

Application Guide

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH WITH ARTHUR BROOKS



BOTTOM LINE:

The people who tend to be the most disappointed with their lives after the age of 70 are the people who have the most success early in their lives and career. However, there is a roadmap to being happy and successful as we age. But we must be willing to embrace a new approach to life.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. Your skills, strengths, and abilities are going to change as you age; create a plan now in order to continue to create value in life later on.
 - A. Identify what you do well.
 - B. Learn to adapt according to those abilities as you get older.
- II. Those who strive to be excellent at what they do often wind up finding their inevitable decline terrifying and their successes increasingly unsatisfying.
 - A. Hard-charging strivers tend to have high standards for themselves, but as you age things get harder and you don't see the same level of success.
 - B. The first half of your life is very different from the second half. You can't keep doing what you've always done and expect it to not diminish.
- III. The solution to staying happy and successful as you get older is to understand that intelligence changes.
 - A. Early life = **fluid intelligence**
 1. Typically increases through your 20s and 30s.
 2. Relies on working memory, innovative capacity, and the ability to focus.
 3. Success and growth come from honing your skills through hard work and personal responsibility.
 4. People want to stay here forever, but that doesn't work. Failure to move to the next stage leads to stagnation which causes burnout.
 2. Later life = **crystallized intelligence**
 1. Typically increases through middle and late adulthood.
 2. Relies on pattern recognition, good judgment, and wisdom.
 3. As you age, you begin to understand which problems you should take the time to solve, rather than going full speed at every problem.
 4. It takes humility and courage to make this shift because at the peak of your career you will be in the zone of maximum effectiveness—but to keep progressing you actually have to step back from it.
- IV. How to more easily transform from fluid to crystallized intelligence:
 - A. **Beat the success addiction.**

Throw out the idea that you would be happier if you were doing more, experiencing more, meeting more people, etc.
 - B. **Use the science of satisfaction.**

Master the art of subtraction as opposed to addition.

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1. True satisfaction is a function of all the things you have divided by all the things you want.
(haves ÷ wants)
2. Early success leads to having a lot (large numerator). To be efficient you need to manage your wants (work to decrease denominator).

V. How to use your crystalized intelligence:

- A. Become a teacher in one way or another by sharing your knowledge and wisdom.
- B. Identify talent, find patterns, and use your experience in what you know you're good at to teach others who are interested in the same things.

VI. A common myth about people as they age: You'll be happier if you follow your instinct to do what you naturally want.

- A. The reality: Mother nature (your instinct) only has two goals.
 1. To survive.
 2. To pass on your genes.
- B. Instinct won't make you happy, achievement won't make you happy; it will only make you feel special for a moment.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. Have you spent your life with a goal to be special or a goal to be happy? Why? What determines how special or happy you are?
2. What are your current "wants"? How do they compare to the things you already have?
3. Can you identify what you do well? Who on your team is also seeking to do that well?
4. What is the teaching version of yourself?

RESOURCES MENTIONED

[*From Strength to Strength*](#) by Arthur Brooks

[*Love Your Enemies*](#) by Arthur Brooks

The Art of Happiness podcast

[*The Pursuit*](#) documentary

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