

Welcome to the Science of Living Well!

Throughout this course, you will challenge yourself to grow by completing the challenges in this manual. The interventions are grouped according to course content, and you will have the opportunity to select which exercises sound most interesting and relevant to you each week.

While you may not have a chance to experience every single challenge in this book throughout your time in the course, these exercises are always here for you.

Feel free to refer to this manual at any time throughout the year, or your life, to get back on track and nurture what's best within you.

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Activity: Positive Introductions

The Challenge:

- 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 your recitation 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

The Challenge:

- 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. 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?

Activity: Harmonizing Our Identities

As each of us has many dimensions to our identity, integrating these facets can sometimes feel like a tremendous task. We each play many different roles in our lives, and bringing these roles into harmony can lead to experiencing a greater sense of wholeness.

The Challenge:

- Sit down in a quiet place and write down all of the different roles that you play in your life. This list may include words like, son or daughter, student, girlfriend/boyfriend, neighbor, brother or sister, friend, uncle, leader, community member, writer, teacher, etc. You may also consider different parts of your personality that manifest in each role. For example, being a student brings out your diligence, as a brother, you are very protective, as a significant other, you are goofy... etc.
- Consider how these roles can come into conflict with one another in your daily life – be as specific as possible:
 - *I.e.) “Sometimes it can be challenging to be a goofy friend when I also have to be diligent and study for my classes.”*
 - *I.e.) “As a leader of my student group, I have to be constantly organized and on top of my members and events. As a premed student, I also have to be so diligent – sometimes I feel like I don’t have the bandwidth to do it all.”*
- Next, consider how these same roles can complement each other.
 - *I.e.) “Being goofy with my friends recharges me so that I can sit down and study for class.”*
 - *I.e.) “I can try to use my skills of organization and teamwork to apply to my premed classes; maybe I can create study groups in my classes, like I work with my fellow group members, to maximize my success in class.”*
- For the next week or so, begin to focus on these reinforcing aspects of the roles in your life. Reflect on potential conflicts as opportunities to find new ways to harmonize the various parts of your identity, and what it feels like to transform a challenge into an opportunity.

Activity: Spotting Our Neurotic Trends

This activity involves identifying and facing your own neurotic trend(s) (see class lecture), so that you can begin moving in a direction to live more by your values, rather than falling subject to many of the illusions that we live by mindlessly every day. Certainly, there are times when it is important to be compliant, aggressive, and detached from the world around you. However, if you find yourself disproportionately falling into one of these categories more than the others, this may indicate that various underlying needs are out of harmony with one another.

Compliance	Aggressive	Detached
1. I need to be liked by everyone.	1. It's a hostile world.	1. I am self-sufficient.
2. I am completely self-sacrificing.	2. Life is a struggle.	2. I don't really need people.
3. I'd almost always rather be with someone else than be alone.	3. I like to be in command.	3. I could live quite well without anyone.
4. I care too much what other people think of me.	4. Only the strongest survive.	4. I avoid long-term obligations.
5. I feel crushed if I am rejected.	5. I enjoy feeling powerful.	5. I resent people trying to influence me.
6. I feel weak and helpless when I'm alone.	6. I enjoy outsmarting other people.	6. I try to avoid advice from others.
7. I try to avoid fighting or arguing.	7. Other people are too sentimental.	7. I could live fine without friends or family.
8. I tend to feel it's my fault if something goes wrong.	8. I am uninhibited and brave.	8. I like it better when people do not share their thoughts or feelings with me.
9. I tend to be the one who apologizes first.	9. To survive in this world, you have to look out for yourself first.	9. I feel I'd be better off without people than with people.
10. I constantly need the company of others.	10. It's a fact of life most successful people step on others to get ahead.	10. I try to avoid conflicts.

The Challenge:

- Start by reading through the various items under each neurotic trend heading, (Compliance, Aggressive, and Detached) above. Tally up the number of statements you

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agree with under each heading to determine your neurotic trend. This is where we will first bring our attention.

- (You may affiliate with many statements under each heading, so you may simply choose the one you want to work on first.)
- Elaborate on the concrete beliefs or behaviors you exhibit that reflect each of the statements you agree with, *i.e.*, *how do these thoughts manifest themselves in your life?*
- Consider: how do these beliefs and behaviors help you? How might they get in the way of your living most by your values and feeling whole? How can you question the beliefs that are impeding you so that you may live with greater freedom, and a little more wholly?
- Commit to being more aware of these beliefs as they come up in your life—how can you continue to challenge these beliefs and free yourself so that you can become the person you most wish to become?

Activity: Three Good Things

The Challenge:

- 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 (I had a major breakthrough in writing my essay!)
- 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 essay, 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 the night before this assignment is due 😊

Activity: Practicing Acts of Kindness

The Challenge:

- 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

The Challenge:

- 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 challenge, 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?
 - How might these activities differentially tap into your sense of "happiness" versus a sense of "meaning?" How, in your eyes, do happiness and meaning differ from one another?
 - When looking to enhance a sense of well-being or wholeness in the future, which type of exercise would you be more likely to engage in? Why?
 - What, if anything, did you learn from engaging in this experiment?

