WHAT IS THE WORKBOOK?

In the following pages, you'll find Well-Being Worksheets that provide hands-on activities, guidelines, reminders, and the like to help boost well-being. The Worksheets can be used by individual lawyers or collectively as part of legal employers' well-being initiatives.

PERMISSION FOR USE

The authors of the Well-Being Worksheets retain all rights and ownership of their content but provide permission to freely use and reproduce it for non-commercial purposes so long as proper credit is given. No further permission is needed from the authors to use the material under these conditions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worksheet Title</th>
<th>Contributor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 How to Be Happier? Make it a Priority</td>
<td>Anne Brafford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Six Sources of Well-Being</td>
<td>Paula Davis-Laack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Grow Your Gratitude</td>
<td>Anne Brafford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Do Acts of Kindness</td>
<td>Anne Brafford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Psychological Capital</td>
<td>Martha Knudson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Reframe Stress &amp; Adversity</td>
<td>Paula Davis-Laack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Mindfulness</td>
<td>Jon Krop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The Emotionally Intelligent Path to Well-Being</td>
<td>Ronda Muir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Well-Being and Confidence</td>
<td>Louisa Jewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Use Your Strengths</td>
<td>Anne Brafford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Capitalizing on Introverted Strengths</td>
<td>Heidi Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Overcoming Public Speaking Anxiety</td>
<td>Heidi Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Mind Your Marriage</td>
<td>Aileen Reilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Managers, Don't Forget Your Own Well-Being</td>
<td>Andrew Elowitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Positive Leadership</td>
<td>Anne Brafford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Physical Activity &amp; Vibrancy</td>
<td>Elaine O'Brien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Positive Golf Activities</td>
<td>Elaine O'Brien</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How To Be Happier? Make it a Priority

Contributed by: Anne Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD In Progress
abrafford@aspire.legal | www.aspire.legal

While genetics play a role in our patterns of happiness, our biology doesn’t have to be our destiny. Much about our genetic makeup is malleable. Also, our life circumstances and 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 for gloominess have an opportunity to take control over factors 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. People with a Positive Emotional Style (PES)—who tend toward positive emotions—are more resilient, healthier, and happier. Among other things, they have fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression; live longer; have better immune systems, cardiovascular health, and pulmonary functioning; and have higher life and work satisfaction (Brafford, 2017). Science suggests that creating a personal Happiness Plan can contribute to our health and success.

Prioritize Positivity

When designing your own Happiness Plan, you’ll want to keep in mind that, for evolutionary reasons, bad is stronger than good: Negative emotions are much stronger than positive ones. We’re hardwired to react more strongly to bad things. As a result, we’re not likely to feel happy (and experience the related beneficial effects) unless our positive emotions outweigh bad ones.

To feel happy, shoot for a ratio 3-5:1. In other words, try to offset every negative experience with three to five positive ones. This is not to say that we should strive to eliminate negative emotion (which would be impossible anyway!). Negative emotions are useful.

They let us know, for example, when we need to make important changes and often accompany early stages of growth activities. But if negative emotions dominate our lives, our health and well-being will suffer. 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. No one said happiness didn’t require some work!

But 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 (Datsu & King, 2016). Focus on the journey, not the destination. The benefits are 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. Activities that will give the biggest boost to our health and happiness are those that support our basic needs as continually-evolving
human beings. The challenge will be to figure out how to include more activities that support these needs into your everyday life. It won’t happen by accident.

✓ **Connection & Belonging.** We humans have a fundamental need to connect and belong. This includes supportive relationships as well as a sense of belonging or fit with groups we care about. A sizable body of inter-disciplinary research shows that this need is powerful and pervasive. It can help or harm our cognitive processes, emotional patterns, behaviors, and health and well-being. A poor sense of belonging and feelings of exclusion can trigger self-defeating behaviors like procrastination, lethargy, and depression.

