

Workbook for Goal-setting and Evidence-based Strategies for Success

Complete Workbook



by

Caroline Adams Miller, MAPP

Author of

*Creating Your Best Life:
The Ultimate Life List Guide*

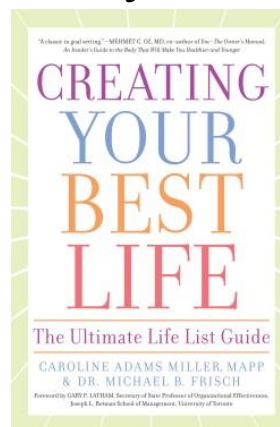


Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Theme One: Flourishing	6
Why Does Flourishing Matter?	6
Success Flows from Happiness.....	6
The Positivity Ratio.....	7
From the Source: Martin Seligman on Flourishing.....	8
Jolts of Joy.....	9
Happiness Boosters Worksheet.....	11
Introducing Character Strengths	12
Exploring Your Own Character Strengths.....	13
Looking Back: Me at My Best	14
Find Your Person-Activity Fit	15
Gratitude.....	16
Three Good Things Worksheet.....	17
Meditation	19
Meditation Benefits and Resources.....	20
Altruism: Acts of Kindness.....	21
Theme One Primary Takeaways.....	23
Theme One Resources	24
Theme Two: Discovering My Best Possible Future Self.....	25
A Powerful Way to Prepare for Goal Setting.....	25
A Businessman reflects on Story Telling	26
Day 1 of Your Best Possible Future Self	27
Dustin Carter Telling His Story	28
Day 2 of Your Best Possible Future Self.....	29
Day 3 of Your Best Possible Future Self.....	30
Future Me	31
Theme Two Summary	32
Theme Two Resources.....	32

Theme Three: Setting Short-term and Long-term Goals	33
Best Possible Future Self Sets the Stage for Goal-setting	33
Purpose and Mission: Values Aligned with Actions	34
Transcendent Purpose	35
Mission and Purpose Worksheet	36
Living Your Dreams.....	37
Setting the Best Goals for Yourself.....	38
Evaluating Goals.....	40
Short-term Goal Worksheet: Template to Evaluate Effectiveness	42
Long-term Goal Worksheet: Template to Evaluate Effectiveness	44
Theme Three Summary	46
Theme Three Resources	46
Theme Four: Creating an Environment of Success	47
Birds of a Feather Flock Together	47
You've Got to Have Friends.....	48
<i>Bright Lights & Black Holes</i> Worksheet	50
Web of Influence.....	51
My Actual Web of Influence Worksheet.....	52
My Ideal Web of Influence Worksheet.....	53
Active-Constructive Responses	54
Share and Share Alike Worksheet	55
Words Can Make You Stronger	56
Word Priming Worksheet.....	57
Design Your License Plate Worksheet.....	58
Theme Four Resources	62
Theme Five: Willpower and Habits	63
Habits.....	63
How Habits Work	64
Making Habits Stick.....	65
Ifs, Ands, and Buts Worksheet	67

Self-Regulation	68
Ability to Wait	69
Ability to Say No to Oneself	70
Exercise Your Self-Regulation Muscle	71
How to Enhance Willpower Stores.....	72
Ben There, Done That, Worksheet	73
Theme Five Resources	74
Theme Six: Fostering the Mindset of Lasting Change.....	75
Taking Risks	75
Taking Risks Worksheet	77
Minimizing Regrets	78
Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda	79
Reflecting on Possible Regrets Worksheet.....	81
Resilience and the Art of Not Quitting.....	82
Is Failure the Secret to Success? Worksheet	83
Grit.....	84
What is Grit?	85
Grit Score Worksheet.....	86
Savoring.....	87
Savoring Worksheet.....	88
Theme 6 Resources.....	89
Epilogue: Now what?	90
Continuing the Journey.....	90
Acknowledgment	91
Farewell for Now	92

Introduction

This eBook is a goal-setting workbook that guides you through exercises to learn how to design, pursue, and achieve important goals.

The six themes introduce important concepts in a particular order that makes the most sense for creating a successful strategy:

- Theme One: Finding actions that light the way to creating your happiest life, since happiness supports successful action
- Theme Two: Visualizing your best possible future self as a basis for taking action
- Theme Three: Setting effective short-term and long-term goals
- Theme Four: Creating an environment that supports success
- Theme Five: Building willpower and making habits that stick
- Theme Six: Fostering a mindset that supports lasting change

Going through the workbook, you'll be invited to do several things: watch videos, explore your strengths, journal about your thoughts, and fill out worksheets. You'll be looking at the science behind goal pursuit, much of it from the field of positive psychology. You may want to go through the workbook with a group. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to learn from others, deepen your understanding of the content, and talk over questions that arise.

Completing this workbook is the beginning of a journey to a different, more vibrant way of living, loving, and experiencing the world. I include extra resources at the end of each theme so you can choose to watch more videos, read more books, or view more Internet resources at your convenience to deepen your mastery of the concepts.

You may print out multiple copies of each worksheet for personal use. For permission to use the worksheets professionally, please contact me through my web site:

<http://www.carolinemiller.com/contact/>

Finally, I hope you will have fun as you go through the activities in this workbook. I imagine you will have takeaways that positively impact the rest of your life!

Theme One: Flourishing

To explore the following questions: What does it mean to flourish? Why does it matter? What actions can you take to build a flourishing life?

Why Does Flourishing Matter?

When he was president of the American Psychology Association, Martin Seligman called for mental health practitioners and researchers to focus on what makes life worth living and what conditions bring out the best in people, institutions, and society. He noted that psychology had been overwhelmingly focused on what was "wrong" and broken, such as disease, negative emotions, and pathologies. He challenged the field to bring as much focus to what was "right" and worthy of replication, such as kindness, love, awe, and gratitude. Seligman used the word "happiness" throughout his book, *Authentic Happiness*, but he has found that this word often stimulates resistance among people who feel a focus on happiness ignores the reality of sadness and suffering.



Martin Seligman

A flourishing life flows from PERMA: Seligman now uses the term "flourishing" instead of happiness, since people can flourish even in the midst of suffering. In his more recent book, *Flourish*, Seligman describes PERMA, his new model for the elements of a good life:

- Positive moments
- Engagement in life
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Achievement

For the rest of Theme One, we'll focus on increasing the positive moments in your life. While there's no question that it would be unrealistic – even unhealthy – to have a life with nothing but positive moments, having a relatively high number is in your best interests. This is a good place to start when embarking on any major enterprise.

Success Flows from Happiness

In a pivotal research meta-analysis published in 2005, Laura King, Ed Diener, and Sonja Lyubomirsky, three luminaries in the field of Positive Psychology, determined that hundreds of studies indicate that success across all life domains arises from being in a

positive emotional state. Thus we become successful because we are happy, and not vice versa. Whether in peer relationships, leadership positions, health, or marriage, the best outcomes tend to happen to people whose lives are relatively happy.

What this means is that if you are engaged in the process of setting goals in any area of life, it's helpful to start by understanding where you are relative to emotional flourishing, and then find ways to enhance it to optimal levels on a consistent basis.

What do I mean by optimal levels? We are not shooting to be a 9 or a 10, with 10 being supremely happy. Ed Diener suggests that being at a 7 or an 8 is ideal because you will not only experience many positives, but you will also have enough negatives to challenge your own assumptions and to remind you to be grateful for what is good in your life.

The Positivity Ratio

Barbara Fredrickson has explored why positive emotions are important from an evolutionary perspective, resulting in her ***Broaden-and-Build Theory***, that positive emotions broaden behavioral repertoires and build durable psychological, physical, and social resources. Not only has she proven that fleeting ***micromoments*** of happiness throughout the day can add up and result in flourishing, she even determined the tipping point that predicts well-being. Having a ***positivity ratio*** of 3 to 1, with 3 positive emotions for every 1 negative emotion, tends to indicate a state of well-being.

In the next activity, you will watch the video of Marty Seligman talking about PERMA. Then move on to the next activity, Jolts of Joy. You will be prompted to think of things that bring **you** happiness. I hope you continue to add to this list as you go through life. Keep it handy for times when you need to remember what makes you flourish!

From the Source: Martin Seligman on Flourishing

Let's start the investigation of flourishing by listening to Martin Seligman, sometimes called the *Father of Positive Psychology*. In this video, he says, "Well-being itself is a plausible individual and national goal."

Working towards personal flourishing is not self-centered or self-indulgent. It enhances your ability to work toward other goals.

The rest of Theme One will be about taking steps to increase your level of flourishing in order to lay a firm groundwork for the activities in subsequent themes in the complete workbook.



Click on the image to open the video. If that doesn't work, use this URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOLbwEVnfJA>

Jolts of Joy

Happiness boosters are unique to every individual, even though scientific evidence shows that things like kindness, exercise, and meditation tend to improve mood. Later in Theme One, we will look at some of these.

Use the following worksheet to make your own list of things that bring you jolts of joy. As you encounter new situations and things that enhance your delight, come back to your list and add to it. When you need an emotional boost, this list can serve as your reminder of things that quickly and effectively put a smile back on your face.

Here are some questions to start your thinking:

- What do you look forward to?
- What friendships make you smile and feel more positive?
- What hobbies bring out the best in you?
- What do you deliberately do when you are down in order to feel better?
- What music tends to lift your spirits?
- What do your friends and family do that lifts your spirits?
- Who could you call to get a boost?



Credit: ltphotographystudio

Here's one of mine. Watch the first 30 seconds on this video to see a father's jolt of joy as he tears up the latest job rejection letter.



If clicking on the image doesn't work, use this URL:

<https://youtu.be/RP4abiHdQpc>

My top jolt is exercise. I look forward to it, I love how it puts me into flow, and I love how it makes me feel afterward. It's hard, so it is a mastery experience on top of everything else. Use the next exercise to explore your own personal jolts of joy.

Introducing Character Strengths

There are many reasons why we should all be well versed in our own strengths and understand how we can use them effectively.

For starters, we feel most comfortable in our own skins when we know which strengths make us feel most alive and at our best.

For another reason, it's been found that just knowing our top strengths and deliberately using them in new and creative ways increases happiness, even as far as six months into the future! Remember we do not become happy because we are successful. Instead we become successful because we start in a flourishing place. Using strengths helps us get there.

In addition to being a mood-lifter, knowing and using our top strengths in deliberate and creative ways has also been found to increase our chances of succeeding at valued goals. For example, people that have high levels of social intelligence are more likely to pick up on social nuances and create team harmony, while those that rank high in bravery can more easily call upon their courage to take big risks.

A focus on strengths can also affect organizational outcomes. Gallup's studies of employee engagement have found that, "On average, a workgroup led by a strengths advocate was almost twice as likely to create above average results as one led by a manager biased toward patching up problems," (Wagner & Harter, [*12: The Elements of Great Managing*](#), p. 42).

