Positive Psychology Interventions for Being a Fully Human

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Synthesizing New Positive Interventions

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Activity: Positive Introductions

- **Desired outcome:** Identifying with a time in the past when you were at your best and embodying this version of yourself in the present
- **Target systems:** Memory, cognition, attention
- **Target change:** Developing a more optimistic explanatory style; cultivating goodness in daily life
- **Active ingredient:** Storytelling

The Exercise:

- Think about a time in your past when you were at your best, when you demonstrated your strongest character strengths and virtues. Refrain from thinking exclusively about times of greatest performance or achievement—rather, consider a time when you stood up for something or someone you believed in, went out of your way to do something kind, or sacrificed your own momentary happiness for a greater good. Reflect on why you acted this way; what inspired you to act this way? What did it feel like in the moment? Afterward? What does it feel like to think about this moment now?
- Tell your story in no more than 1 single-spaced page. See Maya Angelou’s essay “Philanthropy” for an example of a positive introduction.
- Come to class prepared to read your positive introduction aloud and listen to your classmates’ stories. While others are sharing their introductions, allow yourself to be fully present with them. Practice appreciative listening by giving your full attention, and asking questions that help build upon the sentiment that is conveyed.
Activity: Best Possible Self

- **Desired outcome:** Developing a more positive relationship with the self, bolstering optimism, integrating long-term goals into everyday life
- **Target systems:** Attention, affect, relationship with self
- **Target change:** Increasing awareness of deeply held values, shift in focus, more optimistic explanatory style
- **Active ingredients:** Imaginal experiences, autonomy, competence, optimism

The Exercise:

- Spend some time in a quiet place thinking about your best possible self. This can be an image in one, five, ten, or twenty years from now.
- Imagine this future in which you have grown in all the ways you would like to, and things have turned out the way that you have wanted: you have tried your best, worked hard, and achieved your goals. Things have gone as well as you could have imagined.
- Reflect: What is your best possible self like? What do they do on a daily basis? Who surrounds them? What do others say about them?
- After writing about your best possible self, reflect on the experience you had while reflecting (meta-reflection). What was it like to write about this version of yourself?
- How can you actively start working toward that best possible self right now? How can you employ others to help you work toward that version of yourself?
Positive Psychology Interventions for Being a Fully Human

Activity: Three Good Things

- Desired outcome: Yielding greater positive emotions from everyday experiences
- Target system: Attention
- Target change: Shifting focus toward noticing the good things that happen in a day
- Active ingredient: Being mindful of daily goodness

The Exercise:

- Each night for five consecutive days, before going to sleep, write down three things that went well that day. These things can be relatively small (I had a great time at dinner with friends) or relatively large, such as, (I had a major breakthrough in writing my senior thesis!).

- After each positive event on the list, answer in your own words, “Why did this good thing happen?” You can speculate, for example, that you had a great time at dinner with your friends because, “I have begun to really put myself out there and ask friends to grab meals during the week” or because “I went to my favorite restaurant.” When asked why you had a breakthrough in your thesis, you might say, “I had an incredibly productive few hours in the library because I shut off Facebook and kept my phone in my backpack.” (Do hand-in this list of your Three Good Things with your reflection).

- Reflect: Does completing this exercise change the way you go about your days? Have you become more attuned to positive events as they unfold?

- Feel free to continue this exercise beyond five days, however, do stop after five days if it begins to feel burdensome.

- Helpful Hint: It might be helpful to set an alarm or a repeating calendar event in your phone to remind yourself to complete this exercise. Also, do not wait to begin this reflection until Sunday night before this assignment is due 😊
Activity: Create a Positive Portfolio

- Desired outcome: Cultivating positive emotions by curating and engaging with a positive portfolio
- Target systems: Affect, attention, memory
- Target change: Increasing positive emotions
- Active ingredient: Engaging with cherished items

The Exercise:

- Select a positive emotion or affective state that you wish to cultivate and practice: i.e.) joy, serenity, interest, pride, gratitude, hope, amusement, inspiration, awe, love.
- Brainstorm a collection of items, including photos, poems, songs, cards, letters, books, objects, etc. that bring about this particular affective state within you.
- Actually curate a physical positive portfolio of these items, placing them in a folder, binder, container, online file, or whatever works best for containing these particular contents.
- Once you have created your portfolio, spend ~10 minutes engaging with it for five consecutive days. (Helpful Hint: It might be helpful to set an alarm or a repeating calendar event in your phone to remind yourself to complete this exercise. Also, do not wait to begin this reflection until Sunday night before this assignment is due 😉)
- Reflect on the following questions: How did it feel to create the positive portfolio? Which did you prefer, curating the portfolio, or spending 10 minutes with it each day? Was the portfolio effective in helping you achieve your desired positive emotion? Did you feel any other, perhaps unexpected emotions from engaging with or putting together the portfolio? What, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Practicing Acts of Kindness

Desired outcome: Enhancing subjective well-being, improving relationships with others, creating habits of kindness

Target systems: Affect, attention, relationships

Target change: Increasing giving behaviors, practicing effective ways to give to others

Active ingredients: Secret acts of kindness, spontaneous giving, giving the gift of time

The Exercise:

• In the next week, engage in at least five acts of virtue or kindness for another person (a roommate, friend, peer, boss, mentor, stranger, etc.) These do not need to be for the same person, and the person does not need to be aware of the act.

• Try to mix and vary the types of kindness activities that you perform, and if possible, try to chunk them together between one or two days, rather than sprinkling them throughout the week, as research shows that chunking good deeds shows greater psychological benefits to the giver.

• Anonymous acts can include simple gestures, like washing someone else’s dishes, picking up litter on the street, making an anonymous donation, or leaving chocolate on a friend’s desk. More relational acts of kindness can include helping a friend or with work or studying, giving your time to help a friend with errands, cooking a meal for friends, visiting or calling a relative, or volunteering for a charity or philanthropic organization.

• At the end of each activity, log your acts of kindness with the date of completion and exactly what you did. (Do hand this list in with your reflection).