✓ **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 that are significant to us are keys to this source of well-being.

✓ **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 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.

✓ **Help Others.** Research also suggests that we have a basic need to feel that we’re benefiting others or the common good.

✓ **Do Something Meaningful.** We often waste our scarce free time by mindlessly watching TV, paging through gossip magazines, reading click-bait on the Internet, or perusing social media. 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 your own values system and/or that help us make progress toward goals or a general purpose.

**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. **Learn 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. Write down brief statements of what you are doing each hour (Addis & Martell, 2004).

2. **Learn Associated 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).

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 That Have Positive/Negative Impact.** Next, review your logs and identify what activities or behaviors made you feel bad on a regular basis. Consider what alternatives you may have 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. Create a Schedule of 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 doable activities that may help you avoid negative experiences and increase positive ones. Also try to choose high-value happiness activities that are most likely to have the biggest positive impact:

- How 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? How can you help others feel a greater sense of meaning?

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. As you progress through these steps, do so with 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 baseline, take a happiness survey before you launch your Happiness Plan. Then repeat the survey in six-week intervals and keep track of your results. You might find your happiness levels perking up!

One good measure to use is Subjective Well-Being, which is discussed in the Assessments section of the Toolkit. It measures life satisfaction and your balance of positive to negative emotions. It has been linked to many positive well-being consequences.

If you’re experiencing depressive symptoms, you might also decide to use a depression scale to track your progress—such as the CES-D Scale discussed in the Assessment section. The recommendation here to prioritize positivity is similar to what’s called “behavioral activation.” This is a cognitive behavioral-based strategy for overcoming depression and other mental health difficulties that’s been used effectively as part of self-help programs and in conjunction with clinical therapy (Addis & Martell, 2004). The strategy
involves identifying one's values and scheduling daily activities to better align with those values. To learn how to take a structured approach to behavioral activation, Drs. Michael Addis and Christopher Martell's award-winning workbook *Overcoming Depression One Step at a Time* guides readers through helpful exercises.

**CONCLUSION**

As the above reflects, 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**


Psychological Capital: Build Your Mental Strength & Flexibility

Martha Knudson, JD, MAPP
www.linkedin.com/in/martha-knudson | marthaknudson@mac.com

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) – the powerful combination of our resilience, optimism, hope, and confidence – helps us to keep our competitive edge while managing the stress of lawyering. Research links high levels of PsyCap with better job performance, a greater ability to overcome obstacles, higher job satisfaction, and elevated well-being (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015).

PsyCap can be thought of as positive mental strength and flexibility. It can be developed by building these four mental capacities:

- **Resilience**: Being able to cope, sustain, and bounce back to attain success when challenge strikes.
- **Optimism**: Having a positive expectation about your ability to meet challenges and succeed now and in the future.
- **Hope**: Having the ambition to persevere toward goals and, when necessary, to change direction to reach goals in order to succeed.
- **Confidence (or Self-efficacy)**: Having the belief you can successfully take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks.

While each of these capacities individually contributes to our positive mental strength, when combined and used together they become stronger than the sum of their parts.

This worksheet will help you build each PsyCap capacity by having you work through a real-life adversity. You will identify new ways to look at your issue and challenge basic assumptions you might have about your ability to overcome it. Then, you will take an inventory of the resources you have to help you successfully resolve the problem and use your critical thinking skills to see if you’ve overlooked anything. Finally, you will set a S.M.A.R.T. goal, devise multiple ways to reach it, and anticipate ways to overcome any obstacles to your success.

**STEP 1:**
Describe a challenging situation that is not going as well as you would like.

**STEP 2:**
Reflect on your mindset.
Take a minute to understand the nature of your mindset when the situation first occurred, and you initially assessed the risk. How did you respond? Were you energized and ready to rise to the challenge? Or, were you overwhelmed? Defeated? Something else?
STEP 3:
Frame the situation again in terms of its actual impact.

