

Life Wisdom Word Search



Yoga for the Brain™

Cristina Smith
Rick Smith

Featuring Life Wisdom Messages by 60 Authors
Foreword by Steven Forrest

Boost your health and happiness through the power of positive play.

Discover goodies galore to enjoy inside. Insightful inspiring stories. Secret messages. Brain training fun. Positive affirmations to help make your life better. Chicken soup for your brain and soul, *Life Wisdom Word Search* invites you to play!

Who would have thought that practicing mental yoga, turbocharging creativity, and empowering personal mastery could be so much fun? Featuring life wisdom messages from sixty extraordinary authors from ages seven to ninety-four, these sixty puzzles make every page both a challenge to be solved and a meditation for self-realization.

It gets even better! Once all words are found, a hidden message is revealed—a powerful, wise quote to affirm each author's story. Plus, find fascinating facts and enlightening insights inside, providing tasty food for thought.

This book can help you:

- Stay sharp with a more flexible brain
- Bring more peace and happiness into your life with inspiring, mindful messages
- Reduce the risk of early onset dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- Have fun with a purpose

Both a profound philosophy and fun puzzle book, *Life Wisdom Word Search* is yoga for the brain that stretches your mind, nourishes your soul, and touches your heart.

Complete all sixty puzzles. In the process, discover that you have also solved the most important puzzle of all...you!



USD \$11.00 / CAD \$15.00



Praise for *Yoga for the Brain!*

“I love *Yoga for the Brain!* It is a great way to relax, unwind and play. **Even better, research shows that games like these can have a mind-body benefit no matter how old you are. Sign me up for more!**”

—*Camille Leon, Founder, Holistic Chamber of Commerce*

“Never before have I seen such a book, with word search puzzles, secret messages, and even more for the reader to enjoy! More than just a word search puzzle book, it’s also packed with facts and information. Sitting down with the book is a great way to relax and stretch those brain muscles. I can see why the puzzles are considered “yoga for the brain!” **This book is highly recommended for those looking for puzzles, relaxation, inspiration, and enjoyment!**”

—*Carla Trueheart for Readers’ Favorite*

“*Yoga for the Brain* is inspirational, relevant, and fun! The puzzles are challenging in a good way, and the messages are insightful and meaningful. It’s well worth your time. **I highly recommend it to everyone looking for something uniquely uplifting.** It provides an all-around positive experience anyone can benefit from. The books encompass food for thought and food for the soul!”

—*Brenda Krueger Huffman, Publisher, Women’s Voices Magazine*

“Cristina Smith’s **fun and easily accessible works brilliantly blend quantum consciousness-based science with profound philosophical wisdom.**”

—*Dr. Amit Goswami, Quantum Physicist and bestselling author of The Self-Aware Universe*



“While I’ve never actually heard the term “yoga for the brain” before, it makes total sense. This book easily fulfills the mental and spiritual aspects of a Yoga practice. **So much more than a puzzle book, the fun facts, history, and education lining the pages make Yoga for the Brain books a unique treasure.** I highly recommend it for an entertaining and enlightening experience!”

—*Sheri Hoyte for Reader Views*

“Cristina Smith thinks deeply and writes with the kind of simplicity and clarity that only comes from an almost cellular attunement to her subjects. Without pretense or posturing, she uplifts me.”

—*Steven Forrest, author of The Inner Sky*

“Everything Cristina writes about in her books is about our choice of what to do with the great gift of life we have been given. She has experienced in her own life the power of the spirit to transform and allow her to tap into her energy and enthusiasm to help others become all they can be. Puzzles are half of what these books are about. The other half is the commentary Cristina provides that helps us to learn to live fully in this present moment. Highly recommended!”

—*Dr. Russell Fanelli, Professor Emeritus, Western New England University*

“Highly Recommended!”

—*The Wishing Shelf, UK*

The *Yoga for the Brain*[™] series has earned more than a dozen literary awards in the United States and United Kingdom. Have fun discovering why by looking inside!



