

Cultivate Your Happiness: The Four Seasons ThriveRU Weekly Workbook

**Ryerson
University**

**Student
Affairs**

A workbook of weekly exercises designed to help you manage challenges and cultivate your well-being.

This workbook was designed to provide you with at least one weekly exercise that has proven to be effective in increasing life satisfaction, happiness and resilience. Questions designed to help you reflect on the impact of the exercise are included on the subsequent page to each exercise.

Your happiness set point is determined by 3 different factors—genetics (50%), circumstances (10%), and your actions and attitudes (40%). Many of the weekly exercises are based on research reported by Sonja Lyubomirsky in *The How of Happiness* (2007). Other original sources include Shawn Achor, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Jon Kabat Zinn, Christine Padesky, Sharon Saltzburg, and Martin Seligman.

ThriveRU Weekly Workbook written by
Dr. Diana Brecher, Scholar-in-Residence,
Positive Psychology for the ThriveRU initiative,
Ryerson Student Affairs.

ThriveRU Calendar at a Glance

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Week 2:

Gratitude

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

Week 8:

Increasing Flow

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

Week 10:

Committing to Your Goals

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

Week 12:

Meditation

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

The 5 Factor Model of Resilience: A Background for the ThriveRU Weekly Workbook

By Dr. Diana Brecher

When I was a little girl I used to wish upon a star; you know: “Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have this wish I wish tonight—I wish everyone was healthy and happy.” To my child’s mind it seemed to cover everything. It was the wish that encompassed all other wishes (as I had been taught through the fairy tales I loved). It was my way of making a difference in the world, the best way I knew how. I have since learned the Lovingkindness Meditation (out of the Mindfulness Meditation tradition) that covers much of the same ground—but I’m getting ahead of myself.

Fast-forward to adulthood, I studied to become a clinical psychologist and began working at Ryerson’s counselling centre. My job, in some sense, was to help “everyone become healthy and happy”. After 25 years of working as a counsellor, manager, intern supervisor, and instructor, I started to wonder if there was a more direct way to reach the same goal.

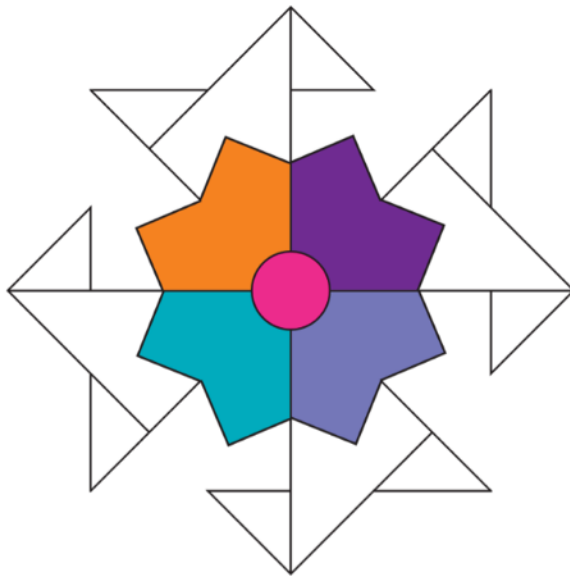
Positive psychology (a relatively new discipline) tells us that there are 6 dimensions of well-being and flourishing: positivity, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement, and vitality. Throughout all six dimensions you will find talk of resilience, an integral aspect of flourishing. I became really interested in how to teach resilience as prevention—and reduce the need for intervention after the fact. My goal became to teach resilience so that people could bounce back (thriving) before they got stuck in distress in the first place.

I thought about what my years as a psychologist taught me, about the difference between surviving and thriving; and built this profile of people who are struggling to thrive:

- They tend to ruminate about the past and worry about the future;
- They seem to be unaware of the good things that are happening in their life;
- They explain why things happen to them from a pessimistic perspective;
- They are judgmental and self-critical;
- They often give up when feeling overwhelmed.

If resilience is best defined as the capacity to bounce back after things go wrong, then what do people need to learn in order to thrive?

After considerable research into the field of Positive Psychology, I created a Five Factor Model of Resilience. Think of it as a puzzle with mindfulness in the centre, and going clockwise: gratitude, optimism, self-compassion, and grit. Each component of this puzzle connects and augments the others, particularly in times of crisis.



The Five Factor Model of Resilience

Mindfulness
Gratitude
Optimism
Self-Compassion
Grit

The Five Factor Model was developed by Dr Diana Brecher, from research in the field of Positive Psychology.

Mindfulness

I think of the absence of mindfulness as a form of time travel—either ruminating about the past and/or worrying about the future. Mindfulness is about being simply present at this very moment. It allows us to take stock and gather resources. Being mindful keeps us grounded in the actual situation and realistically focused on solutions and actions that will make a difference.

Gratitude

Gratitude is not simply saying thank you when someone does you a favor. Gratitude in this context is about noticing good things that are happening all around you, and taking it in; savouring good experiences, the kindness and generosity of others, and opportunities that have opened up and the possibilities that you could explore. It's about the relationships between you and others and the expression of your gratitude to these important people in your life that seems to make life worth living. Gratitude also allows you to feel connected and hopeful about these possibilities.

Optimism

The ways in which we explain why good things happen to us and why bad things happen to us has a significant impact on our ability to bounce back. Changing these explanations is something that can be learned. Martin Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, discovered that optimists explain good times to themselves as something that they caused

directly or had a significant role in instigating; they perceive it as permanent; and it spills over into other aspects of their lives. Optimists end up feeling the glow of achievement and have hope in the future. Similarly, when something bad happens, optimists explain it to themselves as bad luck, temporary, and very situation specific. As optimists, we have more energy to be resilient and take action to resolve challenging situations because we haven't spent our energy feeling scared, filled with self-recrimination, and hopelessness the way that pessimists tend to do.

Self-Compassion

When things go wrong we tend to blame ourselves for everything, being highly self-critical and impatient with our ever-so-human flaws. Kristen Neff, a psychologist at the University of Texas at Austin, asks: what if, instead of being so self-critical, we were able to be our own best friend? Kind, supportive, patient, loving—in the moment that we need it most? Cultivating this attitude of being your own best friend is integral to resilience.

Grit

Grit has been defined by Angela Duckworth, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, as perseverance and passion for very long term goals, in a wide range of contexts. I believe that cultivating grit in reference to overcoming setbacks, losses, and hurdles in our personal lives is equally essential to persevering in service of achievement. Grit is essential to my Five Factor Model of Resilience because it is based on a choice we can make to stick to our goals despite the obstacles we face, and because we already have these attitudes and skills of resilience within ourselves; even when we don't think we do.