• Reflect on your kindness log: did your acts of kindness bring you closer to other people? Did your acts of kindness make others feel good? Did they make you feel good? If so, how long did these benefits last? Did any of your acts of kindness proliferate other acts of kindness, either within yourself or within others? What, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Pleasure vs. Philanthropy Experiment

- **Desired outcome:** A more nuanced understanding between hedonic and eudaimonic experiences
- **Target systems:** Affect, attention
- **Target change:** Increased giving behaviors, greater awareness of the benefits of giving to others, maintaining the value of self-care
- **Active ingredients:** Performance experiences, comparison

The Exercise:

- In the next week, you will plan and carry out two activities. One will be a pleasurable activity, and the other, a philanthropic activity
- For the pleasurable activity, plan something fun that you expect to make you feel good (joyful, excited, contented, interested, amused, etc.). This must be an activity that you intentionally plan for the purposes of the exercise, rather than something that you were planning to do anyway, or simply transpires as the week goes on. It should also probably be legal! ☺️
- For the philanthropic activity, plan to do something that will improve another person’s well-being. This might include giving your time to someone else (tutoring, volunteering, helping a family member or neighbor) or using your unique talents or abilities to do something special for another person. Again, make sure that this is something that you plan intentionally, rather than something you were always planning on doing, or just comes up.
- Write a reflection briefly describing what you did for each activity. Reflect upon how each activity made you feel. What were some similarities and differences between these experiences? What, if anything, did you learn from engaging in this experiment?
Activity: Choose a Mindfulness Meditation

➢ Desired outcomes: Enhancing subjective well-being, slowing down, becoming more mindful
➢ Target systems: Affect, attention, will, cognition, physiology
➢ Target changes: Improving mood, listening, ability to slow down, being present in the current moment
➢ Active ingredients: Mindfulness, self-regulation, clearing the mind

The Exercise:

• For five days this week, you will engage in a mindfulness meditation for at least ten minutes per day (although feel free to go for longer!)
• You can choose meditations from the “7 days of calm” on the website https://www.calm.com/meditate, or you may visit https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx and complete at least ten minutes of any meditation (we recommend sticking to the shorter ones and completing them in full, rather than cutting them short at 10 minutes).
• Make sure that you are in a comfortable position on a chair or on the floor. Find a position that feels relaxed but in which you are still upright and able to breathe comfortably. (If you are unable to sit up for whatever reason, you may also meditate lying down).
• Helpful Hint: It might be helpful to set an alarm or a repeating calendar event in your phone to remind yourself to meditate. Do not wait to until Sunday night before this assignment is due 😊
• After each meditation, jot down some notes about how you feel. Do you feel refreshed? Serene? Silly? Tired? Do you feel like you’re doing it wrong? Note any changes between when you started and when your meditation was over. After the full five days, reflect: What did it feel like to meditate this week? Have you noticed any changes over the course of the week when you were not meditating? Did it get easier to meditate throughout the week? What, if anything, have you learned about yourself from this exercise?
**Activity:** Practice Savoring

- **Desired outcomes:** Improving one’s ability to attend to, appreciate, and enhance life experiences; increasing subjective well-being
- **Target systems:** Affect, attention
- **Target change:** Shift of focus to the positive
- **Active ingredients:** Anticipating experiences, enjoying experiences in the moment, retrospectively appreciating experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Types of Savoring¹</th>
<th>Internal Self</th>
<th>External World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Reflection (Thinking)</strong></td>
<td>Basking (pride)</td>
<td>Thanksgiving (gratitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being receptive to praise and congratulations</td>
<td>Experiencing and expressing gratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ex.) Enjoying the afterglow of winning a soccer game, acing an exam, etc.</td>
<td>ex.) Spending the afternoon with your mother, expressing gratitude that you have such a beautiful, close relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiential Absorption (Doing)</strong></td>
<td>Luxuriating (pleasure)</td>
<td>Marveling (awe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging the senses fully; ex.) Enjoying a relaxing bubble bath, slowly eating a piece of delicious chocolate or sipping a glass of fine wine</td>
<td>Losing yourself in the wonder of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ex.) Waking up early to watch the sun rise, going outside during a thunderstorm to marvel at the sky's action</td>
<td></td>
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**The Exercise:**

- Of the four types of savoring (basking, luxuriating, thanksgiving, and marveling), which type(s) are you most inclined to do naturally?
- Think through the three temporal forms of savoring (savoring something about the past, savoring the present, or anticipatory savoring the future); what type(s) are you most inclined to do naturally?
- Set yourself up for a savoring experience using a temporal form and savoring type of your choice. Further, implement at least 1 strategy to enhance savoring from the table below.

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For example, if you are a reminiscer and naturally are inclined toward gratitude, take out an old photo album and look through photos of your childhood. Engage a sibling or parent to do it with you for your savoring strategy of “share good things with others.”

• After savoring an experience, write a brief reflection, being sure to answer the following questions: What did you savor? What savoring strategy did you use? What was your subjective experience like while savoring? What, if anything, did you gain or learn from this exercise?

### 10 Strategies to Enhance Savoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Share good things with others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Actively build memories, take “mental photographs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Be proud of yourself! Self-congratulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Use downward comparison: remind yourself that things could be much worse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Sharpen your sensory perceptions; slow down</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Be absorbed in the moment: turn off mental chatter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Use your body! Laugh, jump for joy, etc. Shout it from the rooftops!</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Remind yourself to enjoy the moments; time flies!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Count your blessings &amp; acknowledge gratitude</td>
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<td><strong>10. Avoid kill-joy thinking (don't focus on the negative)</strong></td>
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Activity: Active Constructive Responding

- Desired outcome: Building stronger interpersonal relationships and social support
- Target system: Relationships with others
- Target change: Embracing a more supportive, positive style of communication, enhancing capitalization
- Active ingredient: Changing/attending to one’s response style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Responding³</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active-Destructive:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demeaning the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Isn’t that new job just going to make you more stressed and unhappy than you already are?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active-Constructive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic support, asking questions, leads to capitalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That’s wonderful! Tell me everything from start to finish!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive-Destructive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring the event, changing focus to the self</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Aren’t you going to ask me about my day?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive-Constructive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet, understated support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m happy to hear that.”</td>
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The Exercise:

- Choose a person in your life with whom you are close (a friend, classmate, significant other, etc.). Start paying attention to how you respond to them when they relay good news, such as, “I got an A on my chemistry final!” or “My interview went so well today!” Do this long enough to discern a stable pattern.
- Do you respond enthusiastically, asking questions and reveling in the other person’s success? Do you do this more frequently than any other sort of response? If so, you are demonstrating active-constructive responding. You likely already have an excellent relationship with this person. If that is the case, choose another target for this exercise.

• Continue observing your responses to others until you find someone to whom you do not typically respond this way. Reflect: Why aren't you responding actively/constructively with this person? (It might be because you care deeply about this person, and a critical response stems sincerely from your love for them. You may not want a friend to get too excited about something that could fall through.) However, a steady stream of tempered enthusiasm or “constructive” criticism can take a toll on the relationship if your partner does not feel supported or if this is all that he or she hears from you.

• Accordingly, resolve to respond to this person’s good news in an active and constructive manner. Find at least 3 opportunities to use Active Constructive Responding with this person.

