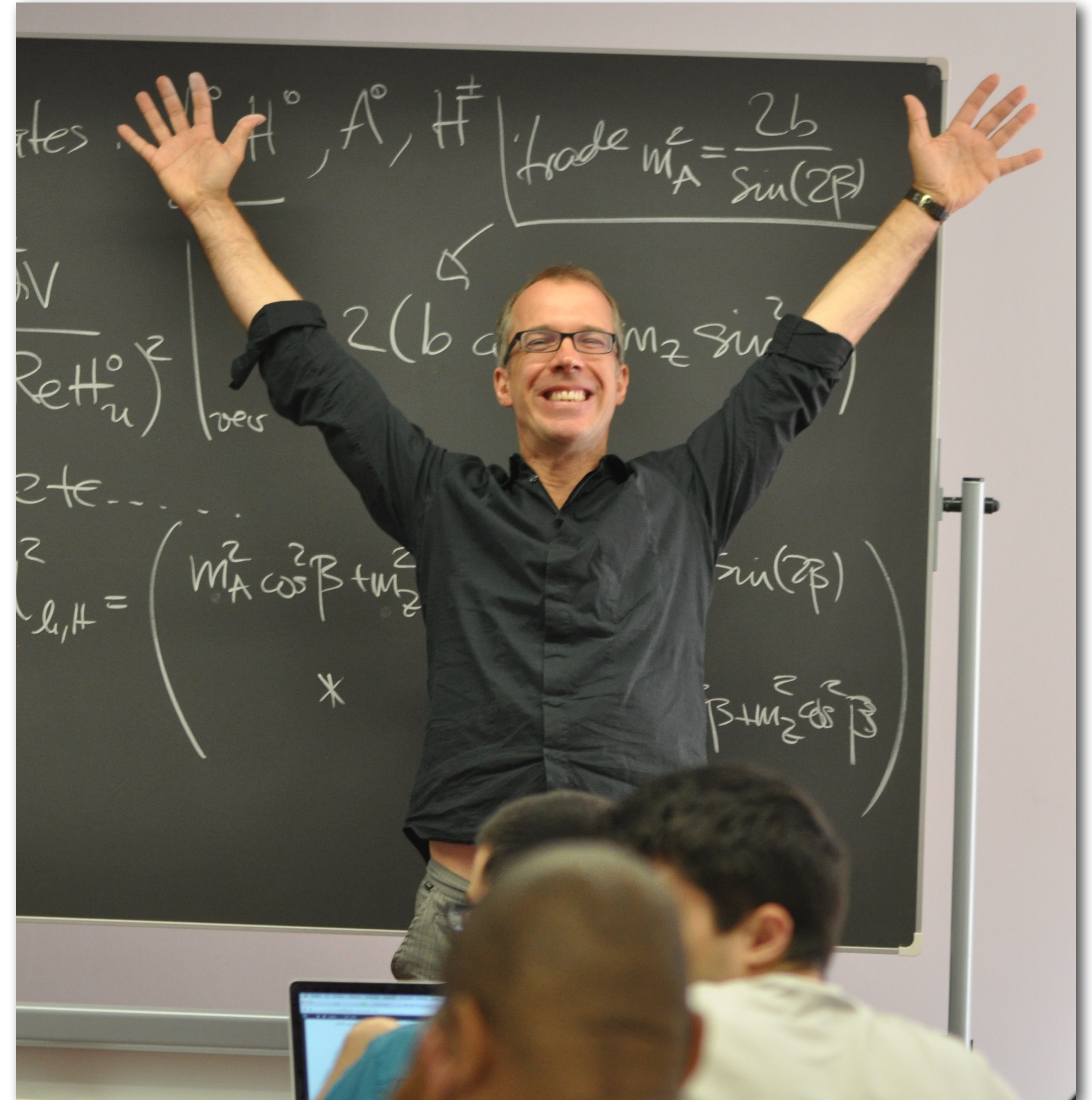


HOW TO BE A
KIND AND HAPPY
RESEARCHER



HOW IT ALL BEGAN



HAPPINESS AND KINDNESS ARE NOT THE DEFAULT

OUR BRAINS ARE WIRED FOR SURVIVAL...

Kindness is a behavior we've learned to survive as a social and interdependent species.

Happiness is a reward our brain delivers when we've done something that helps our survival.

