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"The Constitution may guarantee the right to pursue happiness, but it doesn't offer clear paths to follow through the wilderness. Seligman does. By turns smart, funny, irreverent, and insightful, he is the perfect guide, someone who can make such a difference in life, and lives. A world hungry for happiness will love his new book."

—Diane Ackerman, author of *A Natural History of the Senses*
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—George Valliant, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development and author of *Agging Well*

"Seligman takes the best, most recent science in psychology and applies it to our oldest, most basic human questions: How can we be happy? And how can we be good? His book is groundbreaking, heart-lifting, and, most important, deeply useful. With pun intended, I'm optimistic about its success."

—Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Opbella*

AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS

*Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize
Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*

Martin E. P. Seligman, Ph.D.

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POSITIVE FEELING AND POSITIVE CHARACTER

IN 1932, Cecilia O'Payne took her final vows in Milwaukee. As a novice in the School Sisters of Notre Dame, she committed the rest of her life to the teaching of young children. Asked to write a short sketch of her life on this momentous occasion, she wrote:

God started my life off well by bestowing upon me grace of inestimable value. . . . The past year which I spent as a candidate studying at Notre Dame has been a very happy one. Now I look forward with eager joy to receiving the Holy Habit of Our Lady and to a life of union with Love Divine.

In the same year, in the same city, and taking the same vows, Marguerite Donnelly wrote her autobiographical sketch:

I was born on September 26, 1909, the eldest of seven children, five girls and two boys. . . . My candidate year was spent in the mother-house, teaching chemistry and second year Latin at Notre Dame Institute. With God's grace, I intend to do my best for our Order, for the spread of religion and for my personal sanctification.

These two nuns, along with 178 of their sisters, thereby became subjects in the most remarkable study of happiness and longevity ever done.

Investigating how long people will live and understanding what conditions shorten and lengthen life is an enormously important but enormously knotty scientific problem. It is well documented, for example, that people from Utah live longer than people from the neighboring state of Nevada.

But why? Is it the clean mountain air of Utah as opposed to the exhaust fumes of Las Vegas? Is it the staid Mormon life as opposed to the more frenetic lifestyle of the average Nevadan? Is it the stereotypical diet in Nevada—junk food, late-night snacks, alcohol, coffee, and tobacco—as opposed to wholesome, farm-fresh food, and the scarcity of alcohol, coffee, and tobacco in Utah? Too many insidious (as well as healthful) factors are confounded between Nevada and Utah for scientists to isolate the cause.

Unlike Nevadans or even Utahans, however, nuns lead routine and sheltered lives. They all eat roughly the same bland diet. They don't smoke or drink. They have the same reproductive and marital histories. They don't get sexually transmitted diseases. They are in the same economic and social class, and they have the same access to good medical care. So almost all the usual confounds are eliminated, yet there is still wide variation in how long nuns live and how healthy they are. Cecilia is still alive at age ninety-eight and has never been sick a day in her life. In contrast, Marguerite had a stroke at age fifty-nine, and died soon thereafter. We can be sure their lifestyle, diet, and medical care were not the culprits. When the novitiate essays of all 180 nuns were carefully read, however, a very strong and surprising difference emerged. Looking back at what Cecilia and Marguerite wrote, can you spot it?

Sister Cecilia used the words "very happy" and "eager joy," both expressions of effervescent good cheer. Sister Marguerite's autobiography, in contrast, contained not even a whisper of positive emotion. When the amount of positive feeling was quantified by raters who did not know how long the nuns lived, it was discovered that 90 percent of the most cheerful quarter was alive at age eighty-five versus only 34 percent of the least cheerful quarter. Similarly, 54 percent of the most cheerful quarter was alive at age ninety-four, as opposed to 11 percent of the least cheerful quarter.

Was it really the upbeat nature of their sketches that made the difference? Perhaps it was a difference in the degree of unhappiness expressed, or in how much they looked forward to the future, or how devout they were, or how intellectually complex the essays were. But research showed that none of these factors made a difference, only the amount of positive feeling expressed in the sketch. So it seems that a happy nun is a long-lived nun.

College yearbook photos are a gold mine for Positive Psychology researchers. "Look at the birdie and smile," the photographer tells you, and dutifully you put on your best smile. Smiling on demand, it turns out, is easier said than done. Some of us break into a radiant smile of authentic good cheer, while the rest of us pose politely. There are two kinds of smiles. The first, called a Duchenne smile (after its discoverer, Guillaume Duchenne), is genuine. The corners of your mouth turn up and the skin around the corners of your eyes crinkles (like crow's feet). The muscles that do this, the *orbicularis oculi* and the *zygomaticus*, are exceedingly difficult to control voluntarily. The other smile, called the Pan American smile (after the flight attendants in television ads for the now-defunct airline), is inauthentic, with none of the Duchenne features. Indeed, it is probably more related to the rictus that lower primates display when frightened than it is to happiness.

When trained psychologists look through collections of photos, they can at a glance separate out the Duchenne from the non-Duchenne smilers. Dacher Keltner and LeeAnne Harker of the University of California at Berkeley, for example, studied 141 senior-class photos from the 1960 yearbook of Mills College. All but three of the women were smiling, and half of the smilers were Duchenne smilers. All the women were contacted at ages twenty-seven, forty-three, and fifty-two and asked about their marriages and their life satisfaction. When Harker and Keltner inherited the study in the 1990s, they wondered if they could predict from the senior-year smile alone what these women's married lives would turn out to be like. Astonishingly, Duchenne women, on average, were more likely to be married, to stay married, and to experience more personal well-being over the next thirty years. Those indicators of happiness were predicted by a mere crinkling of the eyes.

Questioning their results, Harker and Keltner considered whether the Duchenne women were prettier, and their good looks rather than the genuineness of their smile predicted more life satisfaction. So the investigators went back and rated how pretty each of the women seemed, and they found that looks had nothing to do with good marriages or life satisfaction. A genuinely smiling woman, it turned out, was simply more likely to be well-wed and happy.

These two studies are surprising in their shared conclusion that just one portrait of a momentary positive emotion convincingly predicts longevity and marital satisfaction. The first part of this book is about these momentary positive emotions: joy, flow, glee, pleasure, contentment, serenity, hope, and ecstasy. In particular, I will focus on three questions:

- *Why* has evolution endowed us with positive feeling? What are the functions and consequences of these emotions, beyond making us feel good?
- *Who* has positive emotion in abundance, and who does not? What enables these emotions, and what disables them?
- *How* can you build more and lasting positive emotion into your life?

Everyone wants answers to these questions for their own lives and it is natural to turn to the field of psychology for answers. So it may come as a surprise to you that psychology has badly neglected the positive side of life. For every one hundred journal articles on sadness, there is just one on happiness. One of my aims is to provide responsible answers, grounded in scientific research, to these three questions. Unfortunately, unlike relieving depression (where research has now provided step-by-step manuals that are reliably documented to work), what we know about building happiness is spotty. On some topics I can present solid facts, but on others, the best I can do is to draw inferences from the latest research and suggest how it can guide your life. In all cases, I will distinguish between what is known and what is my speculation. My most grandiose aim, as you will find out in the next three chapters, is to correct the imbalance by propelling the field of psychology into supplementing its hard-won knowledge about suffering and mental illness with a great deal more knowledge about positive emotion, as well as about personal strengths and virtues.

How do strengths and virtues sneak in? Why is a book about Positive Psychology about anything more than "happiology" or *hedonics*—the science of how we feel from moment to moment? A hedonist wants as many good moments and as few bad moments as possible in his life, and simple hedonic theory says that the quality of his life is just the quantity of good moments minus the quantity of bad moments. This is more

than an ivory-tower theory, since very many people run their lives based on exactly this goal. But it is a delusion, I believe, because the sum total of our momentary feelings turns out to be a very flawed measure of how good or how bad we judge an episode—a movie, a vacation, a marriage, or an entire life—to be.

