

Crafting Well-Being: Employees Can Enhance Their Own Well-Being by Savoring, Reflecting upon, and Capitalizing on Positive Work Experiences

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Keywords

affective events theory, capitalization, crafting, JD-R theory, positive work reflection, savoring

Abstract

We review theory and research on how work events and experiences influence employee well-being, with a particular focus on the day-to-day effects of positive events and experiences. Then we discuss how employees can amplify the beneficial effects of work on well-being by savoring and reflecting upon positive events and experiences from work, and by capitalizing on them via interpersonal means, such as sharing work events and experiences with others. We integrate theory and research on savoring and interpersonal capitalization within affective events theory and the broader job demands–resources (JD-R) theory—and we explain how these approach-oriented agentic strategies that employees can easily use

to derive additional psychological benefits from work experiences can extend JD-R theory. Specifically, we discuss how using these strategies can build additional resources, fulfill employees' basic psychological needs, and make their jobs more meaningful, thereby enhancing well-being at the day-to-day level and in the long term.

INTRODUCTION

Almost two-thirds of people in Western countries are participating in the labor force (Bur. Labor Stat. 2020), and 48% of married couples in the United States are composed of dual earners with more than 60% of married-couple families with children having both parents working (Bur. Labor Stat. 2017). Work is one of the most important life roles for most people. Thus, pondering questions about the costs and benefits of working for people's well-being is important for scholars, practitioners, laypeople, and society at large. Besides providing material resources enabling people to achieve their life goals such as home ownership, stable finances and retirement, or being able to send children to college, work can also be a direct and important source of subjective happiness and psychological well-being. Considering that day-to-day work involves both negative and positive experiences, we ask this question: Is there anything employees can do to derive more psychological benefits from their jobs? We believe the answer to this question is yes, and here we make a case that focusing on positive aspects of work, and implementing agentic strategies to amplify the beneficial effects of those positive work experiences, can help people appreciate their jobs more and improve their psychological health.

One common way to examine work is through a social exchange lens. Accordingly, individuals enter exchanges with organizations or their representatives to maximize their benefits. The employment relationship provides employees with valued extrinsic-material benefits (e.g., pay) but also provides intrinsic-psychosocial resources (e.g., fulfillment of competency or relatedness needs). Traditionally, research on psychosocial outcomes has focused on relatively stable, and mostly negative, effects of work (stressors) on well-being and on finding ways to minimize these effects (e.g., via job redesign). However, recent developments in theory explain how the interplay of job demands and resources can lead to not only strain from work but also motivation and enhanced well-being. These developments incorporate the effects of daily variations in aspects of the work environment, and they include strategies for increasing job resources (e.g., Bakker et al. 2014, 2023a). Furthermore, recent theoretical models and associated empirical research focusing on the dynamic effects of discrete positive work events and experiences include processes that can be used by employees to amplify the effects of their positive experiences, thus increasing the favorable effects of work on well-being (e.g., Bono et al. 2013, Ilies et al. 2011b).

In this review, we take stock of these recent theoretical and empirical developments around work as a positive resource pool. We seek to contribute to the organizational literature by organizing existing research around a framework that focuses on the positive effects of on-the-job experiences for employee well-being. We briefly review the literature on the psychosocial benefits that employees can derive from work, and we then elaborate on actions that employees can take to amplify these positive effects. Moreover, we explicitly pay attention to the timing of events and their effects (short versus long term) on employee well-being, as well as the extent to which these effects vary between and within individuals.

The traditional approach to well-being and its relationship to work has examined why some employees are better off than others and what can be done to increase well-being. This general line of research has two foci: (a) individual differences between employees and (b) differences between work environments and in the design of work itself. There is a vast body of research examining

between-individual differences in constructs that indicate work-derived well-being, such as job satisfaction and work engagement, but also differences in detrimental outcomes such as burnout (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans 2011). These between-individual differences in employee well-being have been linked to stable dispositions, and meta-analytic evidence suggests that personality traits are related to employee well-being (e.g., Anglim et al. 2020, Judge et al. 2002, Young et al. 2018).

Whereas linking dispositions to well-being is important for understanding why some employees are better off than others, other models of employee well-being are focused on aspects of the job, including job characteristics such as autonomy, that can directly or indirectly predict well-being (Hackman & Oldham 1976) or on how job characteristics (e.g., skill variety or social support) not only influence well-being but also protect employees from negative effects of excessive job demands (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, Van Der Doef & Maes 1999). This second approach to studying between-individual differences in well-being is important because unlike incumbent employee personality, job factors are—at least to some extent—under the control of organizations, which allows for changes to the work environment (e.g., providing more autonomy or other job resources) and implementation of job designs that are better for employees. Employees themselves can also change the nature and boundaries of what they do at work via job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001) to make their jobs more meaningful and rewarding.

Traditional job design theories [e.g., job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham 1976)] and more recent frameworks (e.g., Morgeson et al. 2013) assume that job characteristics are relatively stable, but more recent approaches focus on variations in job characteristics via examination of discrete work episodes. Instead of assuming that job characteristics such as autonomy and skill variety are fixed, contemporary theories acknowledge that job characteristics may be dynamic and fluctuate from day to day. Individuals who work in a dynamic environment might regularly switch between eventful and quiet working days, resulting in daily ups and downs in well-being states (e.g., momentary positive affect). Such processes refer to within-individual effects. Here we review two theories that consider the dynamic aspects of work experiences: (a) affective events theory (AET) and (b) the multilevel version of job demands–resources (JD-R) theory. Both theories attend to daily variations in work experiences and acknowledge differences between individuals in how they respond to these experiences. These theories also specify person-level factors that influence the nature and magnitude of within-individual effects (cross-level within-/between-individual effects). Although our focus is ultimately on positive workplace experiences, these two theories—which speak to both positive and negative aspects of the work environment—serve as a jumping-off point for our treatment of work as a series of dynamic events and experiences.

AFFECTIVE EVENTS THEORY

AET (Weiss & Cropanzano 1996) is fundamentally different from early job design theories explaining motivation and job satisfaction, such as motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg 1966), job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham 1976), and more current elaborations on job characteristics such as the integrated work design framework (Morgeson et al. 2013), in that AET focuses on the immediate affective consequences of specific work events. This theory has stimulated research on the effects of variations [e.g., day to day, week to week, or moment to moment (see Ilies & Judge 2004, Ilies et al. 2011a)] in work events and experiences rather than on the longer-term and relatively persistent consequences of stable job design features. Accordingly, in AET, how individuals feel and behave at work is a direct result of the discrete events that occur daily. For example, a phone call with a short-tempered customer or unfair treatment by a supervisor may reduce employees' episodic enthusiasm and induce immediate feelings of worry and anger (Ohly &

Schmitt 2015). In contrast, a successful presentation or attending a fun team meeting may induce instant happiness and contentment. AET proposes that momentary and daily well-being, generally in the form of positive and negative affect, changes as a function of momentary and daily work events and experiences.

AET also postulates that stable aspects of the work environment make the prevalence of positive or negative work events more likely (Weiss & Cropanzano 1996). Employees are generally more likely to experience uplifts in enriched or resource-laden work environments characterized by social support, task significance, and feedback. When organizations provide more of these stable job resources, employees have more fruitful daily interactions with their colleagues, are better equipped to achieve their goals, and receive more recognition on a daily basis (e.g., Junça-Silva et al. 2020, Xanthopoulou et al. 2012). AET and its extensions propose well-being effects both from stable features of the work environment and from daily experiences.

Most important for our purposes is the path that AET draws between discrete work events or short-lived experiences and well-being. AET proposes that work experiences elicit affective responses, which in turn are linked to work attitudes and behaviors associated with thriving. For example, positive affect (e.g., happiness, interest) contributes positively to job satisfaction (e.g., Ilies & Judge 2002, 2004), which may, in turn, influence helping behaviors (Ilies et al. 2006), and helping others at work is associated with perceptions that work is meaningful (Colbert et al. 2016).

Finally, AET also proposes that individual differences modulate affective responses to work events and experiences and their downstream effects on attitudes and behaviors. According to Weiss & Cropanzano (1996), “simply knowing that some personality variables account for more variance in satisfaction is not by itself very interesting” (pp. 8–9). They propose that stable personality characteristics moderate the impact of fluctuating work events on affective reactions and performance. Thus, AET postulates that there are differences between individuals in how they respond to variations in work events—a cross-level within-/between-individual effect. For example, consistent with this proposition, research has shown that individuals high (versus low) in extraversion show stronger positive affective responses (i.e., happiness) to rewarding and social events and activities (Oerlemans & Bakker 2014). Extraverts actively seek excitement, are optimistic, and truly enjoy having frequent interactions with others (Costa & McCrae 1992). As we detail later, conceptually similar effects have been found for other personality characteristics.