HOW CAN WE CAN WE PROMOTE KINDNESS AND
HAPPINESS IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS?

PLAN FOR TODAY

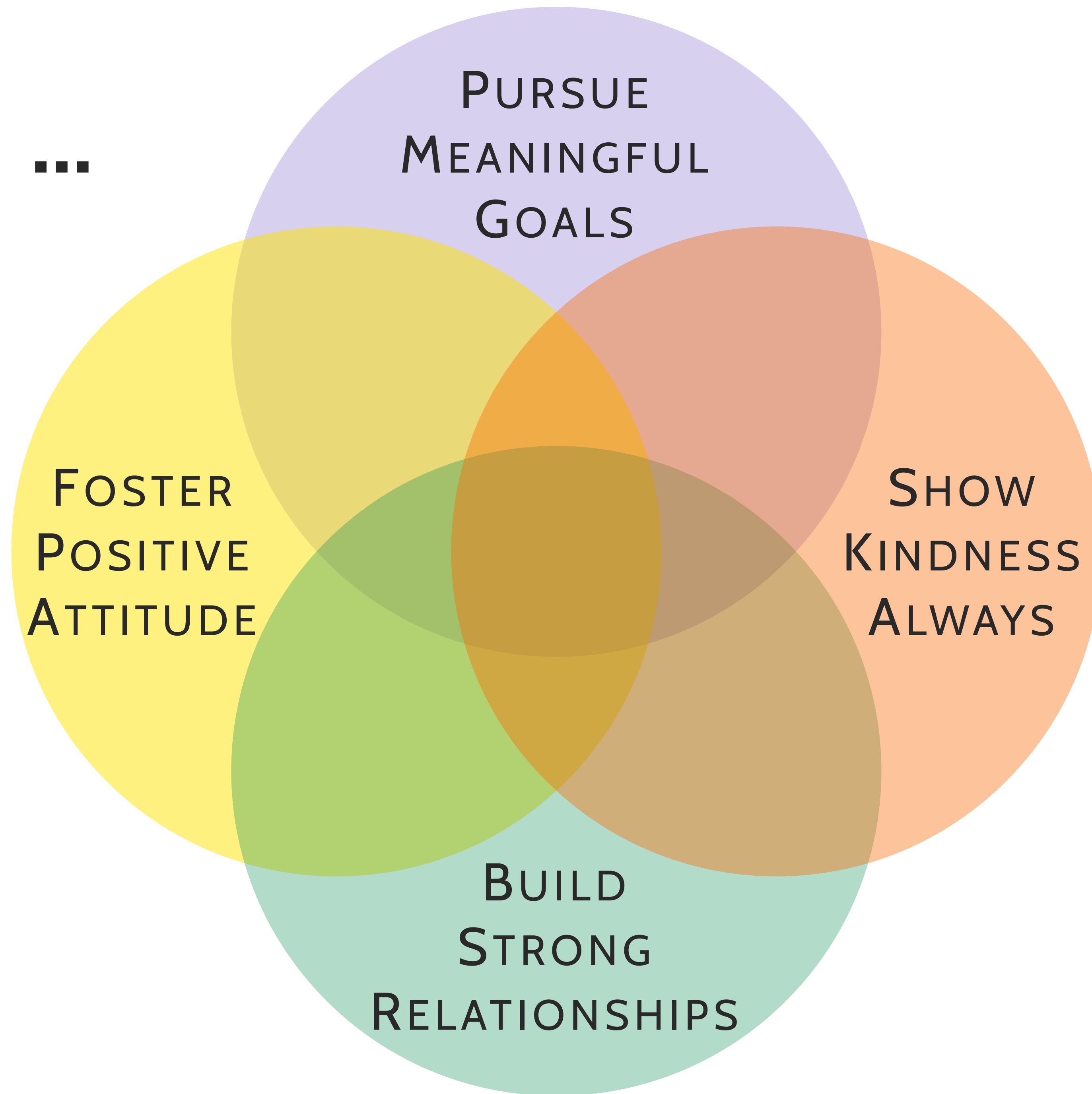
- Present the 4 poles of a kind and happy research life
- Suggest avenues to go further

DISCLAIMER

- I don't have a doctorate in psychology! This is my philosophy, backed up by research on the topic.
- Any mistakes, misrepresentations or misunderstandings are mine and not to be blamed on the actual authors of the studies.
- No "if I were you"s here. Everyone is different and if some things don't resonate with you, you shouldn't force it.