Daniel Kahneman, a distinguished professor of psychology at Princeton and the world's leading authority on hedonics, has made a career of demonstrating the many violations of simple hedonic theory. One technique he uses to test hedonic theory is the colonoscopy, in which a scope on a tube is inserted uncomfortably into the rectum and moved up and down the bowels for what seems like an eternity, but is actually only a few minutes. In one of Kahneman's experiments, 682 patients were randomly assigned to either the usual colonoscopy or to a procedure in which one extra minute was added on at the end, but with the colonoscope not moving. A stationary colonoscope provides a less uncomfortable final minute than what went before, but it does add one extra minute of discomfort. The added minute means, of course, that this group gets more total pain than the routine group. Because their experience ends relatively well, however, their memory of the episode is much rosier and, astonishingly, they are more willing to undergo the procedure again than the routine group.

In your own life, you should take particular care with endings, for their color will forever tinge your memory of the entire relationship and your willingness to reenter it. This book will talk about why hedonism fails and what this might mean for you. So Positive Psychology is about the meaning of those happy and unhappy moments, the tapes they weave, and the strengths and virtues they display that make up the quality of your life. Ludwig Wittgenstein, the great Anglo-Viennese philosopher, was by all accounts miserable. I am a collector of Wittgensteinabilia, but I have never seen a photo of him smiling (Duchenne or otherwise). Wittgenstein was melancholy, irascible, scathingly critical of everyone around him, and even more critical of himself. In a typical seminar held in his cold and barely furnished Cambridge rooms, he would pace the floor, muttering audibly, "Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein, what a terrible teacher you are." Yet his last words give the lie to happtology. Dying alone, he said to his landlady, "Tell them it's been wonderful!"

Suppose you could be hooked up to a hypothetical "experience ma-

chine" that, for the rest of your life, would stimulate your brain and give you any positive feelings you desire. Most people to whom I offer this imaginary choice refuse the machine. It is not just positive feelings we want, we want to be *entitled* to our positive feelings. Yet we have invented myriad shortcuts to feeling good; drugs, chocolate, loveless sex, shopping, masturbation, and television are all examples. (I am not, however, going to suggest that you should drop these shortcuts altogether.)

The belief that we can rely on shortcuts to happiness, joy, rapture, comfort, and ecstasy, rather than be entitled to these feelings by the exercise of personal strengths and virtues, leads to legions of people who in the middle of great wealth are starving spiritually. Positive emotion alienated from the exercise of character leads to emptiness, to inauthenticity, to depression, and, as we age, to the gnawing realization that we are fidgeting until we die.

The positive feeling that arises from the exercise of strengths and virtues, rather than from the shortcuts, is authentic. I found out about the value of this authenticity by giving courses in Positive Psychology for the last three years at the University of Pennsylvania. (These have been much more fun than the abnormal psychology courses I taught for the twenty years prior.) I tell my students about Jon Haidt, a gifted young University of Virginia professor who began his career working on disgust, giving people fried grasshoppers to eat. He then turned to moral disgust, observing people's reactions when he asked them to try on a T-shirt allegedly once worn by Adolf Hitler. Worn down by all these negative explorations, he began to look for an emotion that is the opposite of moral disgust, which he calls *elevation*. Haidt collects stories of the emotional reactions to experiencing the better side of humanity, to seeing another person do something extraordinarily positive. An eighteen-year-old freshman at the University of Virginia relates a typical story of elevation:

We were going home from working at the Salvation Army shelter on a snowy night. We passed an old woman shoveling her driveway. One of the guys asked the driver to let him out. I thought he was just going to take a shortcut home. But when I saw him pick up the shovel, well, I felt a lump in my throat and started to cry. I wanted to tell everyone about it. I felt romantic toward him.

The students in one of my classes wondered if happiness comes from the exercise of kindness more readily than it does from having fun. After a heated dispute, we each undertook an assignment for the next class: to engage in one pleasurable activity and one philanthropic activity, and write about both.

The results were life-changing. The afterglow of the "pleasurable" activity (hanging out with friends, or watching a movie, or eating a hot fudge sundae) paled in comparison with the effects of the kind action. When our philanthropic acts were spontaneous and called upon personal strengths, the whole day went better. One junior told about her nephew phoning for help with his third-grade arithmetic. After an hour of tutoring him, she was astonished to discover that "for the rest of the day, I could listen better, I was mellow, and people liked me much more than usual." The exercise of kindness is a *gratification*, in contrast to a pleasure. As a gratification, it calls on your strengths to rise to an occasion and meet a challenge. Kindness is not accompanied by a separable stream of positive emotion like joy; rather, it consists in total engagement and in the loss of self-consciousness. Time stops. One of the business students volunteered that he had come to the University of Pennsylvania to learn how to make a lot of money in order to be happy, but that he was floored to find that he liked helping other people more than spending his money shopping.

To understand well-being, then, we also need to understand personal strengths and the virtues, and this is the topic of the second part of this book. When well-being comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity. Feelings are states, momentary occurrences that need not be recurring features of personality. Traits, in contrast to states, are either negative or positive characteristics that recur across time and different situations, and strengths and virtues are the positive characteristics that bring about good feeling and gratification. Traits are abiding dispositions whose exercise makes momentary feelings more likely. The negative trait of paranoia makes the momentary state of jealousy more likely, just as the positive trait of being humorous makes the state of laughing more likely.

The trait of optimism helps explain how a single snapshot of the momentary happiness of nuns could predict how long they will live. Optimistic people tend to interpret their troubles as transient, control-

lable, and specific to one situation. Pessimistic people, in contrast, believe that their troubles last forever, undermine everything they do, and are uncontrollable. To see if optimism predicts longevity, scientists at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, selected 839 consecutive patients who referred themselves for medical care forty years ago. (On admission, Mayo Clinic patients routinely take a battery of psychological as well as physical tests, and one of these is a test of the trait of optimism.) Of these patients, 200 had died by the year 2000, and optimists had 19 percent greater longevity, in terms of their expected life span, compared to that of the pessimists. Living 19 percent longer is again comparable to the longer lives of the happy nuns.

Optimism is only one of two dozen strengths that bring about greater well-being. George Vaillant, a Harvard professor who runs the two most thorough psychological investigations of men across their entire lives, studies strengths he calls "mature defenses." These include altruism, the ability to postpone gratification, future-mindedness, and humor. Some men never grow up and never display these traits, while other men revel in them as they age. Vaillant's two groups are the Harvard classes of 1939 through 1943, and 456 contemporaneous Boston men from the inner city. Both these studies began in the late 1930s, when the participants were in their late teens, and continue to this day, with the men now over eighty. Vaillant has uncovered the best predictors of successful aging, among them income, physical health, and joy in living. The mature defenses are robust harbingers of joy in living, high income, and a vigorous old age in both the largely white and Protestant Harvard group and the much more varied inner-city group. Of the 76 inner-city men who frequently displayed these mature defenses when younger, 95% could still move heavy furniture, chop wood, walk two miles, and climb two flights of stairs without tiring when they were old men. Of the 68 inner-city men who never displayed any of these psychological strengths, only 53% could perform the same tasks. For the Harvard men at age 75, joy in living, marital satisfaction, and the subjective sense of physical health were predicted best by the mature defenses exercised and measured in middle age.

How did Positive Psychology select just twenty-four strengths out of the enormous number of traits to choose from? The last time anyone bothered to count, in 1936, more than eighteen thousand words in English referred to traits. Choosing which traits to investigate is a serious

question for a distinguished group of psychologists and psychiatrists who are creating a system that is intended to be the opposite of the *DSM* (the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association*, which serves as a classification scheme of mental illness). Valor, kindness, originality? Surely. But what about intelligence, perfect pitch, or punctuality? Three criteria for strengths are as follows:

- They are valued in almost every culture
- They are valued in their own right, not just as a means to other ends
- They are malleable

So intelligence and perfect pitch are out, because they are not very learnable. Punctuality is learnable, but, like perfect pitch, it is generally a means to another end (like efficiency) and is not valued in almost every culture.

