



CREATIVITY

CREATIVE PERSONALITIES LEAD TO POSITIVE TRAITS: People who have more creative personalities tend to be more independent, unconventional, open-minded, flexible, and spontaneous, as well as more self-confident and self-accepting.

CREATIVITY IS GOOD FOR STUDENTS: For example, in one study, at-risk youth who participated in arts programs ended up with better work habits, attitudes, and behavior.

CREATIVE PEOPLE ARE HEALTHIER: Studies suggest that participating in creative activities improves physical and psychological health and is even associated with stronger immune systems in HIV-positive patients.

CREATIVE PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER: Creativity is associated with greater well-being and life satisfaction and can help people maintain healthy relationships.

CREATIVITY ISN'T ALL-OR-NOTHING, AND IT'S NOT ONLY FOR ARTISTIC GENIUSES: What researchers refer to as “everyday creativity”—coming up with unique ideas that are useful or meaningful—is something that everyone is capable of and can improve at.

Research provided by UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center.

MEANINGFUL PHOTOS

TIME REQUIRED: 15 MINUTES DAILY FOR ONE WEEK TO TAKE THE PHOTOS; ONE HOUR TO DO THE WRITING EXERCISE (WHILE IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH EVERY DAY, ASSUME THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHY WILL TAKE YOU A TOTAL OF 90 MINUTES.)

Research suggests that finding greater meaning in life helps people cope with stress and improves their overall health and well-being—it’s what makes life feel worth living. But finding meaning in life can sometimes feel like an elusive task. In our day-to-day lives, it can be easy to lose sight of the big picture—we tend to focus more on the mundane than the deeply meaningful.

Yet research suggests that there are potential sources of meaning all around us, from the moments of connection we share with others, to the beauty of nature, to the work that we do and the things we create. This exercise helps you bring these meaningful things into focus—literally. By having you photograph, then write about, things that are meaningful to you, it encourages you to pay closer attention to the varied sources of meaning in your life, large and small, and reflect on why they are important to you.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Over the next week, take photographs of things that make your life feel meaningful or full of purpose. These can be people, places, objects, pets, and so on. If you are not able to take photos of these things—like if they’re not nearby—you can take photos of souvenirs, reminders, websites, or even other photos. Try to take at least nine photographs.
2. At the end of the week: If you used a phone, upload your photos to a computer. If you used a non-digital camera, have your photos developed.
3. Then, once you have collected your photos, take time to look at and reflect on each one. For each photo, write down a response to the following question: “What does this photo represent, and why is it meaningful?”

PHOTOGRAPH 1: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 2: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 3: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 4: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 5: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 6: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 7: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 8: _____

PHOTOGRAPH 9: _____

WHY IT WORKS

Taking time to recognize and appreciate sources of meaning through photography can help make them more tangible, serving as a reminder of what matters most to you. This greater sense of meaning can, in turn, inspire us to pursue important personal goals and give us a sense of strength and purpose when coping with stressful life events. The use of photography might also benefit people who are more visual than verbal learners—something for therapists, parents, or teachers to keep in mind as they approach conversations about meaning, purpose, and values in life.



