



COWORKING

by Corin

A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.

THRIVING TOWARD HAPPINESS

The things that underpin our mental and physical well-being are what makes us flourish as human beings and these are also key to contentment and happiness.



the best
is yet
to come

Thriving Toward Happiness

What is best in life? Is it a quantity of pleasures and freedom from pain? Your morning brew, eating chocolate, a back rub, watching the sun set, listening to music, or the scent of freshly baked pie? These are sensory pleasures that can be quantified as significantly better than stubbing your toe, having a migraine headache, breaking your arm, or being hungry. However enjoyable sensory pleasures are, they are short-lived and transitory. They involve little if any thinking.

Is the best in life something loftier – the pursuit of wealth, power, status, and beauty? People put significant effort into these goals and measure them, but are they the most gratifying?

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted rocks. A single bird is visible in flight against the orange sky.

*What is your heart
telling you?*

When we ask about the best in life we prefer to speak about how you thrive as a human being. What is best for your mental and physical health? What underpins your well-being and what makes you happy?

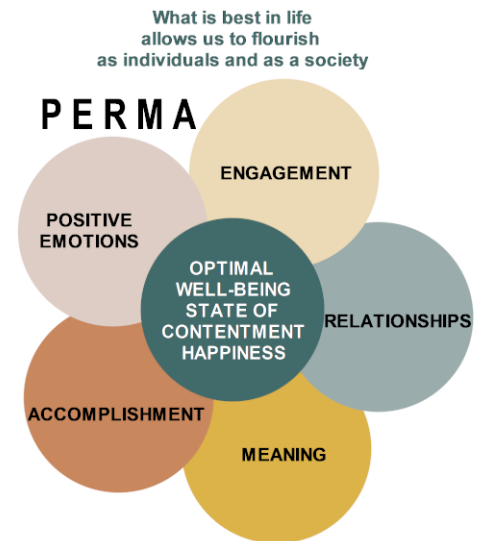
For obvious reasons people have been studying happiness and life satisfaction for centuries. The research reveals that we ultimately have a hold over the things that impact our peace of mind, and there are specific ways of thinking and acting that can strongly impact our sense of satisfaction. Studies indicate the things that underpin our mental and physical well-being are what makes us flourish as human beings and these are also key to contentment and happiness.

There are the five things human beings long for and need for well-being:

1. Most people desire positive emotion in their lives.
2. Most people want engagement with their loved ones, their job, and their leisure activities.
3. Most people want positive relationships.
4. Most people want lives infused with meaning.
5. Most people want accomplishment.

These are universal and timeless needs that, through the science of flourishing, we know are at the root of true happiness. However the truth is many of us sacrifice true happiness because we cannot distinguish the most gratifying aspects of living, what is best for our well-being, or what is meaningful for us. Instead, we choose to do several things that do not help us flourish as individuals and that make happiness seem elusive. It is not. There are misconceptions about happiness that lead us to think the way we do and make it challenging to access and sustain what we long for and need as human beings.

In this guide we will explore the elements of happiness or what is best in life and how to achieve it.



Thriving Toward Happiness

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Relationships

Meaning

Accomplishment

Unwrap Your Happiness to Bring out the Best in You

Amp Up Your Happiness

Mighty Muscles Partnered to do More

Self-Awareness

Courage

Curiosity

Mindfulness

Self-Care

Growth Mindset

From Comfort Zone to Performance Zone

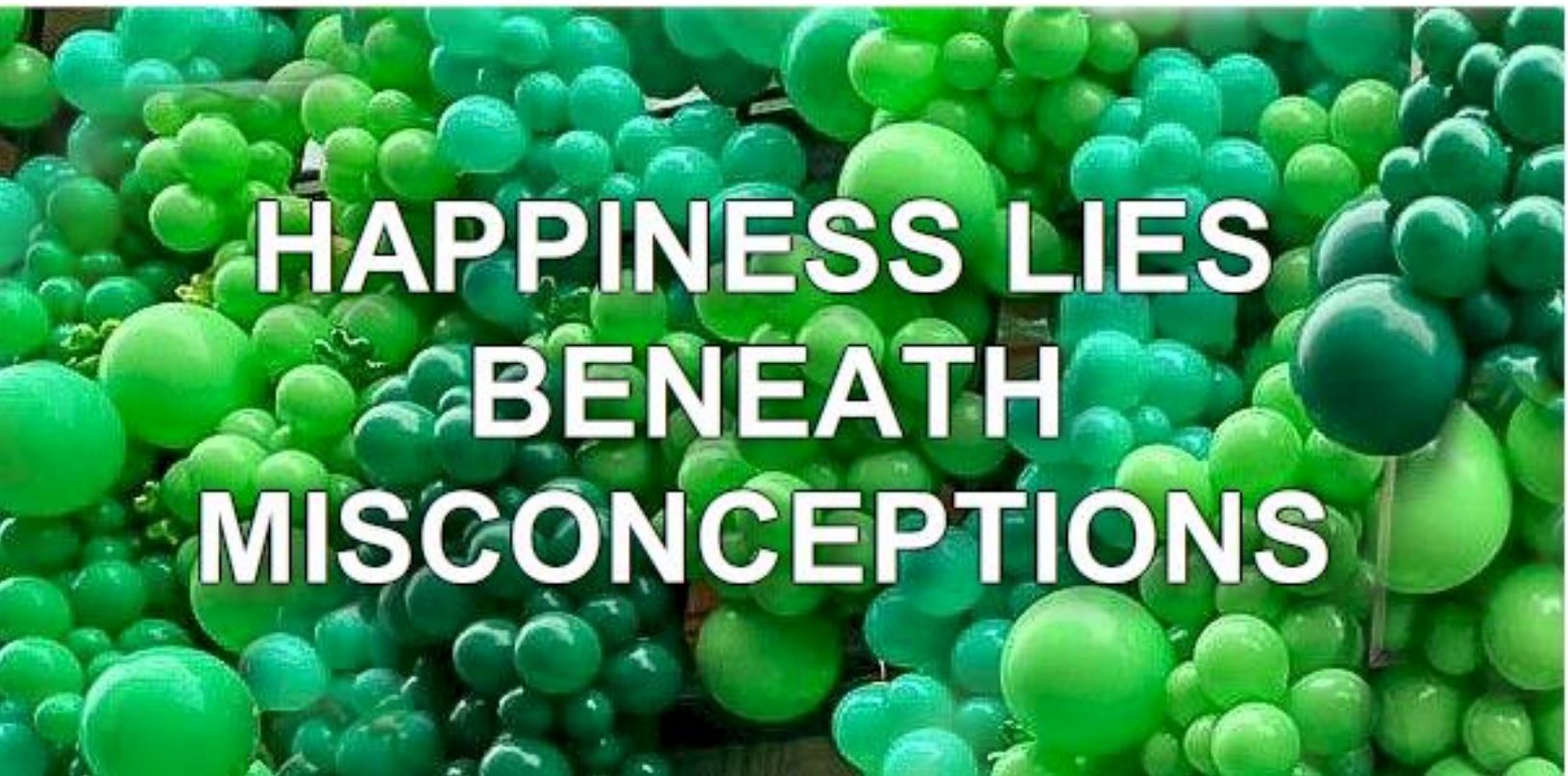
The Learning Curve

Phases of Learning

21 REASONS HAPPINESS SEEMS ELUSIVE

Let's start by ridding ourselves of the misleading notions surrounding happiness. We identify 21 that can negatively affect your well-being.

1) Happiness seems elusive, because it is not just one thing that results in us being happy for the rest of our lives.



Happiness is multidimensional and materializes through several facets of life unfolding over a lifetime. They do not always fit together at the same time. Take your career or a marriage as examples. They unfold over time and require sacrifice of other spur of the moment pleasures. You can put your energy into building a stellar career and accept that you will have fewer lazy days on the beach with friends. You may have to make choices and accept that as one aspect of your life increases in happiness another may not. One aspect of life that produces happiness may be your pursuit of learning or the meaningful things you do for others. Still another aspect might be how secure you feel in life, or how in control you feel. Your happiness may simply be the absence of aversive emotions or physical and psychological barriers to your well-being: stress, exhaustion, illness, injury, doubt, worry, or hyper-vigilance, fear, anger, frustration, despair, stress, exhaustion, illness, and injury. You might derive the most satisfaction from your connection to your family and friends.

2) Happiness seems elusive because we tend to think about happiness in the future or past tense.

Do you recall the days when you thought about how happy you would be to finally have your own apartment, get the attention of that special person, go to university, buy your dream car, land that promotion, or make more money? You were impatient for that happiness. Now you have fuzzy memories about how long you were happy before you realized you were not in perpetual bliss and started to chase the next bright thing.

Think about your last school reunion, when everyone sat around saying, “Remember when! Wasn’t that fun! “ Fond memories of the past reassure us that happiness exists, but also reminds us that moments of pleasure that produce just one aspect of happiness do not linger for extended periods of time. No matter how much of your dreams you achieve, after a happiness fix, it is normal for you to experience restlessness with the present and to imagine seeking a new happiness in the future that would most certainly make you happy. That is normal and it is good. Discontent keeps you motivated. However, you should not be so busy trying to find happiness that you forget to savour it when it does arrive.

3) Happiness seems elusive because we ignore our own needs.

Trying to please everybody is not only an impossible mission, while you are trying to take care of everybody else’s needs, who is taking care of yours? No one! That is because nobody knows better than you what you really want and need. If you don’t think about yourself and what you can do to nourish your own well-being toward happiness, nobody else will. Being a little selfish is not always bad. Be nice to yourself; do things that nourish your well-being. As you thrive and feel fulfillment, people around you will also feel better.

4) Happiness seems elusive because we seldom place emphasis on today’s happiness, the good things or feelings, that are “here right now”.

Even when we are surrounded by brief moments of pleasure or true happiness, we fail to notice and appreciate them. Like other animals, we are wired with the ability to notice the threatening, scary things in life. You know, the fight or flight response. Sometimes we expose ourselves to too much tragedy and forget to open our eyes to see the small beautiful details of everyday life experiences. Yet, for our well-being we need those positive emotions imprinted on our minds. Seldom do you hear anyone say out loud, “Isn’t this great, right now?” “I’m happy to be alive!” Too often, at the end of the day or the week we know that time has passed, but we have little notion where most of it went, which is sad indeed, because this represents pieces of our precious life that went missing without record or recognition.

Do you let the good moments slip away because you let the tragedy in the news rule your day? Because you are preoccupied by inconsequential things in social media? Do you have a morning coffee with a spouse and spend time thinking about all the things you have to do?

Moments of joy in the simplest of things tell you life is beautiful, you are alive and have this day.

- Waking up in the morning
- Nature
- The face of someone you love
- Music that lifts your soul
- Kindness
- Visiting an old friend
- Using your mind/voice to stand up for what you believe in
- Loving a person, job, music, animal, sport, book, hobby
- Having something purposeful to do
- Helping your neighbour
- The smiles of your loved ones at play
- Exercise

Take a moment to focus on what is around you and what you do each day and week. Some things are more important to your well-being than others. Ask yourself why, and how you can have more of it. Then make sure you choose at least one of the important ones each day to feed your happiness. These simple meaningful moments accumulate – a multitude of them can be impactful. Savour the experiences, share them, take mental photographs. Hoard them all for nourishment.

5) Happiness seems elusive because we compare our lives to that of others.

We envy them their perfect lives, not recognizing that with social media and photo-shopped lives they may not be happy at all. Social media has made everyone accessible for comparison, and never in the history of our species has envy been so out of control. We used to envy a neighbour. Now we get to envy everyone in the world. Yet, what we envy, most of us can do without. We can never truly know another person's happiness, day to day lives, their past, their pain. We see material possessions or a smiling face on a selfie and can easily be drawn in to assume that another person is happy.

You probably recognize that envy is not particularly pleasant and it is not particularly realistic. You can intellectualize any jealousy, but when you stare at a computer screen or complain about how some people have it all, on an emotional level you risk putting so much energy into envy that you miss seeing what you already have that is more meaningful or significant than what you envy. You are unique, as we all are, so there is no point in comparing yourself to other people. Have faith in your own life journey and work toward achieving your goals. Praise yourself for your achievements, small and large. Think about how far you've come, and focus on your life and how to make it better.

6) Happiness seems elusive because we do not know how to answer the question: "What would be good enough?"

Happiness does not depend on a perfect environment or historic earth-shattering circumstances. How many times have you postponed your dream because it was not the perfect time? How many times have you missed the great moments in your life because your expectations were too fussy, demanding, naïve, or simply too high or impractical? Experiences that feed our happiness may be more plainly wrapped. There may be momentous moments that we let slip away because it did not fit our expectations or our notion of perfect.

7) Happiness seems elusive because we mistake pleasure or popularity for happiness; we mistake fun or a momentary thrill for happiness. We mistake a luxurious life for happiness.

We end up aiming for immediate pleasure and minimal pain which is short-term, shallow, and impacts no one else.

8) Happiness seems elusive because we look in the wrong direction; we look outward, not inward.

We think it is conditioned in external things. We look for happiness in the wrong things and the wrong people. North American culture pushes people to pursue happiness by selling their blueprint for wealth, power, status, consumption, beauty, and glamour. This one simple question, “Do you want to be happy?” is often answered like this: “I want, but...” The answer is conditioned on something the person needs to have or do to be happy. Sadly, too many people do not know that unconditional happiness even exists because they do not know of any other way to live life except through wanting external things.



There is nothing wrong with a beautifully furnished home, the latest gadget, or awesome week-end retreats. The fun or pleasant things do provide a level of contentment, but pleasure fades quickly. You can end up in an endless marathon to fill your life with fun or pleasant things. If you end up shackled to those conditions or lofty goals you may face situations that are out of your control and beyond your capabilities, and you will never know that unconditional happiness exists. Happiness is not found in any blueprint, bank balance, business card title, or mirror. Happiness is not found in fifteen minutes of fame. It has been estimated that our wealth, health, and life circumstances account for only a small percentage (15% to 20%) of life satisfaction.

Clearly the main ingredient in happiness lies in something more meaningful beyond external factors. When you aim for gratification in everything outside of you, you’ll always be chasing, because happiness is inside you.

9) Happiness seems elusive because it cannot be specifically quantified.

We tend to measure many things in life for instant feedback. But, life doesn’t work like a video game where you accumulate points for every pleasurable moment (cup cake + 125 points, delightful dinner + 400 points, lost 3 kilos + 820 points, noisy neighbour moved + 1300 points, reading a good book + 11455 points) and deduct points for disappointment, pain, or judgement errors (missed deadline – 860 points, paper cut – 88 points, concert cancelled – 4680 points, my job sucks – 15433 points). How can you precisely measure relationships, emotions, or the meaning of life? In life you cannot count gold coins or capture five fictional islands to tally up point totals that equate it to happiness.



10) Happiness seems elusive because we live under the misconception that happiness is about smiling and being cheerful all the time.