While psychology may have neglected virtue, religion and philosophy most assuredly have not, and there is astonishing convergence across the millennia and across cultures about virtue and strength. Confucius, Aristotle, Aquinas, the Bushido samurai code, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and other venerable traditions disagree on the details, but all of these codes include six core virtues:

- Wisdom and knowledge
- Courage
- Love and humanity
- Justice
- Temperance
- Spirituality and transcendence

Each core virtue can be subdivided for the purpose of classification and measurement. Wisdom, for example, can be broken down into the strengths of curiosity, love of learning, judgment, originality, social intelligence, and perspective. Love includes kindness, generosity, nurturance, and the capacity to be loved as well as to love. Convergence across thousands of years and among unrelated philosophical traditions is remarkable and Positive Psychology takes this cross-cultural agreement as its guide.

These strengths and virtues serve us in times of ill fortune as well as better moments. In fact, hard times are uniquely suited to the display of many strengths. Until recently I thought that Positive Psychology was a creature of good times: When nations are at war, impoverished, and in social turmoil, I assumed, their most natural concerns are with defense and damage, and the science they find most congenial is about healing broken things. In contrast, when nations are at peace, in surplus, and not in social turmoil, then they become concerned with building the best things in life. Florence under Lorenzo de Medici decided to devote its surplus not to becoming the most awesome military power in Europe, but to creating beauty.

Muscle physiology distinguishes between *tonic* activity (the baseline of electrical activity when the muscle is idling) and *phasic* activity (the burst of electrical activity when the muscle is challenged and contracts). Most of psychology is about tonic activity; introversion, high IQ, depression, and anger, for example, are all measured in the absence of any real-world challenge, and the hope of the psychometrician is to predict what a person will actually do when confronted with a phasic challenge. How well do tonic measures fare? Does a high IQ predict a truly canny response to a customer saying no? How well does tonic depression predict collapse when a person is fired? "Moderately well, but imperfectly" is the best general answer. Psychology as usual predicts many of the cases, but there are huge numbers of high-IQ people who fail, and another huge number of low-IQ people who succeed when life challenges them to do something actually intelligent in the world. The reason for all these errors is that tonic measures are only moderate predictors of phasic action. I call this imperfection in prediction the Harry Truman effect. Truman, after an undistinguished life, to almost everyone's surprise rose to the occasion when FDR died and ended up becoming one of the great presidents.

We need a psychology of rising to the occasion, because that is the missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle of predicting human behavior. In the evolutionary struggle for winning a mate or surviving a predator's attack, those of our ancestors who rose to the occasion passed on their genes; the losers did not. Their tonic characteristics—depression level, sleep patterns, waist size—probably did not count for much, except insofar as they fed the Harry Truman effect. This means that we all contain ancient strengths inside of us that we may not know about until we

are truly challenged. Why were the adults who faced World War II the "greatest generation"? Not because they were made of different stuff than we are, but because they faced a time of trouble that evoked the ancient strengths within.

When you read about these strengths in Chapters 8 and 9 and take the strengths survey, you will find that some of your strengths are tonic and some are phasic. Kindness, curiosity, loyalty, and spirituality, for example, tend to be tonic; you can display these several dozen times a day. Perseverance, perspective, fairness, and valor, at the other extreme, tend to be phasic; you cannot demonstrate valor while standing in a check-out line or sitting in an airplane (unless terrorists hijack it). One phasic action in a lifetime may be enough to demonstrate valor.

When you read about these strengths, you will also find some that are deeply characteristic of you, whereas others are not. I call the former your *signature strengths*, and one of my purposes is to distinguish these from strengths that are less a part of you. I do not believe that you should devote overly much effort to correcting your weaknesses. Rather, I believe that the highest success in living and the deepest emotional satisfaction comes from building and using your signature strengths. For this reason, the second part of this book focuses on how to identify these strengths.

The third part of the book is about no less a question than "What is the good life?" In my view, you can find it by following a startlingly simple path. The "pleasant life" might be had by drinking champagne and driving a Porsche, but not the good life. Rather, the good life is using your signature strengths every day to produce authentic happiness and abundant gratification. This is something you can learn to do in each of the main realms of your life: work, love, and raising children.

One of my signature strengths is the love of learning, and by teaching I have built it into the fabric of my life. I try to do some of it every day. Simplifying a complex concept for my students, or telling my eight-year-old about bidding in bridge, ignites a glow inside me. More than that, when I teach well, it invigorates me, and the well-being it brings is authentic because it comes from what I am best at. In contrast, organizing people is not one of my signature strengths. Brilliant mentors have helped me become more adequate at it, so if I must, I can chair a committee effectively. But when it is over, I feel drained, not invigorated. What satisfaction I derive from it feels less authentic than what I get

from teaching, and shepherding a good committee report does not put me in better touch with myself or anything larger.

The well-being that using your signature strengths engenders is anchored in authenticity. But just as well-being needs to be anchored in strengths and virtues, these in turn must be anchored in something larger. Just as the good life is something beyond the pleasant life, the meaningful life is beyond the good life.

What does Positive Psychology tell us about finding purpose in life, about leading a meaningful life beyond the good life? I am not sophisticated enough to put forward a complete theory of meaning, but I do know that it consists in attachment to something larger, and the larger the entity to which you can attach yourself, the more meaning in your life. Many people who want meaning and purpose in their lives have turned to New Age thinking or have returned to organized religions. They hunger for the miraculous, or for divine intervention. A hidden cost of contemporary psychology's obsession with pathology is that it has left these pilgrims high and dry.

Like many of these stranded people, I also hunger for meaning in my life that will transcend the arbitrary purposes I have chosen for myself. Like many scientifically minded Westerners, however, the idea of a transcendent purpose (or, beyond this, of a God who grounds such purpose) has always seemed untenable to me. Positive Psychology points the way toward a secular approach to noble purpose and transcendent meaning—and, even more astonishingly, toward a God who is not supernatural. These hopes are expressed in my final chapter.

As your voyage through this book begins, please take a quick happiness survey. This survey was developed by Michael W. Fordyce, and it has been taken by tens of thousands of people. You can take the test on the next page or go to the website www.authentichappiness.org. The website will keep track of changes in your score as you read this book, and it will also provide you with up-to-the-moment comparisons of others who have taken the test, broken down by age, gender, and education. In thinking about such comparisons, of course, remember that happiness is not a competition. Authentic happiness derives from raising the bar for yourself, not rating yourself against others.

FORDYCE EMOTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel? Check the *one* statement below that best describes your average happiness.

- ___ 10. Extremely happy (feeling ecstatic, joyous, fantastic)
- ___ 9. Very happy (feeling really good, elated)
- ___ 8. Pretty happy (spirits high, feeling good)
- ___ 7. Mildly happy (feeling fairly good and somewhat cheerful)
- ___ 6. Slightly happy (just a bit above normal)
- ___ 5. Neutral (not particularly happy or unhappy)
- ___ 4. Slightly unhappy (just a bit below neutral)
- ___ 3. Mildly unhappy (just a bit low)
- ___ 2. Pretty unhappy (somewhat "blue," spirits down)
- ___ 1. Very unhappy (depressed, spirits very low)
- ___ 0. Extremely unhappy (utterly depressed, completely down)

Consider your emotions a moment further. On average, what percentage of the time do you feel happy? What percentage of the time do you feel unhappy? What percentage of the time do you feel neutral (neither happy nor unhappy)? Write down your best estimates, as well as you can, in the spaces below. Make sure the three figures add up to 100 percent.

