



Greater Good in Education  
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

## ARISTOTLE'S SUGGESTIONS FOR A "GOOD LIFE"

Aristotle suggests we shape our lives around:

- Living and acting thoughtfully.
- Reflecting on the ordinary challenges and complexities of existence, as well as the extraordinary.
- Acting out the ordinary, moral matters of living, in an extraordinarily fine way.

He also suggests that "a life that is good for human beings" is marked by:

- Courage, rather than rashness or cowardice;
- Self-control, rather than self-indulgence, or insensibility;
- Generosity, rather than stinginess, or wastefulness;
- Friendliness and civility, rather than rudeness, or flattery;
- Tact and discretion, rather than boorishness, or buffoonery;
- Truthfulness, and integrity, rather than false modesty, or bragging;
- Good temperedness, rather than prickliness, or indifference to the concerns for others;
- Fairness, rather than unfairness.

Aristotle thinks that being able to live out these and other "virtues" in the differing contexts of our lives, is actually what makes up for a life well-lived, and indeed, worth living.

Imagine being in the winter of our lives, looking back over the 80 or so years that we can remember. And we say, in response to the question, "How well did you live, and was it all worth it?" something like this:

*I have been courageous when I had to be; I have been self-controlled, when I had to be, balancing out the differing pleasures that have come my way; I have been generous, friendly, discrete, and always truthful to others about who I really am; I have been even-tempered, kind, and loving towards those around me—even when tested. I have lived with integrity—when I made mistakes I admitted them and sought to restore the damage they had caused. I felt the right way about the right things, and did the right things in the right way—most of the time. I was able to live thoughtfully and with good sense and wisdom.*