

Journey to Happiness

MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATION STARTER

The journey to mental wellness is a path that looks different for each of us. Dr. Arthur Brooks' Pillars of Happiness is a framework he believes can be used to understand how we can experience fulfillment in our lives, leading to happiness. Brooks' main pillars are family, faith, friends and work, and Brooks says if we invest and grow in each, it can help us develop a foundation for a more purposeful life.

Our "Your Journey to Happiness" poster lists seven steps that can positively contribute to our overall mental wellness, similar to the Pillars of Happiness framework. Today, we will discuss each step and consider ways we can implement them in our lives.

In this document, questions to ask and points to make verbatim are in **bold**. Notes and instructions for facilitators are in *italics*.

CHAPTER DISCUSSION

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness involves focusing on the present moment while acknowledging and accepting one's feelings and thoughts. Being present can help us recognize the progress in our lives and temporarily put aside our worries about the future.

What could mindfulness look like for you?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include journaling, meditation, breathing or grounding exercises.

SEEK HELP WHEN NEEDED

Sometimes we need assistance from others in our journey. Just like how each of our paths toward mental wellness is different, seeking help may look different for each of us.

How do you know when you need to seek help? What could seeking help look like for you?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include reaching out to a friend to confide in, attending a counseling session, finding group support or sharing how you're feeling with others.

MAINTAIN BALANCE

Maintaining balance is about striving to find harmony in our lives so that one area does not dominate over the others or we do not neglect personal growth or investment in a particular area. Properly managing our responsibilities, wants and needs is an important step in our journey to happiness.

With school, work, family, social obligations and more, we are often pulled in several directions. What can we do to balance competing priorities?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include utilizing time management skills like keeping a calendar, establishing boundaries, creating time for work and play, and reflecting regularly on where you may want to reprioritize.

PRIORITIZE SLEEP

The average adult needs seven or more hours of sleep each day.

As college students with busy lives, it can be difficult to establish a consist sleep schedule. What obstacles are getting in the way of your sleep? What steps can you take to improve the quality of your sleep?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include going to bed at the same time every night, avoiding doing activities other than sleeping in your bed and limiting your screentime before bed.

LIMIT SCREEN TIME

In a world dependent on technology, it is easy to find ourselves spending an excessive amount of time on our devices. While our devices can be used as sources for connection, they are not replacements for in-person experiences.

In your phone settings, look at the average number of hours you spend on your phone in a week. Is anyone surprised by the number? What would it look like to be more mindful of the amount of time you spend scrolling?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include utilizing a screentime limit, setting goals to read from a book each day, not scrolling before bed and considering how the posts you read make you feel.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Humans are social creatures, and making strong social connections helps us to feel a sense of belonging, which can be key to mental wellness. Making social connections is more natural in different seasons of life.

What did it look like for you to connect with others when you started school? How do you foster existing relationships or establish new ones when you are away from school?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include joining a gym or workout class, engaging with Alpha Chi Omega opportunities, looking for opportunities to engage spiritually, volunteering, and planning social engagements with your friends.

STAY ACTIVE

Physical activity contributes positively to both physical and mental health. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety and depression. It can also improve self-esteem, cognitive function and mood.

What physical activity do you enjoy that you could focus more on?

Allow responses from participants. Examples may include walks with friends, intramural sports, workout classes, etc.

CONCLUSION

As we wrap up our discussion, I'd encourage you to write down one or two steps or ideas that were shared today that you can commit to practicing in the upcoming week. You do not have to commit to big changes, but those one or two steps may be a start to a new journey. You can write your commitments down or text them to a friend for accountability and support.

Would anyone like to share your commitment?

Ask for two to three participants to share their commitment. Thank participants for their engagement in the group discussion on their personal journey to happiness.

SOURCE:

Dr. Arthur Brooks' "From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life. St. Martin's Press."