• Write a brief reaction paper containing details about the interactions you had, both in terms of what you did and how the other person reacted. Was it challenging to change your response style? How did your partner respond? Did you notice anything change in the dynamic between the two of you? What, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
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**Activity:** Loving Kindness Meditation

- **Desired outcome:** Enhancing capacity for love and warmth toward fellow human beings
- **Target systems:** Cognition, physiology, affect
- **Target change:** Enhancing warmth and kindness to loved ones and strangers
- **Active ingredients:** Meditating, cultivating love and kindness

**The Exercise:**

- Spend 15 minutes for at least 3 days this week engaging in a Loving Kindness Meditation. You can listen to a guided meditation by visiting: [http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/loving_kindness_meditation#](http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/loving_kindness_meditation#)
- Make sure that you are seated comfortably with your eyes closed, bringing your awareness inward. Each time you complete this exercise, try to visualize different individuals, expanding the number of people you bring into this personal exploration.
- After going through this entire meditation for 3 days, write a written reflection in which you explore the following: What did it feel like to practice Loving Kindness Meditation? Was it difficult to cultivate warmth and love on demand? Did it get easier or more challenging each time? How did you feel when you were finished each day? Did you notice any changes in the way that you view other people? The way you view yourself? What, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Self-Compassion Letter

- Desired outcome: Developing a more positive relationship with the self, eliminating negative self-talk, treating the self with kindness and respect
- Target system: Cognition, physiology, affect
- Target change: Embracing a less judgmental attitude toward the self, treating the self like one would treat a dear friend
- Active ingredients: Attuning to one’s inner dialogue, reflection

The Exercise:

- Think about a time when a close friend or family member came to you for advice after struggling with something, or feeling really down about something. How did you (or would you) respond to your friend in this situation, being the best possible friend that you could? Write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.
- Now, think about a time in your life (this could be now or in the past) in which you really struggled with something or felt down about yourself. Think about how you typically respond to yourself in these situations: What do you do, what do you say, and what tone do you take with yourself?
- Now, write a written letter to yourself in which you treat yourself and your difficult situation as though you are your own best friend. Write a letter in the second-person about this experience. Allow yourself to remember the situation or think about your stress/suffering. Then acknowledge your feelings or thoughts, as well as what you (were or are) hoping for and needing.
  - E.g., “Dear Kelly, I know that you are feeling [sad/afraid/angry/disappointed in yourself, etc.]. You were really [looking forward to.../trying your best to...], etc.”
- Write about both the stress/suffering and the core need underneath it: a desire for health, safety, love, appreciation, connection, achievement, etc. Offer a message of common humanity. [E.g., all humans make mistakes, sometimes fail, get angry, experience disappointment, know loss, etc.] Mentor yourself with some compassionate advice or encouragement.
After writing the letter, consider reading it out loud to yourself, or putting it away for some time and bringing it out when you need self-compassion.

This letter-writing exercise been shown to provide increases in happiness. When study participants wrote a self-compassionate letter to themselves for seven days in a row, they still experienced increased happiness six months later, when compared to a control group.⁴

Activity: SMART Goal-Setting for Improved Well-Being

- **Desired outcome**: Improving success at reaching goals that improve our well-being
- **Target systems**: Cognition, attention, desires
- **Target changes**: Increasing self-efficacy, shift in focus from global goals to smaller, more achievable tasks
- **Active ingredient**: Conscious goal-setting

This activity is intended for all students to work on throughout the rest of this course. Think very carefully about a particular goal that you have that, if fulfilled, might improve your well-being. A goal might include adding something to your life, i.e.) exercising or reading more; maintaining something in your life, i.e.) continuing to pursue your relationships, even as the semester gets harder and busier; or removing something from your life, i.e.) I want to stop drinking alcohol on weeknights, or I want to cut out added sugar from my diet.

In order to achieve the goals we set out for ourselves, it is extremely paramount that we set realistic, meaningful goals to set ourselves up for success. Therefore, we rely on the acronym “SMART” to reflect what goals should be: 1) specific, 2) measurable, 3) achievable, 4) relevant, and 5) time-specific. By setting SMART goals, we can improve our self-efficacy by breaking down large global goals into smaller, more achievable tasks. We delve into each letter in the SMART acronym to provide further clarification:

**Global Goal**: I want to exercise more

**Making it SMART:**

- **SPECIFIC**: objective should be as specific as possible. You must explicitly state what, where, when, and for whom you want something to happen. There are lots of ways to improve your well-being as a medical student, but hone in on one domain and get specific:
  - I want to exercise in the Pottruck for at least 150 minutes per week (30 minutes 5x/week)

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- **MEASURABLE**: objective should be measureable, meaning that there should be current or baseline value and a level of change that is expected.
  - I currently work out ~90 minutes/week and I want to increase this to 150 minutes of exercise/week for the next month.

- **ACHIEVABLE**: objective must be realistic; if you overreach for unachievable goals, you can become disgruntled or lose your motivation. Therefore, make sure that goals are within reach by creating a realistic time plan to achieve your goal.
  - This is an achievable goal because I can definitely get this done in the mornings before class on Mondays, Fridays, and Thursdays, in the evenings on Wednesdays and Fridays.
  - (If you know that you’re not a morning person, it might be better to schedule your workouts in the afternoons.)

- **RELEVANT**: objective should be in line with overarching goals. Check in with yourself regularly to ensure that your short-term goals are aligned with your global goals.
  - I want to exercise more because it always invigorates me and I feel better after I do it. Exercise improves my mood, cognition, ability to sleep, and overall vitality.

- **TIME-SPECIFIC**: objective should have a concrete time period so that you 1) can measure whether you have succeeded and 2) can modify goals proactively before a ton of time has passed.
  - I want to exercise for 150 minutes/week for the next month; after each week, I will make sure that this is feasible and proceed accordingly.

**The Exercise:**
- Create a SMART goal for yourself in your personal life that you will work toward throughout the rest of the semester. Refine the goal until it meets all of the SMART criteria (feel free to use the worksheet on the next page). For example, you decide that your global goal is to eat healthier. How can you make this goal SMART?
Perhaps, “I want to eat 2 servings of fruit and 3 servings of vegetables every day for the next month”

- Follow through on your goal this week.
- At the end of the week, write a written reflection, making sure to touch on the following questions:
  
  o What is your goal? Does this meet all of the SMART criteria?
  o Were you able to meet your goal this week? Why or why not?
    
      - If no, what are some barriers that prevented you from meeting your goal? How can you counter these barriers in the future?
      
        - How can you modify either your behaviors, or your goal, to make achieving the goal more realistic? (Is this new goal still “SMART?”)
    
  - If yes, what were some keys to your success? What did it feel like to meet or not meet your goal? What is your plan to continue working toward your goal throughout the rest of the semester?

- We will be continuing to pursue these SMART goals for the rest of the semester. If you recognize the need to modify your goal or “re-goal” you are welcome to do so.
- Come ready to your next recitation to share your SMART goal with the class. Continue pursuing your goal for the rest of the semester. We will be discussing these goals in class.
Formulating Your SMART Goal:
Step 1: Identify a goal for improving your well-being.

Step 2: Make it SPECIFIC: what, where, when, and for whom you want something to happen.