A. What is the real risk? Is this risk something in or out of your control? What are your options? Is it possible your initial mindset colored your first assessment?

B. Are there any different ways to look at the situation that will allow you more options or control over your success? [Note: if you get stuck, it can help to get a colleague’s viewpoint. They might see it differently than you.]

STEP 4:
Identify helpful skills and resources. [Note: these can include your knowledge, work ethic, legal skills, colleague networks, ideas from others, finances, creativity, past experience, and the like.]

A. List the skills and resources you have used to respond to the challenge.

B. Are there other resources available you haven’t considered?

STEP 5:
Set a goal that is directly related to overcoming your challenge.

A. Write down your goal using S.M.A.R.T. criteria – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. [Note: pick a goal you want to achieve rather than avoid.]

B. Break your goal into manageable small steps and list them in sequential order.

STEP 6:
Identify multiple ways to goal accomplishment.

A. Write down all the paths you can think of that could realistically lead you to reaching your goal.

B. For each path make a list of the skills and resources you will need.

STEP 7:
Identify and plan ways to overcome potential obstacles.

A. List the obstacles that could get in the way of each path you identified in Step 6.

B. List how you can deal with each of these obstacles. Are there ways around them? Be specific.

STEP 8:
Take time to visualize your success.

Set aside 10 minutes every day to think through the steps of this worksheet and visualize your success. Really get into it. See each step with as much detail as possible. Imagine using your resources to navigate the different paths toward your goal with you confidently getting around any obstacles in your way. Then, visualize yourself reaching your goal and imagine celebrating your win!

REFERENCES


Reframe Stress & Adversity
Contributed by: Paula Davis-Laack, JD, MAPP
www.pauladavislaack.com | paula@pauladavislaack.com

Lawyers spend years learning, and then practicing how to “think like a lawyer.” Professionally, lawyers are responsible for doing all of the due diligence in a matter, analyzing what could go wrong in a situation and steering their clients away from negative impact. That’s important when lawyers are engaged in the practice of law; however, when lawyers practice looking at issues through such a pessimistic, rigid lens 12-14 hours a day, that thinking style becomes harder to turn off when it’s not needed. Ultimately, it can undercut leadership capabilities, interactions with clients, colleagues, and family and cloud the way life is viewed generally.

This skill will help you think more flexibly about stressful situations.

STEP 1:
Think of a situation you are struggling with or frustrated about, and write it in the space below:

________________________________________________________

STEP 2: LIST...
The aspects of the situation you can control or influence:

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

The aspects of the situation you can’t control or need to accept:

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
The specific action steps you can take to make the situation better:


(Based on the work of Drs. Martin Seligman, Karen Reivich, & colleagues).

RESOURCES

Contributed by Anne Bradford

Book Recommendations

- Martin Seligman, Learned Optimism
- Karen Reivich & Andrew Shatte, The Resilience Factor
- Shirzad Chamine, Positive Intelligence: Why Only 20% of Teams and Individuals Achieve Their True Potential
- Kelly McGonigal, The Upside of Stress

Videos

- Kelly McGonigal, How to make stress your friend (www.TED.com)

Web Resources

- www.happify.com
- www.superbetter.com
- Mood Gym is a subscription-based online application created by academics to teach cognitive reframing—a key to mental health and resilience.

Smart Phone Apps

- A growing number of smart phone apps are available to teach cognitive reframing and other psychological tools to manage stress and reduce depression and anxiety. Examples include Pacifica, Betterhelp, and Ginger.io.
Practice Mindfulness to Boost Well-Being & Performance

Contributed by: Jon Krop, JD
www.mindfulnessforlawyers.com | jon@mindfulnessforlawyers.com

Meditation has become enormously popular, and with good reason: it’s great for you. Research shows that meditation can reduce stress and anxiety [1], increase resilience and well-being [2], develop emotional intelligence [3], boost focus [4], enhance cognitive flexibility [5], and improve physical health [6].

