



Exercise: Wearing a Mona Lisa Smile

Researchers have shown that the simple act of positioning your face into a (natural) half smile can lift your mood. It sounds too simple to be true, but it works!

Try this simple exercise: think about a recent situation that made you angry. Close your eyes, clench your fists, lean forward, and squish your face into a “mad” expression. Hold this posture for about a minute while thinking about the situation and your anger in detail (try to remember what was said or done, how you felt and why the situation made you angry).

What thoughts are going through your mind? _____

What emotion(s) are you experiencing? _____

Rate the intensity of the emotion(s) on a scale of 0 to 100: _____

Now, unclench your fists and sit back in a relaxed fashion. Relax your face and put on a gentle half smile (similar to the woman’s expression in the Mona Lisa painting). The muscles around your eyes and mouth should feel relaxed, and your mouth should be slightly upturned. Think again about the situation above for approximately one minute, while holding this posture.

What thoughts are going through your mind? _____

What emotion(s) are you feeling now? _____

Rate the intensity of the emotion(s) on a scale of 0 to 100: _____

Notice if there is was any (even if slight) reduction in the intensity of your emotional reaction.

Try practicing throughout the course of your work day. Actively remind yourself to smile (you may want to put a reminder on your computer or telephone, or place a sticky note in a place where you can easily see it).

Although it can take some practice, over time you may find that the simple act of placing your face into a half (or Mona Lisa) smile can reduce the intensity of negative emotions you are experiencing.