There are many ways to explore personal strengths, but the one I like best is the [Values in Action character strengths assessment](#) created by Chris Peterson, Nansook Park, and Martin Seligman. The VIA assessment is a well-validated test that provides a personal ordering of character strengths such as zest, creativity, hope, love of learning, curiosity, open-mindedness, and spirituality. This test is free and used extensively in research on character strengths. I like to use this survey in my work because people can easily understand how strengths such as curiosity and kindness are expressed in their daily lives.



Exploring Your Own Character Strengths

Take the Values-in-Action character strengths assessment at <http://www.viame.org/survey/>.

It is free and confidential. Allow 30 minutes for the test and be sure to answer the test honestly and as you are now, not how you would like to be.

We will be using your top 5 VIA strengths in future themes, and knowing them may be helpful in the next activity as you create your story about *Me at My Best*.

Now reflect on your own character strengths constellation.

What are your top five strengths? List more if there is a tie within the top five. How do you see them showing up in your life right now?

To take the exploration one step further, try this:

- Consider your five favorite characters from literature, history, stage, screen or anywhere else.
- Think of the most prominent character trait you would associate with each of your characters.
- Then compare those traits to your top five VIA strengths.

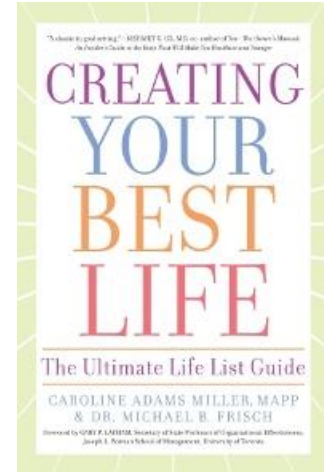
Using this exercise, Chris Peterson found that the traits people admire most in others are often their most important strengths. Is this true for you?

Find Your Person-Activity Fit

A seminal finding in Positive Psychology is that we can improve our happiness levels significantly with intentional activity. Perhaps up to 40% of the variance in happiness across a population, according to Sonja Lyubomirsky, is attributable to behavioral choices, which can be augmented by performing **positive interventions**. In studies of positive interventions, researchers explore which activities tend to move people into more flourishing states of mind. The activity you just completed, identifying your top strengths, is part of an intervention whose effects can last as long as six months.

In chapter 3 of my book, [*Creating Your Best Life*](#), I describe 8 proven happiness boosters:

1. Journaling, which we'll be doing in Theme Two
2. Expressing gratitude
3. Physical exercise
4. Volunteering and altruism
5. Savoring happy moments
6. Forgiving
7. Applying strengths
8. Meditation



Which one do you choose? It depends on your preferences and your experiences. Some people already know what works best for them and had no trouble filling out *Jolts of Joy*. Others need to experiment to find out, and that is what I am asking you to do now.

Please take a few minutes to look through the three suggested interventions: gratitude, meditation, and altruism. Are any of them already on your **Jolts of Joy** list? Select one that is not already there and practice it this week. It's especially important that you have a good **person-activity fit** to derive the greatest benefits. Remember that you are the expert on you. If an activity doesn't work well for you, take it as a lesson learned and move on to another one.

Gratitude

People who express gratitude regularly tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction and hope. This is an important research finding because expressing gratitude is such an easy and accessible way to take action to increase well-being.

There are many ways to express gratitude, such as thanking someone else out loud, writing down a list of blessings on a regular basis, or delivering a letter to someone who has made a difference in your life. Gratitude is linked with lowering depression and anxiety, and may be the most powerful and long-lasting way to make yourself happier.

The *Three Good Things* activity that follows has the power to shape your moods in lasting ways. This exercise is described by Martin Seligman in his book, *Flourish* (p. 84). Seligman suggests writing down three good things every day for a week. Don't feel restricted to three things per day if many more come to mind. You could also print additional copies and keep an ongoing log of things you have to be happy about in your life.

Alternatively, you could make it a supper time or bedtime routine to take turns sharing with your loved ones what you are grateful for. Read about my MAPP classmate [Jen Hausmann doing this every day with her 7-year-old son.](#)



Meditation

I often refer to meditation as the “silver bullet” of the Positive Psychology world because its impact on one’s mind and body is so profound.

Meditation is traditionally done with eyes closed, but other forms of mindfulness have been found to improve well-being, too. A 2012 study found that new meditators need to select the method they like best because there is a higher chance of abandoning the practice altogether if the fit isn’t right. A few of the other approaches worth exploring are mantra meditation, qi gong, visualization, mindfulness, and Zen meditation.

Watch Andy Puddicombe as he describes the benefits of doing nothing.



If clicking on the image doesn’t work, use this URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzR62JJCMBQ>

Barbara Fredrickson has found that one’s response to meditation at the outset can predict whether or not you stay with it and derive maximum benefits. She also discovered that new meditators who persisted with a short meditation practice every day experienced triple the benefits of the first week, which included enhanced relationship quality and reduced stress levels, by the time they entered the seventh week of the class.

Meditation Benefits and Resources

Here are just a few of the positive results that are ascribed to meditating regularly, sometimes for as little as ten minutes a day:

- Compassion (also known as loving-kindness) meditation improves positive outlook and social intuition, as well as relationship quality, empathy, and self-regulation. It has also been found to lower depression levels.
- An 8-week meditation training program changed brain function in the emotional processing center, and those changes persisted even when meditation ended.
- Mindfulness meditation improved stress responses and stabilized emotional regulation. It has even been found to assist with impulse control in addiction recovery.
- It is generally observed that meditation enhances self-awareness and willpower levels, as well as blood pressure and vagal tone. Excellent vagal tone indicates an ability to calm oneself down.
- Mindfulness training has been found to improve job satisfaction and work performance, particularly in emotionally exhausting situations. It has even been found to improve one's ability to multi-task!

Here are some resources that can help you explore guided meditation and other forms of stillness. Andy Puddicombe's website, [Headspace](#), is a popular place for many to start experimenting with mindfulness practices. The [Insight Meditation Society](#) has many free talks, meditations, and other suggestions to explore meditation.

Apps on smartphones can walk you through this process. *Simply Being* ([Apple](#), [Android](#)) and [Mindfulness Meditation](#) (Apple and Android), are among the better ones, while [Universal Pranayama](#) (Apple) and [Pranayama](#) (Android) are also helpful to the new or experienced meditator.

If you'd prefer to just do a simple form of meditation without using a computer or app, sit in an easy position, eyes closed, and just feel your chest filling with air and then emptying slowly. Gradually begin to count the breaths up to ten, and then back down again. If you lose count, start again without judgment. You are learning how to still the mind by just focusing on breath, and as simple as it sounds, it's not easy. Do this for ten minutes and stop. If you choose this activity as your positive intervention, I recommend that you try to do this same exercise every day at the same time.

Altruism: Acts of Kindness

When former First Lady Barbara Bush returned from China, where her husband had been the US ambassador, she admitted to struggling with a depression that was so serious she was afraid she would deliberately crash her car. "I found the solution was to volunteer my time to others, and that's what made my depression vanish," she later observed.

I was a young girl in the student body that heard Mrs. Bush share her prescription for finding happiness and meaning decades ago, and I never forgot her words. When I began to study Positive Psychology, I learned that Mrs. Bush's actions were scientifically sound. Research shows that *helper's high* is real. Giving to others can make you feel better, and it can even prompt a complete transformation in self-image.

Altruism takes many forms, but it must be motivated by concern for others and **not** in anticipation of a reward. For example, you can give your time to a cause that is important to you, donate money to charity, or volunteer to fill a position at your child's school. Veterans of 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous are often told that helping newer members is the ticket to remaining sober. "You can't keep what you don't give away!" is the slogan used as a reminder, and it counts as altruism, as does the infamous 12th step to "carry the message to those who still suffer."

The benefits of giving are astounding. Here are just a few of the findings about its pluses:

- One study found that workers who were given the choice of spending bonus money on themselves or on others reported being happier when they gave it away. It's even been found that positive benefits come from donating as little as \$5 a day, possibly by leaving an extra-large tip for a meal.
- Women with multiple sclerosis (MS) found that when they were trained as peer supporters for other women with MS, their feelings of self-worth, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy increased dramatically, with all reporting a complete transformation of how they saw the world and themselves.
- Volunteering elicits the reward chemical of dopamine in the brain, reinforcing the behavior.
- Helping others builds positive relationships and even can spark a chain of other altruistic acts.
- It's been found that it is biologically impossible to feel both anxious and altruistic at the same time, so giving is a non-pharmacologic stress reducer that calms the physical fight or flight response.
- Giving also changes the way one sees oneself. It can help one build a self-image of being compassionate and empathic.

- Older volunteers score significantly higher in life satisfaction and will to live, and have fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and pain than those who don't volunteer.
- In fact, it's been found that the well-being benefits that come from volunteering are larger than the gains experienced by the receivers of the volunteer efforts.

Here are some ideas to get you started if you select altruism as your positive intervention. People feed expired parking meters, pay for the car behind in the Starbucks line, or spearhead an effort to collect clothing or food for worthy causes. Visit the [The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation website](#) for ideas. Watch the video about Reed Sandridge, a Washington, D.C. man whose year of giving challenge blossomed into a national movement.



If clicking on the image doesn't work, you use this URL:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWIge8koo_c

Read the [article from the Washington Post by Susan Syrluga](#) about the way one man's effort to assist his hometown in another country demonstrates the contagious effect of kindness.

Theme One Primary Takeaways

Here are the primary points to take away from the theme on flourishing:

- Positive psychology is the study of flourishing, which explores the elements of a good life.
- Positive psychology research now confirms that people who have high well-being are more productive, engaged, curious, and connected. They experience lives of greater meaning and purpose.
- Positive moments throughout every day lift us up emotionally, and when we are over a ratio of 3:1, we increase our chances of flourishing.
- We all have our own *Jolts of Joy* that bring us happiness. Making sure that we experience them regularly is an important way to inoculate ourselves with positive emotions.
- When we use our strengths to express ourselves and achieve goals, we are likely to experience moments that might be entitled “*Me at my best.*” We often feel comfortable in our own skin and authentic when we lead with these strengths.
- There are activities called *positive interventions* that have been found to increase well-being for most, if not all, people. They include identifying and using strengths, journaling, expressing gratitude, exercising, being altruistic, and meditating.
- We can *adapt* to positive interventions so that over time they have less impact on us. Therefore it's helpful to vary them to see what works well for us.

Theme One Resources

Many people find that the idea of building on the positives and seeing life through a lens of "What's right?" instead of "What's wrong?" ignites a quest to learn more about Positive Psychology.

