled in diagnosing or treating clinical conditions. Leave that to the psychologists, psychiatrists or MDs.

Leaders of organizations usually expect mental health professionals to take care of these problems with workers outside the workplace. That is not enough if those who seek help for depression and anxiety return to work environments that cultivate depression and anxiety. **What leaders can do is construct work environments that lessen the destructive impact of depression and anxiety on worker efficiency through some very specific leadership tactics that uniquely enhance efficiency of these workers.**

And Furthermore

Workers have responsibilities to assist in the construction of a productive work environment. They are not powerless nor are they innocent bystanders being totally controlled by leaders or the "system".

Some workers are simply not productive. They undermine other workers by doing less or being chronically critical and unhappy. They are misfits…hate their job and expect other workers to feel the same way. They do more harm than good. They are disruptive and blame others. They sabotage others and impair the efforts of leaders. Most of them are "competent" at their "incompetence." Almost certainly no amount of leadership or management will help these workers become more productive.

I included this as an important statement because I believe a few workers in every organization disguise their incompetence by blaming other workers, "the system", supervisors, leaders and external factors for their own failures.

When nothing seems to cause these workers to be more productive, then they need to be expelled from the organization

Workplace Depression and Anxiety

Depressed mood-states distort reasoning and judgment. Anxiety distracts workers and increases avoidance behaviors and inconsistent decision making. Both mental states dramatically reduce worker efficiency and effectiveness. A complicating factor is that these two dysfunctional conditions consistently co-exist within the worker.

Depression

A significant amount of depression is caused by deficiencies in brain chemistry involving neurotransmitter deficits. Physicians can prescribe medications that are frequently helpful in containing some depression caused by deficient neurotransmitters. Not all depression is caused by deficient neurotransmitters, however. Situational and self-created depression account for substantial amounts of depression. Hence, both the workplace environment and the individual can be important contributors to depression.

Depression is an unstable mood-state slanted toward the downside. All of us have normal ups and downs that vary from day to day, but depressed persons are further down and stay down for longer periods of time. Depression can vary in intensity from enormously depressed to just below the line of normality, and it can stay with one for years.

When workers are in a depressed mood-state their world will be viewed more pessimistically. It is as if they are wearing dark glasses. Gloomy thoughts run through their minds on an almost continuous basis.

Regrettably, these negative mood-states are contagious among workers. Behavioral scientists, Dr. Roland Neuman and Dr. Fritz Strack, demonstrated through experimental research that depressed workers spread a negative mood to other workers, which actually lowers their productivity. (Neuman & Strack, 2000). Other research (Sy, Cote, Saavedra, 2005) demonstrated that a negative disposition in leaders similarly transmitted an adverse mood-state to subordinates. Consequently, leaders should pay close

attention to the construction of healthy workplace environments to prevent an epidemic of depression-related work decline.

Anxiety

Fifty years ago I read a newspaper article which reported that Americans lived in the age of anxiety. Recently I read another newspaper article that again said we live in the age of anxiety. Fifty years of nationwide anxiety, an American phenomenon! It follows then, that anxiety is still likely to show up in the workplace as a detriment to work output.

Anxiety is the conscious or unconscious <u>anticipation of danger</u>, the chronic vague expectation that something bad is going to happen. It is for the most part groundless. Anxiety leads to excessive worry, restlessness, staying keyed up or on the edge, and to difficulty concentrating. For many it is an abject fear of failing.

Anxiety can devastate efficiency by diverting focus, using up emotional and intellectual energy and causing faulty decision-making. Prolonged excessive anxiety will destroy a worker's effectiveness.

Helping workers perform with a minimum of anxiety is a major challenge to leaders of organizations. A worker free of excessive anxiety is more motivated and does not have the added weight of apprehension to obstruct him in his work.

Components of the Workplace Environment

Workplace environment, the organization in which workers carry out their assignments, plays a dominant role in worker behavior. I divide the workplace into two parts:

1. The <u>physical</u> environment comprises the visible surrounding physical structures. Ergonomics and other environmental design configurations are often applied to the physical environment to insure the most efficient interaction with workers and machines.

2. The <u>psychological</u> environment consists of worker and leader expectations, shared belief systems about how work is performed, workplace perceptions of success and failure, the emotional states of workers and leaders, and the views of interpersonal practices essential to efficient work practices.

   <u>The psychological environment is the primary determinant of the success or failure of any organization.</u> While the physical environment is important, it plays a secondary role. Depression and anxiety are part of the psychological environment and play their destructive roles in the complex and intricate psychological milieu of organizations.

Factors that Amplify Workplace Depression and Anxiety

Several issues seem to dominate the American workforce and exaggerate negativity. Each issue described below, to some extent, influences the preponderance of organizations.

1.   Fear

Fear, the human response to perceived danger, is a great motivator, perhaps the greatest of all motivators.   Dread of bad things happening can actually motivate workers, but only up to a point; then it becomes devastating.

Mild levels of fear usually coincide with optimal levels of effectiveness.   When fear escalates to high levels and is maintained for a lengthy period of time, it will cause workers to reach breaking points, destroying effectiveness and damaging an entire organization.

Fear is a pervasive societal phenomenon induced by countless mass communications from the worldwide web, iPads, cell phones, blogs, twitters, etc.   Workers in our contemporary society arrive at work flooded by expansive world-wide communications laced with fear messages.   Nearly every American is instantaneously connected to world events and crises as they are actually happening, bombarded with news from highly efficient news organizations and internet messages directed toward fear-driven topics.

To assess the pervasiveness of fear-driven information being mainstreamed to most Americans, I conducted an eight-week research study to identify the number of stories from national news networks and newspapers that were either essentially negative or essentially positive. I reviewed 956 randomly selected stories from three national news networks, three cable news networks, two internet news websites, the front page of a newspaper, editorials and letters to the editors. I classified the negative stories as fear-based.   Additionally, I identified the number of fear-based stories that provided a suggested solution to the negativity.   My belief is that a fear-based story without a solution can do more damage than one with a solution that provides at least a hope of solving the problem. Table 1 presents the results of the study.

As you can see in Table 1, the number of fear-based stories among the 956 stories reviewed ranged from 66.66% to 84.62%. From these sources, Americans were getting considerably more fear-based than positive information mainstreamed into their

consciousness. The front page of the newspaper was the most fear-based source of information although editorials, letters to the editor, internet, and TV news also gave upsetting information.

It is interesting to note that most fear-based stories had no solution to the negativity presented. Fear-based stories without a recommended solution drastically amps up fear. Psychological research studies over the past 50 years show that when fear is created with no way to resolve it, individuals involved will respond more sporadically and intensely with behaviors such as anxiety, anger, or passivity.