MEDITATION: WHY & HOW

Here’s one way to understand meditation: It is the practice of learning to stay in the present moment and out of our heads. We spend so much time wrapped up in worries, fears, plans, and memories. When we untangle ourselves from those mental stories and rest in the present moment, we discover a refreshing calm and simplicity. The simple, present-moment awareness we cultivate through meditation has a name you may have heard before: mindfulness.

Here’s a simple, powerful meditation technique you can try (a video version available here):

1. Sit down: Find a comfortable seated posture that lets you maintain a straight, unsupported spine. The simplest way is to sit in a chair, with both feet on the floor and your hands on your thighs. For detailed instructions on meditation posture, see this video.

2. Find your anchor: Bring your attention to the sensation of air passing through your nostrils as you breathe. That sensation will help anchor you in the present moment.

3. Rest attention on the anchor: Rest your attention on the breath at the nostrils. Form the gentle intention simply to observe the flow of sensation at that spot. As you do this, there’s no need to deliberately control your breath. If the rhythm of your breath changes on its own, that’s fine.

4. When the attention wanders, notice that and return: Eventually, you’ll get distracted. Not only is that okay, it’s supposed to happen. Just notice that the attention has wandered and then gently escort it back to the breath at the nostrils — back to the present.

Some final thoughts on meditation:

Meditation is often soothing and enjoyable... but not always. Like most things worth doing, meditation will sometimes challenge you. It can be agitating or uncomfortable on occasion. It can even stir up
difficult thoughts, emotions, or memories. These experiences are a normal part of the process and are actually useful learning opportunities. I hope you'll embrace the challenge and growth it brings.

One last tip: Meditating regularly is more important than sitting for a long time. Even a few minutes a day can bring real benefits. The Tibetan meditation masters say, "Short sessions, many times."

**MINDFULNESS & ANXIETY**

Anxiety isn’t fun, but it’s totally normal — everyone experiences it. Luckily, there are simple ways to work with anxiety so that it’s less of a problem. To use these strategies effectively, it’s helpful first to understand how anxiety arises and grows.

The root of anxiety is avoidance. We feed anxiety whenever we avoid uncomfortable feelings, thoughts, and situations [7]. Because anxiety is itself uncomfortable, we avoid it when it appears, which makes the anxiety worse, which triggers more avoidance, and so on. It’s a vicious circle.

However, there’s good news: avoidance is a reflex we can unlearn. Through mindfulness practice, we can experience discomfort without fighting or flinching away. In doing so, we deprive anxiety of its fuel source.

Here are some mindfulness practices that can help when you’re feeling anxious:

**THE MINDFUL PAUSE**

This technique takes about 30 seconds. You can do it sitting, standing, or lying down. Your eyes can be open or closed. The practice is quick and discreet, so you can do it almost anywhere. It has four steps:

(Video version available here.)

1. **Take a deep breath.**

Take a slow inhale and exhale. Fill your lungs all the way, but really take your time doing it.

2. **Turn toward your body.**

Turn your attention toward the sensations in your body. Whatever comes up, just notice it: warmth, pressure, itching, tickling, aching, etc. There’s no need to evaluate the sensations as “good” or “bad.” Itching is just itching. Coolness is just coolness.

If you notice sensations that seem related to anxiety, those are particularly good to turn toward. You’re developing the skill of observing those sensations without resisting, condemning, or judging them.

This step can be as quick as one in-breath or out-breath.

3. **Rest your attention on your breath.**

Pay attention to the sensation of air passing through your nostrils as you breathe. This is the same technique as the meditation practice we explored earlier.

Just like the previous step, this step needn’t take longer than one in-breath or one out-breath.

4. **Carry on with your life!**

The last step of the mindful pause is simply to re-engage with the world, without hurry. Don’t lunge for your phone or speed off to your next activity. Move at a leisurely pace.