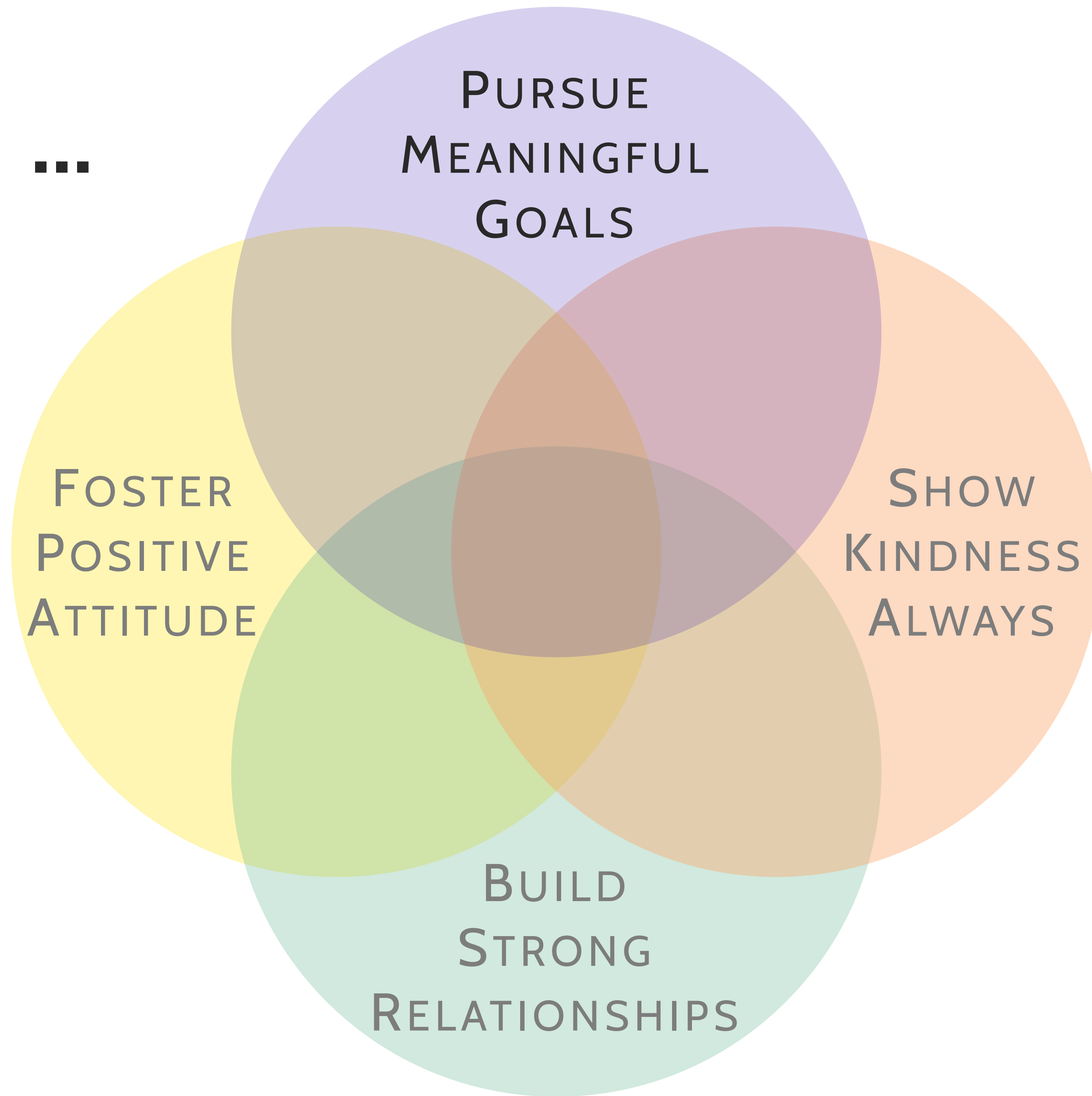
4 POLES

4 POLES ...



**WHY ARE THE 4 POLES
IMPORTANT?**

4 POLES ...



PURSUE MEANINGFUL GOALS

- Progress and accomplishment
- Agency: control over our life
- Ownership and pride

PURSUE MEANINGFUL GOALS

*Wang, W., Li, J., Sun, G. et al. Achievement goals and life satisfaction: the mediating role of perception of successful agency and the moderating role of emotion reappraisal. Psicol. Refl. Crít. 30, 25 (2017).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-017-0078-4>*

Achievement goals =

**“cognitive representations that guide behavior
to a competence-related future end state.”**

They found that achievement goals were positively related to happiness.

