Six Tenets of Happiness – Classified in Character Strengths

Wisdom and Knowledge – cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge

- Creativity [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
- Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
- Judgment and Open-Mindedness [critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one’s mind in light of evidence; weighing evidence fairly
- Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one’s own or formally; related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systemically to what one knows
- Perspective [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and others

Courage – emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

- Bravery [valor]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain; speaking up for what’s right even if there’s opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery
- Perseverance [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persevering in a course of action in spite of obstacles; taking pleasure in completing tasks
- Honesty [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions
- Zest [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated

Love/Humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve tending to and befriending others

- Love [capacity to love and be loved]: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
- Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, niceness]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping; taking care of others
- Social intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and/or feelings of others and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes people tick
Justice – civic strengths that underlie community life

- Teamwork [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, fidelity]: Working well as a member of a team or group; being loyal to the group; doing one’s share
- Fairness: Treating all people the same according to the notions of fairness and justice; not letting feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
- Leadership: Encouraging a group, of which one is a member, to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen

Temperance – strengths that protect against excess

- Forgiveness and Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting others’ shortcomings; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
- Modesty and Humility: Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
- Prudence: Being careful about one’s choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that you might regret
- Self-Regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions

Transcendence/Spirituality – strengths that forge connections to the universe and provide meaning

- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to math to science to everyday experiences
- Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
- Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about; ability to find the silver lining
- Humor [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the lighter side of life; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
- Religiousness and Spirituality [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort