

# Practicing Virtues

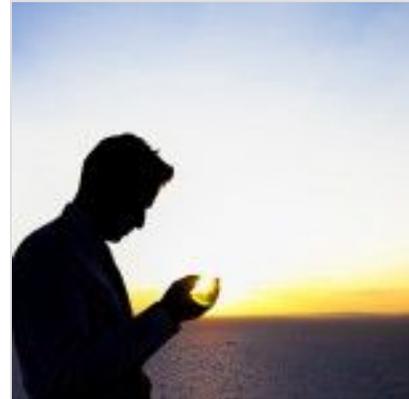
## Some Virtues You May Want to Practice<sup>1</sup>

This excellent advice is taken from the "[Virtues for Life](#)" website.

### [Forgive Yourself](#)

*"I, who have never willfully pained another, have no business to pain myself." ~Marcus Aurelius*

Does something you did in the past trouble you? So much so that you feel haunted by guilt, remorse and self-blame. Maybe you have been beating yourself up for years and being overly self-critical about what happened. If so, it's time to show yourself some compassion in the way of self-forgiveness. We cannot change the past, but we can sure make our future better. By forgiving yourself and letting go of an emotional burden, you can find greater peace of mind and happiness.



### Take the Challenge

Write yourself a heartfelt letter of forgiveness as if a friend was reaching out to forgive you for the hurt you caused him or her. The letter is meant to be one of compassion, support and understanding, not of self-hatred, negativity or regret. Let yourself go. Use encouraging words. Try not to self-edit, just letting your emotions and words flow.

You can cover these three points in the letter:

- What you learned about yourself knowing you did the best you could with the self-awareness you had at the time
- What you have accomplished in your life and how proud of yourself you are
- [Express your gratitude](#) for all that is good about you, your character, your life

Here is an [example letter of self-forgiveness](#) to help you get started.

Once you have the letter completed, you can choose to keep it or throw it away, whatever makes you feel best. Writing this letter is a positive step in healing your past. The letter may not erase all your hurt but overtime, with awareness of this hurt and continued work on releasing negative emotions, the pain will become less and less. So bless your past, forgive yourself and [focus on the better life you are making for yourself](#).

### Benefits of Practicing Self-forgiveness

- You feel less angry and depressed by releasing negative thoughts and emotions

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<sup>1</sup> See "[Virtues for Life](#)"

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- You stop self-destructive behavior used to dull the pain
- You learn to let go of mistakes because you are only human
- You gain a greater sense of self-worth, confidence and ability to love yourself

## Do What Scares You

“Do one thing every day that scares you.” ~Eleanor Roosevelt

Doing what we fear can be scary. But any time we step out of our comfort zone, the place where we feel most at home, we grow. Sometimes we grow exponentially to the point where we may not even recognize ourselves. But why do we want to make ourselves more stressed out and anxious by doing something we fear? Well, anxiety and fear are not so bad and part of being human, necessary for us to reach our potential. Pushing through our fears helps us to live with less regret and builds confidence, making us feel better about ourselves.



## Take the challenge

Make a list of a few things that scare you. They can be both large and small but really think about how you can come out of your comfort zone. For example, for some it's public speaking so that person might consider taking a [Toastmasters](#) class. For others, it could be to run a marathon or perhaps talk to someone new. Once you have the list created, then choose a week that you can start to do these things on your list. You can choose to do one every day or one a month—whatever you wish. What's important is that you are setting an intention to achieve what you fear and following through.

## Benefits of Practicing Courage

- You feel empowered and more confident
- You increase your capacity to face your fears and take risks
- You open the door to new experiences and opportunities

## Accept Your Life

*“Be willing to have it so. Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune.” ~William James*

It's difficult to accept what we dislike about our lives. We may not be where we want to be, stuck in jobs we don't like anymore, tolerating relationships that aren't working or living in



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a place we'd rather not be. We wish we were somewhere other than where we are. Or, something happened to us, a misfortune, that we are struggling to accept. This resistance to our circumstances leads to unhappiness, frustration and angst.