And that perceived successful agency mediated that correlation.

PURSUE MEANINGFUL GOALS

Klug, H.J.P., Maier, G.W. Linking Goal Progress and Subjective Well-Being: A Meta-analysis. J Happiness Stud 16, 37–65 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-013-9493-0>

Another study found “**significant association between successful goal striving and subjective well-being**”, which was larger when

1. “**successful goal pursuit was defined as goal progress, instead of goal attainment**”.

This means as researchers, we need to

1. shift our perspective of **success** from getting that paper done to **progress towards the paper**.

PURSUE MEANINGFUL GOALS

Klug, H.J.P., Maier, G.W. Linking Goal Progress and Subjective Well-Being: A Meta-analysis. J Happiness Stud 16, 37–65 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-013-9493-0>

Another study found “**significant association between successful goal striving and subjective well-being**”, which was larger when

2. “**subjective well-being was measured as subjective well-being (positive indicators), instead of ill-being (negative indicators).**”

This means as researchers, we need to

2. **measure our well-being by the accomplishment we feel by solving many problems, not the decreased frustration from having less problems to solve.**

PURSUE MEANINGFUL GOALS

Klug, H.J.P., Maier, G.W. Linking Goal Progress and Subjective Well-Being: A Meta-analysis. J Happiness Stud 16, 37–65 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-013-9493-0>

Another study found “**significant association between successful goal striving and subjective well-being**”, which was larger when

3. “the data collection took place in an **individualistic culture**, instead of a collectivistic culture.”

This means as researchers, we need to

3. **define personal goals and well-being measures** because what is meaningful and motivating to one person might not be to another.

PURSUE MEANINGFUL GOALS

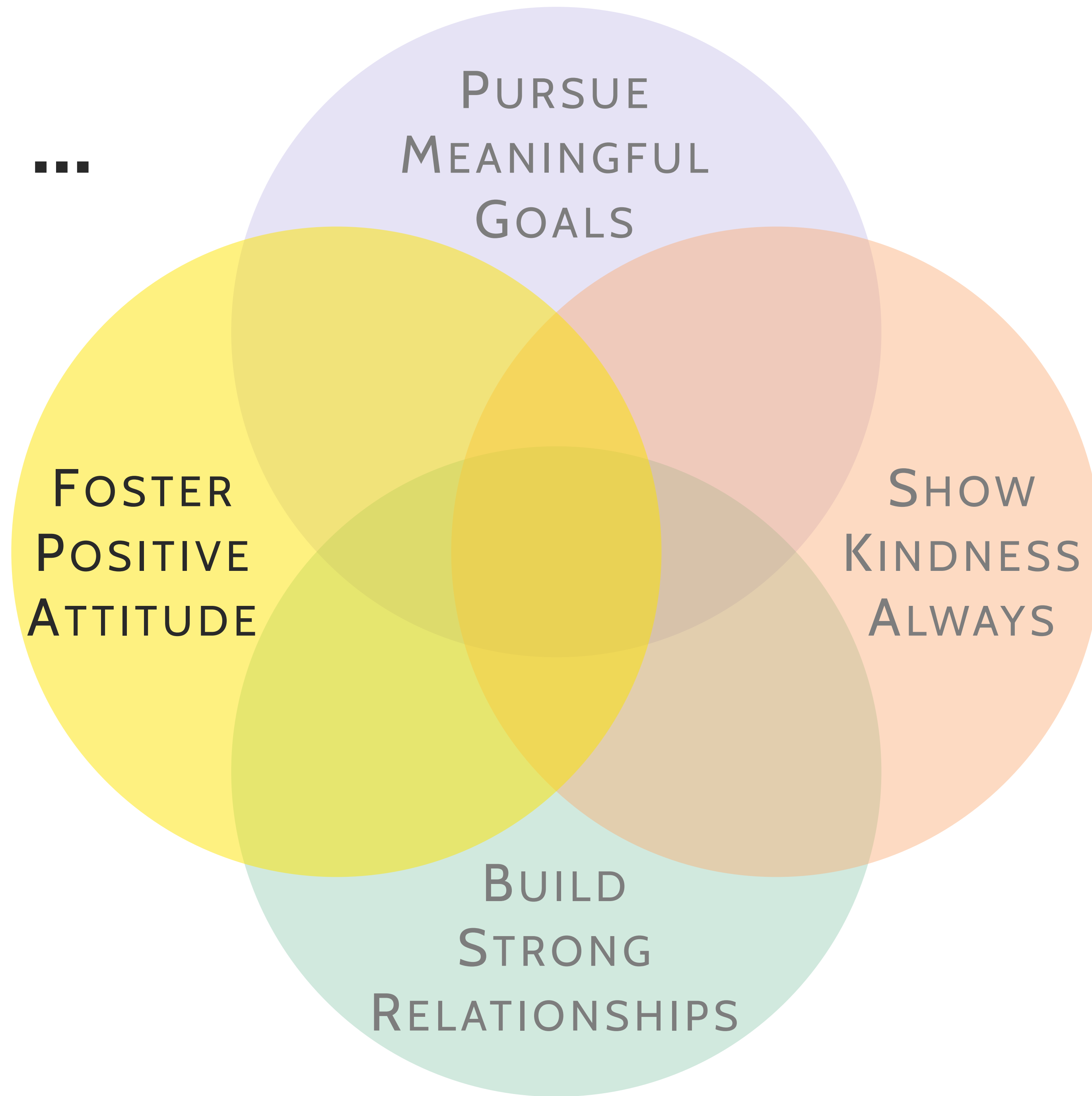
IS HAPPINESS THE RESULT OF SUCCESS OR
IS SUCCESS THE RESULT OF HAPPINESS?

