

FUEL RESILIENCE, HEALTH, & HAPPINESS WITH POSITIVE EMOTIONS

By Anne Brafford | abrafford@aspire.legal | www.aspire.legal

Do you consider yourself to be a pretty happy person? Do you have plenty of positive emotions energizing your life? If so, you likely have a “positive emotional style (PES).” This means that, most of the time, you’re in a pretty good mood. If this doesn’t describe you, you’re not alone. Many people (including many lawyers) face a lot of negativity in their daily lives. If you’re in this group, I’d like to try to persuade you to be more intentional about boosting your daily dose of positive emotions.

You might be skeptical of this advice (you’re a lawyer, after all!). You might be thinking: “But I’m a serious lawyer doing serious business. Why should I care about something that sounds a little silly?” My response? Yep, I used to think that way too. The science has convinced me otherwise: People with a PES have better mental and physical health, live longer, and are more successful and engaged at work. You want proof? Keep reading.

Positive Emotions Support Physical & Psychological Health

Much research has found that people with a PES generally are physically healthier—including having better immune, cardiovascular, and pulmonary functioning (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Positive emotions also contribute to resilience against psychological dysfunction, such as depression, anxiety, and burnout (Carl et al., 2018; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2016). These conditions all are characterized by fewer positive emotions and a tendency to dampen positive experiences.

This doesn’t mean that we should suppress negative emotions and avoid tough experiences—strategies that often backfire and harm mental health. Instead, we can use positive emotions as a coping tool—by, for example, laughing, connecting with others, walking outside, and anything else that provides

a positive jolt that relieves us temporarily from the burden of our worries. Science shows that experiencing positive emotions during moments of stress provides a buffer against negative reactivity in the flow of daily life, which serves as a protective factor against depressive symptoms (Wichers et al., 2007) and burnout (Gloria et al., 2013). For example, a study of public school teachers found that PES was a big contributor to resilience and helped teachers avoid burnout (Gloria et al., 2013).

The “Undoing” Effect of Positive Emotions



An important way that positive emotions fuel resilience is by “undoing” the negative physiological effects of stress (Fredrickson, 2005).

For example, in a study that stoked participants’ anxiety by asking them to do an impromptu public speech (cue racing heart!), the most resilient of them experienced more positive emotions before the speech and had a faster return to cardiovascular baselines afterwards. Another study after the 9/11 tragedy found that the more resilient participants were less depressed and more likely to grow as a result of the trauma. The frequency of their positive emotions fully accounted for the beneficial effects.

Positive Emotions Support Optimal Performance & Success

We all probably believe that being successful at work will make us feel happy. And that's often true. But what also is true is that *feeling happy makes us more successful* (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Walsh et al., 2018). To prove this point, Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky and her colleagues set out to analyze a whopping 225 studies about positive emotions. The study found that people with a PES are more effective and successful. For example, they:

- Receive higher performance ratings
- Are rated as more effective leaders
- Are perceived as more intelligent, better liked, more influential, and better speakers
- Earn higher salaries
- Have more satisfied clients
- Have higher job satisfaction & engagement
- Experience less interpersonal conflict and greater cooperation

Why do positive emotions have such a big effect on success? They don't affect just how we consciously feel but also affect our thoughts, neurological processes, bodies, motivation, and behavior. For example, positive emotions broaden our thinking, facilitate social bonding, boost innovation, smooth social interactions, and animate charisma.

Another effect particularly relevant for lawyers is enhanced flexibility—in problem-solving, interacting with others, and coping with adversity. Positive emotions help people see possible connections, enhance mental flexibility, and stimulate open-mindedness in considering options (Brafford, 2017).

Bad Is Stronger Than Good: Mind The Positivity Ratio

We're all prone to negative self-talk and emotions, which pack a greater punch than positive emotions. For evolutionary reasons, [bad is stronger than good](#): We're more likely to notice negative things and to be more strongly effected by them—a phenomenon

called the negativity bias. As a result, we're not likely to feel happy (and experience the related beneficial health effects) unless our positive emotions outweigh bad ones. To support mental health, we need to shoot for a ratio of about 3 or 5 to 1. In other words, try to offset every negative experience with three to five positive ones.

For lawyers, this natural negativity bias can be exacerbated by work challenges. Built-in aspects of our work can expose us to onslaughts of negativity. Lawyers' work days often are dominated by disputes, competition, zero-sum games, and vigilantly scanning for potential risks to our clients—all of which can stoke negative emotions and harm our health and performance. Also, lawyers' skill at spotting problems to help their clients assess risk and plan for the future can bleed over into other aspects of their lives, causing mental habits that focus on the negative.

This isn't to suggest that we should try to eliminate negative emotions (which would be impossible anyway). Negative emotions are useful but, if they dominate our lives, our well-being will suffer.

Getting Started

Many cheap, easy ways are available to boost our own and others' positive emotions in our everyday lives. Like any new, worthwhile skill, though, continual practice to learn and reinforce happiness skills will be needed to make them a sustained habit. In the following pages, you'll find instructions for developing your own Happiness Plan and recommended strategies for you to include.

How To Be Happier? Make It A Priority.

While genetics play a role in our patterns of positive emotions and happiness, our biology doesn't have to be our destiny. Much about our genetic makeup is malleable. Also, factors within our voluntary control play a big role in our level of happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). This is good news. It means that even those born with a genetic tendency toward negative thinking and emotions have an opportunity to proactively take actions that can significantly increase their well-being.

Happiness Is Worth The Effort

Most of us would like more happiness in our busy lives, and science shows that it's worth making an effort. As discussed above, people with a Positive Emotional Style (PES)—who tend toward positive emotions—are more resilient, healthier, and happier.

Prioritize Positivity

As discussed above, for evolutionary reasons, bad is stronger than good—which means that we won't be our best selves unless positive emotions outweigh negative ones. Especially if you experience a high frequency of negative emotions as a regular part of your work (as lawyers often do), you may need to consciously seek out good things to restore your equilibrium after something bad happens. A good way to be more intentional about prioritizing positivity is to design your own Happiness Plan.

Be aware that pursuing happiness for its own sake can backfire and make us less happy. The best strategy is to deliberately plan daily opportunities that can lead to naturally-occurring positive emotions rather than trying to will yourself to be happy (Datsu & King, 2016). Focus on the journey, not the destination. The benefits will be greater positive emotions and well-being.

Choose High-Value Happiness Activities

Not all activities that trigger short-term positive emotions contribute equally to our long-term happiness. Scarfing down an entire pizza with extra cheese, for example, may give me a jolt of temporary pleasure, but it's unlikely to do much for my long-term well-being.



Building Blocks of Health & Happiness: Basic Needs

Activities that will give the biggest boost to our health and happiness are those that support our basic needs as continually-evolving human beings (Brafford, 2017)—which are summarized below.

Doing activities that fulfill these needs will help boost positive emotions, well-being, and optimal functioning. The challenge will be to figure out how to include more activities that support these needs into your everyday lives. It won't happen by accident.