On average:

The percent of time I feel happy _____%

The percent of time I feel unhappy _____%

The percent of time I feel neutral _____%

Based on a sample of 3,050 American adults, the average score (out of 10) is 6.92. The average score on time is happy, 54.13 percent; unhappy, 20.44 percent; and neutral, 25.43 percent.

There is a question that may have been bothering you as you read this chapter: What is happiness, anyway? More words have been penned about defining happiness than about almost any other philosophical question. I could fill the rest of these pages with just a fraction of the attempts to take this promiscuously overused word and make sense of

it, but it is not my intention to add to the clutter. I have taken care to use my terms in consistent and well-defined ways, and the interested reader will find the definitions in the Appendix. My most basic concern, however, is measuring happiness's constituents—the positive emotions and strengths—and then telling you what science has discovered about how you can increase them.

2

HOW PSYCHOLOGY LOST ITS WAY AND I FOUND MINE

HELLO, Marty. I know you've been waiting on tenterhooks. Here are the results . . . Squawk. Buzz. Squawk." Then silence.

I recognize the voice as that of Dorothy Cantor, the president of the 160,000-member American Psychological Association (APA), and she is right about the tenterhooks. The voting for her successor has just ended, and I was one of the candidates. But have you ever tried to use a car phone in the Tetons?

"Was that about the election results?" shouts my father-in-law, Dennis, in his baritone British accent. From the rear seat of the packed Suburban, he is just barely audible over my three small children belting out "One more day, one day more" from *Les Misérables*. I bite my lip in frustration. Who got me into this politics stuff anyway? I was an ivory-towered and ivy-covered professor—with a laboratory whirring along, plenty of grants, devoted students, a best-selling book, and tedious but sufferable faculty meetings—and a central figure in two scholarly fields: learned helplessness and learned optimism. Who needs it?

I need it. As I wait for the phone to come to life, I drift back forty years to my roots as a psychologist. There, suddenly, are Jeannie Albrigt and Barbara Willis and Sally Eckert, the unattainable romantic interests of a chubby, thirteen-year-old middle-class Jewish kid suddenly thrust into a school filled only with Protestant kids whose families had been in Albany for three hundred years, very rich Jewish kids, and Catholic athletes. I had aced the admissions examination to the Albany Academy for Boys in those sleepy Eisenbower days before pre-SATs. No

WORK AND PERSONAL SATISFACTION

WORK life is undergoing a sea change in the wealthiest nations. Money, amazingly, is losing its power. The stark findings about life satisfaction detailed in Chapter 4—that beyond the safety net, more money adds little or nothing to subjective well-being—are starting to sink in. While real income in America has risen 16 percent in the last thirty years, the percentage of people who describe themselves as “very happy” has fallen from 36 to 29 percent. “Money really cannot buy happiness,” declared the *New York Times*. But when employees catch up with the *Times* and figure out that raises, promotions, and overtime pay buy not one whit of increased life satisfaction, what then? Why will a qualified individual choose one job over another? What will cause an employee to be steadfastly loyal to the company he or she works for? For what incentive will a worker pour heart and soul into making a quality product?

Our economy is rapidly changing from a money economy to a satisfaction economy. These trends go up and down (when jobs are scarcer, personal satisfaction has a somewhat lesser weight; when jobs are abundant, personal satisfaction counts for more), but the trend for two decades is decidedly in favor of personal satisfaction. Law is now the most highly paid profession in America, having surpassed medicine during the 1990s. Yet the major New York law firms now spend more on retention than on recruitment, as their young associates—and even the partners—are leaving law in droves for work that makes them happier. The lure of a lifetime of great riches at the end of several years of grueling eighty-hour weeks as a lowly associate has lost much of its power. The newly minted coin of this realm is life satisfaction. Millions of Amer-

icans are staring at their jobs and asking, "Does my work have to be this unsatisfying? What can I do about it?" My answer is that your work can be much more satisfying than it is now, and that by using your signature strengths at work more often, you should be able to recraft your job to make it so.

This chapter lays out the idea that to maximize work satisfaction, you need to use the signature strengths you found in the last chapter on the job, preferably every day. This is just as deep a truth for secretaries and for lawyers and for nurses as it is for CEOs. Recrafting your job to deploy your strengths and virtues every day not only makes work more enjoyable, but transmogrifies a routine job or a stalled career into a calling. A calling is the most satisfying form of work because, as a gratification, it is done for its own sake rather than for the material benefits it brings. Enjoying the resulting state of flow on the job will soon, I predict, overtake material reward as the principal reason for working. Corporations that promote this state for their employees will overtake corporations that rely only on monetary reward. Even more significantly, with life and liberty now covered minimally well, we are about to witness a politics that goes beyond the safety net and takes the pursuit of happiness very seriously indeed.

I'm sure you are skeptical. What, money lose its power in a capitalistic economy? Dream on! I would remind you about another "impossible" sea change that swept education forty years ago. When I went to school (a military one at that), and for generations before, education was based on humiliation. The dunce cap, the paddle, and the F were the big guns in the arsenal of teachers. These went the way of the woolly mammoth and the dodo, and did so astonishingly quickly. They disappeared because educators discovered a better route to learning: rewarding strengths, kindly mentoring, delving deeply into one subject rather than memorizing a panoply of facts, emotional attachment of the student to a teacher or a topic, and individualized attention. There is also a better route to high productivity than money, and that is what this chapter is about.

"Royal flush!" I shouted into Bob's ear as I hovered over his body. "Seven card stud, high-low!" He didn't move. I lifted his muscular right leg by the ankle and let it drop with a thud on the bed. No reaction.

"Fold!" I shouted. Nothing.

I had played poker with Bob Miller every Tuesday night for the past twenty-five years. Bob was a runner, when he retired as a teacher of American history, he took a year off to run around the world. He once told me he would sooner lose his eyes than his legs. I had been surprised when, on a crisp October morning two weeks before, he showed up at my house with his collection of tennis rackets and presented them to my children. Even at eighty-one, he was a fanatical tennis player, and giving away his rackets was disquieting, even ominous.

October was his favorite month. He would run through the Adirondacks, never missing a run up Gore Mountain, religiously return to Philadelphia each Tuesday evening at 7:30 sharp, and then run off before dawn the next morning for the gold- and red-leaved mountains. This time he didn't make it. A truck hit him during the early hours of the morning in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and now he was lying unconscious in the Coatesville hospital. He had been in a coma for three days.

"Can we have your consent to take Mr. Miller off life support?" his neurologist asked me. "You are, according to his attorney, his closest friend, and we haven't been able to reach any of his relatives." As the enormity of what she was saying slowly seeped in, I noticed an overweight man in hospital whites out of the corner of my eye. He had removed the bedpan, and then he unobtrusively started to adjust the pictures on the walls. He eyed a snow scene critically, straightened it, and then stepped back and eyed it again, dissatisfied. I had noticed him doing much the same thing the day before, and I was happy to let my mind drift away from the subject at hand and to turn my attention to this strange orderly.

"I can see you need to think this over," the neurologist said, noticing my glazed look, and she left. I pitched myself into the lone chair and watched the orderly. He took the snow scene down and put the calendar from the back wall in its place. He eyed that critically, took it down, and then reached into a large brown grocery bag. From his shopping bag emerged a Monet water-lily print. Up it went where the snow scene and the calendar had been. Out came two large Winslow Homer seascapes. These he affixed to the wall beyond the foot of Bob's bed. Finally he went to the wall on Bob's right side. Down came a black and white photo of San Francisco, and up went a color photo of the Peace rose.

"May I ask what you're doing?" I inquired mildly.

"My job? I'm an orderly on this floor," he answered. "But I bring in new prints and photos every week. You see, I'm responsible for the health of all these patients. Take Mr. Miller here. He hasn't woken up since they brought him in, but when he does, I want to make sure he sees beautiful things right away."