You cannot don a super hero costume and role-play your way to happiness, faking it till you make it. Happiness is not on the surface in a permanent state of laughter or pleasure. We fail to understand that it may not be possible to have total happiness in all areas of our life at all times. There is silence in between, and maybe sorrow too. You can be happy and still be comfortable with appropriate moments of fear, sadness and anger.

11) Happiness seems elusive because we pursue another person's idea, description or criterion for happiness.

Sometimes we compare ourselves to others or we may even put our happiness in the hands of another person. Happiness cannot be replicated. There is no blueprint or strict rules. Happiness certainly has no judge. While your friends and family can be a part of your "happiness team", no other person can do it for you. No one can fill the void or make decisions for you. No one can decide whether your criterion for happiness is worthwhile or not. In fact, your own inner voice is hard enough on you without having to satisfy someone else's standards for happiness. Let your friends live their existence with their meaning of happiness while you live yours being happy with who you are. It is something you live with, so forget what other people expect, and create your own goals.

You may have to make time (days to be entirely on your own, just you and your thoughts) to figure out what you need to fuel your well-being and create your own happiness by doing what feels right to you. If you are single, use the time to rediscover yourself and what you really want from a relationship. If you have a dream, you can determine what steps you need to take to achieve your goals. If you want to make changes in your life, you need determine what behaviours you want to work on improving.

Don't compare yourself to others. Don't worry about what other people are doing – just focus on what's right for you. Happiness is about learning to trust yourself, trust in your ideas, your thoughts and those feelings that show up pushing you forward in your pursuits.

12) Happiness seems elusive if we try to control every aspect of our lives and try to rely on always getting what we want to be happy.

Life is unpredictable and it is impossible to control everything. There are times we need to go with the flow and look forward to the unknown. Life would be so boring if everything was planned in advance. Satisfaction derived from learning to live with any outcome is much more stable in that it is applicable to every outcome and not only those where we obtain what you want.

13) Happiness seems elusive because we yield to our fear.

Fear limits or stops us from experiencing many things that are extremely good for our well-being. People are afraid of being alone, so they remain in miserable relationships. People fear conflict or what others will think, so they refrain from asking questions, voicing opinions, or suggesting great ideas. People fear letting their team down or tarnishing their reputation. They fear being labeled, being wrong or looking dumb? People fear being underappreciated, or someone else taking credit for their ideas. People fear having brave conversations when they witness injustice or someone hurting. We all have fears. Shying away from fear does not make it go away. You can choose to eyeball your fear and act in spite of fear, or become a prisoner to fear.

You have no fears, you say? Do you recall ever using the words “impossible” or “hopeless” or “awkward”. Let’s look at four instances of fear that many people do not consider as such. The first is fear of appearing selfish. How many times have you decided to sacrifice your needs because you did not want to appear selfish, fearing how others might perceive you? The second one is fear of being decisive.



How about number three: “saying no”. Ask yourself, when was the last time you said “no” to people when you did not want to do something they asked of you. Was it fear of not being liked or of offending the other person? How often do you do things you do not want to do? The fourth is “fear of not being perfect. How many times in your life did you avoid participating in an activity because you might feel embarrassed, vulnerable, or look awkward? How often do you want to appear perfect? You can waste valuable time and energy and drive yourself crazy aiming for that kind of perfect.

14) Happiness seems elusive if we believe that well-being and happiness are pre-determined by genes or personality.

We are not swept along on a hereditary treadmill. Research has proven that happiness is actually a skill that can be learned and that your happiness levels can change substantially over your lifetime.

15) Happiness seems elusive because we tend to be in constant competition and fail to promote the better side of our humanity.

One side of our nature is self-interested. This is our in-built instinct to do whatever we can to survive and thrive. We often do this at the expense of others. The other side of our humanity is co-operative and leads us to help others even when there is no direct benefit for ourselves. We are wired to care about each other. However, our culture encourages the opposite – competition with the relentless idea that success is about doing better than others. In schools, it's exams. In the workplace we compete for performance bonuses. We are inundated with conspicuous displays of consumption and rivalry. We have such a strong cultural narrative about the selfish side of humanity that we adopt competitive systems and behaviours that lead to envy and resentment that undermines our natural co-operative tendencies. We fail to develop social and emotional skills that enhance our well-being, which has an immense impact on us as individuals, on society, and our happiness.

16) Happiness seems elusive because we fail to distinguish between the fun things we do, that please us or satisfy our hunger or thirst, and the meaningful or enjoyable things we do that are intellectually stimulating, consequential, creative, and gratifying.

We muddle the two together, and think we can get them the same way. Sadly, we tend to use the same verb "like" to characterize our preference for nearly all the best things in life. How can we lump a backrub or eating an ice cream cone in summer into the same category as mastering a skill or climbing a mountain? They are not the same. We pursue them and enjoy them differently.

The fun things are not only different from the consequential and gratifying things; the experiences activate different parts of brains! We share momentary pleasures, those of mere sensation, with other classes of animals. However, the contentment we derive from pleasures of the intellect, of feelings and imagination, of moral sentiments, monumental experiences, or having a nurturing connection to another person are classified as distinctly human, and they provide us long-term gratification.

17) Happiness seems elusive because we do not give meaning to the individual aspects of our overall well-being that lead to happiness.

When something fills us with joy or pride it is different than being surprised, hopeful or inspired. Yet, we tend to "like" them all or attach the experience to common words like "fun" or "feel good". We should attach more meaning to our experiences, broaden our awareness to more closely identify with the positive emotions we feel, and then choose words that fit that emotion. Let's ditch the boring words "like" and "fun". The words exhilarating, mesmerizing, alive, overjoyed, fulfilled, thrilling, compelling, comical can lift our mood and refocus our attention. You get the point. We've compiled a list of more than 500 words just for you. By simply contemplating each word on the positive emotions list, you can think more positively, which will influence your perspectives and amp up your happiness.

[Check out our list of 558 positive words](#)

18) Happiness seems elusive because it is not a mood, or an assessment of the conditions of life.

True happiness is wrapped up in how we thrive through our state of mind and overall well-being, which includes our emotions, relationships, engagement, accomplishments, and purpose. A state of tranquility will never just fall in our laps – it’s too chaotic a world. We have to carve out space within ourselves to experience it as a feeling, and commit to it as a daily experience, regardless of what’s around us.

19) Happiness seems elusive, because we do not work for it.

We take it for granted or we feel entitled. We do not like to work for things that we think we deserve. We may all deserve happiness, but it is not automatic. Happiness is not a physical thing that people can hand over like an inheritance. There is no “right of passage” ceremony. Happiness is not found in the things we acquire. We cannot demand it. And it certainly isn’t found in a quick fix, fast read, cursory study, or one event or activity. Happiness does not fall into your lap as you wish for it. We are responsible to create our own happiness, which means we have to work for it. We find it easy to put significant effort into lofty goals and sensory pleasures, but in aiming for true happiness, we get lazy. As a society we are depressed and starving to death spiritually, but do not put in the work required to generate positive emotions and experiences for ourselves. What we fail to realize is that happiness itself is actually not a goal it is a by-product of living a meaningful life. For many people it is easier to sink into misery or seek out a quick-fix recreational diversion (some very harmful and addictive. We have to carve out space and time in our lives to expand our lives in meaningful ways. A meaningful life is such an important aspect of happiness that we will explore this subject further.

20) Happiness seems elusive because we refrain from asking curious questions.

Why? Because we fear we’ll be judged incompetent, indecisive, or unintelligent. Young children, who have an insatiable need to understand the world around them, are not afraid to ask questions, and they don’t worry about whether others believe they should already know the answers. But, as we get older self-consciousness creeps in. As they climb the organizational ladder, many people think they have to demonstrate expertise and provide answers, not ask questions. How many of us think we have less to learn? Such fears and beliefs are misplaced. Research indicates that high and consistent levels of curiosity are linked to positive emotions and happiness. People like us more and view us as more competent, and the heightened trust makes our relationships more interesting and intimate.

21) Happiness seems elusive because we cannot pinpoint a description of meaningful happiness.

No one can, even though happiness has been studied for centuries. Lacking a clear definition undermines our ability to sufficiently understand happiness or proactively adopt and efficiently cultivate it. We have become too accustomed to quick easy answers – the facts and trivia – and think we can simply go on to the next question. Today as a society we ignore the most important aspect of a question – the part where we stop and think. What mankind has figured out over the centuries is that the meaningful and consequential things in life are impossible to depict in images or words – bookshelves and gallery walls abound with mankind’s attempt, though.

WHAT IS BEST IN LIFE?

Now that you understand why happiness may seem so elusive, you can begin to adopt opposite beliefs and behaviors that will more positively influence your well-being and happiness. There is a lot of research to point you in the right direction. Our goal is to share what we have learned.

So we are back to our initial question: What is best in life? What is meaningful in your life that will help you thrive? What is best for your overall well-being, mentally and physically?

- Someone who supports your dreams?
- Humor and laughter?
- Having a positive attitude?
- Brave conversations?
- Feeding the homeless?
- Saving wildlife?
- A family you can always count on?
- Being the person your family and community can count on?
- Willing to risk your life in the service of some higher value or goal?
- Being your best self?

What is best in life is deeply personal. What works for another person may not work for you. Only you can distinguish between your higher gratifying experiences and lower pleasures to determine where your own appreciation and contentment lie, what produces the great amount of long-term good feeling, what makes you flourish as a person, and what gives meaning to your life. What is best in life for you is elemental to your well-being. When you can distinguish what is best in life for you, you are on the verge of describing how happiness feels for you and you will also know how to enhance your happiness.

Why Meaningful Happiness Cannot Be Described

With the help of bright and vibrant researchers of happiness, we will now explore meaningful happiness and why it cannot be described.

The how's and why's of happiness are complex until they are experienced. At the same time meaningful experiences that bring you happiness are so amazingly gratifying, the experiences are nearly impossible to describe. Hundreds of words have been ascribed to the emotions of the experience and the feelings that linger because of it.

Let's look at the findings of Martin E. P. Seligman – professor at University of Pennsylvania and author of Authentic Happiness and What you Can Change & What You Can't. When he was president of the American Psychological Science Association, he directed the attention of psychologists towards studying the “good” in people and in the world and became the founder of positive psychology. He shares his findings about meaningful happiness. He assigns his students many tasks including dedicating time to experiencing a pleasurable day, engaging with people in various activities, volunteering, pursuing their hobbies, etc. Afterwards, when he asks his students to describe their conscious positive feelings of physical pleasures as they occurred – great food, a back rub, perfume, a hot shower – all participants are able to articulate the emotions they feel - their “raw feels” he call it.

In contrast, when he presses the same people to describe the positive emotion they felt when serving coffee to the homeless, reading a book, playing bridge, or rock climbing, the students are unable to succinctly characterize a discrete emotion. They tend to describe a feeling that is elusive. Their immersion in the experience usually blocks consciousness, so thinking and feeling are completely absent except in retrospect. He says, “Indeed, it is the total absorption, the suspension of self-consciousness, the blocking of thought and feeling, and the flow that the gratifications produce – not the presence of any felt sensation – that define liking these activities.”

His research shows that happiness lies in people pursuing the abundant gratifications that can totally absorb them. The meaningful experience produces feelings that are too monumental, absorbing, luminous, magical, otherworldly, all-encompassing for mere words. Sounds like happiness, wrapped up in the meaningful experience, is indescribable.

The Science of Flourishing

Well-Being, Happiness and Strategies to Flourish

We cannot easily describe happiness, but we can look at decades of work done by Martin Seligman and his of esteemed colleagues to better understand the elements of happiness. In the early 2000's, their ground-breaking research delved into human well-being to understand the range and dimensions of human goodness and how to improve the human experience.

Through the Science of Flourishing it is safe say that you can learn how to be happy.

“Flourishing is like supercharging your well-being to achieve a state of happiness.”

Well-being is often defined as being synonymous with positive mental health, a combination of feeling good and functioning well. They refer to “enhancing well-being” as flourishing. Via the science of flourishing they are able to identify strategies (tools, practices, methodologies) which will help people attain a more gratifying happy life.

The science of flourishing stresses that you understand two things well before you implement the strategies:

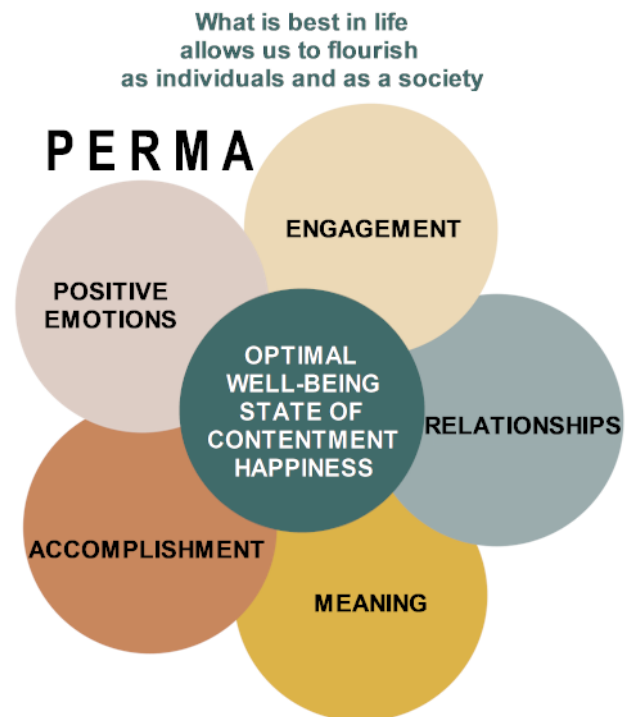
- A. Five key elements of happiness
- B: Your signature strengths, as these are defined by the science.

A. Key Elements of Happiness

Human beings long for and instinctively desire five elements that are at the root of sincere happiness. Most people desire:

- 1) Positive emotion in their lives. Positive emotions heighten other emotions and trigger similar emotions in other people
- 2) Engagement with their loved ones, their job, their leisure activities
- 3) Positive relationships
- 4) Lives infused with meaning
- 5) Accomplishment

The five elements are identified as the most gratifying and meaningful aspects of living and best for your well-being. They can be independently assessed and enhanced to allow you to develop and thrive. The elements are most often recognized by the mnemonic PERMA shown above. We will explore these elements in more detail in another sections of this guide.



B. 24 Character Strengths

They define twenty-four character strengths. These strengths are the positive human traits that are the essence of your character and at the heart of your everyday life. You possess all 24 character strengths in varying degrees. More importantly, you have a one-of-a-kind “character strengths profile” with four to six signature strengths that rank higher and matter most to your authenticity.

The illustration shows an overview of the 24 core character strengths that are categorized by six universal virtues. .

When we mention the word strengths, most people envision skills or tasks. In flourishing, your character strengths make up what’s best about your individual personality. For example: humour, love of learning, perseverance, gratitude.