“Happiness is associated with and precedes numerous successful outcomes.”

“Positive affect—the hallmark of well-being—may be the cause of many of the desirable characteristics, resources, and successes correlated with happiness.”

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: does happiness lead to success? Psychological bulletin, 131(6), 803-855. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803>

4 POLES ...



FOSTER POSITIVE ATTITUDE

If “plan A” didn't work, the
alphabet has 25 more letters.
Stay cool!



FOSTER POSITIVE ATTITUDE

WHAT IT'S NOT ABOUT

- Being disingenuously cheerful.
- Not acknowledging when things are bad.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

- Focusing on positive emotions.
- Intentionally seeking the silver lining.
- Avoid getting stuck in unhelpful thoughts and actions patterns.

FOSTER POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Some researchers posit that positive emotion don't just "feel good" in the moment.

"[...] positive moods may predispose individuals to **feel that life is meaningful**. In addition, positive moods may increase sensitivity to the meaning or relevance of a situation."

King LA, Hicks JA, Krull JL, Del Gaiso AK. Positive affect and the experience of meaning in life. J Pers Soc Psychol. 2006 Jan; 90(1): 179-96. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.90.1.179. PMID: 16448317.

FOSTER POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Some researchers posit that positive emotion don't just “feel good” in the moment.

They could help to undo lingering negative emotions, start upward well-being spirals, **broaden our conscious arsenal of thoughts and actions, and build psychological resiliency.**