Here are a few extra resources I recommend in addition to my own book, [*Creating Your Best Life: The Ultimate Life List Guide*](#):



- [*Authentic Happiness*](#) and [*Flourish*](#) by Martin A. Seligman
- [*A Primer in Positive Psychology*](#) by Christopher Peterson
- [*The How of Happiness*](#) and [*The Myths of Happiness*](#) by Sonja Lyubomirsky
- [*Positivity*](#) and [*Love 2.0*](#) by Barbara Fredrickson
- [*The Happy Movie*](#) directed by Roko Belic
- [*Mindfulness and Character Strengths*](#) by Ryan M. Niemiec
- [*Character Strength Matter: How to Live a Full Life*](#) edited by Kathryn Britton and Shannon Polly. This book explores the 24 VIA character strengths and how to apply them in daily life.

Theme Two: Discovering My Best Possible Future Self

To explore what a flourishing life looks like when you imagine yourself in the future. This visualization will illuminate some of the steps you will need to take to move forward.

A Powerful Way to Prepare for Goal Setting

In the field of positive psychology, a lot of research has been done on how to elicit and sustain well-being. One of the most powerful and popular exercises that has been tested is called *Best Possible Future Self*. Pioneered by Dr. Laura King and reworked by Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, this assignment has been found to enhance optimism, increase happiness, improve self-efficacy, foster hope, and outline short-term and long-term goals.

The research has also found that this simple writing exercise, done for three days in a row, twenty minutes at a time, boosts self-esteem and gives people deeper personal awareness of motives and strengths. It also improves self-regulation because pathways to success become more immediately apparent, and it's easier to spot what you can control and where you can make changes to begin the process of growth.

This exercise can be a springboard from which to dive into some deeper thought about where you would like to take your life and what goals you might want to pursue now.

For the rest of this theme, you'll be working on your personal image of your best possible future self.



A Businessman reflects on Story Telling

The following excerpt comes from an interview with **Karl Heiselman**, the chief executive of Wolff Olins, an international brand consulting firm. The interview was conducted and condensed by **Adam Bryant** in a 2012 article titled [What's Your Story? The Answer May Land You a Job](#).

Q. Any people who were big influences on you?

A. There's a woman named [Sara Little Turnbull](#) who's one of the first women industrial designers — just an incredible woman. She was a visiting professor when I went to the [Rhode Island School of Design](#). One of the things that she asked us to do was, “Write a day in your life five years from now: where you live, where you work, do you have kids, and just describe your day.” That had a profound effect on me.

In school, you always think of your career in terms of, “Do I want to be an architect? Do I want to be a graphic designer? Do I want to be a filmmaker?” But nobody helps you think through whether you could be an architect who's designing hospitals or residential architecture in California. She was probably the one voice during my school years who wasn't saying what's wrong with our work all the time, but was saying what's possible and what you can do. I found that hugely empowering.

Dustin Carter Telling His Story

Before starting on Day 2, watch a Youtube video of a CBS interview where Dustin Carter tells his story of determination and grit to Katie Couric.



If clicking the picture doesn't bring up the video, use this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euh-9WBXDO4>

Future Me

Think about what you've learned from picturing yourself in a successful future. Lest you forget, share that vision with your future self through the [FutureMe website](#). Summarize where you want to be in ten years based on what you learned from writing about your Best Possible Future Self. Use an email address that you think might still be available in the future. Send yourself messages in two, five, even ten years. Ask yourself to review your ideal future.

- What has already been achieved?
- What would you add?
- Is it a good time to journal about your Best Possible Future Self again?

Watch the story of Precious Simba for additional motivation.



My Future Self with Founder Precious Simba

 Girls Development Initiative

If clicking on the image doesn't bring up the YouTube video, use this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkbbe5XtwIo>

Theme Two Summary

Here are the primary points to take away from the theme on flourishing:

- It is beneficial to redo this three-day process periodically to give yourself a chance to update your vision of yourself.
- Between times, plan to come back to your Best Possible Future Self write-ups to bring your ideas back to mind.

Theme Two Resources

The prompts in this section are drawn from work by Laura A. King, a researcher who has thoroughly investigated the benefits of journaling.

- King, L. A. (2001). The Health Benefits of Writing about Life Goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27 (7): 798-807. [Abstract](#)

Theme Three: Setting Short-term and Long-term Goals

To learn the fundamentals of goal-setting theory and to use them to set short-term and long-term goals

Best Possible Future Self Sets the Stage for Goal-setting

Writing about a best possible future self boosts goal-driven behavior by creating the conditions for **mental contrasting**.

Researchers have found that contrasting an imagined positive future to present reality and then making a realistic appraisal of the challenges to be faced to bridge the gap make goal-setting more effective. On the one hand, if you truly believe that your hard work can take you to your best possible future self, then your *goal commitment* is deepened. On the other hand, if you don't believe you can accomplish it, you will *disengage* from the goal, which is also helpful, opening up space to set other goals.



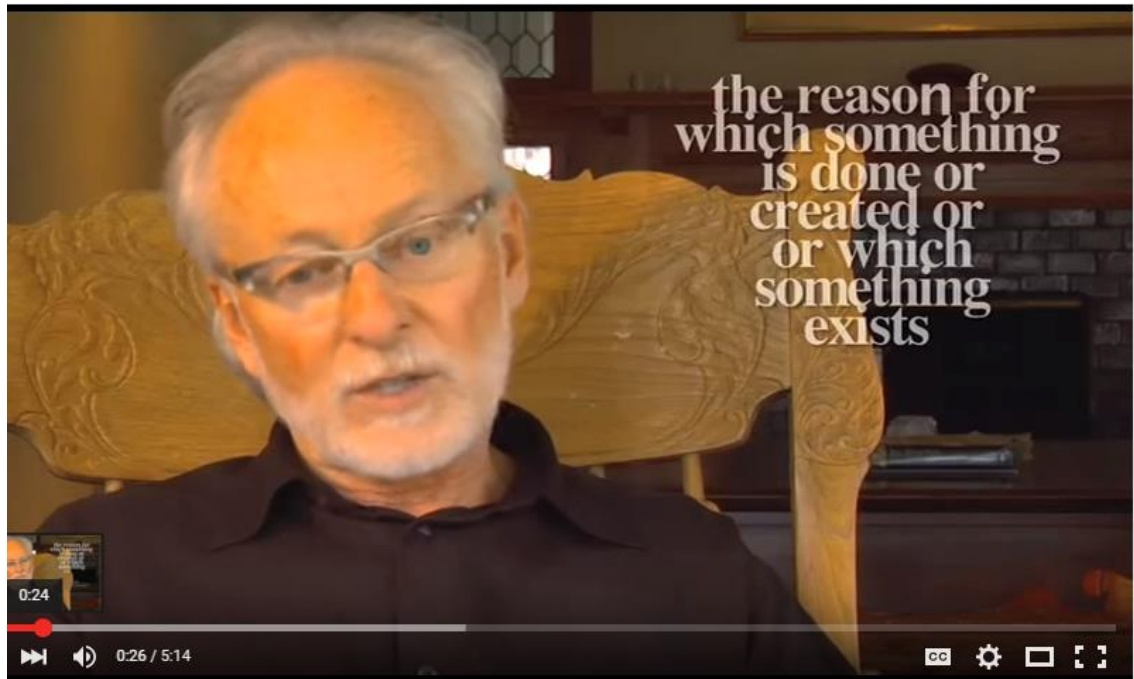
Credit: [AbilloPR](#)

This contrasting thinking isn't quite as successful if you start with where you are now and **then** compare it to where you want to be. This has a tendency to magnify obstacles and reduce optimism. Beginning with the ideal future and then contrasting it to current conditions creates more motivation. It leads to greater planning efforts and greater time spent pursuing future goals. More facts about this process:

- Gabriele Oettingen and colleagues studied people who believe they can achieve their goals versus people who believe they can achieve them easily. They found that people who were optimistic about achieving their goals, but expected it to be hard to overcome obstacles, succeeded far more often than people who only focused on the ideal future.
- By beginning with the vision but contrasting it with current reality, people feel a necessity to act, which increases forward movement.
- Oettingen found that hospital human resource professionals who used mental contrasting to become more productive reported that two weeks after learning the strategy they delegated more effectively, made better decisions, got more done, and managed their time more efficiently.

Purpose and Mission: Values Aligned with Actions

One of the pioneers in studying purpose is author Richard Leider, who wrote *The Power of Purpose: Find Meaning, Live Longer, Better*. In the short video, he elaborates on how to find purpose and meaning in life.



Power of Purpose by Richard Leider (BK Life Book)

Berrett Koehler

If clicking on the picture doesn't bring up the video, copy this link into your browser:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1XzUui25js>

Transcendent Purpose

Strong science shows that having transcendent purpose, which the Japanese call "ikigai," or "that which I wake up for," tends to improve life expectancy and reduce one's chance of having a heart attack or stroke. People who report feeling purposeless are 2.4 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.

When we know our purpose, it's easier to understand what types of goals will bring us the greatest satisfaction. Pursuing goals that aren't aligned with what we value might mean that we aren't clear about what makes life worth living.

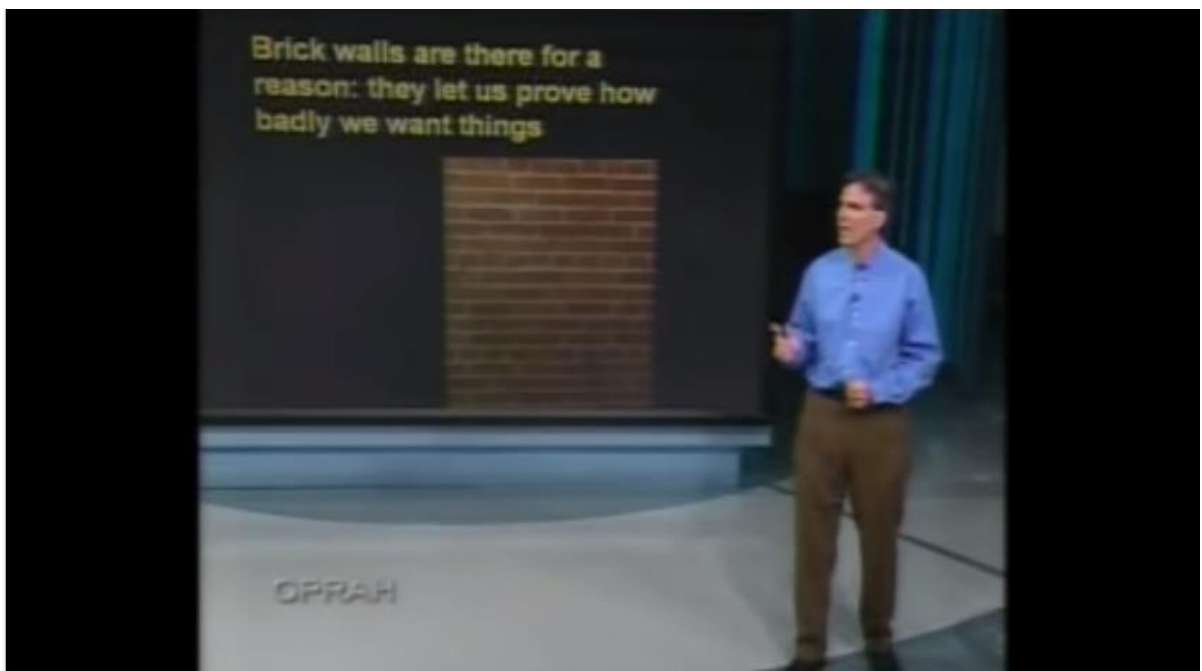
A mission statement often flows from knowing one's purpose, and is basically a virtue grounded in action. Author and educator Jim Loehr calls it "*a declaration of intent about how to invest one's energy.*" For example, you could have a purpose of *providing excellent service in everything I do*, and the accompanying mission statement would be *I will always go the extra mile.*

In the Washington Post story, [The Keys to La Buena Vida](#) by David Montgomery, I want you to see how one man's vision of what a car sale can mean to the future happiness of his customers has shaped his purpose and guided his everyday actions for years.