JOB DEMANDS–RESOURCES THEORY

A second theory that considers dynamic aspects of the work environment is the JD-R theory (Bakker et al. 2023a, Demerouti & Bakker 2023). Although this theory is firmly rooted in the job design literature and proposes that job demands and job resources can be stable over time, the multilevel version of JD-R theory (Bakker 2015, Bakker & Costa 2014) also specifies substantial fluctuation in work environments over time, due in part to dynamic work environments and continuous input from smartphones and other technologies. JD-R theory proposes that features of the job and work environment can be categorized as either job demands (all aspects of the job that cost effort) or job resources (all aspects of work that have motivating potential, facilitate learning, and can help deal with job demands). These job demands and resources may change from day to day, resulting in daily fluctuations in employee well-being (e.g., Simbula 2010). For example, retail salespersons’ workload and emotional demands may increase on busy days, when many customers find their way to the store. On such days, opportunities for social interactions with colleagues and colleague support may decrease. At the end of such days, salespersons can be expected to have used considerable effort (depleted their resources) and may feel drained by their work.

An important assumption in JD-R theory is that daily job resources can be used to deal with daily job demands (i.e., buffer hypothesis, specifying moderation). Thus, although daily job demands may use up cognitive, emotional, and physical resources, and have deleterious effects on well-being, daily job resources such as social support, autonomy, and feedback may help employees deal with these demands. Indeed, empirical research has shown that daily job resources can alleviate the impact of daily hindrance job demands on daily employee well-being (e.g., Tadić et al. 2015). Job resources also enhance the positive effects of daily challenge job demands such as complex tasks and work pressure (i.e., boost hypothesis), strengthening the positive impact of such daily challenge demands on daily well-being (e.g., Breevaart & Bakker 2018, Tadić et al. 2015). In short, daily job demands and resources have combined effects on employee well-being. Daily personal resources, such as beliefs regarding one's ability to control the work environment (e.g., daily optimism, daily self-efficacy), play a role similar to that of daily job resources in JD-R theory (e.g., Bakker & Sanz-Vergel 2013).

JD-R theory also proposes that employees are not passive recipients of environmental stimuli. Rather, they may proactively change the design of their jobs via job crafting (Tims & Bakker 2010, Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001), choosing tasks, seeking resources, and negotiating job content (cf. Parker & Ohly 2008). By engaging in job crafting, employees can actively align their work with their personal abilities and preferences. On days when employees craft their jobs, by optimizing their demands, increasing their challenges, and/or increasing their resources, they can increase their own daily work engagement (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans 2019, Demerouti & Peeters 2018, Demerouti et al. 2015, Petrou et al. 2012). Thus, JD-R theory postulates that day-to-day job resources foster daily work engagement, which is a component (or precursor) of employee well-being. Furthermore, on days when employees are engaged, they are more likely to use job crafting, further increasing their own job and personal resources. These resources, in turn, further increase work engagement, resulting in what is known as the gain spiral (see also Hobfoll et al. 2018).

As in AET, JD-R theory (Bakker 2015, Bakker et al. 2023a) acknowledges the role that stable personality traits play in moderating the impact of fluctuating (daily, weekly) job demands and resources on well-being. For example, Op den Kamp et al. (2018) found that self-insight (treated as a stable individual difference) strengthened the positive impact of weekly proactive vitality management on creativity. In a similar vein, Bakker et al. (2019) showed that extraversion and emotional stability moderated the effect of daily strengths use—when employees utilize their strengths, i.e., the skills, abilities, and characteristics that enable them to perform at their best at work (Wood et al. 2011)—on work engagement and performance. Likewise, Scharp et al. (2019) hypothesized and found that openness to experiences and trait playfulness moderated the effects of playful work design on daily work engagement and creativity.

JD-R theory also considers the role of stable working conditions (job characteristics) and chronic well-being on gain spirals; those who already experience high well-being (e.g., high engagement, low burnout) are more able to deal with prevailing daily job demands and are more likely to effectively use daily job resources. Bakker & Oerlemans (2016) found that time spent on client interactions, meetings, and colleague interactions was a stronger predictor of psychological need satisfaction for individuals already high in enduring work engagement.

Both AET and the multilevel version of JD-R theory specify dynamic processes that unfold over time, in the context of stable individual and workplace differences. Thus, researchers testing these theories must use intensive research designs in which participants are followed over the course of multiple working days or weeks, providing real-time reports on their work experiences. These studies typically start with a general baseline assessment of traits or stable job characteristics that is followed by a period of assessment during which participants are requested

to repeatedly fill out short questionnaires daily (or several times per day) or weekly. These questionnaires assess discrete time-varying events, perceptions, or experiences (e.g., workload perceptions, social support), along with associated physiological [e.g., blood pressure (Ilies et al. 2010)] or psychological [e.g., affect (Ilies et al. 2007)] states or behaviors [e.g., helping (Lin et al. 2017)]. These experience-sampling, or ecological momentary assessment, methods adapt measurement scales to the appropriate time frame, with survey timing and frequency matched to the causal ordering implied in the hypotheses. For further information on intraindividual design, measurement, and multilevel analyses, see Beal & Weiss (2003), Bolger et al. (2003), Dimotakis et al. (2013), Ilies et al. (2016), and Koopman & Dimotakis (2022), among others.

EFFECTS OF DISCRETE WORK EXPERIENCES ON WELL-BEING

Although the central focus of this review is the positive ways in which work can enhance well-being, we briefly review research on the effects of both negative and positive work experiences. It is important to have a balanced view on how discrete (daily) experiences influence well-being. This is also essential because positive experiences, especially those that are savored and shared, can build personal resources that help employees deal with job demands and stressors more effectively, thereby minimizing their negative effects on well-being.

Stressful, Resource-Depleting, Negative Work Experiences

Emerging literature on the impact of daily work events and job demands shows that daily negative events and job demands can have immediate effects on stress and well-being, even during short work episodes. Illustrative studies based on both AET and JD-R are reviewed below.

In the first study testing some AET propositions with an experience-sampling design (the participants in that study reported their affective states four times daily, over 16 days), Weiss et al. (1999) showed that average levels of multiple time-sampled mood ratings accounted for significant variance in job satisfaction over and above the effect of beliefs about the job. Although this result was at the between-individual level (i.e., job satisfaction was measured as a stable attitude), the sampling of individuals' affective states as they occurred at work and at multiple times stimulated much research on within-individual relationships among work experiences, affective states, and other outcomes. Ilies & Judge (2002) extended the findings of Weiss and colleagues and measured both affective states and job satisfaction as time-varying states and found that affect and job satisfaction were related within individuals as well. These authors also found a cross-level moderating effect: Neuroticism influenced the strength of the within-individual association between positive affect and job satisfaction, but the effect was weak and no cross-level moderation with respect to the association of negative affect and job satisfaction was found.

In another early study testing AET, Carney et al. (2000) followed a sample of regular drinkers over the course of 60 days. Participants reported more stress (reduced sense of control, inability to handle personal problems, more difficulties) on the days they faced negative work events. Moreover, they had a greater desire to drink on days they were confronted with more negative work, negative nonwork, and positive nonwork events. Consistent with the cross-level proposition in AET, the positive association between negative nonwork events and alcohol consumption varied as a function of trait neuroticism. Individuals high in neuroticism showed stronger within-person positive associations between negative events and alcohol consumption.

Mignonac & Herrbach (2004) tested AET among French managers and found that negative work events such as problems getting along with one's supervisor or coworkers were positively related to negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and tiredness. When organizations assigned

undesirable tasks or projects, managers were more likely to report reduced positive emotions (e.g., pleasure and comfort). Although the design of the study did not allow causality claims, the findings also offered some support for an indirect effect of negative work events on (reduced) intrinsic satisfaction and affective commitment through reduced positive affect.

