

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

Set your heart on doing good. Do it over and over again, and you will be filled with joy. A fool is happy until his mischief turns against him. And a good man may suffer until his goodness flowers.

Buddha

Like the Buddha, the ancient Greeks believed that happiness comes from living a virtuous life – “to realize your potential, to become what it is in your nature to become (Haidt, 2006, 157).”

“Most cultures wrote about virtues that should be cultivated, and many of those virtues were and still are valued across most cultures (e.g., honesty, justice, courage, benevolence, self-restraint, and respect for authority). These approaches then proceeded to specify actions that were good and bad with respect to those virtues (Haidt, 2006, 159).” They believed that virtues must ultimately be developed through daily practice, not simply through study or observance of role models.

Learning to be virtuous occurs within the unfolding of day-to-day life and a person's self-identity. It has to do with a person's character. Virtue is not a form of abstract reason; rather, virtue is a kind of practical wisdom that is developed within oneself and through experience.

Ben Franklin had an extraordinary “ability to see potential and then realize it (Haidt, 2006, 157).” One place where he saw potential was within himself. To cultivate his potential he “embarked on what he called a “bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection (Haidt, 2006, 157).” In carrying out this project, he identified the virtues that he wanted to cultivate and then tried to live them out in his day-to-day life.

To accomplish this, he developed a training regimen in which he linked specific behaviors that supported or went against him living out his virtues. He then created a table similar to the ones you will see below on pages 4-6 of this document. His table had columns for each day of the week and 13 rows – one for each of the virtues he wished to live out.

“[H]e put a black spot in the appropriate square each time he failed to live a whole day in accordance with a particular virtue. He concentrated on only one virtue a week, hoping to keep its row clear of spots while paying no special attention to the other virtues, though he filled in their rows whenever violations occurred (157-158).”

At the end of 13 weeks, after he had focused on each of his virtues for one week, he would repeat the process. He found through practicing this discipline [of becoming] that his tables got less and less spotty as he behaved more and more consistently with his virtues.

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

Identify four virtues that you wish to cultivate. Please explain what they mean to you and why you chose each of these four. In other words, why are they important to you? You might check out http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_virtues

1.

2.

3.

4.

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

For each of your selected virtues, list out the behaviors in which you should and should not engage in to live consistently with it. As Ben Franklin noted, it is not enough simply to *want* or *intend* to live a virtuous life, it is requires a *discipline* of becoming virtuous to break habits inconsistent with and establish habits in line with with our desired virtues.

Virtue One Behaviors

Virtue Two Behaviors

Virtue Three Behaviors

Virtue Four Behaviors

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

In the columns below, list out your four virtues. On each morning over the next four weeks, review the above virtues and their constitutive behaviors. At the end of each day, put a black spot in each square of each virtue that you failed to behave in accordance with. Each week focus on one of the values. At the end of each week, journal about your experience in attempting to live out these virtues.

Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

Week 5	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Week 6	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

Weekly Reflections

Your weekly reflections should express your subjective experience over the last week of attempting to be virtuous, including examples of significant learning moments, “successes” and “failures.” In addition, your reflection should also address the following questions to deepen your learning, self-understanding and personal development: What was most challenging? What was most surprising? What are you most proud of/excited about? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about your practice of attempting to be virtuous? What was the difference in the impact on others, when you lived out your virtues in comparison to when you did not? How did others support or hinder you being virtuous. What personal habits or structures in your life supported or inhibited you being virtuous? How can you employ what you learned to be more virtuous in future weeks? What tools, structures, techniques and others' support could you employ to be more virtuous? What will you do differently next week?

These questions are provided to stimulate the depth of your reflection, learning and self-development. Also, please don't feel limited to these questions, as answering additional questions may assist your learning and self-development. **Although each week you focus on one virtue, your reflection should address all virtues to some extent**– this will increase your self-understanding. Your grade will be based on the depth and meaningfulness of all of your reflections.