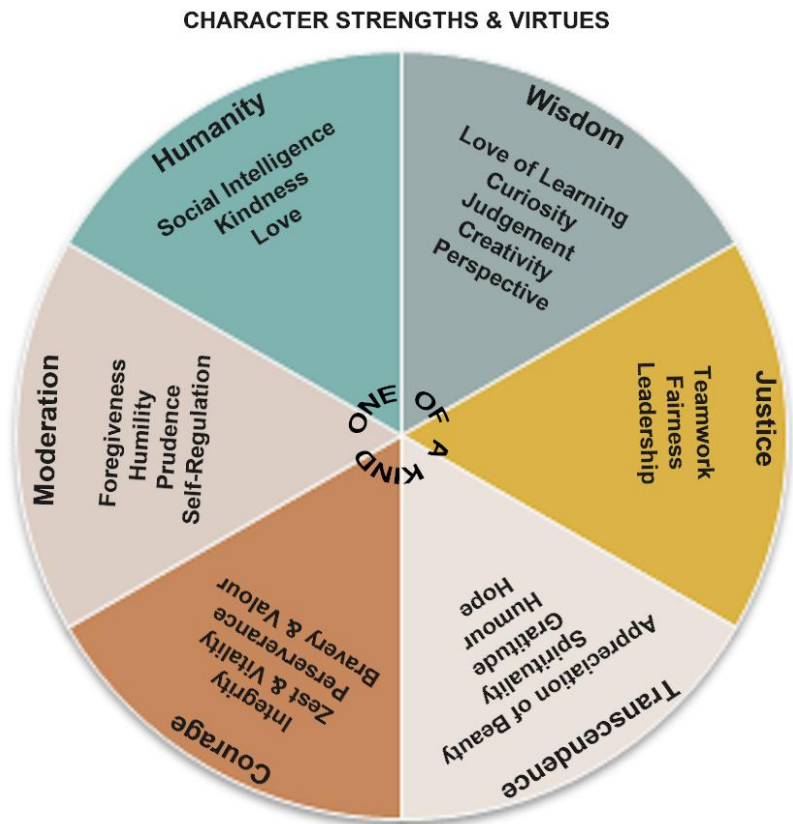
These character strengths enable you to be and to act in ways that help you focus on what’s strong instead of what’s wrong, what can go right instead of what can go wrong. Deploying these character strengths are your unique pathways to human flourishing. In general, once you identify their signature strengths the research indicates you will yearn to learn new ways to express them and to create situations or projects that center on the usage of those core characteristics.

Directing Your Efforts to Flourish

As we delve into the elements of happiness and character strengths we remind you that you do not just read about the science of flourishing and instantly feel better. You have to direct your efforts to learning how to flourish by:

- Discovering and deploying your signature strengths.
- Understanding the five key elements of human flourishing and how to nourish each one.
- Enhancing the strengths and skills that matter most to flourishing so you can put your knowledge, awareness, and capabilities into practice.

Happiness results from flourishing. Flourishing requires knowledge and active participation in nourishing your well-being through each of your conscious experiences.



Signature Strengths – Basic Qualities of Well-Being

You possess all 24 character strengths in varying degrees. You may identify with many of them or appreciate them in others. As important as they are many people underuse them or do not have a meaningful awareness of how they use them. People can be surprised to learn a strength is even on the list. For example, many do not realize that curiosity is a character strength and one of the most crucial. It makes a difference to your well-being to understand these strengths so you can deploy as many of them as possible in your own life.

Your Character Strengths Profile – Your Best Qualities

The real key to being your best self is through deploying your “one-of-a-kind” signature strengths. You may not be consciously aware of your character strengths profile, the four to six strengths that are your best qualities. You may have a sense of them or enjoy them. But, you may not actively use them often enough to nurture your well-being. Yet, they matter most to the authentic you and provide unique pathways to those positive goals you pursue in life, and ultimately bring the highest value to the world.

Character Strengths that Matter Most to the Authentic You

Research shows that using your signature strengths 1-2 hours per day corresponds with increased feelings of happiness.



You will use your signature strengths in different ways than anybody you know. While one person might consider her signature strengths to be related to courage and wisdom, another might view justice and humanity as more central to her authentic sense of self. Research shows that if you have an active awareness of your signature character strengths you are nine times more likely to be flourishing and feel true happiness. Therefore, one of the most important things you can do for yourself is identify and understand your unique character strengths so you can nurture them, enhance them, and use them wisely in all areas of your life.

Determine Your Signature Strengths

For deeper understanding we will explore each of the 24 character strengths. You can study each of the them to identify which strengths best describe who you are at your core. Your signature strengths will have three things in common:

1. **Essential:** the strength feels essential to who you are as a person.
2. **Effortless:** when you enact the strength you feel natural and effortless.
3. **Energizing:** using the strength raises your spirits, is energizing, leaves you feeling content or ready to take on more.

Your Starting Point and the Formal Assessment

As you review a strength, if must meets all 3 key features, to make your list of signature strengths. We know that you will likely end up with more than the 4-6 signature strengths expected for a unique profile. It is your starting point to understand the basic qualities that are important to your well-being.

After you read through the list, we highly recommend you take an online assessment to obtain your accurate unique signature strength profile. It takes about 15 minutes and is free through the VIA Institute on Character. For two decades VIA, a non-profit organization, has been dedicated to bringing the science of character strengths to the world with the aim of promoting well-being, helping to accomplish aspirational intentions, and allowing the greater good of the collective to grow. The assessment was created through collaboration of the researchers of the Science of Flourishing and used by professionals world-wide (available in dozens of languages).

VIA Character Assessment Survey

Once you have your personalized unique profile, you can do a deeper exploration of your signature strengths to learn how to activate each strength to improve everyday life. You can learn exercises to nourish your all your strengths, discover different ways to use your best qualities, or combine them.

Keeping in mind the importance of how you use words to attach more meaning to your experiences. Broaden your awareness of your strengths to more closely identify with the positive emotions you feel, and then choose words that fit that emotion. Therefore, you may define any signature strength more specifically to suit you. For example: zest and vitality for you may be more clearly defined as “playfulness” or “energy”. The character strength of “beauty” may make more sense to you if you think of it as “nature” or “truth” or “recognizing “excellence in everything”.

At the end of this section we will provide you access to specific enhancement exercises for each of the 24 strengths so you can focus on enhancing a signature strength or lesser used strength.

24 Character Strengths Guide

The 24 core character strengths are differentiated by six classes of virtue: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, moderation, and transcendence. Researchers identified the twenty-four strengths based on a criterion that each of the strengths defines the value of a virtue. Each virtue is recognized and valued by all cultures as morally good and one of the basic qualities of well-being. Parents in all cultures aim to instill these traits in their children.

A. Wisdom

Wisdom describes strengths that help you gather and use knowledge. Those who demonstrate wisdom tend to have cognitive strengths that lead them to not only acquire knowledge but to use it in creative and useful ways.

1. Creative: I am creative. I think of new ways to do things or solve problems. I conceptualize things that are novel, but most importantly worthwhile, useful or adaptable with the intention to make a positive contribution to my life or the lives of others.

Creativity gives you self-confidence and greater self-knowledge which allows you to feel comfortable in a variety of situations and adapt to challenges and stressors.

2. Curious: I am curious: I take an interest in a wide variety of topics, open to exploring and discovering new ideas, activities, and experiences. I have a natural desire to build my own knowledge.

Curiosity is one of the strengths most reliably linked to your satisfaction with life. Curiosity is also associated with happiness, health, longevity, and positive social relationships.

3. Open-Mindedness or Judgement: I do not jump to conclusions. I examine things from all sides, weight the evidence to evaluate ideas, facts, and opinions before I make rational and logical choices.

People who can see things from more than one perspective are particularly skilled in dealing with times of change and transition. Judgement counteracts biased thinking, contributing to more accurate decision-making.

4. Love of Learning: I seek to learn for learning's sake and am contemplative about what I learn. I am motivated to deepen my pursuit of knowledge to master new topics, skills, and bodies of research.

Love of learning leads to the development of a deeper base of knowledge, enhancing competency and efficacy. Love of learning has also been associated with healthy, productive aging.

5. Perspective: I am able to avoid getting wrapped up in the small details especially when there are bigger issues to consider. I am able to evaluate multiple sides of an issue before making decisions or providing wise counsel to others. Perspective enables me to learn from my mistakes and also from the strengths of others.

Individuals with perspective are valued by others seeking counsel since those individuals help them see the big picture and alternative points of view.

B. Courage

Courage describes strengths that help you exercise your will and face adversity. People who demonstrate courage have emotional strengths that allow them to accomplish goals despite any opposition they face – whether internal or external.

6. **Honesty:** I am a person with integrity, speaking the truth; without pretense, and taking responsibility for my feelings and actions. I act consistently both publicly and privately, accurately representing my intentions, commitments and internal states the same way within the community as I do with family.

Research findings on the benefits of honesty found honest people are typically viewed as trustworthy, which contributes to healthy, positive relationships. Honesty is also linked to improved accuracy of your goals, reflecting your true values and interests.

7. **Bravery:** There are three types of bravery: physical bravery, such as that executes by firefighters or soldiers, psychological bravery such as facing painful aspects of self, and moral bravery which is speaking up for what's right, even if it's an unfavorable opinion to a group. I embrace challenges, difficulties, or pain despite my doubts and fears. I do not shrink from threat. I act on my convictions.

The strength of bravery helps people tolerate the vulnerability that is part of growing close to others, thereby helping in the formation and maintenance of close relationships.

8. **Perseverance:** I finish things once they are started. I am able to dig deep and muster the will to overcome obstacles and disappointments that bring about thoughts of giving up.

Perseverance helps to improve skills, talents, and resourcefulness as well as build other character strengths. Persistent people are often seen as people who follow through on commitments, which contributes to building trust as a foundation for good relationships.

9. **Zest:** I approach all things in life with energy and excitement, like I am on an adventure and have an opportunity for engagement. I do not do things half-heartedly.

Zest is one of the two strengths most strongly connected with happiness. If you are high in zest you are likely to find joy and meaning in whatever you do and view your work as a calling in life, in that the work is deeply fulfilling, meaningful, and purposeful.

Character strengths help you discover how you operate in the world:

Across several studies in different cultures, the character strengths of zest, hope, love, gratitude, and curiosity repeatedly emerge as being the most interrelated with life satisfaction and are emotionally important factors for experiencing meaning and engagement at work.

While your strengths exist within you, they are also shaped by your situations. You will find some strengths stay consistently high, while others will move up and down or be more prominent at certain times. For example zest may move up and down on your profile depending on how well you physically look after yourself. Having chaos in your life can cloud how you assess your strengths.

C. Humanity

Those who demonstrate humanity have a range of interpersonal strengths that involve caring for and befriending others.

10. Kindness: I have deep concern for the welfare of others. I have empathy and a sense of social responsibility. I do not expect anything in return when I do a favor, good deeds, listen, or give of my time, resources, or talent to help other people who need kindness or support.

The strength of kindness found people who give to others, in small and in large ways, tend to be happier as a result. Kind people are often likable to others, which can provide opportunities to develop meaningful relationships and love

11. Love: I value and nurture close relationships with others that are characterized by reciprocal willingness to give and receive love, warmth, and caring.

Love tends to facilitate tolerance, empathy, and forgiveness in relationships, which contribute to the health and longevity of those relationships. It is one of five strengths most associated with enhanced life satisfaction.

12. Social Intelligence: I am aware of my feelings and motivations as well as that of others around me. With that awareness I am able to fit into different social situations and feel comfortable that I will say and do the right things.

Science says that social intelligence contributes to a high level of comfort across a variety of social situations, opening opportunities for meeting new people and participating in new experiences. The ability to recognize feelings both in yourself and in others has been connected with better mental and physical health, work performance, and social relationships.

You have 24 unique characteristics that make up your good character:

You have just reviewed half the character strengths. You may be thinking that so far no new light has been shed on your qualities. Maybe you identify with most of the qualities, which is a good thing. By definition all strengths are good things. View them as your flourishing tools to supercharge your well-being – tools to help you build relationships, finish work tasks, explore hobbies and, ultimately achieve a well-balanced life and happiness.

When you take the formal survey it will narrow down the strengths that are most central to who you are and best capture your uniqueness. It will be enlightening to connect more deeply to the true value of what these strengths bring to you and others. This will help you to plan experiences around your strengths and put yourself in situations that give you the best opportunities to develop and deploy your strengths.

D. Justice

People who have character strengths under justice tend to possess civic strengths that underscore the importance of a healthy community or help connect in community or group-based situations.

13. Fairness: I treat everyone equally and fairly, and apply consistent rules to everyone.

Fair-minded individuals are more likely to engage in positive, pro-social behaviors and less likely to engage in illegal and immoral behavior.

14. Leadership: I am motivated to take on roles where I organize and encourage a group to get things done as a team, while maintaining good relations within the group, enlisting help, building coalitions while providing a positive vision that inspires dedicated followers to feel inspired and empowered by my actions.

Research findings on the benefits of the strength of leadership found leaders – leadership with a small “L” not movers and shakers – are respected and valued by others, and they experience the benefits of being well-respected and held in high esteem by others. Leadership is related to emotional stability, openness, good social intelligence, and conscientiousness.

15. Teamwork: I am team-oriented, committed and work well to contribute to the team’s success – family, marriage, friends working on a project together, good citizenry. I have a broad sense of social responsibility for a group with which I associate, or of humanity as a whole.

People whose signature strength is teamwork elicit and experience a higher level of social trust and have a more positive view of others.

Applying your strengths to thrive in different situations:

As you go through the list you likely consider more than one strengths as minor to your daily life compared to other qualities. The strengths of lower value are your lesser strengths. They are not weaknesses or problems or deficits. NEVER think of underdeveloped strengths as weaknesses. Chances are you have not much spent time thinking about these strengths or developing them. However, studies have shown that focusing on a improving and using lower strengths can actually boost your happiness and decrease depression.

You may also categorize strengths as phasic strengths or supportive strengths.

A phasic strength is what we call a “rise-to-the-occasion” strength because you do not use it often, but when you call on it to reach an important goal, solve a problem or build a stronger relationship, that strength is front and centre and you use it very effectively. If you came upon a person in trouble you would rise to the occasion and exert bravery to save or help them.

You use supportive strengths often and readily to support, balance, or strengthen signature strengths. As an example, you might use your hope strength by being optimistic about a difficult relationship to help you activate more perseverance in sticking with that relationship through challenging times.

E. Temperance or Moderation

People who have a number of character strengths that fall under moderation tend to have strengths that protect against the excesses in life and manage habits.

16. **Forgiveness:** In humanizing others, I extend them understanding and forgiveness when they have wronged or hurt me. I can accept the shortcomings, flaws, and imperfections of others and let go of the frustration, disappointment, resentment, or other painful feelings associated with an offense, which means that I give people more than one chance.

Forgiveness can contribute to productive interpersonal relationships, thriving teamwork, job satisfaction, personal morale, innovative problem-solving, a sense of flexibility when facing changes, and productivity.

17. **Humility or Modesty:** I have a good sense of who I am and content to let my successes and accomplishments stand on their own. I do not need to get praise or be the spotlight to receive recognition for what I do.