This orderly at the Coatesville hospital (preoccupied, I never learned his name) did not define his work as the emptying of bedpans or the swabbing of trays, but as protecting the health of his patients and procuring objects to fill this difficult time of their lives with beauty. He may have held a lowly job, but he recrafted it into a high calling.

How does a person frame work in relation to the rest of life? Scholars distinguish three kinds of "work orientation": a job, a career, and a calling. You do a *job* for the paycheck at the end of the week. You do not seek other rewards from it. It is just a means to another end (like leisure, or supporting your family), and when the wage stops, you quit. A *career* entails a deeper personal investment in work. You mark your achievements through money, but also through advancement. Each promotion brings you higher prestige and more power, as well as a raise. Law firm associates become partners, assistant professors become associate professors, and middle managers advance to vice-presidencies. When the promotions stop—when you "top out"—alienation starts, and you begin to look elsewhere for gratification and meaning.

A *calling* (or vocation) is a passionate commitment to work for its own sake. Individuals with a calling see their work as contributing to the greater good, to something larger than they are, and hence the religious connotation is entirely appropriate. The work is fulfilling in its own right, without regard for money or for advancement. When the money stops and the promotions end, the work goes on. Traditionally, callings were reserved to very prestigious and rarified work—priests, supreme court justices, physicians, and scientists. But there has been an important discovery in this field: any job can become a calling, and any calling can become a job. "A physician who views the work as a job and is simply interested in making a good income does not have a Calling, while a garbage collector who sees the work as making the world a cleaner, healthier place could have a Calling."

Amy Wrzesniewski (pronounced rez-NES-kee), a professor of busi-

ness at New York University, and her colleagues are the scientists who made this important discovery. They studied twenty-eight hospital cleaners, each having the same official job description. The cleaners who see their job as a calling craft their work to make it meaningful. They see themselves as critical in healing patients, they time their work to be maximally efficient, they anticipate the needs of the doctors and the nurses in order to allow them to spend more of their time healing, and they add tasks to their assignments (such as brightening patients' days, just as the Coatesville orderly did). The cleaners in the job group see their work as simply cleaning up rooms.

Let's now find out how you see your own work.

WORK-LIFE SURVEY

Please read all three paragraphs below. Indicate how much you are like A, B, or C.

Ms. A works primarily to earn enough money to support her life outside of her job. If she was financially secure, she would no longer continue with her current line of work, but would really rather do something else instead. **Ms. A's** job is basically a necessity of life, a lot like breathing or sleeping. She often wishes the time would pass more quickly at work. She greatly anticipates weekends and vacations. If **Ms. A** lived her life over again, she probably would not go into the same line of work. She would not encourage her friends and children to enter her line of work. **Ms. A** is very eager to retire.

Ms. B basically enjoys her work, but does not expect to be in her current job five years from now. Instead, she plans to move on to a better, higher-level job. She has several goals for her future pertaining to the positions she would eventually like to hold. Sometimes her work seems like a waste of time, but she knows she must do sufficiently well in her current position in order to move on. **Ms. B** can't wait to get a promotion. For her, a promotion means recognition of her good work, and is a sign of her success in competition with her coworkers.

Ms. C's work is one of the most important parts of her life. She is very pleased that she is in this line of work. Because what she does for a living is a vital part of who she is, it is one of the first things she tells people about herself. She tends to take her work home with her, and on vacations, too. The majority of her friends are from her place of employment, and she belongs to several organizations and clubs pertaining to her work. Ms. C feels good about her work because she loves it, and because she thinks it makes the world a better place. She would encourage her friends and children to enter her line of work. Ms. C would be pretty upset if she were forced to stop working, and she is not particularly looking forward to retirement.

How much are you like Ms. A?

Very much _____ Somewhat _____ A little _____ Not at all _____

How much are you like Ms. B?

Very much _____ Somewhat _____ A little _____ Not at all _____

How much are you like Ms. C?

Very much _____ Somewhat _____ A little _____ Not at all _____

Now please rate your satisfaction with your job on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 = completely dissatisfied, 4 = neither satisfied or dissatisfied, and 7 = completely satisfied _____

Scoring: The first paragraph describes a Job, the second a Career, and the third a Calling. To score the relevance of each paragraph, very much = 3, somewhat = 2, a little = 1, and not at all = 0.

If you see your work as a calling like Ms. C in the third paragraph (with a rating of that paragraph 2 or higher), and if you are satisfied with work (with your satisfaction 5 or greater), more power to you. If not, you should know how others have recrafted their work. The same cleavage between jobs and callings that holds among hospital cleaners also holds among secretaries, engineers, nurses, kitchen workers, and haircutters. The key is not finding the right job, it is finding a job you can make right through recrafting.

HAIRCUTTERS

Cutting another person's hair has always been rather more than a mechanical task. Over the last two decades, many haircutters in the big cities of America have recrafted their jobs to highlight its intimate, inter-

personal nature. The hairdresser expands the relational boundaries by first making personal disclosures about herself. She then asks her clients personal questions and cold-shoulders clients who refuse to disclose. Unpleasant clients are "fired." The job has been recrafted into a more enjoyable one by adding intimacy.

NURSES

The profit-oriented system of hospital care that has evolved recently in America puts pressure on nurses to make their care routinized and mechanical. This is anathema to the tradition of nursing. Some nurses have reacted by crafting a pocket of care around their patients. These nurses pay close attention to the patient's world and tell the rest of the team about these seemingly unimportant details. They ask family members about the patients' lives, involve them in the process of recovery, and use this to boost the morale of the patients.

KITCHEN WORKERS

More and more restaurant cooks have transformed their identity from preparers of food to culinary artists. These chefs try to make the food as beautiful as possible. In composing a meal, they use shortcuts to change the number of tasks, but they also concentrate on the dish and the meal as a whole rather than the mechanics of the elements of each dish. They have recrafted their job from sometimes mechanical to one that is streamlined and aesthetic.

There is something deeper going on in these examples than activist members of particular professions merely making their otherwise dull jobs less mechanical and routine, more social, more holistic, and more aesthetically appealing. Rather, I believe that the key to recrafting their jobs is to make them into callings. Being called to a line of work, however, is more than just hearing a voice proclaiming that the world would be served well by your entering a particular field. The good of humankind would be served by more relief workers for refugees, more designers of educational software, more counterterrorists, more nanotechnologists, and more truly caring waiters, for that matter. But none of these may call to you, because a calling must engage your signature strengths. Conversely, passions like stamp collecting or tango dancing may use your signature strengths, but they are not callings—which, by definition, require

service to a greater good in addition to passionate commitment.

"He's drunk and mean," whispered a frightened Sophia to her eight-year-old brother, Dominick (who has asked me not to use his real name). "Look what he's doing to Mommy out there."

Sophie and Dom were scrubbing the dishes in the cramped kitchen of their parents' small restaurant. The year was 1947, the place was Wheeling, West Virginia, and the life was hard-scrabble. Dom's father had come home from the war a broken man, and the family was toiling together from dawn to midnight just to get by.

Out at the cash register, a drunken customer—unshaven, foul-mouthed, and huge, at least to Dom—was hulking over his mother, complaining about the food. "That tasted more like rat than pork. And the beer . . ." he shouted angrily as he grabbed the woman's shoulder.

Without thinking, Dom propelled himself out of the kitchen and stood protectively between his mother and the customer. "How can I help you, sir?"

" . . . was warm and the potatoes were cold . . ."

"You're absolutely right, and my mother and I are very sorry. You see it's only the four of us trying our best, and tonight we just could not keep up. We really want you to come back, so you will see that we can do a better job for you. Please let us pick up your check now and offer you a bottle of wine on us when you return to try us again."

"Well, it's hard to argue with this little kid . . . thanks." And off he went, very pleased with himself and not displeased with the restaurant.