In another well-publicized story, Jack Hairston - better known as "Jack the Bike Man" - turned around his depressing older years by fixing and giving away bikes to many of south Florida's poorest children for whom the free bike at Christmas may be the only gift they receive. [Click here](#) to see a South Florida Today television report about his newfound purpose in life and the impact it has had on so many people.

Living Your Dreams

Randy Pausch, a well-regarded professor at Carnegie Mellon, gave a last lecture to his students in September 2008. He was dying from incurable pancreatic cancer and was invited to share his final thoughts with an audience one last time. The video, which was posted on YouTube, went viral immediately and Oprah Winfrey invited him to reprise the talk for her show. In this 11 minute presentation, Pausch underscores how important it is to always have dreams, emphasizing that everything he accomplished in his life had its birth in his childhood ambitions, which included winning as many stuffed animals as possible at fairs!



Randy Pausch reprising his "Last Lecture"



Gabriel Robins

If clicking on the image doesn't bring up the video, use this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1CEhH5gnvg>

Setting the Best Goals for Yourself

For many years, I was under the impression that goal pursuit was a mixture of deadlines, hard work, and a little bit of luck or magic. I bought every goal-setting book on the market, but I never felt like I had a formula that could really work.

When I was at the University of Pennsylvania in the MAPP program, I was introduced to the science of goal-setting through Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory, one of the most validated theories in the motivation field. As a coach, I'd never known that something other than SMART goals existed, so I made a study of everything connected to goals and how to enhance the likelihood of success.

My research led to [*Creating Your Best Life*](#). From the first theme's homework you now know that one of the surprise findings was that success is generally preceded by emotional flourishing. For that reason, you can't talk about goal success without looking at flourishing. That's why we begin this course with a look at that research.

Now we're looking at how to set goals. Before we address two of your goals from theme 2, the *Best Possible Self* exercise, let's look at just a few of the scientific findings.

Any goal that involves measurable performance, where you have control over the outcome, should always be *challenging and specific* for best results. This is called a **performance goal**. Most people, perhaps up to 80%, choose to set *low* goals or no goals according to the research. One of my favorite phrases is “*That which cannot be measured cannot be achieved.*”

- If you cannot set a specific outcome because you don't have a context for predicting how you will perform, it is desirable to set a learning goal. This is the only situation where it is helpful to encourage yourself or others to do your best. Saying "Do your best," for performance goals isn't helpful. It encourages mediocrity because there is no specific target.
- Any goal should be set by you and not by anyone else, including family, friends, culture, or team. This is called intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic. You should always be able to answer the “So what?” question when asked about your goal. Why is this goal important to you? How will your life be better? How will it benefit others? Basically, so what if you achieve this goal? Intrinsic goals inspire more passion, more commitment, and even induce more states of flow, and they produce outcomes that are more satisfying and meaningful.
- No pain, no gain findings from the University of San Francisco show that the pursuit of hard goals out of one's comfort zone resulted in greater feelings of authentic self-esteem at the end of the day. Whether we know it or not, we scan our days for activities that make us proud, and doing hard things, even if they produce discomfort or unhappiness while doing them, is one of the best ways to enhance well-being.
- In one survey, 3,500 citizens were asked what made their lives meaningful and happy. The study found that the happiest people are guided by clear-cut goals, are risk-takers

who never make excuses and never quit, and they have goals in the areas of friendship, love, and helping others.

I challenge the idea of always setting *realistic* or *reachable* goals (the R in SMART goals) because many high achievers set unrealistic goals that galvanize them to push as hard and as far as they can go, often resulting in remarkable achievements. Google believes so strongly in the idea of pursuing impossible dreams to see what their employees can accomplish that they have an entire lab set up to do nothing but try to make outrageously hard goals come true! [Click here](#) to explore what is happening in the Google X quest.

To learn more about the ingredients of good goals, I recommend that you read my book, [Creating Your Best Life](#). This book includes deeper explanations of **approach vs. avoidance** goals, how **self-determination theory** explains why goals around mastery and relatedness bring happiness, and how **pre-commitment and accountability** greatly enhance goal success.

Evaluating Goals

Although some long-term goals can seem overwhelming and unreachable, if you bring passion and commitment to the process you will not only inspire yourself, you'll inspire others. Diana Nyad, a champion open water swimmer in her youth, set an extraordinary goal for her 60th birthday. Watch this video to see what it was, how she went after it, and whether or not she achieved it.



If clicking on the image doesn't bring up the video in your browser, use this link:
<https://youtu.be/paQG39kMMJ4>

We will now pull together what you've learned about goal-setting to help you form two goals. The goal-setting worksheets can be used again for other goals you choose to pursue, but for now just select **one short-term** and **one long-term** goal so that we can clearly understand and refine the steps that contribute to success.

Then use the goal-setting forms on the following two pages and use them to check your goals against the criteria described in the previous activity. Has your level of commitment changed?

Short-term Goal Worksheet: Template to Evaluate Effectiveness

Leverage: Would this goal support the accomplishment of a long-term goal? Circle: Yes or No

Commitment: _____ On a scale from 1 to 10 (“I can’t wait to start.”), how committed am I to this goal?

Values: Which of my values does this goal express? Why is it important to me now?

Challenging: Will this goal require me to move out of my comfort zone and exert myself? How?

Measurable: Will I be able to see whether I’m making progress toward my goal along the way? If not, what can I do to make it so?

Approach Goal? Is it an approach goal? If not, what can I do to make it so?

Resources: What resources or knowledge will I need that I don’t have yet?

Risks: What risks does this goal require me to take? What can I do to be ready to face them?

People: Among the people around me, who will be supporters and who will be roadblocks?

Supporters	Roadblocks

Accountability: How can I make myself accountable to others to maximize my commitment?

Focus: What do I need to say “No!” to in order to focus on this goal?

Environment: How can I enhance my environment to support my efforts to reach this goal?

Past successes: What have I done before that shows I can persevere with passion?

Savoring Small Wins: How will I recognize and savor the successes along the way?

Success: How will I recognize when I’ve reached my goal?

Evaluation Done: Now how committed am I to this goal? _____

Long-term Goal Worksheet: Template to Evaluate Effectiveness

Leverage: Would this goal support accomplishment of other important goals? Circle: Yes or No

Commitment: _____ On a scale from 1 to 10 (“I can’t wait to start.”), how committed am I to this goal?

Values: Which of my values does this goal express? Why is it important to me now?

Challenging: Will this goal require me to move out of my comfort zone and exert myself? How?

Measurable: Will I be able to see whether I’m making progress toward my goal along the way? If not, what can I do to make it so?

Approach Goal? Is it an approach goal? If not, what can I do to make it so?

Resources: What resources or knowledge will I need that I don’t have yet?

Risks: What risks does this goal require me to take? What can I do to be ready to face them?

People: Among the people around me, who will be supporters and who will be roadblocks?

Supporters	Roadblocks

Accountability: How can I make myself accountable to others to maximize my commitment?

Focus: What do I need to say “No!” to in order to focus on this goal?

Environment: How can I enhance my environment to support my efforts to reach this goal?

Past successes: What have I done before that shows I can persevere with passion?

Savoring Small Wins: How will I recognize and savor the successes along the way?

Success: How will I recognize when I’ve reached my goal?

Evaluation Done: Now how committed am I to this goal? _____

Theme Three Summary

In the first theme, we studied some of the fundamental findings from positive psychology and how we can use them to improve our well-being in a variety of ways.

We built on this foundation in Theme Two by introducing another validated positive intervention, *Best Possible Future Self*. In addition to boosting well-being, writing about a desired future increases hope, optimism, and goal commitment. Through the process of *mental contrasting*, starting with a positive future you believe you can achieve and comparing it to the obstacles you expect to face based on current reality, you can clarify goals and become committed to the process and effort of change.

We also looked at some of the critical ingredients of the *right* goals, along with ways to identify your purpose and an accompanying mission statement that can help guide you in this process. A goal-setting template walked you through a series of questions to clarify commitment, potential obstacles, supportive people, risks, resources, environmental factors, and accountability actions.

Theme Three Resources

The following resources support this theme:

- Leider, R. (2015). *The Power of Purpose: Find Meaning, Live Longer, Better*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler.
- Loehr, J. (2012). [Four rules to craft a mission statement that shapes company culture](#). Fast Company blog.
- Miller, C. A. (2009, 2011). *Creating Your Best Life: The Ultimate Life List Guide*. Sterling.
- Oettingen, G. & Gollwitzer, P. (2010). [Strategies of setting and implementing goals: Mental contrasting and implementation intentions](#). In J. E. Maddux & J. Tangney (Eds.), *Social Psychology Foundations of Clinical Psychology*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Theme Four: Creating an Environment of Success

Learn how to nurture a network of positive relationships, take advantage of the science of priming, and build self-efficacy and will-power.

Birds of a Feather Flock Together

Nicholas Christakis is the author of [Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives -- How Your Friends' Friends' Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think, and Do](#). Here he discusses how our moods and behaviors have been proven to be contagious, and what types of connections will enhance our lives.



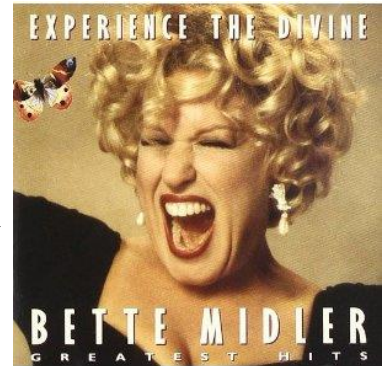
Nicholas Christakis: The hidden influence of social networks



If clicking on the image doesn't work, use this URL:
<https://youtu.be/2U-tOghblfE>

You've Got to Have Friends

Bette Midler once sang, “You’ve Got to Have Friends” on her classic album, *Experience the Divine*, and she thought the message was so important that she opened and closed the album with that iconic song. Even the hit show, *Cheers*, celebrated the idea that if you go to a place where everyone knows your name, is your friend, and is happy to see you, it’s a wonderful experience.