1 Connection & Belonging.

We have a fundamental need to connect and belong. This includes supportive relationships as well as a sense of belonging with groups we care about. A poor sense of belonging and feelings of exclusion can trigger self-defeating behaviors like procrastination, lethargy, and depression.

2 Mastery Activities.

Our fundamental needs also include feeling confident in our ability to master new skills and to have an impact on our environment. Continuous learning and a growing sense of mastery in activities we enjoy or are proud of are keys to this source of well-being. Frequent experiences of “flow” in which we feel challenged but not out-matched in activities that we enjoy are especially beneficial.

3 Maximize Autonomy.

A third fundamental need is driven by a basic human desire to be “self-creating” and under self-rule. It’s about feeling free from coercion, authentic, and like the author and architect of our own behavior—that our behavior aligns with our interests and values and is within our responsibility and control. Doing more of what we like (rather than only what we “should” do or what someone tells us to do) and what makes us uniquely us will help fulfill the autonomy need.

4 Help Others.

We also have a basic need to feel that we’re benefiting others or the common good. Doing so is the biggest contributor to work and life meaningfulness.

5 Do Something Meaningful.

We often waste our scarce free time by mindlessly watching TV, paging through gossip magazines, or reading click-bait on the Internet. These don’t contribute much to our sense of meaningfulness in our lives or work—which research shows is powerfully related to health and happiness. Meaningful activities include those that make us feel that we’re doing something significant within our own values system and/or that help us make progress toward goals or a general purpose.

High-Quality Happiness Activities



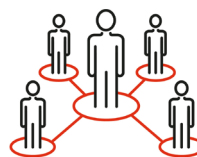
CONNECTION & BELONGING

Supportive relationships and a sense of belonging with groups we care about.



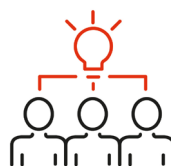
MASTERY

Continually learning, growing, and gaining confidence in our ability to make things happen.



AUTONOMY

Feeling that our choices are self-authored and aligned with our own preferences. The opposite of feeling forced or guilt-driven.



HELPING OTHERS

Helping Others Having a positive impact on others or the common good.



MEANINGFULNESS

Feeling that our activities are significant within our own values system.

PRIORITIZE POSITIVITY



Choose Positive Emotion-Boosting Activities For Your Happiness Plan

Science has identified a multitude of activities that help satisfy basic needs and boost positive emotions—some of which are discussed more in the pages below. Your Happiness Plan might include trying out a new activity every other week to see what works best for you. Multiple studies have incorporated the following collection of activities to boost positive emotions and stave off depression in a variety of settings (e.g., Moskowitz et al., 2019):

1 Notice & Savor Positive Events

See the worksheet below on how to Notice & Savor Positive Emotions.

2 Grow Your Gratitude

See the Growing Gratitude worksheet below.

3 Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness allows people to tolerate and reflect on strong emotions rather than responding impulsively and also boosts positive emotions. We can foster mindfulness formally (e.g., via mindfulness meditation and loving-kindness meditation) or informally (by practicing being present during everyday activities rather than always being on autopilot). See the Mindfulness Worksheet and resources below.

4 Try Positive Reappraisal

Reappraisal involves changing our interpretation of a stressful event. It can include minimizing the impact or importance of a negative event or finding something good that has come of it. Studies consistently have found that it boosts positive emotions and is among the most effective coping skills. This is one of the skills I teach in my free video: [Resilient Thinking Part I: Taming Negative Emotions](#).

5 Use Your Strengths & Pursue Self-Congruent Goals

See the worksheets below about how to (1) Identify & Use Your Strengths and (2) Aligning Our Lives with Our Goals & Values

6 Do Acts of Kindness

See the worksheet below recommending that we Do Acts of Kindness.



Plan & Track Your Progress

It may seem counter-intuitive but, like anything worth doing, increasing happiness will take effort and planning.

Below are suggested steps to get started on your Happiness Plan:

1. Monitor Your Behavior Patterns

Much of our behavior is so automatic that it occurs outside of our awareness and as a matter of habit. To begin to change our patterns to boost well-being, we need to gain better awareness of them. A good way to do so is to create an Activity and Mood Monitoring Chart. For a week or more, complete an [activity log](#) (sort of like your billable time log) on an hour-to-hour basis. Simply write down brief statements of what you're doing each hour (Addis & Martell, 2004).

2. Identify Corresponding Moods

Next, for each activity, write down a few words that describe how you felt during the activity. Words might include, for example, happy, joyful, passionate, angry, anxious, or sad. Rate each emotion on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most intense (Addis & Martell, 2004). Alternatively, [rate the level](#) of Depression, Pleasure, or sense of Achievement you felt before and after the activity.

3. Review What You Noticed

After you've created your logs for a week, review them and identify patterns. Did your moods vary or not? Are there common times of the day that are more difficult

or easier for you? Are there situations that routinely make you happy or are associated with negative emotions? (Addis & Martell, 2004).

4. Identify Behaviors' Impact

Next, review your logs and identify what activities or behaviors made you feel bad frequently. Consider alternatives that can make you feel better or improve the situation. Also identify activities and behaviors that regularly boosted your mood. Consider why that was so and how you can increase those ingredients in your daily schedule.

5. Schedule Mood-Boosting Activities

After looking over the behaviors, activities, and alternatives from Step 4, create a daily log for the upcoming week in which you schedule do-able activities that are aimed at increasing your positive emotions and/or taking care of a responsibility that's important to you. Consider high-value happiness activities that are most likely to have the biggest positive impact:

- **Connection:** How can you connect more frequently with people who give you energy? Can you have less contact with people who deplete you? How can you foster a greater sense of belonging inside of work and in non-work activities?
- **Mastery:** What can you do to support your need for continual learning and mastery—both inside work and in non-work activities?
- **Autonomy:** How can you more effectively plan your schedule and activities so that you feel that they're more aligned with your own interests, values, and choices? How can you reduce feeling that you're being "bossed around" by your schedule and others' demands?
- **Helping Others:** What can you do to help others? How can you highlight for others how their contributions have helped you?
- **Meaningfulness:** How else might you foster

a greater sense of meaningfulness in your work and non-work life? What can you do to ensure that meaningful activities are prioritized over mindless activities?

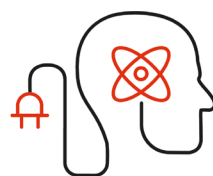
Start relatively small so that you can ensure early wins that will fuel your motivation to keep at it. As you pick up momentum, you can increase the difficulty of your goals and begin designing realistically ideal days that are filled with more positive experiences.

6. Adopt a Mindset of Curiosity.

Maintain an experimental (not a judgmental) mindset. Notice how you feel and whether your plan is working or not. No matter what the outcome, you're likely to learn something useful. Keep trying new experiments to discover what works best for you.

7. Periodically Measure Your Happiness.

To test whether your Happiness Plan is working, consider measuring your level of happiness with a validated scale. To get a base line, take a happiness survey before you launch your Happiness Plan. One possibility is the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) provided below. Then repeat the survey in 6-week intervals and track your results. You might find your happiness levels perking up!



