Positive Thinking for
Cranks & Pessimists

On the Job
What makes people cranky at work?

STRESS

Here are five tips to help.
Tip #1: Get Up, Stand Up
Volunteering: Better than Drugs

• People in better mental and physical health more likely to volunteer *and*...

• Volunteer work improves mental and physical health

• Doing good deeds gives even the crankiest crank a shot of dopamine...

• Scientists call this the “helper’s high.”
“When we give back, it shifts the focus outside ourselves. It creates a sense of satisfaction that increases endorphins and therefore, a sense of well-being... Doing things for other people, thinking about other people, is like giving your brain a break from despair.”

– Jerilyn Ross, Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Break into Groups

• Describe a volunteer or activist effort you were involved with. How did it make you feel?

• Describe a specific public issue you’d like to address.

• What small, concrete step can you take to make that happen? Strategize with others in your group.
Tip #2: Hug Someone You Hate
Why?

Because cultivating positive relationships with annoying people reduces your stress!
Three Modest Suggestions

• Figure out what they need and give it to them (or compensate them if you can’t)

• Try to forgive people who annoy you

• Lovingkindness (or “metta”) meditation
Metta-tation: Try Not to Laugh

• Say it with me: “May I be healthy and strong. May I be happy. May I be healthy.”

• To yourself, say the name of a person you love or just like a lot. Point the metta in the direction of that person.

• To yourself, say the name of someone you neither love nor hate. Give ‘em the metta.

• Now, visualize someone you hate. Open up a can of metta on their butt.

• Finally, shower the whole universe with metta-love.

• Remember: We are in Berkeley.
Your Brain on Metta

- Higher levels of left-prefrontal activity (joy)
- Stronger activity in right insula (empathy)
- Increased activity in regions of brain involved in planned movement (readiness to help)

Source: Kristin Neff’s Self-Compassion and Emotional Resilience: [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/resources/slide_presentations](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/resources/slide_presentations)
Tip # 3: Count your breaths

“Can I call you back, Ed? I’m in the moment here.”
What is mindfulness?

• Paying attention to what’s happening...

• While it’s happening...

• On purpose...

• Without judgment.
Let’s try one minute of breathing in and out
Wasn’t that absurd?

• It takes practice

• I urge you to attend the “Introduction to Mindfulness” workshop on Nov. 9

• You might also consider reading a book by Jon Kabat-Zinn called *Full Catastrophe Living*
Tip #4: Hug yourself (but don’t, um, get carried away)
What the heck is “self-compassion”?

• It’s the practice of quieting the inner critic, replacing it with a voice of support, understanding, and care for oneself

• It’s not the same as self-esteem, self-pity, or self-indulgence—in fact, it’s often the opposite

• Research shows self-compassion makes us more compassionate toward others
Try this

• Talk to yourself as you would a best friend

• Put your hand on your heart, hug yourself —it’s OK to giggle

• Try Kristin Neff’s mantra: This is a moment of suffering; suffering is part of life; may I be kind to myself in this moment; may I give myself the compassion I need
Tip #5: Say “thank you” early & often
What is “thank you”?

• An affirmation: there are good things in the world

• An affirmation of relationships

• A way of expressing power, which means...

• The only person less likely than your spouse to say “thank you” is your boss.
Benefits of Gratitude

• Stronger immune systems and lower blood pressure

• Higher levels of positive emotions

• More joy, optimism, and happiness

• Acting with more generosity and compassion

• People like you more. Seriously.
Introducing Thnx4.org

An online, shareable gratitude journal—and a scientific tool for understanding gratitude.
You can thank someone or something, and make it public or private.
You can say thank you directly and/or publicly.
At the end, users will...

• Discover post-survey insights, including how 14 days of gratitude affected their state of mind

• Review their own gratitude entries and those from people in their community

• Get more gratitude tips
Cal Gratitude Challenge

• We launch the beta on November 1, 2012

• In anticipation of Thanksgiving, we’re working with the UC Berkeley Tang Center to promote Thnx4 to the campus community

• After this test, we’ll roll out to other campuses and communities.
The Bottom Line

• You can’t control other people and you can’t always control the circumstances you face at work

• But even the most pessimistic crank can take positive steps to make things better—and in the process reduce stress