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Prepare to Get Happy..... | 6 |
| The Meaning of Life | 8 |
| How to Play..... | 12 |
| How to Find the Words | 13 |
| Colorful Tip | 14 |
| About the Life Wisdom Messages | 15 |
| The Pursuit of Happiness | 22 |
| The Yoga of Gratitude..... | 26 |
| The Cycles of Life | 30 |
| The Sun and the Moon..... | 30 |
| The Power of Purpose..... | 30 |
| Endgame | 30 |
| Meet the Authors | 30 |
| Answers..... | 30 |

Prepare to Get Happy

What do jazz, the meaning of life, poetry, and puzzles all have in common?

A poet peers out her window across a city street. There's a dreamy, faraway look in her eyes. Suddenly a jolt runs through her body. She rushes back to her desk and jots down the next line of her poem.

Where did that line come from?

The jazz trumpeter gazes into space as the pianist finishes his solo. Suddenly, a cascade of notes pours from his horn. The passage is elegant. He's never played it that way before. He is as surprised and delighted as his audience.

Where did he get that melody?

Even if we are not artists, all humans are capable of extraordinary creativity. Maybe we are faced with some dilemma in life. In a flash, the famous "lightbulb" lights over our heads. We have found an answer that works. But how did we come up with it? Did we find that answer in the same way that we balance our checkbook or calculate our taxes? Not at all—it is an entirely distinct process, and much more mysterious. The difference is that we have conscious knowledge of checkbook calculations, while with any kind of true creativity, we really have no idea where those answers come from. Poof—they simply appear. They are not there, then they are. We did it, somehow—but we don't know quite how.

There is more: when that little everyday miracle happens, we feel happy. We feel charged with life. Another way to express it is that we are simply having fun. If we think about that line for a moment, it can carry us straight down into the heart of an ancient mystery. We all have a larger self. That larger self is the deep well from which these kinds of flashes arise. And when that happens, it also energizes us. Joy bubbles up. Whether we label that deep well the psyche, the soul, or the unconscious mind, we know that it is there. The existence of human creativity simply proves it.

With our poet and our jazz trumpeter, we asked the question: where did their inspiration come from? That same deep well is our answer. It is that sea of luminous lightbulbs upon which our conscious minds float like a bobbing cork.

And whenever we part the veil between us and that vast inner realm, energy pours into us. We light up. We smile. We are glad to be alive. Even when we do it in simple, playful ways, we have plugged into the ancient battery of life itself.

I invite you to sit down with this edition of *Yoga for the Brain*, let your creative imagination guide you, and be prepared to get really happy.

—Steven Forrest, author of *The Inner Sky*



The Meaning of Life

What is wisdom? How do we gain it? Is what everyone considers wisdom the same? Does it only come with age? Does the famous phrase *out of the mouths of babes* actually mean anything? Once we throw the word *life* into it, we're really looking at the big questions. In a puzzle book? Really?

As humans, we are all on the same quest to some degree or another. We all want to discover the elusively magical meaning of life. Myths and legends have been built around this question. It is the subject of deeply meditative contemplation and prayer. Philosophers and priests of every belief and faith debate the answer. It's the holy grail of self-knowledge.

Many want to tell us the answer and have us join their parade regarding life's meaning. Others would simply say the answer is love, or oneness, or "42." Ultimately, though, deep down in our inner sanctums, we already know the answer. The meaning of life is to live a meaningful life. Our exceptionally personal, exquisitely individual, different from everyone else's, life. One filled with purpose, whatever that looks like for each of us.

Searching for our purpose takes us on the journey of our own life story in which we are the main character, the hero. How we star in that role is up to us. We seek meaning, venture out, face trials and conflicts, eventually triumph over adversity, and are then richly rewarded with priceless treasure, both in our inner and worldly lives. Then we're on to the next quest.



Some find purpose in family, others careers, and others profoundly mystical spiritual development. Many must focus on the basics of survival day-to-day. Some of us are digital nomads and others have lived most of their lives in their family home, like generations before them. Purpose changes with individuals and sometimes time.

In our own unique way, the meaning of life is *yes*. What we say *yes* to in our lives is what our lives become.

Yes can open lots of new doors and opportunities. It can also shoot us in the foot even before we begin. There are those habitual *yeses* that perhaps perpetuate a cycle of familiar pain. Some of us continue to say *yes* to our relationships, businesses, and circumstances long after our hearts and souls really want to say no. Letting go by saying no is hard. What do you say *yes* to in life?