Using a 10-day diary study among health care professionals, Kuba & Scheibe (2017) found that negative work events (e.g., a dying patient, talking to a father about the son's cancer diagnosis, interactions with a repeatedly complaining colleague) were negatively related to daily well-being. As predicted, acceptance moderated the effect of negative event occurrence on daily well-being. Highly accepting employees experienced a smaller increase in negative emotions and a smaller reduction in work engagement on days with negative work events than did less accepting employees.

Using a short, three-day diary study among employees working in industry, the financial sector, and health care, Demerouti & Cropanzano (2017) found that negative work events (e.g., computer crash, unfinished tasks, unclear planning) were negatively related to daily positive affect and work engagement. Consistent with Kuba & Scheibe's (2017) findings, daily sportsmanship [i.e., a willingness to tolerate the inconveniences and annoyances of organizational life without complaining (Organ 1990)] moderated these effects. Daily negative events were negatively related to same- and next-day positive affect and work engagement for employees low in sportsmanship but were unrelated or positively related to same- and next-day well-being for employees high in sportsmanship.

Testing JD-R theory, Totterdell et al. (2006) conducted a 26-week diary study among portfolio workers. They predicted and found positive effects of weekly job demands on weekly anxiety and depression. These effects were found irrespective of the presence of weekly job resources (job control, social support), but they were weaker for employees high in optimism. Kühnel et al. (2012) conducted a one-week diary study among German employees working in a wide variety of industries. They predicted and found that day-specific job control influenced the association between day-specific time pressure and work engagement. On days with higher job control, time pressure was beneficial for work engagement, whereas on days with lower job control, time pressure was detrimental for work engagement.

Meier et al. (2014) conducted a daily diary study over two weeks among Swiss employees holding a variety of jobs (e.g., administrative staff, computer specialist, social worker). They found that daily interpersonal conflict was related to impaired psychological (depressive mood and low job satisfaction) and physical (somatic complaints) well-being. As predicted, these within-individual effects were particularly strong for people with high levels of chronic depressive symptoms. In another diary study conducted in Croatia, Tadić et al. (2015) found that daily hindrance job demands (e.g., bureaucracy, hassles) were associated with reduced daily positive affect and engagement, whereas challenge job demands (e.g., time urgency, task complexity) were positively related to daily positive affect and work engagement. Moreover, consistent with JD-R theory, daily job resources buffered the negative impact of daily hindrance demands and boosted the positive impact of challenge demands.

Finally, Bakker et al. (2023b) hypothesized that weekly job demands (workload and emotional demands) would relate positively to maladaptive behaviors, via burnout, especially for those employees who experienced higher levels of chronic burnout. Employees from various occupational sectors filled out a general survey and then completed weekly diary surveys for five weeks. Results showed that weekly job demands were associated with higher weekly burnout and self-undermining, and this effect was stronger for those who scored higher (versus lower) on chronic burnout.

Nurturing, Resource-Building, Positive Work Experiences

Whereas negative work events and job demands can reduce well-being, positive work events and job resources can have immediate positive effects on emotions and work engagement. Koopmann et al. (2016) conducted an experience-sampling study among employees from various occupations. In their study, daily positive work events (e.g., receiving positive feedback or praise; receiving information that positively affected work schedule, duties, or pay; accomplishing what the employee hoped to accomplish) were positively associated with positive mood and negatively associated with psychosomatic symptoms (e.g., headaches, muscle tension) via daily promotion focus (i.e., a self-regulation strategy that is aspirational and growth oriented). Cross-level tests showed that these effects were strongest for those employees with a low chronic prevention focus.

N. Wang et al. (2020) investigated the motivational mechanism of two clusters of commonly encountered positive work events—achievement and recognition events. Using experience-sampling data from 200 full-time employees over eight workdays, they found that both achievement and recognition events had positive effects on work engagement through psychological needs satisfaction. Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) investigated how daily fluctuations in job resources (autonomy, coaching, and team climate) were related to employees' personal resources (self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism) and work engagement in a sample of 42 fast food employees. Consistent with JD-R theory, results showed that day-level job resources had a positive effect on work engagement through day-level personal resources, after controlling for general levels of personal resources and engagement. Additionally, coaching had a positive, lagged effect on next days' work engagement, via increased optimism.

In summary, a selective review of theory and research on the effects of job events, demands, experiences, and resources on changes in well-being shows there are many ways in which work affects how people feel and how happy they are. Studies grounded in both AET and JD-R theory consistently show that various work experiences and events influence well-being indicators within individuals (main effects), as predicted by these theories, and also show support for cross-level moderating effects of an array of individual difference constructs (e.g., personality traits) on the strength of the within-individual (main) effects. Going forward—and consistent with our purpose in this review—we narrow our focus to ways employees may increase the beneficial effects of their positive workplace experiences. Similar to the process of job crafting, whereby employees actively shape their jobs to be more meaningful (Tims & Bakker 2010, Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001), we discuss proactive actions employees can take to purposefully craft the psychological well-being that results from their own positive work experiences. Before we discuss various strategies employees can use to craft their own well-being, we briefly review the conceptual mechanisms by which positive events and experiences affect well-being.

EXPLANATORY MECHANISMS FOR THE EFFECTS OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES ON WELL-BEING

As specified by AET, work events and experiences have the most proximal (immediate) effects on positive and negative affect. Basic psychological theory distinguishes between approach and avoidance neuropsychological systems that regulate appetitive and aversive behaviors in reactions to the environment and are connected to positive and negative affect, respectively (Watson 2000). This dual focus on approach and avoidance is also reflected in JD-R theory, which differentiates processes that can deplete psychological resources (e.g., leading to burnout) from those that create such resources, stimulating personal growth and learning and increasing well-being. Furthermore, recent theoretical and empirical work in organizational psychology that was grounded in JD-R theory (Ilies et al. 2020) makes a clear distinction between resource depletion and

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Crafting well-being: agentic strategies that employees might use to enhance and maintain well-being that results from positive work experiences

Intrapersonal strategies: reflecting upon and savoring; “paying attention to, appreciating, and enhancing positive experiences” (Fritz & Taylor 2022, p. 140)

Interpersonal strategies: capitalization; “the process of informing another person about the occurrence of a personal event and thereby deriving additional benefit from it” (Gable et al. 2004, p. 228)

Work-family interpersonal capitalization: “an active response to positive work events that involves sharing or discussing such events with one’s spouse or partner at home” (Ilies et al. 2011b, p. 118)

Gratitude: a feeling of appreciation for a beneficial experience for which one was not personally the cause; can be reflected upon (intrapersonal process) and/or shared with others (interpersonal process)

Positive reflection: intentional and active introspection on positive events; can be naturally occurring thoughts, what can be savored (intrapersonal) or shared (interpersonal), and may also be prompted by an intervention (e.g., “Think about three good things that happened at work today”)

resource possession, proposing that positive resource-generating processes that link work experiences to employee well-being should be studied by assessing resource possession and acquisition (as opposed to minimizing resource depletion).

As we discuss in detail shortly, in this review, we examine active strategies that employees can use to amplify and extend the positive effects of work experiences on their well-being, and we distinguish between intrapersonal strategies (e.g., reflecting on positive work experiences after they have occurred) and interpersonal strategies (e.g., capitalizing on positive work experiences by discussing them in the family after work) (see the sidebar titled Terms and Definitions). Although our focus is on positive strategies and effects, these strategies also have counterparts that apply to negative experiences (e.g., coping with negative experiences versus capitalizing on positive experiences), and the difference between positive and negative processes can also be explained by the distinction between the basic approach and avoidance systems. For example, the literature on positive and negative work reflection suggests that these are largely independent processes (Jimenez et al. 2022), perhaps because they stimulate the approach and avoidance systems, which are themselves independent of one another. Similarly, Langston (1994) and Gable & Reis (2010) also noted a distinction between coping with adverse circumstances/negative events and capitalizing on what is positive in people’s lives. These authors discuss that these processes are distinct because they are rooted in independent neurophysiological systems—appetitive and aversive (see also Gable et al. 2003)—consistent with JD-R theory and research (Bakker et al. 2023a, Ilies et al. 2020).

Moving to more specific theories, in this section, we give a short and selective overview of the theoretical explanations for how positive experiences, which trigger approach processes that influence positive affect and appetitive behaviors, influence worker well-being: We draw from well-documented explanations based on self-determination theory (SDT) (e.g., Ryan & Deci 2000) and more recent explanations anchored in JD-R theory. We propose two pathways by which positive experiences influence well-being. Positive work experiences (*a*) help make work meaningful to employees and (*b*) aid them in the acquisition of valuable emotional resources.