Prioritizing Positivity As An Effective "Behavioral Activation" Strategy

The recommendation here to prioritize positivity stems from positive psychology research. It's very similar to what's called "[behavioral activation](#)." This is a well-established cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)-based strategy for overcoming depression and other mental health difficulties. Research has found it as effective as talk-based CBT therapies. It's been used effectively as part of self-help programs and in conjunction with clinical therapy (Addis & Martell, 2004).

Behavioral activation involves identifying your values

and pleasure-giving activities and scheduling your day to better align with those. To learn more about how to take a structured approach to boosting your well-being, Drs. Michael Addis and Christopher Martell's award-winning workbook [Overcoming Depression One Step at a Time](#) guides readers through helpful exercises.

CONCLUSION

For many of us, making up our minds to be happier and healthier by prioritizing positivity is likely to have the intended results. Fellow lawyer Abraham Lincoln appears to have had it about right when he said, "Folks are usually about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

REFERENCES

- Addis, M. A., & Martell, C. (2004). *Overcoming depression one step at a time: The new behavioral activation approach to getting your life back*. U.S.: New Harbinger Publications, Inc
- Brafford, A. (2017). *Positive Professionals: Creating High-Performing Profitable Firms Through the Science of Engagement*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association.
- Datsu, J. D., & King, R. B. (2016). Prioritizing positivity optimizes positive emotions and life satisfaction: A three-wave longitudinal study. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 96, 111-114.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71-75.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.
- Moskowitz, J. T., Cheung, E. P., Snowberg, K., Verstaen, A., Merrilees, J., Salsman, J. M., & Dowling, G. A. (2019). Randomized controlled trial of a facilitated online positive emotion regulation intervention for dementia caregivers. *Health Psychology*, 38(5), 391-402

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.
— Mahatma Gandhi

Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions.
— Dalai Lama

Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give.
— Eleanor Roosevelt

Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow. It only saps today of its joy.
— Leo Buscaglia

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life's about creating yourself.
— George Bernard Shaw

Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons.
— Ruth Ann Schabacker

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.
— Buddah

My barn having burned down, I can now see the moon.
— Mizuta Masahide (17th Century Japanese poet and samurai)

She stood in the storm, and when the wind did not blow her way, she adjusted the sails.
— Elizabeth Edwards.

There is more to life than increasing its speed.
— Mahatma Gandhi

Notice & Savor Positive Emotions

Savoring is the mindful act of engaging in thoughts or behaviors that heighten our good feelings about positive events (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). It includes anything that generates, intensifies, or prolongs enjoyment (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Savoring is about paying more attention to noticing and appreciating all the big and small positive things in our lives for as long as possible. It can be done about the past, present, or future: We can savor memories, current experiences, and future events.

WHY INCREASE SAVORING?

Savoring increases positive emotions (which improves mental and physical health), deepens gratitude, facilitates mindfulness, enhances engagement, and provides greater meaning in our lives (Bryant 1989; Bryant 2003; Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Bryant, Smart & King, 2005). A chart of “Nine Savoring Strategies to Boost Positive Emotions” is provided below.

DIFFERENCES IN SAVORING HABITS

While some people automatically savor, others tend to dampen positive emotions, which is associated with depressive symptoms and other mental health conditions (Quoidbach et al., 2010).

People also differ in their tendencies to savor past, present, or future events (Bryant, 2003). To analyze your habits, review the following to assess whether you have strengths in anticipating, savoring the present moment, and/or reminiscing:

Anticipating: Looking forward to positive events.

- I get pleasure from looking forward
- I get excited by anticipating in advance

Savoring The Present Moment: Intensifying and prolonging enjoyment of current experience.

- I know how to make the most of a good time
- I feel fully able to appreciate good things

Reminiscing: Looking back to rekindle positive feelings.

- I enjoy looking back on happy times
- I find it easy to rekindle the joy of happy memories

The full Savoring Beliefs Inventory scale is provided

below for you to measure your current savoring habits as well as track progress.

AVOID KILL-JOY THINKING

Some also have dampening habits that squelch positive emotions (Quoidbach, et al., 2010). Five common habits are listed below in the “Avoid Kill-Joy Thinking Habits” chart. Often, people engage in these thinking-habits automatically, without realizing what they’re doing. Be on guard against them. They are related to poor mental health, including depression.

LET’S PRACTICE

Below is an activity designed and tested to help you practice savoring the current moment (Hurley & Kwon, 2012).

- 1. Baseline Measure.** To get started, take a survey that will measure your positive and negative emotions. One option is the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), which appears below.
- 2. Reflect.** Recall 3 positive events that occurred last week, and list ways that you could’ve savored them:

Positive Events	How I Could Have Savored?
1.	
2.	
3.	

- 3. Practice.** Next, over the next two weeks, concentrate on savoring the present moment throughout each day. Look at the 9 Savoring Strategies in the chart below and note any additional strategies that you have identified on your own. Use any strategy you’d like to help you savor experiences.

- Pay attention even to mundane things that you have to do regularly and that you typically do on automatic pilot.
- Really pay attention to the moment and the good parts of the experience—the good smells, sounds, tactile sensations, and emotions.
- Use a Savoring Log to keep track of how often you savor events each day. Just write a short note

NOTICE & SAVOR POSITIVE EMOTIONS

about the savored positive event. There's no need to write a detailed description—which might actually undermine your ability savor by being overly concrete or literal (Lyubomirsky, 2010).

- Find ways to remind yourself daily to savor the moment. Set a reminder on your calendar, leave yourself sticky notes, etc.
- At the end of the two weeks, take the SPANE again. Were there positive changes?

- Next, begin practicing your skills of anticipating and reminiscing about positive experiences.

Once you have a little practice, work on creating mental habits that incorporate savoring into your every-day life. Joyfully anticipate upcoming events, mindfully attend to all the goodness in the present, and reminisce about the good parts of past experiences. Science suggests it will benefit your well-being.

9 SAVORING STRATEGIES TO BOOST POSITIVE EMOTIONS

SHARE ("CAPITALIZE")	Share experiences and memories with others.
BUILD MEMORIES	Actively store images for future reminiscing. Take "mental photographs" (or real ones) to form vivid images.
SELF-CONGRATULATE	Tell yourself how proud or impressed you and others are of, e.g., achievements and personal successes.
COMPARE	Do "downward comparisons" – contemplate how much better off you are than you could be.
SHARPEN PERCEPTION	Intensify pleasure by focusing on certain stimuli and screening out others. Be vigilant in your attention to positive aspects of your experiences.
ABSORPTION	Try not to think; shut off self-talk. Be mindful without cognitive reflection.
EXPRESS	Express positive emotions through non-verbal behaviors. Smile, laugh, jump for joy, pump your fist in the air.
REFLECT ON TRANSIENCE	Remind yourself how fleeting the moment is and that you should enjoy it now; savor bitter-sweetness.
GRATITUDE	Contemplate the good things in your life and feel grateful.