Thirty years later, Dominick confided to me that after that encounter his parents always gave him the difficult customers to wait on—and that he loved doing it. From 1947 on, Dom's parents knew that they had a prodigy in the family. Dom possessed one signature strength precociously and in extraordinary degree: social intelligence. He could read the desires, needs, and emotions of others with uncanny accuracy. He could pull exactly the right words to say out of the air like magic. When situations became more heated, Dom became cooler and more skilled, while other would-be mediators typically aggravated the situation. Dom's parents nurtured this strength, and Dom began to lead his life around it, carving out a vocation that called on his social intelligence each day.

With this level of social intelligence, Dom might have become a

great headwaiter, or diplomat, or director of personnel for a major corporation. But he has two other signature strengths: love of learning and leadership. He designed his life's work to exploit this combination. Today, at age sixty-two, Dominick is the most skilled diplomat that I know in the American scientific community. He was one of America's leading professors of sociology, but was nabbed as provost by an Ivy League university when he was only in his late thirties. He then became a university president.

His almost invisible hand can be detected in many of the major movements in European and American social science, and I think of him as the Henry Kissinger of academia. When you are in Dominick's presence, he makes you feel that you are the most important person in his world, and remarkably, he does this without any tinge of ingratiation that might otherwise arouse your distrust. Whenever I have had unusually tricky human-relations problems at work, it is his advice I seek out. What transforms Dominick's work from a very successful career to a calling is the fact that what he does summons the use of his three signature strengths virtually every day.

If you can find a way to use your signature strengths at work often, and you also see your work as contributing to the greater good, you have a calling. Your job is transformed from a burdensome means into a gratification. The best understood aspect of happiness during the workday is having flow—feeling completely at home within yourself when you work.

Over the last three decades, Mike Csikszentmihalyi, whom you met in Chapter 7, has moved this elusive state all the way from the darkness into the penumbra of science and then to the very borders of the light, for everyone to understand and even practice. Flow, you will remember, is a positive emotion about the present with no conscious thought or feeling attached. Mike has found out who has it a lot (working-class and upper-middle-class teenagers, for example) and who doesn't have much of it (very poor and very rich teenagers). He has delineated the conditions under which it occurs, and he has linked these to satisfying work. Flow cannot be sustained through an entire eight-hour workday; rather, under the best of circumstances, flow visits you for a few minutes on several occasions. Flow occurs when the challenges you face perfectly mesh with your abilities to meet them. When you recognize that these abilities include not merely your talents but your strengths and virtues, the implica-

tions for what work to choose or how to recraft it become clear.

Having any choice at all about what work we do, and about how we go about that work, is something new under the sun. For scores of millennia, children were just little apprentices to what their parents did, preparing to take over that work as adults. From time out of memory until today, by age two, an Inuit boy has a toy bow to play with, so that by age four he is able to shoot a ptarmigan; by age six, a rabbit; and by puberty, a seal or even a caribou. His sister follows the prescribed path for girls: she joins other females in cooking, curing hides, sewing, and minding babies.

This pattern changed starting in sixteenth-century Europe. Young people in droves begin to abandon the farms and flock to the cities to take advantage of the burgeoning wealth and other temptations of city life. Over the course of three centuries girls as young as twelve and boys from age fourteen migrated to the city for service jobs: laundresses, porters, or domestic cleaning. The magnetic attraction of the city for young people was action and choice, and not the least significant of the choices was about a line of work. As the cities expanded and diversified, the opportunity for myriad different lines of work expanded in lockstep. The agricultural parent-child job cycle shattered; upward (and downward) mobility increased, and class barriers were strained to the breaking point.

Fast forward to twenty-first century America: Life is all about choice. There are hundreds of brands of beer. There are literally millions of different cars available, taking all the permutations of accessories into account—no more are the black Model T, the white icebox, and jeans only in dark blue. Have you, like me, stood paralyzed in front of the stunning variety on the breakfast cereal shelves lately, unable to find your own brand of choice? I just wanted Quaker Oats, the old-fashioned shot-from-a-gun kind, but I couldn't find it.

Freedom of choice has been good politics for two centuries and is now a big business, not just for consumer goods but for structuring the very jobs themselves. In the low-unemployment economy America has been enjoying for twenty years, the majority of young people emerging from college have considerable choice about their careers. Adolescence, a concept not yet invented and so unavailable to the twelve- and fourteen-year-olds of the sixteenth century, is now a prolonged dance about the two most momentous choices in life: which mate, and which job. Few young

people now adopt one of their parents' lines of work. More than 60 percent continue their education after high school, and college education—which used to be considered rounding, liberal, and gentlemanly—is now openly centered on vocational choices like business or banking or medicine (and less openly centered on the choice of a mate).

Work can be prime time for flow because, unlike leisure, it builds many of the conditions of flow into itself. There are usually clear goals and rules of performance. There is frequent feedback about how well or poorly we are doing. Work usually encourages concentration and minimizes distractions, and in many cases it matches the difficulties to your talents and even your strengths. As a result, people often feel more engaged at work than they do at home.

John Hope Franklin, the distinguished historian, said, "You could say that I worked every minute of my life, or you could say with equal justice that I never worked a day. I have always subscribed to the expression 'Thank God it's Friday,' because to me Friday means I can work for the next two days without interruption." It misses the mark to see Professor Franklin as a workaholic. Rather, he gives voice to a common sentiment among high-powered academics and businesspeople that is worth looking at closely. Franklin spent his Mondays through Fridays as a professor, and there is every reason to think he was good at it: teaching, administration, scholarship, and collegueship all went very well. These call on some of Franklin's strengths—kindness and leadership—but they do not call enough on his signature strengths: originality and love of learning. There is more flow at home, reading and writing, than at work because the opportunity to use his very highest strengths is greatest on weekends.

The inventor and holder of hundreds of patents, Jacob Rabinow at age eighty-three told Mike Csikszentmihalyi, "You have to be willing to pull the ideas because you're interested . . . [P]eople like myself like to do it. It's fun to come up with an idea, and if nobody wants it, I don't give a damn. It's just fun to come up with something strange and different." The major discovery about flow at work is not the unsurprising fact that people with great jobs—inventors, sculptors, supreme court justices, and historians—experience a lot of it. It is rather that the rest of us experience it as well, and that we can recraft our more mundane work to enjoy it more frequently.

To measure the amount of flow, Mike pioneered the experience sampling method (ESM), which is now used widely around the world. As mentioned in Chapter 7, the ESM gives people a pager or Palm Pilot that goes off at random times (two hours apart on average), all day and all evening. When the signal sounds, the person writes down what she is doing, where she is, and whom she is with, then rates the contents of her consciousness numerically: how happy she is, how much she is concentrating, how high her self-esteem is, and so on. The focus of this research is the condition under which flow happens.

Americans surprisingly have considerably more flow at work than in leisure time. In one study of 824 American teenagers, Mike dissected free time into its active versus passive components. Games and hobbies are active and produce flow 39 percent of the time, and produce the negative emotion of apathy 17 percent of the time. Watching television and listening to music, in contrast, are passive and produce flow only 14 percent of the time while producing apathy 37 percent of the time. The mood state Americans are in, on average, when watching television is mildly depressed. So there is a great deal to be said for active as opposed to passive use of our free time. As Mike reminds us, "Gregor Mendel did his famous genetic experiments as a hobby; Benjamin Franklin was led by interest, not a job description, to grind lenses and experiment with lightning rods; [and] Emily Dickinson wrote her superb poetry to create order in her own life."

In an economy of surplus and little unemployment, what job a qualified person chooses will depend increasingly on how much flow they engage at work, and less on small (or even sizable) differences in pay. How to choose or recraft your work to produce more flow is not a mystery. Flow occurs when the challenges—big ones as well as the daily issues that you face—mesh well with your abilities. My recipe for more flow is as follows:

- Identify your signature strengths.
- Choose work that lets you use them every day.
- Recraft your present work to use your signature strengths more.
- If you are the employer, choose employees whose signature strengths mesh with the work they will do. If you are a manager, make room to allow employees to recraft the work within the bounds of your goals.

