

Workbook



3 Key Virtues for Creating a Happier Life

Stacey Thompson, CC / VirtuesforLife.com

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WELCOME

Can you intentionally add more happiness to your life? Not the fleeting kind resulting from buying a new car or going on a vacation, although these things are exciting. But the kind that is more lasting. You sure can! By cultivating three key virtues in life, which are gratitude, compassion and purpose. In fact, the Dalai Lama XVI once said, "Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions." Practicing these virtues or inner strengths is a way for us to take action on behalf of our happiness. Gratitude shifts our mindset from the negative to the positive. Compassion turns our focus away from ourselves onto helping others. Purpose gives meaning to our lives. The practice of these virtues creates a deeper satisfaction in life.

To be happy, though, has its challenges. Negative thoughts, busyness, not prioritizing what we want, fear, a lack of confidence, and comparison can impede happiness. With intention, we can strengthen the virtues of gratitude, compassion and purpose. As we do, blocks to our happiness lessen. We find ourselves with a more positive outlook.

Inside this mini-workbook, you'll find discussion, thought-provoking questions, ways to practice, and resources on each virtue. You'll be guided to integrate them into your life in a meaningful way.

I hope you enjoy the workbook.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.
It turns what we have into enough, and
more. It turns denial into acceptance,
chaos to order, confusion to clarity.
It can turn a meal into a feast, a house
into a home, a stranger into a friend.

~Melody Beattie, Author



GRATITUDE

Being grateful shifts our perspective from what we lack and what's wrong to what's abundant and right in life. It's a choice for positivity. We savor life's benefits from a beautiful sunset to the love of our family and friends, to our personal power to make positive change. When we are grateful, we immerse ourselves in the present moment. Our hearts open to life's difficulties. Our wants and worries lessen. Life is more beautiful.

Yet, for many of us, being grateful is not so easy, especially during tough times. A pandemic, losing a job, or facing an illness makes it harder to see the good. But research has shown that gratitude can increase our happiness by 25% and grateful people experience higher levels of positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm and love.

We may not feel grateful right away because we are angry, disappointed, or frustrated. But, in time, we can use gratitude as a tool to help us cope better.

Whether good times or bad, gratitude is a simple, yet powerful emotion we can use to gain peace and an optimistic outlook.



finding GRATITUDE

01

Name some simple pleasures you are grateful for in life. (i.e, nature walks, a hot cup of coffee or tea, music, ice cream, etc.)

02

Write 3-5 qualities that you appreciate about yourself.

03

What were you grateful for in childhood?



finding GRATITUDE

04

Choose a person in your life you feel grateful for and explain why. Be as specific as possible in your explanation.

05

What's an accomplishment you are most proud of and grateful for achieving and why?



finding GRATITUDE

06 List all that you are grateful for in life. This can include people and things. Write down as many blessings as you can.

WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Challenge yourself to accomplish at least two ways below to practice gratitude.

DEVOTE TIME EACH DAY TO REFLECT ON WHAT YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR IN LIFE

Writing 3 to 5 things you are grateful for in a journal helps shift your focus to the good in life. You can purchase a journal with a special cover, or write in an online journal (365gratitudejournal.com and gratefulness.org). An alternative to writing is to think grateful thoughts in the morning and/or at night.

EMBRACE YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Take notice and savor the sights and sounds of your surroundings. For example, if you're hiking, notice the trees swaying in the wind, the colorful flowers, the friendly people you pass, and the clean air you're breathing. Immerse yourself in the goodness using all your senses.

CREATE GRATITUDE AFFIRMATIONS

Recite gratitude affirmations daily like, "I am grateful for each day and all its blessings."; "I choose to see the good in every situation." Place affirmations around your house to remind you of all that's right in life.



WRITE A THANK YOU LETTER

Can you think of someone you can express appreciation towards? Maybe it's a friend for his or her unshakable support? Or, your spouse or partner whom you may not have thanked lately for all they do for you? How about your child's teacher, your doctor, or your parents? Expressing gratitude to people with a thoughtful letter can transform relationships and even yourself.

Consider John Kralik, author of *365 Thank Yous*. He was at a low point in his life when, on a walk, he thought he could make his life more tolerable if he could focus on what he had rather than on what he didn't have. So he decided to write a thank you letter to someone who touched his life each day for one year. Through his expression of gratitude, came financial gain, true friendship, weight loss, and inner peace.

Writing thank you letters is a powerful gesture to acknowledge and thank people.

RESOURCES ON GRATITUDE

We've gathered these resources to help you strengthen gratitude in your life.

Please note, with this PDF file, you can click on the references below, and you'll be taken to them on the web.