AVOID KILL-JOY THINKING HABITS

SELF-DOUBT	Thinking "I don't deserve this."
SUPPRESSION	Hiding positive emotions due to, e.g., shyness, modesty, or fear. "People will think I'm bragging."
DISTRACTION	Thoughts (often worries) unrelated to current positive event. Thinking of other things you should be doing.
FAULT-FINDING	Paying attention to negative aspects of otherwise positive situations. Focusing on what could go wrong or how it could be better. "This is too good to be true."
NEGATIVE MENTAL TIME TRAVEL	Think about what has gone wrong in the past and how they likely will go wrong in the future. Attribute causes of good things in the past to external causes (e.g., "I won that motion because my opponent was weak, not due to my strengths") and negatively anticipate the future (e.g., "My good luck streak will end soon.").

(Nelis et al., 2016; Salzberg, 2014)

Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE)

The SPANE scale can help you evaluate progress on experiencing more positive than negative emotions through savoring and other activities discussed in other worksheets.

Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing during the past four weeks. Then report how much you experienced each of the following feelings on a scale of 1 to 5.

	1 Very Rarely or Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Very Often or Always
Positive	1	2	3	4	5
Negative	1	2	3	4	5
Good	1	2	3	4	5
Bad	1	2	3	4	5
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Joyful	1	2	3	4	5
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Contented	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring:

The measure can be used to derive an overall affect (i.e., emotions and mood) balance score, but can also be divided into positive and negative feelings scales.

- **Positive Feelings:** Add the scores for the 6 positive items: positive, good, pleasant, happy, joyful, and contented. The score can vary from 6 (lowest possible) to 30 (highest positive feelings score).
- **Negative Feelings:** Add the scores for the 6 negative items: negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, afraid, and angry. The score can vary from 6 (lowest possible) to 30 (highest negative feelings score).
- **Affect Balance:** Subtract the negative feelings score from the positive feelings score. The difference that results can vary from -24 (unhappiest possible) to 24 (highest affect balance possible).

Source: Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39, 247-266.

Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI)

The SBI can help you measure your current mental habits related to savoring as well as track your progress on savoring skills.

For each statement listed below, please circle the one number that best indicates how much you disagree or agree with the particular statement. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
1. Before a good thing happens, I look forward to it in ways that give me pleasure in the present.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. It's hard for me to hang onto a good feeling for very long.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. I enjoy looking back on happy times from my past.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. I don't like to look forward to good times too much before they happen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. I know how to make the most of a good time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. I don't like to look back at good times too much after they've taken place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. I feel a joy of anticipation when I think about upcoming good things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8. When it comes to enjoying myself, I'm my own "worst enemy."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9. I can make myself feel good by remembering pleasant events from my past.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10. For me, anticipating what upcoming good events will be like is basically a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11. When something good happens, I can make my enjoyment of it last longer by thinking or doing certain things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12. When I reminisce about pleasant memories, I often start to feel sad or disappointed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13. I can enjoy pleasant events in my mind before they actually occur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14. I can't seem to capture the joy of happy moments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15. I like to store memories of fun times that I go through so that I can recall them later.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16. It's hard for me to get very excited about fun times before they actually take place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17. I feel fully able to appreciate good things that happen to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18. I find that thinking about good times from the past is basically a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Savoring Beliefs Inventory – Continued

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I can make myself feel good by imagining what a happy time that is about to happen will be like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I don't enjoy things as much as I should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. It's easy for me to rekindle the joy from pleasant memories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. When I think about a pleasant event before it happens, I often start to feel uneasy or uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. It's easy for me to enjoy myself when I want to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. For me, once a fun time is over and gone, it's best not to think about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Scoring

- The SBI is made up of 4 sub-scales, which represent different types of savoring habits: (1) Anticipating, (2) Savoring the Moment, (3) Reminiscing, and (4) the SBI Total score. You can score your results as follows:
- **Anticipating subscale score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following four items: 1, 7, 13, 19. (b) Sum up responses to the following four items: 4, 10, 16, & 22. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed score for the Anticipating subscale.
- **Savoring the Moment subscale score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following four items: 5, 11, 17, 23. (b) Sum up responses to the following four items: 2, 8, 14, & 20. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed score for the Savoring the Moment subscale.
- **Reminiscing subscale score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following four items: 3, 9, 15, & 21. (b) Sum up responses to the following four items: 6, 12, 18, & 24. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed score for the Reminiscing subscale.
- **Total SBI score:** (a) Sum up responses to the following 12 (odd-numbered) items: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, & 23. (b) Sum up responses to the following 12 (even-numbered) items: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, & 24. (c) Subtract the total obtained in Step B from the total obtained in Step A, to get a summed SBI Total score.

Grow Your Gratitude

Increasing our attention to all the good things in our lives can significantly enhance our happiness. Multiple studies have shown the positive power of gratitude (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon et al., 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), [including at work](#). People who are consistently grateful are happier; more energetic; and less depressed and anxious (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

“THANKFUL THURSDAYS”

One well-tested gratitude activity is to take time once a week to [write down 3 things](#) for which you're grateful. Studies have shown that people who do this activity for six weeks markedly increase their happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon et al., 2005). But it's also important to vary your activities to avoid boredom. The good effects can wear off without variety. Below is a list of different gratitude activities for you to try. Consider picking one day each week to do your gratitude activity—e.g., Thankful Thursdays. And then pick an activity. Try one for three or more weeks and then switch to another.

GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Once a week, think about everything—large and small—for which you're thankful (e.g., got great feedback on work, roommate made a delicious dinner, tulips are blooming). Think about things you're good at, advantages you've had, people who care about you and have touched your life. Then pick three things and write a brief note about them. Try out a [gratitude journal](#) or smart phone app (e.g., My Gratitude Journal by Happytapper), which will send you regular reminders.

APPRECIATIVE ART

Engage in [something artistic](#) to express your gratitude to another. Draw or paint a picture, make a collage, sculpt with clay, etc. Or write a poem, a song, or a story. Studies indicate that art-creation boosts mood (Dalebroux, Goldstein, & Winner, 2008). Art-making that depicts something happy is more

effective at improving short-term mood than using art to vent negative emotions (Dalebroux et al., 2008). Also, a variety of different art-making activities (e.g., drawing, painting, collage-making, clay work, etc.) may reduce anxiety (Sandmire, Gorham, Rankin & Grimm, 2012). So, engaging in an appreciative art activity may give you benefits both from artistic engagement and from your grateful thinking.

GRATITUDE PHOTO COLLAGE

Taking and sharing “selfies” is popular, but try this too: For a week, keep a look-out for every-day things for which you're grateful (e.g., your dog, a warm garage in winter, dinner with friends, your baby niece) and take photos of them. At the end of the week, post them all on your favorite social networking website with fun notes. Research shows that sharing good things with others (the more the better) actually increases your enjoyment of them (Gable & Reis, 2004; Gable & Gosnell, 2011). So share your photos with friends and explain why they represent something for which you're grateful.

