

THE HAPPINESS INSTITUTE

The Happiness Institute's Guide to Utilising Your Strengths

(Adapted from "A Primer in Positive Psychology" by Christopher Peterson)

Having identified your strengths using our "Signature Strengths List" the challenge now is to work out **how you can best utilise these strengths as often as possible**. We trust you'll find the following suggestions (and they are only suggestions) useful and we note that this list is by no means exhaustive – accordingly, we encourage you to generate additional applications. Please also note that this list is compiled alphabetically (rather than within the "clusters") for ease of use.

Appreciation of beauty

- Visit an art gallery or museum with which you are unfamiliar
- Start to keep a beauty journal in which you write down every day the most beautiful things you saw
- At least once a day, stop and notice an instance of natural beauty, e.g., a sunrise, a flower, a bird singing

Authenticity

- Refrain from telling white lies to friends (including insincere compliments)
- Think about your most important values and do something every day that is consistent with them
- When explaining your motives to someone, do so in a genuine and honest way

Bravery

- Speak up for an unpopular idea in a group
- Protest to the appropriate authorities about a clear injustice that you observe
- Do something that you ordinarily would not do because of fear

Creativity

- Enrol in a writing, photography, sculpting, drawing or painting class
- Choose an object at home and find another use for it rather than its typical use – & this doesn't mean using that spare chair as a clothes rack
- Send a card to a friend that includes a poem you have written

Curiosity

- Attend a lecture on a topic about which you know nothing
- Go to a restaurant featuring cuisine unfamiliar to you
- Discover a new place in your town and learn about its history

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Fairness

- At least once a day, admit a mistake and take responsibility for it
- At least once a day, give due credit to someone you do not especially like
- Hear people out without interrupting them

Forgiveness

- Let a grudge go every day
- When you feel annoyed, even with justification, take the high road and do not tell anyone how you feel
- Write a forgiveness letter; do *not* send it, but do read it every day for a week

Gratitude

- Keep track of how many times you say "thankyou" during the day and increase the number every day for a week
- At the end of every day, write down three things that went well
- Write and send a gratitude letter

Hope

- Think of a past disappointment and the opportunities it made possible
- Write down your goals for the next week, the next month, and the next year; then make concrete plans for achieving these goals
- Dispute your pessimistic thoughts

Humour

- Make at least one person smile or laugh each day
- Learn a magic trick and perform it to your friends
- Make fun of yourself, if only by saying, "there I go again"

Kindness

- Visit someone in hospital or a nursing home
- When driving, yield to pedestrians; when walking, yield to cars (this latter suggestion also counts as an act of prudence)
- Perform an anonymous favour for a friend or family member

Leadership

- Organise a social get-together for your friends
- Take responsibility for an unpleasant task at work and make sure that it gets done
- Go out of your way to make a newcomer feel welcome

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Love

- Accept a compliment without squirming; just say "thankyou"
- Write a brief note to someone you love, and leave it where it will be found during the day
- Do something with your best friend that he or she really enjoys doing

Love of learning

- If you are a student, read something that is "recommended" but not "required"
- Learn and use a new word every day
- Read a non-fiction book

Modesty

- For an entire day, do not talk about yourself at all
- Dress in a way that does not call attention to yourself
- Think of something that a friend does much better than you do, and compliment him or her about it

Open-mindedness

- In a conversation, play the devil's advocate and take a position at odds with your private opinion
- Every day, consider some strong-held opinion, and think about how you might be wrong
- Listen to a radio show or actively seek out and read a newspaper that espouses the "other" political line

Perseverance

- Make a list of things to do and do one thing on the list every day
- Finish an important task ahead of schedule
- Work for several hours straight without interruptions, e.g., no television in the background, no phone calls, no snacks, no checking emails

Perspective

- Think of the wisest person you know and try to live one day as if you were that person
- Offer advice only if asked, but then do so as thoughtfully as you can
- Resolve a dispute between two friends, family members, or co-workers

Prudence

- Think twice before saying anything other than "please" or "thankyou"
- When driving, stay 5 miles per hour under the speed limit
- Before you eat any snack, ask yourself, "is this worth getting fat for?"

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Religiousness

- Every day, think about the purpose of your life
- Pray or meditate at the start of every day
- Attend a religious service of a faith unfamiliar to you

Self-regulation

- Start an exercise program and stick with it every day for a week
- Refrain from gossiping or saying mean things about others
- When tempted to lose your temper, count to 10; repeat as needed

Social intelligence

- Make someone else feel at ease
- Notice when friends or family members do something that is difficult for them, and compliment them
- When someone annoys you, understand his or her motives rather than retaliate

Teamwork

- Be the best team-mate you can be
- Spend 5 minutes every day picking up litter on the sidewalk and putting it in the rubbish bin
- Volunteer your time to a charitable group

Zest

- Every day for at least a week, go to sleep early enough that you do not need to set an alarm, and eat a nutritious breakfast when you do wake up
- Say "why not?" three times more frequently than you say "why?"
- Do something everyday because you want to and not because you need to