Step 3: Make it MEASURABLE: how are you quantifying whether you’re achieving your goal? Do you have a baseline level to compare your level of goal attainment?

Step 4: Make it ACHIEVABLE: are you setting yourself up for success? Is this goal achievable and practical? If not, modify your goal accordingly.

Step 5: Make it RELEVANT: is this goal something that is serving your greater life goals? Is this goal relevant in your life right now? If not, modify your goal accordingly.

Step 6: Make it TIME-SPECIFIC: can you achieve this goal in 1 week? If not, is this a step toward a larger process that you can carry with you after the completion of this 1-week exercise? If not, modify your goal accordingly.

FINAL SMART GOAL DECLARATION:
Activity: Post-Traumatic Growth

- **Desired outcome:** Improving resilience, optimism, and growth after adversity
- **Target system:** Cognition, affect
- **Target changes:** Re-framing negative events, self-regulation, optimism
- **Active ingredients:** Thinking about past events, attempting to see a difficult situation through a new lens

The Exercise:

- Think about a time when you faced a significant adversity or loss. First, write and reflect about the doors that closed due to that adversity/loss. What did you lose? How did it feel in the moment? How does it feel now to have faced that adversity/loss?
- Next, write about the doors that opened in the aftermath of that adversity/loss. Are there any new ways of acting, thinking, relating to others or yourself, etc. that have become more possible now? While you would have never asked for this adversity or loss to occur, what do you take with you from that in your life today that might be positive? What did you learn from this experience?
Activity: Practice Your ABCs

- **Desired outcomes:** Improving optimism, resilience, and cognitive control over one’s emotions
- **Target systems:** Cognition, affect
- **Target changes:** Increasing awareness of thought processes, self-regulation, optimism
- **Active ingredients:** Thinking about past events, understanding cause-and-effect of beliefs and consequences of those beliefs, preparing for future events

Although some people might believe that they are either resilient or not, resilience can be built and exercised; it is more something that one “does” rather than something one “is.” Resilience is about acknowledging that each of us has choices about how we respond to challenges, adversity, and even traumatic events. While life will inevitably throw us many curve balls, we can rely on some core competencies to help us recover and grow from these experiences. These competencies include, **self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, character strengths, connections with others,** and **optimism.** For instance, by understanding how we react to challenges (self-awareness), we can cognitively transform challenges into opportunities to find deeper meaning, expand our perspectives, develop deeper bonds with others, and experience personal growth.

This exercise is about understanding that some of our underlying beliefs have distinct consequences for our emotional states. By understanding this cause-and-effect relationship between our beliefs and the emotions that result from these beliefs, we can intervene and question some of those beliefs to change the way that we react to grief and challenges. Some thought themes and their associated consequences are summarized in the table below.
### Beliefs and their Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thought Themes (Thoughts/Beliefs)</th>
<th>Emotions/ Reactions (Consequences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loss:</strong> I have lost something</td>
<td>Sadness/Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Danger:</strong> Something bad might happen. There is some threat</td>
<td>Anxiety/Agitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trespass:</strong> I have been harmed, my rights have been violated</td>
<td>Anger/Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inflicting harm:</strong> I have caused harm</td>
<td>Guilt/Apologizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative self-worth:</strong> I don't measure up, I am damaged</td>
<td>Shame/Hiding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Positive contribution:</strong> I contributed in a positive way</td>
<td>Pride/Planning future achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appreciating what you have received:</strong> I have received a gift that I value</td>
<td>Gratitude/Giving back, Paying forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive future:</strong> Things can change for the better</td>
<td>Hope/Energizing, taking action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vastness:</strong> I am in the presence of something greater than me</td>
<td>Awe/Prosocial Behavior* Research is still emerging in this domain</td>
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</table>

This table is about our B→C pathway. To complete our ABCs, think about how an **Activating Event** might trigger our underlying **Beliefs** or automatic thoughts, which then triggers these **Consequences**. Then **Dispute** these thoughts, and analyze your **Energization** after questioning some of these underlying beliefs.

**The Exercise:**

- Complete the following tables labeled retrospective ABCs and prospective ABCs. In the first table, think about a recent event that was particularly activating for you (you got yelled at by your boss, you failed an exam...).
- Describe what you said to yourself in the moment (what your beliefs or thoughts were) and then write what the consequences were for your emotions, behaviors, and physiology. Then complete the following reflection questions.

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### Retrospective ABCs

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A:</strong></td>
<td>Describe a recent <strong>activating</strong> event:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B:</strong></td>
<td>What were your <strong>beliefs</strong> or thoughts that you said to yourself in the moment?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C:</strong></td>
<td>What were the <strong>consequences</strong> on your emotions, behaviors, and physiology that resulted from those beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D:</strong></td>
<td>How can you <strong>dispute</strong> potentially maladaptive beliefs? Compare the evidence for/against the thought you had. Are you getting caught in any thinking traps? Can you find another way to look at the situation?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E:</strong></td>
<td>How do you feel now in regards to your <strong>energization</strong>? How do you want to act now?</td>
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</table>

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Positive Psychology Interventions for Being a Fully Human

- Reflect: In what ways were those thoughts/beliefs productive? In what ways were these beliefs counterproductive?
- In the following table, we will think through how to avoid feeling some of those negative consequences by modifying our thoughts/beliefs. This time, start with the C box and then move to the B box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prospective ABCs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A:</strong> Describe an upcoming event that may be potentially activating:</td>
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<td><strong>B:</strong> What will you think/believe to generate those desired consequences?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C:</strong> What were emotions, behaviors, and physiology will be the most productive?</td>
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</table>

- Reflect: How can changing our thoughts or beliefs positively impact our emotional, physiologic, and behavioral states? How can you integrate these ABCs into your everyday life? In your relationships?
- What, if anything, did you learn from completing this exercise?
Activity: The Unplug Challenge

- Desired outcomes: Enhancing one’s sense of vitality, improving self-care, reducing exhaustion, improving relationships
- Target systems: Willpower, physiology
- Target changes: Achieving better sleep, being more present in the moment, forging deeper connections with family, friends, and self in the moment
- Active ingredient: Detaching from the virtual world

This exercise is about detaching from the virtual world of cell phones, television, tablets, email, smart-watches, and anything with a screen, and plugging into the present moment—being with yourself, your friends, your family. Not only do phones and other electronic devices get in the way of quality time during meals, other quality time with family and friends, and time alone decompressing from a difficult day or savoring a great one, but these devices may also hamper our sleep quality. The blue light in our cell phones and televisions interferes with melatonin and may disrupt our circadian rhythms. Therefore, unplugging from electronic devices at least two hours before bed, and sleeping in a dark room, may greatly enhance sleep quality.