Personal Model Of Resilience

I believe that we can tap the strategies, behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs that fuel our grit in one context in which we are successful, and import these to a different area of our lives where we are struggling. This is the essence of resilience. Christine Padesky, a psychologist and author of *Mind Over Mood*, suggests that when we do something we love on a regular basis, we keep going, no matter what; obstacles are seen as temporary and surmountable. Our faith in these successful strategies and attitudes is justified because they are familiar and trustworthy in one context—all we need to do is transpose these to another situation and discover how they work there. By bringing our behaviours from a successful context to an area where we are struggling, we are able to deal with the completely new challenge and succeed. Recognising these strategies, behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs becomes our personal model of resilience.

So there we have it: being fully present and mindful; noticing the good things in life and all the possibilities before you; giving yourself credit for the good things that happen, with hope and zest for the future; forgiving yourself for things that have gone wrong; and tapping your already proven strengths to use them in service of the challenge before you. A five factor model of resilience; grounded in best practices research within the field of positive psychology and flourishing, and 25 years-experience working with university students who want to thrive and be their best selves.

This article was originally published in the magazine TEDxRyersonU: Lenses in March 2017.

I hope that the Five Factor Model of Resilience helps to contextualize the goals of these exercises.

Spring

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Building community is an important task for most of us. Research in Positive Psychology tells us that the happier you are, the more likely it is that you will have good friends. The deeper the friendships you have, the happier you feel. The good news is that you can increase your happiness by building and strengthening your friendships. We all need three good friends to give us a sense of belonging.

Exercise:

Give your colleagues 100% of your attention, maintain eye contact while they are talking, and tell them how much you appreciate their efforts. A respectful environment, where people demonstrate their appreciation for others, sets a great tone and expectations that can be carried forward into new contexts.

Week 2:

Gratitude

Adapting to any new environment involves paying close attention to and assessing your strengths and weaknesses. Noticing opportunities and possibilities, and feeling grateful for the good things that happen in the course of a day, can boost your well-being and happiness overall. Gratitude strengthens the bonds of friendship and other connections to your communities (at work, at home, and in your neighbourhood) and helps you to cope with stress. Gratitude also increases the intensity and pleasure associated with savouring positive experiences.

Exercise:

Consider your degree of satisfaction about the past (gratitude), compared to your capacity for optimism and hope for the future and compared to your level of happiness (pleasure, savouring meaning and purpose) about the present.

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Optimism is about how you explain to yourself why things happen to you. This means choosing how you see the world and your role in it. Pessimistic thinking can interfere with productivity, resilience, and focus. Optimistic thinkers have more hope and energy to deal with the bad times because they take credit for their part in creating the good times. They see them as permanent and pervasive.

Exercise:

HOPE

The word 'hope' the learned say
is derived from the word 'hop'
and leads one on to leap.

Plato in his turn, says that leaping
of young creatures is the essence of play -
So be it!

To hope then, means to take a playful leap
into the future - to dare to spring from firm ground -
to play trustingly - invest energy, laughter;
And one good leap encourages another -
On then with the dance.

Take this Optimism questionnaire to discover how optimistic you actually are, and in which contexts <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter>

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

The capacity to be fully present and focused will reduce the impact of anxiety and stress. When the stress is mounting, there is a tendency to imagine the worst and feel stuck ruminating over what might go wrong. When you compare yourself to others you are less likely to focus on working through your problems and take appropriate action. Gaining perspective on the most likely consequences of a situation can be very helpful.

Exercise:

Consider the self-acceptance narrative, developed by Linda Graham:

1. This is what happened
2. This is what I did to survive it (understandable, even brilliant)
3. This has been the cost (compassion makes it safe to look at that)
4. This is what I learned (a new narrative of self that allows us to live with, even be proud of ourselves)
5. This is how I respond to life now (by being resilient going forward)

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

Learning to cope during the good times is in itself a good strategy—you can rely on it when you hit a rough patch. Doing things differently (dealing with things head on) and thinking about things differently (becoming more hopeful and optimistic) are both good ideas.

Exercise:

Professional success & achievement are linked to these 7 character strengths:

- Optimism
- Gratitude
- Social Intelligence
- Curiosity
- Self-Control
- Enthusiasm
- Perseverance/Grit

Take VIA CHARACTER STRENGTHS SURVEY and identify your top 5 strengths
<https://www.viacharacter.org/www/>

Pick one of your top strengths and lead from it all day.

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Use curiosity and an open mind when dealing with any new and complex task. Your work takes effort and a willingness to feel stuck at some points. Adopt the attitude: “I’m not sure I can do it now, but I think I can learn to with time and effort.” Praise yourself for the effort and hard work that you put into a project—it will sustain you over time.

Exercise:

Watch animated film on Growth Mindset
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75GFzikhmRY0>

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Think about a current challenge in your life that you have been approaching with a fixed mindset and consider how you might shift your experience by approaching it with a new perspective (growth mindset). Can you begin to see yourself as a work in progress, with the attitude that hard work and effort can yield optimal results? Does that change your experience with this challenge?

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

Practicing acts of kindness and generosity leads to raising your overall level of happiness. The more you give to others, the better you feel about yourself. There is often a ripple effect, and those who received your act of kindness or generosity are more likely to do something similar for someone else. It is a great way to bring about change in your community - by modeling it one step at a time.

Exercise:

Make an effort to practice acts of kindness and generosity by expressing your positive feelings on a daily basis.

There are 5 expressions of positive feelings (Language of Love):

1. Acts of service
2. Physical touch
3. Receiving gifts
4. Quality time
5. Words of affirmation

Week 8:

Increasing Flow

Flow involves feelings of intense absorption in your current activity. You feel engaged and excited and your skills are just enough to meet the challenge. When the challenge is too low and your skills are high, you tend to get bored; when the challenge is too high, and your skills are low, you will likely feel anxious. Flow experiences can happen at school, work, and play. You can move into flow by either increasing the challenge or acquiring more skills. Flow results in a subjective sense that time is passing differently (faster or slower, depending on context).

Exercise:

Watch an animated book review of Flow:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUsOCR1KKms>

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

The person who benefits most from forgiveness is yourself. Holding on to disappointment, resentment, and anger only serves to hurt you in the long run. Not forgiving is like holding a burning hot rock and expecting the person you can't forgive to get burnt (a Buddhist teaching).