Table 1
Fear-Based News Study

	Number	Percentage
News Stories		
Total News Stories Reviewed	532	
Total Fear-Based News Stories	415	78.01%
Total Positive News Stories	117	21.99%
Total Fear-Based Stories with Solution	60	11.27%
Letters to Editor		
Total Letters Reviewed	129	
Total Fear-Based Letters	107	82.95%
Total Positive Letters	22	17.05
Total Fear-Based Stories With Solution	24	22.42%
Editorials		
Total Editorials Reviewed	42	
Total Fear-Based Editorials	28	66.66%
Total Positive Editorials	14	33.33
Total Fear-Based Editorials with Solution	14	50%
Front Page		
Total Front Page Stories Reviewed	78	
Total Fear-Based Front Page Stories	66	84.62%
Total Positive Front Page Stories	12	15.38%
Total Fear-Based Stories with Solution	8	12.12%
Internet		
Total Internet Stories Reviewed	175	
Total Fear-Based Internet Stories	131	78.86%
Total Positive Internet Stories	44	25.14%
Total Fear-Based Stories with Solution	2	1%

The immersion in media negativity gradually raises individual levels of fear, causing workers to arrive at work already possessing a high level of fear, which, in turn, makes them more susceptible to fear overload in the work environment. Excessive fear-based

responses lead to clinical depression, debilitating anxiety, phobias, panic attacks, self-destructive thoughts and behaviors, diffuse aggression, and extreme avoidance behaviors.

Corporate environments can inadvertently become fear creators. Unclear expectations, bullying supervisors, excessively critical and negatively-oriented leaders as well as the clash between unrealistic expectations and low motivation of workers with the organization's push for productivity can be fear generators.

Low-intensity subtle behaviors with intent to prompt worker productivity are common. Behaviors such as speaking condescendingly to someone, excluding colleagues from workplace meetings, discourteousness and rudeness are major destructive fear creators in the American work environment.

Organizations regularly provoke fear through the promotion of competition among workers. While worker competition is meant to drive organizations to higher levels of success, internal competition can cause unintended collateral damage. With competition there is generally a loser for every winner, a type of zero-sum gain. For example, workers competing with each other for jobs and pay raises, commonly become less cooperative with their competitors, and in some cases, even actively seek to undermine the accomplishments of others in order to gain a competitive edge. Losers in organizations are not happy campers!

In my individual counseling sessions with clients, I observed three consistent responses to fear overload. The first is <u>anger</u> as a defense mechanism. When a worker sensed threat, anger served to energize the worker and cause hyper alertness to dangers followed by their taking defensive stances. Almost no one overcomes fear in an anger state, so those with this response are stuck in an emotional state that is dangerous and destructive. Furthermore, anger in one worker often engenders anger and aggressive behavior in workers around them. A second response is <u>apathy</u>. The worker either disregarded threats or interpreted them as something other than threats, causing evading and misdirected behaviors. The third response to fear is <u>confusion</u>. The

individual identifies the fear-threat but is confused as to why it exists or finds it difficult to understand that the threat from fear is really happening. This usually ends in a general state of anxiety for the worker.

Workers in organizations frequently function under the fuzzy apprehensions that they will fail, lose their job, or undergo a downward spiral of financial ruin, and that something harmful is going happen to them. They face potential failure almost every day in their work life, usually in a series of small setbacks such as missing a deadline, not being able to accomplish a goal because of circumstances beyond their control, a difficult and uncooperative team member, a micromanaging supervisor, or a hostile work environment.

Whether the worker is succeeding or failing, there is likely to be a considerable amount of worry about failing, which leads to diminished productivity, a descending discontent and growing unhappiness. Generally, polls of employees in organizations show they could work harder but because of work failures and associated worry about failing, they choose not to expend their best effort to succeed.

A major role of leaders then is to drive fear out of the organization.

2.   Fragmentation

Humans have a fundamental need to make sense out of the world. When workers receive fragments of information about things happening in the workplace environment, they attempt to make sense by filling in the gaps. Rumors usually emerge when workers fill in the gaps with speculation, guesses and unsubstantiated facts. These fill-ins consolidate into a new set of informal rumor rules and norms accepted by the "group" of workers, and they may not be the desired organizational norms. Once rumors tie together the known and unknown facts to make sense out of the work environment groupthink emerges where workers reinforce each other for believing and following these informal rules, norms, standards and expectations, even when they are counter to rules established by organization's leaders.

Leaders in organizations who fail to clearly and vigorously communicate expectations, goals, rules, and relevant information run a huge risk of workers filling in the blank spaces with speculation and guesses, which facilitate the creation of work environments that magnify anxiety and depression.

3. Workers-Leaders Interactions

The relationship that develops between workers and their leaders is an essential factor in creating work environments where workers are motivated for efficiency and effectiveness. <u>Most research that I have read indicates that the worker-leader relationship is the most important factor in productivity of workers in organization.</u>

Harmful, unethical, and destructive workplace behaviors occur at alarming rates and cost organizations billions of dollars every year because of negative leader-worker relationships. When workers feel aggrieved, they will respond with anger and retaliation toward leaders and co-workers, accelerating depression and anxiety.

Leaders engaging in sustained displays of negative behaviors will damage and ultimately destroy relationships. In a research study, two behavioral scientists, Dr. Marie Mitchell and Dr. Maureen Ambrose (2007), describe some of the most common negative behaviors of supervisors as described by subordinates:

Ridicules me
Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.
Gives me the silent treatment.
Talks bad about me behind my back.
Breaks promises he/she makes.
Reminds me of my past mistakes.
Spreads rumors about me.
Calls me names or degrades me.
Doesn't give me credit.
Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment.
Expresses anger at me when she/he is mad for another reason.
Makes negative comments about me to others.
Tells me I'm incompetent
Lies to me
Puts me down when I question work procedures.
Yells at me or scolds me.

Talks down to me.
Does not defend me when others speak poorly of me.

4.   Workers' Perceptions

The perception that workers have about their organization has a powerful impact on the environment.   Negatively perceived environments heighten depression and anxiety, which then leads to lower productivity. Several years ago I designed and standardized a *Perception of Organization Survey* where workers provided their perceptions of seventeen factors that contributed to an effective organization. (**See Appendix A for explanations**) I collected about 3,000 surveys in six organizations which gave me a good random sample of workers' perceptions in organizations. The information in Table 2 shows means and standard deviations from the sample surveys and should provide you with a representative sample which you may compare to your organization. Table 2 shows leaders what workers think are important in organizations and whether organizations meet their expectations.

An interesting finding is that the vast majority of workers perceived that they were not as productive as they could be, which could be an ominous warning to organizations that workers may are not fully functional.

The factors that most contribute to anxiety and depression are job satisfaction, morale and work relationships. There was a significant gap between the degree of importance workers placed on these variables and how they perceived they existed in their organizations. Workers thought these variables were significant but did not think they existed to a high degree in their organization. If we generalize the data from this survey, it is apparent that the gap between the importance of a factor to workers and its existence in an organization contributes greatly to magnification of depression and anxiety in the workplace.

In is interesting to note that in my consulting this survey accurately predicted bankruptcy of two corporations about two years in advance of their filing for bankruptcy.

In sum, leaders have to pay close attention to worker perceptions. Whether the workers are right or wrong, it is their perceptions upon which they will act.