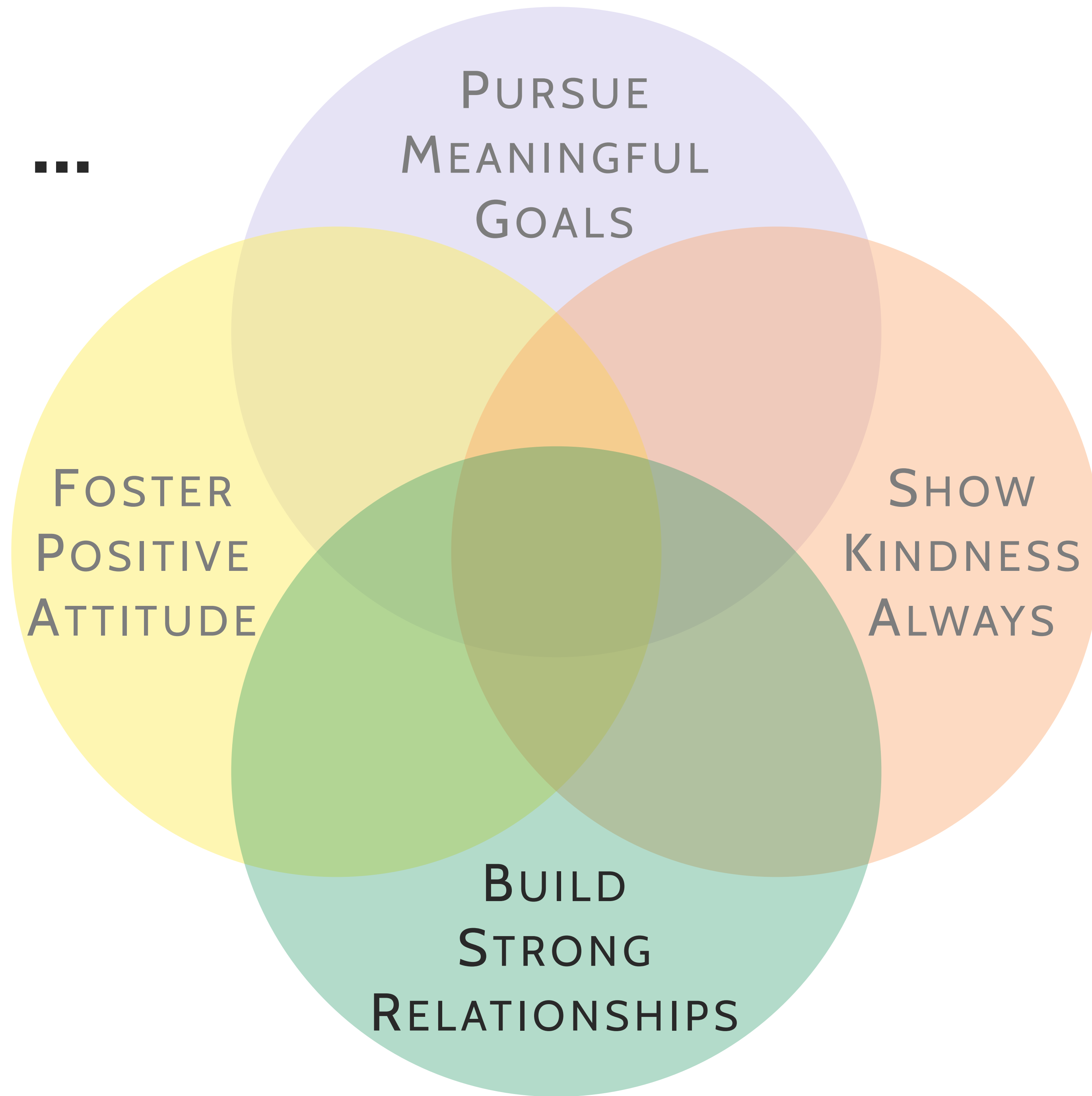
Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. American Psychologist, 56(3), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218>

Sugawara, D. and Sugie, M. (2021), The Effect of Positive Emotions with Different Arousal Levels on Thought–Action Repertoires^{1,2}. Jpn Psychol Res, 63: 211-218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpr.12300>

Barbara L. Fredrickson & Christine Branigan (2005) Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires, Cognition and Emotion, 19:3, 313-332, DOI: [10.1080/02699930441000238](https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930441000238)

Cohn MA, Fredrickson BL, Brown SL, Mikels JA, Conway AM. Happiness unpacked: positive emotions increase life satisfaction by building resilience. Emotion. 2009 Jun;9(3):361-8. doi: 10.1037/a0015952. PMID: 19485613; PMCID: PMC3126102.

4 POLES ...



BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Loneliness \neq Isolation

“Loneliness is defined as the distress that accompanies a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships.

The discrepancy usually arises from having relationships that are of poorer quality than wanted.”

Louise C. Hawkley

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Loneliness is associated with increased risks of