Friends are far more than the subject of songs, stories, and movies. Research has indicated that the quality of your relationships with others could be the most important factor in whether or not you have a happy life. In fact, people with few friends who don’t work on creating and sustaining healthy bonds with others experience a loneliness that is so toxic that it carries a higher health risk than cancer!

Remember PERMA, the 5 ingredients of a flourishing life according to Martin Seligman? Although all 5 ingredients matter, it was Dr. Seligman’s late partner, Chris Peterson, who repeatedly said that if you wanted a 3 word summary of positive psychology, it would be “Other people matter.”

We don’t need a lot of close friends to experience well-being. In fact, the research has found that having as few as four close friends with whom you share deep feelings and experiences is enough to inoculate you from stress and loneliness and to extend your life. It’s also been found that extroverts experience more happiness than introverts because they distract themselves with social interactions when depressed, while introverts tend to ruminate. The good news of that research is that introverts who force themselves to behave occasionally in outgoing ways report as much happiness as real extroverts!

Some of the newest research has found that our feelings and behaviors are dramatically impacted by the people who surround us, even ones that are at a distance. If we value their opinions and stay in touch with them, their impact is as powerful as those with whom we live and work. It’s been found that not only are we more likely to gain weight if people in our closest circle gain weight, we are also more likely to quit smoking, be happy/lonely/sad, or behave altruistically if that’s what our friends do. Not only are we affected by others’ behaviors, so will people in our lives who don’t even know the person who affected us! For instance, one study has found that experiencing rudeness at work has the result of creating a more unpleasant and stressful life at home.

One magazine study found that over 80% of women report enduring *frenemies* because they don’t know how to sever the bonds with a destructive person without looking not nice. In my work, I’ve seen that if we want to accomplish something important, or even simply be happy,



the quality of our friends could be the most important determinant in our lives. Failing to create boundaries between us and the people who are destructive, passive-aggressive, whiny, angry, or depressed can ruin our dreams if we aren't careful.

Use the worksheet on the next page, *Bright Lights and Black Holes*, to track how your mental state is affected by various relationships.

Write down who you are interacting with at the times listed on this sheet. Perhaps you are talking on the phone, sending an email, or conversing in person. Then rate your state of mind on a scale from 1 to 5, with one being the worst you can feel and five being the best. At the end of one week, you will have a good idea of which situations and which people constitute the ***black holes*** and ***bright lights*** in your life.

Are there people you now realize should have a limited presence in your life - if any at all?

Are there people who inspire and motivate you whose presence you'd like to increase in your life?

Do you have *frenemies* who are more enemies than friends?



Credit: [Homini:](#)

Bright Lights & Black Holes Worksheet

Copy this form and use it for a week to track how you feel at various times during the day.

Write down who you are with at the times on this sheet, whether in person or talking on the phone or engaging in another way, such as email. Then rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 on your well-being, with one being the worst you can feel and five being the best. At the end of one week, you will have a good idea of which situations and which people constitute the “black holes” and “bright lights” in your life.

Date: _____

Time Range	Who was with me? (in person or virtually)	How did I feel?
6:00-8:00 AM		1 2 3 4 5
8:00-10:00 AM		1 2 3 4 5
10:00-Noon		1 2 3 4 5
12:00-2:00 PM		1 2 3 4 5
2:00-4:00 PM		1 2 3 4 5
4:00-6:00 PM		1 2 3 4 5
6:00-8:00 PM		1 2 3 4 5
8:00-10:00 PM		1 2 3 4 5
10:00-Midnight		1 2 3 4 5

Web of Influence

Use the *Web of Influence worksheets* to explore the nature of your relationships. Many of the readers of *Creating Your Best Life* have commented that this exercise helps them see which connections are positive and which ones are not.

Whenever this topic is addressed in classes, speeches, and with clients, I am usually asked in a puzzled tone, "But what do you do if some of the relationships that need to change are with family members?" My response is usually, "It's **always** family members!"

Although people laugh, it's true that some of the people who aren't in our corner will be family members. While they may not intend to be destructive in their words and actions, they may have complicated internal feelings when they see us pursuing a dream or changing something in our lives. Sometimes our dreams or changes point out what they are **not** doing in their own lives, and rather than face it, they will deprive us of their support.



Credit: [aussiegal](#)

When you fill out *Web of Influence* for the first time, you'll probably realize that some of the qualities in the people around you are not in your best interests, and that spending too much time socializing or talking to them has a negative impact on your outlook. Whether it's family members or not, the advice is the same: *Create strong boundaries so that other people's negative behaviors do not infect you.* This can include having time limits on visits with family members, choosing not to share good news initially with some people until you've received positive feedback from supportive others, and even deciding that some of the people around you shouldn't be in your circle at all. It's an individual choice, but it's an important one so I urge you to take this step very seriously.

After you fill out *Web of Influence* as your life currently exists, then do another one that reflects your desired web. Are there people who bring out the best in you whom you'd like to spend more time with? Move them closer to you. What about people whom you'd like to meet? Do you have a way to connect with them and possibly foster a relationship or a mentorship?

The *Heliotropic Effect* states that all living beings turn naturally towards the sun, or whatever light is available. Positive energy or light causes growth and thriving. Our relationships are no different. Take control of your precious time and energy and resolve to invest them only in the people who are light-giving and to whom you can reflect that same light and energy back.

My Actual Web of Influence Worksheet

Research shows that we are 171% more likely to gain weight if our friends gain weight, and their values in other areas impact us, as well. Think about what qualities define you first (center of the web), and then fill in the boxes that radiate out from the middle with the names of the people closest to you, and their values. Are the values of the people closest to you the values that you want to define you? Do you see any changes you might want to make in this web? Is there anyone you need to remove? Is there someone you'd like to add?

The diagram is a spiderweb with a central yellow smiley face. Eight rectangular boxes are connected to the web's spokes, arranged as follows:

- Top-left: 3 horizontal lines
- Top-right: 3 horizontal lines
- Middle-left: 3 horizontal lines
- Middle-right: 3 horizontal lines
- Bottom-left: 3 horizontal lines
- Bottom-center: 3 horizontal lines
- Bottom-right: 3 horizontal lines
- Far-right: 3 horizontal lines

My Ideal Web of Influence Worksheet

Now fill in this copy of the web with your ideal Web of Influence, and set some goals to change your life accordingly to bring those people more deeply into your day-to-day life.

The diagram features a central yellow smiley face with a wide, open-mouthed grin. Radiating from this center are ten lines that connect to ten rectangular boxes, each divided into three horizontal sections for writing. The boxes are arranged in a circular pattern around the smiley face, with two boxes at the top, two on the left, two on the right, and four at the bottom.

Active-Constructive Responses

If we are living our best lives, we are surrounded by people who enrich our days, who celebrate our good times and mourn our bad times, who take time to let us know what our friendship means to them, and who help us achieve our dreams. We also do the same for them.

Psychologist Shelley Gable has studied the impact of different ways of responding to someone else's good news. Good friends respond with curiosity and enthusiasm and encourage us to share every detail of our happiness. Any other reaction may dampen our feelings about the good news or even cause us to abandon goals.

Remember that there are four different ways people can choose to respond when others share their good fortune:

- Active Constructive (AC) = Best response. Positive, enthusiastic, “Tell me all about it!” “I’m going to tell everyone!”
- Passive Constructive (PC) = Lukewarm, changes subject quickly. “That’s nice. Where do you want to eat?”
- Active Destructive (AD) = Worst type of response. Mean, jealous, undermining. “It will never last.” “You don’t have what it takes.”
- Passive Destructive (PD) = Passive/aggressive response. “Why would you ever want to work at a place like that?” “Can’t you get a higher salary than what they offered? You must be disappointed.”



Credit: [Duncan](#)

It is important to share good news with others, and to have their responses be uplifting, encouraging, and positive. In fact, it’s been shown that the reaction of the first person you share your good fortune with has a big impact on how you remember that event!

Use the attached worksheet for several days to chart how people respond to your good news **and** how you respond to theirs. Once you know how you respond, you can take action to be an even better friend. You’ll also know which of your friends are really good at helping you celebrate when good things happen.

Share and Share Alike Worksheet

For a few days, watch what happens when good news gets shared in your vicinity. In the spaces in the tables, write down how others responded to what you shared, and how you responded to someone else's good fortune. You can use the initials AC, AD, PC, and PD for type. If you consistently receive responses that are not "Active-Constructive," you need to consider whether to find a new set of cheerleaders for yourself, and also ask what impact these people have had on you before. If you don't respond in an "Active-Constructive" way with others, you need to get to work on yourself, too.

My Shared Positive Event	Response from Other	Type
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
Other's Shared Positive Event	My Response	Type
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

Design Your License Plate Worksheet

One of my favorite primes is the seven-letter vanity license plate that many people use on their cars. Over the years I've collected hundreds of pictures of plates because they say so much about the car's owner.

I've seen plates that promote important causes (AUTISM) and gratitude/spirituality (AMEN). They are some that are playful about the owner's life outlook (CRPDIEM) and favorite character (ZORRO). People explain their profession (I think) with BOOKS, FRAMER, and TEETH. Some are statements about the person's general being: RUTHLES, POKYMOM, and L82WORK.



For this activity, come up with a license plate of no more than seven letters or numbers that would make a great prime for one of your goals, a reminder of your values, or a cue to behave a certain way. To get warmed up, take a look at the sample plates in the attached document.

You might also enjoy creating a new email/Twitter handle for yourself that is reflective of your goals or what you want others to think of you.

The following examples are from photos I've taken from cars on the highway. See if they can unlock your creative spirit.









Theme Four Resources

There is an extensive list of research articles and other empirical sources in *Creating Your Best Life* about priming. Here are just a few sources that can help you explore its power:

- Bargh, J. A. & Morsella, E. (2008). [The Unconscious Mind](#). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.
- Cady, E., Harris, R., & Knappenberger, B. (2008). [Using music to cue autobiographical memories of different lifetime periods](#). *Psychology of Music*.
- Gollwitzer, P. (1999). [Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans](#). *American Psychologist*, 54(7), 493-503.
- Oettingen, G. & Gollwitzer, P. (2010). [Strategies of setting and implementing goals](#). In J. E. Maddux & J. P. Taguey (Eds.), *Social Psychological Foundations of Clinical Psychology*, New York: The Guildford Press.
- Christakis, N. & Fowler, J. (2009). [Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives -- How Your Friends' Friends' Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think, and Do](#). Bay Back Books.

Theme Five: Willpower and Habits

To learn how to foster habits of thought that contribute to effective goal pursuit

Habits

In this short clip, Charles Duhigg, explains how he became interested in habits, whose habits have been studied, and why we all need to understand our own habits if we want to control how we live our lives. Duhigg's book *The Power of Habit* was named one of the top business books of 2012.