Table 2
Perception of Organization Survey

Rank Order	Importance	Exist in Org	Difference
Job Satisfaction	8.9679	7.6189	-1.3490
Work Relationships (Team Work)	8.9227	7.8528	-1.0699
Personal Productivity	8.9038	5.5717	-3.3663
Reward Systems	8.8717	7.1445	-1.7272
Morale	8.8679	7.5339	-1.3340
Leadership	8.7266	7.2585	-1.4681
Upward Communication	8.7207	7.4415	-1.2792
Direction	8.7170	7.6642	-1.0528
Decision Making Practices	8.6436	7.6132	-1.0304
Work Organization-Work Flow	8.6245	7.7509	-0.8736
Downward Communication	8.6019	7.0623	-1.5696
Career Growth Opportunities	8.5604	6.1887	-2.3717
Lateral Communication	8.5585	7.8207	-0.7378
Control	8.5151	7.5509	-0.9642
Supervisory Practices	8.3208	7.7849	-0.5359
Vision	8.0227	6.6472	-1.3755
Planning	7.0056	7.2581	+0.2525
Mean	**8.5905**	**7.3978**	**-1.1927**
Standard Deviation	**1.7076**	**2.1901**	**+0.4825**

Recognizing Workplace Depression

Workplace depression is frequently difficult to identify because it takes many behavioral forms: disengagement and minimal involvement, chronic lateness and absenteeism, continuing conflict with co-workers, a short fuse, inability to think through situations before acting, low energy, and accident-proneness.

Clinically depressed clients in my private practice told me depression was like a shadowy cloud hovering over them with constant feelings of impending doom. Things were meaningless; nothing seemed to really matter. Intense feelings of sadness and unhappiness stayed with them always. They went through the motions of working each day, returning home at night in a foggy state. What makes this even more perplexing is that clients infrequently recognized this as depression, typically feeling, for some vague reason, they were "bad" persons or that others

are "making" them depressed. Here are a few of my thoughts on identifying workplace depression.

1. Has the worker's behavior changed from generally positive to negative? Does the worker complain about lack of support to do the job? Depressed individuals often "feel alone" and unsupported, and tend to focus negative feelings on something external. Self-isolation is common.

2. Has the worker's energy level dropped from full of energy to withdrawal from others and to producing less? Does the worker show a diminished interest in work? Work productivity often slowly drops as a person descends into depression.

3. Does the worker start hedging time, coming to work late, asking to leave early, missing deadlines, taking longer to perform routine activities and forgetting details? Depressed workers start avoiding work, especially the more complex aspects of work.

4. Is there an increased edginess, or is he or she more easily annoyed or irritated? Has the worker become a chronic complainer with frequent displays of temper? Depressed persons can take on an agitated state.

5. Has the worker become more uncooperative? Depressed workers become less cooperative and will attempt to "block out" responding to new information.

6. Does the worker have a downcast appearance? Depressed people lose their expressions of positivity. They appear to be "plodding" along in a rote manner, just going through the motions with no enthusiasm, barely performing at the minimum level and sometimes below the minimum.

7. Does the worker seem sad, excessively self-critical and apologetic? Is the worker preoccupied with unjustified doubts? There are usually feelings of guilt and shame in the depressed worker for not living up to some standard.

8. Does the worker show increased difficulty in organizing tasks and activities? Does the worker have trouble planning and thinking ahead?

The worker does not have to have all the above symptoms to be depressed, and some of the symptoms above may co-exist with anxiety. Furthermore, some workers may have several of these symptoms and not be depressed at all. It is a matter of degree of each symptom. When you see the behavioral symptoms of depression, you need to act.

It is more effective to work with the <u>behavioral</u> issues that you <u>observe</u> than to attempt to interpret what the worker is thinking or to determine whether the worker is clinically depressed.

Again let me emphasize that leaders and managers are <u>not</u> in the business of treating depressed workers. Many depressed workers are receiving treatment from psychologists, psychiatrists or MDs. <u>The leader's mission is to create a healthy work environment where workers can excel.</u>

Some Ways I Work with Depressive or Anxiety-Prone Workers in Counseling

In my private practice, I frequently helped clients who suffered from depression or anxiety improve their work performance. I will describe some of the approaches I used in conducting counseling to help these workers. The techniques may provide you with some ideas of how to help improve work performance of an underperforming worker who may be showing symptoms of depression or anxiety. Although I am not advocating that you become a counselor with those you supervise, I do believe some of the one-to-one approaches used by psychologists can provide you with some insights in talking with workers about how to improve productivity.

❑ When talking with a client I attempt to never imply that I know exactly what is going on in their mind. Only the client knows. I don't say, "You are depressed." Or "You are experiencing too much anxiety." Instead, I stay with clearly <u>observed</u> behaviors. Leaders should do the same.

❏ The identification of the real causes of any underperformance problem can never be conclusively determined. You can only make speculations from observations. I do not suggest that a problem will be totally resolved or ideal goals completely attained. Instead, I propose that circumstances can be significantly improved, and meaningful progress toward performance improvement can be made.

❏ I am outcome-oriented and solution-focused. <u>What</u> and <u>how</u> are used instead of <u>why</u>. I focus on what and how to improve performance instead of identifying the underlying causes by asking why. I am more focused on developing uncomplicated solutions to performance improvement, not on why the client is underperforming. Nevertheless, I do not ignore why the client is underperforming, but simply focus more on solutions.

❏ An underperforming client has to have a compelling reason to change. Therefore, the client has to perceive that they have a problem. Otherwise, they will not change. Change comes from disequilibrium, not balance. Change is prompted only when a client decides that changing is the only way to exist in the work environment.

❏ If the client is not motivated to resolve problems, I work on motivation. Attempting to solve an underperformance problem with someone who is insufficiently motivated is likely to be ineffective. I tend to encourage concentrating on increasing effort first. Effort precedes increased output.

❏ I help the client see what things would be like if the problem were resolved. I often ask the miracle question: "Suppose you go to sleep tonight and in the middle of the night a miracle happens and all your work problems are solved. What would have happened?" I work to get the client to tell me how they see the miracle. They may resist doing this but I am calmly persistent.

❏ I correspondingly help the client see the ultimate results of a problem if the problem does not get resolved. I ask, "If the problem does not get fixed what will happen?" Again, I work to get the client to tell me the answer.

- What looks like an uncooperative attitude by the client is often a lack of clarity. Getting more clarity may help change things, so I often work on this first. Don't assume the client sees things with clarity, however. If they did see things with clarity, they would most likely be performing at a higher level.

- Change takes place gradually over time. Big problems do not always require big solutions. Reducing problems to the lowest common denominator is essential. I work for the smallest change. Small change leads to big change. A client who can be persuaded to agree to a small suggestion is more likely to agree later to a larger request.

- Instead of asking the client to change, I ask them to do something different. You can never completely change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model, a new way of doing things.

- People often agonize for long periods of time about particular problems, but spend little time analyzing why something is working so well. I try to find those things the client is doing well in their job and get them to do more of them.