With such affirming consequences, it is important that we think about, choose, and discern our *yeses*. What follows the word *yes* matters immensely. *Yes...but* really means “I wish I could say no.” In these circumstances, a firm “no” works best in creating the world we want for ourselves. Sometimes saying no is really saying *yes* to ourselves. In our quest for our meaning of life, we have said *yes* to many opportunities and have also had the stalwart courage and fortitude to say no.

When *yes* is followed by *please* or *and*, we keep moving on and expand on the concept of *yes*. *Yes and* or *yes please* send a clear message to the world. We have made a choice and embraced something. It is not just some default, path of least resistance, deciding-by-not-deciding moment.

We are delighted you have said “*yes*” to following the fun treasure map of wisdom, solving the puzzles, and decoding the secret messages within. You’ve said “*yes*” to exercising both sides of your brain, reducing stress, and enjoying moments of relaxing mindfulness. You’ve said “*yes*” to boosting your health and happiness through the power of positive play. And you’ve said “*yes*” to sipping from the cup of your inner holy grail through these wisdom stories and considering your own *once upon a time*, leading to what can become an ever unfolding *happily ever now*.

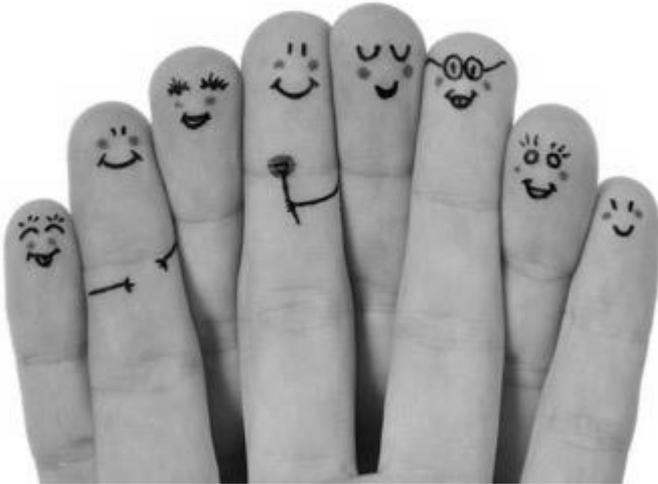
Be the star of your own life.



Wisdom comes in many forms and flavors. Our contributors' perspectives span most of a century: the elder was born in the 1920s, the youngest in 2012. Read each puzzle to discover a broad spectrum of viewpoints. Explore the meaning of life through the various stages and ages. From New Zealand, to Arkansas, to Germany, to India, to the UK, to Uganda; from poets to jazz musicians to teens, to chaplains to sailors to healers—enjoy taking a peek into other ordinary yet inspiring heroic lives and journeys. What chapter of your experience would you contribute? Your own hero's journey is calling. Your quest continues. Share your wisdom.

Happy puzzling!

Let's Play!



Have Fun!

How to Play

A word search puzzle consists of letters placed in a grid. Some of the letters form words, others don't. The object of this game is to find and mark all the words hidden inside the grid that appear in the accompanying word list.

The words may be placed horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, and arranged forward or backward. They may share letters with other words.

Hidden within the puzzle is a secret message created by the letters that are not used in any word within the grid. The key to decoding it is underneath the text of the reading.

The blank lines are where you will place the letters discovered once the word search phase of the puzzle is complete. Starting from the top left corner of the puzzle grid and proceeding left to right, line-by-line, place each unused letter on the blank line in the order it appears. When solved, the Life Wisdom message associated with the reading magically appears!

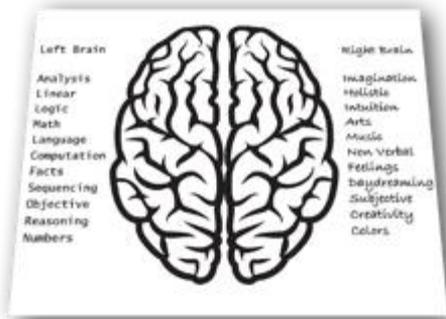


How to Find the Words

Knowing where to start is sometimes the key to the solution.

