



# Sigma Nu Fraternity

EXCELLING WITH HONOR

## Your Journey to Happiness Discussion Guide

Show participants the *Your Journey to Happiness* poster.

The journey to mental wellness is a path that looks different for each of us. Dr. Arthur Brooks, Harvard professor and best-selling author, developed the “Pillars of Happiness” framework to understand how we can experience happiness and fulfillment in our lives.

### Chapter Discussion

Brooks’ main pillars are family, faith, friends, and work, and Brooks says that investing and growing in each can help us develop a foundation for a more purposeful life. The “Your Journey to Happiness” poster lists seven steps that can positively contribute to our overall mental wellness, similar to the Pillars of Happiness framework. Today, we will discuss each step and consider ways we can implement them in our lives.

1. Practice Mindfulness
  - Define: Mindfulness involves focusing on the present moment while acknowledging and accepting one’s feelings and thoughts. Being present can help us acknowledge progress and temporarily put aside our worries about the future.
  - Discuss: What could mindfulness look like for you?
    - *Journaling, meditation, breathing, or grounding exercises.*
2. Seek help when needed
  - Define: Sometimes we need assistance from others. Just like how each of our paths towards mental wellness is different, seeking help may look different for each of us.
  - Discuss: How do you know when you need to seek help? What could seeking help look like for you?
    - *Reaching out to a friend to confide in, attending a counseling session, finding group support, or sharing how you’re feeling with others.*
3. Maintain Balance
  - Define: Maintaining balance is about striving to find harmony in our lives so that one area does not dominate the others, or we do not neglect personal growth or investment in a particular area. Properly managing our responsibilities, wants, and needs is an important step in our journey to happiness.
  - Discuss: With school, work, family, social obligations, and more, we are often pulled in several directions. What can we do to balance competing priorities?
    - *Utilize time management skills like keeping a calendar, establishing boundaries, creating time for work and play, and reflecting regularly on where you may want to reprioritize.*
4. Prioritize Sleep
  - Define: We know that the average adult needs seven or more hours of sleep each day.

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- Discuss: As college students with busy lives, establishing a consistent sleep schedule can be difficult. What obstacles are getting in the way of your sleep? What steps can you take to improve the quality of your sleep?
  - *Go to bed at the same time every night, reduce distractions in your bedroom, and limit your screentime before bed.*

#### 5. Limit Screentime

- Define: In a world dependent on technology, it is easy to find ourselves spending an excessive amount of time on our devices. While our devices can be used as sources for connection, it is not a replacement for in-person experiences.
- Discuss: In your phone settings, look at the average number of hours you spend on your phone in a week. Is anyone surprised by their number? What would it look like to be more mindful of the amount of time you spend scrolling?
  - *Utilize a screentime limit, set goals to read from a book each day, don't scroll before bed, and consider how the posts you read make you feel.*

#### 6. Connect with Others

- Define: Humans are social creatures, and making strong social connections helps us to feel a sense of belonging, which can be key to mental wellness.
- Discuss: Making social connections is more natural in different seasons of life. What did it look like for you to connect with others when you started school? How do you foster existing relationships or establish new ones when you are away from school?
  - *Join a gym or workout class, engage with your organization's alumni opportunities, look for opportunities to engage spiritually, volunteer, or plan social engagements with your friends.*

#### 7. Stay Active

- Define: Physical activity contributes positively to both physical and mental health. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. It can also improve self-esteem, cognitive function, and mood.
- Discuss: What physical activity do you enjoy that you could focus more on?
  - *Walks with friends, intramural sports, workout classes, etc.*

### Conclusion

As we wrap up our discussion, write down one or two steps or ideas shared today that you can commit to practicing in the upcoming week. You do not have to commit to big changes, but those one or two steps may be a start to a new journey towards happiness. You can write your commitments down or text them to a friend for accountability and support. Would anyone like to share their commitment?

Thank you for your time and attention today.

### Resources

- If you are experiencing a mental health crisis:
  - Call or text 988 to access the [Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
    - The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention, and crisis resources for you or your loved ones.
  - Call 800-662-HELP (4357) for substance abuse and mental health treatment



- SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

## Source Material

This discussion guide draws inspiration from Dr. Arthur Brooks' *"From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life."* St. Martin's Press."