- Negative emotions have a narrowing effect on thinking and problem-solving. Positive emotions broaden and build a repertoire of thoughts and actions. I help clients to be more positive so they are open to new things, get more involved, and put effort into solving problems. I adopt the attitude that things can change and can be improved. I consistently encourage hope for a better day. Even in darkest times there is always a better way. I stay positive, point out the client's strong points when possible and provide encouragement.

- When problems are identified and solutions constructed, the client should make a public commitment to comply. The client should tell the leader what they will do.

Strategies for Constructing Depression-Free Workplace Environments

Having said all of the above, I am now ready to describe several specific strategies that I believe can help leaders create more positive environments and reduce the effects of depression in the workplace. You probably will not use all of them, but perhaps you can pick and select at least one that you think will be best for you. I will first suggest strategies to address depressed workers and then strategies for anxiety-prone workers. Although the strategies are separated for clarity, they can be used interchangeably with depressed or anxious workers.

Strategy 1: Exercise Intelligent Observation

Yogi Berra the "baseball philosopher" once said, "You can observe a lot by just watching". I got a good laugh from his comment. After giving it a little thought, there is actually an underlying legitimacy to his statement.   We cannot know for certain what is happening unless we deliberately look at it. As the pace of work picks up and pressures build, we commonly become less observant. Generally we have a tendency to quit intentionally paying attention beyond the immediately urgent. It is my observation that leaders often narrow their perceptions and lose awareness of what is happening for numerous reasons in the wider work environment.

Conscious broad-based and intense observation provides an information foundation for constructing a workplace environment that diminishes depression. Observation helps us see the total context in which depressive behavior is occurring. Observation helps us tie together events and circumstances that aggravate depression. Observation provides us with solutions.

Try This

Vigorously pay attention for three weeks to what you see and hear in your work environment. Pull back and be as objective as possible. Meticulously pay attention to the behaviors of workers. Each day consciously intensify paying attention to what you see and hear. Be an objective observer. Make notes about your observations. Also, observe yourself during this time. Observe what you say, what you do and how your actions appear to impact others. Write this down in separate notes. After three weeks,

read and re-read your notes. You may be surprised at the amount of information you can obtain if you discipline yourself to do these things consistently. From these notes, make a list of at least three things you believe you can do to diminish workplace depression.

Intense attention can provide new ideas as to how to create a more dynamic environment.

Strategy 2: Expand Communications

Depressed workers do not grasp as much information as non-depressed workers because their minds are functioning at a reduced level of alertness. They are only absorbing fragments of information and will be strongly inclined to fill in the blanks with negativity or misinterpret information, situations or events.

Try This

Let workers know what is going on both formally and informally. Tell workers everything you can that is not illegal or unethical. Send emails, make direct calls, develop newsletters, etc. Find every avenue possible to communicate information to workers. Communicate often your strategies for accomplishing work goals. Tell them why you are doing something. Keep communications positive and upbeat. <u>Over communicate</u>!!! Help them feel as if they are on the "inside" and an important part of the "in" group through your extensive communication efforts.

Don't back off communicating. Depressed workers often respond more effectively to excessive communications. This may sound unusual, but that is what seems to happen.

Strategy 3: Constructively use positivity

Words have a powerful influence on mood. Leaders need to be communicating with words that add <u>positivity</u> to the environment. Communications should be interspersed with positive words.

Researchers Dr. John Bargh, Dr. Mark Chen and Dr. Lara Burrows demonstrated how easily a positive or negative mood-state could be fashioned by merely giving two groups of volunteers a

list of words to read. One group read a list of positive words and one group read a list of negative words for about ten minutes. An evaluation of their mood was completed immediately before and immediately after reading the list of words. They found that negative words created a <u>significantly</u> more negative mood and positive words created a <u>significantly</u> more positive mood in just a few minutes, unmistakably demonstrating that choice of words can bring about a good or bad mood-state.

We have a greater inclination toward using negative words. The built-in bias toward negativity is a compelling reason for us to develop a compendium of positive words and to deliberately employ them so as to diminish the overbalance toward negativity.

Try This

Use an abundance of positive words to enrich the environment with positivity. If you have to use negative words, attempt to structure them in terms of suggestions. Instead of saying, "We did not accomplish our monthly goal?" say, "Let's work to make sure we accomplish our goal next month by redistributing our workloads. I know we all want to do our best."

<u>Excessive </u>positive communication can benefit all workers. I have never heard leaders of failed corporations stand up and say that they lost profits because they over communicated with positivity. And, in fact, of the thousands of clients that I worked with in my private practice, I don't believe I ever heard a client say they had problems because leaders were too positive toward them. It is typically the negative words that bring them down.

To be able to use positive words you need an extensive arsenal of them. Make a personal list of positive words using techniques I described above. For several days, listen to workers and peers for their use of positive words and add them to your list. Listen to the radio, watch TV and read newspapers and news on the internet for positive words. Build a master list of positive words.

After building your master list of positive words, follow the same process to build a list of negative words. Make a conscious effort to avoid or at least minimize the use of negative words.

Try using some of these positive words.

Wow!	Great job!	Stellar	Amazing
Awesome	Perfect	Fantastic	Outstanding
Great	Fabulous	Remarkable	Wonderful
Wondrous	Stupendous	Right on!	Nice job
Good going	Good job.	Nice work	That's nice
Impressive	Terrific!	Aha!	Unbelievable
Splendid	Excellent	Incredible	Spectacular
Now you've got it.		You can do it.	
You're the best.		That's thoughtful of you.	
I can see you enjoy (fill in)		It's been a pleasure to talk with you.	
You really outdid yourself.		Keep up the good work.	

For several months, intersperse your communications with genuinely positive words. Observe the response of others. Do they react positively? Are they suspicious that you are trying to manipulate them? Or do they not respond at all? You have to conduct this experiment for a lengthy period of time and you have to make a strong conscious effort to keep using them.

Again, I have never seen a leader reprimanded for being too positive, although I know there are probably exceptions. Stay positive. If you do not get the results you want immediately, don't give up. The key to this approach is to stay the course.

Try This

There is a learning principle that states, "When a behavior is rewarded, the behavior tends to be repeated and when a behavior is punished it tends to stop." Rewards gradually shape our behavior.

More learning occurs with rewards than punishment. (Proven by scientific research.) Results are superior when you focus on rewarding good behavior rather than concentrating on punishing bad behavior.

Look around for workers in the organization who are exhibiting constructive behaviors toward successful work outcomes and verbally compliment them using words from your positive words collection. Positive words are rewarding. Especially reward <u>effort</u> because effort comes before success. Avoid negative comments unless absolutely necessary. Only compliment workers with observable positive behaviors. Remember negativity stops behaviors and rewards increase behaviors.

Follow the management dictum: "Catch them doing something right and tell them about it in positive terms."

Try This

The story goes that a man thought life was awful and terrible. He believed he would never be happy. So, he decided that to survive he would have to go through life faking being happy. In his obituary it was reported that he died a happy man. He apparently became the role he played.

Depressed workers can be highly influenced by leaders' positive actions.