The Exercise:

• Set an evening to unplug. Invite friends or family to participate in the Unplug Challenge with you. You, alone or with your friends/ family members, will shut off all electronic devices including television, cell phones, tablets, computers, etc. Use clean socks as “sleeping bags” for participant’s cell phones.
• Set yourself up to complete an activity while you are “unplugged.” This can include cooking dinner, reading, writing, going for a walk or hike, or creating a piece of art. If you are completing the unplug challenge with others, you can cook together, discuss a book, co-create art, play board games, hike, play charades, or create a family tree if completing the challenge with family.
After an evening of unplugged fun, remain unplugged until bedtime. Resist the temptation to turn on your phone or browse the web before bed. Get to bed at a reasonable hour so that you can get as close to eight hours of sleep as possible.

Complete a written reflection, detailing your experience of unplugging with either yourself or others before turning on your devices in the morning: What did you choose to do while unplugged? Do you feel more refreshed? Did you feel better rested the following day? Did you find that you were more deeply connected with yourself or your loved ones without the disruption of cell phones? Are you more able to focus and concentrate in the moment without your phone constantly buzzing and beeping? What else, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Time Tracking

- **Desired outcomes:** Improving vitality, deliberately structuring one’s day to maximize vitality
- **Target systems:** Cognition, attention, physiology
- **Target changes:** Increasing awareness of daily activities to subsequently improve self-regulation, revamping structure of day to live a healthier lifestyle
- **Active ingredients:** Self-regulation, keeping track of daily activities & reflecting on ways to improve

**The Exercise:**

- For 3-5 days (ensure at least one weekend day in addition to weekdays), either complete the Daily Time Tracking Table below or use a smart phone app like iTrackMyTime to track your daily activity. If you are using the table, mark each time block with an “x” if the majority of that half hour was spent in the specified activity. Note that it is possible to have completed two activities simultaneously (for instance, if you ran with a group of friends outdoors, you’d put an “x” next to exercising, outdoors, and connecting with others.) This exercise is not about assessing how you spend your time; rather it is about raising awareness of how you spend your time.

- At the end of each tracking day, reflect on your mood, affect, and energy level as a result of each activity, to determine if what you were doing had any influence on how you were feeling.

- After completing the exercise for ~3-5 days, and reflecting each day, reflect on the overall experience: Were there any patterns that you saw, for instance: How many hours of sleep are you typically getting? Is this enough sleep to optimally function during the day? Are you finding the time to exercise? (Remember, guidelines suggest getting at least 30 minutes for five days in a week, or 150 minutes spread over the course of a week.)

- Are there any tweaks that you are feeling inclined to make to be more active? (For instance, can you opt to take the stairs instead of the elevator?) What can you to do
Positive Psychology Interventions for Being a Fully Human

spend more time with others? Are there any changes you think you could make in the way you structure your time to maximize your pursuit of vitality?

• What, if anything, did you learn from tracking your time and the way that you structure your day?
## Daily Time Tracking Template

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<th>Sitting</th>
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<th>Exercising</th>
<th>Sleeping</th>
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<th>Connecting with others</th>
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Exercises compiled and developed by Jordyn Feingold and Scott Barry Kaufman
Activity: Take the VIA Inventory & Use Your Top Strength in New Ways

- Desired outcome: Increasing engagement in life by identifying and using signature strengths
- Target systems: Attention, affect, engagement
- Target changes: Shift in focus, increased engagement, increased self-efficacy
- Active ingredients: Competence, autonomy, performance experiences

You will take the VIA Inventory and use your results to first become aware of your strengths, and then explore your strengths, and finally to apply your strengths in new ways. As you may discover when answering the VIA and reviewing your results, strengths are not fixed traits across settings and time; rather, strengths are malleable, subject to growth, and largely context-specific. Thus, strengths that you may rank high in in life such as perspective or humor may seem to go out the window when it comes to your premed classes... Similarly, you may not be very prudent or self-regulated when it comes to putting yourself at risk, but when it comes to your loved ones, you are highly cautious and reserved. Additionally, it is important to note that strengths may be overused, or applied in a situation where it may not be appropriate or warranted. When it comes to strengths, there tends to be a “golden mean” or right amount of exercising a strength that leads to optimal results (see the figure below).

This exercise is aimed to help you channel your top strengths in your work to increase your engagement, meaning, and mastery in college life. Note that your strengths will be ranked in order of top strengths to low strengths, not necessarily your weaknesses. While this intervention is specifically designed for you to use your top strengths, also consider focusing on some of your bottom strengths. Further information about this is provided in the exercise prompt.

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The Activity:

- Complete the VIA Survey of Character Strengths (240-item version). Do this by visiting [https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu](https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu) and then hovering over “Questionnaires” at the top of the page.

- Click on “VIA Survey of Character Strengths” (and make sure you don’t click on the VIA Strength Survey for Children.”) At this point, you will be directed to login or create an account. Create your account.

- Once you have created your account, complete the VIA Survey of Character Strengths. It should take ~20 minutes to complete.

- Once you are done, review your results. You can see your rank-ordered 24 strengths by going back to the Questionnaires tab and visiting the “Questionnaire Center,” which is the first option within this section. You will scroll down and click on “details” for the VIA survey.

- Complete a written reflection about the following: do any of your top strengths surprise you? What about your lower strengths? What would your life look like if you were unable...
to use your number 1-top strength? Do you think that you would find it more helpful to focus on using your top strengths or improving your lesser strengths?

• **Find 3 new ways to use your top strengths this week.** Can you use these top strengths to help you be a better student? A better friend/family member? To overcome some obstacle? To create a positive experience? Please write about the 3 new ways you used your top strengths this week. Use the template below to record how you are using your strengths in new ways (you can use the same strength 3 times, OR 3 different strengths).
## Using Strengths in New Ways

### Strength 1:

How did you use this strength in a new way this week?

### Strength 2:

How did you use this strength in a new way this week?

### Strength 3:

How did you use this strength in a new way this week?
Activity: Write a Gratitude Letter

- **Desired outcomes:** Improving and enriching relationships and social bonds, bolstering positive affect, thwarting hedonic adaptation
- **Target systems:** Attention, affect
- **Target changes:** Showing more gratitude, admiration, appreciation, & affection toward others
- **Active ingredients:** Gratitude, relatedness

Practicing gratitude is a cornerstone of positive psychology associated with several beneficial outcomes for well-being. In correlational studies, expressing gratitude is associated with increased savoring of positive life experiences, bolstering self-worth and self-esteem, more effective coping with life stresses and trauma, better adjustment to loss and chronic illness, enhanced moral behavior, nurturing new social bonds and strengthening old ones, inhibiting envy and comparison with others, lessening negative feelings, and reducing our tendency to adapt to positive events. This exercise, the gratitude visit, has been empirically shown to induce positive changes in happiness and a decrease in depressive symptoms for up to a month.

**The Exercise:**

- Choose a person in your life who has been especially kind to you but may not have ever heard you express your deep gratitude to them.
- Write him or her a letter, with the intention of reading it out loud to this person if at all possible. Describe in detail what the person has done for you and exactly how it has affected your life. Mention how often you remember his or her efforts and how you may plan to pay this kindness forward somehow.