Activity: Create a Positive Portfolio

The Challenge:

- 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.
- 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: Embrace Your Dark Side

The latest research suggests the importance of not only cultivating positive emotions and events in our lives, but also, accepting the most difficult or uncomfortable emotions in our lives, acknowledging them non-judgmentally, and hopefully, finding a healthy outlet for them. For instance, emotions like guilt, anger, or embarrassment can serve as emotional cues that we may find utility in repenting, resolving a conflict, or evaluating the reasons for these negative emotions so that we may respond to them. Similarly, features of our lives that may sometimes feel to us like “scars,” such as struggling with physical or mental illness, harboring a particular insecurity, etc., can actually become sources of great strength, giving us a unique ability to help or understand other people.

This activity involves reacting mindfully to our own negative emotions or life experiences, and thinking about ways to harness these emotions for optimal growth and creativity.

The Challenge:

- In writing, reflect upon your “dark side” using some or all of the following questions to guide you:
 - What might come to mind when thinking about your own “dark side?”
 - What are a few situations in your life that make you feel particularly negative? (i.e. time spent in a particular place, with certain people, things you often dread but have to do, etc.)
 - What is something in your life that you struggle with, or see as a potential “scar”?
- Consider, in what ways have you coped with the negative emotions, emotional ‘scars’ or ‘negative’ parts of your identity?
- In what new ways might you be able to take these negative emotions or ‘scars’ and do something productive with them, such as making small personal improvements or connecting with others, rather than judging oneself? How might your dark side make you a better friend, student, or person? How does your dark side serve you in helping you become a whole person?

Activity: Choose a Mindfulness Meditation

The Challenge:

- For five days this week, you will engage in a mindfulness meditation of your choice.
- 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 for five days (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: The Unplug Challenge

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 Challenge:

- 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. What did you do while unplugged? How did you feel? How do you feel now? What did you learn from this exercise?

Activity: Time Tracking

The Challenge:

- 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 challenge 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 do to 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?

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Daily Time Tracking Template (For 1 Day)										
TIME	Sitting	Standing	Reclining (awake)	Exercising	Sleeping	Eating	Indoors	Outdoors	Connecting with others	TIME
12:00am										12:00am
12:30am										12:30am
1:00am										1:00am
1:30am										1:30am
2:00am										2:00am
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Activity: REVAMP Inventory

In order to set out to improve our whole-person well-being, it is important to have a coherent framework for what it means to thrive. In class, we learn about PERMA, or the REVAMP theory, which involves six ingredients for optimal well-being, including relationships, engagement, vitality, accomplishment, meaning, and positive emotions. The task this week is to reflect on each of these elements in our own lives, how we are already thriving, and how we can deliberately make small changes to enhance our sense of overall health and well-being.

The Challenge:

- Complete the chart on the following page to the best of your ability. This can be hand-written on the chart itself, or you can complete electronically or type in a reflection format. Please reflect on both questions for each of the six elements: How am I doing now? And how can I do better?

REVAMP ELEMENT	How have I been doing?	How can I do better?
<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Relationships with my classmates * Relationships with professors/faculty * Relationships with family and friends * Relationship with myself 		
<p>Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Engagement in schoolwork * Engagement in leisure activities * Am I employing mindfulness? * Am I using my strengths? 		
<p>Vitality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Physical activity * Nutrition & diet * Sleep * Energy level 		
<p>Accomplishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Setting goals for myself * Asking others for help * Helping others achieve their goals 		
<p>Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * General sense of purpose * Sense of interconnectedness with others, with the universe * Sense of transcendence in my life 		
<p>Positive Emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Savoring positive experiences * Practicing gratitude * Cultivating resilience * Taking note of positive emotions, without suppressing my dark side 		

Activity: Take the VIA Inventory & Use Your Top Strength in New Ways

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**.¹ 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 prompt.

¹ Biswas-Diener, R., Kashdan, T. B., & Minhas, G. (2011). A dynamic approach to psychological strength development and intervention. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 6*(2), 106-118.

	Strength	Opposite	Absence	Excess
Wisdom and Knowledge	creativity	triteness	conformity	eccentricity
	curiosity	boredom	disinterest	nosiness
	judgment	gullibility	ineffectiveness	cynicism
	love of learning	orthodoxy	complacency	"know-it-all"-ism
	perspective	foolishness	shallowness	ivory tower
Courage	bravery	cowardice	fright	foolhardiness
	persistence	helplessness	laziness	obsessiveness
	authenticity	deceit	phoniness	righteousness
	vitality	lifelessness	restraint	hyperactivity
Love	intimacy	loneliness	isolation/autism	emotional promiscuity
	kindness	cruelty	indifference	intrusiveness
	social intelligence	self-deception	obtuseness	psychobabbling
Justice	citizenship	narcissism	selfishness	chauvinism
	fairness	prejudice	partisanship	detachment
	leadership	sabotage	compliance	despotism
Temperance	forgiveness	vengefulness	mercilessness	permissiveness
	humility	arrogance	footless self-esteem	self-deprecation
	prudence	recklessness	sensation-seeking	prudishness
	self-regulation	impulsivity	self-indulgence	inhibition
Transcendence	awe	criticism	oblivion	snobbery
	gratitude	entitlement	rudeness	ingratiation
	hope	despair	present orientation	Pollyannaism
	humor	dourness	humorlessness	buffoonery
	spirituality	alienation	anomie	fanaticism

VIA Strengths & their Opposites, Absences, Excesses (Seligman, 2015)

The Challenge:

- Complete the VIA Survey of Character Strengths (240-item version). Do this by visiting <https://www.authentic happiness.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, and how it made you feel when you did so. 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).

****NOTE: You don't have to stop finding new ways to use your top strengths this week. You can keep it up the entire semester, and for the rest of your life!****

Using Strengths in New Ways

Strength 1:
How did you use this strength in a new way this week? How did this make you feel?