GRATITUDE LETTER

Think about the people for whom you feel grateful—a family member, old friends, a special teacher or coach, a good boss. Then [write a letter expressing your gratitude](#) and, if you can, visit that person and read it aloud or call them on the phone. Describe in detail what they did for you and how they affected your life. You might even write a letter to people who are helpful everyday but whom you don't know—e.g., postal carrier, garbage removers, bus drivers, politicians, authors. You might also choose to write a letter but then not deliver it.

One study showed that participants who spent 15 minutes writing gratitude letters once a week over an eight-week period became happier during and after the study (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Check out this fun [video from Soul Pancake](#) showing real-life results from the gratitude letter activity.

GRATITUDE JAR OR BOARD

Designate a jar (or other container) as the [Gratitude Jar](#) or create a Gratitude Board and invite others to drop in or post notes whenever someone does something helpful. Then read the notes aloud periodically. Use this activity with work colleagues, your family—any group that spends significant time together.

MEETING-STARTERS

According to a recent survey, people are less likely to feel or express gratitude at work than anywhere else (Smith, 2013). Most said they got a positive boost from saying “thank you” to others and otherwise showing gratitude, but few actually did it regularly. This is a lost opportunity for fueling resilient, optimal functioning, and engagement. Consider starting meetings by asking everyone to identify something for which they’re grateful or one good thing that has gone well this week (Brafford, 2017).

GRATITUDE SURVEY

You can use the following gratitude survey to measure and track your progress on growing your gratitude (McCullough et al., 2002). On a scale of 1 to 7 (with 1 being the lowest), how much do you disagree or agree with the following? (An electronic version of the survey with scoring is available on U Penn’s [Authentic Happiness website](#).)

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
3. When I look at the world, I don’t see much to be grateful for.*
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.*

* Reversed Scored

REFERENCES

- Dalebroux, A., Goldstein, T. R., & Winner, E. (2008). Short-term mood repair through art-making: Positive emotion is more effective than venting. *Motivation and Emotion*, 32, 288-295.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377-389.
- Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E., & Asher, E. R. (2004). What do you do when things go right? The intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits of sharing positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 228-245.
- Gable, S. L. & Gosnell, C. L. (2011). The positive side of close relationships. In K. M. Sheldon, T. B. Kashdan, & M. F. Steger (Eds.), *Designing positive psychology: Taking stock and moving forward* (pp. 265-279). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 112-127.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 73-82.

Do Acts of Kindness

Doing [acts of kindness](#) for others is not just helpful to them; it also boosts the do-ers positive emotions, health, and happiness (e.g., Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005).

EXPAND TIME WITH KINDNESS

Do you think you're just too busy to squeeze much do-gooding into your already-packed days? It's true that many of us feel a constant sense of "time famine"—having too much to do and not enough time to do it. But examples below include every-day acts of helpfulness that can fit into even busy daily routines.

Also, research has made the fascinating finding that, when we help others, our sense of time actually may expand—we're more likely to experience "time affluence" rather than "time famine" (Mogilner et al., 2012). We also may experience a greater sense of work-life balance (Ramos et al., 2015).

BURSTS OF KINDNESS

People typically get a bigger boost to their happiness when they do a bunch of smaller acts of kindness or one big act of kindness all on one day rather than spread out over a week (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005). So consider adopting "Friendly Fridays" (or whatever day of the week you like) to shower those around you with kindness.

YOU CHOOSE

Your kind acts should be things you choose—what you *want* to do, not what you think you *should* do (Della Porta, 2012). Acts of kindnesses can come in many shapes and sizes. What is important is to design activities that feel authentic for you.

DON'T GO OVERBOARD

Choose activities that aren't too disruptive to your life (Della Porta, 2012). There likely is an upper limit after which giving too much can have negative consequences—such as when it begins to impair our ability to be effective in our own lives (Mogilner et al., 2012). The goal is not pathological altruism, where we exhaust ourselves by giving to others.

AIM FOR VARIETY & NOVELTY

Variety is important. Shake it up so that you don't get bored. You're more likely to sustain the benefits of doing acts of kindness when you vary your activities (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Also, your acts of kindness should be new and outside of your routine activities.

SAVOR YOUR KINDNESS

Use your growing savoring skills to squeeze the most benefits out of your kindness activities. For example, consider recording your planned acts of kindnesses and reflect on the experience. There's evidence that counting your own acts of kindness contributes to increases in happiness (Otake et al., 2006). Also, do your kindness activities mindfully. Put yourself in the other persons' shoes and consider the impact of your actions on their lives (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

DO SECRET ACTS

Remember that acts of kindness are not all about receiving approval and admiration. Consider doing at least one act of kindness per week anonymously. Giving for kindness' sake can be very rewarding.

WORK TEAM KINDNESS

Think of ways to make kindness a team sport. For example, consider periodically generating and distributing a random list of colleagues for whom your team will do every-day acts of kindness, like getting a cup of coffee, saying thank you, or cheering them up (Chancellor et al., 2018). A [recent study](#) that followed this model found beneficial effects for both those in the gift-giver and gift-receiver roles. The acts of kindness also inspired the gift-receivers to do more acts of kindness themselves (270% more)—creating a powerful pay-it-forward effect in the workplace.

DO ACTS OF KINDNESS

40 ACTS OF KINDNESS TO DO FOR YOUR BOSSES, COLLEAGUES, STAFF, & CLIENTS

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” —Aesop

1. Offer to help them with a difficult project or meet a tight deadline.
2. Tell them why you appreciate them.
3. Be a cheerleader for their ideas.
4. Share your expertise with them.
5. Do great work that's ready to go and requires little more from them.
6. Send them flowers.
7. Bring their favorite kind of coffee from their favorite coffee shop.
8. Assume their good intentions.
9. Make sure they know why their work matters and how it benefits others.
10. Invite them to lunch.
11. Put your phone away when you're with them.
12. Tell them thank you.
13. Cheer them up after disappointments.
14. Write, make, or buy something to provide encouragement when they're experiencing difficulties.
15. Praise them to others.
16. Really be present and listen to them without interrupting.
17. Learn something new about them.
18. Look for opportunities to make helpful introductions.
19. Celebrate their accomplishments.
20. If they're overwhelmed with personal or work challenges, ask if you can help in some way.
21. Pass along useful information.
22. Enable their growth—e.g., coach, give feedback, invite them to tag-along.
23. Buy them a book that you know they'll love.
24. Scout for reasons to compliment them. Shoot for three people a day.
25. Give them a “care package” when they're preparing for trial, participating in a deal closing, etc.
26. Send them greeting cards on holidays.
27. Notice and note their progress on something important to them.
28. Compliment a good presentation, high-quality meeting, or contribution on a call.
29. Each day, make the first email you write a compliment, note of support or appreciation, or other positive jolt.
30. Sneak into their offices and leave them sticky notes with encouraging message or treats.
31. Get to know them as people, remember the details, and follow up on them.
32. Don't gossip or talk negatively about them.
33. Make them laugh.
34. Celebrate their birthdays by making them cards and a cake.
35. If they blog or publish online, read, comment, circulate, and encourage others to do the same.
36. Create a spreadsheet that includes their likes (e.g., simple things like favorite candy, favorite drink, favorite snack, etc.) and use it regularly.
37. Share credit with them.

