

## Four Ideas to Stay Happy as a Professional

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I was trolling Facebook the other day, and a colleague posted a comment that caught my attention. He stated—and I am paraphrasing—that he was tired of student affairs professionals posting on Facebook that they are upset staying late at work for the students. He then proceeded to explain that the reason we stay late is because we love our jobs and our students, and if you do not love your job, then why are you here? This got me thinking. It worries me that after working for only five years in the fraternal movement that I can be considered a veteran. Fraternity membership helped me find my calling, and I love my job even when the light at the end of the tunnel can sometimes be dim or nonexistent. I want to share with you four of my tricks of the trade that have kept my battery charged and that continue to get me excited about my job every day.

Close your eyes and think of that student who finally “got it.” You have been working with a student for days and tried every tactic known to man to get them to understand. Then, suddenly out of the blue, they do get it! But wait, they do not stop there. They continue to excel. The satisfaction on your face is greeted by a proud student who stands just a little taller. Yes, that is a smile creeping onto your face. You just caught the “aha” moment. It the most rewarding part of this job, and it is one of the reasons you are here in this profession. Think about it! These moments do not come daily, but they always seem to occur just when things are looking dark. It is time for a new perspective. Stop working from incident to incident and work for the “aha” moments. Those are your rewards and the gratification for being you. Go inspire some “aha” moments.

**Friendships and support** are some of the greatest things you can have in a career. I have been blessed to have fraternal friends from across the country. I can walk into an airport, go to a conference, or visit a new city and truly feel someone is always close by to lend an ear or grab a laugh. Put yourself out there and make some friends. A certain company out there may even tell you to be socially excellent. Go make a new friend at the Annual Meeting by the water cooler in between a session or by talking to the person sitting next to you at a meal. You need a support network and people with which to share ideas. Let’s face it: Your parents have no idea what you do, and your friends outside of the field think you just play all the time. So, connect with colleagues and doors will open. My battery is recharged every time someone trusts me enough to ask for assistance at a leadership opportunity or bounces ideas off of me. I also feel relieved when I am able to talk to someone who “gets it” and that can help me put my ship back on course. You cannot make it in this career without the support network, so go make yours or come say “hi” to me!

**Helping others to succeed** is why you are here. You are a one stop shop and an expert of all things found on campus. You are more likely than not the only position in your office that dabbles in everything a college campus provides: scholarship, community engagement, leadership programming, risk reduction, and the list goes on. Some would look at this as a burden causing you to be overworked. Change your perspective. Your position is one of the few positions on campus that is not the same every day, and you should love that. Accountants crunch numbers and programming boards program every day. You are truly a jack or jill of all trades who gets to have a new experience almost every week. You help students succeed because you know where to find resources and you can switch your mindset at a moment’s notice. You truly help provide the success to organizations and students. Embrace it because you get to wake up and say to yourself, “I wonder who is going to walk in that door and how I am going to be a part of their success.”

**The feel good folder** is the only tangible piece of advice I can give you, and, do not worry, it does not involve crafts. Remember when you just got your first thank you card or first email of praise? You were on cloud nine and untouchable. So what did you do with it? You should print it and put it into a folder and label it the "feel good folder!" Take the folder with you for the rest of your career. This is a little corny, but think about it. There are going to be days when you are going to feel like you have been dragged through the mud. You may even begin to contemplate why you even bother. This is when you pull out that folder. Look back on all those great things people have said to you or about you. You made a difference in someone's life, and that is no easy task. Sometimes the contents might be minor and sometimes they might be major, but when you look at those nice things your battery will get a recharge. Release your inner millennial with a feel good folder.

Let's be real. The fraternal movement needs you; we need more veterans who are passionate about what they do. So, find a balance between the long nights and those moments that keep your passion alive and recharge your batteries. These tricks of the trade are strategies that get me through the hard times, so try them out! Whether it is by inspiring "aha" moments, flipping through your feel good folder or another strategy of your own creation, find and utilize whatever means necessary to remember your desire to help make a difference one affiliated member at a time.