There is no one right way to solve word search puzzles. It's individual. Your unique brilliance will reveal your perfect way forward. Word search puzzles are a wonderful way to play with your brain and help increase its flexibility. Experiment with these different strategies and notice how it feels when doing each. It is likely that one approach will feel more natural.

What's great about playing with your brain in this context is that it is a no-risk proposition. Nothing critical is on the line. There is no deadline. No one else will be judging your performance. It is the perfect laboratory in which to do research on yourself. A whole brain approach could look something like this:



Start with the right-brain intuitive approach. Read the story. Scan the grid and see what words you notice first. Circle them and cross them off the list. It is interesting to make a note of the ones that pop out as an indicator of your current state of being.

Take a look at the word list and then look again at the grid and see what else reveals itself. Consider picking out a word and see if you are able to find it by shifting your perspective.

Next, move to the left-brain logical strategy. A common tactic for finding all the words is to go through the puzzle left to right (or vice

versa) and look for the first letter of the word. After finding the letter, look at the eight surrounding letters to see whether the next letter of the word is there. Continue this system until the entire word is found.

The step-by-step method approaches the word list in order. It's helpful to skip over the ones that are elusive at the moment and come back to those words later.

To finish, switch on the right-brain intuitive technique again. Which words did you have a hard time finding? Notice anything interesting about them? Isn't it fascinating what we see and don't see?

*Get to know yourself in different states of mind.
New perspectives emerge.*



Colorful Tip

Many people use a pencil to circle found words and then cross or check them off the list. That works well, especially if you have a good eraser. However, the grid looks a bit chaotic when all of the word list is found. As a colorful tip, use a highlighter felt-tip pen to identify found words in the grid. It can make it easier to recognize which letters remain unused when decoding the secret message.

About the Life Wisdom Messages

Each puzzle includes a unique short story shared by one of our sixty inspiring contributing authors. They range in age from seven to ninety-four, offering us a slice of wisdom from diverse perspectives. After the puzzle section, you will briefly meet each author and be able to find out more about them at LifeWisdomWordSearch.com.

Some keys to the mysteries of inner wisdom may be unlocked while playing with the magic of word search. These puzzles are not mind-numbingly difficult. They are designed to stretch your mind and perspective, like a yoga pose.

Each puzzle creates specific benefits. First, reading initiates the overall focus of the story. The carefully selected word list supports different facets of the theme. Solving the puzzle itself improves whole brain health function and flexibility. Finally, the deciphered Life Wisdom reveals a powerful affirmation that can embed these positive messages into the essence of everyday life.

Have fun solving all of these deliciously unique puzzles and inspiring secret messages!





Start with Self-Love

Life can sometimes throw us a curveball. The unexpected happens. Things don't always feel good. People let us down or things we wished for don't come to fruition. We can be positive, optimistic, hard-working, kind, and loving. And still, life happens and sometimes it hurts.

To navigate through these times, be gentle with yourself.

Life can be a lot to handle sometimes. There are those surprise twists and turns and detours and roundabouts. Regardless of the curves, the one person you may always count on to have your back is you. You are deserving of your compassion. You are worthy of your self-care and self-love. When times get tough, the thing to remember is that you're human and you're doing the best that you can.

When those tough moments arise, as they will, take a deep breath. Remember that you will get through this. You can do so with tender, loving care. The way you show up for yourself during these challenges makes those rough times just a little bit easier. Your self-support carries you more swiftly and lovingly through to the other side.

Be the loving foundation that you can always fall back onto.

—*Shari Alyse*

Life Wisdom:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | U | R | V | E | S | D | E | E | P | C | S | D | T | H |
| A | H | E | N | L | O | S | V | E | A | R | N | Y | N | G |
| L | U | O | U | O | I | R | F | R | U | I | T | I | O | N |
| Y | M | G | I | R | I | S | E | O | K | V | E | O | I | I |
| S | A | Y | P | E | O | T | T | D | U | R | P | H | S | V |
| E | N | R | S | M | E | E | A | S | N | T | L | T | S | O |
| D | U | F | I | E | D | S | M | D | I | E | O | A | A | L |
| S | E | R | E | M | E | I | M | M | N | W | T | E | P | T |
| Y | H | S | P | B | O | T | I | R | S | U | T | R | M | S |
| L | T | A | E | E | U | S | A | U | R | A | O | B | O | E |
| T | N | T | R | R | T | T | P | G | E | H | A | F | C | B |
| F | N | A | N | I | V | P | E | V | I | T | I | S | O | P |
| I | N | S | C | Y | O | I | T | H | S | V | F | L | E | S |
| W | Y | H | T | R | O | W | N | I | A | N | A | U | O | Y |
| S | E | L | T | N | E | G | G | G | E | E | L | N | S | E |