**FLOATING NOTING**

Like the Mindful Pause, floating noting works by helping you turn toward your present-moment experience instead of avoiding it. However, it’s a bit more comprehensive and less bite-sized. Once again, you don’t need to adopt a special posture or even find a quiet place. Here’s how you do it:

(Video version available here.)

- **Let your attention float freely.** As your attention drifts, various sights, sounds, sensations, and thoughts may grab your attention and take center stage in your awareness.
• As this happens, just (1) notice whatever stands out in awareness and (2) give it a light mental label.

• To keep the labeling simple, we’ll use categories: “seeing” for sights, “hearing” for sounds, “feeling” for physical sensations, and “thinking” for anything that arises in the mind.

• As new objects arise in awareness, just continue noting whatever is most prominent.

Let’s say the sound of a passing car draws your attention. You just label the experience “hearing.” Then a thought arises — maybe something about a client matter you’re working on. Instead of getting caught up in the thought, you label it “thinking.” The thought then triggers a hollow sensation in your stomach, which you label “feeling.”

Even difficult experiences become less overwhelming when you break them down in this way. An anxious sensation or a worried thought is less of a problem when you just notice it, label it, and move on.

Here are a few practice tips:

• Find a nice, steady rhythm for your noting. Personally, I find that noting once every couple of seconds feels good. I advise against noting more quickly than that. Fast noting can produce unpleasant side effects and is best done under a teacher’s supervision.

• If you’re somewhere private, you can note out loud. It helps you stay focused and present. It can even bring you into a pleasant sort of “flow state.”

• If the same object stands out in your awareness for a while, just keep noting it: “hearing... hearing... hearing...”

• If multiple objects stand out at once, and you don’t know which one to label, just pick one.

• If you have no idea what to label in a given moment, you can just notice that uncertainty and label it “don’t know.”

References


may/29/planets-happiest-human-and-his-app;


RESOURCES
Contributed by Anne Bratford

Book Recommendations
- Rick Hanson, Buddha’s Brain
- Daniel Goleman & Richard Davidson, Altered Traits: Science Reveal How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, & Body
- Cal Newport: Deep Work

Videos
- Andy Puddicombe. All It Takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes (www.TED.com)

Web Resources
- 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.
Use Your Strengths

Contributed by: Anne Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD in Progress
abrafford@aspirelegal.com | www.aspire.legal

To get started on this activity, you’ll first need to identify your strengths by taking the values in action (VIA) Survey. The VIA Survey measures 24 character strengths. The results are simply a rank order of your own strengths. Your results are not compared to others. Also, the survey doesn’t measure which strengths you value the most; it measures the strengths that you report as most often showing up in your actions and thoughts. It’s an effective way to identify your own strengths, which you then can use to spur your thinking about how to use those strengths more and in new ways to improve your and others’ happiness.

The VIA is based on the VIA Classification, which resulted from an extensive 3-year research project. Researchers explored the best thinking from all over the world on virtue and positive human qualities in philosophy, virtue ethics, moral education, psychology, and theology over the past 2500 years.

**VIA Classifications**

Six core themes emerged, which were found across religions, cultures, nations, and belief systems. These “virtues” were subdivided into 24 universal character strengths:

**Wisdom:** Creativity, curiosity, judgment/open-mindedness, love of learning, & perspective

**Courage:** Bravery, perseverance, honesty

**Justice:** Teamwork, fairness, & leadership

**Humanity:** Love, kindness, & social intelligence

**Temperance:** Forgiveness, humility, prudence, & self-regulation

**Transcendence:** Appreciation of beauty & excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality, & zest

Character strengths are stable, universal personality traits that show themselves in how you think, feel, and behave. They are considered to be the basic building blocks of human flourishing. They are not fixed; they can be developed. Most people likely can enhance their capacity for expressing each of the 24 character strengths.