Humility is linked with good self-esteem and a positive self-view. Humble people are likely to demonstrate higher levels of gratitude, forgiveness, spirituality, and general health.

18. **Prudence:** I am careful about my choices, stopping and thinking to examine the potential consequences of my actions, and control myself to avoid things that I might regret.

Prudence is associated with productivity and the ability to be conscientious. This strength helps you to avoid the mishaps of life, both physical and psychological.

19. **Self-Regulation:** I am self-disciplined and confident that I am able to control my appetites, emotions, as well as my reactions to disappointment.

People with high self-control report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, are better able to control anger, and generally get along better with people. Self-regulation is linked with better personal adjustment, such as having fewer physical and psychological problems and having a greater sense of self-acceptance and self-esteem in relationships.

Widen your perspective to realize the value of any strength:

You might be thinking that you sound rather humdrum. Ranking strengths in a character profile has nothing to do with a strength being more acceptable or publicly suitable, sexy or thrilling. Choose words that have more meaning to you, as long as it fits and is a pathway to you existing authentically.

You may view a strength as unfamiliar or lost. A lost strength can conceivably be any of the 24 character strengths. Perhaps a character strength needs reawakening if it has been dormant for a period of time or eroded from your conscious awareness and use. We hear many times that a valuable quality like perseverance or bravery was consistently squashed by an authority figure such as a parent teacher, coach or sibling. The strengths of critical thinking or love of learning can be depressed by cultural or social constraints.

F. Transcendence

Transcendence describes strengths that connect one to the larger universe and provide meaning. People who have a number of character strengths that fall under transcendence tend to forge connections with a divine power, God, the universe, or religions that provide meaning, purpose, and understanding.

20. **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence:** I notice and appreciate everything that produces awe and wonder in my life: beauty in nature, excellence in skilled performance, moral goodness – from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.

Science says exercises focused on increasing appreciation of beauty and excellence have been shown to boost happiness and lower depression.

21. **Gratitude:** I am aware and thankful for the good things and take time to genuinely express my feelings of gratitude to others in recognition of their contribution to my life.

Gratitude is one of the strengths most connected to the experience of a meaningful life. Gratitude also contributes to several physical and psychological health benefits, such as better cardiovascular and immune functioning.

22. **Hope:** I expect the best; I believe I am action oriented to make good things happen, believing there are alternative ways to make good things possible.

Hope is most associated with life satisfaction and well-being. Hopeful people tend to be healthier, happier, and more successful. Hope leads to greater longevity.

23. **Humor:** I make other people smile or laugh; find humour in difficult or stressful times; and find it a valuable method of coping with distressing situations to keep composed and maintain a cheerful view on adversity, and thereby help others sustain a good mood.

Humorous people are socially attractive to others. Humor can also decrease social anxiety, thereby creating opportunities for social connection.

24. **Spirituality/Religiousness (secular or non-secular):** I feel spiritual and have a solid belief about a higher purpose and meaning in my life. I see my place in the grand scheme of the universe, a dimension to life that is beyond human understanding. Sacredness might be pursued as the search for a purpose in life, a close relationship with something greater, experienced in the forgiveness offered by a child, a humble moment, an awe-inspiring sunset, a profound experience during meditation or a religious service, or the self-sacrificing kindness of a stranger.

The strength of spirituality, provides a sense of being grounded, increases optimism, and helps provide a sense of purpose for life which contributes to an overall sense of well-being.

Challenging results can be eye opening opportunities:

The strengths should not be surprising. They should be recognizable and confirm something best you know about yourself. Maybe you do not feel good about the results right now because you have not discovered or connected to the true value of what a strength can bring to you and others. You may not have been putting yourself in situations that give you the best opportunities to develop your strengths. Maybe you have to learn how to plan experiences around your strengths.

Lead a Strength-Based Life to Increase Joy at Work and to Live the Life you Love

Once you determine which strengths matter most to you, lead a strength-based life to improve your emotional well-being, motivate and energize you to develop your potential, and help you address any challenges and difficulties you may face. The key to a strength-based life lies in nurturing your signature strengths to be more prevalent in your life. These are strengths you can trust. The general idea is incorporate them into your routine:

- Research shows that using your strengths 1-2 hours per day corresponds with increased feelings of happiness. Prevalence comes from the enjoyment you derive through using your signature strengths on a regular basis in the course of your regular life, not just for your career.
- Contemplate on how you currently use your signature strengths with the skills, experiences and knowledge you enjoy at work? In your personal life? When you were at your best or in times of struggle what strengths did you use? Think about how you feel during and after you use one of those strengths. These are experiences to savour. Do this often.
- Give your strengths primacy in self-reflection. We humans tend to focus on weaknesses or what is not going well for us. Instead of thinking about complaints or mishaps, focus on how things go well using your character strengths. Routinely ask yourself, “What strengths have I deployed today?”
- Post stimulating prompts in prominent places to remind yourself to use your character strengths. Visible cues help you be more aware. [Print VIA’s 1 page description of the 24 strengths.](#)
- Give “strengths of character” primacy in conversation. Encourage other to do the same. Talk about what the family’s core strengths have been over the years. With friends share the ways you expressed your curiosity or creativity at work. Tell others that you value their strengths. Name the strength and share how you saw them display the strength. “Yvonne, I was impressed by how well you kept your cool during that heated debate at our meeting yesterday.”
- The strengths you see in yourself may not necessarily be the strengths that coworkers, family or friends see in you. You may be very enlightened by what others see as powerful strengths that you don’t see as prevalent? What they share may motivate you to dig deeper, challenge yourself to focus on those strengths more often, or learn to use strengths in new ways.
- Focusing on one strength per week, track your internal experiences and behaviours. Record your findings. [If you haven’t done so already, take the VIA Character Assessment Survey. It is free](#)
- Create plans to build up or rekindle any strength. Find new ways to enhance or use supportive strengths to make your signature strengths stronger. Reawaken strengths if necessary.
- Consider what might happen if instead of acquiring things, you spent your time and money to do things that activate and elevate your strengths.
- Nourish your character strengths as part of your daily routine. Since the twenty-four strengths are so interrelated you should not ignore any of them on the basis of use or consistency. Nourish and use all 24 strengths whenever possible. .

Ways to Nourish your Character Strengths

The twenty-four character strengths are positive human traits and since they are at the heart of your everyday life it only makes sense that they should be nourished. In the rankings between signature strengths and supportive strengths, the numerical differences can be quite small. Any strength can become more prominent at certain times. Therefore, cultivating any strength to be stronger creates a much stronger foundation for flourishing.

There are enhancement exercises for each of the 24 strengths. The exercises are provided with permission of Drs. Tayyab Rashid and Afroze Anjum of the University of Toronto. They were two of the original researchers on the Science of Flourishing, who contributed to Dr. Seligman's work and also VIA.

340 Ways to use Strengths

Visit [U of T Science of Flourishing Website](#)

Here are 7 ways to nourish your character strengths:

1. Explore a defining moment. Identify one defining moment when you enacted one of your signature character strengths and it had a meaningful effect on you. It does not need to be momentous. Which character strength did you use in that situation? How did this defining moment shape who you are or what you do.
2. Plan "curiosity" days. Research indicated that when people experience positive emotions like happiness, they also tend to display more curiosity than on days when they are not as happy. Research shows that high and consistent levels of curiosity are linked to the other elements of well-being and life satisfaction. Curiosity is a willingness to engage with complex, unfamiliar, and challenging concepts or endeavors.
 - If you can learn something new every day, so much the better. If curiosity is not prevalent in your life, get into the habit of asking questions like "Why?" "What if...?" and "How might we...?" and genuinely listen to the responses.
 - Create space in your day or week to be curious about one thing and learn more. You could research a new item to find out more background information, or determine other opinions about the subject. You could get curious about a city, country, culture, or how something was made.
 - Engage with new people, new places or new points of view. When we demonstrate curiosity about others by asking questions, people like us *more* and view us as *more* competent, and the heightened trust makes our relationships more interesting and intimate. By asking questions, we promote more-meaningful connections and more-creative outcomes.
 - Encourage curiosity in others. During meal time encourage each person to share what they learned that day and how they did it. You can choose one of those topics for the whole family to further explore after the meal.

3. Create joy. Choose an unavoidable task that you normally find tedious and invent a way to perform the task using one of our signature strengths. One of Dr. Seligman's students transformed his lonely midnight walk from the library to his apartment using his strength of playfulness by rollerblading home and trying to set a new record on each run. Another student used her strength of social intelligence to turn waitressing into gratification by setting the goal of making each customer's interaction with her the social highlight of his or her evening.
4. Sit and observe your surroundings with interest and curiosity. Hold your attention to become aware of what you are absorbing through your five senses. Without being analytical or too logical, what strengths pop up?
5. Widen your view of each of your signature strengths. What would happen if you could not use one or more of your strength? First, consider how one of your top five strengths has helped you so far in life. Now, imagine that you are not allowed to use that strength for the next month. Consider what that would be like, and how you would feel.
6. Imprint your satisfaction. Calling upon your signature strengths, perform one philanthropic activity and one simply for your own pleasure. Do both on the same day or within a day or two. Afterwards, make written notes to compare the satisfaction you derived from both activities.
7. Anchor your strength in habitual activities. Choose a regular activity you engage in on a regular basis: leading a team meeting, handling telephone calls, working one-on-one with clients, washing pots and pans, walking your dog, talking with your loved one. Each time you start this activity, say to yourself – "I am going to bring forth one of my signature strengths in a new way while I'm doing this activity." This will anchor your strength with something that is already routine and from that new ideas around enhancing your strengths will emerge.

Underpinnings of Flourishing – Meaningful, Authentic Happiness

Through the science of flourishing you learned that all human beings long for and instinctively desire five universal, timeless elements that are at the root of sincere happiness. They are the most gratifying and meaningful aspects of living and best for your well-being to flourish.

1. Most people desire positive emotion in their lives.
2. Most people want engagement with their loved ones, their job, and their leisure activities.
3. Most people want positive relationships.
4. Most people want lives infused with meaning.
5. Most people want accomplishment.

You might say that happiness is like seed within you. You need to cultivate the five elements of your well-being for that seed to flourish. Before we delve into each element, take a moment to think about them. You might recognize that their value is encapsulated in the clichéd tips that we heard from our grandparents and studied philosophers. You know the ones we ignored because they sounded so well-worn and corny. Yet, think about all the years of experience these influencers had before they offered sage advice about their pathway to happiness. They asked themselves questions such as: If I can be a better version of myself, how do I want to be? What makes us strong and virtuous? What has made my life worth living?

Think about the extraordinary people you know and what they might tell you about their challenges and accomplishments, and how they find meaning in their life.

“Happiness is not ready made. It comes from your own actions.” – Dalai Lama

“The true secret of happiness lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.” – William Morris

“True happiness is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.” – Helen Keller

“Happiness is a form of courage.” – Holbrook Jackson

“Happiness is a state of activity.” – Aristotle

“The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.” – Marcus Aurelius

I have only two kinds of days: happy and hysterically happy.” – Allen J. Lefferdink

“If you want to be happy, set a goal that commands your thoughts, liberates your energy, and inspires your hopes.” – Andrew Carnegie

Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities in blessings.” – William Arthur Ward

“The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance, the wise grows it under his feet.” James Oppenheim

We do not
live in a vacuum!

What if well-being
increased our enacting of
moral traits and our wish to
become a virtuous person?

What if happiness made us more
mindful and morally more engaged?

What if happiness comes
from more generosity?

What if well-being & happiness
was the result of
living well
with others.

POSITIVE EMOTION

Positive emotions are an integral part of our well-being. Happy people look back on the past with gladness; look into the future with hope; and they enjoy and cherish the present.

The choices you make, the actions you take, and the perceptions you have are all influenced by the emotions you are experiencing at any given moment. The emotions at the core of human experience are: joy, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, anger, amusement, contempt, embarrassment, excitement, guilt, pride in achievement, relief, satisfaction, and shame. You experience these emotions along a gradient of low to high intensity. Also these emotions can be combined to form different deeply inter-



related feelings, positive and negative, which you can also sense at different intensity.

While negative emotions can trigger strong responses to difficult events, ultimately having more frequent positive emotions has a stronger impact on your actions than the negative ones.

Positive emotions help us broaden our outlook on the world. They blend into optimism and eagerness to help us feel energized. Our emotions help us take action, find our purpose, help us care about others,

build relationships and feel connected. These are but some of the basic reasons people desire positive emotion in their lives.

Positive emotions trigger similar emotions in other people. Think of how elevated you feel when you watch someone engage in an act of kindness or generosity. You recognize their inner goodness which can inspire you to similar action. Think of the satisfaction you feel from helping others or the positive vibes you get from liking a person for the pleasure of his or her company? What about the intensity of your readiness or excitement for something. These are just some of the positive emotions that elevate you and reinforce one another to enhance your overall well-being and add to your level of contentment.

Change Your View of Pain and Suffering

You can change your view of pain and suffering to adopt more positive perspective. There is no event or situation we cannot handle as long as we learn not to react by continuous suffering through toxic inner commentary. We refer to the pain of change or hardship such as the betrayal of a friend, the loss of a job, or the death of a loved one. We all experience hardship. Those experiences can be challenging and difficult for sure. But, they are manageable. Let us examine a painful experience to differentiate pain from suffering.

What does pain from hardship look like? Pain from a change or hardship is an intense physical or emotional sensation that we feel immediately at the time the hardship is revealed. Later it passes. In the midst of this hardship you can have thoughts come and go: "This is unbearable. This is killing me. I can't stand it any longer. How long will this go on?" These are anticipatory thoughts about your future. These thoughts are normal, but none of them is "the pain". The way you see the pain and how you react to it will determine the degree of suffering you will experience.

What does suffering look like? When you experience the hardship, you can allow an inner dialogue to take over: "This is terrible. This hurts. Is this going to last forever? Why me? Oh no, oh no, oh no!" Suffering is this mental story that plays over and over and over in your mind. When you stop the negative story you can stop the suffering.

Think about the people you know or have heard about who were dying of cancer or survived a painful accident to end up bound to a wheel chair or were traumatized by a life-altering event and are completely happy. Instead of dwelling in the "story of suffering" they did not allow events to keep them from loving life or having a deep belief that life is meaningful!

You do not need to experience positive emotions all day everyday to reap their benefits. Fleeting moments of positive emotions can be the ones that make hard work and struggling in life worthwhile. Just a few here and there can put you in a magical state of mind where little things feed your well-being and happiness.

6 Ways to Nourish Positive Emotions and Adopt a More Positive Perspective

1. Become more self-reflective. Ask yourself thought-provoking questions to figure out your perspective on life and how you might challenge your assumptions about yourself and others to improve yourself and your relationships. Refer to our list of thought-provoking questions.
2. Share an example of something good that happened to you today. Identify the character strengths that you used that contributed to the good feelings.



3. Three good things. Every evening, write down 'three good things' that happen during that day.
4. Make a day beautiful. Design a day that you will spend in a very pleasant way.
5. Share your positivity through your actions by making time to demonstrate kindness, compassion, gratitude or encouragement to others. People can become so busy focusing on the negative events in their life they fail to notice the negative events going on in the lives of others. Be a guardian angel by helping others in positive ways.