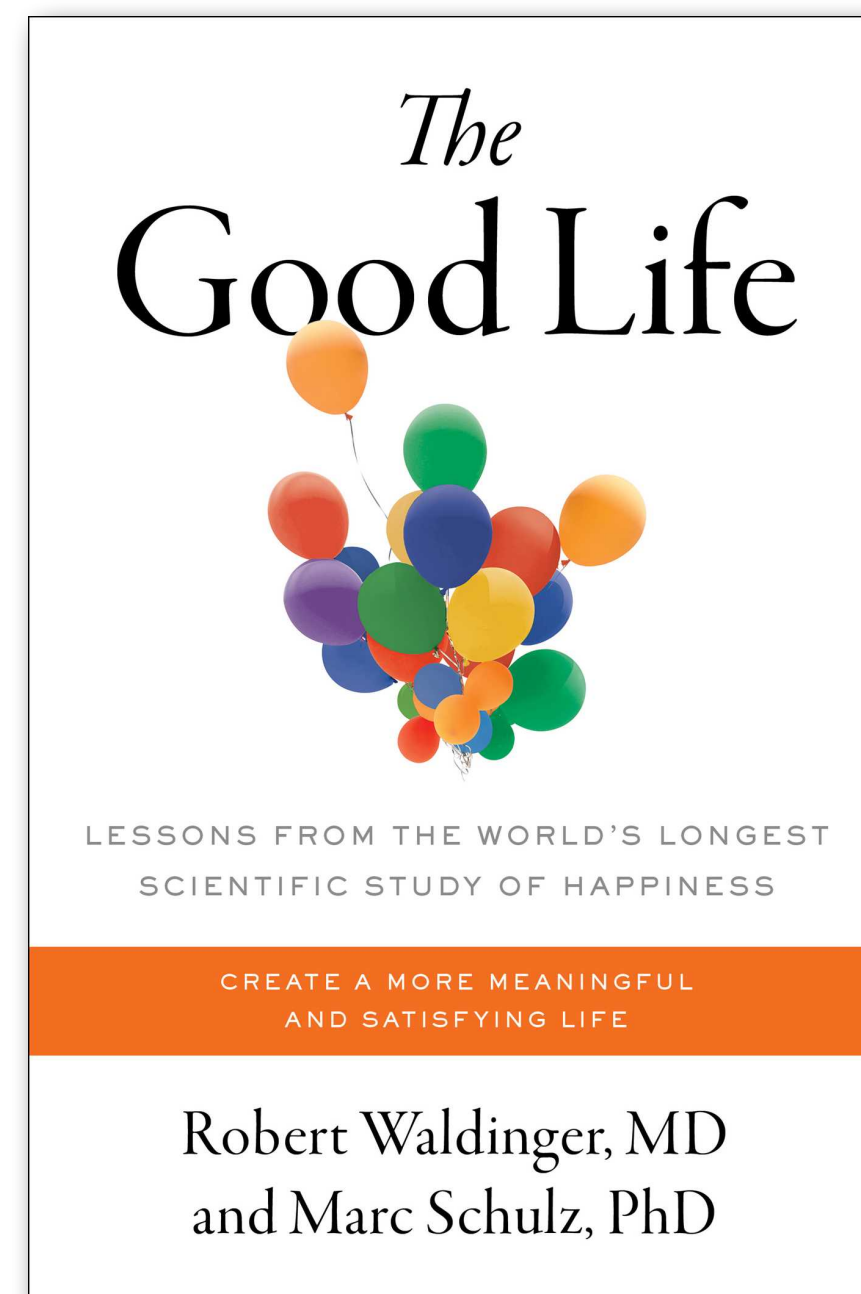
- cardiovascular disease,
- dementia,
- depression,
- lower well-being,
- anxiety,
- impaired behavioural and emotional self-control,
- impaired control of eating behaviour,
- poor sleep quality
- ...

Hawkley, L.C. Loneliness and health. Nat Rev Dis Primers 8, 22 (2022).
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41572-022-00355-9>

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

In many surveys, close relationships are among the top happiness factors cited by participant.

<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-04/Global%20Happiness%202022%20Report.pdf>



An 80 year study (Harvard Study of Human Development) found it to be the #1 factor to successful ageing.

“Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period.”