Psychological Need Fulfillment and Meaningfulness

According to SDT, humans require the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as essential nutrients for psychological growth and well-being.

Work is an important role for most individuals; therefore, work-derived well-being must be driven, at least in part, by the extent to which work experiences provide such psychological nutrients. Although SDT has been applied to the work context (see Deci et al. 2017), most but not all (see, e.g., Gillet et al. 2012) applications have concerned intrinsic motivation. More relevant to our focus here on well-being is a series of studies by Ilies and colleagues. In an experience-sampling study of employees, Ilies et al. (2017b) proposed and found that basic need satisfaction was associated with well-being and that need satisfaction mediated the effects of flow at work on well-being. In follow-up research applying SDT principles, Ilies et al. (2018) distinguished between intrapersonal and interpersonal need fulfillment at work, proposing that both explain the effects of job characteristics on work-derived well-being (e.g., job satisfaction). These authors developed a measure for interpersonal need fulfillment [they adapted items from a psychological contract measure (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway 2005) to measure intrapersonal need fulfillment] and found differential effects for intrapersonal and interpersonal job resources (e.g., autonomy versus social support), as expected. Importantly, the fulfillment of each of the two types of needs had independent effects on job satisfaction. This research suggests that need fulfillment (both inter- and intrapersonal) is an important mechanism by which positive workplace experiences and resources can build employee well-being.

We believe that the fulfillment of intra- and interpersonal needs at work contributes to making work meaningful for individuals and therefore enhances their well-being. Meaningfulness is one of the core psychological states of the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham 1976) and is an essential psychological condition necessary for personal engagement at work (Kahn 1990), a concept similar to work engagement in JD-R theory. We focus on meaningfulness as a potential explanatory mechanism by which need fulfillment increases well-being because it is also an outcome of job crafting, which helps individuals build job resources and increase well-being.

Acquisition of Emotional Resources

JD-R theory specifies how daily job resources (e.g., autonomy, social support) can generate personal resources, such as self-efficacy and optimism. Yet much of the within-individual research on the effects of discrete work events (inspired by AET) focuses on positive emotions and affect as outcomes. Of course, the personal resources from JD-R theory and positive emotions from AET are related in the sense that positive emotions and affect also represent personal resources. To bridge these approaches, as we briefly mentioned earlier, Ilies et al. (2020) distinguished between resource acquisition and resource depletion, arguing that the effects of job resources should be assessed by examining emotional resource possession, rather than by examining whether job resources decrease resource depletion (e.g., decrease emotional exhaustion). This research includes a series of studies and is grounded in JD-R theory and its more specific work-home resources model (Bakker et al. 2023a, ten Brummelhuis & Bakker 2012). The authors developed a scale of emotional resources possession [(the emotional resource possession scale (ERPS))] and found that quantitative job demands predicted emotional exhaustion but did not significantly predict the possession of emotional resources. In contrast, coworker support (a job resource) predicted the possession of emotional resources measured with the ERPS but not emotional exhaustion. This is a distinction critical to our view that positive emotional resources are an important indicator of well-being and can be used to assess the effectiveness of approach-oriented strategies, which can be both intrapersonal and interpersonal, for amplifying the benefits of positive work experiences.

INTRAINDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES: SAVORING AND REFLECTING UPON POSITIVE WORK EXPERIENCES

Given that work itself can be a source of positive, resource-building experiences, there has been increased attention in recent years to actions employees can take to enhance and extend these positive effects. This section focuses on strategies employees can use—and organizations can encourage and support—that help employees savor their positive work experiences to increase and extend their benefits. Much, although not all, of this research focuses on how employees can extend the benefits of positive work experiences on well-being into the after-work hours. To fully capitalize on the benefits of positive work experiences, the literature suggests that they should be savored and actively reflected upon.

The foundation of research on savoring positive workplace experiences is in positive psychology. Theoretically, much of this research is based on Fredrickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which demonstrates the extended benefits of positive emotions. Empirically, research on savoring positive work experiences to enhance their beneficial effects is drawn from the literature on brief positive psychology interventions (for a review, see Carr et al. 2021). Indeed, there has been an extensive research effort aimed at determining whether these interventions will have beneficial effects for employees at work (Donaldson et al. 2019, Gilbert et al. 2018, Van Woerkom et al. 2021). We are not concerned with the efficacy of positive psychology interventions that may increase worker well-being, per se. Instead, we focus on strategies that help employees increase and extend the benefits they get from positive experiences at work. Fritz & Taylor (2022) recently drew explicit attention to this notion of savoring positive work experiences, defining savoring as “paying attention to, appreciating, and enhancing positive experiences” (p. 140).

A variety of strategies that involve reflecting on positive work experiences in some way, either at work or after work, have been studied. Fritz & Taylor (2022) list several ideas for more fully appreciating positive experiences as they occur, from taking photos to increasing sensory awareness to focused absorption of events as they take place. But the bulk of the research literature is focused on post hoc reflection. Historically, thinking about work—after the workday has ended—was thought to be detrimental to employees. This is in part because some views of work consider it to be an overall stressful experience, from which one must recover, and recovery involves—at least in part—detachment from work when the workday is over (Sonnentag 2018). Even positive work reflection—after work is over—indicates poor detachment, yet it can also serve as “a means for individuals to appraise their jobs in a positive light and replenish lost resources beneficial for employee wellbeing” (Jimenez et al. 2022, p. 238) (see **Table 1**).

Table 1 Agentic strategies to increase well-being from positive work experiences

Self-initiated vs. prompted	Reflection type	Specific activity
Self-initiated activities	Savoring	Intentionally and actively thinking about positive experiences after work
	Capitalization	Intentionally and actively sharing positive experiences with others (reflection)
Prompted reflection: intrapersonal	Savoring	Writing lists of good things that happened at work Making lists of things one is grateful for Making a list of positive events or experiences and why they occurred
Prompted reflection: interpersonal	Capitalization	Writing a letter to a person who caused the experience one is grateful for Sharing one’s gratitude verbally with the person who caused the experience one is grateful for Sharing one’s positive workplace experiences with family, friends, and coworkers

It is only in the past couple of decades, as the nurturing and resource-building effects of work have been more fully recognized, that research has focused on the positive aspects of reflecting on work and how reflecting on positive aspects of work can enhance their resource-building effects. Some studies on positive reflection examine naturally occurring thoughts of work, often those that occur after the workday has ended. Others examine specific interventions aimed at increasing positive reflection and its benefits. In both types of studies, authors often examine both positive and negative reflections, but we focus here only on positive workplace reflections, both because our interest is in work as a source of well-being and because we take an approach-oriented perspective to examine how employees can maximize the psychological benefits they derive from work (also, there is already a large existing literature on the effects of rumination about negative events). Importantly, as alluded to earlier, Jimenez et al.'s (2022) review of positive and negative work reflections makes it clear that they are not the same thing and do not have the same (opposite) effects. Thus, the important thing for our purposes is that the reflection is (a) positive and (b) focused on work. We do not review the many studies that test direct effects of various interventions on well-being, nor do we examine reflection on negative work events. Our goal was to examine strategies that involve some form of positive reflection on work experiences, an approach-oriented strategy for crafting well-being.

Naturally Occurring Positive Work Reflections

Studies examining the effects of naturally occurring (not manipulated) positive workplace reflections measure these reflections in a variety of ways, but at their core all share questions about positive thoughts about work, typically after the workday has ended. For example, sample items used by Frone (2015), who developed the positive and negative work rumination scales, included “How often do you replay positive events in your mind even after you leave work?” and “How often do you think back to the good things that happened at work even when you’re away from work?” (p. 160). Others used more informal measures, including items such as “Today after work, I thought about the good sides of my work” (Meier et al. 2016, Sonnentag & Grant 2012) or “I reflected on things that have gone well for me in my job” (Flaxman et al. 2018). Positive reflection studies also operationalized well-being in a variety of ways, and some included work-related motivation and behavioral variables as outcomes of positive reflection, in addition to indicators of well-being. We took a broad approach to well-being, including health, affect, burnout and emotional exhaustion, sleep quality, and alcohol use, but we excluded motivation, job attitudes, and behaviors such as those indicating organizational citizenship or in-role performance.