Creatures of Habit

If clicking on the image doesn't bring the video up, use this URL:

<https://youtu.be/zdGbHY9VKVM>

How Habits Work

One of the most important parts of being able to create and maintain change involves looking at whether or not our habits are supporting our efforts to accomplish important goals. According Duhigg, as much as 45% of our activities every day are behaviors that we are simply repeating because they are familiar to us. This means we are on autopilot almost half the time, so taking note of what we are doing is the beginning of knowing what new habits might need to be introduced and which ones need to be disrupted or dropped.

Habits always start with a *cue from the environment*, an aroma, an emotion, a time of day, an object, a food, that we have paired with another behavior, or series of behaviors, to lead us to a reward. For example, a positive habit would be pairing hunger with eating fruit to lead us to the reward of a healthy weight. In contrast, a bad habit would be getting in a car without putting on a seatbelt, where the reward is going somewhere. Habits are so powerful that we all have probably experienced being in the midst of doing one thing but unwittingly ended up doing something else because we were lulled into a comfortable habit such as following a familiar driving route, sending the wrong email, calling someone we didn't intend to contact. Essentially we have been hijacked by our habits.



Credit: [Darwin Bell](#)

We drift to automatic behaviors because they conserve emotional and physical energy. When we are mentally depleted, our reserves of willpower are low and we are more likely to behave in self-destructive ways. The same is true when it comes to initiating new and desirable habits when we are mentally depleted. It takes so much energy and focus to do something new in response to a familiar prompt that we are likely to default to what we have always done, and not do what we need to do. As a result, it's our job to have as many automatically positive habits as possible.

Being able to accurately visualize the way we'd like to be in the future tends to predict whether or not we will adopt the habits **now** that will maximize our chances of making that best possible self come true. For example, studies have found that showing age-progressed pictures to a person to help them visualize how they will look in the future leads them to contribute more aggressively to retirement plans. In addition, people who are emotionally disconnected from considering their future selves were more likely to behave unethically in such areas as leaking secrets that could destroy someone's career.

Kelly McGonigal, a Stanford professor and author of *[The Willpower Instinct](#)* hypothesizes that people who don't have a realistic vision of who they can become in the future tend to put off handling hard things or exercising self-regulation in the present because they unconsciously believe that the future self will simply rise to the challenge without much effort.

This is yet another value you can gain from the time you spent imagining your best possible future self!

Making Habits Stick

When you hear the word *habit*, it's not hard to think of a few of your own, such as biting your nails, reading the Sunday newspaper in a certain order, or calling family members at a specific time of day to check in. But you may not know that things like **procrastination** are actually considered habits, too. I used to think that procrastination was a fog that descended upon me that I couldn't control, but an all-day seminar with Bill Knaus, a renowned procrastination expert, convinced me that it is just another habit that we can change. This realization actually changed my life in profound ways.

The key to identifying a habit is to pinpoint what you are doing throughout every day, noting which cues prompt a series of emotions and behaviors that define your habit. A time of day might lead you to say to yourself, "I need to relax," and an alcoholic beverage might not be far behind. Hearing the signal for new email might also cause you to stop whatever you're doing to see what's in your inbox. So when attacking procrastination - or any other habit - you must *map your sequence* so that you can **disrupt it** and replace an unhelpful behavior with something that will serve your needs better.

For example, I was surprised to find that my own procrastination sequence unfailingly began with a simple thought, "*I'd like a cup of coffee.*" This thought was actually a fiendishly brilliant way to avoid doing anything I didn't want to do because acting on that thought took me to a different room and started a train of distracting thoughts and actions that consumed me for hours. I'd see laundry, mail, unmade beds, and dirty floors on my way to the kitchen and inevitably my cup of coffee thought ensured that hard things were done at the last second while less urgent tasks got knocked off ahead of them.

Discovering that my entire sequence started with a simple thought gave me the power to do what Knaus suggests: **Disrupt the sequence.** So whenever I caught myself saying in the middle of the day, "*I'd like a cup of coffee,*" I asked myself what I was trying to avoid and pledged to spend at least ten minutes on that task before going to get coffee. As Knaus predicts, noticing the cue and then deliberately doing something different counteracts procrastination and usually results in getting the dreaded thing done more quickly.

Researcher Peter Gollwitzer has discovered an elegant solution to the common problem of getting stuck on getting started on a hard goal. Gollwitzer discovered that people who created an **implementation intention**, a statement of what they intended to implement when they encountered a situation/person, tripled their likelihood of goal accomplishment, particularly for challenging goals. Dozens of studies have found that these **if-then statements** allow us to commit following a cue with a desirable behavior.

An implementation intention, also known as an if-then statement scenario, goes like this:

“When I encounter “X” in the environment, I will do “Y.”

A few sample if-then statements are:

- “If I sit down at my computer, I will pay my bills online before I do anything else.”
- “If I see the morning newspaper arriving, I will take the dog on a ten-minute walk.”
- “If I see my pedometer, I will put it on the waistband of my pants.”
- “If I experience a cue that makes me want to light up, then I will chew gum instead.”

For example, smokers who used the last statement quit smoking six times more often than people who didn't create if-then planning statements. The same increase in probability of following through holds true whether looking at quitting heroin, scheduling mammograms, or writing a resume. Planning ahead to use a familiar cue to do something new and specific vastly increases your chances of adopting new habitual behaviors that will conserve energy and put you on an autopilot course that you have designed for yourself.

Use the worksheet on the next page to create some new if-then statements that can help you create new and beneficial habits.

Self-Regulation

Some of the biggest research strides in recent years have involved breakthroughs in the area of **self-regulation**, also known as **willpower**. At one time, experts thought the road to goal accomplishment was straightforward: identify important goals, set small goals to build in that direction, create motivation, and then follow through. Failure meant that you just didn't want it badly enough, or that you'd dropped the ball somewhere and needed to retrace your steps to figure out what you'd done wrong.

This approach has been conclusively disproven. Researchers including Roy Baumeister at the University of Florida have done hundreds of experiments to try to get to the bottom of how we can boost willpower, and what they've found is groundbreaking.

Our ability to delay gratification and say **no** to ourselves is now thought to be like a *muscle* that gets exhausted the more we call upon it to override temptation throughout the day.

It's impossible to overstate the importance of self-regulation when it comes to having a flourishing life across multiple dimensions. Therefore understanding and using this research can change the course of your life.

Ability to Wait

A little background: In the 1960's, Walter Mischel did some seminal research at a preschool at Stanford University. He offered 4-year-olds the opportunity to get two marshmallows if they could sit quietly with just one marshmallow for fifteen minutes without eating it. Sixty percent were able to wait, but forty percent were not and ended the experiment by ringing a bell.

The long-term significance of this difference in ability to delay gratification turned out to be staggering. Fifteen years later, Mischel obtained data about the academic and personal lives of the same subjects. The children who had waited fifteen minutes for a second marshmallow had higher SAT scores, better grades, more popularity, superior relationships with adults, and happier lives. For the other group, low willpower also predicted an increased likelihood of trouble with authorities, more addictive behaviors, and less trust among their peers.

In this informative and fascinating news interview, Dr. David Walsh of Stanford University recreates Mischel's marshmallow test and explains why it can predict whether or not children will thrive as they grow up.



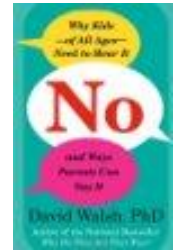
Marshmallow test reproduced by Dr David Walsh @ wcco

If clicking on the image doesn't bring the video up, use this URL:

<https://youtu.be/amsqeYOk--w>

Ability to Say No to Oneself

Dr. Walsh is the author of the book, [*No: Why Kids of All Ages Need to Hear It and How Parents Can Say It*](#). He notes how society used to support delayed gratification in childrearing, but that the current culture has undermined this critical mental muscle.



We might be born with a certain ability to say no to ourselves, as some of the preschoolers demonstrated, But Baumeister's latest research shows that we have the power to increase that ability at will. Baumeister describes us waking up every day with a full storehouse of willpower, but as we use it to do such mentally challenging things as exercise, hold our tongues, make stressful decisions, say **no** to fattening foods, and adhere to our budgets, we gradually deplete our willpower.

This is why at the end of the day, our reserves are usually gone, and we tend to make impulsive decisions, overindulge in food and drink, and have poor judgment around spending, anger, and sex. Many New Year's resolutions backfire almost immediately because people set so many willpower goals at once that the need to say **no** to themselves over and over depletes their willpower before noon every day.

Depleted willpower sometimes shows up as decision fatigue. Read [John Tierney's NY Times article](#) to learn about Israeli judges making complicated, important decisions and how a simple lunch break replenished depleted reserves: This article will help you see some of the important connections between willpower and behavior.

Another article relevant article includes [an interview with Walter Mischel](#) by Pamela Druckerman about how he continues to distract himself to delay gratification to get to future rewards himself at the age of 84!

The good news is that we can build our stores of willpower, just as we build the strength of our muscles. Move on to the next activity to see how.

Exercise Your Self-Regulation Muscle

Roy Baumeister is one of the leading researchers of self-regulation and author of the book, *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. Listen to him talk about willpower in action.



Willpower: Self-control. decision fatigue. and energy

If clicking on the image doesn't bring up the video, use this URL:
<https://youtu.be/vefDeoXCbbk>

How to Enhance Willpower Stores

Baumeister discovered that having as little as one teaspoon of sugar can restore a subject's willpower. The glucose is thought to restore brain functioning to maximum capability because effortful thinking uses energy. As mentioned in the article by John Tierney in the last activity, "The problem is that what we identify as sugar doesn't help as much over the course of the day as the steadier supply of glucose we would get from eating proteins and other more nutritious foods."

So managing our daily nutrition contributes to self-control. That shouldn't be news to parents who have observed how their children become fractious and hard to control when they are hungry or tired.

We can also restore willpower by watching other people in a movie or in person exhibit high self-control, or by laughing and becoming happier, for example by watching a funny video clip. Even more cutting-edge research has found that simply believing that you have unlimited willpower seems to help when stores are down.

The most effective way to increase willpower is to exercise it.

Baumeister recommends picking one simple behavior that requires self-control and practicing it regularly. Willpower appears to build up like a muscle, so that the overall store is increased and takes longer to deplete. The willpower you build will not be limited to that behavior. Thus if you work on only one self-regulation change at a time, research shows that 6 to 8 weeks later other activities requiring willpower (spending, alcohol, exercise, eating nutritiously) have shown improvement!

At any rate, the **most important takeaway** is that willpower is the backbone of our ability to delay gratification long enough to achieve our goals and that we can build our willpower with intentional effort. By practicing willpower in a simple activity, we can build our ability to attain hard goals that require persistence and resilience. Understanding our tendencies and daily routines will help us notice when we can preserve our willpower stores by avoiding temptation, but it's good to know how to add more when necessary. In addition, practicing on a daily basis gives us a larger amount of willpower to start out with each day.