Strength 2:
How did you use this strength in a new way this week? How did this make you feel?

Strength 3:
How did you use this strength in a new way this week? How did this make you feel?



Activity: Creativity Challenge

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 Challenge:

- 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.” For example, 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.

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- Immediately following your “creativity-enhancing activity,” complete the Alternative Uses 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 Uses test? To assess whether the activity “worked” assess the following:
 - Which of your lists is longer?
 - Which list has more original or uncommon uses? (i.e. uses that do not resemble the intended function of the object).
 - 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 Talent

Despite the pervasive use of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and other standardized measures of “general” intelligence in the United States, we each differ in our pattern of specific abilities and talents as well. This exercise is designed to reinforce or exercise any one particular talent that you are either under-utilizing in the current college environment, or hope to use more of to achieve a particular goal.

The Challenge:

- Complete a written reflection in which you explore the following questions: which ability area do you think you are strongest in? In other words, is there a particular talent that you think you possess? Which area of ability are you notably less adept at? How has your greatest talent helped you to get to where you are today? How do you think this talent is valued in society (among your social network, in your major, at Columbia, etc.)?
- Set yourself up for an experience in which you spend time using your greatest talent. For instance, if you are particularly talented at linguistic skills, 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.
- Continue your reflection: what did you select for your activity? How did it feel to “hone” your talent in this way? How might you use more of this talent in your life to derive positive emotions or well-being? What, if anything, have you learned from this exercise?

Activity: SMART Goal-Setting for Improved Well-Being

This activity is intended for all students to work on throughout the rest of this course. Think very carefully about a personal goal that you have that, if fulfilled, might improve your well-being and self-actualization. A goal might include adding something to your life—for example:

- Exercising or reading more;
- Maintaining something in your life (i.e., continuing to pursue your relationships, even as the semester gets harder and busier)
- 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.² 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:
 - e.g., “I want to exercise in the gym for at least 150 minutes per week (30 minutes 5x/week)”
- ❑ **MEASURABLE:** Objective should be measurable, meaning that there should be current or baseline value and a level of change that is expected.

² Doran, G. T. (1981). There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review*, 70(11), 35-36.

- e.g., “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.

- e.g., “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.

- e.g., “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.

- e.g., “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 Challenge:

- 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, say that 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.

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- At the end of the week, write a written reflection, making sure to touch on the following questions:
 - What is your goal? Does this meet all of the SMART criteria?
 - 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?
- You 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.
- Continue pursuing your goal for the rest of the semester. You will be discussing these goals in your recitation section so that you can help support each other’s personal journey of growth.

(See the worksheet on the next page to help you formulate your goal)

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: Facing Our Fears

This activity involves identifying and facing your fear(s), so that you may better combat the persistent anxieties in daily life that interfere with your health and overall capacity to thrive. You will start by reading through the *Psychological Fears Scale* below and continue with the exercise prompt.

Psychological Fears Scale

Fear of Failure

1. I am afraid of failing in somewhat difficult situations when a lot depends on me.
2. I feel uneasy doing something if I am not sure of succeeding.
3. If I do not understand a problem immediately, I start feeling anxious.

Fear of Rejection

4. When I get to know new people, I often fear being rejected by them.
5. Being given the cold shoulder when approaching strangers makes me feel insecure.
6. Being rejected is a big deal for me.

Fear of Losing Control

7. I become scared when I lose control over things.
8. I start worrying instantly when I notice that I don't have an impact on some things.
9. The idea of not having any control in a situation frightens me.

Fear of Losing Emotional Contact

10. I am absolutely devastated if a good friend breaks off contact with me.
11. I become agitated when I lose emotional contact with my loved ones.
12. If a close friend blows me off, I become anxious about our relationship.

Fear of Losing Reputation

13. I would be very worried if my good reputation was in danger.
14. I'm very keen on an undamaged reputation.

The Challenge:

- Think about some of your own fears. For some, these might come immediately to mind, or, you may read through the *Psychological Fears Scale* above to see which statements resonate with you most.
- Determine which fear(s) you would most like to work on, based on your current life experiences and taking into account the Psychological Fears scale.
- In a written reflection, explore the following:
 - What am I afraid of? Why is this so scary to me? What is the worst possible outcome of this happening to me?
 - What could be a potentially favorable outcome of this fear unfolding? In what ways might I grow as a person? What might I learn? What parts of myself can I rely on (i.e. specific qualities, strengths) that could help me overcome my greatest fear?
- Throughout the rest of the semester and beyond, try to notice when your fears are getting in your way. Commit yourself to facing this fear and for being even-handed with what positive things might ensue, as you feel yourself panicking or avoiding these aversive stimuli.

Activity: Grow Together, Cultivate a Secure Relationship

At one time or another, we have all felt insecure in a relationship, whether due to external stressors, or because of our own more deep-seated tendencies toward avoidance or anxiety. However, when couples express their fears and needs with one another, previously silenced concerns can be tackled directly, and partners may be relieved of the pressure to mind-read or assume how their partner might be feeling. This exercise is designed for dyads (couples, friends, siblings, etc.) to engage in to deepen your most valued relationships, demystify hidden feelings or anxieties, and secure a foundation of trust and acceptance.