In one of the early positive work reflection studies, Sonnentag & Grant (2012) examined the effects of meaningful work (perceived prosocial impact) on the likelihood of positive reflection after work, which they subsequently linked to bedtime affect. Using a sample of firefighters and two daily surveys, they assessed perceived impact at work and affect at the end of the workday, and positive reflection and affect at bedtime; their study spanned five workdays. Results showed that on days when firefighters perceived higher prosocial impact, they were more likely to engage in positive reflection after work. More importantly, positive work reflection was significantly and positively associated with well-being (activated and deactivated positive affect) at bedtime. An interesting aspect of this study is that there were no direct effects of perceived prosocial impact on affect at the end of the workday. Rather, it was only after participants reflected on their workday that the benefits of meaningful work on well-being were fully realized.

In a large phone survey of nearly 3,000 US workers, Frone (2015) took a between-individual approach, asking participants about the extent to which they generally engaged in positive and negative after-work rumination. The author’s goal in this study was to determine, among other

things, whether positive work experiences led to positive after-work rumination and whether rumination on positive events after work reduced alcohol use. He found a significant correlation between emotionally pleasant work and positive rumination after work, which was subsequently associated with reduced alcohol use after work and with reductions in heavy alcohol use.

Meier et al. (2016) extended this research by conducting two studies wherein they examined naturally occurring positive work reflections after the workday ended. One important contribution of their studies was their use of a within-individual design, effectively controlling for individual differences in the tendency toward positive reflection. A second important contribution was their decision to control for end of workday well-being, which allowed them to link positive work reflection to changes in well-being after work. They assessed positive work reflection at bedtime and examined the effects of work reflection on well-being via both high- and low-activation positive and negative affect (serenity, joviality, depressive symptoms, and angry mood), at bedtime and again the next morning. Results varied slightly across the two studies in that positive reflection was associated with increased serenity and reduced depressive symptoms in both, but lagged effects of reflection on depressive symptoms the next morning were only found in study 1.

Flaxman et al. (2018) conducted a daily diary study using government agency employees in the United Kingdom that included three surveys a day for one work week. At bedtime on Monday–Thursday evenings, employees were asked to report the extent to which they had positive thoughts about work that evening. In this study, there was no association between work reflections and well-being (sleep quality the next day and emotional exhaustion), although work reflections were positively associated with work engagement.

In a between-person study, Z. Wang et al. (2020) used a general survey measure of positive work-related thoughts, in a sample of workers from 30 organizations in China, to examine the effects of positive work reflection on creativity. Most interesting here was their mediating process, which was composed of several personal resources (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) that are considered elements of well-being. They found that positive work-related thoughts were significantly associated with increases in well-being, operationalized as psychological capital.

Finally, Jimenez et al. (2022) aggregated the results of work reflection studies in a meta-analysis focused on off-job work-related thoughts. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of work-related thoughts—positive and negative—that take place when employees are not at work. In keeping with our aim of understanding the benefits of savoring positive experiences, we focused on positive reflections only [we note the absence of any association between positive and negative work reflections ($r = 0.07$, n.s.)]. Given the relatively small literature on positive reflection and the wide variety of well-being measures that have been used, there were not enough studies to meta-analyze for many aspects of well-being, but the authors report finding no significant association between positive work-related thoughts and health complaints, although positive work-related thoughts were significantly associated with reduced burnout.

Considered as a whole, this group of studies suggests no downsides to reflecting on positive aspects of the work after the workday is over, and many potential benefits were reported—from reduced emotional exhaustion and negative mood to less alcohol use to increased positive affect and psychological capital. This literature is promising in that it includes not only between-individual studies but also within-individual studies that allow for stronger causal inference and control for between-person differences in the tendency toward positive reflection. They also allow examination of changes in well-being due to after-work reflection, separately from the effects of the workplace experiences.

Positive Reflection Interventions: Reflecting on Good Things

Bono et al. (2013) conducted a within-individual, experience-sampling study in which they asked employees to record their positive and negative work experiences and well-being (affect and health) for seven days, after which they introduced a positive reflection writing exercise. Participants were not told that this was a positive reflection intervention, only that another item was being added to the end of workday survey: “Your assignment is as follows: Every day for the next 8 days, you will be writing for 5–10 minutes about three things that went really well on that day and why they went well” (Bono et al. 2013, p. 1626). Using within-individual analyses, where each person’s data from the first seven days served as their own control, they found that positive workplace reflections (writing three good things) were associated with reduced stress and mental health complaints. Although it had a direct effect on well-being, the reflection intervention did not enhance the positive effects of the workplace experiences themselves (i.e., there was no boosting effect from the reflection). Thus, in this study (as in Sonnentag & Grant 2012) it appears that having positive work experiences and reflecting upon them each have unique impacts on well-being. It is important to note that participants in this study were not instructed to think about good events at work, and many recorded good things in their personal lives that day.

Following this line of research, Meier et al. (2016, study 3) also used a positive reflection intervention, focused explicitly on work. They randomly assigned half of the sample to a writing condition, where participants were asked to write three good work-related things that had happened at work that day and why. Contrary to expectations, asking participants to think about three good things at work did not increase the amount of positive workplace reflection participants engaged in, nor was positive reflection associated with well-being (serenity, joviality, low depressive mood, or low angry mood), which was measured at bedtime and again the next morning.

Clauss et al. (2018) also conducted a reflection intervention study, but they used a more extensive manipulation. In the first step, they asked a sample of caregivers to “think about a positive and meaningful work-related event they had experienced on that specific day. It had to be an event that made them feel good, pleased, or happy and reminded them why their work was meaningful for both themselves and others” (Clauss et al. 2018, p. 130). Participants then chose a keyword to identify this memory along with a description of what happened or with whom they associated the event; this was entered into a reflection activity in an iPad. Next, caregivers engaged in a brief mindfulness exercise that involved a few minutes of attending to breathing, to prepare them for reflection. Finally, participants were asked to remember the work-related event in detail, including what happened and where it happened. They were prompted with questions, such as “Where did it happen? What did you see, hear, or even smell? What did you do or say?” (Clauss et al. 2018, p. 131). After the questions, participants were instructed to relive the experience and dwell on it for about three minutes. Well-being was assessed at three times: once before the intervention, once at the end of the 10-workday intervention period (two work weeks), and once again two weeks later. There was no significant difference between the intervention and control group in the pretest, nor at the end of the 10 working days of the intervention. But the follow-up questionnaire after two additional weeks revealed significant differences in the two groups for both emotional exhaustion and fatigue, which were lower in the intervention group. Data plots revealed that well-being increased for both groups slightly immediately postintervention. But two weeks later, the positive reflection intervention group retained the well-being benefits of the intervention, whereas the control group did not (they returned to, or slightly decreased from, baseline well-being).

Positive Reflection Interventions: Reflecting on Gratitude

Another type of positive reflection intervention that has been tested at work is the gratitude intervention. Although gratitude interventions sometimes involve sharing with others, we focus in this section on intrapersonal gratitude interventions, which typically involve journaling or making lists of things people are grateful for. Like for many other brief positive psychology interventions, there is considerable evidence that exercises as simple as making a gratitude list are associated with well-being, including positive emotions and relationship closeness (for a review and theory, see Wood et al. 2010). In a meta-analysis of the efficacy of a variety of positive psychology interventions at work, Donaldson and colleagues (2019) concluded that employee gratitude (along with strengths use interventions) had stronger effects than other brief positive psychology interventions at work (Hedges' $g = .34$ for gratitude). We treat gratitude journals and lists as a subset of positive workplace reflections in that they both ask employees to re-experience and savor positive events that occurred at work, thereby extending their benefits. They cause people to explicitly recall a subset of positive events at work, specifically those for which they feel grateful.

In an early study of gratitude reflections at work, Kaplan et al. (2014) asked university employees to “think about the many things in your job/work, both large and small, for which you are grateful” (p. 372). They used multiple measurements, before and after a gratitude intervention, and found that well-being (assessed via positive affect) increased with the intervention. More recently, Locklear et al. (2021) conducted two studies in which they delivered a gratitude intervention in the workplace. Although their purpose was ultimately to address employee mistreatment, their examination of multiple mediating processes showed how reflecting on work with gratitude affected aspects of employees' well-being. As in Kaplan et al. (2014), they asked employees to think about things at work they were grateful for: “Think back over the day and write down on the lines below the events that you are grateful or thankful for and why” (Locklear et al. 2021, p. 1320). This intervention was positively associated with prosocial motivation, coworker relationship closeness, and improved self-control. These relational resources, in turn, can serve as the means by which reflecting on positive workplace experiences amplifies and extends their immediate benefits. In the short run, gratitude reflections increase well-being via positive affect and better self-regulation; in the longer run, they strengthen workplace relationships (Locklear et al. 2023), which in turn are associated with increased well-being [i.e., positive emotions and meaningful work (Colbert et al. 2016)].