Week 1 Reflection

EXCELLENT EXAMPLE REFLECTION

This week 3/13/2017-3/19/2017 I chose to focus on the virtue of patience. This is something I have been struggling with recently. Specifically, I have been struggling with patience in regard to the falling out of a 5-year relationship. My successes this week pertain to this specifically and I am happy to say my failure does not. To keep this virtue in the forefront of my mind this week, each morning I wrote a quote pertaining to the virtue of patience on the whiteboard in my bedroom and beside it, on my chalkboard, I wrote in large capital letters the word PATIENCE. I feel as though I made conscious effort to be patience with myself and with others. Consciously I was taking a step back, taking a deep breath and thinking before I reacted to an unpleasant situation. I then later acknowledged myself for being able to exhibit such patience. What was most surprising to me is the overall difference in my level of positivity. After a week of consciously working toward being more patient and be successful at it, I feel refreshed in a sense. Since I was able to stop and think I did not become angry or frustrated therefore these emotions did not linger with me throughout the day or throughout the week. I am most excited about how well I did. Although I slipped up on one occasion, I feel as though it did not have a large an impact as it typically has in the past because I am consciously thinking about how to improve my ability to be patient with myself. I work at a restaurant in Pawtucket; on Friday I was *forced* into working 11 am – 9 pm. During these 10 hours, I slipped up and did not exemplify my virtue of patience. I was initially scheduled to work 11

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

am – 3 pm and then had plans to celebrate the holiday however the owner of the restaurant, a kind but serious and intimidating man, asked me to stay for the night shift. I explained to him that I had plans with family and friends for the evening but this business is his life and he did not really care that I had previous plans because he needed me there. I became easily frustrated and angry with the situation but I did not act on these emotions. However, during the evening porting of the shift, there was a multitude of takeout phone orders which I had to receive, put into the system and package up. On weekends, the owner remains in-house and often stands in the kitchen watching as plates come out the window. In regards to doing take out, he was questioning every order I put together. I understand he seeks perfection or close to it in regards to the service his restaurant provides but I have been working there for over a year and I am one of their best employees in terms of sales and customer compliments. He knows I know what I am doing. With high traffic and high volume of orders, the kitchen and takeout section was quite hectic. As he asked questions I would lose my train of thought because I would be answering him. After I packaged and sealed a bag, he would then decide he wanted to double check. I quickly became impatient and annoyed. I did not speak with disrespect but I ask him to please let me do my job or work with me rather than just questioning me and he could tell that I was angry. My mind was going a mile a minute and I did not take the time to step back, breathe and just focus on what I was doing. At the end of the night, there were no hard feelings. I do not feel as though I failed necessarily but rather that I slipped up. I did not contradict all or even the majority of my “should” list while I did not exhibit all or the majority of my “should not” list. I think environmental elements played a large role in this situation.

My successes this week were in terms of a relationship. As I previously mentioned, the basis for this virtue of patience was in regards to this. With the recent falling out of a 5-year relationship, I have not been patient with myself or with him. What is most challenging for me in terms of being patient with such a situation is that I need (or maybe I don't need, I just want) to know and to understand why. After having someone consistently in your life, practically every day for 5 years, it is difficult to understand the abrupt disconnection. By disconnect I mean communication. I know the type of person this individual is and I understand that when he is angry, mad or upset about something, he shut that person or thing out and distracts himself. Although I know this, for some time I was not able to mentally step back and think things through before reacting to something he said or did. I was frustrated with him, I jumped to conclusions as to why things happened how they did, I was quick to respond with anger and I persistently kept pushing to understand why. Unfortunately, I still do not know why but because of this class and my self-change initiative, I have come to accept things the way they are. I cannot force him to tell me how he feels or tell me what he wants if he does not want too then he is not going to, it's as simple as that. I have been able to mentally step back, physically take deep breaths,

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

think before I say something I may later regret, and consider different perspectives of the situation. Through looking at the situation from different perspectives and not being so narrow-minded, I am open to inferring what is truly going on with him. Maybe in time, I will know but for now, I remain patient with myself and with him. He is close with my mother and father, they continue to communicate even though we currently do not. My mother was texting him and being the mother she is and trying to help, she asked him to call and speak to me but for me, this is not helpful. Regardless, I answered the phone call and exemplified my virtue of patience. Foremost, I acknowledge my ability to be patient and I practiced my list of "should" actions. Later in the week, he decided to follow up his phone call with a text message, at which point I was annoyed but I remained patient, graceful and gave myself the self-respect I was due. When he called earlier in the week I failed to be respectful of myself. I got down on myself for the whole situation and I blamed myself for things I should not be blamed for.