The Challenge:

- Sit with a partner (a significant other, close friend, etc.) in a comfortable setting without distractions (put cell phones away and bring your full presence to the moment).
- Together, start by coming up with at least two to three elements of your relationship that you cherish the most, and which bring you the most satisfaction. *I.e.) the fun you have together, your common vision of the future, what you learn from each other... etc.* Feel free to really delve into these elements that make your relationship successful, citing specific memories or stories, perhaps sharing feelings you have not expressed before.
- Once you feel that you have sufficient list of the strongest parts of the relationship, allow each partner to share one concern or insecurity that they may harbor. As you share, try to use only “I” statements, rather than “you” statements, sharing your experience without placing blame on the partner. The listener should wait to respond in any way until the speaker is entirely done sharing. The listener should then repeat back their partner’s statement to ensure mutual understanding.
- Together, devise a plan to address this concern, drawing upon your mutual strengths from the first part of the exercise to formulate a solution.
 - *Note: you will likely not be able to ‘solve’ these problems or concerns in one sitting. The goal of this exercise is to create an environment where it is safe to share your insecurities, in which both partners commit to being more mindful of their partner’s needs. Drawing upon your strengths together and as individuals can be a great*

approach to dealing with insecurity and anxiety.

- Switch places so that each partner has had a chance to share, and that you have a plan for beginning to address each partner's concerns.

Activity: Active Constructive Responding

Ways of Responding to Positive News³

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

The Challenge:

- 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

³ Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E. A., & Asher, E. R. (2004). What do you do when things go right? The intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits of sharing positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(2), 228-245.

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?

Activity: Foster a High Quality Connection

Even brief moments of connection with other people can enliven our days and bring us closer to experiencing wholeness. Imagine how different your day might feel if, instead of feeling tension and awkwardness with your classmate or neighbor, your interactions were defined by trust, humor, and mutual positive regard? This exercise is about transforming a subpar or even neutral relationship in your life, into a source of energy and sustaining connection.

Tips for Building High Quality Connections (HQC) in Four Domains⁴

RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT	TASK ENABLING	TRUSTING	PLAYING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be present • Listen, really listen • Be punctual • Be affirming, yet authentic • Communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach • Facilitate • Accommodate • Nurture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with others • Self-disclose • Ask for feedback and proceed accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make meetings playful • Let your guard down • Create fun rituals

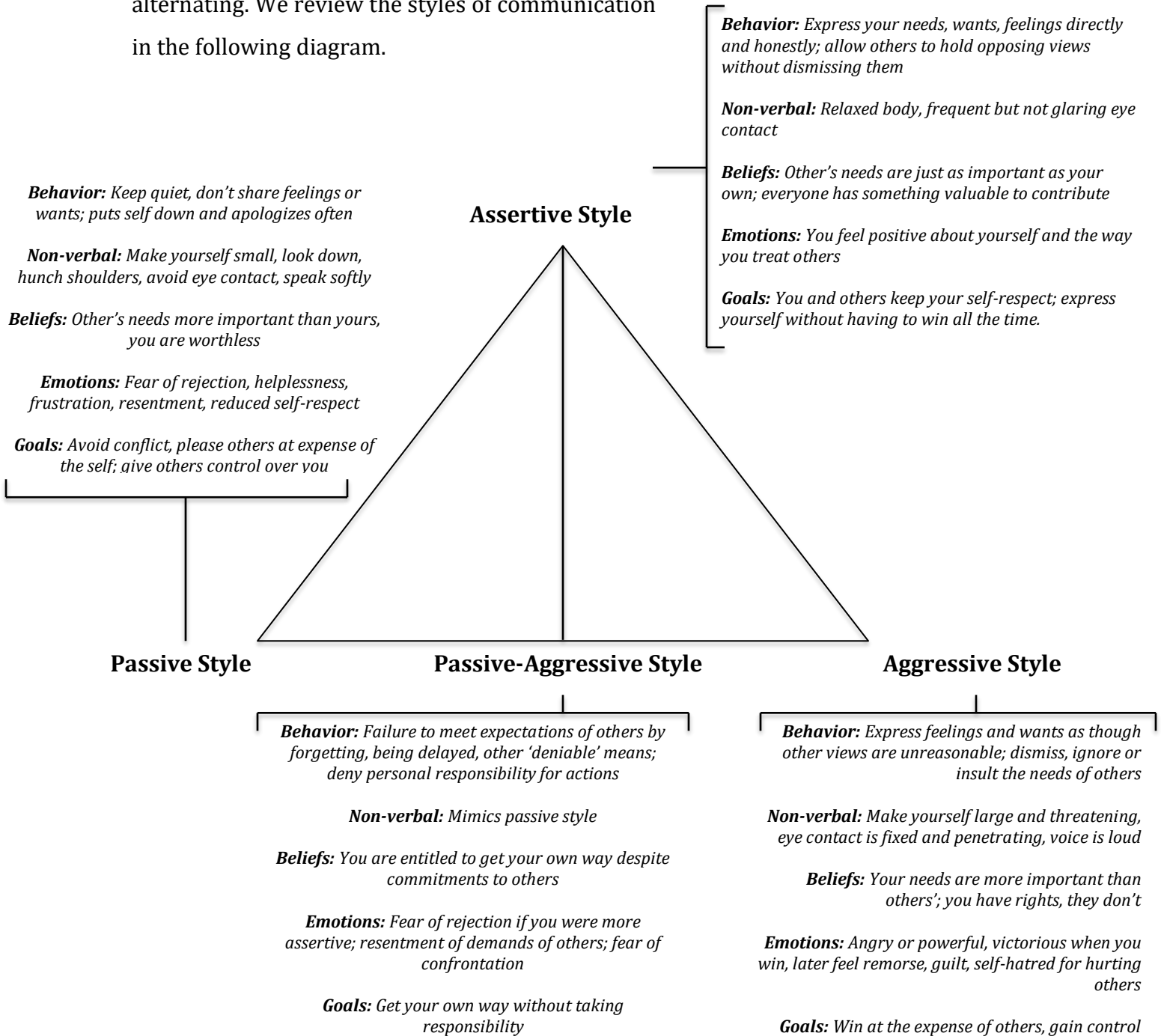
The Challenge:

