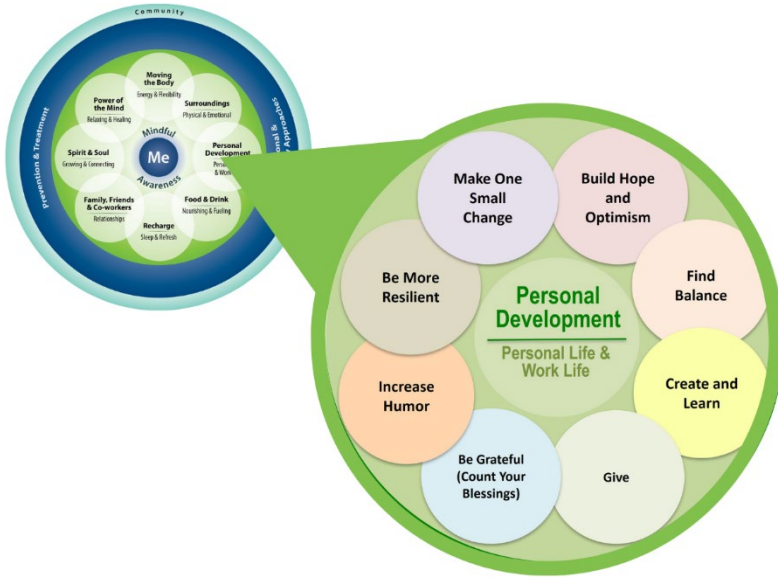


# Zeroing In – Personal Development: Personal Life & Work Life

*Working on Personal Development allows you to live more fully. Ways to live more fully may include being more optimistic, grateful, social, and resilient. You can learn new skills, find more balance, and figure out new ways to help others. Doing things like that improves your health, and helps you live longer.*



## Key Points

- Keep asking yourself what you need to learn and grow in your life.
- Get support from someone you trust. Personal Development may require that take a deep look at your thinking patterns and personality. That can be hard. It helps to have support.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Choose a Personal Development goal that fits you. There are many options. No one way is better than the others.

### Hope and Optimism

**Build Hope and Optimism.** Being a hopeful and optimistic person allows you to be less sensitive to pain, take care of yourself better, and live longer.

- You do not have to be “fake.” Just practice thinking about what can go right.
- Watch your thought patterns by practicing mindful awareness.
- It can be hard to catch your own negative thoughts. Think about working with a mental health professional.
- Setting and achieving goals can help you build and feel more hopeful and positive.

### Balance

**Find Balance.** Consider how different parts of your life balance out in terms of time, how involved you are, and how happy or satisfied they make you.

- What do you do each day? Writing it out can show you how you spend your time.
- How much satisfaction does each activity you do give you? Some activities are necessary, but others aren’t. What can you cut out without feeling like it is a big loss?
- Do you have too little time, or too much? Make sure you have time and energy to do what you need to do, and what you want to do.

### Create and Learn

**Create and Learn.** Creating and learning keeps your mind and body healthy. It can help you earn more money too.

- There are many ways to be creative. Think about your hobbies and talents.
- Classes can be for fun or to learn essential skills. Look into courses offered by local colleges, rec centers, or park districts.
- Learning does not need to be in a traditional class setting. Consider watching a documentary, listening to a podcast, or reading an article.

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### Give

**Give.** Giving to others can be a powerful way to improve your own health too.

- Charity can be for strangers, or it can be for family, friends, and people you know.
- Giving does not have to be money. It can be a helping hand, time, or support.
- The VA has many volunteering and mentoring programs. Consider helping other Veterans. You can even train to help with Whole Health!

### Be Grateful

**Be Grateful (Count Your Blessings).** Gratitude is a practice that asks you to focus on the good things already in your life, not having to do something new.

- The first step is being aware of people, actions, and events that happen in your life. Mindful awareness can help you notice those things.
- This can be hard but remember that “practice makes perfect.” Gratitude is good for your health.

### Increase Humor

**Increase Humor.** Laughing burns calories, decreases anxiety, and increases pain tolerance. Laughing lowers your stress hormones and increases your feel-good hormones.

- Consider laughter yoga.
- Think about things that you find funny and how you can include them in your life.

### Be More Resilient

**Be More Resilient.** The ability to bounce back helps to prevent health problems, especially mental health issues. There are many ways to be resilient.

- You might work on your attitudes and perspectives. A health psychologist or other mental health professional can help you see patterns you follow that do not help you.
- Having more positive emotions is another way of being resilient. The above topics like hope and humor can help with this.
- People and support systems can be important in bouncing back. Work with mentors. Look to role models.