Alyse

Best

Breath

Care

Compassion

Curves

Deep

Deserving

Detours

Easier

Foundation

Fruition

Gentle

Human

Kind

Loving

Navigate

Optimistic

Positive

Remember

Self

Shari

Support

Surprise

Swiftly

Tender

Turns

Twists

Worthy

You



Music to the Rescue

Can music change a life? We sure think so. *Music to the rescue* is our motto and we live it every day.

We have created and sustained a home for vulnerable children called M-Lisada in the city of Kampala, the capital of Uganda, Africa. Music is at the center of all of our lives. All of our children learn an instrument, dance in the culture troupe, or train in acrobatics.

Though from different backgrounds, all are united. We each faced challenges early in our lives. Through music we have fun, learn teamwork, improve our study and social skills, and discover that we can bring joy to ourselves and others.

Our brass band has marched throughout Uganda while the culture group performs dances from every region. We play traditional instruments such as *adungu*, *akogo*, and *amadinda*. The acrobats amaze audiences with their abilities.

Our home was started in 1996 by an orphaned twelve-year-old boy who had two dreams: he wanted to perform for appreciative audiences, and to care for his three younger sisters. He soon banded together with a handful of other kids living in the slums of Katwe.

Since that time, over one thousand children have lived at or received training from M-Lisada. Several have graduated secondary school, and some have even gone on to university, law school, and nursing school. Others have become professional musicians and music teachers throughout East Africa.

Music has changed so many lives. How has it enhanced yours?

—Chris Weigers

Life Wisdom:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | M | A | D | I | N | D | A | S | E | E | M | U | S | I |
| D | D | A | N | C | E | N | E | S | R | R | M | C | F | R |
| U | T | E | E | S | U | C | R | E | S | E | A | O | A | V |
| N | S | N | E | F | N | R | U | Y | O | A | G | C | H | N |
| G | E | D | E | E | W | M | T | H | A | F | R | I | C | A |
| U | O | P | I | M | L | A | L | Y | S | O | I | B | E | T |
| T | O | D | B | K | U | E | U | I | B | J | C | O | A | W |
| M | U | N | E | M | O | R | C | A | S | A | O | R | B | U |
| A | R | E | S | C | U | E | T | C | K | A | N | Y | I | N |
| E | T | R | E | H | A | I | H | S | L | O | D | D | L | I |
| N | C | D | W | T | C | O | I | A | N | H | G | A | I | T |
| E | I | L | T | S | O | R | P | Y | C | I | O | O | T | E |
| U | S | I | A | L | H | M | R | O | F | R | E | P | I | D |
| L | U | H | K | C | A | A | D | N | A | G | U | D | E | B |
| E | M | C | F | K | O | S | M | A | E | R | D | R | S | E |

Abilities
Acrobatics
Adungu
Africa
Akogo
Amadinda
Audiences
Band
Brass
Care

Children
Chris
Culture
Dance
Dreams
Fun
Home
Instrument
Joy
Kampala

Katwe
Kids
Mlisada
Music
Perform
Rescue
School
Uganda
United
Weigers



Happiness is Contagious

Did you know you can catch happiness from your friends? It's true. And likewise, you can spread your happiness to them. Social networking research has shown that the people in our lives are incredibly influential. This isn't just a matter of "birds of a feather flock together," but rather contagion, whether positive or negative.

We influence those around us, just as those around us influence us. Happiness is contagious. When we choose to smile at someone, whether a loved one or a stranger, we are influencing the great web of human connectivity.

We tend to think of ourselves as individually separate, as though we are a single being independent of our environment. In truth, we are interwoven into the fabric of existence. A single smile or act of goodwill reverberates through the chain of being, increasing overall happiness. Conversely, negative expressions and behaviors are also contagious.