6. Frame your perspective with positivity more frequently. When you feel poorly or things are tough, monitor your thoughts and inner dialogue to eliminate negative self-talk. Offset negative emotions by focusing on what matters to you, what you are grateful for, and what you can control. Difficult does not mean impossible. Negative emotions are also a normal part of life and they do not necessarily cause your demise. You can learn from any situation, and you can always find something to be grateful for. It is important to acknowledge your negative emotions or that negative things occurred, but it is equally critical that you not dwell on them or chastise yourself for feeling them.

Remember to Adopt a Positive Perspective as Often as you Can

ENGAGEMENT

When we focus on doing the things we truly enjoy and care about, we can begin to engage completely with the present moment and enter the state of being, known as flow.

Experiences and activities that meet your need for engagement flood your body with positive neurotransmitters and hormones that elevate your sense of well-being. You find calm and joy, even while exerting intense energy. We all find enjoyment in different things: playing a sport, dancing, a hobby, playing an instrument, playing games with family, working on an interesting project. When you use your signature strengths to accomplish something or meet a challenge, you feel “authentically happy” and gratified. You become so immersed in the person, subject or activity, so fully involved the progress of the experience or task, time flies by. It flows so seamlessly, you did not realize how your energized concentration stretched your intelligence, skills, and emotional capabilities to the maximum.



Engagement occurs when you experience using your character strengths every day. Positive engagement merges action, awareness and enjoyment. You have a sense of confidence and personal control over the situation or activity. There is immediate feedback because you are strategically aware of the progress of the activity and feel the potential to succeed. Yet, strangely, during the activity, you

do not realize how much you enjoy it. It is when you reflect on the experience that you realize how much you enjoyed it. You may feel tired or drained, but you will be flourishing and happy. Most people want engagement with their loved ones, their job, and their hobbies or leisure activities.

Psychologists call it “finding flow”. Athletes call it “being in the zone”. Musicians are in “a state of flow”. Gardeners are “in tune with nature”. Software programmers are “wired in”. Stock market traders are “in the pipe”. Pokers players “play the A-game”. Artists call it “the muse”. What they have in common is two-fold. First they know what needs to be done and how well they are doing. Second, whether they reach their goal or not, is not important – whatever produces that flow, the “high” of the experience, becomes its own reward. All these people derive happiness from personal development and growth to do it again and again.

There is a difference between positive engagement where you use your signature traits and negative hyper-focus, where you spend so much time on an activity it has a potentially negative effect. Two examples of hyper-focus can occur when a person plays video games or binge watches television shows and gets side-tracked to the detriment of other important aspects of their well-being. In negative hyper-focus you do not necessarily use your character strengths.

4 Ways to Nourish Engagement

1. Make a list of all the things that you like about yourself. Start with your signature strengths. Include other personality traits – your sense of humor, your commitment to family, your athletic or artistic talents. Add to the list all the things that you have accomplished in life. Be generous. No accomplishment is too small. Courses you have taken, graduating from college, volunteer activities, raising children, helping your neighbour. Do not forget your community, work or family projects you organized or helped to complete (no matter how involved you were): family reunion, birthday or Christmas dinners, fundraisers, support groups, talent shows, company trips or celebrations. Add to the list over the next few days as you recall your wonderful qualities or accomplishments over the years. A pattern of engagement will emerge.
2. Create a list of all the situations that have fully kept you fascinated or captivated. They could be things you like doing such as reading, a hobby, creating puzzles, or taking self-improvement courses. They could be things you have done that were so enthralling you wanted to keep talking about it with family or friends to share your excitement or discovery or accomplishment. For each situation, determine which of your signature strength you displayed. Note any secondary strengths that recur. All these strengths are expressions of the real you and provide a good indication of how you can utilize your strengths in different situations.
3. Engage in a household chore or a work project by thinking of 3 novel things about the activity while you do it. Use your senses and mindful awareness to experience the task in this new way.
4. Do not show up at work to kill time. Find at least one thing that you can totally absorb you. Make a list of goal-based activities that you really love in your job. Try to incorporate an element of such an activity into each day. Forget about your nagging “to do list” and concentrate on the activity.
 - When you can, choose a time of day where you are at peak performance.
 - Eliminate distractions: close your browser, put your phone on silent (hide it even), have water for hydration or a snack handy if you think you'll need one.
 - Create a ritual to signal your brain you are ready to focus on what you are doing: short walk, meditation, cup of tea.

RELATIONSHIPS

Everyone needs someone. We enhance our well-being and share it with others by building strong relationships with the people around us - family, friends, coworkers, neighbours.

If you are like most of us you want to feel deeply connected to other people, fully seen, understood, and appreciated by them, and above all you want to feel secure in those relationships. One of the most profound experiences you can have in your life is the connection you have with other human beings.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development has researched happiness for more than 80 years. Their studies show that initially people tend to assume that wealth and fame are keys to happiness. However, what has been repeatedly shown to be true is that those who actually fared best were “people who leaned into relationships with family, friends and community.” Their social networks helped shaped their personal and professional lives. Even when their social relationships changed due to retirement, moving or the death of a loved one, they nurtured new relationships.



The leading predictor of happiness is what social scientists call pro-social behavior – how people interact with other people. By nature, we are hard-wired to bond and depend on other humans. We thrive on human connections with parents, siblings, peers, friends, boss, and coworkers. Your positive relationships that promote love, intimacy, and a strong emotional and physical interaction help you to be more authentic and emotionally rich because you trust the community of humans around you to be supportive. Oppositely, when you are isolated chances are your pain centres become more active. Strong relationships, belonging to a group (no matter how small) helps you feel safe and valued. They also provide support in difficult times that require you to be resilient. It is within these positive relationships that you have the best opportunities to enrich your life, boost your well-being and increase your level of happiness.

6 Ways to Nourish Positive Relationships

1. Surround yourself with people who care for you and you care for. You may wonder — who has the time to do all that? The thing is you do not need a huge network to enjoy connection and support. The key is nurturing positive relationships built on mutual trust with compassionate people you can count on when the going gets tough. They listen, accept your vulnerability, and respect your boundaries.
2. Find resilient role models. Is there a friend, relative, colleague, or mentor who you feel has the kind of emotional intelligence and satisfaction you'd like to achieve? Adopt that person as a role model! Look to their examples of good emotional resilience and learn how they do things.
3. Take small actions to create more positive connections with others at the office, in the shops, on the train or in your neighbourhood. Take an interest in others during conversation. Make an effort to learn more about your coworkers or people you know on a more casual basis. Showing an interest in the lives of others through conversation helps to build rapport and develop friendships. These tiny moments of friendliness and co-operation aren't trivial and meaningless; they are the vital lifeblood of a good society.
4. Name one example of how your significant other or a friend has used each of their top 3 strengths in an admirable way. Share this with him or her and explain why this is important to you.
5. Give the gift of your presence. A busy schedule can get in the way of maintaining friendships or developing new relationships. Keep connections active by carving out time in your week to focus on your family and friends and find different ways to connect with them. The first step to feeling more loved is creating close relationships and that starts with honest, meaningful, reciprocal conversation. Not social media posts and forwarding repetitive emails, but the gift of your presence, in person or at least hearing your voice. Your presence includes listening, too.
6. Commit to meeting new people. Try joining a class or group that meets regularly, spending time with people who have similar interests is a great opportunity to develop new friendships.

Focus on Family and Friends

Find Ways to Connect

MEANING

We are at our best when we dedicate time to something greater than ourselves. This might be community work, family, a charity, religious faith, politics, a professional or creative goal.

Living a life of meaning is another of the key elements of flourishing and essential to your well-being. But, what does this mean?

Think about what you spend a lot of time doing. Ask yourself, what does that activity provide toward my fulfillment? Some people call it purpose. Martin Seligman defines the meaningful life as knowing what your highest strengths are and “using your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are.” That is why people ask, “Why are we on this earth? What drives us toward fulfillment?”

Still, many people wake up and ask the wrong questions: What will I accomplish today? What will the day bring for me? While there is nothing at all wrong with asking, these type of question is created by ego that is based in a demanding or competitive environment. The ego will seek immediate pleasures or a win at all costs. When you answer to ego, you deny the authentic side of your nature that demands something better from you. Deep inside, the authentic you wants to recognize and feel your actions are valuable and worthwhile, and that you belong to and are working towards something which is greater than yourself. Rather than deny your authentic self, what if you instead asked, “How might I use my unique talents to create joy for others, not myself?”

Some people feel hesitant about pursuing their life purpose because they worry they cannot achieve something commendable like feeding the hungry of the world or researching a disease. They worry that a lofty purpose sounds self-serving. However, living a life of meaning does not need to be an earth-shattering cause. It is about recognizing your own gifts and using them to contribute something personally meaningful to the world around you. You can find meaning in raising children, playing music for others to enjoy, helping a friend solve a problem, teaching children to read, volunteering to coach in minor sports, working for a good company, or simply bringing more joy into the lives of those around you. Living a life of meaning can be about helping your co-workers without seeking anything in return or your devotion to your faith or aligning with an ideology – whatever, has the potential to change the lives of other people, even in small ways.

It is difficult to make good choices for your overall well-being if you do not know yourself intimately. That makes it very difficult to know, let alone pursue a meaningful life. You can end up prioritizing friends, a job or activities that are not aligned with your true self. You can end up not speaking your truth.

Let's explore that thought. People share a lot online, in their creative work, jobs and even in relationships, but so often they censor themselves by not saying what they really mean. When you read something that is deeply honest or watch performers who expose their vulnerabilities, are you moved? Can you tell when someone is giving you full attention? Do these experiences inspire you?

Despite your ability to witness such passion or purpose, do you edit yourself for the listener or viewer rather than exposing yourself from a deep true place? It is not easy to looking inward. But, it is a skill that can be honed. We will delve into self-awareness in the next section.



Pursue Your Idea of a Meaningful Life

A life of meaning often grows from connection to others. If you believe you lack meaning in your life it could be a symptom of isolation. Once you identify what is meaningful in your life you are bound to find others who think it matters too.

Here is an important question relating to authentic expression or meaning in your life.

Can you define your personal values? Your personal values are your moral compass, the central part of who you are, and who you want to be. Your personal values guide your motivations, your behaviors, actions, reactions, the choices you make, or the order in which you do things. Your personal values exist whether you recognize them or not, or can identify your values by a specific name. Your values have to make sense to you, help you feel fulfilled, not make other people happy.

To help you to generate ideas of your personal values and purpose as yourself:

- What is important in my life?
- When I read a news story, what kind of story or behavior tends to inspire me?
- What type of news story or behavior makes me angry?
- What do I want to change about the world?
- What do I want to change about myself?
- What things have I done that made me proud?
- How do I want to be remembered?
- What am thinking or I doing when I feel most alive or satisfied?

Once you determine what gives you purpose, you do not need to completely change your life. Bit by bit, you can reshape things in your life and seek out experiences so you can start living your purpose more fully each day. Pay attention to how you are feeling, how it shapes your mindset and the attitude you have toward others as well as the events you experience.

Naturally, the more you do toward your greater purpose the more it will parlay into a fulfilling happy life. That in turn will automatically translate into serving others in the most real and powerful way.

Do not be surprised if your life of meaning changes over time, as you settle into different responsibilities of adulthood or shift into retirement. You will always have something to look forward to and thrive through something that matters in your life.

Here is another view of greater purpose:

The World Happiness Report: “For society as a whole”, the World Happiness Report 2013, a major global study, found that, “two of the strongest explanatory factors for national wellbeing are levels of social support and generosity. Our success as a society directly depends on the extent to which we see each other as a source of support rather than a source of threat.” We live in a complex and interconnected world. We should not ignore the huge possibility that our happiness is part of something much bigger, such as the importance of connecting with and caring about the people we do not know and may never meet. This matters for sustainability of our resources, for solving the major challenges we face as a creature on this earth, and how we measure progress. Instead of growth at all costs, we should consider a more holistic view of well-being as the ultimate goal, taking future generations into account too.”

There is a deeper message, too, that relates to the way that we each behave as individuals as well as how we treat others in our communities and working lives. Tiny moments of friendliness and co-operation are not trivial and meaningless; they are the vital lifeblood of a good society. Understanding the elements of flourishing and the factors that influence this state helps us to work together to improve the quality of our lives, as individuals and as communities. Humanity’s wellness depends on connection, taking notice of what it needs to thrive, lifelong learning, and giving the people around us our time, words, and presence.

8 Ways to Nourish Meaning in Your Life

1. Expose yourself to a broad range of meaningful experiences. It improves your well-being while give you new directions to explore. Volunteering expands your experience and helps others. It brings you into contact with people who have similar values and may inspire you to explore opportunities you had not considered before.
2. Use your magic wand. Think about the world around you — your home, community, the world at large—and visualize what you would change if you had a magic wand and could change anything. Then ask yourself, why you chose what you did and consider concrete steps you might take to move the world a little closer to that ideal.
3. Define your “Authentic Self” in one sentence. If you need to investigate the answer:
 - Make a list of the things that provoke a strong response from you. Honesty? Unfairness? What fires your passion? Your answers are indicators of what living a meaningful life is for you.
 - Spend time reflecting on previous positive memorable experiences and what was meaningful in them.
 - Recognize your strengths. What do they reveal about you?
 - Seek an outsider’s opinion by contacting people who know you—teachers, friends, family, colleagues, and mentors—and ask them what you’re good at, and how you might utilize your strengths to make life more enjoyable for someone else or make your mark on the world.
4. Go out of your way to thank someone. At the start of every day, make a phone call, write a note, send a short email or text praising someone you know. Recognizing the meaningful things others do makes us feel good. In our daily routine we encounter many people who purposely support our lives: the postman who brings the mail, rain or shine, the crossing guards who keep our children safe, firefighters and police who protect our community, the waitress or barista, who always greets you with a smile.
5. Align one of your signature strengths with your top 3 work tasks (e.g., running a meeting, filing papers, emailing a customer) to make the task more meaningful.
6. Express one truth daily. Every day write and share something that is true for you at that moment in time. This is for you and you should not be concerned over the perspective or response of others.
7. Take one positive experience from the past 24 hours and spend two minutes writing down (not just thinking) every detail about that experience. You do this to imprint it on your brain as a meaningful experience.
8. Have a brave conversation. Speaking your truth can be tough because like many of us you may fear you will hurt someone’s feelings or maybe you fear consequences. However, when something bothers you or you witness an injustice or see another person hurting, you should find the courage to say what is true for you.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Everyone needs to win sometimes. To achieve well-being and happiness, we must be able to look back on our lives with a sense of accomplishment: 'I did it, and I did it well'.

Having accomplishments in life is important to your well-being. You probably already recognize that fulfillment does not come from you doing easy work. It comes in the afterglow of satisfaction you feel after achieving a tough goal. You know the sense of satisfaction you get when you put in effort, do the kind of work that demands your best, contributes value, and makes a difference. The ability to persevere over months or years to reach a goal adds to your sense of accomplishment and fulfillment, and is something that you can savour and recall for motivation when facing a new challenge.