The worksheet on the next page is named in honor of one of the American Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, who decided to strengthen his character by taking one virtue at a time, such as modesty, humility, or temperance, and marking each successful day with an "x" if he refrained from bad behavior in that area. Franklin's program worked for reasons that goal specialists of the 21st century understand: he focused on one self-control change at a time, he monitored his behavior in a journal, and he only proceeded to the next quality after perfecting the one before. Focusing on just one change at a time reduces the depletion of mental and emotional resources.



Credit: [olga_melnyk](#)

Theme Five Resources

Great books on building willpower and making habits stick include:

- Baumeister, R. (2012). [*Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*](#). Penguin Books.
- Duhigg, C. (2012). [*The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*](#). Random House.
- Halvorson, H. (2011). [*Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals*](#).. Plume Publishing.
- Knaus, W. (1997). [*Do It Now!: Break the Procrastination Habit*](#). Wiley Publishing.
- McGonigal, K. (2011). [*The Willpower Instinct: How Self-Control Works, Why It Matters, and What You Can Do To Get More of It*](#). Avery.
- Walsh, D. (2007). [*No: Why Kids--of All Ages--Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*](#). New York: Free Press.

Some interesting articles include:

- Job, V., Dweck, C. S., & Walton, G. M. (2010). [*Ego Depletion--Is It All in Your Head? : Implicit Theories About Willpower Affect Self-Regulation*](#). *Psychological Science*.
- Tierney, J. (August 17, 2011). [*Do you suffer from decision fatigue?*](#) The New York Times Magazine.

Theme Six: Fostering the Mindset of Lasting Change

How to take advantage of what's known about risk-taking, resilience, optimism, savoring, and grit

Taking Risks

Bronnie Ware penned *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, a remarkable memoir about working at the bedsides of those in hospice. The most common regret by far as people see their lives coming to an end, she says, is that they never had the courage to live their own lives, and instead lived the lives that the people around them expected.

In my work, I find that people often long to take bold steps, but fear keeps them rooted in place. Partnering with a coach gives them courage to take the necessary risks, and when this happens, amazing things can happen.

If we are going to pursue important, life-changing goals - and sometimes even small ones - we need to take risks. A risk is uncomfortable because the outcome is not guaranteed. But it's hard to lead a fulfilling life if you plan to play it safe and only go for sure bets. In fact, it's been found that over time people regret **more** the things they never attempted than the ones where they tried and failed!

There is a lot of research on why taking risks is essential. In one telling article, the *Wall Street Journal* noted that the United States has become so safety-conscious, with parents trying to keep their children from taking unnecessary chances, that even playgrounds have been dumbed-down so that the apparatus poses no challenges. In short, the slides, swings, and climbing areas are just plain boring. No wonder children prefer to stay inside and play with electronic games!

When children can't explore, challenge their strengths and skills, and develop mastery over their fears, they grow up to have more anxieties and phobias, as well as poor brain development. For example, if children aren't allowed to climb trees, they lose the opportunity to overcome fear of heights and to learn to explore their environments with confidence.

Teaching corporate executives to take more physical risks, sometimes called *crossing the freak-out point*, increases their ability to take smart financial and emotional risks that can spell the difference between the success or failure of a company. Studies of entrepreneurs have found that the ability to take risks and handle uncertainty is essential to grow past the challenges common to start-ups.



Credit: [Roshnii](#)

How can you improve your risk-taking muscle? Several approaches have been identified as helpful:

- Train yourself to handle short-term stress the same way you build physical strength and endurance. When you do this type of interval training, your body gets broken down, then rests, and can subsequently handle a greater workload. The same is true of building your emotional muscle of risk-taking. Gradually go out of your comfort zone into stress and uncertainty in pursuit of important goals, and then return to emotional safety. Then do it again. It is these short bursts of intensity and fear followed by the realization that you have survived and learned how to handle a variety of stressors that build up the ability to face your fears.
- Boost your mood with positive interventions. People who feel more upbeat are more willing to challenge stereotypes and act out of character. This is Barbara Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build theory at work: positive emotions give people the courage to explore their environments and broaden their outlooks.
- Challenge yourself to do new things on a regular basis. Pursuing novelty often leads to positive results and creative breakthroughs when combined with persistence and curiosity. The United States was founded by pioneers with a spirit of exploration. Read the attached article to think more about what neophilia, the love of the new, could do for you.

I often ask my clients what they would do if they were ten times bolder than they are right now. The answer to that question often shines a light on a path that needs to be taken.

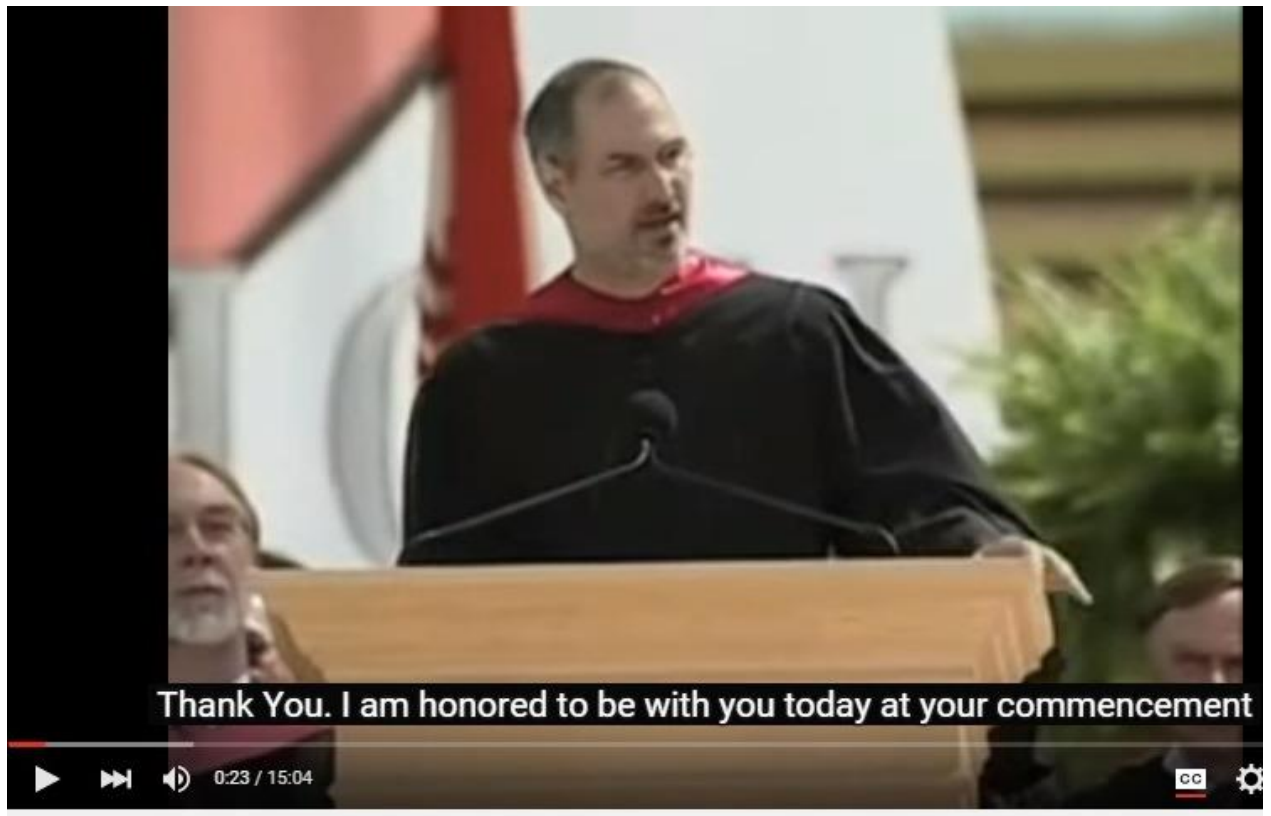
Read [John Tierney's New York Times article](#) about how novelty seeking, sometimes called neophilia, can be a source of well-being.

Taking Risks Worksheet

It has often been found that the biggest risks result in life's biggest rewards. Can you think of a time when this was true for you? Tell the story below.

Minimizing Regrets

In this iconic speech at Stanford University's commencement in 2005, Steve Jobs discussed how a deadly diagnosis caused him to focus on what he wanted to accomplish with the time he had left. "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life ... [M]ost important, have the courage to follow your heart and your intuition," he counseled those in the audience. His speech has become a classic call to take charge of one's time and to live with passion and purpose.

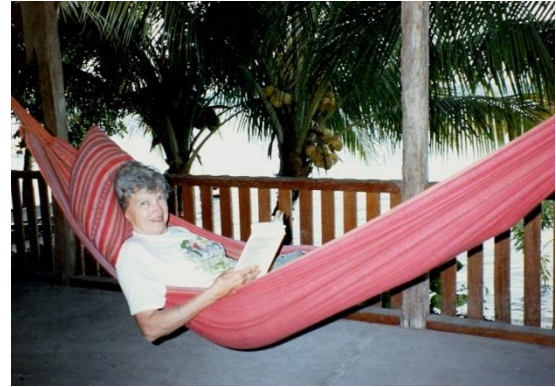


Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address

If clicking on the image doesn't bring the video up, use this URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8uR6Z6KLc>

Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda ...

It's not uncommon for all of us to look back with regret on roads not taken, risks not pursued, and relationships not explored. Called *counterfactual thinking*, imagining other futures leads to regrets that are a common part of life. Only if we have never had to make choices in life could we avoid experiencing regret. In economic theory the awareness of what we lose from the choices not taken is called *opportunity cost*. Understanding that a choice has opportunity cost, whichever option we pick, can help us deal with the regrets that follow.



No regrets

The most common regret, according to a Northwestern University study of 370 adults, is a missed romantic connection, followed by not getting the right education, allowing a family squabble to continue too long, and money mistakes.

We can't live regret-free lives, but we can keep from wasting energy on toxic regrets, and we can learn lessons from our disappointments.

When we dwell on lost opportunities to the point that we can't experience satisfaction in the present, it's possible that we are trapped by a *lost possible self*. Researcher Laura King at the University of Missouri studied women experiencing divorce after marriages of 20 years or giving birth to children with Down Syndrome. For some people, she found that the life-altering events disrupted their original views of their best possible future selves to the point that they got stuck in rumination and depression. Constantly looking backwards, they couldn't set and pursue goals that matched their new realities.

On the other hand, some of the women King studied were able to *make meaning* of the unexpected events. They could see new possibilities arising from what had transpired and let go of the imagined futures that were never going to come about. Sometimes saying goodbye to a lost possible future self is necessary to open up the door to new images of the future.

Although we may have regrets about some of our choices in life, it's actually not advantageous to keep too many options open. A study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that students who played a computer game that gave them 100 clicks to win money by opening doors refused to close doors that had a slim chance of rewards. Dan Ariely, the author of *Predictably Irrational*, noted that even when students understood how to maximize their earnings, they still didn't want to close down any future options. Ariely commented, "Closing a door on an option is experienced as a loss, and people are willing to pay a price to avoid the emotion of loss."