Exercise:

Cultivating Your Higher Self, developed by Linda Graham

1. "Find a comfortable position to sit quietly. Allow your eyes to gently close. Breathe deeply a few times in your belly and allow your awareness to come more deeply into your body. Allow yourself to breathe comfortably. Become aware of relaxing into a gentle field of well-being.
2. Imagine that you are standing on a beach where the land and the water meet. Imagine the details of the scene and your presence there in vivid detail. When you are ready, imagine yourself rising up into the air, floating up above the beach, and travelling across the water to land on another beach and another land. This is the home of your wiser self.
3. Imagine the dwelling of your wiser self: a home, cabin, garden, or any setting that seems fitting. Picture yourself walking towards the entrance. Notice how your wiser self greets you. Does she (or he) come out to meet you? Does she invite you in? Does she shake hands, bow, or hug you? Notice how old your wiser self is, how she is dressed, how she moves.
4. Imagine yourself sitting and talking with your wiser self. Notice her presence, her energy, and how it affects you. Ask your wiser self how she came to be who she is. Ask what helped her most along the way. What did she have to let go of to become who she is? Can you share examples of when and how she triumphed over adversity? You may choose to ask her about a particular problem or challenge facing you now. Notice what advice your wiser self offers that you can take with you. Listen carefully to all she has to tell you.
5. Imagine what it would be like to embody your wiser self. Invite her to become part of you. Notice how it feels to inhabit your wiser self from the inside out and to

experience your wiser self within you. When you are ready, imagine your wiser self becoming separate from you again.

6. Imagine your wiser self offers you a gift - an object, a symbol, a word or phrase-to remind you of her. Receive this object into your hand and place it somewhere in your clothing for safekeeping. Your wiser self will let you know her name; remember it well.
7. As you prepare to leave take a few gentle breaths to anchor this connection with your wiser self. Know that you can evoke this experience of encountering her at any time you choose. Imagine thanking her for the time you have spent together; imagine saying goodbye. Walk back to the place where you landed, then imagine yourself floating back across the water to return to the beach where you started. Gradually become aware of your surroundings and, when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.
8. You may wish to write down your experience with your wiser self to help integrate it into your conscious memory and to use it anytime you need guidance from within about how to be more resilient. As with any use of imagination to access our deep intuitive knowing, the more you practice encountering your wiser self the more reliably you will be able to embody her wisdom as you respond to the challenges and difficulties of your life”.

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

What did you learn from your wiser self?

Week 10:

Committing to your Goals

Pursuing goals gives you a sense of meaning and purpose, and achieving your goals makes you happier in the long term. They improve your time and task management skills because you must get organized in pursuit of goals. Choose personally meaningful goals based on your own values and interests.

Exercise:

SMART goals exercise

- S – Specific
- M – Measurable
- A – Achievable
- R – Realistic
- T – Timely

Your brain does not hear the “not” (or the negative). State your goals as the presence of a new behaviour as opposed to the absence of the old one. So, what do you want to achieve?

Steps to goal achievement

- Define your goal
- Visualize and map out your action plan
- Create a system of accountability
- Commit to achieving the goal
- Use primers to reinforce the goal
- Plan on the possibility of failure, bounce back and try again

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

Physical activity and exercise increase quality of life, improve mood, reduce anxiety and stress, increase focus and attention, and improve quality of sleep. Moderate physical activity 3 times a week is a great place to start if you are not already active.

Exercise:

Integrate social time and physical activity by building in both. Examples include, a regular squash game with a friend, running on Sunday morning followed by a brunch, take a Swing dance class and get to know people through your regular attendance. Physical activity boosts energy, enthusiasm and vigor, while social connection builds support, reinforces friendships and creates new opportunities for savouring.

Week 12:

Meditation

Cultivating attention with regular practice can lead to increased happiness and well-being. Regular meditation impacts one's level of stress, cognitive functioning, and physical well-being. It tends to increase a sense of alertness, as well as relaxation.

Exercise:

Ocean Meditation

Taking your seat, in a posture that embodies dignity. Let your attention go to wherever the breath takes you, most naturally. Let your awareness ride the wave of the breath, wherever you feel it most naturally, your nostrils, your chest, your belly, or for some people, it's the whole body breathing, whatever comes naturally for you, and just let your attention ride the wave of your breathing.

(PAUSE)

As you're sensing your breath...in and out... I'm going to tell you an ancient story that's been passed through the generations about the mind being like the ocean; where deep in the ocean, beneath the surface, it's calm and clear; and from that deep place in the ocean, you can look upward toward the surface; and at the surface no matter what the conditions are; whether it's flat or choppy, or even a full storm, no matter what those conditions are, deep in the ocean, it's calm and clear.

Just sensing the breath allows you to go to the depth of the ocean of your mind; where from this deep, place, you can look upward at the waves at the surface; the brain waves that are the activities of your mind. From this deep place in your mind, you can notice the thinking, the feeling, perceiving, all these things that are just there at the surface, and notice them as being activities that come and go in and out of awareness, like ripples on a pond; and just sensing your breath brings you back to this deeper place in the depth of your mind. So let's take a few moments right now to just sense your breath, and when an activity of the mind brings your attention to it, like a thought, feeling, a memory, a sensation, then kindly and gently, redirect your attention to the breath.

For some people, it helps to make a gentle mental note, so if there is a thought, you can gently say in your mind, like a soft whisper in the back of your mind, “thinking”, if there is an emotion, you can gently say “feeling” or if there is a sensation, you can say gently “sensing”; and let your attention return to the breath to this depth of your mind where you can just sense and observe the activities of the mind as just that, just activities, and not the totality of who you are.

So let’s take the time now, just sensing your breath, and when you come to notice that your mind is no longer focusing on the breath, kindly and gently take note of that and return your attention to your breathing.

(PAUSE)

Now in just a few moments, we’ll bring this meditation to a close. Just focusing your mind on your breathing can bring you to a deep place of calm and clarity.

Adapted with permission by The Mindfulness Edge TM
www.everydaymindfulness.org

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

One of the best ways to handle particularly stressful times is by staying grounded. This can involve taking the time to remember the good times, be fully present (appreciating what is happening right now), and optimistically anticipating the times that make life worth living. Use all of your senses to recall a pleasant experience, to fully engage in the present joys, and to imagine a future event by considering all aspects of it.

Exercise:

The 20-Minute Replay: Spend 20 minutes re-living a positive experience by documenting it with all the details pertaining to how, when, where, with whom, and why this lovely event occurred. Each time you re-read about the experience you can savour and re-live it. It also helps us to remember the things we like about our lives and the people in it.

Summer

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Building community is an important task for most of us. Research in Positive Psychology tells us that the happier you are, the more likely it is that you will have good friends. The deeper the friendships you have, the happier you feel. The good news is that you can increase your happiness by building and strengthening your friendships. We all need three good friends to give us a sense of belonging.

Exercise:

Watch this 10 minute TEDX talk on the Essential Truths of Friendship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=at81UEpuWyo>

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Think about how this insight might apply to your choices. Is there anything you might do differently going forward?

Week 2:

Gratitude

Adapting to any new environment involves paying close attention to and assessing your strengths and weaknesses. Noticing opportunities and possibilities, and feeling grateful for the good things that happen in the course of a day, can boost your well-being and happiness overall. Gratitude strengthens the bonds of friendship and other connections to your communities (at work, at home, and in your neighbourhood) and helps you to cope with stress. Gratitude also increases the intensity and pleasure associated with savouring positive experiences.