“Signature strengths” are your top character strengths that really resonate with you and feel like they are at the core of who you are (Peterson, 2006).

**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?**

Studies show that using your signature strengths more or in new ways can improve well-being.

- Regularly using strengths is linked to work satisfaction and engagement at work, lower turnover, greater psychological well-being, less stress, goal achievement, and lower depression levels as much as 6 months after participating
in a strengths-based exercise (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Gurpal, 2012).

- Two of the most important predictors of employee retention and satisfaction are: Reporting use of your top strengths at work and that your immediate supervisor recognizes your top strengths.

- Character strengths buffer people from the negative effects of vulnerabilities (e.g., perfectionism and need for approval) and play an important role in depression recovery.

- As you learn more about your 24 strengths, you can begin to develop your competence in using them all in the right proportion that each situation calls for. This can improve your interpersonal effectiveness and other aspects of personal performance and sense of well-being (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Gurpal, 2012).

**Put Your Strengths into Action**

Now that you’ve identified your character strengths and know why it’s valuable to use them, it’s time to put them into action...

Think of a specific time when you were at your best—when you really were feeling and behaving at a high level and you felt that you were being your authentic self. Describe that time.

**List Your Top Strengths**

Now, list your top strength from your VIA survey report.

Strength 1:

Strength 2:

Strength 3:

Strength 4:

Strength 5:

Strength 6:

Strength 7:

**Identify Your Signature Strengths**

Next, you’ll identify your signature strengths, which are strengths that you easily recognize in yourself, regularly exercise, and celebrate. You feel that they describe the “real me.” You have a rapid learning curve and feel joy and enthusiasm when using them (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2011).

- Review your top VIA strengths and ask the following questions:

  - Is this strength the real, authentic you? Does it come naturally to you? Is it easy for you to express?

  - Do you feel more energized when you’re using this strength?

  - Would your family and friends be quick to identify this strength in you?

  - Do you use this strength frequently at home, at work, and in your social life?

  - What character strengths have you used in your past and current successes?

When you’re happiest, what strengths are you using?

**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 can you identify in the story of you at your best?

- Which one of your signature strengths seems most evident in your every-day life right now?

- What are examples of how you use that strength now?
**Using 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 (Peterson, 2006). According to Seligman (2002) and Peterson (2006), the regular use of signature strengths—especially in service to others—cultivates well-being.

A good place to start is with a well-tested exercise in which you pick a signature strength and, for the next week, use it in a new way every day (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Peterson, 2005).

The strengths of hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity, and love, have the strongest link to life satisfaction (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). So you might consider them as top targets if they are among your signature strengths.

For ideas on activities that incorporate your signature strengths, take the Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic test developed by Sonja Lyubomirsky (2008). You’ll likely find that such activities improve your well-being through engagement.

**Three Ways to Use Your Strengths**

What are three ways in which you can use your signature strength more or in a new way in the next three weeks to help you progress toward something important to you? For ideas, review 340 Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths (Rashid & Anjum, 2008),

1.

2.

3.

**References**


Niemiec, R. M. (2013). VIA character strengths: Research and practice (The first 10 years). In H. H. Knoop & A. Dele Fave (Eds.), Well-being and cultures: Perspectives on positive psychology (pp. 11-30). New York: Springer.


Positive Leadership: Key Ingredients For Unleashing The Best In Others

Anne M. Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD in Progress
abrafford@aspire.legal | www.aspire.legal

Wouldn’t we all love to work in law firms that bring out our best? And, as aspiring positive leaders, wouldn’t we all love to know the secrets to unleashing the best in others? Psychological science offers some helpful insights on these very questions. Of particular importance is a well-established and powerfully predictive framework of human motivation called “self-determination theory” (SDT), which forms the foundation of my book *Positive Professionals*. SDT identifies key ingredients that contribute to optimal performance, health, and happiness.

