

Notice the beauty | Christin Smith Myers

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I have a beautiful mouse pad. It's a gorgeous flower picture my husband took. It makes me so happy. And yet I hardly ever use it. It usually just stays in the bin where my laptop is stored, because my mouse works fine on the desk. I don't *need* the mouse pad, but I need the beauty. We all do.

A proven strategy to increase happiness is to infuse your surroundings with positivity. According to happiness researcher Shawn Achor, "Our physical environment can have an enormous impact on our mindset and sense of well-being. While we may not always have complete control over our surroundings, we can make specific efforts to infuse them with positivity." For me, that means doing things like customizing my planner cover to make it more attractive (helping ensure I actually use it), having pictures of my family on my desk at home and work, using a pretty desk organizer to stash my supplies, wearing a raincoat covered in flowers to brighten dreary days, wearing cute slippers to drive in to save my heels from getting destroyed, choosing a beautiful screen saver, and so on.

Of course, to enjoy these things I have to actually notice them. When I'm just going through the motions, I can go days without really noticing the birds, the trees, or the sky. And that's a shame. As Achor says, "One study found that spending 20 minutes outside in good weather not only boosted positive mood, but broadened thinking and improved working memory." We could all use those benefits.

A woman I was driving home from a retreat periodically commented on what she was seeing out her window. I asked how she noticed all of this, and she told me her secret: Look for color, look for movement. I'm trying it and I encourage you to do so too. Notice the beauty.