01 A NETWORK FOR GRATEFUL LIVING

A Network for Grateful Living (gratefulness.org) is a global organization focused on inspiring and guiding a commitment to grateful living through educational programs and practices. You can explore gratitude practices, light a candle for a loved one, send an e-card, and more.

02 GRATITUDE AT WORK

Gratitude at Work (gratitudeatwork.ca), founded by Steve Foran, gives organizations and people the tools they need to cultivate gratitude. Join his "One Billion Happier People" club to discover how you can be happier at work.

03 20 WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE

The article, "20 Ways to Practice Gratitude" by Virtues for Life, gives you more ways to practice gratitude such as "Recognizing each day as a gift" and "Creating gratitude affirmations."

04 BOOKS

- *Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier* by Robert Emmons
- *Living in Gratitude: A Journey That Will Change Your Life* by Angeles Arrien
- *The Gratitude Diaries: How a Year Looking on the Bright Side Can Transform Your Life* by Janice Kaplan
- *365 Thank Yous: The Year a Simple Act of Daily Gratitude Changed My Life* by John Kralik
- *Attitudes of Gratitude: How to Give and Receive Joy Every Day of Your Life* by M.J. Ryan

05 VIDEOS

- Want to be happy? Be grateful | David Steindl-Rast | TED
- A Good Day With Brother David Steindl-Rast | A Network of Grateful Living
- An Experiment in Gratitude | The Science of Happiness | SoulPancake
- Robert Emmons: The Power of Gratitude | Greater Good Science Center

“If you want others to be happy,
practice compassion. If you want to
be happy, practice compassion.”

~*Dalai Lama XIV,*
Spiritual Leader of Tibet



COMPASSION

Compassion is a feeling that happens when we witness someone's suffering and are motivated to relieve that suffering. The Buddhists define compassion as, “the heart that trembles in the face of suffering.” They consider compassion to be the noblest quality of the human heart.

With a compassionate heart, we recognize that we all want to be happy and not suffer. Compassion is an exchange of goodness that acknowledges our similarities, rather than our differences. Beloved Buddhist teacher Pema Chödrön beautifully said, “Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It is a relationship between equals.”

Judgment doesn't exist when we are being compassionate because we feel that person's suffering as we feel our own. Compassion moves us to relieve that suffering, as we would want others to help relieve our own. In this way, compassion strengthens our bonds with others in its expression of love and care.

Compassion makes us happy because it gives us a sense of purpose and belonging. Our kind acts boost our mood while we positively impact others.



finding COMPASSION

01

**What compassionate act have you done for someone or a group?
How did it make you feel?**

02

**When was a time when someone showed you compassion?
How did you feel?**



finding COMPASSION

03

Have you ever judged someone, preventing you from showing compassion? Please explain.

04

Who in your life could you extend more compassion to and why?



finding COMPASSION

05

Who in your life would you like to receive more compassion from and why?

06

List a few ways you could be more compassionate to yourself. (i.e., forgive yourself for something, stop self-criticizing, etc.)

WAYS TO PRACTICE COMPASSION

Challenge yourself to accomplish at least two ways below to practice compassion.

LISTEN TO OTHERS SYMPATHETICALLY

So often, we are busy and distracted when we're talking to someone. Many of us listen to respond, interrupting, or trying to fix the person's problem. But by listening in silence and saying compassionate, encouraging words when needed, people feel valued and loved. Give people the gift of your full attention and deep listening.

BECOME MORE PRESENT

Mindfulness helps cultivate compassion. We are present to another's suffering. Sometimes this is not so easy with the fast pace of life. We may not even notice that someone needs our attention in the way of caring words or actions. Take time to truly see the people in your life.

NOTICE WHERE YOU MAY JUDGE

Notice where you may be judging a person. It's human to do so. But when we judge, we shut down any potential for creating valuable, or deeper connections with others. Compassion is cultivated with an understanding of our shared humanity.



ENGAGE IN ACTS OF KINDNESS

Kind acts are how we show our compassion to others. These acts make us feel good, valuable and alive. Consider doing at least one of these kind acts below as a way to practice compassion. You will be spreading good feelings, and you never know the lasting effect your gesture has on someone.

1. Pay for a coffee for the driver behind you.
2. Encourage someone with a compliment or words of support.
3. Cheer up a loved one with a card, baked goods, or a coffee/dinner date.
4. Do some volunteer work with an organization whose mission you enjoy.
5. Call someone you haven't talked to in a while to say hello and check-in.

Find more ways to practice kindness in the Virtues for Life's post, "100 Ways to Be Kinder".

RESOURCES ON COMPASSION

We've gathered these resources to help you strengthen compassion in your life.

Please note, with this PDF file, you can click on the references below, and you'll be taken to them on the web.

