

Why silly distractions at work can actually be good for you

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Positive interventions that distract us from difficult tasks actually help to

reduce our stress levels, according to new research from WHU—Otto Beisheim School of Management and Trinity Business School.

The research, conducted by an international team of researchers, shows that short positive interventions, such as watching a funny YouTube video, can help you to overcome daily demands like dealing with annoying emails or the tasks you dread.

In turn, this allows you to be more engaged, creative, and helpful toward your coworkers.

The research was led by Vera Schweitzer from WHU—Otto Beisheim School of Management with co-authors Wladislaw Rivkin (Trinity), Fabiola Gerpott (WHU—Otto Beisheim School of Management), Stefan Diestel (University of Wuppertal), Jana Kühnel (University of Vienna), Roman Prem (University of Graz), and Mo Wang (University of Florida).

So, according to this research, next time you find yourself secretly laughing at a hilarious video your colleague sent to you during the lunch break, you should embrace it. This will help you to recover from a stressful morning and prepare you to make the rest of the day a success.

Vera Schweitzer, researcher at WHU—Otto Beisheim School of Management, explained, "Our study shows that experiencing feelings of positivity throughout your workday can help you to remain effective particularly when daily work demands require you to invest a lot of self-control, that is, regulatory resources to control your temper.

"Trying to stay calm after reading an annoying email, for example, is typically quite depleting for employees. Consequently, they might struggle to demonstrate self-control throughout the rest of their workday, which, in turn, would hamper their engagement, creativity, and behavior

toward their colleagues.

"This is where positivity comes into play: Watching a funny video increases feelings of positivity. Such positive emotions allow employees to protect their regulatory resources even after dealing with resource-consuming self-control demands. In turn, this positively affects their effectiveness at work."

Dr. Wladislaw Rivkin, associate professor in organizational behavior, Trinity Business School, added, "Today's work environments are increasingly demanding, but we have limited understanding of what organizations and employees can do to prevent the stressful effects of self-control demands such as negative emails or unloved tasks.

"Our research shows that short positivity interventions can help employees make the best of their day and that employers and employees should consider incorporating more positivity into the [workday](#)! For example, organizations could provide employees with recommendations about short funny videos via a daily newsletter or post a 'joke of the day' on the intranet. By doing so, employers can help mitigate the negative effects of [self-control](#) demands."

The researchers gathered their results by examining 85 [employees](#) over 12 workdays, who received a daily text- or video-based positivity micro-intervention.

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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