Exercise:

Watch this 7 minute film on gratitude phone calls
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>

Week 2:

Gratitude

Are you inspired to make a call to someone to whom you feel deep gratitude?

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Optimism is about how you explain to yourself why things happen to you. This means choosing how you see the world and your role in it. Pessimistic thinking can interfere with productivity, resilience, and focus. Optimistic thinkers have more hope and energy to deal with the bad times because they explain the good times as permanent and pervasive, and take ownership of what they did to create them.

Exercise:

Set aside 2 – 3 minutes in the morning, before getting into your routine. Do these quickly and don't overthink. Try to come up with a minimum of 3 endings for any one of these sentence stems

If I bring more awareness into my life today.....

If I take more responsibility for my choices and actions today...

If I pay more attention to how I deal with people today.....

If I boost my energy level by 5 percent today.....

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Which of these challenges had the greatest impact and why?

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

The capacity to be fully present and focused will reduce the impact of anxiety and stress. When the stress is mounting, there is a tendency to imagine the worst and feel stuck ruminating over what might go wrong. When you compare yourself to others you are less likely to focus on working through your problems and take appropriate action. Gaining perspective on the most likely consequences of a situation can be very helpful.

Exercise:

Living in the present moment is about being mindful and intentional in your focus. It is not about changing anything, or getting anywhere, it is just about being.

A cartoon from The New Yorker sums it up: Two monks are sitting side by side, meditating. The younger one is giving the older one a quizzical look, to which the older one responds, "Nothing happens next. This is it."

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

Have you had moments when you were truly able to be fully present, accepting that nothing is actually happening and that it is okay?

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

Learning to cope during the good times is in itself a good strategy—you can rely on it when you hit a rough patch. Doing things differently (dealing with things head on) and thinking about things differently (becoming more hopeful and optimistic) are both good ideas.

Exercise:

Personal Model of Resilience (developed by Dr. Christine Padesky)
There are 4 steps to tapping your strengths:

Step 1: Choose an enjoyable and fulfilling activity with which you have lots of experience and where you are used to solving problems and overcoming obstacles. It is helpful to have insight into what you have done with these obstacles, and most importantly, why you keep going even when you are tired or frustrated.

Step 2: Identify the obstacles you face and what you do to persist in the face of these obstacles. In essence you are answering what keeps you going (behaviours, attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, metaphors, feelings).

Step 3: Find three examples of obstacles you faced and identify the resiliency strategies and attitudes you used to overcome them.

Step 4: Extract these resiliency strategies and attitudes from the everyday activity, make a list.

Step 5: Apply these findings to a challenging area of your life.

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Use curiosity and an open mind when dealing with any new and complex task. Your work takes effort and a willingness to feel stuck at some points. Adopt the attitude: “I’m not sure I can do it now, but I think I can learn to with time and effort.” Praise yourself for the effort and hard work that you put into a project—it will sustain you over time.

Exercise:

6 steps to creating a new habit

1. Identify the cues (what will trigger you to get started each time?)
2. Define the rewards (what is the pleasurable experience if you do the behaviour?)
3. Anticipate and crave the rewards (let this craving motivate you and lead you to feel disappointed if you don't get the reward)
4. Do the routine (repeat the behaviour until it becomes a habit - 21 days in a row at minimum)
5. Announce your intentions (you are more likely to keep repeating the habit if someone else knows you are trying)
6. Ask for support (work mate, exercise pal, encouragement from community or someone important to you)

Note: it takes approximately 21 days or repetitions for any new behaviour to become a habit.

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

Practicing acts of kindness and generosity leads to raising your overall level of happiness. The more you give to others, the better you feel about yourself. There is often a ripple effect, and those who received your act of kindness or generosity are more likely to do something similar for someone else. It is a great way to bring about change in your community - by modeling it one step at a time.

Exercise:

Pay it forward – Think about the people in your life, what do they need but can't seem to do for themselves? Can you choose 3 people, do a favour for them and ask only that they do the same for 3 other people?

This exercise and concept is based on the premise that we can change the world by doing a big favour for three others. It must be something that the receiver can't accomplish on their own.

Catherine Ryan Hyde wrote the novel Pay it Forward.

It was also made into a film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mV4TCWjehTO>

Week 8:

Increasing flow

Flow involves feelings of intense absorption in your current activity. You feel engaged and excited and your skills are just enough to meet the challenge. Flow experiences can happen at school, work, and play. When the challenge is too low and your skills are high, you tend to get bored; when the challenge is too high, and your skills are low, you will likely feel anxious. You can move into flow by either increasing the challenge or acquiring more skills. Flow results in a subjective sense that time is passing differently (faster or slower, depending on context).

Exercise:

“Work can be the prime time for Flow because, unlike leisure, it builds many of the conditions of Flow into itself. There are usually clear goals and rules of performance. There is frequently feedback about how well or poorly we are doing. Work usually encourages concentration and minimizes distraction, and in many cases, it matches the difficulties to your talents and even your strengths. As a result, people often feel more engaged at work than they do at home.”

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is the author of the book:
Flow, The Psychology of Optimal Experience

<http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi/>

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

The person who benefits most from forgiveness is yourself. Holding on to disappointment, resentment, and anger only serves to hurt you in the long run. Not forgiving is like holding a burning hot rock and expecting the person you can't forgive to get burnt (a Buddhist teaching).

Exercise:

Consider these quotes.

Do they inspire you to think about forgiveness and compassion differently?

1. "Forgiveness is a process, not a moment. It has to be cultivated. You cannot be pressured to forgive. When there is a serious loss, a period of grieving must precede forgiveness." (Edward Hallowell)
2. "Forgiveness is letting go, not excusing the other person or reconciling with them or condoning their behavior, just letting go of your own suffering." (Dean Ornish)
3. "The past is over: Forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past." (Jack Kornfield)

Take this short test on your level of self-compassion

<http://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/>

Week 10:

Committing to your Goals

Pursuing goals gives you a sense of meaning and purpose, and achieving your goals makes you happier in the long term. They improve your time and task management skills because you must get organized in pursuit of goals. Choose personally meaningful goals based on your own values and interests.

Exercise:

State your goals as something you wish to increase or start. For example: I will do (action)_____, by (date) _____ by doing (behaviour) _____.

Use 'Primers' to help motivate you in achieving your goal. Choose something that represents the goal or achievement you are trying to reach, that will be a regular reminder to you to keep striving towards this goal.

There are multiple forms of Primers: Sticky notes, passwords, license plates, charm bracelets, ringtones on your phone, vision boards, screensavers, voicemails, and posters.

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

Physical activity and exercise increase quality of life, improve mood, reduce anxiety and stress, increase focus and attention, and improve quality of sleep. Moderate physical activity 3 times a week is a great place to start if you are not already active.