01 THE COMPASSION INSTITUTE

The Compassion Institute (compassioninstitute.com) is a nonprofit global advocate for compassion education. They offer practical compassion-focused trainings based on the latest psychology, neurology, and contemplative science.

02 SELF-COMPASSION WITH KRISTIN NEFF

Kristin Neff, Ph.D., a leading expert on self-compassion, has researched the power of compassion extensively. On her website (self-compassion.org), she provides practices, meditations and resources.

03 THE COMPASSIONATE LOVE SCALE BY UPENN

The Compassionate Love Scale by UPENN "measures your tendency to support, help, and understand other people." You will need to supply a username and password to take the test. (authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter)

04 BOOKS

- *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Lives* by Thupten Jinpa PhD
- *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* by Dr. Kristin Neff
- *Compassionate Life: Walking the Path of Kindness* by Marc Ian Barasch
- *The Kindness Cure (How the Science of Compassion Can Heal Your Heart and Your World)* by Tara Cousineau
- *An Open Heart: Practicing Compassion in Everyday Life* by The Dalai Lama

05 VIDEOS

- Compassion and the true meaning of empathy | Joan Halifax | TED Talks
- The science of compassion: Dr. James Doty | TEDx Talks
- Kristin Neff: The Three Components of Self-Compassion | Greater Good Science Center

“When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their bonds. Your mind transcends limitations; your consciousness expands in every direction; and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person than you ever dreamed yourself to be.”

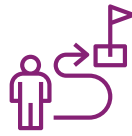
~Patanjali, *Indian Sage*

PURPOSE

Purpose is an aim that gives us a sense of direction and helps guide our behaviors and goals. It also brings meaning to our lives. In fact, Holocaust Survivor and Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl who wrote the memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*, believed we all want meaning in life. He wrote, “To the European, it is a characteristic of the American culture that, again and again, one is commanded and ordered to 'be happy.' But happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue. One must have a reason to 'be happy.' Once the reason is found, however, one becomes happy automatically. As we see, a human being is not one in pursuit of happiness but rather in search of a reason to become happy, last but not least, through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation.”

What gives life meaning is different for each of us. Whether it's found in raising moral, happy children, working in a garden, being an artist, or helping end hunger, doing it and doing it often brings a deeper satisfaction in life.

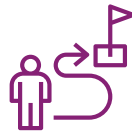
Ultimately, our purpose or "calling" lies in a feeling of genuine fulfillment. We are using our talents and skills to do something we love. We are being true to who we are, what we value, what we want, and what makes us happy. Engaging in life this way is where we'll make our greatest contribution.



finding PURPOSE

What do you value in life? (Common values include: Adventure, Achievement, Balance, Creativity, Faith, Fun, Growth, Friendships, Peace, Respect. You can view a comprehensive list of values at jamesclear.com/core-values.)

02 What brings meaning to your life?



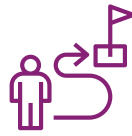
finding PURPOSE

03

What are your unique talents and skills? List as many as you can think of. If you need help, ask family and friends what they think.

04

What legacy would you like to leave behind, or what is a contribution you'd like to make to humanity?



finding PURPOSE

05

What bucket list items do you want to accomplish in life?

06

What makes you happy? You can even think back to your younger self and what made you happy then.

WAYS TO PRACTICE PURPOSE

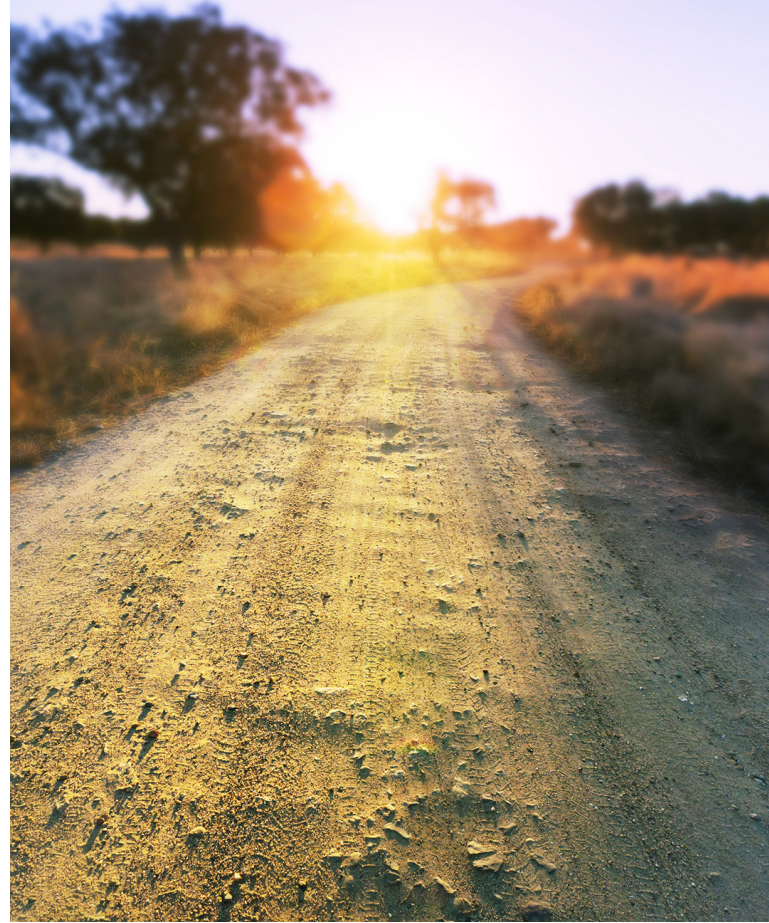
Challenge yourself to accomplish at least two ways below to practice purpose.