<u>Deliberately become more positive by acting positive like an actor in a movie.</u> Although you may not feel positive, play the role and act it out anyway as if it is real when you are leading workers. You may say this is disingenuous or dishonest. My response is, if we always acted how we felt, we would be in conflict all the time. Given a choice to act negatively or positively, act positively.

Try This

Cultivate thankfulness in the work environment. A study by Dr. Robert Emmons asked depressed patients to make a list of things for which they were grateful from the previous week, and to do this once a week for six weeks. At the end of six weeks the patients were evaluated. The main effect of this one simple activity dramatically elevated the mood of participants.

Make a private list of the good reasons for working in your organization, the things for which you are thankful. Experiment with making these statements to others in your communication, and when the opportunity arises, encourage others to express things they are thankful in working for the organization. Expressing genuine appreciation elevates mood. Observe immediate and long-term reactions to this practice.

Strategy 4: Elevate Self-Worth of Workers

Workers who believe they are performing an important task working toward a significant goal, or doing something that makes a difference in the workplace, will be less depressed. We all need to feel we are doing something important. When we do not feel that we are performing worthwhile work, we have nothing left but days of meaningless activity which can easily cause workers to descend into apathy and depression.

Viktor Frankl, one of history's most prominent psychiatrists, wrote the classic book titled, *Man's Search for Meaning*. The book was voted by Readers Choice, a national reading group, as one of the top five most influential books written in the 20th century. Dr. Frankl spent almost three years during WWII in a Nazi concentration camp. During that time his family perished in the camps. The book is an explanation of his horrifying experience. Dr. Frankl observed that the people who survived the concentration camps had an important reason to live, an important task they wanted to accomplish in life. Dr. Frankl had a hope of getting out of the concentration camp, going around the world to make speeches about the atrocities of the camp so that he could do his part to discourage man from ever again committing such cruelty. He imagined walking into a well-lit and warm auditorium, sitting at a table with a lamp, and making his speech to an attentive audience. That reason kept him struggling to survive the concentration camp.

A curious event happened to me several years ago with regard to Dr. Frankl's hope. A minister I had never met called me up and invited me to go with him to a local university to hear Dr. Frankl speak. A friend had given him my name and he had two tickets. So I went. I walked into the auditorium full of attentive people. Looking down on the stage, I saw a table and lamp. Dr. Frankl walked out and spoke to a spellbound audience for 2 ½ hours, and when he left the

audience remained silent for at least ten minutes before anyone left. It was the most powerful speech that I had ever witnessed. Incidentally, it was reported in the newspaper the next day that Dr. Frankl had made this speech over four hundred times in forty-five countries. Is doing something important, valuable? Definitely yes!

The challenge as a leader is to help workers identify the importance of their work. We are rational human beings. We like to have a reason for doing things. Most don't like to mindlessly perform work activities. If workers have an important **why** to do something, they will be less depressed at work. Important work leads to commitment, which leads to worker efficiency, which weakens depression. Workers become successful by accomplishing work that means something to them.

I once read an interview conducted with a janitor in a downtown Chicago office building. The janitor stated that he had the most important job in the building. He believed nothing happened until he unlocked the doors and turned on the heat. Furthermore, he kept the offices clean and trash-free, allowing workers to do their work. Without him no worker could perform a job without the clean workplace that he established through his work. He believed in the importance of his job. My guess is he was very successful.

Try This

Identify a few workers who give the appearance of being down or who have shown a recent drop in performance. Develop a rationale from your perspective of the importance of their jobs. Write as many reasons why their jobs are important as you can. These reasons should include how the workers' tasks fit into the overall purpose of the organization.

Let workers know how their work contributes to the functioning of the whole organization. Tell them over and over. Continually show them why their work is essential to the creation of the major product or service of the organization. Solicit reasons from them. Ask them why they think their work is important.

A task I believe a leader can do to elevate the importance of work is to give every worker one unique, special challenge; a commitment to doing something hard and

achievable that only that worker can do. Challenging a person to do something uniquely important elevates mood.

Strategy 5: Escalate Cooperation

An established principle in psychology with regard to human behavior is that when you do me a favor I will feel the need to return the favor sooner or later. This is known as the reciprocity principle.

Have you ever been offered a free sample while shopping at the grocery store? Recently my wife and I were grocery shopping when we were offered a free sample of cereal by a store worker in the cereal section of the store. Wishing to be courteous my wife took the offer and sampled the cereal. Guess what happened? She is not normally a cereal eater, but has since being given the free sample, she has bought three more boxes, a perfect example of the power of reciprocity.

I decided to test the reciprocity principle with my daily exercise routine of walking three miles. Near my home is a walking trail. As I walk this trail daily, I usually meet 5 to 10 people walking in the opposite direction. Each day as I walked, I greeted walkers moving toward me before they had the chance to greet me with either a slight wave of the hand or a cheery good morning, and I kept tabs on how many walkers responded and how many responded in the same way I greeted them. If they greeted me first, I did not count the greeting.

Surprisingly 97.66% responded back to my greeting. Additionally, 72.58% responded in the same way I greeted them with either a hand wave or a verbal good morning. Astonishingly, after about two weeks I had to discontinue my experiment because on three consecutive days every walker I met spoke first, not allowing me to make my greeting first. (Before I started the experiment very few greeted me.) I concluded that people not only return a positive gesture with a positive gesture, but also continued to return the gesture many times more after I stopped my original gesturing.

The influence of reciprocity can be applied in organizations. If one worker in an organizations genuinely helps another worker, the helped worker is highly likely to eventually return the favor

and perhaps more than once. What would happen if leaders in organizations were able to get 50% of their workers to do one work-related favor for another worker? The amount of cooperation this would generate would be astounding, and could result in enormous improvement in the organization's efficiency. "If you help me, I will help you" is a powerful human practice.

The reciprocity principle also has a dark side, however: If you mistreat me, I will return the mistreatment to you sooner or later. Leaders have to be aware of workers' perceptions of being maltreated. Uncooperative attitudes, tardiness, low motivation, devious and deceptive behavior are all examples of negative reciprocity.

Successful organizations survive because they establish numerous cooperative networks. When cooperation is high in an organization, the resultant environment diminishes the effects of depression and improves efficiency among all workers.

The task for leaders and managers is to find ways to multiply cooperation relying on the reciprocity principle. I do not have all the answers on how leaders and managers can do this, but I have several ideas that you may try.

Try This

Reciprocal tradeoffs among workers can be encouraged by fostering reciprocity beliefs. The challenge is to get workers to accept the beliefs that tradeoffs are beneficial to everyone.

Below is a list of ten beliefs that can be imparted to workers or infused into the, which will increase tradeoffs in your organization.

1. Success comes from helping others be better off.
2. It is better in the long run to be a giver than a taker. As Zig Zigler stated in his book, *See You at the Top*, "You can have everything you want if you can help enough other people get what they want." However, it is okay to be a receiver because it allows you to be more successful.