Summary of Savoring and Reflection

In considering this body of literature on positive workplace reflections, several conclusions can be drawn. First, there is no evidence that reflection on positive work events is harmful to employees, even when it is assigned to them. Despite the fact that after-work reflection represents poor detachment, there were no studies showing reductions in well-being associated with positive reflections. Across studies, measures, and manipulations, results are somewhat inconsistent but generally support the notion that positive work reflections enhance well-being. Second, there is enough variability in results across studies that careful attention should be paid to how manipulations are conducted and what measures are used, which aspects of well-being are measured and when, and whether or not causal conclusions can be drawn (time-lagged analysis, within-individual studies, and interventions all boost confidence in the causality of the effects from reflection to well-being). Overall, our review suggests that employees can increase the benefits of positive workplace experiences by savoring (relying/reflecting on) them. Research in this area is promising, and more is needed.

In addition to the benefits of intrapersonal strategies (reflecting upon and savoring positive work experiences), there should be additional or different benefits accrued to those who choose

interpersonal strategies, which involve sharing positive events or experiences with others, another approach-oriented process often referred to as capitalizing on positive experiences.

INTERINDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES: INTERPERSONAL CAPITALIZING ON POSITIVE WORK EXPERIENCES

Langston (1994) was a pioneer in developing theory on interpersonal capitalization, although his work was not specific to work experiences. He was the first to suggest that positive events represent opportunities on which those who experience such events can capitalize. He suggested that the ways in which people interpret and react to positive events can further amplify the naturally occurring positive effects of such events. Drawing an analogy to the long tradition of research on coping with negative events but noting that “positive events are not problems to be surmounted or coped with” (Langston 1994, p. 1112), Langston termed the process of actively dealing with positive events post hoc as capitalization and focused on the process of sharing positive events with others as a potentially moderating (amplifying) influence of these events on affective well-being. Langston conducted two daily experience studies (e.g., using alarm watches that prompted participants to fill five surveys every day for 15 days in study 1) and found that when participants shared the news of a positive event with close others, they experienced greater positive affect, beyond the obvious increases associated with the valence of the event itself. A stream of literature in social psychology following Langston’s influential work on capitalization ensued. This research firmly established that capitalizing on positive events by sharing them with close others (romantic partners, spouses) is indeed a strategy that enables people to amplify their benefits (see Gable & Reis 2010).

Gable et al. (2004, p. 228) formally defined capitalization as “the process of informing another person about the occurrence of a personal event and thereby deriving additional benefit from it.” In that influential article, which comprised four studies of either undergraduate students or dating couples recruited from the local community, the authors found that telling others about positive events was associated with higher well-being, as indicated by positive affect and greater life satisfaction. Furthermore, Gable et al. (2004) found that receivers’ active-constructive (versus passive-destructive or passive-constructive, for example) responses to capitalization attempts led to increased benefits for the capitalizers, above and beyond the effects of capitalization: Capitalizers reported increased well-being (positive affect and satisfaction) when they engaged in capitalization attempts, and their well-being was further increased when the responses to their attempts were perceived as being active-constructive. Building on this notion is Peters and colleagues’ (2018) InterCAP model, which specifies (among other effects) a process whereby the intrapersonal benefits of sharing positive events (well-being) combine with the interpersonal benefits (relationship growth and satisfaction) to create a positive resource-generating spiral, in which both parties accrue benefits of capitalization.

Work-Family Interpersonal Capitalization

Building on social psychology theory and research on interpersonal capitalization within close relationships, Ilies et al. (2011b) defined the term work-family interpersonal capitalization as “an active response to positive work events that involves sharing or discussing such events with one’s spouse or partner at home” (p. 118) and proposed that such acts of sharing allow individuals to relive the positive events and re-experience their psychological and emotional components (e.g., positive affect), thereby amplifying the benefits of positive events. They also argued that sharing positive work events at home should increase individuals’ satisfaction with the role in which the events occurred (i.e., job satisfaction) over and above the effects of the positive events themselves,

via social verification. In a three-week daily study of employees and their spouses (or cohabitating significant others), the focal participants were asked to recall and describe the most positive event experienced at work every day, and then they were instructed to either share this event or not (sharing was randomized across days and participants). Results showed that on days when employees engaged in work-family interpersonal capitalization, they reported higher job satisfaction compared to days when they did not capitalize (controlling for the pleasantness of the most positive work event that was recalled and described at the end of the workday and for a checklist of other positive work events experienced on that day). This study showed that a simple strategy of sharing something good that happened at work has additional positive effects, over and above recall at the end of the day and the effects of the control variables just mentioned.

In another study where both employees and their spouses participated, Ilies et al. (2015) tested the proximal effect of work-family interpersonal capitalization on positive affect and also the more distal effect on life satisfaction. The data collected for this study supported these effects when tested using both self-reported and spouse-reported capitalization reports; the findings indicated that positive affect partially mediated the effects of capitalization on life satisfaction. This study was the first to show that capitalizing on positive work events increases positive affect and life satisfaction (and not only job satisfaction as in Ilies et al. 2011b), verifying both immediate (affect) and potentially longer-term (life satisfaction) effects of capitalizing on positive work events.

Culbertson et al. (2012) conducted an experience-sampling study examining work-family interpersonal capitalization where they linked work engagement to family life and found that on days when employees were more highly engaged at work, they experienced higher work-family facilitation (Wayne et al. 2004) through affective spillover. Important for our purpose, they also found that employees who discussed positive work experiences at home more often (this variable was measured daily, but responses were aggregated at the individual level to form a measure of employees' propensity to share positive work experiences) were characterized by a stronger, positive relationship between work engagement and work-family facilitation. Although this study was not grounded in JD-R theory, and the authors did not examine the within-individual relationships between work engagement and work-family interpersonal capitalization, the results nevertheless suggest that capitalization can be used as a strategy to amplify the benefits of being highly engaged at work.

In a follow-up study, Ilies et al. (2017a) specifically conceptualized work-family interpersonal capitalization as a mechanism that can extend the effects of the central positive construct from JD-R theory, work engagement, on employee well-being as it relates to family life, examining this mechanism at the within-individual level. Findings showed support for the link between work engagement and work-family interpersonal capitalization in an experience-sampling study of 125 employees who filled three surveys per day (two from work and one from home) for 10 working days. Furthermore, findings indicated that work-family interpersonal capitalization had further effects on family life, increasing daily family satisfaction and daily work-family balance. Thus, work engagement can be seen as a motivational construct that makes employees' jobs more meaningful, energy generating and rewarding, but also as the start of an approach-oriented process through which employees can create additional personal resources, perhaps by generating feelings of pride and meaningfulness (Ilies et al. 2017a), and increase their family-related well-being via work-family interpersonal capitalization.

Finally, in another experience-sampling study conducted over five days with 144 employees, Tremmel et al. (2019) focused specifically on interpersonal work experiences (social conflicts and perceived prosocial impact) and proposed that on days when employees report higher perceived prosocial impact, they will engage in more positive work-related conversations and these would

increase their positive affect at bedtime and the next morning. Support for the predictions was mixed; although perceived prosocial impact correlated positively and significantly with positive work-related conversations at the within-individual level, in the model that included effects from social conflicts and negative work-related conversations, the effect from perceived prosocial impact on positive work-related conversations was not significant. Also, positive work-related conversations did not have the hypothesized positive effect on bedtime positive affect (but did have a significant negative effect on negative affect at bedtime), yet these conversations had a positive effect on the next morning's positive affect.

Workplace Interpersonal Capitalization

As noted, studies of work-family interpersonal capitalization followed social psychology research on capitalization by focusing on sharing positive events with close others [e.g., partners or spouses (Gable et al. 2004)]. Recently, Watkins (2021) extended this line of research by examining workplace interpersonal capitalization, that is, sharing positive work events with coworkers. The focus of this study, however, was not on the consequences of capitalization for those who shared the positive work experiences but on the reactions of the recipients of interpersonal capitalization. Watkins reasoned that unlike with spouses or partners, sharing positive events with coworkers might generate envy, which undermines the positive effects of capitalization and can lead to social undermining under some circumstances. He found that the level of competition between the capitalizer and responder moderated the relationships of capitalization to envy (but also to inspiration) and to social undermining. This study is therefore important because it qualifies the positive effects of interpersonal capitalization (yet on the receiver): Competitive environments or relationships can dampen these positive effects and may even foster negative consequences. This is clearly an issue that should be further studied and one that suggests interesting possibilities for new research on how workplace capitalization relates to interpersonal dynamics among coworkers.