38. Learn and use their names.
39. Plan a Week of Kindness targeting clients.
40. Be their “wing man.” Find out their strengths and accomplishments and share them with others at conferences, meetings, networking events, retreats, etc.

PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO NEWCOMERS

Getting started as a new lawyer or even starting at a new place of work is stressful, so try to pay special attention to newcomers when doling your acts of kindness:

- Invite them to networking events and “shepherd” them through.
- Recommend professional associations for them to join.
- Drop by their offices and say hello.
- Make introductions—to peers, staff, leaders, clients, insiders, etc.
- Invite them to attend hearings, meetings, etc. with you.
- Offer to observe them in a hearing, deposition, call, etc., and provide feedback.
- Mentor them.
- Give guidance on developing their reputation.
- Help them learn the firm’s “political” ropes.
- Praise them to higher-ups and insiders.
- Leave a “welcome” greeting card signed by everyone on the team/department/office.
- Tell them all the great reasons they were hired.
- Leave a note saying, “We’re glad you’re here!”
- Take a strengths assessment together and share ideas about using those strengths at work.
- Discuss their goals and how you can support them.

REFERENCES

- Della Porta, M. D. (2013). Enhancing the effects of happiness-boosting activities: The role of autonomy support in an experimental longitudinal intervention. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, Order No. AAI3518646,
- Lyubomirsky, S. & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(1), 57-62.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A new approach to getting the life you want*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Mogilner, C., Chance, Z., & Norton, M. I. (2012). Giving time gives you time. *Psychological Science*, 23(10), 1233-1238.
- Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., Fredrickson, B. (2006). Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting kindnesses intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 361-375.
- Ramos, R., Brauchli, R., Bauer, G., Wehner, T., & Hämmig, O. (2015). Busy yet socially engaged: Volunteering, work-life balance, and health in the working population. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 57(2), 164-172.

Identify & Use Your Strengths

People who are aware of their strengths are more likely to use them (Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012) and are nine times more likely to be flourishing (Niemiec, 2017, p. 22). There are many good ways to identify your strengths and other core aspects of your self. What specific tool or survey you use is less important than embracing the overall concept: To bolster our well-being and engagement, we'll want to periodically reflect on who we are—our strengths, traits, talents, skills, abilities, values, and needs—and proactively devise new and interesting ways to continually infuse them into our work, workplaces, and non-work lives.

IDENTIFYING VIA STRENGTHS

One popular (and free) way to measure strengths is using the [VIA survey](#), which measures 24 character strengths that we all have. The VIA results are simply a rank order of your own strengths. Identifying your strengths can spur your thinking about how to use them more and in new ways to improve your engagement, performance, job satisfaction, and happiness and that of others.

The VIA is based on the VIA Classification, which resulted from an extensive 3-year research project to synthesize the world's best thinking on virtue and positive human qualities over the past 2500 years. VIA defines character strengths as universal personality traits that show themselves in how we think, feel, and behave. They are considered to be the basic building blocks of human flourishing. They are not fixed; lower strengths often can be developed.

INTERPRETING THE VIA REPORT

- The VIA report is about your strengths. It doesn't measure weaknesses or problems. So, lower strengths still are strengths.
- The VIA Survey measures your view of yourself, not facts about your character. The results are broad brushstrokes. So don't sweat the details.

WHY USE YOUR SIGNATURE STRENGTHS?

Signature strengths (discussed more below) are those that feel most authentic and energizing. Using signature strengths more or in new ways is related to many benefits:

- Regular strengths-use is related to greater psychological well-being, lower levels of depressive symptoms, coping and resilience to stress, and better physical health (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Gурpal, 2012; Fujishiro & Heaney, 2017; Harzer & Ruch, 2015).
- Regularly using strengths is positively associated with job and life satisfaction, goal-achievement, work engagement, a sense of calling, meaningfulness in life and work, positive emotions, higher job performance, productivity, proactivity, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Boxall et al., 2015; O'Brien, 1982 ; Harzer & Ruch, 2012, 2014, 2016; Kong & Ho, 2015; Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2016; Niemiec, 2018; Van den Broeck et al., 2015; van Woerkom, Oerlemans, & Bakker, 2015).
- Working in jobs that enable us to regularly use our strengths bolsters feelings of being more authentic, invigorated, and "fitting in" at our workplaces. It helps us feel that our capacities and contributions are useful, needed, and asked for at work (Harzer & Ruch, 2016).
- Two important contributors to job persistence and satisfaction are use of your top strengths at work and that your immediate supervisor recognizes your top strengths.

REFLECTING ON YOUR STRENGTHS

- What was your initial reaction to your survey results? Did anything from your survey results surprise you? If so, why?
- What strengths are you currently using in your daily activities at work?

IDENTIFY YOUR SIGNATURE STRENGTHS

Signature strengths are the three to five top strengths that really resonate with you and feel like a core of who you are (Peterson, 2006). These are strengths that you easily recognize in yourself, regularly exercise, and celebrate. To identify your signature strengths, review your top seven VIA strengths and ask the following questions:

- Is this strength the real, authentic me? Does it come naturally to me? Is it easy for me to express?
- When I consider times that I was successful, was I using this strength?
- Do I feel more energized when I'm using this strength?
- Would my family and friends be quick to identify this strength in me?
- When I'm happiest, what strengths am I using?

USE YOUR SIGNATURE STRENGTHS

Our work doesn't end with identifying our strengths. Having strengths and values in the abstract is not enough to flourish. What we *do* makes the difference. A good place to start is with a well-tested exercise in which you pick one of your signature strengths and, for the next week, use it in a new way every day (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Peterson, 2005).

GUARD AGAINST OVERUSE OF STRENGTHS

Using our strengths is good for our well-being, but sometimes we can *overuse* them and harm ourselves and others. Strengths overuse occurs when we put forth a strength too strongly in a particular situation (Niemi, 2018, p. 94). For example, curiosity can become nosy, honesty can become unkind, courage can become rashness, and self-regulation can curtail self-expression.

For lawyers, "judgment" often is among our top

strengths. This strength includes critical-thinking, open-mindedness, and rationality. It counteracts faulty thinking and biased opinions, which can help make decisions and resist manipulation. If the judgment strength is overused, however, it can result in narrow-mindedness, rigidly rejecting influence, and being overly argumentative. It can be harmful, for example, to relationships, creativity, and innovation. The importance of striking the right balance in our strengths use is clear. Because we often are blind to the overuse (and underuse) of our strengths, we should be watchful for these issues and mindful of how we use our strengths.

HAPPINESS STRENGTHS

The strengths of hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity, and love, have the strongest link to life satisfaction (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004) as well as work engagement, meaningfulness, and job satisfaction (Littman-Ovadia, Lavy, & Boiman-Meshita, 2016; Niemi, 2018). Other character strengths found especially beneficial to work-related well-being include teamwork, leadership, and perseverance (Harzer, Mubashar, & Dubreuil, 2017). So you might consider these as top targets for attention whether or not they are signature strengths.