Not all accomplishments are created equal. When you aim to accomplish something because you “have to” or feel that you “should” the pursuit of the goal is usually less gratifying or meaningful. The “get ahead or lose out” ethos fails to promote the better side of your nature. Science shows that accomplishments toward fame, fortune, winning, and success can actually detract from your well-being due to the psychological pressures. On the other hand, the intrinsic goals, relating to relationships, leaving a legacy, personal growth, along with developing social and emotional skills does not just enhance well-being, it boosts performance.



WELL DONE

In an earlier exercise under “Engagement” you were asked to make a list of all you have accomplished in life, large and small. Go through your list again and single out the five most memorable or gratifying ones that have intrinsic value. In all likelihood the tough ones are more memorable and gratifying.

Those accomplishments were all milestones or high points in your life. Grab hold of those moments, see them, feel them and appreciate them, like you would a treasured keepsake. Savour them. You will feel good without having done a thing, based purely on invoking a memory of that past accomplishment. This recall is good for flourishing just as the accomplishment itself contributed significantly to your overall well-being at the time. It is like a gift that keeps on giving. Achievement lasts forever and cannot be taken away – even in death.

The words “accomplishment” and “achievement” are often retrospective, as people look back at their lives to acknowledge something already completed. Just because you’ve reached those milestones you should not simply glide along in the afterglow of contentment or stop reaching for new high points. The truth is we all need more of those types of intrinsic personally meaningful goals and achievement experiences to continue flourishing.

Savour your Accomplishments and Bolster your Well-Being with Further Achievement

5 Ways to Nourish your Need for Accomplishment and Spin More Positivity

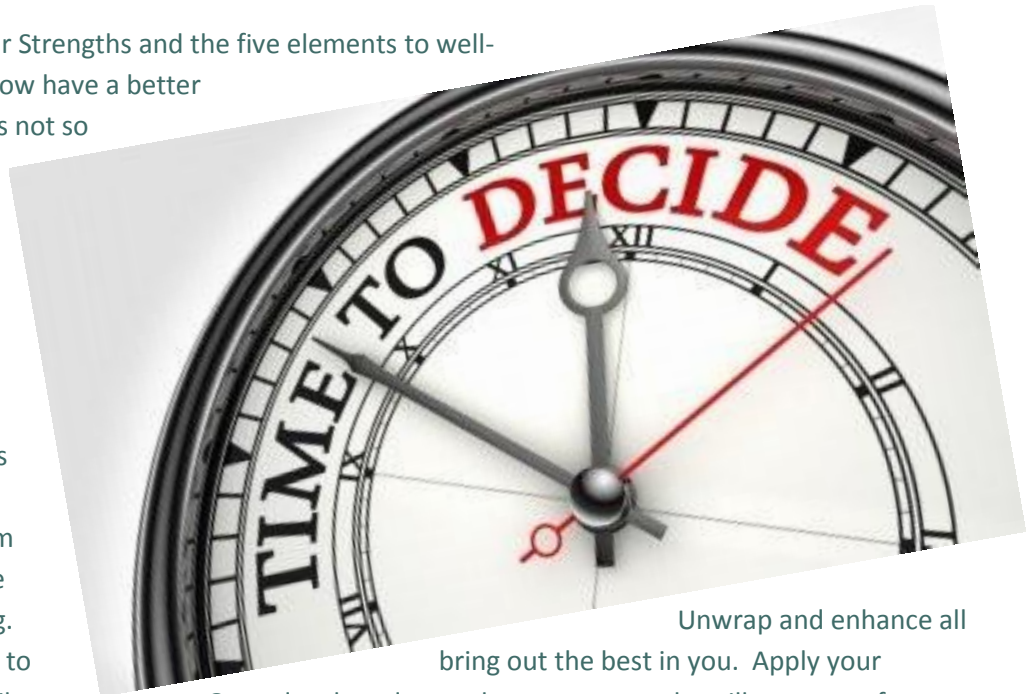
1. Reflect on your accomplishments often. Reflecting builds positivity, it strengthens your resilience and it reminds you of what you are good at. Reflecting spins off into a cycle of positivity. Your achievements are worthy of daily celebration for you own wellbeing as well as for those around you.
2. Set a goal of one thing you would like to accomplish. Build hope by thinking of at least 3 ways you can achieve your goal and at least 3 positive thoughts you can use to motivate yourself to stay focused on the goal.
3. Set aside time to review your goals. It does not matter whether you wrote them down or you have an internal sense of what they are. Ask yourself:
 - a. Are they authentic? Are you pursuing goals that are aligned to your life values? If you do not know what your core values are then how will be able to set and strive for authentic goals! Learn more about core values.
 - b. What is your motivation? What does it mean to you personally? Is it a goal that is a gift to you?
4. Make a list of two to three things that scare you. Be sure to stretch yourself. Choose a week to take action on one of your fears. Make a pact with yourself that you will do it. See how good it feels when you step into your fear to accomplish something meaningful to you. You’ll also build your confidence and feel less regret in life. Remember, the fears we mentioned earlier in #13 under “Happiness Seems Elusive”.
5. Trying something, anything apart from what you already know how to do. It can be a small goal or stepping stone toward a bigger personal goal.

Unwrap Your Happiness to Bring out the Best in You

Your happiness is bound up in two things:

1. The Five Elements of Happiness

2. Using Your Character Strengths and the five elements to well-being. We hope you now have a better understanding that it is not so much about what happens that leads to flourishing, it's much more about what you make of your 24 character strengths to shore up your internal resources – approach, attitude, courage – to have them help you boost the five elements of flourishing. 24 character strengths to signature strengths daily. Once developed your character strengths will serve you for your lifetime in elevating the elements of flourishing.



Unwrap and enhance all
bring out the best in you. Apply your

Once developed your character strengths will serve you for your
lifetime in elevating the elements of flourishing.

AMP UP YOUR HAPPINESS

When you are flourishing, you think more clearly and perform better because you are tuned into your core desires and character strengths. People want to work with you and learn from you. You are more fun to be around. When you are flourishing every experience presents meaningful knowledge, insight and something you can be excited about.

Enthusiasm, meaning or insight? How do you achieve that? The answer lies in enhancing the skills that matter most to your well-being. These skills should not be taken for granted:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Mindfulness
3. Courage
4. Curiosity
5. Self Care
6. Mind-set

Two of these skills, curiosity and courage, are also character strengths which are at the heart of life. One might consider both survival skills for the 21st Century. Your curiosity and courage are what makes the other character strengths and acquiring any capability possible. When you have higher levels of curiosity and courage you are not easily deterred by feelings of stress and anxiety and you are more resilient. These two strengths are valuable life skills.

In theory, most of us know we should be prepared for anything, but the reality is we can sometimes feel woefully ill-equipped to handle all the curve-balls life throws our way. Sometimes it is difficult to be a grownup! We sometimes forget to use our most important skills.

Mighty Muscles – Partnered to do More

View these skills as your mighty muscles. It is vital to your well-being to develop and exercise these muscles because they are valuable, regardless of the industry you work in or situation that confronts you. Your ability to flex those muscles allows you to grow wiser and stronger from any situation, to transform it into an opportunity or something momentous to savour. You can count on these muscles to discriminate between right and wrong, find the strength to do what is difficult without giving in to impulses, maintain a positive attitude, and above all believe in yourself and your strengths and abilities – all meaningful to flourishing as an individual. Best of all, your emotional response, what you do, how you use these muscles, and what you learn are consolidated into your long-term memory so you are able to automatically retrieve the memory and the experience to savour it or mobilize those skills again when the situation arises.

These mighty muscles are more than intrinsic skills for flourishing they are interconnected with developing resiliency and your pursuit of learning, which are both essential to your growth and happiness. Let's explore these muscles and how to strengthen them.

Self-Awareness

Many of us rarely take time out from our harried schedules to become observers of our own lives and who we are being. We get bogged down in daily activities and do not make it a priority to determine what makes us happy and what gives us authentic purpose.

It requires self-awareness to identify what aspects of your life may not align with your authentic self. Self-awareness is about being in tune with what you know and understand about your own character, feelings, motives and desires. In your reach for authenticity and living a meaningful life, acquiring self-awareness is one of the biggest gifts you can give yourself. This is by no means saying that you look inward because something is broken and needs fixing or that you need to change your life. You look inward to get to know the “true you” to better understand how to live your life more authentically.



Internal and External Self-Awareness

There are two broad categories of self-awareness: internal self-awareness and external self-awareness.

Internal self-awareness leads to understanding with clarity why you think or feel a certain way. When you feel off-kilter, anxious or angry it could be because you haven’t taken an inside look at what makes you feel that way. External self-awareness is your ability to clearly see how other people perceive you, your attitude and responses to them as individuals. Are you aware of how your tone of voice or choice of words affects other people? External self-awareness typically allows you to be more empathetic which is reflected in your abilities as a leader and in maintaining stronger relationships.

It is not Easy Looking Inward

Think of yourself as a garden, but imagine that up until now you are unaware if the garden is thriving or barely surviving.

The reason you do not know is because you do not know enough about the plants and flowers that grow there, or the garden in general. You do not know which plants grow where, how big and beautiful the plants might grow or what bears fruit, because you have never actually learned about their nature. Despite their importance, you do not even know their names! You've never looked closely at the leaves, petals, or the soil. You do not know if the plants self-seed, require pruning, need more sunlight, nutrients, or extra water. There could be an infestation of weeds choking the roots or pests chewing away at the leaves and blossoms. Maybe you need more bees and butterflies to visit. The soil could be leached dry of nutrients and cracked from lack of moisture. The fact is you have never been curious or taken the time to explore the various pathways in the garden to enjoy it or seek out the mysteries and marvelous secrets hidden there.

Your lack of knowledge about the garden could be due to your innocence, naivety, or inexperience. Maybe you got preoccupied and knowing or the needs of the garden were not high on your list of priorities. But, now you learn that your happiness may depend on your knowledge of that garden. You really want to care about the garden, and you should because it is after all the essence of you. Do you take the time to get to know every facet of that garden and become an expert on what is best for the garden itself? Do you delve into the mysteries and secrets that allow the garden to flourish beyond your wildest imagination? Or do you let the garden become a victim of the weeds, pests, and elements? We can count on you concentrating on the garden because it is one of the keys to your happiness?

When you decide to become more self-aware, you choose to see just the real you, apart from your work, home, or environment. You look inside yourself to pinpoint the emotions, motivations, and triggers that initiate both your positive and negative feelings.

Seriously, how often do you just sit and ponder the truth that is within you. Is it possible that you get so preoccupied with what others are thinking and doing that you fail to do yourself justice. Are you letting your awareness muscle atrophy by not recognizing yourself as a source of insight? When you are faced with an issue do you use Google or social media as your go-to guide for answers? Do you look to become more like heroes and business leaders who relate success stories?

Think about it. Knowledge is not insight. Insight is your ability to make sense of a situation, identify and distill what you learn, develop your own judgement, and figure out your own passions. While many iconic leaders have achieved great things, should your goals be about what is outwardly displayed by them? Instead of being preoccupied with one-click answers, carve out some time to listen to your inner voice. Your goal is actually simple – to be the best version of yourself.

Self-Awareness is not Fixed

Your self-awareness is not fixed. As you develop your personal character strengths, various abilities, and knowledge of the world, you will also always enhance your self-awareness to discover something interesting and exciting about yourself.

Each moment in your life is an opportunity to be introspective and listen to your inner voice. The insights you gain matter to everything you do, every relationship you have, how you feel about yourself, how these things ultimately affect you as well as others, and how you take responsibility for your positive emotions, your flaws and problems, and most importantly improve what matters to you and help you grow as an individual.

Give these next suggestions or questions about your self-awareness some serious thought and think how just one aspect of any relationship or one part of your day could be better or easier if you decided to apply just five minutes of more self-awareness to your daily interactions.

- Can you define your personal values or moral compass? People can live in disarray because they are unaware of their internal moral compass. They make choices that conflict with their personal values and it affects their emotions and ability to flourish.
Learn More about Personal Values
- Ask yourself “what” questions and find good answers.
 - What am I trying to achieve?
 - What am I doing that is working?
 - What am I doing that is slowing me down?
 - What can I do to change?
- When we ask “why” we focus on the mistake which opens ourselves to negative, suspicious, or critical thoughts, that can be depressing and unproductive. Highly self-aware people ask, “What?” because it provides more productive focus on objectives and future goals rather than mistakes. Asking “what” guides you to recognizing factors that may be outside your control and may not align with your personal values or passions. This leads to you being able to strategize how to fix situations rather than ruminate on “whoa is me” negatives.
- Can you look at your feelings and behaviours from a third-person perspective and then make rational judgements on them? Make lists, a balance sheet, or a chart of your abilities, character strengths, weaknesses, limitations, liabilities, and problem behaviours.
 - You need a complete picture. You do that by getting different perspectives to get a true sense of how others perceive you. Listen to the important people in your life. Ask for input on what you might have missed or viewed differently. Assess what you can improve or learn, how, or from whom.
 - Allow yourself to be vulnerable, ask for feedback from people you work with, or lead.

- Anytime you make an important decision, assess it by noting your thoughts and motivations during the decision-making process.
 - Every time you gain a new strength diarize it. Track the progress of your character over time. You may employ other methods. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of who you are, what you want, and how those things overlap or conflict with how you behave, think, and feel.
- Spend time with yourself in silence. It is exceedingly difficult to self-reflect when you are distracted by a television, phone, or friends. Practice mindfulness. Mindfulness allows you to be present with yourself and observe your thoughts in a non-judgemental way. What better way to become self-aware than focusing, non-judgementally, on you?
 - Spending time reading, writing, meditating, or practicing other solo activities to connect with the authentic you.
 - Try to give yourself 30 quiet, distraction-free minutes a day. That may seem to be a big ask, but try.
- In trying to impress others, many people cover up their weaknesses and hardly ever admit a mistake. Sooner or later the truth comes out, so why do they continue to live in disguise and be labeled as unaccountable, fraudulent, or untrustworthy? When they live in that kind of fear and suppress themselves for too long, they end up ashamed which further complicates their lives and ability to be themselves.
 - Can you be candid about who you are?
 - Do you overcompensate to pretend you're not afraid?
- Everyone is afraid of judgement. It's how you respond that matters. Next time you make an error, just say so. It takes but a few seconds to say, "My bad," or "I misjudged the situation," and move on since there are many more minutes and hours in the day to deal with. Work and relationships are complicated enough, why add more obstacles like lies or guilt!

Self-awareness is crucial to creating more opportunities to enhance those things that matter most to you. Without self-awareness, proficiency in the most other competencies becomes difficult to deploy consistently. As you become more self-aware, you'll be able to reach a new level of contentment. Self-awareness helps you manage your emotions better, helps you become a better leader, improve relationships and develop the uniqueness that gives your life more meaning.