Watkins et al. (2023) followed up on this study and examined consequences for the capitalizers, that is, their feelings of pride and whether they engaged in knowledge sharing. They reasoned that in the workplace (as opposed to nonwork close relationships), capitalization can serve instrumental purposes. Thus, they proposed and found that when employees attribute the occurrence of positive events that are shared to their own effort, they experience pride. Then pride further led to knowledge sharing, which the authors considered to be instrumental in gaining status and social influence, and this second-stage link was moderated by responders' responsiveness to capitalization such that the relationship between pride and knowledge sharing was stronger when responsiveness was perceived as being higher. (Responsiveness was measured with three items, such as "When I tell my coworkers about my personal work-related positive events," . . . "My coworkers make me feel like they value my abilities and opinions" in that study.)

Workplace Interpersonal Gratitude Interventions

Although gratitude experience and expression can have positive effects on both those who express and those who receive them (e.g., Tang et al. 2022), most research has studied the effects on those who express gratitude (e.g., through interventions). Also, even though gratitude interventions at work can be intrapersonal (e.g., employees make a gratitude list) as noted in the prior section, some gratitude interventions include behavioral expressions. Behavioral expressions of gratitude involve sharing one's gratitude with the person who engaged in the behavior one is grateful for. A few studies have examined this interpersonal form of gratitude at work, often in the form of writing a letter to someone one is grateful to and then either sending or reading the letter to the recipient. Unfortunately, existing workplace studies with interpersonal gratitude interventions are often

focused too broadly [e.g., Komase et al. (2021) examined gratitude lists as well as behavioral expressions of gratitude] or on clusters of positive psychology interventions [e.g., Cook et al. (2017) examined behavioral expressions of gratitude as part of a multifaceted positive psychology intervention], making it impossible to isolate the effects of interpersonal gratitude at work from the effects of other behaviors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, THEORY, AND PRACTICE

One of our aims was to extend JD-R theory by focusing on the additional benefits that can be achieved by employees through the use of approach-oriented strategies for building personal resources following positive experiences at work. We focus on how these strategies can enhance well-being—over and above the effects of the positive experiences themselves. We believe that this is an important theoretical extension because it adds agentic processes to the most widely used, and thoroughly validated, theory linking job features and work experiences to employee well-being [the JD-R (see Bakker et al. 2023a)]. The clear implication is that scholars should further build and test theory that includes this extension by building complex models that include sequentially mediated effects from job demands and resources to positive work experiences that enhance employee well-being, via reflection, savoring, and capitalizing on those experiences. Following Gable & Reis (2010, p. 213), who suggested that “capitalization experiences should be considered as part of the growing suite of appetitive processes that contribute to human growth and well-being,” we propose that positive self-reflection, savoring, and interpersonal capitalization can be integrated into an extension of JD-R theory (see **Figure 1**). This extension should focus on how employees can enhance and craft work-derived well-being, by acquiring and building personal resources from their positive workplace experiences. Although we started off from both AET and the JD-R theory, we position our further theoretical extensions that consider savoring, reflection, and interpersonal capitalization within JD-R theory because this theory is more

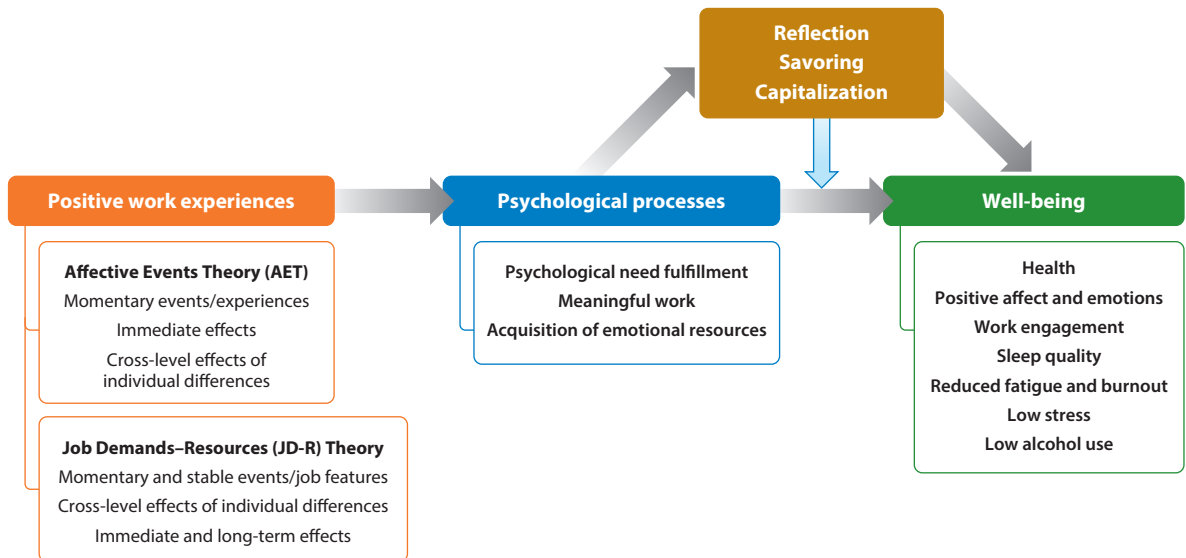


Figure 1

A conceptual model of work-derived well-being: crafting well-being at work via savoring and capitalizing on positive experiences.

specific in terms of constructs and psychological processes than AET (which is more of a general framework), yet such extensions are also relevant to AET.

Questions and Conundrums

Although including agentic strategies—well-being crafting—into JD-R theory makes an important contribution to our understanding of how job resources can be built, maintained, and even amplified, there are important practical questions remaining about which strategies should be used, by whom, and when. As we considered prescribing approach-oriented (active) strategies to increase the benefits of positive work experiences on well-being, several issues emerged:

1. Strategies aimed at crafting well-being may work only when they are initiated by employees. Gilbert et al. (2018) explicitly note that most of the effects of positive interventions on well-being are experienced by those who voluntarily engaged in them. Thus, it is not clear from the existing literature whether directed interventions, where employees are asked to make a gratitude list or to reflect on good things, will be effective. In general, employees who reported naturally occurring positive reflections after work tended to benefit from them. But, in the studies where employees were specifically asked to engage in positive reflection [intervention studies, such as writing about good things at work (e.g., Bono et al. 2013, Clauss et al. 2018, and Meier et al. 2016)], positive effects were not consistently found.
2. Depth of engagement may influence results. In the Bono et al. (2013) and Meier et al. (2016) studies, as in most interpersonal capitalization studies, the reflection/capitalization episodes were brief. In the Clauss et al. (2018) study, the interventions were much more extensive, and the results were stronger. Simply listing good things may not bring the same benefits as truly reflecting on and savoring them or capitalizing on them by sharing them with others. Illustrative of this point, in the Ilies et al. (2011b) study, all participants were asked to recall and describe the most positive work event that happened to them at work (each day), yet sharing those reflections with others (i.e., capitalization) revealed additional benefits. Reflection and savoring may enrich positive work experiences, making them better candidates for capitalization, and may increase the effectiveness of sharing. Moreover, interpersonal capitalization may trigger an animated conversation in which the partner reciprocates the actor's capitalization of positive work experiences by talking about their own positive work experiences. Indirect evidence for such a process comes from a Japanese study among dual-earner couples (Bakker et al. 2011), wherein the authors found that when both partners discussed their experiences at work and took each other's perspective, they increased each other's energy and enthusiasm regarding work, resulting in increased levels of work engagement.
3. The content of reflections may influence their efficacy. There is a suggestion in our review that strategies that involve others (gratitude, prosocial impact, capitalization via sharing) may be more effective than purely intrapersonal strategies such as creating a list of good things. In addition, it may matter whether employees reflect upon, savor, and capitalize on (a) positive (interpersonal) work events, (b) the well-being resulting from these events, and/or (c) the agentic role they played in bringing about positive work events (e.g., job crafting).
4. Timing of reflections or capitalization may matter. Is a reflection period after the work experiences needed before reflecting on them can have its full effect? In the good things studies, all reflections were either at work or at the end of the workday, but naturally occurring reflections are presumably happening over the course of the after-work hours and into the evening. Similarly, work-family interpersonal capitalization happens at home after work (Ilies et al. 2011b). This idea is intriguing, especially given Sonnentag & Grant's (2012)

findings that the effects of work experiences on affect were not fully realized at the end of the workday and were enhanced with after-work reflection. Taking an even more expansive view of time, Clauss et al. (2018) found that the benefits of a deep reflection intervention were most evident two weeks later.