3. When I help one person, the whole organization is helped.

4. Tradeoffs are unselfish ventures.

5. I will be ever alert to help.

6. It matters in my work that I help.

7. Watch your words and speak with good purpose only.

8. Learn to find ways to help others.

9. If I know that I helped someone, that is enough.

10. Commitment to help will make me more successful.

As I mentioned earlier in this guide, depression and anxiety regularly co-exist in workers. When one is present the other is highly likely to be present. In excess, depression and anxiety have deleterious effects on productivity. I have presented some of the effects of depression and made suggestions to create an environment that will minimize depression. Now I turn to anxiety.

Recognizing Workplace Anxiety

Anxiety plays out in the workplace with the following <u>observable</u> behaviors. Remember, anxiety is coping with irrational and unfounded fears.

1. Avoidance of work situations that trigger anxiety. Workers experiencing anxiety will misdirect their anxiety to external factors in the workplace, and then <u>avoid</u> those factors when possible. Avoidances may be irrational with no valid reason.

2. Fixating and obsessing on past failures when carrying out work duties. Anxiety-prone workers can easily get stuck in the past and overlook the demands of the present.

3. Frequently reminding others that work projects are out of control. High-anxiety workers have an ongoing feeling things are out of control, and they are always on the verge of falling apart and losing it all. Lots of drama surrounds them.

4. To get things back in control, workers may exhibit a disproportionate need for order and organization, resulting in rigid, rule-bound, and unbending behaviors which interfere with output. Repetitive checking of work beyond the necessary may well occur.

5. Persistent complaining about the many dangers of failing. Fearful attitude toward work projects. Unwarranted fear of getting reprimanded or criticized. Resistance to trying new or different projects or to problem-solving activities.

6. Too much "people pleasing" behavior, which results in acquiescent and submissive behavior when assertive behaviors are needed.

7. Showing a strong preoccupation with time: setting rigid time frames and reminding others to follow them; an inflexible personal time management system; expressing doubts of not having enough time.

Strategies for Diminishing Anxiety in the Workplace

Anxiety can never be completely eliminated. In fact, some anxiety is good for motivation. Leaders should seek to help high-anxiety workers diminish anxiety to a more functional level.

Strategy 1: Marginalizing Anxiety

Try This

Marginalize anxiety by breaking long-term goals into small parts along a linear continuum. Working with small parts of goals can bring work into more immediate successes instead having to wait for long-term successes. <u>High-anxiety workers need more immediate feedback on successes</u>.

The further an anxiety-prone worker is from achieving a goal, the more anxiety the worker will experience. The more immediate the objective, the less anxiety. Breaking work down into small parts allows the worker to achieve numerous immediate objectives, thus reducing the amount of time to anticipate future dangers.

Try This

For a couple weeks, each day develop a daily list of objectives you want to accomplish during the day. Check them off as you complete them. Work to become skilled at setting and accomplishing daily objectives. When you feel comfortable with this technique, teach it to those you lead. This a very simple tactic, but my experience in working with workers has shown it to be highly effective.

Strategy 2: Desensitizing Anxiety

Anxiety-prone workers will become anxious about being anxious. Desensitizing is a technique that you can use to reduce the amount of negativity associated with anxiety.

Try This

Since anxiety is the <u>anticipation of danger</u>, the chronic vague expectation that something bad is going to happen but has not as yet happened, go ahead and play out

this danger with workers by exploring the worst-case scenarios with them. After doing this, invent ways to eliminate or reduce the danger before it actually occurs.

Talk with the worker about the worst possible outcomes. Generate as many possible negative outcomes as you can think of. Take every negative outcome all the way out to the hypothetical ultimate conclusion. Reviewing these outcomes serves to desensitize the worker to an anticipatory negative outcome by getting the anxiety all out into the open. <u>After doing this, construct a plan with the worker to be successful in this possible work situation</u>.

Strategy 3: Override Anxiety

If workers can anticipate the worst outcomes, they can also learn to anticipate the best outcomes. Anxiety is worst-case scenario outcomes thinking. Exploring best-case scenario outcomes can override anxiety.

Try This

Explore the best possible outcomes with workers. Develop a sense of hope for the future. A sense of hope counteracts anxiety. After doing this, construct a plan with the worker to be successful in the present work situation.

Reminder: Again I am recapping my previous statements that some workers will need professional help with their anxiety. Leaders are not to serve as therapists or counselors, but should encourage workers to seek professional help when anxiety becomes excessively destructive.

Leaders' Personal Self-Management of Anxiety and Depression

Leaders who do not effectively <u>self-manage</u> their own anxiety and mood can become transmitters of anxiety and depression. Workers pay attention to leaders, especially when leaders show fears, short fuses, and non-communicative behavior. Leaders can become depressed and anxious too. The following are some suggestions for leaders' self-management.

Strategy 1: Practice Placing Yourself in Their Place

Spend some time empathizing with an underperforming worker. The ability to empathize is absolutely essential to helping a depressed or anxious person.

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in the other person's situation, to experience how the other person thinks and feels. Empathy is not sympathy. Sympathy is feeling sorry for another person. Empathy is putting yourself psychologically and emotionally in the other person's place. It is not judging whether the other person is right or wrong. It is only an attempt to see the world through the eyes of another person.

Pick a worker. Take some time each day to put yourself this worker's place. Imagine that you are the worker for a few minutes each day. Attempt to see the world through his or her eyes. Answer this question: What would I be thinking and feeling if I were this person?

The recurrent practice of empathy will open new avenues of understanding.

Strategy 2: Challenge Your Thinking

We are constantly thinking in our minds or, in other words, we are silently self-talking to ourselves. The quality of our self-talk makes a tremendous difference in the way we interact with workers and in the ways workers perceive us.

Thinking leads to actions. Occasionally challenge your thinking to help you become more logical. Try the following challenges to your thinking when you feel "negative" about something.

Identify the Goal

Behind every negative feeling or thought is a demand--something that you want, a goal. Since there is a goal to be accomplished by each demand, develop the goal to be achieved. When you feel negative, answer the following question: "What is my goal now?" Then, explore alternatives to accomplishing the goal. This thinking tactic focuses on outcome.

Find a Better Way to Think

When you are upset, anxious or feeling negative about a problem in your work situation ask yourself, "What is a better way to think about my situation?" Restate how you believe you can think in more useful terms.

Employ Coping Thoughts

When you cannot change a situation that is causing you to get upset, you may have to cope with the problem temporarily. Ask yourself, "What is the most effective way to cope with the problem instead of getting upset?" The idea is not to solve or even change the problem, but to find a way to cope for the time being. Sometimes just coping with a problem can reduce the problem.

Strategy 2: Sharpen Intuition

I encourage the use of this strategy specifically to help leaders become more proficient in recognizing and understanding their intuitive thinking. Recognizing and understanding intuitions can significantly improve your ability to make decisions.

Pay close attention to this strategy. Great leaders often state that they made major decisions based on their intuitions. They did not know why they acted as they did, but they knew their decision "felt" right. When they make the right

decision, depressed or anxious workers are inspired to rise up and overcome their dysfunctional state.

