

mind



Grab the Good Vibes

Catching feels has a whole new meaning: Science says you absolutely can soak up happy energy from others. All it takes is a little more intention in your connections.

By Alison Goldman
Photographed by The Voorhes




Picture this: You're seated at a conference table when your office's new exec strides in and begins a presentation. You've never seen her before, and you're captivated. Her vibe? Commanding. Her energy? Infectious. (Your colleagues' eyes are on her, not their phones or laptops.) You want to blurt out, "Teach me your ways!"

On the flip side, if a teammate always brings an angsty 'tude to meetings, chances are you'll breathe in those blues too. Negative energy is equally contagious, in the cover-your-mouth-when-you-cough way.

That's because humans unconsciously mimic each other, seldom realizing how much, research shows.

When you closely engage with someone, you can take on each other's mannerisms, emotions, and physiological processes like hormone release, heart rate, and neural patterns, says neuroscientist Emiliana Simon-Thomas, PhD, science director at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California at Berkeley. Even when adults and infants interact, their brain activity syncs up and the same regions of the brain become alert, according to new research from Princeton University. "We have systems throughout our body that equip us to understand each other and, in part, simulate others' patterns," Simon-Thomas says. But if you put real purpose behind it, you can more effectively emulate people with positive energy—and in turn improve your own well-being.

The idea (of course) isn't to morph into someone you're not, but to use connections to help you live more deliberately. So make a mental short list of energizers who power you up—be it for their confidence, likability, authenticity, etc.—then get out there and seize those sensibilities.



Ask yourself: What went well today, and who really lifted me up?

In Your Social Life

Your role model for a trait (your hub for patience, your best friend for self-assurance) may already be in your world on a meaningful level, says psychiatrist Judith Orloff, MD, author of *Thriving as an Empath: 365 Days of Self-Care for Sensitive People*. You've got one-on-one time, so take it a step further, she suggests. "Involve them in the process."

SHARE THE MISSION ▶ Tell someone you know well the things about them you appreciate. "With a friend, you can say you love these qualities and you'd like to learn to emulate them," says Orloff. Ask about past experiences that profoundly impacted their personal growth so you can understand how they developed that side of themselves.

COMPARE BEHAVIOR NOTES

▶ Look for choices they make that are different than ones you would make, says Tasha Eurich, PhD, an organizational psychologist. "It's almost like you're looking for the biggest gaps between what you would do and what they're doing." For instance, maybe your tendency is always to explain away and minimize a compliment, but your friend gracefully accepts them. This doesn't mean you always have to do what they do, she notes, but tweaking your approach to small actions in positive ways can lead to a shift in your emotional outlook.

In Your Career

Let's say you want to channel the productivity or passion of someone you work with. Your best move is to try for face time with just the two of you, says Brad Owens, PhD, an associate professor of business ethics in the Marriott School of Business at Brigham Young University, who researches relational energy. "You'll be more stimulated and get better info when there's nobody else around," he says.



Engage more and score the best result: serious joy.

DO A CASUAL "INTERVIEW"

▶ If someone is authoritative but not arrogant about business decisions, question them about their process, Orloff says. "Ask what their fears are and how they overcome them," she says. "The goal is to integrate wisdom they've achieved into the way you operate."

EXTEND THE POSITIVITY ▶ Perhaps every time you meet with a colleague you leave feeling empowered about what you do. "If you had a great interaction with somebody, the next time you're feeling down or stuck, ask yourself, 'What would they say about this situation?'" suggests Eurich. "Make it a point to channel them when they're not around."

In Your Everyday Life

You can be exposed to impactful energy in all of life's circles, even from people you'll never meet, says yoga and meditation teacher Rebecca

Pacheco, author of *Do Your Om Thing: Bending Yoga Tradition to Fit Your Modern Life*. "Think of someone like Maya Angelou. She continues to teach with her words."

BE MINDFUL ▶ If you're up for something a little different, meditate on the person's attribute that you're hoping to evoke. Focus on how you would sit, literally, with that quality, says Pacheco. "What would your posture be? How would it feel in your body?" Alternatively, "you can name the quality and use that word as a mantra or borrow a phrase from this person as an anchor in meditation," she says.

CONSUME THEIR WISDOM ▶ Infuse an admirable trait into your routine. If it's a singer's boldness, for instance, play her most empowering song or YouTube moment (*searches J.Lo Super Bowl 2020*). "These things are all energy," says Pacheco.

Can You Not?

Three quick tricks to stop a toxic presence from blocking your light

THE TIME LIMIT

If you know it's in a person's nature to complain just 'cause, set boundaries, says Orloff, who suggests saying outright you have only a few minutes to talk or text if you know she is a downer. If you're in person, empathize, then make a gracious exit.

THE LAUGH TRACK

The next time you're dealing with someone insensitive, "imagine a literal laugh track in your mind behind the mean comments," says Eurich. "It jolts us out of going along with whatever they're saying and taking that as reality."

THE DEACTIVATION

You're in a convo with a jerk, and you want to call them out—but in a kind way. Say "Ouch!" suggests Pacheco. The point is to show that what they said felt hurtful. "It offers the other person the chance to revise their approach without feeling attacked."