Be mindful of your influence on the delicate web of human coexistence. Be aware of those with whom you choose to associate. Is your circle full of love and support? If not, what words and actions can you make go viral to generate more positivity within your community?

Choose to spread happiness. Be joyously contagious. Be grateful for those who reciprocate happiness to you. Let's make happiness go viral in our world.

—*John Hood*

Life Wisdom:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Y | O | E | T | A | C | I | L | E | D | F | L | O | C | K |
| U | A | C | R | E | D | A | T | T | R | U | A | N | S | M |
| S | D | R | O | W | I | A | T | R | F | T | H | E | R | A |
| N | S | B | F | N | R | D | E | E | O | R | A | E | C | S |
| E | I | D | E | E | T | J | T | R | N | P | P | V | D | E |
| R | O | F | N | W | A | A | O | H | P | O | P | R | A | P |
| P | I | E | E | E | R | T | G | Y | S | S | I | U | N | E |
| M | G | C | V | G | I | O | H | I | O | B | N | T | S | S |
| I | C | I | O | S | V | R | T | E | O | U | E | I | C | N |
| N | I | R | W | E | T | I | F | H | R | U | S | E | G | A |
| D | R | B | R | L | V | I | R | A | L | H | S | L | R | E |
| F | C | A | E | I | N | F | L | U | E | N | C | E | Y | A |
| U | L | F | T | M | T | C | H | A | I | V | H | T | N | O |
| L | E | Y | N | S | D | O | O | H | F | B | O | O | A | E |
| L | L | L | I | W | D | O | O | G | I | N | G | L | J | C |

Action

Birds

Catch

Circle

Contagious

Delicate

Fabric

Feather

Flock

Friends

Full

Generate

Goodwill

Grateful

Happiness

Hood

Influence

Interwoven

John

Joyously

Love

Mindful

Overall

Positivity

Smile

Spread

Support

Viral

Web

Words



Stand for Yourself

My parents and most of my aunts and uncles were sharecroppers, all born in Arkansas during the early 1900s. We fled in 1937—with a lynch mob preparing to hang my uncle for trying to unionize sharecroppers. I was three. Ultimately, we landed in San Diego, California.

As an adult, I was a five-foot two-inch black woman knocking on doors, in largely white working-class neighborhoods, to either collect past due monies, or physically turn off the gas and electric valves. I was called every name imaginable. Enduring verbal abuses came with the job. I had a family to feed. I had no other option but to thicken my skin, and call in the police when threats escalated.

As an eighty-six-year-old black woman who's lived through and experienced pretty much every possible gender and racial inequality that exists, melded with sprinkles of domestic violence, here are my words of wisdom:

- Stand up for what you believe in. Be heard. Make your presence felt.
- Stay focused on your purpose and goals. Don't allow the small stuff to take you off track.
- Don't tolerate abuse. Once you're free, trust there's a better life waiting for you.
- A closed mouth doesn't get fed. Ask for what you deserve. Challenge unfair treatment.

—*Lula Washington*

Life Wisdom:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D | N | T | O | E | C | N | E | S | E | R | P | A | Y | S |
| E | H | R | O | N | V | T | E | F | T | F | L | L | L | E |
| S | E | A | L | S | A | E | E | H | R | U | I | A | W | E |
| E | A | C | W | R | I | L | I | E | L | M | O | A | T | S |
| R | R | K | E | T | T | C | E | L | A | G | S | S | S | D |
| V | D | L | N | R | K | E | K | F | E | H | L | A | U | R |
| E | O | I | L | E | S | T | G | S | I | B | A | S | R | O |
| T | K | N | N | A | K | D | U | N | A | P | F | N | T | W |
| S | E | O | R | T | Y | N | G | S | E | V | L | A | V | O |
| U | S | T | H | M | E | T | O | B | M | L | W | K | A | Y |
| Y | O | O | U | E | O | S | T | C | E | O | L | R | A | N |
| S | P | R | I | N | K | L | E | S | K | T | D | A | D | F |
| O | R | R | Y | T | S | T | A | N | D | I | T | S | H | O |
| U | U | R | M | O | U | T | H | F | E | D | N | E | I | C |
| S | P | F | O | C | U | S | E | D | E | L | F | G | R | W |