Intuitive thinking operates automatically without conscious control and cannot be easily brought to our conscious awareness. Our intuitive thinking is constantly processing and categorizing information at a nonconscious level, and then for some unknown reason making part or all it available to consciousness. Intuition, then, is a form of knowing, which is not based on consciousness reasoning. Intuitive information arrives in our consciousness in several ways. (Mikels,et al)

❖ Intuition comes to our consciousness in hunches, gut feelings, and impressions.

❖ Intuition may come in the feeling that something is wrong or something is lacking in a situation—things just do not feel right.

❖ Intuition may come in the form of a sense of solution, a feeling that a solution is pending or suspecting that there is a better solution than the present one.

❖ Intuition may come in the form of a sudden appearance of a solution at an unexpected moment.

❖ Intuition can be the sensing of an underlying order in things, a quick pattern recognition and synthesis. One can suddenly see the whole picture and how the parts fit together.

Not all intuition that comes to our consciousness is beneficial, although a great deal of our intuitive thinking is constructive. <u>For intuitive information to be useful, you should unravel its meanings when it comes to your consciousness by logically analyzing it.</u>

Deliberately pay attention to how you feel when a situation or event stimulates a feeling. For example, someone makes a comment to you and you have this sudden negative feeling, but are not sure why. Stop and focus on the feeling. While a negative feeling is likely to command more attention that a positive one, pay attention to the feeling whether it is negative or positive. Instead of suppressing the feeling or just automatically reacting, allow yourself to fully experience the feeling.

<u>Logically</u> explore the feeling, speculating with yourself as to what it means. If you take this approach in responding to your intuitive feelings, you will gradually become more skilled at recognizing, validating, and responding to nonconscious messages.

Here are a few other suggestions that may help improve your ability to understand your intuitions.

Identify and Evaluate Intuitions

Each day make a conscious effort to pay attention to your feelings or any slight doubt that unexpectedly comes into your awareness. Also, be alert to any sudden insights into solutions to problems or in seeing the whole picture for the first time. If you are uncertain as to what these feelings or insights mean, apply your logic to speculate as to what their significance may be. You may be right or wrong in your speculation, but if you consistently do this, you should gain increased insight into what your intuitions mean and how to efficiently use them. Deliberately being more aware is a simple and easy process that enhances effectiveness, but it requires diligence.

Clear Your Mind

Take about fifteen minutes each day in a quiet place to stop, close your eyes, and relax. Put everything out of your mind and focus on the present moment. Clearing your mind helps you to subsequently recognize sudden feelings before sorting them for meaning. This may be difficult at first until you have mastered the skill of clearing your mind. Practice, practice, practice…..

Enhance Awareness

Heightened awareness will provide new insights into understanding intuitions.

Spend one day paying attention using your **<u>vision</u>**. Willfully pay attention to everything you see. Look at things in your world deliberately. Especially pay attention to other people, what they say and what they do. Look around you as if for the <u>first time</u> and observe all the things you see—non-judgmentally. (You may be amazed at what you observe).

Next, spend one day paying attention to **sounds**. Listen for sounds.

Finally, take one day and focus attention on both vision and sounds. Be curious and open-minded and less judgmental about situations and events.

Observe the Moment

Throughout the day, periodically pause briefly, take a deep breath and observe the moment non-judgmentally. Put away any thoughts about the future or past and just focus on the moment. Observe how you feel. Observe things around you. Stay in the moment for longer periods of time each day.

Strategy 3: Be More Precise in Time Knowledge

Knowing precisely how long it takes to perform certain key daily tasks will lead to more effective use of your time. The perception by workers that you are organized or that you are "on top" of things is a great anxiety reducer for you and those you supervise.

Although time unfolds at the same rate for everyone, it is generally perceived as moving faster or slower depending on one's mood or current level of stress. Unless you have a relatively accurate view of the time it takes to perform essential tasks, it will be easier to run out of time, become sidetracked or act according to your mood-state.

A way to improve time knowledge is to become more accurate in recognizing the time it takes to manage key routine daily tasks. This may sound a little unusual, but merely increasing your knowledge as to the amount of time it takes to accomplish tasks leads to improved efficiency.

Get a stopwatch and time routine daily activities to determine how long it takes to complete them, e.g., how long it takes to get to work, the amount of time needed to get dressed in the morning, eat breakfast, brush your teeth, complete daily work projects, etc. Write down each activity and record the time required. Keep doing this until you have a clear picture of how much time it takes to complete routine daily activities. (Many of my past clients expressed surprise at how inaccurate they were after completing this project.)

When you determine time requirements of important activities, form the habit of time-predicting other activities. These are simple tasks but they can direct your mind to the future and help increase your sharpness of planning ahead.

Once you determine the time it takes to perform a task, you can then apply a principle in psychology known as Parkinson's Law. This law states that work expands to fill the amount of time available. For example, if you have two hours to mow your lawn and it only takes one hour, eventually it will take you longer than one hour to complete the project because of the extra available time. In other words, the more time you have for a task, the longer it will eventually take to complete it. <u>To use this principle, set slightly shorter time frames to complete</u> tasks and see what happens.

Strategy 4: Change from Problem Talk to Solution Talk

Do not get stuck in analyzing or debating problems with workers once the problem is identified. It is more effective to concentrate on solutions to problems. If you have a worker who is not performing well, talk predominantly in terms of solutions.

Shifting from problem talk to solution talk gets you started in a positive direction.

Examples of Problem-Talk

    Why are you doing that?

    Let's talk about this problem.

    How does it feel when you can't remember?

    What kinds of problems are you having getting your work done?

Examples of Solution-Talk

    What can we do?

    How can we solve this?

    When can we get this done?

    What is our goal?

    What would you like for me to do to help you?

    What are our options?

    I think our best course of action is…

Let's make a plan.

Here is what we are going to do.

How do you feel about our decision?

Another Idea

For the above strategies I have presented, the focus has been on elevating the performance of underperforming workers. Here is a second focus area for you to consider.   Spend some time concentrating on developing a small highly energized and effective number of workers who can have a dramatic influence on all the other workers.

You will only need to get a small number, a critical mass, of workers who are exhibiting highly positive and productive behaviors to drastically influence and maintain a positive work environment for the vast majority of your workers. There is no widespread agreement as to what percentage of workers this might take. Some researchers have indicated that as little as 15% of the workforce performing at the superstar level will dramatically change the entire environment. (Carrington, Quinn, Riskin) The peer pressure achieved is a powerful driving force.

My suggestion is to find the high performers and help them perform even better and then point this out to the other workers. Use some of the strategies in this book.

Conclusion

I am ending this book by laying out several challenges to diminishing the effects of depression and anxiety in the workplace. I synthesized into one paragraph the ideas that I presented in the book. Recognizing consequences of anxiety and depression in the work environment alone is a good start to solving the problem. Even so, taking the next steps described below remains the real challenge.