STRESS-COPING STRENGTHS

The "intellectual strengths" of love of learning, judgment, curiosity, and creativity are most strongly associated with coping with work-related stress (Harzer & Ruch, 2015). Accordingly, you might reflect on how to apply these strengths in stressful situations to help you cope effectively.

LEADERS' ROLE IN STRENGTHS SUPPORT

If you're a leader or emerging leader, you'll want to take advantage of all of this knowledge about strengths to help build your leadership skill and boost your followers' happiness, health, and engagement.

Leaders shape followers' job attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors, including followers' strengths use at work (Kong & Ho, 2016). To support followers' strengths use, you'll want to develop your strengths-spotting skills. We all already are expert fault-spotters when it comes to other people (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Feedback and professional development often consists of identifying others' faults and ways to fix them. Curtailing that practice and instead emphasizing followers' and colleague's strengths can lead to more engaged, energetic workplaces.

For example, in a study of more than 2,000 managers, researchers asked open-ended questions about managing talent versus weaknesses (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Manager performance also was evaluated on such items as productivity, profitability, employee retention, customer loyalty, and safety. The study found that the probability of success (defined as performance above the mean) was 86% greater for managers with a strengths versus non-strengths approach. This success was due in part to an increase in employee engagement brought on by the strengths-orientation, which positively impacted business performance.

Despite scientific support for a strengths-based approach, many still overlook it. One study found, for example, that 80% of employees believed that their supervisors were not aware of their strengths (Niemic, 2017).

Research also has found that, when managers focus on strengths, 61% of employees are engaged and only 1% are actively disengaged (Sorenson, 2014). When managers focus primarily on weaknesses, 22% are disengaged. When managers do not focus on

either strengths or weaknesses, 40% are disengaged (Sorenson, 2014). In other words, over-emphasizing weaknesses is detrimental but entirely ignoring people also produces bad outcomes.

This does not mean we should ignore weaknesses; the question is where to invest the most attention and effort. Strengths-oriented leaders concentrate on building and appreciating strengths while understanding and managing weaknesses (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Bouskila-Yam & Kluger, 2011).

WAYS TO USE & SPOT STRENGTHS

Year In Review. Imagine it's December 2019 and you're reflecting back on the year. Finish this sentence: "I wish I would have spent more time _____." What character strengths might you use to help you accomplish what you have written down?

Energizing Your Daily Activities. How can you use your strengths to be more engaged during your daily work activities? For example, list the 5 activities you do most frequently at work (e.g., attending meetings, answering emails, talking to clients, researching, etc.). Now, write down one way that you can use any one of your strengths with each of the five work activities. Explain how you will bring the character strength forward in the given activity (Niemic, 2018). For example, if you know a meeting is likely to be boring, how can you use your curiosity or love of learning to stay engaged? How might you use gratitude during client calls? During what activities can you incorporate strengths-spotting of others?

Team Strengths. Ask supervisors and colleagues with whom you often work to take the VIA or other strengths survey and exchange results. Then find ways during regular daily activities to call out strengths use or to give people opportunities to use their strengths. During meetings, take a few minutes to ask people to share stories and ideas of how they're incorporating strengths into their daily lives.

IDENTIFY & USE YOUR STRENGTHS

Periodically choose one or two colleagues for special attention, write down three of their best strengths, and, for each, write down a recent incident that reflects that strength. Share this with your colleagues, explaining why their strengths use is important and valued by you (Niemiec, 2018).

Aspirational Strengths. Write a short description of how you'd like to have your leaders, colleagues, and followers describe you. What strengths would you like them to observe? How can you use your strengths to achieve those reviews?

Gift of Time. Pick 3 people you care about. Offer each the gift of spending time with them and express your signature strengths while with them.

Turn Your Strengths to Others. Choose one of your signature strengths and decide how you will direct

it toward someone with whom you work, including managers, colleagues, staff, and clients. How might you clearly express your strength in a way that they would appreciate? What benefit might you bring them by using your strength?

Prepare for Positive Challenges. Think of an upcoming challenge or stressor that you'll be handling. Think about how you've used your top give strengths in tackling past challenges and how their importance to your life. Then think about how you might use your strengths in the upcoming situation. You might consider writing down your concerns or needs for the upcoming situation and then consider how your strengths can be used to address each. Also consider the strengths of people in your social network and how they might support you.

CORE VALUES ACTIVITY

The list of 24 VIA strengths doesn't encompass all values of Western cultures or within our own personal values systems. So, below is a supplemental list. Research suggests that we can boost well-being by choosing one or two and writing for 10 minutes about their importance. For example, you might write about how you already use the selected value in your work or how you'd like to do so more. You might also meet with a small group of colleagues and take turns sharing stories about meaningful ways you've used your values at work--an activity that has had beneficial effects among physicians.

Authenticity	Citizenship	Flexibility	Kindness	Pleasure	Spirituality
Achievement	Community	Freedom	Knowledge	Poise	Stability
Adaptability	Competency	Friendships	Leadership	Power	Success
Adventure	Connection	Fun	Learning	Recognition	Tolerance
Ambition	Contribution	Growth	Love	Religion	Tradition
Authority	Courage	Happiness	Loyalty	Reputation	Trustworthiness
Autonomy	Creativity	Helping Others	Meaningful Work	Respect	Valued
Balance	Curiosity	Honesty	Novelty	Responsibility	Wealth
Belonging	Determination	Humor	Openness to	Security	Wisdom
Boldness	Excitement	Influence	Change	Self-Direction	
Compassion	Fairness	Inner Harmony	Optimism	Self-Respect	
Challenge	Faith	Justice	Peace	Service to Others	

Pick & Practice Positive Emotions

The Pick & Practice activity invites you to practice 10 different positive emotions during the upcoming weeks. It is derived from an online study that found that participating in the activity resulted in reduced depressive symptoms and increased well-being, including life satisfaction (Mongrain et al., 2016).

DIRECTIONS

Over the next several weeks, pick one of the following positive emotions every other day and create ways to practice it:

1. **Joy:** A sense of elation, happiness, or exhilaration, often experienced as a sudden spike due to something good happening.
2. **Gratitude:** A feeling of thankfulness for something specific or simply all-encompassing; often accompanied by humility and even reverence.
3. **Serenity:** Calm and peaceful feeling of acceptance of oneself.
4. **Interest:** Feeling of curiosity or fascination that demands and captures your attention.
5. **Hope:** Feeling of optimism and anticipation about a positive future.
6. **Pride:** A sense of approval of oneself and pleasure in an achievement, skill, or personal attribute.
7. **Amusement:** A feeling of lighthearted pleasure and enjoyment, often accompanied by smiles and easy laughter.
8. **Inspiration:** Feeling engaged, uplifted, and motivated by something you witnessed.
9. **Awe:** An emotion that is evoked when you witness something grand, spectacular, or breathtaking, sparking a sense of overwhelming appreciation.
10. **Love:** A feeling of deep and enduring affection for someone, along with a willingness to put their needs ahead of your own; it can be directed towards an individual, a group of people, or even all humanity.