SDT proposes that we’re all naturally inclined toward growth and happiness and that our social surroundings facilitate or thwart our path toward optimal functioning. Our continued growth depends on whether our social conditions thwart or help meet basic psychological needs:

- **Autonomy.** This need is driven by a basic human desire to be “self-creating” and under self-rule. It’s about feeling 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. It is the opposite of feeling controlled, bossed around, or guilted into things.

- **Connection & Belonging (or “Relatedness”).** We humans have a fundamental need to connect and belong. This includes supportive relationships as well as a sense of belonging or fit with groups we care about. This need is powerful and pervasive. It can help or harm our cognitive processes, emotional patterns, behaviors, and health and well-being. Lack of belonging and feelings of exclusion can trigger self-defeating behaviors like procrastination and depression.

- **Mastery (or “Competence”).** 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 that are significant to us are keys to this source of well-being.

- **Helping Others (or “Benevolence”).** Research also suggests that we have a basic need to feel that we’re benefiting others or the common good.

**Ingredients For Thriving Firms**

- **Connection & Belonging**
  - Supportive relationships and a sense of belonging or fit with groups we care about.

- **Mastery Activities**
  - 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 controlled, forced, or guilt-driven.

- **Helping Others**
  - Having a positive impact on others or the common good.
This may all sound fine and good but still leave you wondering if it really applies to that special breed of people called lawyers. Recent research shows that it absolutely does.

Researchers Larry Krieger (a law professor-turned-researcher) and Dr. Kennon Sheldon (a highly respected social scientist) conducted a large-scale study of 6,000 lawyers working in a wide variety of legal jobs. The study, titled *What Makes Lawyers Happy?*, asked what kinds of things in lawyers’ social surroundings contributed to their happiness.

It found that SDT needs made a huge difference in lawyers’ lives. The relationships between lawyer happiness and SDT needs was much larger than other factors in the study. For example, the positive relationship between need-fulfillment and happiness was three times as large as the relationship between income and happiness. And whether lawyers had achieved a high class rank during law school (something that so many law students stress out about) had a very small relationship with their current levels of happiness.

**Supporting the Autonomy Need**

All of the SDT needs are essential ingredients to thriving workplace cultures. But we need to start somewhere, and the autonomy need is a good place to start. (My book *Positive Professionals* offers strategies for fulfilling all of the needs). Leaders, colleagues, clients, and workplace policies and practices all can support or undermine our sense of autonomy.

Experiencing autonomy goes hand-in-hand with feeling respected, valued, and important. It is the experience of choosing an activity freely because it aligns with our own values, goals, and desires—it aligns with who we are. It’s not synonymous with individualism or detachment. In particular, it doesn’t mean that we must act independently from others’ desires. Instead, it’s a need to act with a sense of choice and volition, even if doing so might mean complying with the wishes of others.

Autonomy at work typically takes the form of discretion for work scheduling, decision-making, and work methods. All three forms of autonomy significantly contribute to job satisfaction and engagement, but decision-making autonomy leads the pack. Below are some strategies for fostering a culture that supports autonomy:

1. **Foster a Sense of Control**

Autonomy is closely related to the concept of control—which affects not only engagement but also psychological health. Feeling in control of one’s own work and schedule is a well-established factor contributing to mental health. Lack of control—especially in the face of high demands—is a strong predictor of depression and burnout. A high level of responsibility with little control is a toxic combination that can destroy health and performance.

2. **Optimize Independence**

Among the best way to support autonomy is to allow as much independence and discretion as followers’ level of experience and competence allow. We should allow people to figure things out for themselves, make their own choices as much as possible, and not hijack the project at the first sign of a wobble.

3. **Give Flexibility in Time & Place of Work**

Flexibility in where and when followers do their work also helps meet their autonomy need. Technology has dramatically enhanced the potential for such flexibility, making telecommuting both feasible and desirable because it provides greater autonomy and job satisfaction.