In the computer game, students that tried to keep all of their options open actually lost money, up to 15% of their earnings. In real life, the losses may be more than financial.

People who keep too many options open may waste time, lose energy, be unable to focus, and become pessimistic.

Are you afraid of experiencing more regrets by choosing to focus on one thing in favor of another? If so, Ariely has advice that sums up what he has seen work most effectively in life and in his labs: Make a decision that you are going to commit to one course and refuse to look back. Commitment without vacillation has a way of strengthening the mind and soul.

For another view on how to manage regrets over the course of a long life, read [Advice from the Graying Edge on Finishing with No Regrets](#), a *New York Times* article by Jane Brody.

Resilience and the Art of Not Quitting

Watch this [ABC news video shown after the Japanese earthquake in 2011](#). It shows some examples of resilient reactions to tremendous loss and devastation.

Now that you have gotten this far, you have no illusions that going after the goals that will bring you the greatest well-being will be easy. After all, if it were, nobody would experience trouble achieving desired goals and everybody would follow cherished dreams.

One of the most important factors separating finishers from everyone else is their *resilience*. Resilience is necessary because you will run into roadblocks, setbacks, and unexpected crises along the way. Some of your best-laid plans will fall apart, and just when you think you've grabbed the brass ring, it will slip away. At times, you may feel like Charlie Brown running towards the football remembering all the times Lucy swiped it away.

There will also be many wins and positive surprises that will assist you as you move forward. The difference is that people don't quit trying when they are winning; they give up when things feel overwhelming and hard. That's where you will need emotional strength to keep you in the game.

In [The Resilience Factor](#), Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte discuss factors that contribute to having a resilient attitude towards life. In addition to fighting pessimistic thoughts by looking for evidence to support a more optimistic explanation for what is happening, they find that resilient people:

- Reframe setbacks as opportunities to learn something that will benefit them long-term.
- Use humor to lighten difficult times and distract themselves and others from ruminating and excessively focusing on setbacks.
- Disengage from the immediate goal and look for low-hanging goals that will bear immediate fruit. This easier mastery experience is a quick boost to confidence.
- Remove themselves from situations where negativity prevails. Instead they surround themselves with a more upbeat group
- Deal with stress in productive ways, such as meditation or exercise

New research on *post-traumatic growth* finds that weathering setbacks can help us discover what happiness really means. For example, after the 9/11 tragedy, many people who were surveyed noted that they had developed a greater sense of purpose, more appreciation for their own inner strengths, and clarification of what they valued most as a result of facing the losses and suffering that came from the horrible events of that day.

This research also found that we all need to experience at least *five to seven serious setbacks* for optimal benefits, with too few or too many both having similar negative outcomes and not fostering the necessary resilience that only comes from adversity. The old saying, "That which doesn't kill you makes you stronger," is actually true, so when setbacks come your way, embrace them and watch yourself grow as a result.

Grit

Angela Duckworth, PhD, is an engaging presenter on her passion for the topic of grit, which she shared at TedxBLue in 2009. She is fond of encouraging people who want to be more gritty to "choose easy (something you love to do) and work hard" if you really want to succeed at something that will require many years of hard work before you get to the finish line.



TEDxBlue - Angela Lee Duckworth, Ph.D - 10/18/09

If clicking on the image doesn't bring the video up, use this URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaeFnxSfSC4>

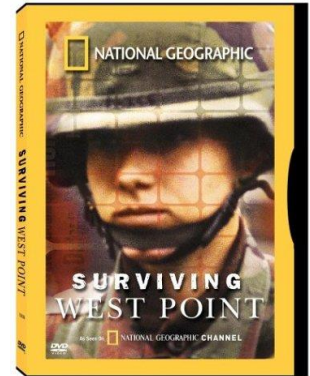
What is Grit?

Angela Duckworth came to the University of Pennsylvania with one burning question several years ago: why were some of the children she was teaching in inner-city Boston outperforming their peers who had IQ advantages and more resources available to them?

She and Marty Seligman decided to investigate high performers across many fields - sports, art, and education, for example - to see if one factor stood out over any other to explain why certain people achieved great feats in spite of not always being the smartest or most talented. As they looked at chess masters, pianists, and Olympic athletes they honed in on what they found mattered most in getting to the finish line. They decided to call that quality **grit**.

Grit is not the same as resilience, but resilience is a necessary piece of being a gritty person. Grit is defined by Duckworth as **passion and persistence in the pursuit of long-term goals**. The goals tend to involve several years of time and energy investment, and setbacks are considered inevitable.

So grit is the ability to get up over and over again after being knocked down by multiple false starts, dead ends, and failures. The image I use is being an ice skater in the Olympics who falls down in the middle of a difficult jump. The skater doesn't have the option of staying down on the ice and staring at spectators; he or she simply gets up and continues to skate, often summoning up a smile in spite of disappointment.



Grit is often mistaken for several other qualities:

- Self-discipline is the ability to delay gratification, which we've learned is important, but it's not enough because it doesn't communicate the passionate pursuit of a goal over many years, which takes much more than just sheer willpower.
- Perseverance is the ability to stick with things, but it's not grit because it's not always applied towards an intrinsic goal, and it can also be misdirected into activity that is mistaken for productivity.
- Conscientiousness is a positive quality, but it could easily describe someone who only achieves short-term goals. Think of a sprinter, as opposed to a marathoner.
- Ambition is part of how gritty people get motivated, but when ambition isn't paired with action and follow-through, you can simply build a better mousetrap in your mind for years.
- Passion is necessary if you are going to hang in there over many years, but it's just not enough when you don't combine it with focus and a work ethic.
- Optimism is another important part of the package of grit, but optimistic people are not always able to pursue their goals when things aren't going well. Gritty people have a tendency to continue to work towards their goals in the absence of positive feedback.

Savoring

When we have moments of achievement, pride and awe, we have a choice: we can rush on, looking for the next achievement, or we can stop and savor the moment, memorizing every detail so that we can recall it later.

Whatever your politics, take a moment to watch [this brief video](#) of President Obama at the conclusion of being sworn in as President of the United States, turning around on the stairs to **savor** the scene of his second swearing-in. Saying, "I'm not going to see this again," Obama takes in what is in front of him: thousands of spectators waving American flags with the magnificent backdrop of the Mall and Washington Monument behind. He pauses and gazes across the vista, taking mental snapshots.

What President Obama did is one of the hallmarks of happy people: they savor. This shows up in three ways.

1. Savoring people are mindful in the **present**. They don't let positive experiences pass by unnoticed. I call it *saluting* the moment because you signal to yourself that it's a time worth remembering. President Obama signaled the moment by remembering that he would not see it again.
2. Savoring people also readily call up positive memories from the **past** and are *nostalgic*. Sonja Lyubomirsky found that mental replaying of happy memories actually brings more well-being than simply writing about them. Sharing family stories at meals and other gatherings is common in happy families, as they celebrate and relive the past.
3. Savoring people also *anticipate the future*. Happy people tend to have events and opportunities to enjoy themselves on the calendar. It's been found that a person's immune system even improves in the hours leading up to an anticipated fun activity!

Savoring Worksheet

Pause now and consider how you might bring more savoring into your life. Creating your happiest life will include pursuing meaningful goals, sharing precious moments with loved ones, and taking note of your accomplishments as they occur.

Are you including enough savoring in your life? What are the peak moments and scenes you want to remember? What are you looking forward to?

Savoring the past: What peak moments give you energy to move forward? What fond memories could you share with family or friends?

Savoring the present: What is going on right now that you could enjoy more by paying close attention?

Savoring the future: What is on your calendar that you could enjoy thinking about today?

Theme 6 Resources

Here are some great books on grit, savoring, resilience, and making choices:

- Ariely, D. (2010). *Predictably Irrational, Revised and Expanded Edition: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*. Harper Perennial.
- Bryant, F. & Veroff, J. (2006). *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*. Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.
- Colvin, G. (2010). *Talent Is Overrated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers from EverybodyElse*. Portfolio Trade.
- Dweck, C. (2007). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* Ballantine Books.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). *The Myths of Happiness: What Should Make You Happy, but Doesn't, What Shouldn't Make You Happy, but Does*. Penguin Press. This book can lead to a deeper understanding of regrets.
- Reivich, K. & Shatté, A. (2003). *The Resilience Factor: 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles*. Three Rivers Press.
- Schwartz, B. (2005). *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less*. Harper Perennial.
- Tough, P. (2012). *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Angela Duckworth recommends this book.
- Ware, B. (2012). *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying: A Life Transformed by the Dearly Departing*. Hay House.

Epilogue: Now what?

We will sum up the journey and explore the tools that can keep us on a road of growth and change.

Continuing the Journey

In this workbook, I've laid out a framework that I hope will help you look at your life and goals in a new way. Feel free to reuse the worksheets as needed. This is just the beginning of what will be an exciting and flourishing time in your life, so let me summarize what I'd like you to remember:

- The science of positive psychology has given us evidence that emotional flourishing pays numerous dividends, including greater success with goals, better relationships, and more self-regulation.
- We have considerable control over how many positive moments we experience every day. Positive interventions such as forgiving, meditation, exercise, and journaling can be extremely effective.
- The exercise of *Best Possible Future Self* can create a hopeful scenario of a desired future, supporting goals that can then be pursued with the proper tools.
- Goal-setting is a complicated science, but knowing that goals should be intrinsic, value-laden, and pursued with accountability is a helpful framework for getting started.
- Knowing and using our strengths doesn't just raise well-being, it also makes it more likely that we will succeed with our goals and enjoy the process.
- A number of factors contribute to having the right mindset for flourishing and success. Self-regulation is one of the most important. Self-regulation can be increased with practice.
- The quality of our relationships with others can often be determined by how we respond to others' good news.
- We need to be conscious of what behaviors are contagious, either positively or negatively.
- Priming is one of the most important, yet underused, tools that can strongly impact well-being and goal success.
- Resilience and grit will be required in any type of goal pursuit. When we take risks, setbacks are likely to occur, so we need the ability to rebound. We can intentionally increase resilience and grit.

I strongly suggest that everyone get an accountability buddy, a mastermind group, or a coach to stay focused on moving forward. Everything is easier with a support system, so create a positive one if you don't already have one.

Acknowledgment

I'd like to thank [Kathryn Britton](#), a colleague from my MAPP program, who was my invaluable right hand as I created this workbook.

I'd encourage all of you to visit [Positive Psychology News](#), where Kathryn oversees the content of this extraordinary online publication that has published more than 1200 short articles about applying positive psychology in everyday life over the last 9 years. She is also a coach and a writing coach. You can follow her on twitter: [@KathrynBritton](#).

Farewell for Now

Until we meet again live with passion, courage, and incredible zest!

Watch for my upcoming book, [Authentic Grit](#), to learn more about building this vital element for pursuing hard and valuable goals.

Caroline Adams Miller, MAPP

