

THE SKILLS YOU NEED

# GUIDE TO LIFE

LIVING WELL, LIVING ETHICALLY:  
HOW TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE, EVERY DAY



THE SKILLS YOU NEED

# GUIDE TO LIFE

LIVING WELL, LIVING ETHICALLY:  
HOW TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE, EVERY DAY

Skills You Need

This is one of a series of eBooks  
by Skills You Need available for sale at:

[www.skillsyouneed.com](http://www.skillsyouneed.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Illustrations by [Freepik Storyset](#)

ISBN: 978-1-911084-45-7

Published by Skills You Need Ltd

© 2024 Skills You Need Ltd

This version was published in April 2024

# CONTENTS

<b>PART 1: THE CONCEPT OF LIVING WELL</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. LIVING WELL, LIVING ETHICALLY</b>	<b>8</b>
SIX WAYS OF LIVING	8
SIGNS OF FLOURISHING	10
CONCLUSION	11
<b>2. GOODNESS: LEARNING TO USE YOUR MORAL COMPASS</b>	<b>12</b>
GOODNESS ACTS AS A COMPASS	13
WORKING OUT WHERE YOU STAND	14
USING YOUR MORAL COMPASS	15
LIVING WELL	17
<b>3. A FRAMEWORK FOR LIVING WELL</b>	<b>18</b>
FOUR LEVELS OF 'GOODNESS'	19
MODELS OF LEARNING	21
WORTHWHILE ACHIEVEMENTS ARE SELDOM EASY	21
<b>PART 2: UNDERSTANDING ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4. COURAGE</b>	<b>23</b>
WHAT IS COURAGE?	24
THE BENEFITS OF COURAGE	25
COURAGE GOVERNS AND OVERCOMES FEAR AND OVERCONFIDENCE	25
FEAR AND OVER-CONFIDENCE ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN.	28
FINDING A BALANCE	29
<b>5. SELF-CONTROL</b>	<b>30</b>
THREE HABITS OF SELF-CONTROL	31
DEFINING SELF-CONTROL	32
ASSESSING YOUR SELF-CONTROL	33
A SLIGHT DIVERSION: SHAME	34
SELF-CONTROL AND PATIENCE	34
WHY IS PATIENCE IMPORTANT?	35
CULTIVATING PATIENCE	37
DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL	38
FINDING THE BALANCE	39

<b>6. GENEROSITY</b>	<b>40</b>
GENEROSITY IN PRACTICE	41
THE BENEFITS OF GENEROSITY	42
WHEN SHOULD YOU GIVE?	43
THE 'FLIP SIDE' OF GENEROSITY	44
GUIDELINES FOR GENEROSITY	45
FINDING THE BALANCE	46
<b>7. FRIENDLINESS AND POLITENESS</b>	<b>47</b>
WHEN TO USE FRIENDLINESS OR CIVILITY	49
ASSESSING YOUR LEVEL OF FRIENDLINESS	50
FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE OF FRIENDLINESS	51
FINDING THE BALANCE	54
<b>8. TACT AND DISCRETION</b>	<b>55</b>
DEFINING TACT AND DIPLOMACY	56
PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESSFUL TACT AND DIPLOMACY	57
STRATEGIES FOR TACT AND DIPLOMACY	58
<b>9. TRUTHFULNESS AND INTEGRITY</b>	<b>60</b>
TWO TYPES OF TRUTH	61
THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH	62
IS IT EVER RIGHT NOT TO TELL THE TRUTH?	62
FINDING THE BALANCE	64
A LAST WORD	64
<b>10. GOOD TEMPER</b>	<b>65</b>
THE IMPORTANCE OF ANGER	66
WHAT SHOULD MAKE YOU ANGRY?	67
ASSESSING YOUR TEMPER	68
MANAGING YOUR TEMPER	69
GOOD TEMPER AND TOLERANCE	72
THE IMPORTANCE OF TOLERANCE	72
DEVELOPING TOLERANCE	73
SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT THINGS...	75
DEVELOPING A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOUR	76
A SENSE OF HUMOUR	77
THE BENEFITS OF A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOUR	78
TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE?	79
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT	80
<b>11. FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE</b>	<b>82</b>
THE FIT BETWEEN JUSTICE AND GOODNESS	83
WHY JUSTICE?	84
THE REVERSE OF JUSTICE	84
ENSURING JUSTICE	86
FINDING THE BALANCE	86
<b>12. COMPASSION</b>	<b>87</b>
ARISTOTLE ON COMPASSION	88
A MORE MODERN SLANT ON COMPASSION	88
COMPASSION AND RELIGION	89
THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION	90
FINDING THE BALANCE	91