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Positive Psychology Interventions for Being a Fully Human

• If possible, read the letter out loud to the recipient. If this is not possible, you can read the letter over the phone or mail the letter and follow-up with a phone call.\textsuperscript{11}
• Complete a written reflection detailing what it felt like to engage in this gratitude intervention. You may feel free to share the letter itself in your reflection, but you do not have to.

\textsuperscript{11} If you are not comfortable reading or sending the letter, that is okay. Just writing the letter may be enough to produce substantial boosts in your well-being. However, sending the letter will maximize the benefits of gratitude to enhance the relationship quality between you and your letter recipient.
Activity: Practicing Forgiveness

- **Desired outcomes**: Enhancing capacity for forgiveness, letting go of a grudge
- **Target systems**: Cognition, physiology, affect
- **Target change**: Enhancing mindfulness around the mistakes of self and others
- **Active ingredients**: Meditating, cultivating forgiveness, love and kindness

The capacity for forgiveness is an immensely important life skill. As humans, others will inevitably hurt us, and we will inevitably—consciously or unconsciously—hurt others and even ourselves. Experiences of hurt, regret, sadness, etc. can re-afflict us again and again when we hold onto these negative emotions after the point of infliction. When we do not forgive others or ourselves, we actually “add insult to injury” by ruminating on negative events rather than letting go of and learning from them. Forgiveness is not about condoning hurtful behavior; rather, it is about letting go of the emotional baggage so we do not become crippled by anger and resentment. While hurt is an inevitable part of the human experience, it is up to each person to determine whether to forgive and foster compassion, or whether these painful events stay with us and define us. For this Forgiveness Practice, you have two options (you do not need to complete both). Please choose one, and specify in your reflection which exercise you chose.

**The Exercise (Option 1):** *Choose this option if meditation is a useful skill for you, or if you wish to practice meditation*

- Spend about 10 minutes for at least 3 days this week engaging in a Forgiveness Meditation. You can listen to the guided meditation by visiting: https://soundcloud.com/mindfulmagazine/10-minute-mindfulness-practice-to-foster-forgiveness
- Make sure that you are seated comfortably with your eyes closed, bringing your awareness inward. Each time you complete this exercise, you may visualize different scenarios and hurtful experiences, or focus on the same ones to help you process particularly difficult situations.
After going through this entire meditation for 3 days, write a written reflection in which you explore the following: What did it feel like to practice Forgiveness Meditation? Was it difficult to forgive yourself and/or others? Did the exercise get easier or more challenging each time? How did you feel when you were finished each day? Did you notice any changes in the way that you view other people? The way you view yourself? What, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?

The Exercise (Option 2): *Choose this option if you do not particularly enjoy meditation, or if you have a very specific example of forgiveness that you hope to cultivate*

This exercise is based on Everett Worthington’s REACH model of forgiveness. For each of the following letters, engage in written reflection in which you explore your feelings. If you do not feel comfortable submitting your notes on each letter, that’s okay. You may simply hand in your reflection on the entire experience at the end.

- **R = Recall the hurt**
  - In order to heal and subsequently forgive, you must acknowledge that you have been hurt. Recall what happened and why you were hurt. Make up your mind not to treat yourself like a victim, and not to view the other person like a monster. Decide that you will not pursue “payback” but will treat the person as a valuable person.

- **E = Empathize with the person**
  - Make an effort to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. Imagine what could have possibly been going on in that person’s life to cause you the hurt that he/she did. Really try to imagine the best-case scenario of what may have been at play when you were hurt. Imagine how he or she feels to have hurt you; imagine the possible pain that this person might be going through his/herself. Empathizing enables you to feel compassion or loving kindness to the other person, allowing you to give of yourself.

- **A = Altruistic gift**

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12 See Dr. Worthington’s website at: http://www.evworthington-forgiveness.com/reach-forgiveness-of-others/
• Determine to give your forgiveness as an unselfish, altruistic gift. To do this, imagine a time when someone in your life forgave you for wrong-doing (perhaps a friend, sibling, parent, or teacher). Remember how you felt when you were forgiven by that person—it likely felt quite light and freeing—and you did not want to do wrong by that person again. By forgiving unselfishly, you can allow the person who hurt you to feel that same lightness and freedom.

  o **C = Commit**
    • Commit to forgiveness. Write a note to yourself to affirm this forgiveness, something simple such as: “Today I forgave [Person’s Name] for hurting me.” You can keep this note to yourself, or share it with the person.

  o **H = Hold onto forgiveness**
    • If/when you are feeling in doubt about your forgiveness, re-read your note and re-commit. Remember, forgiveness does not necessarily mean forgetting, it simply means letting go of additional pain and hurt after damage has already been done.

• After going through this REACH acronym, and reaching inside yourself to forgive, complete a reflection in which you explore the following: What did it feel like to engage in this exercise? Was there a particular letter that was the most challenging? Did you share your Commitment with the person who hurt you? If yes, how did that go? If no, why not? How do you feel toward this person now? What else, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Creativity Experiment

- **Desired outcome:** Enhancing capacity for creativity
- **Target systems:** Affect, cognition, physiology
- **Target changes:** Increasing awareness of conditions that foster creativity
- **Active ingredients:** Performance experiences, psychological and emotional states, creativity

Research reveals many ways that small changes in our lives can make a big difference in our capacity for creativity. Activities such as listening to classical music, using a pen and paper to write rather than a computer, spending time in nature, daydreaming, meditating, exercising, and laughing all may enhance our capacity for creativity. However, not all methods may work for all people. Thus, in this exercise, you will have the choice in how you experiment to enhance your creative potential.

**The Exercise:**

- Set yourself up for a creativity experiment. First, with no priming whatsoever, sit down however you normally would to complete your assignment, and set a timer for 2 minutes. In 2 minutes, think of as many possible uses for **one of** the following common objects: a *brick, Ping-Pong ball, spoon,* or *mug.*
  - For example, let’s say you were completing this test with a **paperclip.** You might think about the following uses:
    - *Cufflinks*
    - *Earrings*
    - *Something to unlock a jammed door*
    - *Bookmark*
    - *Toothpick*
    - *Twist-tie*
  - After you write down as many alternative uses for the object of your choice, set yourself up for a “creativity-enhancing activity.” I.e.) you can listen to Mozart or other classical music for 10 minutes, go exercise for more than 20 minutes, spend 10 minutes just...
daydreaming, meditate, go spend time with friends and laugh, watch a funny television show, or go spend at least 30 minutes in nature.

- Immediately following your “creativity-enhancing activity,” complete the Alternative-Use exercise again, this time, with one of the other objects (do not just repeat the exercise for the same object). Set a timer for 2 minutes and think of as many uses of the new object as possible.