Courage

Living a life of courage is not about signing up for extreme sports or slashing your way through a scary jungle, putting your life on the line like police officers or firefighters, or the overconfident cockiness to blindly rush in and take unnecessary risks. Courage is not the absence of fear. Tapping into your courage is about saying, “I can”, being willing to make bolder choices to do whatever you are afraid of doing, physically or emotionally to triumph over fear – asking for a raise, giving a stranger a compliment, establishing personal boundaries, confronting uncertainties about something unfamiliar, or engaging in complex, unfamiliar, and challenging concepts or endeavors. Courage can be an intelligent gamble, calculated through careful deliberation and preparation.



Brene Brown, popular author and research professor in social work, reminds us that the root word for courage is ‘cor’ –the Latin word for heart. For her, courage means ‘to speak one’s mind by telling one’s heart.’ Another researcher, Jonathan Lear, says, “Courage is the capacity for living well with the risks that inevitably attend human existence.” Winston Churchill said, “Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.”

Shying Away from Fear does not Make it go Away

We all have fears and worries. Shying away from your fear does not make it go away. Actually, the fear becomes bigger in your mind. You can choose to act in spite of fear and be a hero to yourself. Identify your fears. Say them aloud, write them down. Then take a step forward, even if you feel a bit unsteady.

You can do Hard Things - Courage Shows up In Many Ways

The majority of us have to learn and build courage as we go along. The need for courage shows up in a number of ways:

- It takes a courageous spirit to take the initiative. Sometimes it involves risk such as proposing a new idea or going beyond the scope of a job description. It might involve overcoming a fear. Personal courage and your ability to face what you fear can be daunting—especially if the personal choice to be courageous is not popular. A young person who wants to refuse to drink alcohol might fear what his peers will think or say.
- It takes courage to be decisive and make the difficult decision in the wake of adversity or challenge. Have you ever waited so long trying to make a decision that the opportunity itself was lost? Research shows that many people opt for making no decision even if logic would dictate otherwise. But the same research shows that even when decisions don’t go perfectly to plan, the very act of decisiveness emboldens us, fuelling personal power in ways that procrastination never can.

- It takes courage to acknowledge your shortcomings and take personal responsibility for your decisions. People often play the victim card without even realizing that they are making excuses because making excuses is part of the internal story people tell themselves. If you fail to assume responsibility and are quick to blame circumstances or other people when an outcome is not good, you are allowing external circumstances account for everything. Then how can you take credit for your successes! Mistakes are what you did not who you are. Courage to take responsibility is evidence of your honesty and trustworthiness.
- It takes courage to try new things, make mistakes, and keep going no matter what the outcome might be. Your very best lessons in life almost always come directly from your biggest blunders. So, instead of worrying about what might go wrong focus on the experience.
- It takes a courageous spirit to speak up. But speaking up is absolutely critical to making a difference and creating change and growth. Blowing the whistle on corruption – the CEO who pushes to invest in environmentally harmful practices. Blowing the whistle on lies – just because someone says something is true, or because it shows up on the Internet, or because “everyone” is repeating it as fact, doesn’t actually make it true.
- It takes courage to sit down and listen.
- It takes courage to let go of the need to control outcomes or put your trust in others.
- It takes courage to learn new things, ask questions, try new methods, or be a novice. It takes courage to be vulnerable, to be willing to shed your protective layer and let people see the real you. The openness and honesty that comes from being vulnerable fosters trust. You simply cannot have trust without vulnerability.
- It takes courage to stand by your values because you believe you are doing the right thing. Doing the right thing is often the hardest choice, but your conviction will see you through.
- It takes courage to admit when you are wrong. Getting back up when you have suffered a set back is one of the bravest things you can do.

Mastering Your Emotions for Courage

Courage is a human activity that requires you to master your emotions. The key is to think rationally about what you want to do and what is the right thing to do in the situation. Ask yourself:

- What am I actually afraid of? Is it the right thing to be afraid of? Should I be this afraid of it? Rationally, should I be less or more afraid?
- What harm can this thing actually do to me or others?
- What are the things that could happen as a result of my actions and/or inactions?
- What is the worst that could happen as a result of my actions and/or inactions?
- What are the risks to me and to others?

Courage gives you the strength to evaluate an emotional response and then act rationally and rightly.

Curiosity

Curiosity is your desire to know or learn for the sake of knowing and to be fascinated with new information and experiences. Curiosity is at the heart of human endeavour; it keeps leading mankind down new paths to countless wonders. Research shows that consistent levels of curiosity are elemental to your well-being and life satisfaction. Furthermore, you tend to ask smarter questions, inspire others, solve problems, and avoid thinking that leads to faulty decision-making.

Does our Society Nurture Curiosity?

As a child you were naturally curious, asking, in one day, ten times the questions an adult asks in a week. Through curiosity you experienced some important moments in your life. As you entered adulthood did you continue to nurture your curiosity as a strategic tool? If not, why not? Probably because like most adults you have taken your level of curiosity for granted. When not used, the curiosity muscle withers.



We live in a society where curiosity is often not encouraged. We are vulnerable to automation. We have been programmed to think like machines, and we work with technology made to replicate the minds of incurious adults. Even at school they often fail to nurture a learning mind because the things that are easy to teach and test are precisely the kinds of things that are easy to digitize. In the workplace we are expected to fulfill a specific role or stick to the spoon-fed formulas. We are all acquainted with an organization that discourages curiosity by resisting new ideas or novel questions. At home, how many people take a back-seat to rely on spoon-fed answers from Alexa?

Father of computer science and artificial intelligence, Alan Turing said, “Instead of trying to produce a program to simulate the adult mind, why not rather try to produce one which simulates the child’s?” That did not happen. Now we treasure knowing, not the experience of learning. In this “one click away” machine driven world where there is an unlimited availability of information, it takes a hungry mind to explore it, expand it, and use it.

Curiosity can be Learned and Fine-Tuned

Curiosity precedes learning and is the driving force behind your search for information and innovation. It is associated with your motivation, engagement and agility. Without curiosity even your most in demand soft skills of creativity, persuasion, collaboration and adaptability are more elusive.

Fortunately, more and more experts are realizing curiosity is a skill rather than just a natural trait which leads more parents, educators, and organizations to encourage students and adults to become more curious and use that mighty muscle every day.

Albert Einstein said, “I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious.” That is intrinsic motivation – simply enjoying the opportunity to explore and seek answers to questions. You do not need to be a genius to be curious.

Curiosity can be learned and fine-tuned. When your brain is curious, it generates dopamine, triggering the learning that occurs. High levels of curiosity activate areas of your brain that are involved with other cognitive processes and benefits. That’s what happens with the stimulated mind of a child. Curiosity separates us from the robots, which is even more critical as artificial intelligence becomes more prevalent in our lives. You can be creative, innovative or intellectually curious; robots cannot. It’s worth carving out time each week to boost your curiosity. You’ll love where it leads you as it transforms into a natural part of your life and curiosity becomes instinctive.

Exercises to Spark your Curiosity

- Learn to think like a toddler; be curious about everything. For youngsters learning is not tied to any reward like acing a test. For them, curiosity is a way of life – playing and learning are innate, not imposed assignments. For children one question leads to another, and another. Spend time with young children and follow their lead.
- Question everything. Identify the gaps in your knowledge? There is a bottomless pit of fascinating possibilities. What do you know about wolves? Are bats really blind? How do I make my own paper? Press flowers? Can I see ice from the last ice age? Where? What are the masterpieces of world literature? Can I be a backyard meteorologist? Are there When you find an answer ask more questions about that topic.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions wherever you go, with whomever you meet. Some adults think being curious is “being nosey”. When someone is being nosey, they want to know something for their benefit. When someone is being curious, they want to better understand a person or situation. Phrase your questions accordingly.
- Learn to ask better questions. The skill of curiosity and questioning go together. To develop the skill of curiosity, we have to question why things are the way they are or why a person may do something a certain way.
 - Ask yourself tough questions such as, “Why do I believe that?” or “Why do I think my way? What would happen next if I tried_____?”
 - Learn to be fascinated by the person you are with.
 - The key is knowing what to ask and when.
 - Be comfortable with silence while allowing a person to respond to a question.
 - Listening intently and effectively.
- Reflect on how you engaged with the world in the last seven days. How many of the things below are true for you? Do this every week.
 - I got so absorbed in learning something new that I lost track of time.
 - I talked to someone who gave me a new idea or changed my mind on something.
 - I took the initiative to learn more about one of my interests.
 - I didn't know the answer to a question; this didn't allow me to rest until I figured it out.
 - I explored a completely new idea or topic—just for the fun of it.
 - I took the initiative to talk to a new person, just to discover what she was thinking

- Do not shy away from the unknown. If someone is not doing what we expect, be curious about what their outcome could be. You learn to see things from another perspective. It can be a learning opportunity for both of you.
- Embark on a curious excursion. You don't have to go far. It is best if you go someplace new. You could choose a museum if that interests you, but you can bolster curiosity exploring a hardware store or tree nursery. The next time you go to supermarket, ask the produce manager the differences in the variety of tomatoes, apples or onions. When someone cannot answer a question, make note of it and explore the answer via a new route, such as a library.
- Fall in love with learning from new situations, experiences, and people. Go out into the real world because an office or classroom can pose limitations. You can learn from books, courses, podcasts, seminars and training programs for sure, but do not restrict yourself to taking data someone else presents. You can observe what others have done, but you learn more by experiencing it. Learn from direct interaction with the real world and experiment. Go out in nature and let your curiosity run wild.
- Learn something new that excites you. We all have random interests that we never act on. Pick one and pursue it. You can start with Wikipedia or TedTalks to get your curiosity juices flowing. There are dozens of free online educational opportunities through: HarvardX, Coursera, the Internet Archive to name a few.

Mindfulness

Days blend together. Months fly by, and before you know it, another year has passed. In that time, you have done thousands upon thousands of things, many of them without being mindful of how you spend your time. Just think about the number of times you googled something and for what reason. Think about how many meals you consumed and not savored the taste or acknowledged the effort that went into obtaining the ingredients or the skill to cook it? Think about the number of people you have talked to – colleagues, clients, strangers, friends – in your work week. Think about the number of times you were distracted and barely lingered to enjoy a fleeting thought. Were you mindful of every experience? Probably not! You actually may have been more mechanical.



MINDFULNESS

in the Midst of Many Things

Are you always on autopilot? It's estimated over 90% of our behavior runs on autopilot.

You do not stop and think about many of your habits, routines, impulses or reactions. It is not necessarily a bad thing because as part of your survival mechanism you have habits and routines or manageable short-cuts that guide you to easily get through the day. You do not need to consult a how-to manual every time you turn on a stove to scramble eggs or the water faucet for a morning shower. Mindfulness is the opposite of autopilot. It is executive control that enables intentional actions and decisions. Mindfulness is simply the practice of observing what is going on in your mind, body, and environment and doing it with focus and clarity.

Your mindful brain knows what is best for you. The autopilot brain does not. The autopilot brain relies on short-cuts that eventually deaden your willpower and decision making ability. When you operate on autopilot for so long that you get stuck in repetitive patterns, you do mindless activities or do not have mindful awareness of your own impulses and reactions, you are no longer in executive control.

The good news is you can exercise your mindful brain to awaken to experience that will help you become more effective in life.

Mindfulness is a state of active attention on the present when you focus on the moment. In the midst of many things, you have to be intentional – and this is the tough part – to be more sensitive and perceptive, and listen better, to take the time to experience your life and environment with all of your senses. Though research indicates that engaging your senses outdoors is especially beneficial, do not ignore being mindful in your workplace, because when you feel more alive and present no matter where you are, you can still be productive, actually more productive.

Practice Mindfulness

Pausing to practice mindfulness for just a few minutes at different times during the day can help your days be better, more in line with how you'd like them to be. Mindfulness exercises can be as long or as short as you like. You do not have to make big changes. At least commit to one thing new each week that you can practice while in the shower, walking your dog, boiling the kettle, or walking to the elevator. Make opportunities to pause, be attentive to the present moment, and connect with yours senses. Even one minute of consciously connecting with one of your senses is classified as a mindful exercise. Here are others:

- Learn to soak up everything about a good moment no matter where you are. You don't need to close your eyes. You don't even need to be sitting down. Simply connect with what you are feeling through your body at any one time. Perhaps try to slow down as you walk to the lunchroom. Be aware as your heel and toes touch the floor. Listen to sounds – the chatter of your coworkers, the paper spitting out of the printer, unidentified noises, or the stillness. Pay attention to what you see out the windows – sunshine, cloud formations, busy traffic, trees swaying in the wind. Feel the cool steel touch of the elevator door, the warmth emanating from your coffee cup, the sugar granules between your fingers or the frost in the refrigerator.
- Mindful eating. Enjoy every mouthful.
- Use traffic jams to drive yourself calm, not crazy. It is an opportune time to put your mindful brain into practice. Breathe, scan your body for tension, stretch, adjust your position, look around you, recognize and accept the situation, smile with other drivers, sing. Repeat phrases of self-compassion. Breathe some more. Give yourself some love.
- Mindful pause. Focus on your breath with quiet eyes several times during the day. It is great for your state of mind and one of the most inconspicuous ways to practice mindfulness at work.
- Carve out time to think and dream. Allow yourself the opportunity to sit still and do nothing, to be motionless and gather your thoughts.
- Be more self-reflective. It is a core habit of mindfulness.

- Begin your day with intention. Assume a relaxed posture – sitting is fine. Take some deep breaths and ask yourself, “What is my intention today?” As you think about the people or activities that you will face, you can use these prompts to help figure out your answer.
 - How might I show up today to have the best impact?
 - What quality of mind do I want to strengthen and develop?
 - What do I need to take better care of myself?
 - During difficult moments, how might I be more compassionate to others and myself?
 - How might I feel more connected and fulfilled?
- Set your intention for anything you feel is important. For example, “Today, I will be kind to myself; be patient with my children and co-workers, and have fun at work.”
- Throughout the day, check that you are following through on your intentions.
- Pay attention to your repetitive thoughts. Of the tens of thousands of thoughts you have in a day, most of them are the same. In being mindful, you choose constructive self talk over exaggerated, irrational, or unrealistic chatter that may cause you undue worry.
- Slow down. Stop trying to multi-task – it has been proven to be inefficient and counter-productive. By slowing down and stopping to be mindful of what you are doing you become more efficient, productive, resilient, and in the end happier and healthier, too.

Learn more about the No No's of Multi-Tasking

Self-Care

Self-care is 100% about the things you do to make yourself happy, to refresh and renew your spirit and take care of your mind and body. There are several forms of self-care that should be incorporated into your daily routine:

- Regular sleep routine
- Fresh air
- Nutrition
- Physical exercise
- Seeking medical attention
- Nurturing your relationships
- Healthy boundaries
- Taking regular lunch breaks
- Making time for relaxation
- Asking yourself questions about your life and experiences
- Practicing compassion, kindness and acceptance to yourself
- Incorporating activities into your life that help you feel recharged
- Engaging in spiritual practices that you find fulfilling
- Face-to-face time with family and friends
- Keeping your mind sharp with activities that stimulate you
- Employing healthy ways to process your emotions
- Promoting curiosity to create wonder in your life
- Attending professional development programs.
- Engaging with a non-work hobby
- Nurturing supportive friendships
- Releasing pent up emotions
- Attending special events with family, friends.

