FACILITATORS GUIDE

VALUE OF LIFE – Human Flourishing

JANUARY FRD

**Slide 1** Introduction. When we consider the concept of a Life Worth Living or the Value of Life what are we talking about? What is it that makes life worth living, what is it that makes our lives of value? These are questions that philosophers and religions have been working on for centuries, today we can benefit from the wisdom of the ages to build our holistic health and fitness and enhance all the areas of our lives. Recently, Harvard University has stood up the Human Flourishing Program with their Institute of Quantitative Social Science. Founded in 2016, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science aims to study and promote human flourishing, and to develop systematic approaches to the synthesis of knowledge across disciplines.

**Slide 2** Introduce Topics. These are the main areas we will be looking at this morning. We will discuss the idea of Human Flourishing and a Life worth Living. Then we will look at the model of human flourishing. Lastly, we will consider some exercises that can be done to enhance and increase the flourishing in our own life. Before we go on…when you hear the word “Flourish” what does it mean to you, can you describe it? It isn’t a word we use often, unless possibly you are a gardener! Oxford Dictionary: (of a person, animal, or other living [organism](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=b8fa7d8779a1a942&sca_upv=1&q=organism&si=ALGXSlYmNhxeZOJxNGRDYi-2PpnDhjm3OWQ2r6ZisprpJf-5-WBawLBhUzyOLyEl6VGKGvPsFSSDwi0Ih2XWQ0Et-8s1JuQrDzRPEZJuK8DUz2uLybcezyY%3D&expnd=1)) grow or develop in a healthy or [vigorous](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=b8fa7d8779a1a942&sca_upv=1&q=vigorous&si=ALGXSlYmNhxeZOJxNGRDYi-2PpnDnWHHuuK45KOXajZ55taC6Mepz1B1_w1LZ4ritvmmUZF9yndGEmnS8ZJEQN2hASg5uwcky22xrrFV0U4OTQ8JTPK3eeE%3D&expnd=1) way, especially as the result of a **particularly favorable environment**. "Wild plants flourish on the banks of the lake" This idea of the favorable environment will become key in our discussion.

**Slide 3** Some introductory thoughts on human flourishing. 1st take a moment to read this quote from FM 7-22, how would you connect this quote to the idea of building a “Life Worth Living”? (Facilitators Note: Possible answers may include knowing you purpose sets your goal, knowing who you are at the essential level will inform how you interact with the world, your beliefs may inform why your life is of value, or what a “well-lived” life is…) When you think of human well-being or holistic wellness…what comes to mind? Some definition of a Life worth Living become reductive…I want to be “happy” while that is true…it offers a very narrow definition of wellness that is only active in the emotional domain. Often happiness is a result of things that may or may not be in your control. (Facilitators Note EXAMPLES: An illness that impacts you or a loved one, you are fired/downsized/passed over/separated, suffer a natural disaster (like those folks in KY recently) Your spouse left you, your lost custody of your children, can you lead a life worth living without being happy? The answer to this question is critically important in combatting the curse of suicide.

**Slide 4** On this slide we see the identified domains of human flourishing. (note: financial/material stability is a domain that empowers the others). If you consider a flourishing plant…. these domains would be what you can see, the leaves, the petals, the stems etc.…So when you assess the flourishing life these domains would be present and visible in the life of that person (or yourself). Do you agree with this list? Does anything surprise you?

Definitions and Descriptions of the Domains:

* The first domain is our general sense of happiness and life satisfaction. This encompasses our own subjective experiences and evaluations about just how happy and satisfied we think that we are.
* The second domain is our mental and physical health. This encompasses the usual suspects of being generally free from or successfully dealing with the various mental and physical ailments that may come our way throughout our lives.
* The third domain is that of meaning and purpose. This encompasses how we view our individual purpose within the world as well as our greater sense of understanding of the meaning of it all.
* The fourth domain is that of character and virtue. This encompasses our individual character and virtue and how we act towards ourselves and others.
* The fifth domain is that of our close social relationships. This encompasses us being content with our friendships, family, and relationships as well as having them be as satisfying as we would want them to be.
* Finally, the sixth domain is that of our financial and material stability. This encompasses whether we must worry about safety, food, or housing as well as not worrying about meeting our monthly living expenses.