Challenges

Don't let depression or anxiety overpower you or those you supervise. Fight hard to drive it out of the work environment. Work on being content in the moment. Stop all negativity. Stop worrying. Know that workers will work harder for a cause than for money.   Remember that workers have to have a reason for doing something. Continuously think about ways to make

things better. Always be looking for a solution to any problem that comes your way. Stay time competent. Over communicate to workers. Be a positive force. Champion cooperation. Pay close attention to what is going on. Don't get caught being unaware. Workers always get stronger when they take action. We tend to have more regret for actions we did not take than for actions we took. So, stand up and be assertive and don't back down on issues important to you. Relationships with workers are absolutely the most important factor in creating healthy work environments! Work hard to understand others. It is not what happens to us but our perception of what happened. Be tough and caring. Pay attention to how you are feeling in work situations—feelings often come before logic. When something doesn't work, do something different. Refuse to let yourself feel defeated. Be challenged by the situation you are given. And know that you gave it your best.

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Appendix A

Perception of Organization Survey

The following is a Perception of Organization Survey that I developed to help leaders get a handle on what workers observe about their work and what they believe to be important. If you have a good "feel" for what workers are thinking and feeling, you are in a better position to create a work environment that diminishes the effects of depression and anxiety.

I designed this survey to measure productivity factors displayed by leaders and managers. From extensive research seventeen productivity factors were selected and a pool of thirty statements which could possibly represent each factor developed. Fifteen experts from the field of leadership, management, organizational behavior and psychology ranked the statements in order of how well they represented the factor. The top five ranked statements for each factor were selected for the survey.

Participants completing the survey were asked to rate on a 1 to 10 scale their observations of each statement and to rate the importance of each statement. Over the years I have collected data from several organizations to provide you with some general guidelines as to how workers may rate each question. I calculated mean and standard deviations for every statement from a large pool of workers. (Results are reported in Table 2)

Below I have listed the brief instructions of the survey followed by the name and definition of each component. Below each component are the five statements that best measure that component.

Perception of Organization Survey

Participants completing the survey are asked to rate 85 statements on two factors. They are to read each statement and to rate on the two following

1. To what extent you have observed that it exists in your organization.

2. To what extent this is important to you.

Use the following guidelines to rate each statement. **

	Very Little Extent	Average Extent	Very Great Extent
Exist in Our Organization	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Important to me	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

The seventeen factors measured and the statements that represent the factor are listed below.

Upward Communication

The effectiveness of communication to the next higher authority in the organization.

Statements

My supervisor makes an effort to get my opinions and ideas about work here.

If I have a problem I feel my supervisor will listen.

My ideas are encouraged and welcomed.

My supervisor is generally available when I need information.

I can ask my supervisor a question about work and get a satisfactory answer.

Downward Communications

The amount and appropriateness of communication a worker receives from higher authorities in the organization.

Statements

My supervisor keeps me informed on what is going on.

My supervisor takes the time to talk to me about how I am doing.

My supervisor talks with me on a regular basis about specific work matters.

My supervisor talks with me in a respectful way.

My supervisor comes to me often to discuss important work.

Lateral Communications

The capacity of the worker to communicate with peers inside and outside work group

Statements

People here talk with each other about work problems.

If I need help from someone in another work group, they will help me.

It is easy to talk with other employees about work related problems.

People outside my immediate work group seem to work well together.

The people in my work group seem to work well together.

Planning

The amount of planning that takes place in the workgroup.

Statements

I know the goals of my work group.

People in my work group make work plans.

I have a good idea about how much work others in my work group have to do.

We plan ahead in our work group.

We spend some time each week getting organized.

Work Organization-Work Flow

The effectiveness of how work is organized.

Statements

Those in my work group know what they are supposed to do in their job.

Work is assigned in a fair manner in my work group.

I know what I am supposed to do in my job.

Our work group runs smoothly.

People in my work group agree with the amount of work each person has to do.

Decision Making Practices

The effectiveness of decision making: appropriateness of decisions, when to make decisions, and the amount of inclusion in decision making.

Statements

I know when I must talk with my supervisor about making a decision.

When important decisions need to be made I am included.

I have the freedom I need to make the necessary decisions about how to get my job done.

My work group makes good decisions.

When my work group makes an important decision we are able to follow through.

Direction

Thoroughness to which work is guided toward ends.

Statements

My supervisor lets me know my job duties and responsibilities.

People in my work group have clear work directions.

My supervisor know when to tell our group what needs to be done.

My supervisor gives me clear direction.

When people high up in the organization give an order it is clear.

Control

The effectiveness in which work stays on track.

Statements

If things get out of control, my supervisor helps get them back on track quickly.

My supervisor follows up to see that work is done.

When things go wrong we get them back to normal quickly.

People in my work group do a good job keeping work going as it should.

Things stay on track around here.

Reward Systems

The effectiveness of monetary and nonmonetary reward for work.

Statements

I am paid well for the work I do.

People who do a good job get recognized by those who run this organization.

People in our work group get rewarded for good performance.

I am recognized by my supervisor when I do good work.

This organization offers good benefit.

Work Relationships (Teamwork)

The effectiveness of teamwork.

Statements

I feel like I am on a team.

Members of our work group are willing to help out each other when there is a crisis.

I can depend on others in my work group.

People in this organization are committed to its success.

People in my work group are committed to our success.

Career Growth Opportunities

The prospects for advancement and learning.

Statements

There are opportunities to advance in this organization.

I received information from my supervisor on my potential to advance.

This organization provides me with training to do my job better.

I believe that if I stay with this organization I can advance.

I receive encouragement from my supervisor to advance.

Job Satisfaction

The amount of personal job fulfillment and contentment.

Statements

My job gives me a feeling of accomplishment.

I believe that my work is important.

I look forward to performing my job.

My job gives me a feeling of pride.

My job gives me an opportunity to do something I like.

Leadership

The extent workers are inspired and motivated by leadership.

Statements

I have confidence in the people running this organization.

The people running this organization think that my job is important.

The people running this organization have faith in me.

I am inspired to work harder by those running this organization.

There is a positive atmosphere in this organization.

Vision

The extent of the understanding and acceptance workers have of the long-range plans and goals of the organization.

Statements

I understand the long-range plans of my organization.

I am inspired and motivated by the goals of my organization.

I helped develop the long-range goals and plans of my organization.

My work makes a positive contribution toward the achievement of my organization.

I believe my works makes the world a better place to live.

Personal Productivity

The extent workers believe they are productive.

Statements

I am working to my full potential.

I am very productive in my job.

I find my work challenges me to grow and develop.

I am doing the best I possibly can in my job.

I think of ways I can be more productive.

Morale

The general mood level of workers.

Statements

There is a positive atmosphere in this organization.

I look forward to coming to work every day.

I feel enthusiastic about my work.

I find people in my work group to be enjoyable and stimulating.

I can laugh with and enjoy the people with whom I work.

Supervisory Practices

The general observation of the effectiveness of supervisors.

Statements

My supervisor is hardworking.

My supervisor is organized.

My supervisor stays at a project until it is completed.

My supervisor is outgoing.

My supervisor is consistent on a day-to-day basis.

**   When selecting the various statements representative of each factor, the statements were rated as to the degree of importance in measuring the factor. The statements are listed in order of importance.