Many firms still have not embraced the full potential for flexibility, although some have formally adopted telecommuting policies. Some lawyers continue to frown on the practice, having long relied on “face time” in the office as a de facto measure of commitment and productivity. They worry that associates will shirk their responsibilities if allowed to work from home. In short, they don’t trust them.
Recent research should help allay these concerns. A 2015 study that crossed industries found that telecommuting did not harm workers' performance—and, in fact, boosted it. They found that the autonomy need was at the root of the effect. Workers felt grateful for the trust and autonomy granted to them by their organizations and so reciprocated with greater energy that positively influenced their performance.

4. Frame Work-Related Communications to Respect Autonomy

When making work-related requests, leaders respect followers' autonomy by using words of influence rather than coercion. Dwight D. Eisenhower defined motivation as "the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it." This is precisely what leaders do when they tailor work requests to respect autonomy.

To take Eisenhower's advice, research shows that we should show responsiveness to others' perspectives, avoid bossy- or coercive-sounding language, give meaningful rationales for requests, and offer opportunities for choice. For example, a junior lawyer might question the tight deadline given for a project but still act willingly and autonomously because the partner provided a meaningful rationale for it.

The opposite of an autonomy-orientated leadership style is a controlling one. Controlling leaders ignore others' needs, interests, and feelings. To motivate followers, they use directives, threats, incentives, and deadlines. In short, they're bossy and rely on power differentials to motivate. The result is extrinsic, low-quality motivation among followers and all the trouble that flows from that.

Research has found that, no matter what your natural tendencies, you can learn to use a more autonomy-oriented style. Below are some fairly simple research-backed behaviors that you can adopt to start championing autonomy right away:

Autonomy-Supportive Communications

**Behavior**

- Use language that doesn't sound controlling or coercive. (Avoid bossiness.)

- Take followers' perspectives and acknowledge their feelings.

- Give rationales for requests.

- Tailor motivation strategies to account for followers' interests, preferences, work-related values, and to boost their confidence in their abilities to be effective and master new skills.

- Maximize followers' sense of choice and self-initiation.

**Example**

"Can you please ___? It would be really helpful if you could ___.”

"I'm sorry about this short turn-around t. I know it's a pain and I'm sorry about that.”

"The client just asked for this by tomorrow.”

"I wouldn't ask just anyone to do this, but I know you can handle it. And the upside is that it might give you a chance to take a deposition.”

"I know it's getting late and it's fine if you want to go home and work there. What time do you think is reason-able to get me a draft?”
5. Use Participatory Leadership

In participatory management styles, leaders invite others’ suggestions, solicit input, and spur open discussions for identifying new solutions. This type of leadership demonstrates that leaders value others’ opinions, contributions, and talents. When people are involved in making decisions, they feel more autonomous when carrying them out. This tactic boosts followers’ sense of meaningfulness because they feel valued and that their opinions matter. On the other hand, people who are left out of decision-making have a higher risk of burnout.

RESOURCES

Book Recommendations
- Anne Bradford, Positive Professionals: Creating High-Performing, Profitable Firms Through The Science of Engagement
- Liz Wiseman, Multipliers: How The Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter
- Jane Dutton & Gretchen Spreitzer (Editors), How to Be A Positive Leader
- Daniel Pink, Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us
- Paul J. Zak, Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies
- Bruce Avolio, Leadership Development in The Balance
- John Mackey & Raj Sisodia, Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business

Won’t This Take More Time & Effort?

It’s true that autonomy-oriented leadership often requires investment of extra effort compared to directive or controlling styles. It can be easier to boss people around than inspire them. But research indicates that it’s worth it. It will pay off by enhancing motivation and engagement.

Autonomy-Support Checklist:
- ✓ Foster a Sense of Control
- ✓ Optimize Independence
- ✓ Give Flexibility in Time & Place
- ✓ Make Non-Controlling Requests
- ✓ Use Participatory Leadership