

Cultivating Character

A prescription for happiness and success

A Study Guide

The best method to use this study guide is to keep a journal of your thoughts, inspirations and daily activities. This can either be in the form of a physical book or an electronic file.

Among its numerous benefits, journaling offers an opportunity for improved self-awareness, introspection, mindfulness, self-discipline and goal setting, all of which are important components to the methods described in this book.

Chapter 1—The Nature of Character

- What are the words you would use to describe good character?
- What elements of good character matter most to you?

Chapter 2—The Relevance and Necessity of Character

- Do you think character is important? If so, why?
- What do you think are the consequences of good and bad character?
- Do you think that you have an impact on society and the world? If so, list some of the things where you can make a difference.

Chapter 3—Determining Good Character

- Name some qualities that you think make up good character.
- Name some qualities that you think make up bad character.
- What are some differences between good and bad character?
- List the influences in your life that help you determine the nature of good and bad character. Is it your family upbringing, your religious convictions, cultural norms, etc.?
- How do these qualities affect your personal life, and that of your family, your school and your job?

- List a couple of people who you consider to be persons of admirable/good character. Why did you pick these people? What qualities do they exhibit that made you choose them?
- List a couple of people who you consider to be persons of bad character. Why did you pick these people? What qualities do they exhibit that made you choose them?

Chapter 4—Human Design and Purpose

- What do you think is the purpose of life? Why do you think you are here?
- Suspending everything you know about life and your experiences living it, ponder a simple question: Think of one single word that encapsulates everything that you hope for and desire in life—one word only.
- What do you do in your daily life to pursue this one single aspiration that you mentioned?
- Again, set aside your daily concerns and troubles, and all that you think is wrong with the world. Instead, quietly get in touch with the inner recesses of your original heart and mind, and ask yourself: What gives me joy? Allowing for a stream of consciousness write down ten or twenty things that give you joy.
- Why do these give you joy, satisfaction and contentment?
- If you think there is a difference, how would you distinguish between profound joy and pleasure?

Chapter 5—The Four Life Goals

- Now think about and list what gives you joy in the context of each of the Four Life Goals. You might want to use the following framework to do generate your list:

<i>Category #1</i> Creation of Self	<i>Category #2</i> Creation of Others (Family)	<i>Category #3</i> Creation of Others (Society)	<i>Category #4</i> Creation of Environment
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- Contemplate on and list the things you do throughout your day to pursue, nurture and improve:

- The development of your mind and body
 - The management of your family
 - The betterment of your social relationships at school, at work and in your neighborhood
 - The management of time, your living environment and the external environment as a whole
- For the same four categories, list the things that you can improve in your life.
 - What is your motivation for doing these things, and why are they important to you?

Chapter 6—The Role of Desire

- List some desires that motivate and help you in your daily life; explain how they assist you.
- List some desires that you feel stand in the way of living life to the fullest; explain how they hold you back.

Chapter 7—Good and Evil

- What is your definition of good and evil?
- What qualities do you consider to be admirable in another person?
- What qualities do you find repugnant in another person?
- Being honest, which qualities from these two lists do you have?

Chapter 8—The Role of Sexuality in Human Affairs

- While watching television or a movie, make note of the times that sexual abstinence is portrayed in the relationships between character couples.
- Also make note of the times that casual, cavalier and trite notions of sexual innuendo and conduct occur in relationships between characters. Note also the characters who engage in casual sex and one-night stands. Finally, make note of any ramifications or consequences (if any) that result from this activity.

- While watching a television program or a movie, make note of how men in particular are portrayed.

Chapter 9—The Nature and Purpose of Marriage

- What do you want from a marriage partner?
- What can you contribute to your marriage partner?
- While watching television or a movie, make note of the times that marriage is portrayed in a wholesome light between characters.
- Also make note of the times that marriage is portrayed as a burden and entrapment between characters. Note also the characters who enter into extramarital affairs to placate their plight and seem to find greater happiness.

Chapter 10—The Central Role of the Family

- While watching television or a movie, make note of the way that marriage and family is portrayed in the story. Enumerate the characters who have a happy marriage and stable family and compare this to those characters who are divorced, having an extramarital affair or part of a broken family.
- Note how children from a broken home are portrayed.

Chapter 11—The Nature of Discipline

- List some of the times that you experienced discipline in your life. Include some of the difficulties and challenges you faced along with the benefits that you got from the experience, if any.

Chapter 12—Becoming a Person of Character

- When using the Character Mirror, choose an item from the white column. Write down why this character trait is important to you. For instance, why is honesty important? Why is compassion important?
- When using the Character Mirror, choose an item from the gray column. Write down why this character trait is something you want to avoid. For instance, why is cheating a problem? Why is lust a problem?

- Being honest, write down an answer to “Who am I?”
- What makes you unique from everyone else?
- Think of ways that you can be more empathetic.
- Make a list of annual goals as an individual, couple and family using the Self-Assessment Worksheet presented in this book as a framework.

Chapter 13—Finding the Incentive to act

- What motivates you to get out of bed in the morning and face the day? How does this motivation correspond with concepts presented in this book?