HOW TO PRACTICE EACH EMOTION

As you get started with each chosen emotion, reflect on situations, people, and/or objects that serve as triggers of that emotion for you. Then, make a plan about how you'll cultivate each emotion during the week. Feel free to recruit others to participate.

One idea for practicing is to create a "Positive Portfolio" of items that trigger the chosen emotion (Fredrickson, 2009). To create your Portfolio, you'll gather objects or mementos that help you cultivate the emotion. You might consider making a portfolio, a journal, a scrapbook or a folder on your computer. You can also collect small objects in a box or other container. Your collection could contain anything you like that helps foster or savor the emotion (photos, letters, quotes, nips, souvenirs, and so on).

REFLECT

After practicing each emotion (and before moving on to the next one), reflect on your experience and write about it—e.g., what you did, how you felt, and what other people accompanied you during your experiences. This step will help structure your thoughts and derive meaning from the activity.

REFERENCES

- Fredrickson, B. L. (2009). *Positivity*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press (see pp. 214-223)
- Mongrain, M., Komeylian, Z., & Barnhart, R. (2016). Happiness vs. mindfulness exercises for individuals vulnerable to depression. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 11*(4), 366-377. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1092569>

Aligning Our Lives With Our Goals & Values

Making progress toward significant goals and aligning our lives with our values are big contributors to positive emotions and well-being. When we get busy at work, though, many of us are prone to short-changing non-work values. When this happens, our attention and lives can become increasingly narrow and our well-being is placed at risk.

If you're now thinking to yourself "Sure, I work hard, but this won't happen to me," consider a recent study suggesting common blind-spots on this topic. Research indicates that people who are committed to their work often inaccurately assess how harmful excessive work is to their psychological and physical health (Kuroda & Yamamoto, 2018). They might tell you that they're satisfied with their jobs while, at the same time, general health measures reflect declining well-being. People who become highly absorbed in their work can actually become addicted to the psychological rewards of work achievement, to the detriment of their well-being and relationships (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Striving for a more optimal equilibrium between work and non-work goals and values is more likely to support health and happiness.

Below is a list of 10 categories that represents one way of describing a whole life. You might wish to add or delete a category or modify an existing one. That's just fine. The exercise is meant to measure how much you value various aspects of your life and your level of satisfaction with each. It is not a picture of how it has been in the past or what you want it to be in the future. It is a snapshot taken in the moment, today.

DIRECTIONS

On a scale of 1 (not valued) to 10 (highly valued), rank each category based on how much you value it in your life right now. On a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (highly satisfied), rank your level of satisfaction with each life area.

1. FAMILY

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

2. SIGNIFICANT OTHER (Romantic Relationship)

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

3. FRIENDS

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

4. CAREER

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

5. FUN & RECREATION

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

6. HEALTH

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

7. MONEY

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

8. PERSONAL GROWTH

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

9. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

10. COMMUNITY SERVICE

Value: ____ Satisfaction: ____

ACTION PLAN

- In what areas is your satisfaction most misaligned with your values?
- On what area would you like to focus in the next month?
- What's the first thing you can do to raise your satisfaction with that area?
- What's your plan for taking that step?

Meditation and mindfulness are receiving a lot of attention from well-being advocates—and with good reason. Research indicates that meditation can help address a variety of psychological and psychosomatic disorders, especially those in which stress plays a causal role (Walsh & Shapiro, 2010). One type of contemplative practice is mindfulness. Mindfulness is a technique that cultivates the skill of focusing attention on the present moment and calmly accepting or detaching from our thoughts and feelings.

Research has found that mindfulness can help deter rumination, improve attention, and reduce stress, depression, and anxiety (Chiesa & Serretti, 2011; Fjorback et al., 2011; Galante et al., 2012; Huffziger & Kuehner, 2009; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010; Levy & Wobbrock, 2012; Teper, et al., 2013; Marchand, 2012; Wolever et al., 2012; Zeidan et al., 2010). Mindfulness-based interventions also have been effectively used as part of substance abuse treatments (Chiesa & Serretti, 2013; Garland, et al., 2012; Witkiewitz et al., 2013). Yoga—another mind-body practice—has been linked to enhanced mindfulness and reductions in anxiety, fatigue, and sleep disruptions (Field, 2011; Chugh-Gupta, Baldassare, & Vrkljan, 2013).

A growing body of research links mindfulness to a host of competencies that enhance lawyer effectiveness, including increased focus (Mrazek et al., 2013), working memory (Jha et al., 2010), critical cognitive skills (Mrazek et al., 2013; Jha, 2010; Zeidan, 2010), concentration (Levy & Wobbrock, 2012; Zeidan et al., 2014), reduced burnout (Cohen-Katz et al., 2005), ethical decision-making (Shapiro et al., 2012; Ruedy & Schweizer, 2010), and rational decision-making (Kirk et al., 2011).

In the side-bar, you'll find resources to get started on a mindfulness practice.

MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

Book Recommendations

- Jeena Cho & Karen Gifford: [The Anxious Lawyer: An 8-Week Guide to a Happier, Safer Law Practice Using Meditation](#)
- Rick Hanson, [Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love & Wisdom](#)
- Daniel Goleman & Richard Davidson, [Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, & Body](#)
- Cal Newport: [Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World](#)
- Cory Muscara, [Stop Missing Your Life: How To Be Deeply Present In An Unpresent World](#)

Videos

- Andy Puddicombe, [All It Takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes](#), 9:05 minutes
- Happify, [Why Mindfulness is a Superpower](#), 2:43 minutes

Web Resources

- Jon Krop, a lawyer and meditation teacher, has created a [mindfulness worksheet](#) as well as a [free video](#).
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a well-established, meditation-based stress management program developed by Prof. Jon Kabat Zinn. MBSR resources are widely-available and some can be found [here](#).

Smart Phone Apps

- [Headspace](#): Among the most popular meditation apps.
- [10% Happier: Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics](#). A popular meditation app.



SPEAKER BIO

[Anne Brafford](#) (JD, MAPP, PhD Candidate) is a former equity partner at Morgan, Lewis, & Bockius LLP and the founder of Aspire, an education and consulting firm for the legal profession. She earned a Master's degree in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) from University of Pennsylvania and has completed all but her dissertation for her doctoral degree in positive organizational psychology from Claremont Graduate University. Her focus is on the many aspects of law firm culture that boost engagement and well-being and avoid burnout, such as resilience, meaningful work, positive leadership, high-quality motivation, advancement of women lawyers, and more.

Anne is the author of an ABA-published book titled [Positive Professionals](#) and is the Chair of the ABA Law Practice Division's Attorney Well-Being Committee. She was the Editor in Chief and co-author of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being's recent report: [The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change](#) and is the founder and Chair of [Lawyer Well-Being Week](#). Anne also was appointed by the two most recent ABA Presidents to the Presidential Working Group formed to investigate how legal employers can support healthy work environments. In her work with that group, Anne created the freely-available [ABA Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers](#).



www.aspire.legal | abrafford@aspire.legal