<b>13. GRATITUDE</b>	<b>92</b>
WHAT IS GRATITUDE?	93
THE RIGHT TIME FOR GRATITUDE	94
THE BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE	96
<b>14. HUMILITY</b>	<b>97</b>
WHAT IS HUMILITY?	97
WHY DOES HUMILITY MATTER?	98
DEVELOPING HUMILITY	99
A FINAL THOUGHT	100
<b>PART 3: PUTTING VIRTUES INTO PRACTICE</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>15. RESILIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE</b>	<b>102</b>
FOUR INGREDIENTS OF RESILIENCE	103
THE LINK BETWEEN THOUGHT AND EMOTION	104
THINKING TRAPS	105
IMPROVING RESILIENCE	106
IMPROVING RESILIENCE THROUGH REACHING OUT	108
A FINAL THOUGHT	108
WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?	109
PERSEVERANCE MATTERS	110
FOUR WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR PERSEVERANCE	111
A FINAL WORD	113
<b>16. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>114</b>
THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL LAWS	115
FOUR LEVELS OF PRINCIPLE-CENTRED LEADERSHIP	116
<b>17. ETHICS IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE</b>	<b>118</b>
THE PLACE OF 'GOODNESS' IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE	119
GOODNESS AND THE LAW	120
GOODNESS AND MEDICINE	121
ACTING ETHICALLY AS A PROFESSIONAL	122
ETHICS OR MORALS ARE NOT INCONSISTENT WITH PROFESSIONAL LIFE	123
<b>18. SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<b>124</b>
WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?	125
THREE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY: ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL	126
ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SUSTAINABILITY	129
FROM THE TANGIBLE TO THE INTANGIBLE	131
A FINAL THOUGHT	132
<b>19. ETHICAL CONSUMPTION</b>	<b>133</b>
THE ETHICAL ISSUES AROUND CONSUMPTION	134
IMPROVING THE ETHICS OF YOUR CONSUMPTION	136
REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE: MANAGING WASTE	138
10 TIPS TO HELP YOU REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE	139
EVERY LITTLE HELPS	142
<b>CONCLUSION: STARTING TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE</b>	<b>143</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The first Skills You Need Guide to Life explains how you can look after your body and mind, and ensure that they remain healthy.

**However, there is more to living a ‘good’ life than simply being healthy.**

Most of us would probably agree that we want to be able to look back at our lives and say that we had lived the life we wanted to live, and had no regrets. But how do you decide what life you want to live?

There are many ways in which you could live: aiming to enjoy life, for example, or make money. However, the Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that these approaches were intrinsically unsatisfying. He suggested that to avoid deathbed regrets, you needed to live a ‘good’ and virtuous life, following a set of principles that he called ‘virtues’.

This book discusses those virtues, including some more modern additions and supplements to Aristotle’s list. We hope that it will help you live your best life, and incorporate the virtues into your day, every day.

# PART 1:

## THE CONCEPT OF LIVING WELL

There is a saying that nobody looked back from their deathbeds and said that they wished they had spent more time in the office.

Most people would probably sympathise with that point of view. But there are many other things that you might already look back on, if not with regret exactly, at least with a vague feeling that you would prefer to be able to say that you had not done that.

How can you avoid looking back at the end of your life with too many regrets? This is an issue that humans have been addressing for hundreds, if not thousands, of years and at least since the days of Aristotle.

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was a Greek philosopher and scientist. He wrote a number of treatises on ethics and is considered to be one of the greatest intellectuals in Western history. His ideas about ways to live have been particularly influential.

# 1

## LIVING WELL, LIVING ETHICALLY

### SIX WAYS OF LIVING

**Aristotle suggested that there were six basic pursuits or ambitions that might shape individual lives. He explained these as:**

- Pleasure, always looking for the ‘feel-good’ factor;
- Wealth and material things;
- Status, respect, and fame or influence;
- Power, and being able to persuade others of your point of view, or get your own way;
- Knowledge; and
- A morally virtuous and ethical approach.

No life is going to be entirely shaped by any one of these, but it is likely that most of us will see one of those approaches as our dominant tendency.

Aristotle also suggested that each approach had some drawbacks. These might stop those following the approach from reaching their full potential. For example, he suggested that seeking out only pleasure left no room for thinking or reason. Those who chose to pursue status might find that they were left high and dry when their followers deserted them, for whatever reason.

Instead, Aristotle suggested that we should try to live and act thoughtfully. He proposed that we should live in a way that enables us to explore and reflect on the ordinary happenings of life, as well as the extraordinary. We should also try to act out ordinary things in an extraordinary way.





## ARISTOTLE'S IDEAL LIFE

Aristotle suggested that you could look back and say that you had lived a 'good' life if you had shown:

- Courage, and not cowardice or impulsiveness and extreme risk-taking;
- Self-control, instead of self-indulgence or selfishness, including the patience to wait for the things you want;
- Generosity, and not wasted resources or opportunities;
- Friendliness and politeness, not rudeness, flattery, or other unpleasantness towards others;
- Tact and discretion;
- Truthfulness and integrity;
- Good temper, even in the face of provocation, which often means a sense of humour; and
- Fairness.

Aristotle described these as the 'virtues' by which he believed people ought to try to live.

Other people have suggested that compassion and gratitude should also be included.

Part 2. Understanding Aristotle's Virtues explains and defines each of these virtues.

Some or all of these 'virtues' may seem familiar. These ideas have been around under different guises for a very long time. However, just because they have been around a while does not mean that they are less valid. Indeed, many would argue that it gives them greater strength because they have been proven over time.

These 'virtues' have also been described as 'natural laws' because they are so deeply embedded in our collective psyche. Part 3. Putting virtues into practice describes how and why they are important in leaders and for others professionally. They are also equally important to all of us outside work, and Chapter 19. Ethical Consumption explains more about this.

**The full eBook  
is available at**

**[www.skillsyouneed.com](http://www.skillsyouneed.com)**



© 2024 Skills You Need Ltd.