### One Small Change

**Make One Small Change.** Here are a few examples of options:

- Make a schedule for yourself.
- Create a “bucket list” or plan your dream vacation.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Develop your hobbies and talents, including art, music, and writing.
- Go to a comedy show or watch a funny movie.
- Volunteer your time. Donate clothes, toys, and/or food.
- Consider a gratitude journal to write down what you are grateful for.
- Write a letter to someone you are grateful for.
- Do a random act of kindness. Some examples are putting change in someone’s parking meter, paying for the coffee of the person behind you, or giving a random person a compliment.
- Identify a role model and what it is about them you admire.
- Write down your strengths.
- Try to be flexible in the way you think.
- Practice self-compassion; be kind to yourself.

# Personal Development Links

You can follow the links below to learn more about Personal Development.

**Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts.** These are indexed at

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-handouts/index.asp>.

- An Introduction to Personal Development. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/IntroPersonDevelop-Final508-03-29-2019.pdf>.
- Finding Balance. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/FindingBalance-508Final-10-25-2018.pdf>.
- The Healing Power of Hope and Optimism. [https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/HealingPowerHopeOptimism\\_Final508\\_07-25-2019.pdf](https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/HealingPowerHopeOptimism_Final508_07-25-2019.pdf).
- Create a Gratitude Practice. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/Gratitude-Final508-08-29-2018.pdf>.
- Forgiveness. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/Forgiveness-Final508-08-29-2018.pdf>.
- What Matters Most? Exploring Your Values. [https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/WhatMattersMost\\_Final508\\_07-25-2019.pdf](https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/WhatMattersMost_Final508_07-25-2019.pdf).

## Other VA Whole Health Resources

- VA: A Patient-Centered Approach to Personal Development. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYZfEA5RgNw&feature=youtu.be>

## Kindness

- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Loving Kindness Meditation. [http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout\\_loving\\_kindness.pdf](http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_loving_kindness.pdf)
- Random Acts of Kindness Foundation – Read stories and get ideas of what others have done. <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>

## Forgiveness

- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Information on Forgiveness - [http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout\\_forgiveness.pdf](http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_forgiveness.pdf)
- International Forgiveness Institute. <https://internationalforgiveness.com/>

## Laughter and Humor

- Laughter Yoga International. <https://laughteryoga.org/>
- Laughter Yoga TED Talks. There are many. Check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=5hf2umYCKr8>, with the founder of the Laughter Yoga movement, Madan Kataria.

## Changing Your Mindset

- Unstuck – Website and free app. Resources and articles to help change your mindset. <https://gettingunstuck.com.au/>.
- Help guides. <https://www.helpguide.org/>.
- Organization devoted to supporting mental and emotional health. <https://nami.org/Home>.

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### Skill-Building

- The YMCA – Source for activities, classes, volunteering, donations, etc. <https://www.ymca.org/>.

### TED TALKS

- For some inspiration, consider watching some videos on a range of topics. <https://www.youtube.com/@TED/videos>.

### Volunteering and Donation Resources

- Veterans Affairs. <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>. Check this out to learn more about volunteering at the VA.
- United Way. <https://www.unitedway.org/>. Click on the “Get Involved” tab at the top of the screen.
- Points of Light. <https://engage.pointsoflight.org/>. Can search for volunteer opportunities based on where you live. Covers many different groups. Can also ask for volunteers for your projects.
- Volunteer.gov. <https://www.volunteer.gov/s/>. Volunteer opportunities related to natural and cultural resources, including volunteer work with the National Park Service.
- Idealist. <https://www.idealists.org/en>. Click on “Volunteering” at the top. Can search by location. Also has a list of jobs.
- AARP’s Create the Good. <https://createthegood.aarp.org>. Can search for volunteer opportunities based on location on this site as well.
- Volunteer Match. <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>. Can match based on location as well as the type of opportunity you want.
- Fetzer Institute has free resources related to community and service. <http://fetzer.org/resources>.

### Balance

- Workaholics Anonymous. <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org>. Good source of information and guidance.
- Work-Life Balance Guidance from Mental Health America. <https://mhanational.org/work-life-balance>.

### Resilience

- American Psychology Association Resilience Information <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>. Discusses ways to build resilience and places to seek support.
- The Resilience Prescription. <https://icahn.mssm.edu/files/ISMMS/Assets/Files/Resilience-Prescription-Promotion.pdf>. More detail about ten ways to increase resilience.