Arkansas

Ask

Believe

Better

Challenge

Deserve

Family

Fed

Felt

Focused

Free

Goals

Heard

Knocking

Lula

Mouth

Presence

Purpose

Skin

Sprinkles

Stand

Thicken

Tolerate

Track

Treatment

Trust

Valves

Washington

Wisdom

Words



Find Your Purpose

After many years focused on setting and achieving goals, I sensed a feeling of dissatisfaction. Is this all there is? I enjoyed the work that I did, but it wasn't enough. What was the purpose of it all? Not long after, I went to a meeting where the presenter shared his story of failure, bankruptcy, and breakthrough. It was an *aha* moment for me. He talked about how nothing he had accomplished had any meaning until he found his personal purpose.

Finding my purpose wasn't easy. Two years of reading and researching information didn't get me any closer. Then I remembered the presenter's suggestion that I think about my memorial service. What would I want people in all the different areas of my life to say about me? What was my legacy? It felt uncomfortable, but I was determined.

I considered my business associates, spiritual group, and friends. Then I thought of my family, which was the hardest part, until I pictured my eleven-year-old grandson. The realization that I had already influenced his life opened my eyes. I became aware that I was already guiding people to help them see and recognize their potential.

It isn't often that you know for sure you have made a difference. Then one day someone walks up to you in a parking lot and says they remember you from twenty-eight years ago and how much you positively impacted their life. It is that feeling, that somehow my presence a long time ago inspired someone. I may never know how. That's the day I discovered my purpose. This is how I want to be remembered!

—*Barbara Eldridge*

Life Wisdom:

F I I N S P I R E D N S D Y P F B
 E C N E U L F N I B O P U R R R A
 G P S P E R S F A O N I A L E I N
 D R L E P U F R R P O R S A S E K
 I E E T T E B F O C H I K I E N R
 R S O O R A A F S E H T Y T N D U
 D E T E R M I N E D H U C N T S P
 L N N A I N A C S R F A A E E L T
 E C O L D H G S O A E L G T R A C
 E E Y W A N E U I S Y O E O U I Y
 P A R K I N G L O T S L L P I R V
 E A F D I H U P S G R A N D S O N
 U L I S E R R E F D E T C A P M I
 I U U L E U Y L L R E B M E M E R
 G B P E P E D L I F S L A O G M E

Aha
 Associates
 Bankruptcy
 Barbara
 Breakthrough
 Business
 Determined
 Difference
 Eldridge
 Eyes

Failure
 Family
 Find
 Friends
 Goals
 Grandson
 Guiding
 Help
 Impacted
 Influence

Inspired
 Legacy
 Memorial
 Parking Lot
 Potential
 Presence
 Presenter
 Purpose
 Remember
 Spiritual

The Yoga of Gratitude

What are you grateful for? What do you consider the top blessings in your life? Purpose? A sunrise or sunset? An animal companion? A loved one's smile?

Giving thanks and offering gratitude has been with us for a long time. Many offer some form of thanks at meals. *Thank you* has long been taught to children as a magic phrase, along with *please*, the magic word. Prayers of thanks and special ceremonies are common among almost all spiritual traditions. Thanksgiving is a national holiday in several countries. It is sometimes associated more with feasting than with gratitude.

What if we looked at gratitude as a form of yoga? A way to stretch ourselves into a perspective of what is abundant in our lives, not what we lack. Yoga means *union*. When we add a daily practice of stretching our awareness to our many blessings, our lives can and will change and improve. Physical yoga limbers up the body. The yoga of gratitude softens the heart and eases the busy mind.

According to Dr. Paul Mills, professor and director of the Center of Excellence for Research and Training in Integrative Health at the University of California, San Diego, expressing gratitude may actually help us live longer. Counting our blessings counts. His research shows that heart patients who cultivate an attitude of gratitude have less inflammation in their bodies and have better autonomic regulation of their heart. His patients keep a gratitude journal, writing down most days of the week a few things they are grateful for.



Two other recent studies have incorporated procedures intended to foster gratitude into interventions for cancer patients, with favorable results.* Pain patients report that the more they focus on being grateful, the better they are able to manage their pain. Gratitude reduces the heart rate, eases stress, lowers blood pressure, and can help regulate the nervous system. Some patients even say that their thankfulness quotient actually reduces their symptoms.