The profession of law is a good case study for seeing how to release your own potential for flow and for satisfying work in your job.

WHY ARE LAWYERS SO UNHAPPY?

As to being happy: I fear that happiness isn't in my line. Perhaps the happy days that Roosevelt promises will come to me along with others, but I fear that all trouble is in the disposition that was given to me at birth, and so far as I know, there is no necromancy in an act of Congress that can work a revolution there.

—Benjamin N. Cardozo, February 15, 1933

Law is a prestigious and remunerative profession, and law school classrooms are full of fresh candidates. In a recent poll, however, 52 percent of practicing lawyers described themselves as dissatisfied. Certainly, the problem is not financial. As of 1999, associates (junior lawyers vying to become partners) at top firms can earn up to \$200,000 per year just starting out, and lawyers long ago surpassed doctors as the highest-paid professionals. In addition to being disenchanting, lawyers are in remarkably poor mental health. They are at much greater risk than the general population for depression. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found statistically significant elevations of major depressive disorder in only 3 of 104 occupations surveyed. When adjusted for sociodemographics, lawyers topped the list, suffering from depression at a rate 3.6 times higher than employed persons generally. Lawyers also suffer from alcoholism and illegal drug use at rates far higher than nonlawyers. The divorce rate among lawyers, especially women, also appears to be higher than the divorce rate among other professionals. Thus, by any measure, lawyers embody the paradox of money losing its hold: they are the best-paid profession, and yet they are disproportionately unhappy and unhealthy. And lawyers know it; many are retiring early or leaving the profession altogether.

Positive Psychology sees three principal causes of the demoralization among lawyers. The first is pessimism, defined not in the colloquial sense (seeing the glass as half empty) but rather as the pessimistic explanatory style laid out in Chapter 6. These pessimists tend to attribute the causes of negative events to stable and global factors ("It's going to last forever, and it's going to undermine everything"). The pessimist views bad events as pervasive, permanent, and

uncontrollable, while the optimist sees them as local, temporary, and changeable. Pessimism is maladaptive in most endeavors: Pessimistic life insurance agents sell less and drop out sooner than optimistic agents. Pessimistic undergraduates get lower grades, relative to their SAT scores and past academic record, than optimistic students. Pessimistic swimmers have more standard times and bounce back from poor efforts worse than do optimistic swimmers. Pessimistic pitchers and hitters do worse in close games than optimistic pitchers and hitters. Pessimistic NBA teams lose to the point spread more often than optimistic teams.

Thus, pessimists are losers on many fronts. But there is one glaring exception; pessimists do better at law. We tested the entire entering class of the Virginia Law School in 1990 with a variant of the optimism-pessimism test you took in Chapter 6. These students were then followed throughout the three years of law school. In sharp contrast to results of prior studies in other realms of life, the pessimistic law students on average fared better than their optimistic peers. Specifically, the pessimists outperformed more optimistic students on the traditional measures of achievement, such as grade point averages and law journal success.

Pessimism is seen as a plus among lawyers, because seeing troubles as pervasive and permanent is a component of what the law profession deems prudence. A prudent perspective enables a good lawyer to see every conceivable snare and catastrophe that might occur in any transaction. The ability to anticipate the whole range of problems and betrays that nonlawyers are blind to is highly adaptive for the practicing lawyer who can, by so doing, help his clients defend against these far-fetched eventualities. And if you don't have this prudence to begin with, law school will seek to teach it to you. Unfortunately, though, a trait that makes you good at your profession does not always make you a happy human being.

Sandra is a well-known East Coast psychotherapist who is, I think, a white witch. She has one skill I have never seen in any other diagnostician: she can predict schizophrenia in preschoolers. Schizophrenia is a disorder that does not become manifest until after puberty, but since it is partly genetic, families who have experienced schizophrenia are very concerned about which of their children will come down with it. It

would be enormously useful to know which children are particularly vulnerable, because all manner of protective social and cognitive skills might be tried to immunize the vulnerable child. Families from all over the eastern United States send Sandra their four-year-olds; she spends an hour with each and then makes an assessment of the child's future likelihood of schizophrenia, an assessment that is widely thought of as uncannily accurate.

This skill of seeing the underside of innocent behavior is super for Sandra's work, but not for the rest of her life. Going out to dinner with her is an ordeal. The only thing she can usually see is the underside of the meal—people chewing.

Whatever witchy skill enables Sandra to see so acutely the underside of the innocent-looking behavior of a four-year-old does not get turned off during dinner, and it prevents her from thoroughly enjoying normal adults in normal society. Lawyers, likewise, cannot easily turn off their character trait of prudence (or pessimism) when they leave the office. Lawyers who can see clearly how badly things might turn out for their clients can also see clearly how badly things might turn out for themselves. Pessimistic lawyers are more likely to believe they will not make partner, that their profession is a racket, that their spouse is unfaithful, or that the economy is headed for disaster much more readily than will optimistic persons. In this manner, pessimism that is adaptive in the profession brings in its wake a very high risk of depression in personal life. The challenge, often unmet, is to remain prudent and yet contain this tendency outside the practice of law.

A second psychological factor that demoralizes lawyers, particularly junior ones, is low decision latitude in high-stress situations. Decision latitude refers to the number of choices one has—or, as it turns out, the choices one *believes* one has—on the job. An important study of the relationship of job conditions with depression and coronary disease measures both job demands and decision latitude. There is one combination particularly inimical to health and morale: high job demands coupled with low decision latitude. Individuals with these jobs have much more coronary disease and depression than individuals in the other three quadrants.

Nurses and secretaries are the usual occupations consigned to that unhealthy category, but in recent years, junior associates in major law

firms can be added to the list. These young lawyers often fall into this cusp of high pressure accompanied by low choice. Along with the sheer load of law practice ("This firm is founded on broken marriages"), associates often have little voice about their work, only limited contact with their superiors, and virtually no client contact. Instead, for at least the first few years of practice, many remain isolated in a library, researching and drafting memos on topics of the partners' choosing.

The deepest of all the psychological factors making lawyers unhappy is that American law has become increasingly a win-loss game. Barry Schwartz distinguishes practices that have their own internal "goods" as a goal from free-market enterprises focused on profits. Amateur athletics, for instance, is a practice that has virtuosity as its good. Teaching is a practice that has learning as its good. Medicine is a practice that has healing as its good. Friendship is a practice that has intimacy as its good. When these practices brush up against the free market, their internal goods become subordinated to the bottom line. Night baseball sells more tickets, even though you cannot really see the ball at night. Teaching gives way to the academic star system, medicine to managed care, and friendship to what-have-you-done-for-me-lately. American law has similarly migrated from being a practice in which good counsel about justice and fairness was the primary good to being a big business in which billable hours, take-no-prisoners victories, and the bottom line are now the principal ends.

Practices and their internal goods are almost always win-win games: both teacher and student grow together, and successful healing benefits everyone. Bottom-line businesses are often, but not always, closer to win-loss games: managed care cuts mental health benefits to save dollars; star academics get giant raises from a fixed pool, keeping junior teachers at below-cost-of-living raises; and multibillion-dollar lawsuits for silicone implants put Dow-Corning out of business. There is an emotional cost to being part of a win-loss endeavor.

In Chapter 3, I argued that positive emotions are the fuel of win-win (positive-sum) games, while negative emotions like anger, anxiety, and sadness have evolved to switch in during win-loss games. To the extent that the job of lawyering now consists of more win-loss games, there is more negative emotion in the daily life of lawyers.