- At this point, you should have two lists for two distinct objects. Looking at these lists, write a reflection in which you address the following: What creativity-enhancing activity did you choose to complete? Do you think that the activity helped you to be more creative at the Alternative-Use test? To assess whether the activity “worked” assess the following:
  o Which of your lists is longer?
  o Which list has more original or uncommon uses? (i.e. uses that do not resemble the intended function of the object).
  o Which list is more “flexible” or covers more areas? (i.e. a paperclip used as both earrings and cufflinks are both “accessories”, which is only 1 area).

- Whether or not the creativity-enhancing activity helped you with this task, reflect: what types of things do you think will help you to increase your creativity in the future? In what situations might you want this enhanced level of creativity? What, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Hone Your Intelligence

- **Desired outcomes:** Broadening our notion of “intelligence”
- **Target systems:** Cognition, attention
- **Target change:** Enhancing self-awareness, self-determination, and self-efficacy
- **Active ingredients:** Performance experiences, competence, autonomy

Despite the pervasive use of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and other standardized measures of “general” intelligence in the United States, IQ is both limited in its potential to predict individual’s success, and limiting, such that it ignores the great nuance and variety of intelligences that individuals possess. Today, we appreciate that there is not one single unified form of intelligence, but rather, we have *multiple*, rather distinct, modular forms of intelligence, including: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and spiritual/existential intelligences.¹³ This exercise is designed to reinforce or exercise any one particular type of intelligence that students are either under-utilizing in the current college environment, or hope to use more of to achieve a particular goal.

The Exercise:

- Complete a written reflection in which you explore the following questions: which of the above types of intelligence do you think you are strongest in? Which types of intelligence are you less adept at? How has your greatest form of intelligence helped you to get to where you are today? How do you think this type of intelligence is valued in society (among your social network, in your major, at Penn, etc.)?
- Set yourself up for an experience in which you spend time using your greatest form of intelligence. *i.e.*) if your most strongest form of intelligence is linguistic, spend some time reading literature or poetry; if it’s mathematical, spend some time with math problems; if musical, spend time singing or with your instrument, etc. Spend no less than 30 minutes engaging in your activity.

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• Continue your reflection: what did you select for your activity? How did it feel to “hone” your intelligence in this way? How might you use more of this type of intelligence in your life to derive positive emotions or well-being? What, if anything, have you learned from this exercise?
Activity: Develop a Personal Meaning Oath

- ** Desired outcome:** Increasing one’s sense of meaning and purpose in college life, bolstering engagement in daily activities
- ** Target systems:** Energy, cognition, attention
- ** Target change:** Capitalizing on individual sense of purpose
- ** Active ingredient:** Writing an oath

Research demonstrates great psychological, work-related, and societal benefits for individuals who possess and cultivate their unique sense of purpose in life. Working toward meaning-oriented goals such as supporting family and friends, serving a higher power, living life to the fullest, being successful, helping others, and doing the right thing, among others, helps us to see the “big picture” in our daily lives and may prevent us from “sweating the small stuff” or focusing on the minor negative situations or annoyances (pardon the clichés 😝). Meaning and purpose are powerful drivers of both our daily experiences, and what we choose to do with our lives personally and professionally in the long-term. This exercise is aimed at helping students identify and reflect on their unique sense of purpose in life, and create a plan forward for keeping these goals at the forefront of our minds.

The Exercise:

- Begin by reflect on the following questions:\[14\]
  - What matters to you most in life, and why?
    - [For example: social justice, environmental sustainability, family, community service, helping to heal sick people…. etc. Make sure to explain WHY?]
  - What would you like to see different about the world?
    - Why?
  - Are you doing anything about this problem?
    - If not, why not?

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\[14\] Questions retrieved from Matthew J. Bundick’s research from the Institute on College Values Conference: https://studentvalues.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Bundick_College_Student_PurposeD.pdf
Think back to some of your signature strengths: How might your personal strengths equip you to deal with this problem?

What do you want to be remembered for?
  - What are you doing now to make sure that happens?

After reflecting on these questions, write a personal oath in which you dedicate yourself to the causes that mean the most to you. Oaths may take any form you choose, but should include affirmative statements of how you hope to pursue the areas that mean the most to you. One example is included here:

“I will

Use my strengths of curiosity and wisdom
To pursue life-long learning,
Never being complacent with the knowledge I possess
I will read news and books, memoirs, novels,
That challenge my preconceived notions
I will bring an open mind and heart to new people and experiences
And maintain my awareness that my worldview is shaped by the life I have lived thus far.
I will listen to others’ opinions, and be careful not to judge others or myself
  I will practice mindfulness. I will study hard.
  I will give my time and resources to help those in need
  I will take care of myself, so that I may take care of others.”

Keep your oath handy: type out your oath and make it your computer desktop or phone background, keep it on a keychain, or put it somewhere where it will be visible to you everyday.

The submission for this assignment should include both your oath and your answers to the priming questions.
Activity: Create a Meaningful Music Library

- **Desired outcome:** Providing students with an available resource for meaning-making and positive emotions through music
- **Target systems:** Memory, physiology, affect
- **Target change:** Increasing meaning and motivation through music
- **Active ingredients:** Music, psychological and emotional states, reminiscence

Mounting scientific evidence from empirical studies indicates that music listening has beneficial effects on pain perception, stress, and emotions. Mechanisms by which music elicits emotions in listeners include pre-wired brain stem reflexes, gradual adjustments in internal rhythms such as heart rate, mimicry of perceived emotions within a piece of music, and imagery and memories associated with a listener’s past experiences, among others. These various mechanisms help to bring about emotions that positively impact both the subjective well-being of a listener as well as physical changes, such as changes in dopamine, serotonin, cortisol, endorphins, and oxytocin levels.

Cultivating a meaningful music library can provide listeners with an available source of meaning and positive emotions to listen to while studying, walking, working out, meditating, or just hanging out. Actually curating this music library as well as listening to it and are both positive interventions in and of themselves. Thus, this intervention may have benefits at the time of music collection, and lasting effects when listening to this music library.

**The Exercise:**

- Think about types of music in your life, or specific songs that have elicited positive emotions or that represent certain positive or meaningful life experiences. Think about songs you may have sung or listened to with loved ones, a certain genre that is personally uplifting, or the favorite music of someone you hold dear. Anything goes that elicits positive emotion, spirituality, or a sense of meaning.