From the On Flourishing App (booklet)

**Slide 5** Again, going back to the image of a flourishing plant the pathways to human flourishing are akin the environment in which a flourishing plant grows. The soil, the water, the climate etc. We know that if you take the most beautiful healthy tropical flower and plant, it here in front of our building it will cease to flourish. Environment is important. The four pathways listed here are the most common Family, Work, Education, Religious Communities are the environment in which we grow in the domains of human flourishing. Each one of these pathways has been shown to support the development of the domains of human flourishing.

Please take a moment to read this quote from the article “On the Promotion of Human Flourishing.” In essence the author is saying if we can improve the environment the impact on growth would be substantial. Since we all share in the same pathway of “work” lets focus on that for a moment. How do see Work as a pathway to human flourishing and the development of the domains? (Facilitator’s Note: Possible answers, I like my job, I get to serve the country increasing my life satisfaction, I work a stable job and have been able to build financial security, coming to work everyday helps give me meaning and purpose, it also keeps me active physically and mentally) Now of course these answers come from a healthy work environment. An unhealthy work environment will negative impact our ability to flourish (like that tropical flower planted in front of the building). Negative work environments can impact physical health through stress related conditions, we may resent or hate coming in, we have hostile work relationships. Etc. By investing in building (or rebuilding) the pathways to human flourishing in this example work, we could see substantial improvements in the domains of human flourishing.

**Slide 6** In this slide, we see how the concepts of human flourishing are connected. As you see this can you pick one pathway and describe how it might lead to flourishing in one of the domains? (Facilitators note: this slide is mostly meant to draw out the connections between the pathways and the domains.)

**Slide 7** While we can take proactive steps to directly improve the domains of flourishing (e.g., a solid PT or exercise plan can enhance physical and mental health) The human flourishing project also emphasizes the need to improve and enhance the pathways of human flourishing. Which of these pathways has been the most impactful for you in developing the domains of human flourishing? Listed are some possible ways to “support, improve, and promote participation in these pathways” do you have any additional ideas?

**Slide 8** Exercises to improve human flourishing. these and many exercises are laid out in the Human Flourishing App (booklet) that is embedded in the resource sheet.

* There are cognitive exercises, which involve sustained reflection and inquiry.
* There are also behavioral exercises which is action oriented to seek what is good for your others, and the community.
* There are commitment activities designed to improve your pathways.
* Facilitators Note: this exercise is mainly to be done and discussed in the smaller group setting, although a discussion over these three areas may prove fruitful: why are we asked to focus on these three areas, which domains of human flourishing do they support?

Optional Activity for when in smaller FRD groups, the Job Crafting Activity page 19-20 in the Human Flourishing App Booklet:

The idea of job crafting is that one reflects upon one’s work environment and takes actions at work to try:

1. to structure one’s tasks so that they can be done more effectively, or so that tedious tasks are no longer necessary, or so that more challenging tasks are available.
2. to have better, more meaningful, or more effective social interactions at work.
3. to find meaning and purpose in the work being done.

You will first develop a job crafting plan. Then, over the next six weeks you will commit to implementing that plan. You will check back in weekly and write about both how you have been doing as well as what you might be able to do better in the upcoming week.

Does this sound like something that could be helpful? Have you every reflected deeply on the nature of your work?

**Slide 9** In our time together today, we have discussed the Concept of Human Flourishing and modeling provided by Harvard’s Human Flourishing Program. As with any type of self-improvement/ self-knowledge will only bring you so far. It is the engagement in reflection and behavior based on that reflection that will move us forward. Please be sure to check out the Resource Sheet that accompanies this material it has many other exercises for personal growth an in-depth information that will inspire you as continue to increase the value of life and live a life worth living.