5. Short- and longer-term effects should be distinguished. Our review clearly shows that work events, job demands, and resources can have immediate effects on employee well-being. Thus, daily positive events and daily opportunities for development as well as social support can foster daily positive affect and work engagement. These positive experiences can be expanded and extended to the evening through after-work reflecting, savoring, and capitalization. Thus, the effects are immediate and bring benefits to well-being crafters on the same or next day. One important question is whether well-being crafting can be made habitual so that it can have long-term effects (e.g., over the course of months or years). The answer to this question may not be straightforward. For example, it is conceivable that characteristics of the partner at home (e.g., personality, employment status, own work-related well-being) play an important role in whether employees can consistently capitalize on positive work events.

Recommendations for Research

The two research streams on savoring/positive work reflection and interpersonal capitalization have developed independent of one another. We recommend that scholars consider these approach-oriented strategies in combination to examine whether they have additive or synergistic (or perhaps redundant) effects. This could be easily examined in research similar to that conducted by Ilies et al. (2011b), but adding a condition where respondents recall and describe a neutral event, and measuring outcomes after the recall and then again after the work-family interpersonal capitalization episode. Similarly, with respect to interpersonal capitalization, research could take a dual focus on coworkers and family members as recipients and examine how workplace capitalization (Watkins 2021) and work-family interpersonal capitalization (Ilies et al. 2011b) would work together. It is also conceivable that interpersonal capitalization triggers a chain of emotions, cognitions, and narratives in actors and partners, resulting in increased dyadic well-being.

Future research could also examine indirect effects of positive work events and experiences on well-being through savoring and interpersonal capitalization. Such indirect effects are suggested by the study by Ilies et al. (2017a) who found that on days when they were more highly engaged at work, employees were more likely to engage in work-family interpersonal capitalization later in the day at home, and capitalization, in turn, was related to family-based employee well-being (family satisfaction and work-family balance). If such effects are replicated with respect to savoring (and also using broader well-being constructs), it would be important theoretically because it would explain, in part, why positive experiences influence well-being (also, are the proposed intra- and interindividual indirect effects independent?). We also need to know more about the types of experiences that cause positive reflection and interpersonal capitalization; given the link between work engagement and interpersonal capitalization found by Ilies et al. (2017a), for example, meaningful work experiences should be strongly associated with reflection and interpersonal capitalization.

Savoring and positive work reflections have a clear focus on amplifying the effects of positive events for those who engage in savoring and reflection. Social psychology theory on interpersonal capitalization originally had the same focus (Langston 1994) but has since developed to include benefits for the recipients of capitalization episodes as well, and also now includes possible reciprocal effects in the InterCAP model developed by Peters et al. (2018). Furthermore, the iterative proposition from the InterCAP model—which explicitly includes benefits for both

capitalizers and receivers—suggests that repeated (capitalizing) interactions can lead to relationship well-being and growth. Although Ilies et al. (2017a) found that capitalization was related to relationship (family) well-being, these authors did not examine cumulative effects (growth). We suggest that organizational research should follow the InterCAP model and examine cumulative effects for both capitalizers and receivers, and whether the growth in relationship quality leads to more active-constructive responses (Gable et al. 2006), less competition (Watkins 2021), and higher responsiveness from coworkers (Watkins et al. 2023), which in turn would make capitalization more efficacious for increasing well-being for both parties and perhaps also result in higher status and social influence for capitalizers at work (Watkins et al. 2023). Such positive spirals are suggested by the InterCAP model and are also included, in a more general sense, in JD-R theory (i.e., the gain spirals mentioned earlier).

Another suggestion, for both positive work reflection and interpersonal capitalization, that follows our earlier analysis on how and why positive work experiences increase well-being is that those who engage in those strategies should specifically focus on how the positive events or experiences on which they reflect or that they share fulfill their basic psychological needs. Such focus should increase the effectiveness of these strategies, and scholars can certainly test this proposition in experimental research by manipulating the focus on need satisfaction. Similarly stemming from our analyses on how and why positive experiences increase well-being, we suggest that reflectors and capitalizers should explicitly focus on how the positive work events and experiences make their job and life more meaningful because, as we explained earlier, meaningfulness is central to work-related well-being [e.g., job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham 1976)], personal engagement (Kahn 1990), and the good, authentic life (Ryan & Deci 2001, Waterman 1993).

Finally, based on our observations of inconsistent results across studies, there is a need for research—particularly intervention research—that examines the potentially differential effects of reflecting and savoring positive experiences based on (a) the extent to which they involve prosocial impact or accrue due to others' actions, that is, the extent to which there are interpersonal components to the positive experiences themselves; (b) the length, depth, and timing of savoring and capitalization; (c) whether the effects of savoring and capitalization build or diminish over time; and (d) whether the greatest benefit can be obtained when there is a match between person and reflection [e.g., agreeable individuals reflect on and share interpersonal events, whereas conscientious individuals reflect on and share achievement events (see Table 2)].

Recommendations for Practice

Within the framework of JD-R theory, savoring positive work experiences, positive work reflection, and interpersonal capitalization are relatively straightforward approach-oriented strategies that individuals can use to amplify the beneficial outcomes of positive situations at work, garnering and accumulating even more personal resources, and thus enhancing (crafting) their own well-being, in both the short and long term. It is clear that after-work reflection and interpersonal capitalization, even though they may represent a failure to detach from work, are beneficial to employees. Thus, organizational decision makers should encourage and perhaps even provide training programs that explain these strategies and their benefits. We note, however, that teaching employees how to get the most out of their positive workplace experiences would tend to be most effective in environments rich with such experiences. Thus, the first step for organizations may not be to diminish job demands but to enhance the job resources that provide employees with positive experiences on which they can reflect and build.

Organizations may also use reflection, savoring, and interpersonal capitalization during away days, company retreats, or strategic planning sessions with management teams. By actively thinking about and discussing positive work events, resources, and achievements, managers may

Table 2 Future research topics: advancing our understanding of agentic strategies for crafting well-being from work

Topics for future research	Questions for future research
Reflecting and sharing	Do reflections and sharing each have unique effects, or are they redundant? Which has the strongest effects? How long do the effects last? Do they diminish or build over time?
Sharing	Are there reciprocal effects, creating a positive, expanding spiral of benefits? What are the benefits for recipients of shared positive experiences? What is the role of recipient characteristics, such as personality, employment status, and well-being?
Work experiences	Which types of work experiences are most beneficial? Are interpersonal experiences more beneficial for well-being than achievement-oriented experiences? Are those that are more meaningful more likely to be reflected upon and shared? Are those that are more meaningful more likely to build well-being?
Interventions	How much depth, breadth, and time is needed to influence well-being? How long do the effects last? Do effects diminish or build over time? Do good things and gratitude interventions have differential effects (e.g., duration or strength)?

not only amplify the positive effects of these work experiences for themselves but also increase the management team’s cohesion and well-being.

CONCLUSION

“The good life,” in an Aristotelian sense (see Waterman 1990), is not about predicting daily deviations in positive affect or satisfaction around one’s average (long-term) levels. How then do the within-individual processes and short-term (daily) effects generated by positive work events and experiences relate to long-term employee well-being? Clearly, jobs that are characterized by more positive daily experiences, higher positive affect, and greater engagement are more fulfilling and meaningful, with daily experiences and well-being states having cumulative effects over time. But in addition to the cumulative effects of positive experiences, we suggest that approach-oriented agentic strategies undertaken by employees themselves can amplify and extend their benefits, thereby increasing the relevance and importance of work as a source of well-being. By reflecting upon, savoring, and capitalizing on positive work experiences—most especially those that involve giving to, benefiting from, and sharing with others—employees can play an active role in creating positive spirals that lead to more meaningful work and better lives, effectively crafting their own well-being.

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