- Choose a relationship in your personal or professional life in which your interactions with another person are less than ideal. In writing, describe and reflect on the current state of this relationship. What about this connection might be subpar?
- Strategize about potential steps that you can take to improve your quality of connection with this person. What specific actions can you take to enhance the relationship quality and build genuine positive regard?
- When you feel ready, actually start taking these steps – Reflect on what you observe. Have you noticed any changes in the quality of this connection? How does this impact your energy level? How can you continue to ensure this connection, and other connections, remain high quality?

⁴ Dutton, J.E. (2003). *Energize Your Workplace: How to Create and Sustain High-Quality Connections at Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Activity: Practice Healthy Assertiveness

Practicing assertiveness involves employing a communication style that is satisfying, enables open and honest exchange with others, and demonstrates that you are in control of your own behavior and actions (see class lecture). An assertive style is one of four communication styles, which include passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and alternating. We review the styles of communication in the following diagram.



The Challenge:⁵

- Review the above diagram, including the behaviors, non-verbal communication, beliefs, emotions, and goals of each of the communication styles. Determine which communication style is your dominant response. If you are already an assertive communicator in most domains of your life, feel free to choose another exercise to complete this week. If you are nearly always assertive except in certain situations, focus this exercise on those situations in which you could be more assertive.
- Briefly list 1-3 situations in your life in which you would like to become more assertive (and less passive, passive-aggressive, or aggressive).
- Complete the following sentences:
 - I act most passive when _____.
 - I often become aggressive when _____.
 - My biggest fear of being assertive is _____.
 - The 1-3 people in my life with whom I find it hardest to be assertive are _____.
 - I am already quite assertive when _____.
- Reflect upon your answers to these questions and practice acting in a more assertive manner in one domain in your life. Write a brief reflection after you endeavor to practice some assertiveness skills, as highlighted on the diagram above. Here are some additional tips for being more assertive as you go complete this exercise:⁶

1. Assertiveness is about controlling our own behavior, not the behavior of others. You always have a choice. You can't stop people from asking of you, but you can say no.
2. People are not psychic. If you want something, ask for it! If others say no, do not take it personally.
3. Symbolic value (i.e. what actions represent, as opposed to the action itself) is often what makes confrontation hard. Try to get others to change a behavior, not their personality.

⁵ Patterson, Randy J. (2000). *The assertiveness workbook: How to express your ideas and stand up for yourself at work and in relationships*. Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications.

⁶ <https://www.bakadesuyo.com/2016/09/how-to-be-more-assertive/>

Activity: Ditch Perfect!

Securing our self-esteem involves worrying less about what other people think, taking more risks, and spending less of our energy projecting a persona of perfection. Many of us spend too much of our own precious time and energy striving for perfection, worrying about *how* we are doing at any given task, rather than *what* we are doing in the moment. This quest for perfectionism can leave us feeling exhausted, isolated, and constantly dissatisfied with others and ourselves. This exercise is about questioning the pressures that we place on ourselves and receive from others to be perfect, and settling for “good enough” so that we can move in the direction of greater self-actualization.

The Challenge:

- Think about an area in your life in which you find yourself striving for perfection. Explore the following questions in a written reflection:
 - Why might I feel pressure to be perfect?
 - What does striving for perfection require of me? How does it impact my energy? How does it impact my feelings of self-worth?
 - How might seeking perfection actually interfere with my performance?
 - What am I putting at risk by not achieving perfection?
 - What is the worst thing that will happen if I am not perfect?
 - How likely is this outcome?
- After reflecting on these questions, identify some ways that you can “ditch perfect” in your life. Devise an explicit plan to increase your tolerance for “good enough” in yourself and others. Note that this does not mean settling for mediocrity—rather, it means shifting our focus of attention from outcome to process, the *how* to the *what*, and enabling ourselves to learn and grow, even through failure.

Activity: Challenging Cognitive Distortions

Throughout our evolution, humans have developed ways of navigating our world to make it easier to make decisions when we are inundated with information. The “confirmation bias” is one such shortcut, defined as the tendency to notice, remember, and value information that supports our beliefs, and disregard and devalue evidence that conflicts with our beliefs. The problem is, our beliefs themselves are often fraught with cognitive distortions, or irrational patterns in our thinking.

Simply attuning ourselves to these distortions and attempting to actively challenge them can free us of daily angst, guilt, and neuroticism.

Common cognitive distortions include, but are certainly not limited to:

- **Catastrophizing:** Believing that the worst will happen
- **Jumping to Conclusions:** Feeling certain of the meaning of a situation, despite little evidence
- **Overgeneralizing:** Drawing conclusions or settling on a global belief based on a single situation
- **Personalizing:** Attributing the outcome of a situation as solely the result of one’s own actions or behaviors
- **Externalizing:** Attributing the outcome of a situation as solely the result of others’ actions or behaviors
- **Mind Reading:** Assuming others know what you are thinking, or that you know what another is thinking, despite not communicating directly
- **Emotional Reasoning:** Reasoning that what we feel is true, without evidence
- **Magnifying:** Overvaluing shortcomings
- **Minimizing:** Undervaluing positive events

The Challenge:

- Pick out some of these cognitive distortions that you find yourself falling subject to. Ask yourself: when do you fall into these patterns? How do these patterns impact your sense of self-worth and esteem?
- How might you prevent yourself from falling into some of these patterns in the future?