Exercise:

Watch the 5 minute video on the benefits of exercise by Dr. Mike Evans, Health Promotion professor at University of Toronto - '23 and ½ hours' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F5Sly9JQao>

Week 12:

Meditation

Cultivating attention with regular practice can lead to increased happiness and well-being. Regular meditation impacts one's level of stress, cognitive functioning, and physical well-being. It tends to increase a sense of alertness, as well as relaxation.

Exercise:

MOUNTAIN VISUALIZATION

We are going to practice a visualization called the “Mountain”, starting by assuming a mindful standing posture (demonstrate). This sets the tone – an intention – for what we are about to do.

Picturing the most beautiful mountain you have seen or you can imagine... one whose form speaks personally to you... noticing its overall shape from its peak to its base... the mountain is standing tall and strong... it has been there for thousands of years.

Perhaps your mountain has snow at the top and trees on the lower slopes...perhaps it has one prominent peak, perhaps a series of peaks... just sitting and breathing with the image of this mountain, observing it.

(PAUSE)

And when you feel ready, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body, so that your body standing here & the mountain in your mind's eye, become one... your head becomes the lofty peak... your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain, your torso and legs the solid base rooted to the floor.

Inviting yourself to become a breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are... beyond words and thoughts, a centered, unmoving presence.

(PAUSE)

All around the mountain, the weather changes from beautiful sunny skies, to rain, to hurricane force winds, to snow and ice... but the mountain always stands firm... the activity just whirls around the mountain but does not affect it day to day.

In our lives and meditation practice, we experience periods of light and dark ... vivid colour and drab dullness...storms of varying intensity and violence, in our outer world and in our own lives and minds... enduring periods of darkness as well as savouring moments of joy. Even appearance changes constantly, just like the mountain's, experiencing a certain type of weather and a weathering of its own. By becoming the mountain, we link up with its strength and stability and can use these energies to encounter each moment with mindfulness, balance, and clarity.

Helping us to see our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional storms are much like the weather on the mountains... Not to be ignored or avoided but felt, known for what it is, and held in awareness... coming to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom right within the storms.

(PAUSE)

Letting the thoughts and the stress and anxiety whirl around you without affecting you. The thoughts are just thoughts. The feelings are just feelings. They are not the totality of who you are. You are a mountain, sitting strong. You are who you are, who you have always been, regardless of the "weather" happening around you.

(PAUSE)

Breathing in and out... sitting with that feeling of power and majesty... and your deepening capacity to dwell in stillness... carrying these qualities into your daily life.

Adapted with permission by The Mindfulness Edge TM
www.everydaymindfulness.org

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

One of the best ways to handle particularly stressful times is by staying grounded. This can involve taking the time to remember the good times, be fully present (appreciating what is happening right now), and optimistically anticipating the times that make life worth living. Use all of your senses to recall a pleasant experience, to fully engage in the present joys, and to imagine a future event by considering all aspects of it.

Exercise:

Celebrate good news – about yourself and the important people in your life. Take the time to congratulate, celebrate and acknowledge the good fortune of others and enjoy their special moment to the fullest! When it is your good news, don't let modesty rob you of your achievements - acknowledge how hard you worked to earn this experience/award/ accomplishment, visualize how impressed those people in your life who love you will be!

Sources: Bryant & Veroff (2007); Kurtz, Wilson & Gilbert (2007); Liberman, Boehm, Lyubomirsky, & Ross (2009); Lyubomirsky (2007)

Week 13:

Savouring Life’s Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

How does savouring your good times impact other parts of your life?

Fall

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Building community is an important task for most of us. Research in Positive Psychology tells us that the happier you are, the more likely it is that you will have good friends. The deeper the friendships you have, the happier you feel. The good news is that you can increase your happiness by building and strengthening your friendships. We all need three good friends to give us a sense of belonging.

Exercise:

Be willing to open up to your friends. Mutual sharing is what leads to real intimacy. Listen, give your friends 100% of your attention, and maintain eye contact when they are talking about something important. Tell them how much you appreciate them and value this time together. Universal rules of friendship include: keep their secrets, be loyal, and be at least as generous with them as they are with you. Hug your friends when you say hello and say goodbye.

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

What was the impact of putting more effort into the quality of your friendships? Did it make a difference?

Week 2:

Gratitude

Adapting to any new environment involves paying close attention to and assessing your strengths and weaknesses. Noticing opportunities and possibilities, and feeling grateful for the good things that happen in the course of a day, can boost your well-being and happiness overall. Gratitude strengthens the bonds of friendship and other connections to your communities (at work, at home, and in your neighbourhood) and helps you to cope with stress. Gratitude also increases the intensity and pleasure associated with savouring positive experiences.

Exercise:

Express gratitude for the first time to someone to whom you feel grateful by writing them a letter. Be specific as to why you are grateful to them, based on your shared experiences. Print it and read it to them. Give them the letter when you are done.

Week 2:

Gratitude

What was the impact of writing and sharing this letter? Did it change the relationship between you? How did you feel after writing the letter and later, sharing it?

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Optimism is about how you explain to yourself why things happen to you. This means choosing how you see the world and your role in it. Pessimistic thinking can interfere with productivity, resilience, and focus. Optimistic thinkers have more hope and energy to deal with the bad times because they take credit for their part in creating the good times. They see them as permanent and pervasive.

Exercise:

Ask yourself when something good happens:

- (1) What role did I play making this happen?
- (2) How can I make this permanent?
- (3) What can I do to have this spill over into other aspects of my life?

Ask yourself when something bad happens:

- (1) In what way is this also the responsibility of others or circumstances beyond my control?
- (2) How can I keep this temporary?
- (3) What must I do to contain the damage or the long-term effects of this event?

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Were you able to flip into an optimistic
frame of mind?

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

The capacity to be fully present and focused will reduce the impact of anxiety and stress. When the stress is mounting, there is a tendency to imagine the worst and feel stuck ruminating over what might go wrong. When you compare yourself to others you are less likely to focus on working through your problems and take appropriate action. Gaining perspective on the most likely consequences of a situation can be very helpful.

Exercise:

In order to solve a problem:

1. Imagine what would happen in the worst case scenario (be creative, generate several worst case scenarios, and give yourself permission to imagine the worst possible outcomes). Assign a percentage point to each of these options regarding how likely are they to happen.
2. Generate the best case scenarios - be optimistic and creative and generate the ideal outcomes to these scenarios. Assign percentage points to each of these best case scenarios.
3. Consider the most likely scenarios. Assign percentage points to each.
4. Develop an action plan based on the most likely scenarios.

If this is a problem you must solve - then solve it and learn the lessons this process has taught you along the way (patience, perseverance, compassion, courage, loyalty, etc.).

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

Solve a problem by itemizing what would happen in each scenario.

