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## **Happiness and Serenity**

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People frequently choose happiness and serenity as the most important things in life (not being rich, skinny, sexy, popular or powerful).

### **Old Wisdom**

For thousands of years philosophers, saints and wise people (Jesus, Buddha, Aristotle, St. Francis, Confucius, Mother Teresa) have asserted that happiness and serenity are earned through living the value-centered life of a person of good character.

### **Positive Psychology**

In the last decade, "Positive Psychology" has emerged as a force of healthy change in American life. Positive Psychology asserts that a value-centered life yields a life of happiness and serenity.

Both the "Old Wisdom" and the new "Positive Psychology" agree that if one is to experience the

most important things in life, good character counts. When they speak of "good character", they are referring to the positive qualities and ethical choices that a person makes.

### **Virtue Is Its Own Reward**

"Virtue is its own reward" does not mean that if we live a life committed to positive values we get to be self-righteous. The reward of living a virtuous life is the experience of happiness and serenity.

### **Core Virtues**

Virtues that are revered throughout time and across cultures as creative and life-enhancing are:

**Integrity:** Being true to one's self; listening to and being guided by our deepest values and by our conscience.

**Honesty:** Being truthful with oneself and with others.

**Human Dignity:** Treating yourself and others with respect, kindness, justice and fairness.

**Compassion:** Feeling with and having empathy with the pain of others; doing what we can do to

**Patience:** Not trying to “push the river”; allowing people and circumstances to grow and develop in their own time; accepting the things we cannot change.

**Courage:** This means “to have heart”; to have the heart to care enough to face difficult situations; to care enough to find the courage to change the things we can; to have the strength to persevere and not give up.

**Responsibility:** Realizing that our behavior is the result of our decisions, not our conditions; the ability to respond, rather than react; exercising self-control; “no excuses”, “no blaming”.

**Forgiveness:** Letting go of negative feelings and ruminating, resentful thoughts. Dropping judgement and condemnation (and still holding someone accountable for his or her behavior).

**Amends:** Making amends includes: 1) Admit we made a mistake. 2) Sorrow that we hurt someone. 3) Tell the person we are sorry we did the hurtful action.

Alleviate suffering.

4) Ask what we can do to make it right.

5) Commit to doing our best to make sure that the hurtful action will not occur again.

**Wisdom:** This is the openness to learn from others; the humility to learn from our mistakes. Being curious and creative.

**Gratitude:** Developing an “attitude of gratitude”; having appreciation for life; counting our blessings; being generous and willing to share with others.

*I know when I haven't practiced for one day,  
my wife know's when I haven't  
practiced for two days,  
my audience knows when I haven't practiced for three days.”*

**A virtuoso violinist**

*“I am convinced that one person can be a change catalyst, a “transformer” of any situation...such an individual is yeast that can leaven an entire loaf with vision, initiative, patience, respect, persistence, courage and faith...”*

**Stephen Covey**