Activity: Practice Our ABCs

This exercise is about understanding that the underlying beliefs we hold about the world and about ourselves can have distinct consequences for our emotional states, behaviors, and even our physiology. By understanding the cause-and-effect relationships between our beliefs and the consequences that result, we can begin to question the validity of our underlying beliefs and intervene on maladaptive belief-behavior patterns in order cope more effectively through challenges.

Practicing our ABCs involves thinking through how an **activating event** might trigger certain underlying **beliefs** or automatic thoughts, which then trigger **consequences** for our emotions, behaviors, and physiology.

The Challenge:

- In a written reflection, explore the following, following the A, B, C, D, E:
 - A)** Think about a recent event that was particularly **activating** for you. Describe what happened in detail.
 - B)** What were the **beliefs** or automatic thoughts that came to your mind in the moments after this event occurred?
 - C)** Describe the **consequences** of those beliefs: What did you feel like in your body? What was your emotional state? What did you do?
 - D)** How can you **dispute** potentially maladaptive beliefs and thoughts? Compare evidence for and against the thoughts that you had. Are there potentially other ways that you could have viewed the situation to lead to different, perhaps more favorable consequences?
 - E)** **Examine** the results: What happens when we question our underlying beliefs and combat maladaptive thoughts?

Activity: Be Curious!

This growth challenge is about cultivating social curiosity in order to see the people in our lives for who they really are, rather than who we *want* them to be.

The Challenge:

- Choose someone in your life with whom you will practice your social curiosity. This can be someone you know very well, or it can be with a newer relationship. The next time you engage with this person, try to learn or notice something about this person you never knew before. You can start out subtly, by just paying more attention to their expressions, their smile, their voice, etc.
- When you feel comfortable, start to ask questions that demonstrate your interest in this person. Some question suggestions might include:
 - *What would constitute your perfect day?*
 - *If you could have a meal with anyone in the world, who would it be and why?*
 - *What would others say is your greatest strength, and why?*
 - *What are you fearful of, and why?*
 - *What is a dream you have for the near future? For the distant future?*
- Be sure to use your judgment about when showing this curiosity is appropriate, and be ready to reciprocate and allow your partner to ask questions as well. See what you notice about the quality of your connection, and try to practice this curiosity with others in your life.
- Write a written reflection about the experience of pursuing social curiosity, what came of this exercise, and anything that you might have learned.

Activity: Test the Waters; Expand Your Comfort Zone

Humans are creatures of habit, and expanding our comfort zones or changing up our usual routines can be challenging; however, doing so can lead to growth, discovery, and a greater sense of mastery.

The Challenge:

- Set yourself up for an experience doing something that at first makes you feel slightly uncomfortable! If you tend to be more introverted, consider hosting a dinner party, inviting a new friend over for coffee, stirring up a conversation with a stranger or potential relationship partner, or going to a new event in your community, such as an art show or workout class. If you tend to be more social, consider going out for a meal, to a concert, movie, or sporting event *alone*. Whatever activity you chose, the goal should be to try something new: to expand the boundaries of what you're comfortable with.
- While completing this activity, lean into the discomfort! Try to understand what physical sensations you experience, and what things you can do to effectively make yourself more comfortable in the situation.
- In a written reflection, explore what it feels like to expand your comfort zone. How did you decide what type of activity to complete? What were the barriers (if any) to your feeling comfortable immediately? How did you feel throughout completing the activity? What, if anything, did you learn about yourself through this personal exploration?

Activity: Post-Traumatic Growth

The Challenge:

- 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: Practicing Forgiveness

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.

The Challenge:

- This exercise is based on Everett Worthington’s REACH model of forgiveness.⁷ 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

⁷ See Dr. Worthington’s website at: <http://www.evworthington-forgiveness.com/reach-forgiveness-of-others/>

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**
 - 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.
- **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.
- **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: Exercise your Vagal Tone with Loving-Kindness

Practicing loving kindness toward oneself and toward others is a powerful way to build our capacity for compassion and exercise our vagal tone, which is strongly associated with physical, mental, and social flexibility, as well as adaptation to stress. This exercise involves cultivating our capacity to practice love and kindness towards others and ourselves.

The Challenge:

- Sit down in a quiet place where you can meditate without interruption, even for just five to ten minutes. Relax your body, and bring your awareness to any places in your body where you may be holding tension. Without judgment, let those areas soften.
- Allow your mind to think about a person in your life who loves you, and who you love very much. This can be someone living or someone who has passed. Imagine the warmth radiating from this person and the emotions you feel when you are with them. Imagining this person as vividly as possible standing beside you, send them all of your love and kindness with the following phrases:
 - May you be safe
 - May you live your life in peace, free from pain
 - May you always feel supported and loved
- Next, turn your attention to someone in your life who is neutral to you, perhaps an acquaintance, or even a stranger. Imagine this person standing beside you, and when you are ready, send them all of your love and kindness with the following phrases:
 - May you be safe
 - May you live your life in peace, free from pain
 - May you always feel supported and loved
- Finally, turn your attention to yourself. Imagine yourself in a room, surrounded by all of those people who love you and wish you well. Allow yourself to feel the warmth radiating from your loved ones, and bask in this moment. When you are ready, repeat the following phrases:
 - May I be safe

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- May I live my life in peace, free from pain
- May I always feel supported and loved
- When you feel ready, bring your awareness back into the present moment. Reflect on what it felt like to send love toward someone you love, a stranger, and yourself. How can you bring this loving kindness into your daily life?
- Try to complete this practice for five days in a row—see what you notice. Write a written reflection in which you describe the experience of practicing loving kindness to others and yourself. For whom is it most difficult to channel positive sentiment? What, if anything, did you learn or gain from this exercise?