Worst Case Scenarios	%	Most Likely Scenarios	%	Best Case Scenarios	%

Create a Plan: Given the most likely scenario, I can _____

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

Learning to cope during the good times is in itself a good strategy—you can rely on it when you hit a rough patch. Doing things differently (dealing with things head on) and thinking about things differently (becoming more hopeful and optimistic) are both good ideas.

Exercise:

Coping sheet: Divide a page into 4 quadrants - at the top write “day” and “night”, along the sides write “alone” and “with others” :

Make a list of activities that can help you to cope in each quadrant. For example: during the day, when alone—reading a good novel, going for a run, painting, meditating; with others—texting your best friend and making plans to get together, shoot hoops, ask for help, etc. Complete the chart with ideas in all 4 circumstances (day and night, with others and alone). Put these ideas somewhere convenient (like on your phone) and pick the one that makes the most sense when you are stressed out. Add to it as new ideas come to you.

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

List your coping strategies

	Day	Night
Alone		
With others		

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Use curiosity and an open mind when dealing with any new and complex task. Your work takes effort and a willingness to feel stuck at some points. Adopt the attitude: “I’m not sure I can do it now, but I think I can learn to with time and effort.” Praise yourself for the effort and hard work that you put into a project—it will sustain you over time.

Exercise:

- Watch Carol Dweck’s TED talk on Growth Mindset: https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve/transcript?language=en
- Approach each task this week with an attitude of curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, trusting that if you put in the effort you will overcome the challenge.

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

What did you feel after watching Carol Dweck's TED talk on Growth Mindset? How can you cultivate an attitude of curiosity and enthusiasm for your work?

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

Practicing acts of kindness and generosity leads to raising your overall level of happiness. The more you give to others, the better you feel about yourself. There is often a ripple effect, and those who received your act of kindness or generosity are more likely to do something similar for someone else. It is a great way to bring about change in your community - by modeling it one step at a time.

Exercise:

As you go through your day, be aware of the needs of others and make an effort to reach out to help them in some way. Pay attention to what it feels like to be generous with your time and skills. Vary your acts of kindness and notice what it says about you that you took the time to be of help to someone. Which values do these acts of generosity express?

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

In what ways did these random acts of kindness improve your life or mood?

Week 8:

Increasing flow

Flow involves feelings of intense absorption in your current activity. You feel engaged and excited and your skills are just enough to meet the challenge. Flow experiences can happen at school, work, and play. When the challenge is too low and your skills are high, you tend to get bored; when the challenge is too high, and your skills are low, you will likely feel anxious. You can move into flow by either increasing the challenge or acquiring more skills. Flow results in a subjective sense that time is passing differently (faster or slower, depending on context).

Exercise:

- Fully focus your attention on what you are doing. Try not to let yourself get distracted by non-related concerns. Be wholeheartedly open to new and different experiences and be willing to learn new things all the time. Look for high-challenge, high-skill situations and take on new challenges as you become comfortable with the old ones. Know which activities bring on flow for you and do more of them. If you are anxious, increase your skills through working harder and smarter. If you are bored, take on new challenges. The easiest way to get into flow is to have clear rules for performance, immediate feedback, doing things that allow for some control over your work and ensure that the challenge matches your skills.
- Read *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Performance* by Csikszentmihalyi
- Watch “Flow by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi + The rise of superman by Steven Kotler book review mix” here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1MHyyWsMeE>

Week 8:

Increasing flow

What circumstances bring flow into your life?
What is your plan to increase your challenges or skills?

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

The person who benefits most from forgiveness is yourself. Holding on to disappointment, resentment, and anger only serves to hurt you in the long run. Not forgiving is like holding a burning hot rock and expecting the person you can't forgive to get burnt (a Buddhist teaching).

Exercise:

- Remember a time when someone forgave you. How did they express their forgiveness to you? How did you react? What were the benefits of being forgiven and what did you learn from the experience? How did your relationship change as a result of you being forgiven?
- After this reflection, consider forgiving yourself for an error in judgement or thoughtlessness. Self-compassion is about being your own best friend—supportive, gentle, and understanding without any judgement. This is a gift that you give yourself.
- Watch Dr. Kristen Neff on self-compassion:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvTZBUSplr4>

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

How has forgiveness (of others or yourself) enriched your life?

Week 10:

Committing to your Goals

Pursuing goals gives you a sense of meaning and purpose, and achieving your goals makes you happier in the long term. They improve your time and task management skills because you must get organized in pursuit of goals. Choose personally meaningful goals based on your own values and interests.

Exercise:

Identify your top priority goals and rank order them. Break down your top goal into subgoals, including specifically when, where, and how you can begin to work on these subgoals. Consider obstacles you might encounter and brainstorm solutions or action plans to deal with these obstacles. Carry out the goals with lots of support from family and friends. Remember to consider: are you approaching a desirable goal or trying to avoid an undesirable one? It is easier to accomplish a goal if you conceive of it as doing something proactive (e.g. "I plan to eat healthy foods with good portion control") instead of avoiding what you don't want to do (e.g., "don't eat tempting snacks").

Week 10:

Committing to your Goals

Has this exercise moved you closer to achieving your goals? What is the effect of framing your goals in positive terms (i.e. the presence, rather than the absence, of something)?

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

Physical activity and exercise increase quality of life, improve mood, reduce anxiety and stress, increase focus and attention, and improve quality of sleep. Moderate physical activity 3 times a week is a great place to start if you are not already active.

Exercise:

Choose something you enjoy doing and that fits your personality and lifestyle; it can be a class at the gym, a team sport, or watching an exercise video alone at home. Decide when, where, and for how long you intend to exercise and keep to that schedule. Try to choose a time of day when you have the most energy. If you can't keep your schedule on one occasion don't let it stop you from going right back to exercise as soon as you have the time.

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

What helped you to exercise regularly?
Consider monitoring your productivity, focus, quality of sleep and mood—in what ways did these change as a result of regular exercise?

Week 12:

Meditation

Cultivating attention with regular practice can lead to increased happiness and emotional well-being. Regular meditation impacts one's level of stress, cognitive functioning, and physical well-being. It tends to increase a sense of alertness, as well as relaxation.

Exercise:

3 minute breathing space: Sit comfortably, bringing length to your spine and keep a sense of softness in your posture. Rest your hands in your lap and tuck in your chin slightly. Close your eyes. Bring your awareness inwardly and focus on your breath. Pay attention to the inhale and the exhale. Focus your awareness on your breath. There's no need to change it. Just notice the rhythm and pace of your breath. Bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body including places of pressure, contact, or temperature. Now bring your awareness to your thoughts; notice what is popping into your mind. Just notice your thoughts and let them go. Bring your awareness to your feelings, noticing any qualities but not getting wrapped up in what they mean. Expand your awareness to your whole body. Get a sense of your whole self being here in the present moment. Imagine your whole body breathing with each inhale and exhale. PAUSE. When you're ready, open your eyes and bring your awareness back into the room to close the practice.