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- Aim for no fewer than five songs in your first brainstorm, and feel free to add to this list over time.
- Find these songs online on music listening software such as iTunes or Spotify, or on YouTube. Create a playlist where you cultivate these songs for easy listening at any time of your choosing.
- Each day for a week, listen to this playlist for at least 15 minutes.
- At the end of the week, write a written reflection in which you explore the following: How did you feel when curating this meaningful music library? Which did you find more positive: the creation of the library or spending time listening each day? Why? What emotions did you feel when listening to the music? Did these emotions last? Did you find yourself listening to the music to induce any specific emotions? Did you experience these emotions at a particular occasion when you needed them? What went really well for you in doing this exercise? What, if anything, didn’t go so well? What else, if anything, did you learn from this exercise?
Activity: Create a Flow Experience

- **Desired outcome:** Enhancing one’s engagement with work, leisure, and life
- **Target system:** Attention, cognition
- **Target change:** Increasing flow in everyday life
- **Active ingredients:** Reflection, action, challenge, designing experience

This exercise is about increasing flow experiences in your life, in any domain of your choosing (i.e. school, work, with family, friends, etc.). Flow is about intense absorption in an activity in which you are fully concentrating, completely immersed, and even unaware of yourself.\(^{16}\) To induce flow, the idea is to find the optimal balance between skill and challenge: you do not want to do something that is *too* difficult that you are anxious while doing it, and you don’t want to do something too simple so that you are bored. Cultivating one’s ability to experience flow in many circumstances as possible may lead to a happier, more fulfilling life. Ideally, one would be able to find flow in their favorite hobbies or activities, such as singing, painting, or running, and also in their educational pursuits, such as writing papers, completing problem sets, doing research, or studying for exams.

Finding flow involves challenging the body and mind to its limits, striving to accomplish something new, difficult, or worthwhile, and to discover rewards in the process of each moment. Eight tools for enhancing flow are presented in the table below:

**The Exercise\(^{17}\):**

- First, write a brief reflection about a previous flow experience you’ve had. This should be a time when you were completely absorbed in the task at hand, lost all self-consciousness and perception of time. Consider a) what has facilitated this experience, b) what, if anything, may have impeded this experience? Then consider, c) how might you solve the potential obstacles to flow?
- Then, intentionally set yourself up for a flow experience, to the best of your ability. Go out and complete this activity and continue your reflection writing about this


\(^{17}\) Ibid.
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experience. What did you do, and how did it feel? This may be a solitary activity, or something you engage in with others. Refer to the table for some tips to enhance your flow experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools for Enhancing Flow&lt;sup&gt;18&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Attention</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Open Yourself to New Experiences</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be a Lifelong Learner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Learn What Flows</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Transform Routine Tasks</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Engage in Smart Leisure</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Engage in Smart Work</strong></td>
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**Activity:** Appreciative Inquiry: College Edition

- **Desired outcome:** Cultivating the parts of our college lives that bring us the most well-being; paying these forward
- **Target system:** Attention, cognition
- **Target change:** Shifting focus away from the negative, toward the positive
- **Active ingredients:** Reflection, imaginal experience, self-regulation

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a multi-step process aimed at promoting positive attributes and cultivating the aspects of our lives in which we feel the best, and most alive. An alternative to problem solving, AI shifts the focus away from what is wrong within a system into what is RIGHT by evaluating peak experiences and systems that work well. It is another perspective through which we can identify and cultivate the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions that serve us best in order to increase our positive potential. Appreciative Inquiry is practiced in a series of 4-D’s. The first step, ‘discover,’ is an inventory of things that work well to bring a sense of self-fulfillment. The second step, ‘dream,’ is a space to consider the ideal conditions that could support your best self. The third step, ‘design,’ is about bringing these ideals into the real world. The final step, ‘destiny,’ is about defining goals towards achieving one’s positive potential.

**The Exercise:**

- Complete the worksheet in which you go through the 4 D’s with guided questions.
- For this assignment, your reflection can simply be the answers to each of these prompts. Note that the last part of this exercise, “destiny” requires you to set a SMART goal for yourself (recall: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-sensitive). This SMART goal can be new, or it can reinforce the previous goal you’ve been working toward throughout the semester.

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**Discover:** List some things that have gone particularly well for you in the past semester. These can be school-related, friends-related, extra-curricular, etc. When do you feel the most “alive” at Penn? Where are you, and who are you with? What brings you the most joy & fulfillment in college?

**Dream:** In an ideal world, what would your college life look like? Really think big on this one, the sky is the limit! For instance, you can think about what classes you’d take, how you’d spend your time, who you’d spend your time with, etc. What would the “ideal” semester be like?

**Design:** Given the resources available to you and the practical constraints of the college environment, how can you bring some of these ideals into reality? How can you structure your days to be more like your ideal experience?

**Destiny:** What is one specific practical change that you can make in your life for the rest of the semester and in the future to live out this ideal? To carry out your destiny, use this space to write a SMART goal to make this a reality.
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Activity: This I Believe

- **Desired outcomes:** Reflecting on personal values; creating a piece of writing that may be shared with family, friends, and colleagues
- **Target systems:** Affect, attention, cognition, memory
- **Target change:** Increasing self-determination/intrinsic motivation, affirming values
- **Active ingredients:** Imaginal experiences, autonomy

The “This I Believe” essay contest was created 65 years ago through National Public Radio to elicit personal philosophies from lay people across the United States. Writing a statement of personal belief is a powerful tool for self-reflection. Although you will not be submitting these essays to the NPR contest, we do hope that you will share our essays with your classmates in recitation if you would like to.

The Exercise:

- In fewer than 500 words, write a statement of personal belief. You may see the NPR website for guidelines. Details are included here:
  - Tell a story about you, in which you specifically discuss a belief that is grounded in the events that have shaped your core values. Consider moments when the belief was formed, tested, or changed. Think about those parts of your own life (family, school, work, friends) that no one else knows. The story need not be heart-warming, or gut-wrenching; it just has to be real.
  - When naming your belief, think about a single core belief that you can name in a sentence or two
  - Be positive: don’t write about what you don’t believe, write about what you do believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.
  - Be personal: make your essay about YOU. Speak in the first person, (and avoid the editorial, “we.”)
  - Submit your essay as your reflection for this week. If there is time, we would love for you to share you essay (in whole or in part) in recitation.

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20 See: http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/
Activity: Meta-Reflection

- **Desired outcome:** Synthesizing our beliefs about how positive interventions have enhanced our well-being and ability to be “fully human” this semester; understanding how positive psychology plays a role in our daily lives.

- **Target systems:** Cognition, affect, memory, physiology

- **Target changes:** Enhancing wholeness

- **Active ingredients:** Meta-Reflection

The Exercise:

- In 4-6 double-spaced (no less than 4, no more than 6 with standard formatting) pages, reflect on how your well-being and "humanness" has changed (or not changed) over the course of the semester. Reflect on why these changes occurred (or did not occur). How did your engagement with the positive psychology activities in this course impact your well-being/feeling of wholeness? How successful were you at working toward your SMART goals? Were there other factors outside of this course that impacted your well-being/wholeness? What have you learned about yourself and others by taking this course?

- You may mention how the reflection exercises impacted your well-being, but this is more than just a synthesis of your reflections - we want you to reflect on your well-being as a whole, which has many more components than the exercises we had you try.