Win-loss games cannot simply be wished away in the legal profession, however, for the sake of more pleasant emotional lives among its practi-

tioners. The adversarial process lies at the heart of the American system of law because it is thought to be the royal road to truth, but it does embody a classic win-loss game: one side's win equals exactly the other side's loss. Competition is at its zenith. Lawyers are trained to be aggressive, judgmental, intellectual, analytical and emotionally detached. This produces predictable emotional consequences for the legal practitioner: he or she will be depressed, anxious, and angry a lot of the time.

Countering Lawyer Unhappiness

As Positive Psychology diagnoses the problem of demoralization among lawyers, three factors emerge: pessimism, low decision latitude, and being part of a giant win-loss enterprise. The first two each have an antidote. I discussed part of the antidote for pessimism in Chapter 6, and my book *Learned Optimism* details a program for lastingly and effectively countering catastrophic thoughts. More important for lawyers is the pervasiveness dimension—generalizing pessimism beyond the law—and there are exercises in Chapter 12 of *Learned Optimism* that can help lawyers who see the worst in every setting to be more discriminating in the other corners of their lives. The key move is credible disputation: treating the catastrophic thoughts ("I'll never make partner," "My husband is probably unfaithful") as if they were uttered by an external person whose mission is to make your life miserable, and then marshaling evidence against the thoughts. These techniques can teach lawyers to use optimism in their personal lives, yet maintain the adaptive pessimism in their professional lives. It is well documented that flexible optimism can be taught in a group setting, such as a law firm or class. If firms and schools are willing to experiment, I believe the positive effects on the performance and morale of young lawyers will be significant.

As to the high pressure-low decision latitude problem, there is a remedy as well. I recognize that grueling pressure is an inescapable aspect of law practice. Working under expanded decision latitude, however, will make young lawyers both more satisfied and more productive. One way to do this is to tailor the lawyer's day so there is considerably more personal control over work. Volvo solved a similar problem on its assembly lines in the 1960s by giving its workers the choice of building a whole car in a group, rather than repeatedly building the same part.

Similarly, a junior associate can be given a better sense of the whole picture, introduced to clients, mentored by partners, and involved in transactional discussions. Many law firms have begun this process as they confront the unprecedented resignations of young associates.

The zero-sum nature of law has no easy antidote. For better or for worse, the adversarial process, confrontation, maximizing billable hours, and the "ethic" of getting as much as you possibly can for your clients are much too deeply entrenched. More *pro bono* activity, more mediation, more out-of-court settlements, and "therapeutic jurisprudence" are all in the spirit of countering the zero-sum mentality, but I expect these recommendations are not cures, but Band-Aids. I believe the idea of signature strengths, however, may allow law to have its cake and eat it too—both to retain the virtues of the adversarial system and to create happier lawyers.

When a young lawyer enters a firm, he or she comes equipped not only with the trait of prudence and lawyerly talents like high verbal intelligence, but with an additional set of unused signature strengths (for example, leadership, originality, fairness, enthusiasm, perseverance, or social intelligence). As lawyers' jobs are crafted now, these strengths do not get much play. Even when situations do call for them, since the strengths are unmeasured, handling these situations does not necessarily fall to those who have the applicable strengths.

Every law firm should discover what the particular signature strengths of their associates are. (The strengths test in the last chapter will accomplish that goal.) Exploiting these strengths will make the difference between a demoralized colleague and an energized, productive one. Reserve five hours of the work week for "signature strength time," a nonroutine assignment that uses individual strengths in the service of the firm's goals.

- Take Samantha's *enthusiasm*, a strength for which there is usually little use in law. In addition to her plugging away in the law library on a personal-injury malpractice brief, Samantha could be paid to use her bubblyness (combined with her usual legal talent of high verbal skill) to work with the firm's public relations agency on designing and writing promotional materials.
- Take Mark's *valor*; a useful strength for a courtroom litigator, but wasted on an associate writing briefs. Mark's signature strength

time could be spent planning the crucial attack with the star litigator of the firm for the upcoming trial against a well-known adversary.

- Take Sarah's *originality*; another strength without much value while combing through old precedents, and combine it with her *perseverance*. Originality plus perseverance can turn an entire domain around. Charles Reich, as an associate before he became a Yale law professor, reworked the musty precedents to argue that welfare was not an entitlement, but a property. In so doing he redirected the law away from its traditional take on "property," toward what he termed the "new property." This meant that due process applied to welfare payments, rather than just the rather capricious largesse of civil servants. Sarah could be assigned to look for a new theory for a particular case. New theories hidden among precedents are like drilling for oil—there are many dry holes, but when you strike, it's a bonanza.
- Take Joshua's *social intelligence*, another trait that rarely comes in handy for an associate engaged in routine assignments about copy-right law in the library. His signature strength time could be based around having lunch with particularly prickly clients from the entertainment field, schmoozing about their lives as well as their contract disputes. Client loyalty is not bought by billable hours, but by the gentle strokes of a good human relationship.
- Take Stacy's *leadership* and make her head a committee on the quality of life for associates. She could gather and collate complaints anonymously perhaps, and present them to the relevant partners for consideration.

There is nothing peculiar to the field of law in the recrafting of jobs. Rather, there are two basic points to keep in mind as you think about these examples and try to apply them to your work setting. The first is that the exercise of signature strengths is almost always a win-win game. When Stacy gathers the complaints and feelings of her peers, they feel increased respect for her. When she presents them to the partners, even if they don't act, the partners learn more about the morale of their employees—and, of course, Stacy herself derives authentic positive emotion from the exercise of her strengths. This leads to the second basic point: there is a clear relation between positive emotion at work,

high productivity, low turnover, and high loyalty. The exercise of a strength releases positive emotion. Most importantly, Stacy and her colleagues will likely stay longer with the firm if their strengths are recognized and used. Even though they spend five hours each week on nonbillable activity, they will in the long run generate more billable hours.

Law is intended as but one rich illustration of how an institution (such as a law firm) can encourage its employees to recraft the work they do, and how individuals within any setting can reshape their jobs to make them more gratifying. To know that a job is win-loss in its ultimate goal—the bottom line of a quarterly report, or a favorable jury verdict—does not mean the job cannot be win-win in its means to attaining that goal. Competitive sports and war are both eminently win-loss games, but both sides have many win-win options. Business and athletic competitions, or even war itself, can be won by individual heroics or by team building. There are clear benefits to choosing the win-win option by using signature strengths to better advantage. This approach makes work more fun, transforms the job or the career into a calling, increases flow, builds loyalty, and it is decidedly more profitable. Moreover, by filling work with gratification, it is a long stride on the road to the good life.

11

LOVE

WE are members of a fanatical species that commits itself easily and deeply to an array of dubious enterprises. Leaf Van Boven, a young professor of business at the University of British Columbia, has shown how very commonplace the process of irrational commitment is. Van Boven gives students a beer mug emblazoned with the university seal; the item sells for five dollars at the school store. They can keep this gift if they want, or sell it at an auction. They also get to be participants in the auction and bid on items of similar value, like university pens and banners that were gifts for the other students. A strange phenomenon occurs. Students will not part with their own gift until seven dollars on average is bid; however, the very same item belonging to someone else is seen as only worth four dollars on average. Mere possession itself markedly increases the value of an object to you, and increases your commitment to it. This finding tells us that *homo sapiens* is not *homo economicus*, a creature obedient to the “laws” of economics and motivated solely by rational exchange.

The underlying theme of the last chapter was that work is vastly more than labor exchanged for an expected wage. The underlying theme of this chapter is that love is vastly more than affection in return for what we expect to gain (this is no surprise to romantics, but shocking to the theories of social scientists). Work can be a source of a level of gratification that far outstrips wages, and by becoming a calling, it displays the peculiar and wondrous capacity of our species for deep commitment. Love goes one better.

The tedious law of *homo economicus* maintains that human beings