You can listen to this meditation at:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-743147355-683744593>

Week 12:

Meditation

How did this meditation make you feel? Did the three minutes of quiet breathing and reflection reset your energy?

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

One of the best ways to handle particularly stressful times is by staying grounded. This can involve taking the time to remember the good times, be fully present (appreciating what is happening right now), and optimistically anticipating the times that make life worth living. Use all of your senses to recall a pleasant experience, to fully engage in the present joys, and to imagine a future event by considering all aspects of it.

Exercise:

- Relish ordinary experiences—take the time to slow down and focus on appreciating the things we normally take for granted. Take a few moments to reflect and appreciate pleasurable experiences. It can be as simple as smelling baked bread or a fresh cup of coffee, or noticing the calm of a sunset.
- Reminisce with friends or family about shared experiences—enjoy sharing your memories and remembering a bit differently by listening to what they recall—thereby enriching both of your experiences of savouring.
- Transport yourself—travel to a place that has always brought you peace or pleasure or comfort by using your imagination to recreate it and bring it back when you need it. Have a list of places that you love and spend the time to recall all aspects of it using all of your senses. Go there in your mind when you feel stressed out and need a few minutes to re-charge. Try doing this twice a week.

Sources: Seligman, Rashid, & Parks (2006);
Pasupathi & Carstensen (2003); Bryant & Veroff (2005);
Lyubomirsky (2007)

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

Which of these exercises of savouring had the greatest impact and why?

Winter

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Building community is an important task for most of us. Research in Positive Psychology tells us that the happier you are, the more likely it is that you will have good friends. The deeper the friendships you have, the happier you feel. The good news is that you can increase your happiness by building and strengthening your friendships. We all need three good friends to give us a sense of belonging.

Exercises:

1. Make time to make friends and show interest in what is important to them. Create a regular time (preferably on a weekly basis) to get together and do something—go to the gym, meet for coffee, play on a baseball team, or join a community group together.
2. When thinking about long-term friends—you can further enhance your connection by doing these over several days or weeks:
 - Write a list of what initially drew you to this friend and elaborate with examples.
 - Write about an especially good time in your friendship.
 - Remember a time when your friend disappointed you and try to come up with a generous explanation for why they behaved as they did.
 - Write about values and goals that you both share.

Week 1:

Making New Friends and Strengthening Your Connections with Old Friends

Have you been able to strengthen your friendships by spending quality time together? Did your weekly exploration (of what drew you to your friends and the values you share) deepen these friendships?

Week 2:

Gratitude

Adapting to any new environment involves paying close attention to and assessing your strengths and weaknesses. Noticing opportunities and possibilities, and feeling grateful for the good things that happen in the course of a day, can boost your well-being and happiness overall. Gratitude strengthens the bonds of friendship and other connections to your communities (at work, at home, and in your neighbourhood) and helps you to cope with stress. Gratitude also increases the intensity and pleasure associated with savouring positive experiences.

Exercise:

Keep a gratitude journal. Every night, write down 3 good things that happened during the day, your role in making them happen (if any), and what it means to you and/or your future that these events or interactions happened.

Week 2:

Gratitude

How has writing in your gratitude journal opened up new possibilities for you?

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

Optimism is about how you explain to yourself why things happen to you. This means choosing how you see the world and your role in it. Pessimistic thinking can interfere with productivity, resilience, and focus. Optimistic thinkers have more hope and energy to deal with the bad times because they explain the good times as permanent and pervasive, and take ownership of what they did to create them.

Exercise:

Take 20 minutes, while sitting quietly, and imagine your best possible self; think about what you would like your life to be—one, five, or ten years from now. Imagine a future in which all your dreams have come true. You accomplished your goals and put in the effort necessary to reach them. Then break these up into sub goals, as one way of planning out how you will get there. Recall times that you have been successful at something and identify what strengths and resources you used to achieve your goal. Work on the details daily until it fully reflects your best possible future self.

Week 3:

Cultivating Optimism

How did imagining your best possible future affect your mood? Are you more hopeful about what may happen?

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

The capacity to be fully present and focused will reduce the impact of anxiety and stress. When the stress is mounting, there is a tendency to imagine the worst and feel stuck ruminating over what might go wrong. When you compare yourself to others you are less likely to focus on working through your problems and take appropriate action. Gaining perspective on the most likely consequences of a situation can be very helpful.

Exercise:

- Give yourself the gift of perspective: imagine how important this concern might be in 5 or 10 years, or create an image of your problems as a dot on planet Earth, which is a small part of the solar system, and only a tiny part of the Milky Way... shrinking this problem down to a more realistic size.
- If this is a problem you must solve—then solve it and learn the lessons this process has taught you along the way (patience, perseverance, compassion, courage, loyalty, etc.)

Week 4:

Living in the Present Moment

How did changing your perspective shift your view of a problem? What lessons did you learn by problem solving?

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

Learning to cope during the good times is in itself a good strategy—you can rely on it when you hit a rough patch. Doing things differently (dealing with things head on) and thinking about things differently (becoming more hopeful and optimistic) are both good ideas.

Exercise:

Gaining perspective: For 15 minutes, four days in a row, write about a challenging event that you are dealing with. Explore your feelings and thoughts about what this means to you and how important it is for you to cope with this problem. Do you have any role models who coped with similar problems and are there actions you can emulate? Think about your support network (how can they help or support you) and try to put this situation in perspective (what this tells you about who you were in the past, how it affects your present and what, if any, future implications this challenge may bring).

Week 5:

Coping Strategies

How have your role models and/or support systems helped you to cope?

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Use curiosity and an open mind when dealing with any new and complex task. Your work takes effort and a willingness to feel stuck at some points. Adopt the attitude: “I’m not sure I can do it now, but I think I can learn to with time and effort.” Praise yourself for the effort and hard work that you put into a project—it will sustain you over time.

Exercise:

Don't count on willpower alone to get the job done. Willpower diminishes as the day wears on, so you need other strategies to get things done. Instead: Remove the first 20 seconds of obstacles to you working on the task, and then stick to it until you're done. If you want to stop doing things—create 20 seconds of obstacles to stop you from starting the bad habit you are trying to break; make it effortful to engage in it, and you won't.

Week 6:

Growth Mindset

Did you try to use the 20 Second Rule to add a new habit or to break an old one? What worked? What didn't work?

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

Practicing acts of kindness and generosity leads to raising your overall level of happiness. The more you give to others, the better you feel about yourself. There is often a ripple effect, and those who received your act of kindness or generosity are more likely to do something similar for someone else. It is a great way to bring about change in your community - by modelling it one step at a time.

