

For the next few months, the Socrates' Café will be focusing on Benjamin Franklin's process for improving one's virtuous actions. The goal is to help each person develop their own list of virtues they will focus on, present Franklin's process, offer possible improvements to the process and to do a detailed examination of the most commonly recognized virtues. To aid in the process of selecting virtues to work on I have listed samples of those virtues that many different religions and groups have identified as desirable.

Benjamin Franklin - Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity and Humility

David G. Allan - Morality, Industry, Friendliness, Erudition, Frugality, Flexibility, Civic Duty, Introspection, Patience, Spirituality, Creativity, Mindfulness and Healthfulness.

The 7 Virtues of Bushido, Gi – Justice or Integrity, Yu – Courage, Jin – Mercy or Benevolence, Rei – Respect, Makoto – Honesty, Meiyo – Honor, Chugi – Loyalty.

WB David Allison - Empathy, Prudence, Generosity, Kindness, Diligence, Honesty, Modesty, Curiosity, Considerate, Fairness, Awareness, Courageousness

Gandhian virtues - Cleanliness, Developing villages, Physical activity, Mental Strength, Healthy Mother and Child, Dietetics, and Care of the Diseased.

For Socrates and Plato, there are four primary virtues: courage, moderation, wisdom and justice.

Puritan Cardinal Virtues - chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, kindness, patience and humility.

Islamic virtues - kindness (to people and animals), charity, forgiveness, honesty, patience, justice, respecting parents and elders, keeping promises, and controlling one's anger.

Boy scout virtues - trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

The D/Lakota Virtues Wówalitake - Fortitude Wóohitike - Courage/Bravery Wóowothanġla - Integrity: Wówičakġe - Honesty: Wóuŋšiič'iyē - Humility Wówačhanġtognake - Generosity
<http://www.teachingvirtues.net/virtues.html>

One list of virtues which is widely promoted in Buddhism are the Pāramitās (perfections) – Dāna (generosity), Sīla (proper conduct), Nekkhamma (renunciation), Paññā (wisdom), Viriya (energy), Khanti (patience), Sacca (honesty), Adhiṭṭhāna (determination), Mettā (Good-Will), Upekkhā (equanimity).

The Nine Noble Virtues of Norse Paganism - Courage, Truth, Honor, Fidelity, Discipline, Hospitality, Industriousness, Self-Reliance and Perseverance.

Yoruba virtues: love, morality, temperance, honesty, honour, bravery, justice, prudence, and fortitude.

Once Franklin had settled on the virtues he wished to work on, he then listed the virtues and wrote a brief statement identifying what the goal/s were for each virtue. The following is a list of the virtues along with the goals for each virtue that Franklin settled on.

1. Temperance Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i. e., waste nothing.
6. Industry. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.
11. Tranquillity. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. Chastity.
13. Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Franklin then selected an individual virtue to focus on each week and created a spreadsheet to be used to track his progress at increasing his ability to demonstrate that virtue as well as marking failures in the other virtues. A completed spreadsheet for the week focusing on Temperance is shown below.

Temperance							
Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation							
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Temperance							
Silence	*	*		*		*	
Order	**	*	*		*	*	*
Resolution			*			*	
Frugality		*			*		
Industry			*				
Sincerity							
Justice							
Moderation							
Cleanliness							
Tranquillity							
Chastity							
Humility							

By tracking the failures he had in demonstrating a virtue, he could then see his improvement over time.

(insert Franklin quote)

Even though this program clearly worked for Franklin, I propose a few modifications. It has been well documented the importance of self-talk. With Franklin’s process a person is being reminded of his failures. Instead, I purpose that a symbol be used to mark the times when a virtue was demonstrated and a different symbol to be used when an opportunity to demonstrate a virtue was missed. By describing failures as “missed opportunities,” the mind is directed toward improvement which will encourage better success when these opportunities present themselves in the future. The goal then is to increase the % of successful demonstrations of a virtue compared to the number of times an opportunity was missed. Also, I suggest picking symbols that have relatively neutral connotations as demonstrated in the spreadsheet below.

Temperance							
Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation							
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Temperance							
Silence	&& *			& *			
Order						&& **	
Resolution		& *					
Frugality			&&& *				
Industry				&&& **			
Sincerity	&&& *						
Justice						& *	
Moderation	&&&& *		&&& *				
Cleanliness	&	&& *		&		&&	
Tranquility			& *				
Chastity		&		&	&&& *		
Humility	&&&		& *				

Another thing that Franklin did was to start each day asking "What good shall I do today?" This prepares the mind to plan for and seek out opportunities for demonstrating virtues. I also see value in taking time at the end of the day to reflect and to list all the good that was done on that day. Another good idea is to make plans to do activities that demonstrated a virtue. The following quote is from an article by David G. Allan on the CNN website.

"The weekly tasks were often fun. One week, for Friendliness, I'd call a friend every day. Another week, I'd attempt going vegan for Morality. Erudition sent me looking up every word I came across and didn't know. Sometimes, I just learned something – or something about myself – and other times, 13 Virtues became a reason to do something enjoyable or interesting, especially in categories such as Creativity or Erudition. Other weeks weren't as enjoyable, but they all felt like self-improvement."