DISTINGUISH WHAT YOUR PURPOSE IS.

What do you value? What makes you happy? What brings your life meaning? When do you feel your most authentic self? What are your skills and talents? The answers to these questions provide clues to what your purpose is. You answered these questions previously in the workbook. Now review them and see if you can come up with at least one purpose based on what you uncovered about yourself. If you already know your purpose, think about how you can expand it more in your life.

MAKE YOUR PURPOSE A PRIORITY

If you feel that you know your purpose, it's important to do it as much as possible. It's easy to put what you love to do on the back burner in favor of daily obligations and responsibilities. But days, months, and even years can go by and you still haven't done what you truly want to do in life. Start today by adding your purpose into your life wherever you can, even if it's for a short time each day, or once a week. You'll feel happier!



GO ON A QUEST

Commonly defined as a journey that someone takes to achieve a goal or complete an important task. Typically it's an adventure, trek, or mission, which can bring purpose to your life.

Think about a quest you'd like to go on. Be sure you feel motivated and excited to make the effort for what might be a long haul. Here are examples of quests from the book, *The Happiness of Pursuit* by Chris Guillebeau:

- A man traveled to every single country in the world
- A boy scout earned all 154 merit badges by age fifteen
- A middle-aged woman committed to seeing all the bird species for the rest of her life

Although these are lofty quests, your quest can be as small or big as you want it to be.

RESOURCES ON PURPOSE

We've gathered these resources to help you strengthen purpose in your life. Please note, with this PDF file, you can click on the references below, and you'll be taken to them on the web.

01 VIA INSTITUTE ON CHARACTER

Discover your character strengths with a free self-assessment that takes less than 15 minutes. (viacharacter.org). The insightful assessment provides information to help you understand your best qualities. Knowing your best qualities can help you live more fully and even uncover your purpose.

02 ARTICLES ON PURPOSE

Two helpful articles on finding your purpose:

- Seven Ways to Find Your Purpose in Life by Jill Suttie in *Greater Good Magazine*
- Life Purpose: 10 Tips to Learn How to Find Your Passion by Jack Canfield

03 THE ART OF NON-CONFORMITY

The Art of Non-Conformity (chrisguillebeau.com) is a website designed to "share the story of how to change the world by achieving personal goals while helping others at the same time."

04 BOOKS

- *The Power of Purpose: Find Meaning, Live Longer, Better* by Richard J. Leider
- *The Happiness of Pursuit: Finding the Quest That Will Bring Purpose to Your Life* by Chris Guillebeau
- *Life on Purpose: How Living for What Matters Most Changes Everything* by Victor J. Strecher
- *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* by Rick Warren
- *In Pursuit of Purpose: The Key to Personal Fulfillment* by Myles Munroe

05 VIDEOS

- Allow things to unfold and you will find your purpose in life | Peggy Oki | TEDxQueenstown
- The ONLY Video You Need To Find Your TRUE PURPOSE In Life | TOP 5 Best Advice Speeches | Goalcast
- How to know your life purpose in 5 minutes | Adam Leipzig | TEDxMalibu

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THANK YOU!

Thank you for reading the *3 Key Virtues for Creating a Happier Life* mini-workbook. I hope you found the discussion, thought-provoking questions, and ways to practice each virtue valuable in boosting your happiness. An important takeaway is to consistently practice these virtues so that you can make them more of a habit.

With habit, they will come more naturally to you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stacey Thompson is a certified life purpose coach. She is founder of Virtues for Life (virtuesforlife.com), a website designed to help people bring out the best in themselves by cultivating virtues such as gratitude, courage, perseverance and forgiveness. She is passionate about helping people improve their lives and believes that using the practice of virtue as a personal development tool can bring about positive change.

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