Exercise:

Choose one day this week to be kind and considerate to others. These five acts of generosity don't need to be directed to the same person, or even to people you know. Some ideas might be:

- Offer to fix something for a colleague.
- Surprise a friend with a meal.
- Smile at someone who is serving you in a store or restaurant.
- Develop your compassion for others by imagining life from their perspective, and be generous.
- Do a kind deed and don't tell anyone else about it.

Week 7:

Practicing Acts of Kindness and Generosity

How did these acts of kindness impact your sense of well-being and happiness?

Week 8:

Increasing flow

Flow involves feelings of intense absorption in your current activity. You feel engaged and excited and your skills are just enough to meet the challenge. Flow experiences can happen at school, work, and play. When the challenge is too low and your skills are high, you tend to get bored; when the challenge is too high, and your skills are low, you will likely feel anxious. You can move into flow by either increasing the challenge or acquiring more skills. Flow results in a subjective sense that time is passing differently (faster or slower, depending on context).

Exercise:

1. When in conversation, listen carefully and ask lots of follow up questions, such as "And then what happened?" and "Why did you think that?" This will engage you more fully. Make it a goal to learn more about the speaker as you are having this conversation.
2. Choose leisure activities that invite you to concentrate and challenge your mind or use your skills. Often these activities have clear goals and rules to guide you with immediate feedback to tell you how well you are doing (sports, games, playing a musical instrument, artistic activities, etc.).
3. Think about your current job as leading to your future. You get to decide if you will have a job, a career, or a calling. This depends on your willingness and ability to engage in flow activities each step of the way. Consider this: a bricklayer working on a hospital can think of their work as laying bricks (a job), constructing a building (a career), or laying the foundation for a place of healing. When we see our work as a calling we take on extra challenges to more fully engage and live in flow much more of the time.

Week 8:

Increasing flow

Which activities are most likely to bring you into flow? How can you do more of them?

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

The person who benefits most from forgiveness is yourself. Holding on to disappointment, resentment, and anger only serves to hurt you in the long run. Not forgiving is like holding a burning hot rock and expecting the person you can't forgive to get burnt (a Buddhist teaching).

Exercise:

Write a letter of forgiveness to someone who has hurt you. Describe what they did and explain how it impacted you at the time and if it still does, how so. Tell this person how you wish they had behaved instead. At the end of the letter clearly state that you have forgiven them. Decide if you want to send it to them, or not. Either way, a weight should be lifted. Writing the letter is something you do for yourself, sending it (if appropriate and possible) is something you do for the other person and for the relationship.

Week 9:

Learning to Forgive

How did writing this letter impact you?
Did the burden of carrying these
experiences lift? Why?

Week 10:

Committing to your Goals

Pursuing goals gives you a sense of meaning and purpose, and achieving your goals makes you happier in the long term. They improve your time and task management skills because you must get organized in pursuit of goals. Choose personally meaningful goals based on your own values and interests.

Exercise:

If you are not sure what your lifelong goals are, try this exercise: imagine the personal legacy that could be written after you die. What do you want to be remembered for? Imagine and write a description of your life accomplishments. Elaborate on why these events and deeds are so meaningful and identify the values they reflect. Your goals will emerge from this exercise.

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

Physical activity and exercise increase quality of life, improve mood, reduce anxiety and stress, increase focus and attention, and improve quality of sleep. Moderate physical activity 3 times a week is a great place to start if you are not already active.

Exercise:

If you're not sure that you have the time to exercise, try this experiment: monitor your productivity, focus, quality of sleep, and mood for one week while you are exercising. Compare it to the following week when you are not exercising. Then, decide for yourself whether it is worth the time and effort.

Week 11:

Physical Activity and Exercise

What happened when you monitored your productivity, focus, and quality of sleep during the week? Did this information inspire you to keep your exercise routine?

Week 12:

Meditation

Cultivating attention with regular practice can lead to increased happiness and well-being. Regular meditation impacts one's level of stress, cognitive functioning, and physical well-being. It tends to increase a sense of alertness, as well as relaxation.

Exercise:

Sit comfortably, bringing length to your spine and keep a sense of softness in your posture. Rest your hands in your lap and tuck your chin in slightly. Close your eyes. Bring your awareness inward and focus on your breath. Pay attention to the inhale and the exhale. Bind your awareness to your breath. There's no need to change it — just notice the rhythm and pace of your breath. Bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body including places of pressure, contact, or temperature. PAUSE. When your breathing is deep and steady—say the following phrases to yourself:

May I be safe and protected, and free from inner and outer harm;
May I be happy and contented;
May I be healthy and whole, to whatever degree possible;
May I experience ease of well-being;

After you have gone through this exercise focused on yourself, change your focus for each new category of people, for each round of the meditation:
For example—directed towards someone who we love and who loves us unconditionally:

May you be safe and protected, and free from inner and outer harm;
May you be happy and contented;
May you be healthy and whole, to whatever degree possible;
May you experience ease of well-being;

Thereafter, repeat the full meditation below for the following: (a) people who you know, (b) people who you don't know, (c) all beings on the planet (e) the planet (f) field of Lovingkindness. Use this phrasing:

May we be safe and protected, and free from inner and outer harm;
May we be happy and contented;
May we be healthy and whole, to whatever degree possible;
May we experience ease of well-being;

<https://soundcloud.com/user-743147355-683744593/loving-kindness-meditation>

Week 12:

Meditation

How did it feel to go through this
Lovingkindness meditation?
What did it bring up for you?

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

One of the best ways to handle particularly stressful times is by staying grounded. This can involve taking the time to remember the good times, be fully present (appreciating what is happening right now), and optimistically anticipating the times that make life worth living. Use all of your senses to recall a pleasant experience, to fully engage in the present joys, and to imagine a future event by considering all aspects of it.

Exercise:

1. Pay close attention to the pleasures in your life; take the time to enjoy the taste and smells of your favourite foods, the beauty of a sunrise, the sound of your favorite music, and the joy of laughing with friends. It helps to block off one sense while focusing on others (e.g. close your eyes while listening to music).
2. Create a photo album of your favourite people and places. Look at it regularly to give yourself a boost, especially when away from home.
3. Seek out bittersweet experiences—the mix of sad and glad leads you to appreciate the moment even more, precisely because it will come to an end, and you know it.
4. Nostalgia is about remembering something that has passed but still brings you joy—spend some time thinking about your nostalgic moments.

Week 13:

Savouring Life's Joys (Past, Present, and Future)

What happened to your stress level after spending a few moments indulging in joy and the memories that bring you closer to your family and friends?

ThriveRU Weekly Workbook Exercises:

Sources

Many of the weekly exercises are based on research reported by Sonja Lyubomirsky as found in *The How of Happiness* (2007). Since she compiled the research of many others into her book, the original researchers who developed these exercises are cited here. Other significant original sources include Shawn Achor, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Christine Padesky, Sharon Salzberg, and Martin Seligman.

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