Activity: Treat Yourself Like You Would Treat a Best Friend

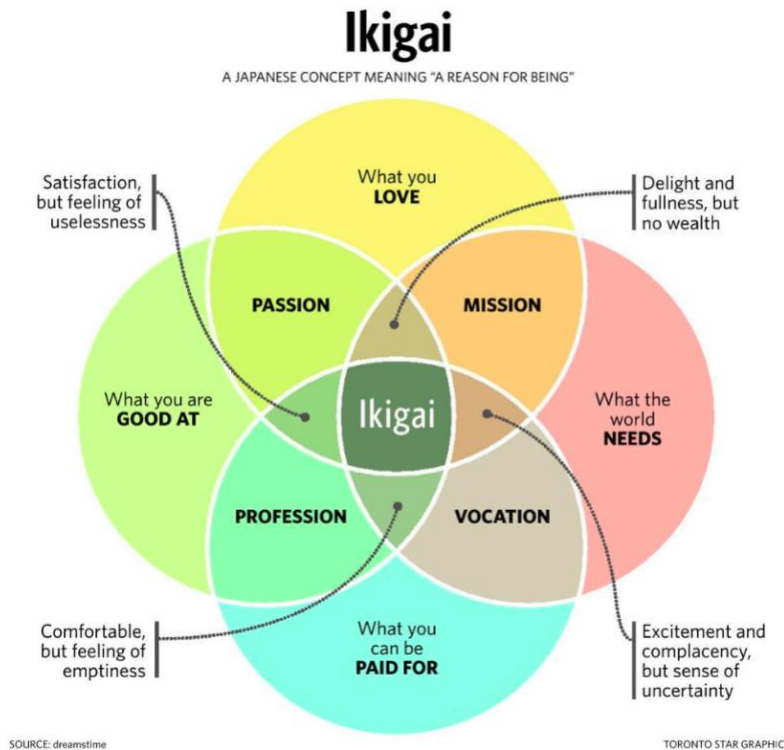
Often, our own inner dialogues can be cold and even downright cruel. Practicing self-kindness can be a great challenge compared to practicing kindness directed toward others, including our friends and loved ones.

The Challenge:

- 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.

Activity: What's your *Ikigai*?

To find one's *ikigai*, or “reason for being” requires an exploration of the things in our lives most central to who we are—that which excites us, brings us meaning, and helps us feel whole. Hopefully, through this course, you have and will continue to come to greater awareness of your own *ikigai* and learn new ways to deliberately engage in the things that sustain you most. This exercise is designed to help you on this journey.



The Challenge:

- In writing, reflect on the following questions:
 - What in my life am I best at? What sorts of things feel effortless for me (i.e., they energize me and light me up)?
 - What in my life do I choose to pursue, even though it is challenging?
 - What in life do I most value?
 - What in my life provides me with a sense that I am part of something larger than myself?

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- What in my life focuses my attention most completely and allows me to enter the flow state of consciousness?
- If I could quit school tomorrow and do absolutely anything in the world, what would I do?
- Reflect on any themes that emerge, attending to aspects that come up in more than one of the questions above. Spend time over the next several days reflecting on your *ikigai*, and how you are spending time in your life engaging in the things that bring you a sense of meaning and vitality.
- What is one thing you can do to live more in line with your *ikigai*? How can you attend to your *ikigai* on a daily, or at least weekly basis?
 - Note: Venturing to discover a singular *ikigai* can seem daunting—do not fret! Living by your *ikigai* is simply about doing more of the things in your life that bring you a sense of meaning and purpose. As you continue on this journey, consider how engaging in such activities affects you.

Activity: Develop a Personal Meaning 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 Challenge:

- Begin by reflect on the following questions:⁸
 - 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?
 - 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?

⁸ 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

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- 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

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 Challenge:

- 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.
- 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: This I Believe

The “This I Believe” essay contest was created 66 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 Challenge:

- In fewer than 500 words, write a statement of personal belief. You may see the NPR website for guidelines.⁹ 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.

⁹ See: <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/>

Activity: Write a Gratitude Letter

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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

The Challenge:

- 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.
- 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.¹²
- 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.

¹⁰ Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.

¹¹ Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410–421.

¹² 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: Create a Flow 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.¹³ 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 Challenge:

- 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, with a substantial shift of 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 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.

¹³ Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.