Sometimes when we think about gratitude, our minds jump to what we don't have enough of. For many that includes time, money, and connection with family/tribe. What about being grateful for basic things that most of us take for granted? Hot and cold running water. Shelter from the storm. A safe place to sleep. Lights that turn on with the flip of a switch. Endless food of incredible variety. Abundant water that is safe to drink. Access to medical care.

It's pretty astounding how rich we are, regardless of the state of our finances. Funny thing about humans; we tend to stress and obsess over what we don't have rather than feel constantly grateful for what we do.

Somewhere in the midst of all that concern about paying this bill or getting to that appointment, consider your blessings. Being alive and functional at whatever level is a big one. Do you have a beloved animal companion? Think for a moment on all that creature has brought to your world. Most of us smile fondly and shake our heads at the same time at adorable, silly, or occasionally destructive antics.



* Published on the US Department of Health & Human Services National Institutes of Health National Center for Biotechnology Information website.

Check it out in your own life. Observe and follow your thoughts for a random five minutes. Where does your mind go? Do you worry? Stress? Plan? Organize? Daydream? Are you in the present moment? The past? The future? Interesting to track, isn't it?

Think of the relationships you do have, or did have, that you treasure. Got one very good friend? You're lucky. Remember to celebrate that person and tell them that you do! A special family member that warms your heart and life? Let them know. We think of gratitude as an internal, private thing, and it can be. It can also be shared. Sometimes those that we are most grateful for might not even know it. Surprise them with a special card or long-distance chat. It's good for your health. And it feels wonderful!

What if that special friend or family member has already gone before you into the great beyond? That doesn't have to keep you from celebrating them or remembering the joys and trials you shared. Set aside some time to remember them, talk to them in your thoughts, and feel the love. Visit your special place, have lunch at your shared favorite restaurant, or an indoor picnic of remembrance. Might bring some tears along with the joy, but the joy will be there. Thankfulness can transform.



No matter our health condition, loneliness factor, or state of being, an attitude of gratitude positively impacts our lives. Many enjoy taking some time every day to record at least one thing for which they are thankful. It can be easiest to do this when you get up in the morning and/or right before going to bed. It's constantly available; there's no waiting for open business hours. We can do it in the middle of those unexpected sleepless nights. It's a great cure for insomnia. It can take a week or so to get into the swing of it. It's surprising to discover that the more we look at our lives with gratitude, the more we have to be thankful for.

Changing habits, especially habits of thinking, take time and a bit of effort. Rome wasn't built in a day. If we're habitual worriers, blessing counting can seem strange, false, and even a little bit uncomfortable. Persevere. The benefits are huge and the cost is only a bit of focused attention.

Experiment with what the yoga of gratitude can do for you. Think long and deeply about what is excellent in your life. Watch the stress melt away. Keep blessings uppermost in your mind and heart each and every day.

Enjoy better health and more happiness. Feeling vulnerable, or filled with self-doubt? Practice thankfulness yoga and watch your life fill up and your inner cup of love overflow. Cultivate that attitude of gratitude and see your life transform.



Biographies

Cristina and Rick Smith

Brother and sister team Cristina and Rick Smith have been solving puzzles together their whole lives. They spent their formative years playing games for hours upon hours, both inside at the table or on the floor and outside in the back yard. Though they have very different personalities and interests, Rick and Cristina were able to meet over a game of cards or a jigsaw puzzle and happily hang out together, much to the delight of their parents.



Rick has been creating games, riddles, and puzzle books for decades. Cristina's writings have appeared in scores of magazines, newspapers, newsletters, websites, and books. In this book, Rick is the puzzle master and book designer and Cristina is the word smith and project orchestrator.



Their signature *Yoga for the Brain* book series of profound philosophy and fun puzzles have earned numerous awards and accolades, including Gold Medal winner for Best Book Series from the Council of Visionary Resources.

Rick lives in Colorado and is retired from a life in high tech and startup companies. Cristina lives in northern California, is the founder of the Subtle Energy Center, and has served in numerous community and nonprofit organizations.

When they get together, Cristina and Rick still enjoy doing jigsaw, word, and logic puzzles as well as cooking a delicious meal.

Learn more at YogafortheBrain.com