The best thing that we can do for ourselves and our psyches is to try and accept our circumstances. As William James says, "Be willing to have it so." Once we accept our lives as they are, we feel better, freer and even more empowered.

## Take the challenge

Write down five things that you are not accepting in your life. Now next to these things, write down a positive statement that will help you to see your situation from a new perspective. For example, "I got laid off from my job and am having a hard time finding a new one." A positive statement might be: "This is an opportunity for self-reflection and to find a job more suited to me." Read these positive statements whenever you find yourself resisting your circumstances.

## Benefits of Practicing Acceptance

- You feel less negative emotions
- You are more peaceful and at ease
- You open the door to new experiences and opportunities

## Write Down Your Goals

*"Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans."* ~Peter F. Drucker

Writing goals down is the first step toward achieving them and can even help you understand what you want says Author Henriette Anne Klauser in her book, [Write It Down, Make It Happen: Knowing What You Want And Getting It](#). When we dream big, set our goals and make a commitment to achieve them in the face of all obstacles, we will succeed.



## Take the challenge

Choose the goals that matter most to you and will have the greatest positive impact on your life (1-10 is recommended). Once you choose these goals make sure to write them down where you can see them daily so they stay in the forefront of your mind.

Here is a post that you may like to read to help you achieve these goals: [5 Steps to Success in Achieving Goals](#).

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## Benefits of Practicing Commitment

- You can achieve amazing things by committing to what you want in life.
- You will live with less regret having fulfilled your dreams and heart's desires.
- You will inspire others by being a person who goes after what they want in life.

## Give the Gift of Kindness

*“When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace.” ~Dalai Lama XIV*

In the spirit of giving, think about a gesture of kindness you can make to someone who you know or to a complete stranger. This is typically thought of as a “random act of kindness” or a good deed towards someone or something with the motivation to spread goodwill and/or brighten someone’s day. This gift of kindness can bring about the greatest positive impact on a person’s mood or spirit.



## Take the challenge

To practice kindness, here are some ideas: Pay for the person behind you at the drive thru, praise someone you work with for a job well done, volunteer at a homeless shelter, [express your gratitude](#) to someone who could use the appreciation, and cheer up a loved one with an unexpected gift. You can read our post [“100 Ways to Be Kinder”](#) for many more kindness ideas.

## Benefits of Practicing Kindness

- You will spread goodwill and, at the same time, inspire others to do the same.
- You increase your health and well-being, as research has shown.
- You promote feelings of happiness, peace, love, unity, and hope.

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## Mentor or Teach Someone

*“Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” ~Martin Luther King, Jr.*



What are you good at? Can you play an instrument, cook well, write a resume, or throw a football 100-yards? Someone can benefit from what you know and be grateful for your time and generosity in sharing your experience. You will not only be providing a great service to another person, but you will feel good about having made a difference in his or her life. How rewarding it must be to help someone read, for example?

## Take the challenge

How do you get started as a mentor? Many communities have mentoring programs available like [Big Brothers, Big Sisters](#). You can even help a family member, friend or neighbor to learn something new or with a project. You can find many opportunities for mentoring on the website, [volunteermatch.org](#) such as helping people to read and working with children.

## Benefits of Practicing Service

- You will create a connection with the person you are helping, building and strengthening relationships.
- You will gain the satisfaction of helping people and making a difference in their lives and the community you live in.
- You help to transform your own life with feelings of pride, accomplishment and goodwill.

## Express Your Gratitude

*“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it” ~William Arthur Ward*

Expressing gratitude to someone can make their day. Whether it be in person or through an e-mail or letter, the receiver of this gratitude will swell with appreciation. Can you think of someone you can thank today? Perhaps it's a friend for his or her unshakable support? Or a spouse you may be neglecting?



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How about your postal worker, or the waitress who served you breakfast, your child's teacher, your parents, a neighbor? Take time to say thanks to someone, and you will be glad you did.

## Benefits of Practicing Gratitude

- You will make a difference in someone's day and help them to feel good.
- You create stronger relationships based in your caring about other people's feelings.
- You become healthier by lowering your blood pressure, as scientifically proven.
- You become happier by experiencing more positive emotions.