Tools for Enhancing Flow¹⁴

Control Attention	College students have only have so much attention to spare. Flow is about mastering control over one’s attention so that they may be completely immersed in the task at hand. While very strict control over one’s attention may take a great deal of effort in the moment, it is an important ingredient toward long-term mastery
Open Yourself to New Experiences	Be open to new and different experiences, such as: Going camping, playing a new sport, travelling to a foreign place, or trying new types of cuisine. Keep challenging yourself and do not become complacent!
Be a Lifelong Learner	Similarly to opening oneself to new experiences, learning and embracing new challenges throughout the course of life is a key component of finding flow when you’ve already mastered many skills
Learn What Flows	Often, individuals fail to recognize when they experience flow. Pay close attention and establish precise time periods and activities during which you are in flow, and seek to amplify these activities
Transform Routine Tasks	You can find “micro-flow” states even in mundane activities, such as running errands, cleaning up a workspace, or listening to a boring lecture. Transform routine tasks by solving puzzles in your head, doodling, or re-writing your favorite songs to include medical content for easier memorization
Flow in Conversation	Develop goals within your conversation to learn more about the person you’re speaking with: What is on her mind? What emotions is she experiencing? Have I learned something about her that I didn’t know before? Focus your full attention on the speaker and on your reactions to her works. Prompt with follow-up questions: “And then what happened?” “Why did you think that?”
Engage in Smart Leisure	College students may not have a ton of leisure time to spare. Consider making your leisure time “smarter” by engaging in activities in which you are using your mind and exercising your skills – ideally different skills from the ones you use all day at work and in school
Engage in Smart Work	Cater the tasks you need to do to align with your skills, passions, and values.

¹⁴ Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press

Activity: Practice Savoring

4 Types of Savoring¹⁵		
	Internal Self	External World
Cognitive Reflection (Thinking)	Basking (pride) <i>Being receptive to praise and congratulations</i> <i>ex.) Enjoying the afterglow of winning a soccer game, acing an exam, etc.</i>	Thanksgiving (gratitude) <i>Experiencing and expressing gratitude ex.) Spending the afternoon with your mother, expressing gratitude that you have such a beautiful, close relationship</i>
Experiential Absorption (Doing)	Luxuriating (pleasure) <i>Engaging the senses fully;</i> <i>ex.) Enjoying a relaxing bubble bath, slowly eating a piece of delicious chocolate or sipping a glass of fine wine</i>	Marveling (awe) <i>Losing yourself in the wonder of experience ex.) Waking up early to watch the sun rise, going outside during a thunder storm to marvel at the sky's action</i>

The Challenge:

- 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.
 - 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?

¹⁵ Bryant, F. B. (2003). Savoring beliefs inventory (SBI): A scale for measuring beliefs about savoring. *Journal of Mental Health, 12*(2), 175-196.

Activity: Create an Awe Experience

The concept of Awe has been described as a complex mixing of the emotions of ecstasy and fear. It can be deeply personal to experience awe, and researchers have explained two primary cognitive appraisals that are central to awe experiences: 1) the perception of vastness, and 2) a struggle to mentally process the experience.¹⁶ Experiencing awe is associated with many positive outcomes, including enhanced life satisfaction, a feeling that there is more time available to experience the world, increased helping behaviors and generosity, and decreased aggressive attitudes.

This exercise is intended to increase your experience and understanding of awe, and reflect upon your own awe experience.

The Challenge:

- First, write a brief reflection about a previous awe experience you've had. This can be from any time in your life, but recent enough that you remember the details. Consider what has facilitated this experience of awe, i.e.) what features of the experience induced a sense of awe. Features might include vastness (being in the presence of something grand), a need for accommodation (or feeling challenged to mentally process the experience), a distortion of time, self-diminishment (feeling small in a large universe), connectedness (having the sense of being connected to everything around you), or physical sensations (feeling the chills, jaw drop, etc.).
- Then, intentionally set yourself up for an awe experience, to the best of your ability. Go out and complete this activity (safely) and continue your reflection writing about this experience. What did you do, and how did it feel? This may be a solitary activity, or something you engage in with others.

¹⁶ See <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/can-you-quantify-awe/>

Activity: Appreciative Inquiry: College Edition

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.¹⁷ 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 Challenge:

- 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.

¹⁷ Cooperrider, D. L., & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. *Research in organizational change and development*, 1(1), 129-169.

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” in college? 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, how you’d use your strengths, 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.*

Activity: Accepting Your Whole Self

This exercise is about turning inward to begin accepting our whole selves, including the parts of ourselves that we most struggle with. This is the basis of authenticity: *accepting the totality of our being*.

The Challenge:

- Settle into a comfortable position and relax into your body. Focus on allowing your muscles to relax, bringing your attention to your breath. Inhale deeply as you bring yourself fully into the present moment, imaging yourself sipping in air as if to breathe in the world around you as it is happening right now, and exhale to release everything that has come before this moment.
- As you breathe, allow your mind to focus on one or two things you like about yourself. Repeat these qualities in your head, basking in the parts of yourself that you consider your greatest assets.
- When you feel ready, allow your mind to wander to some of the qualities about yourself that you may struggle with. Maybe these are qualities you consider to be less desirable, or perhaps wish you did not possess. It may feel uncomfortable, but allow yourself to soak in these qualities as you breathe in and out.
- Once you have summoned these qualities, repeat the following phrases in your mind:

I take responsibility for my whole self, including my flaws

My weaknesses are the raw material for personal growth

I accept my whole self in this moment.

- As you repeat this mantra, accept whatever sensations or urges arise, without trying to control or change them.
- Complete a written reflection about how it felt to complete this exercise; you may also write your own mantra that is different from the one provided, that can help you to better accept the totality of your being.

Activity: Meta-Reflection

The Challenge:

- In 4-6 double-spaced (no less than 4, no more than 6 with standard formatting) pages, reflect on how your well-being and 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 interventions in this course impact your well-being?
- How successful were you at working toward your SMART goals? How about living by your *Ikigai*? Were there other factors outside of this course that impacted your well-being? 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.