You will identify personal self-care needs that are unique to you, making this list longer. There is no one-size fits all approach. Self-care is unique for each person. You will practice self-care differently than another family member or friend. You do not choose one or three per day. Practicing “the best care for ‘you’ means you do most of them on a daily basis.



Self-Care is a Daily Necessity

Every aspect of self-care is ultimately very important to your well-being. Many people view self-care as something you do for emergency maintenance like taking a day off or visiting a doctor. Some people view self-care as an unnecessary indulgence or treat rather than a priority. An annual visit to a day spa is not adequate self-care. If you do not take steps to promote your own **self-care on a daily basis** you will mostly feel overwhelmed, tired, and ill-equipped to handle life's inevitable challenges. Self-care balances out all the stress and negative emotions that you feel.

Emphasize Saying “Yes” to You

The key to self-care is to make “you” the priority. You are the best person to monitor your internal state for signs of depletion. You are best to decide what area of your life needs more attention and decide what you need to care for yourself better. You need to make clear choices on your own behalf.

Exercise #1: Write a list of your current daily activities (work days and non-work days). Record how much time you spent on each thing. Include everything – making a bed, texting friends, playing games – no matter how mundane it is, whether it takes two minutes or two hours. In another column, list the things you do on a daily basis to care for yourself. Add the time. Is your list lopsided? Some self-care activities, such as sleep or exercise may appear on your list, but get too little attention. Some may not even appear on your list. Comparing your list to the one on the previous page, can you see where you can put more energy into caring for yourself better?

Exercise #2: Do you realize that every time you say “yes” to someone, you are saying “no” to yourself? Look at your list one more time and identify areas where you can say “yes” to you.

Only you can decide to make all aspects of self-care a priority. Only you can make time to care for your physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Once you make more aspects of self-care part of your daily routine, you will discover that many of things that you struggle to incorporate today will become effortless. Some will bring so much enjoyment and benefit you will do them many times a day.

Frequent Self-Care Assessment

Part of self-care is doing a frequent assessment in this manner. Adjustments may be necessary in the early stages of implementing new self-care strategies. A few tactics may be easier to implement on a daily basis, such as ensuring you get adequate sleep, nutrition, or fresh air. You can emphasize some aspects of self-care by fine-tuning your routine – time with friends, activities that energize you or keep your mind sharp, self-compassion. You may have to implement some forms of self-care in stages as you learn new strategies or adjust your schedule to make self-care the priority. As self-care strategies evolve into part of your daily routine, an assessment helps you determine which other aspect of self-care to incorporate. Perform an assessment when areas of your life change or when you need extra attention to make yourself feel good, show yourself love and compassion, or balance out stress.

Healthy Boundaries in Self-Care

One aspect of self-care that many of us struggle with is setting healthy boundaries, physical or emotional. That may be because we do not know what healthy boundaries look like. Let's start with the word "boundary". We might not carry around a giant "no trespassing" sign, but the word itself conveys the idea that we are barricading ourselves off from others. The opposite is true, because boundaries are actually healthy connecting points by which we navigate our relationships. Psychologists call them invisible bubbles. We could call them rules, guidelines, or personal limits.

Your personal boundaries can be intellectual, physical, or emotional.



Intellectual boundaries include respect for your ideas and an awareness of what you deem appropriate for discussion.

Physical boundaries include your body, sense of personal space, sexual orientation, and privacy. Examples of physical boundaries:

- Declining physical contact from a coworker is setting an important boundary.
- Equally crucial is asking the same coworker not to invade your privacy or make unreasonable demands on your time or emotions.
- Asking someone not to crowd you or invade your personal space.
- Say 'no' to something you do not want to do.

Emotional boundary invasions are things you do to yourself:

- Sacrificing your plans, dreams, and goals in order to please others.
- Not taking responsibility for yourself and blaming others for your problems.
- Not knowing how to separate your feelings from your significant other's and allowing his/her mood to dictate your level of happiness or sadness.
- Not recognizing when excessive use of social media or technology is causing you harm.

Recognize your limits to set Healthy Boundaries

Learn how to recognize your limits regarding: personal space, emotions and thoughts, stuff or possessions, time and energy, culture, religion, and ethics. Our bodies always give us signals when we are near a personal limit – clenched fists, tightened jaw, churning stomach, perspiration. When you feel anger or resentment or find yourself whining or complaining, you probably need to set a boundary. Explore your discomfort. Examine similar past experiences that may have occurred because your limits had been crossed. Determine what you need to do limit your exposure to feeling that way again.

- Once you know your limits, determine if your boundary will be loose or rigid. It is crucial to determine what consequences you can implement if your boundaries are crossed. Make sure you are willing to follow through or else the boundaries will not be effective.
- Communicate your boundary to the other person. Be assertive. Do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible. You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner. Here is an example:

“When you told our friends about what’s been going on with my family, I felt hurt and embarrassed. Please don’t share things about me without my consent. My privacy is important to me.”
- At first you may feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway! While reminding yourself you have a right to self-care. Do not be surprised if some people react poorly. You can express your limits with compassion, but it’s not your job to make it okay for them by justifying or apologizing for the boundary you are setting.
- Respect the boundaries that others have set for themselves - parents, children, romantic partners, bosses, coworkers, etc.

10 ways to enhance self-care:

Like the character strengths, the elements of flourishing and the other key skills needed to flourish, there are exercises that help you to enhance self-care.

- Keep (or develop) a sense of humor. Lighten the mood of situations for yourself and others with laughter.
- Give daily attention to curiosity. In people of all ages research shows that high and consistent levels of curiosity correlate with mental well-being and life satisfaction. Curious people also seem protected from depression.
- Nurture your connections. Talk and listen to others and always live in the moment. Give people your time, your words and your presence.
- Make one lifestyle choice that affects the functioning of your body.
- Be active – do what you can and enjoy what you do.
- Recognize and minimize the adverse effects of too much social media and electronics.
- Allow yourself the opportunity to sit still and do nothing, to be motionless and gather your thoughts.
- Make time to play. Play gives you the energy you need to keep going.
- Take notice – remember the simple things that give you joy.
- Keep learning – embrace new experiences and seek new opportunities.
- Read books. There is very little difference between someone who cannot read and someone who will not read. Either results in ignorance. There is no excuse for ignorance when there is opportunity to learn more. Books are one means of rising above the ordinary, because all the wise insights and advice of mankind have been captured in writing. Read just one more book.

When you take steps to care for your physical, social, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being you will feel empowered to meet your responsibilities and challenges with energy, vitality and confidence. You will equip yourself to embrace change and live your best life.

Growth Mindset

Have you heard this story shared by Shawn Achor in his TEDx talk, “The Happy Secret to Better Work”?

“A little girl falls from her bunk bed and lands hard on the floor. She might have broken her leg, and she’s in tremendous pain. As she is about to cry, her quick-thinking older brother tells her that no human could possibly have landed the way that she did when she hit the floor, and that can only mean one thing: she’s a unicorn.

Rather than giving in to the pain, the little girl’s brain begins to process the concept that she might actually be a baby unicorn...”

This story is an example of how re-framing your circumstances can allow you to achieve a positive happier mindset.

What is Mindset

Mindset is the established set of attitudes that adults tend to cling to. Basically there are two kinds of mind-sets: growth mindset and fixed mindset.

With a “fixed mindset” you assume that your character, attitudes, and behaviours are prearranged and carved in stone; that you cannot change qualities, intelligence, or creative ability in any given way. A negative or fixed mindset can sully how a person views the world. On the other hand, a growth mindset teaches you to be fascinated by emerging challenges, to be curious and willing to put in the effort to keep on learning. When you have a growth mindset you believe that you can do hard things and that basic qualities, attitudes, intelligence and abilities are things you continue to cultivate through learning, application, and experience.

Three Common Problems of a Fixed Mindset

1. People with a fixed mindset resist change. They take the path of least resistance within the boundaries of their comfort zone. When they resist change their fear zone expands and takes over their growth zone. That means they do not have a far stretch to float into the zone of fear where they let change or hardship overwhelm them. The zone of fear is where something is perceived impossible. But change will still happen and the world will be revolving around them as they loaf around until their next birthday.

2. People with a fixed mindset end up feeling constricted and stifled – basically frustrated – because it is contrary to their natural tendencies or hard-wired need to flourish authentically. Their mindset does not allow them to recognize anything other than they probably won’t get much better in their personality, character, relationships, or careers. The contradiction creates urgency for them to prove over and over again that he or she is not incomplete or imperfect or lacking. They put their energy into one consuming goal – that of evaluating and proving themselves. Will I be rejected? Will I feel like a loser? Will I fail? Will I look dumb?

3. People with a fixed mindset tend to be less curious, less inclined to learning new things, and less open to new experiences. Lack of curiosity combined with the previous two tendencies results in a person rigidly adhering to time-worn routines and opinions. When they stop asking questions or being interested in life, it negatively affects their mental health and vigor.

Acquiring a Growth Mindset

For more than two decades Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck has studied mind-set and the power of mankind's beliefs. She set out to prove that intelligence and personality can be developed rather than being immutably engrained traits. Her research has shown how changing even the simplest of beliefs can have profound impact on nearly every aspect of a person's life. She states that a growth mindset creates a passion for learning rather than a hunger for approval. She is quoted as saying:

"Why waste time proving over and over how great you are, when you could be getting better? Why hide deficiencies instead of overcoming them? Why look for friends or partners who will just shore up your self-esteem instead of ones who will also challenge you to grow? And why seek out the tried and true, instead of experiences that will stretch you? The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it's not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives."

Change your Brain's Neuroplasticity with a Growth Mindset

Neuroplasticity refers to brain's ongoing ability to adapt and develop. Neuroplasticity provides scientific proof that intelligence is not fixed, it develops throughout our lives. You make new connections and pathways on a daily basis as you adapt to new circumstances. When you learn something new, you change and expand how the circuits in your brain are wired. These are physiological changes. A person with a growth mindset believes that he or she can get smarter, better, or more skilled at something through sustained effort – which is exactly what neuroplasticity tells us on a broad level.

With a growth mindset you are willing to ditch arrogance or any hint of an "I-know-it-all" attitude and step out of your comfort zone to embrace the unfamiliar, live for a little while with uncertainty or not knowing. The growth mindset you employ for learning a skill applies to any changes you want to make in behaviour, attitude, or pattern in your life. These changes include enhance character strengths or positive emotions, or learning to be more self-aware or mindful.

There are many reasons why we do not achieve what we set out to do. Life has twists and turns, external forces, circumstances, the people (and distractions) we meet along the way. Many of those are beyond our control. However we can control how we think about these twists and turns.

Change Just one Thing to Adopt a Growth Mindset

Life has twists and turns, external forces, circumstances, the people (and distractions) we meet along the way. Many of those are beyond our control. However we can control how we think about these twists and turns. You can decide ahead of time to make one small change, right now, for yourself. Change your thinking pattern by used one word, yet.

What if instead of saying “I’m not good at this”, you said “I’m not good at this yet”?

“I don’t understand this yet. It doesn’t work yet? This doesn’t make sense yet”?

In essence the word means you realize that some things are worth waiting for, and striving for.

From Comfort Zone to Flourishing Zone

While in college, Gerald, lingered in disappointment that he did not achieve a dream he had held onto for quite awhile. At first he refused or was unable to explore the twists and turns of his life. He says he got bogged down with negative feelings and the idea that life isn’t fair. Then one day he asked himself why he not able to adapt to his new situation. After all he knew he was smart. Two curious insights came to Gerald. He discovered that the ambition he brooded over was no longer suited to the person he had become. All the expertise he had acquired was going to be “super useful”. Gerald had looked inward and decided to step out of his comfort zone.

**There are two options: step forward into growth or
step back into safety of the comfort zone.**

**You need to be out of your comfort zone
to expand your life in new directions.**

Your comfort zone is based on your memories of things you know and know how to do. We all gravitate back to what we know, but none of us limit ourselves to that zone. Well at least we didn’t as children. You are here today, able to talk, read, drive a car, or boil water on the stove. You do not have to crawl to the supermarket or boardroom. You may have no clear memory of the first time sat on a toboggan overlooking a steep hill or jumped off a diving board. There was a first time for every one of your experiences and many of them required you to step out of your comfortable zone. Now those historical experiences are the fabric of a much larger comfort zone. Every time you venture out of your comfort zone to learn and experience new things your comfort zone expands and the inner zone of fear and panic narrows. Your learning and growth zones can expand to narrow the zone of fear to a narrow sliver.





Children are naturally willing and excited to push out of their comfort zones. It really makes no sense that as an adult a person should want to remain in some comfort zone on a permanent basis. It takes no talent or ability to grow old there. What chain holds adults there? The answer is being stuck with a fixed mindset. Many of us fail to realize that every endeavor we undertake that brings us pleasure is the result of stepping outside our comfort zone.

Often that means learning new skills. We ask you to do that.

Often that means taking a

leadership role – self leadership and leading your own life. We ask you to take one step to lead yourself out of your comfort zone to adopt a growth mindset to set you on a path to flourishing. We ask you to lead yourself out of your comfort zone to learn self-care, self-awareness, and mindfulness. In your learning zone and performance zone is where you will enhance character strengths, positive emotions, and personal connections, so crucial to flourishing. Step forward to experience engagement, achievement and a life of meaning.

The Learning Curve

Aspects of learning and growth are stressed in the science of flourishing. Learning is not always easy. As adults we tend to forget there is a difference between reading how something is done and actually putting it into practice. Too many of us become discouraged too early because we make one fundamental mistake. We confuse a lack of skills and knowledge with a lack of ability. Sometimes we experience a little anxiety and give up too quickly because we do not recognize where we are on the learning curve. It is a poor excuse for not completing our learning. By sticking it out, we might learn that anxiety is manageable and can even be enjoyable.



How many of us lose sight of the fact that we are all beginners at something when we first start? There is a learning curve and time element to everything we learn, or want to change in our lives. Sometimes we do not put enough time into learning or applying what we learn so we can move up the learning curve from the novice state to competency before becoming the experts.

Take charge of your happiness. Today is a new “Starting Point”: Accept wherever you are and start making solid strategic decisions to pursue your path to enhance your overall well-being. That begins with your readiness to learn, your readiness to acknowledge you may be a novice again while you learn different capabilities. Rushing the process by skipping steps or practice is detrimental to your success. Do not ignore the value of a step-by-step guide. The key is to start taking small steps and build up momentum.

If you approach learning with laser-like focus and training your mighty muscles you will move up the learning curve from being a beginner to being competent and advancing to the expert stage. You need to be prepared to put new learning into practice and be patient, because it may take several rehearsals to get it right before you can become the happiness pro you want to be.

Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

Corro is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success