This week I was my typical friendly self but several times I did not exemplify the virtue to the degree I wish to. Out of habit, I listen to music everywhere I go. Music is a sort of release for me and it cancels out the world and allows me to just be with myself. A couple days I was walking on campus early morning or late in the evening and I was not consciously thinking about being outwardly friendly. I did not go above my norm to say hello or to smile at more students in passing.

In terms of balance, I am already a pretty organized person when it comes to my schedule and writing things down but several days this week, I did not balance my schedule very well. I often focused on one assignment or one task too much and neglected to give attention to equally as important things. This was in part due to my lack of allocating time to specific tasks. Stressing over time is something I do frequently but this week I really made an effort to not allow this to have an impact on my days or my schedule. I think balance will be the hardest virtue for me to fully accomplish but I am determined to live virtuously. I just started working at my restaurant again two weeks ago – post surgery I was not up to all the walking of waitressing. Going forward I need to balance working at the restaurant, my internship, physical therapy, the gym, classes, course work, personal time, time with friends and family, and applying to jobs.

This week I learned that the effects of my emotions linger on for longer than just a specific event. I noticed this as I was calmer and at peace with myself and my life when I was able to be patient, balance my thoughts/emotions and daily tasks as well as show myself a little more respect than usual. Through practicing my virtues I realized how much of an impact even just one virtue can have on my overall attitude. When I lived out these virtues, I felt as though the energy I was giving off was more positive and that sometimes translated into the energy I received back from

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

others. When I do not live out these virtues, my attitude is not as positive and at a time is negative and it is obvious the negative impact that has on others around me. When I am not patient with the individual whom I at this time do not have relations with, he is quick to remove himself from the conversation and continue to shut me out which in turn has a negative impact on my attitude. My virtue of patience was hindered by the actions of my boss, my mother and him. When others are glued to their phone and not looking up while walking it hinders my ability to practice friendliness as there is theoretically no one there for me to engage. Some things that supported by the ability to be virtuous where: my daily quotes, the visual writing of the word PATIENCE, the daily planner, my ability to exercise, meditation and personal reflection/prayer at the end of the day. Some things in my daily life that inhibit my ability to be virtuous are my negative/passive aggressive housemate, my use of social media and music, at times – my academic schedule, and my inability to exercise to the degree I would like to.

Going forward I am going to continue writing a quote each morning along the virtue I am focusing on that week. I am going to keep my planner up to date and include detailed descriptions and times for my tasks/events. Each morning I will review my planner and put into perspective the things I need to get done. I will continue to exemplify patience because I feel as though my level of patience transcends into my other virtues. Next week I am going to focus on friendliness. I will remind myself each morning of this virtue. I typically walk with headphone into class in the morning / throughout the day so if I need to, I will leave the headphone at home so I am not tempted. I will dress appropriately for the cold weather (I often overestimate how warm it really is) so I am not bunched up while walking to keep myself warm. Next week I may try to take a different route to class so I encounter different and potentially more people, therefore, giving me more opportunity to be outwardly friendly.

Week 2 Reflection

Week 3 Reflection

Week 4 Reflection

For each of these final two weeks, you can choose which virtue you wish to focus on.

Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues Assignment

Week 5 Reflection

Week 6 Reflection

Overall Reflection

Please provide a description of your experience of and learning from cultivating your virtues over the last six weeks. What did you learn about your self? What has changed? How have you grown? What helped you live out your virtues? What were your major personal, relational and contextual impediments in attempting to live out your virtues? What could you have done to have been more effective in living out your virtues? What was the impact on those with whom you interacted? What can you take from this experience to facilitate your being more virtuous in the future?