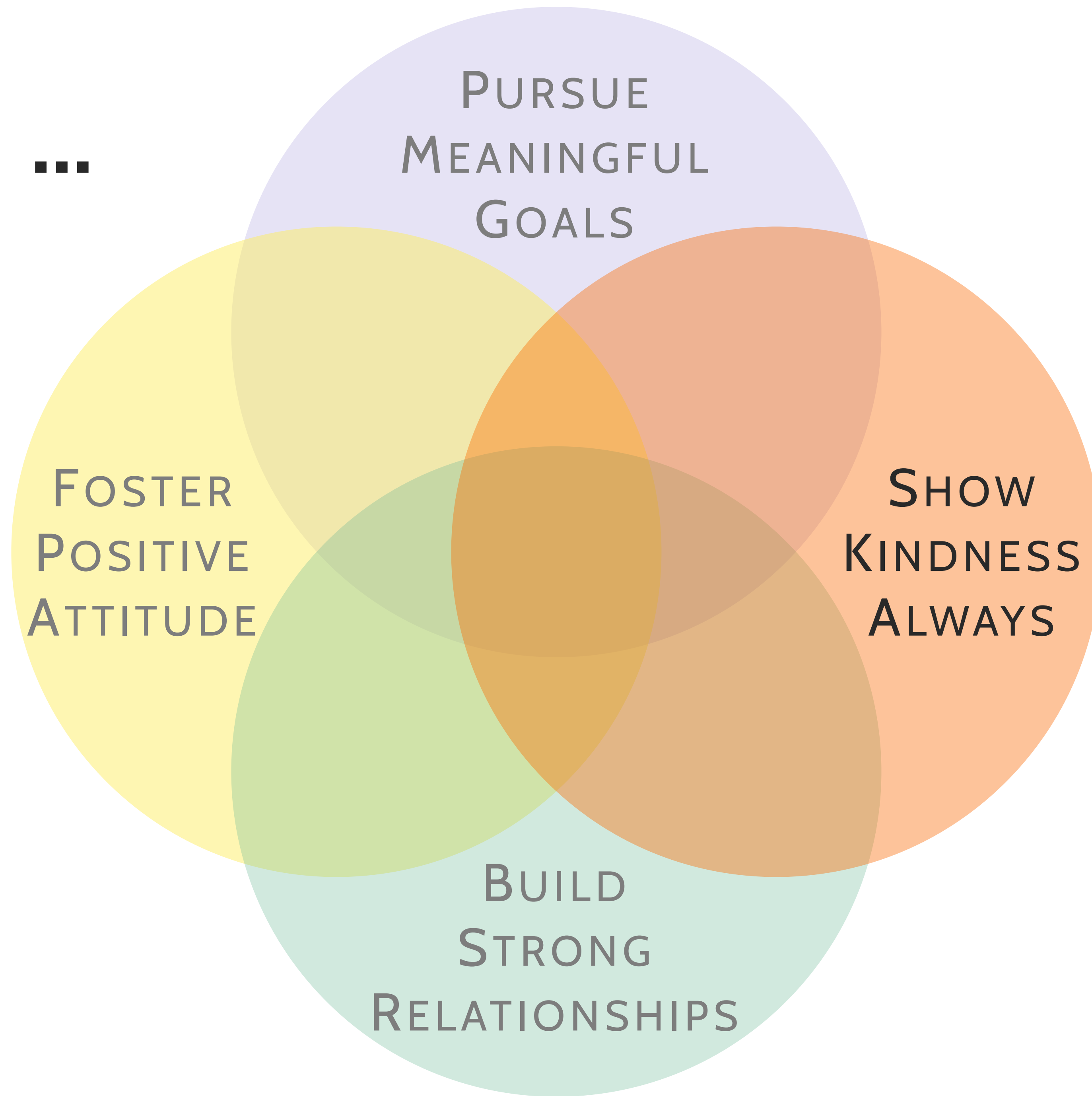
The Good Life
— Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Maintaining qualitative and fulfilling relationships (at home, at work, and elsewhere) is essential to living a happy life.

The academic system can make it difficult to maintain fulfilling relationships.

4 POLES ...



SHOW KINDNESS ALWAYS

Kindness begets happiness and vice versa.

Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J. et al. Happy People Become Happier through Kindness: A Counting Kindnesses Intervention. J Happiness Stud 7, 361–375 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-005-3650-z>

Kindness is also linked to reduced mortality (specifically through its link to stress).

Poulin MJ, Brown SL, Dillard AJ, Smith DM. Giving to others and the association between stress and mortality. Am J Public Health. 2013 Sep;103(9):1649-55. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2012.300876. Epub 2013 Jan 17. PMID: 23327269; PMCID: PMC3780662.

Supervisor kindness is also associated with virtuous motivation process and greater employee performance.

De Carlo A, Dal Corso L, Carluccio F, Colledani D, Falco A. Positive Supervisor Behaviors and Employee Performance: The Serial Mediation of Workplace Spirituality and Work Engagement. Front Psychol. 2020 Jul 24;11:1834. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01834. PMID: 32793085; PMCID: PMC7393218.

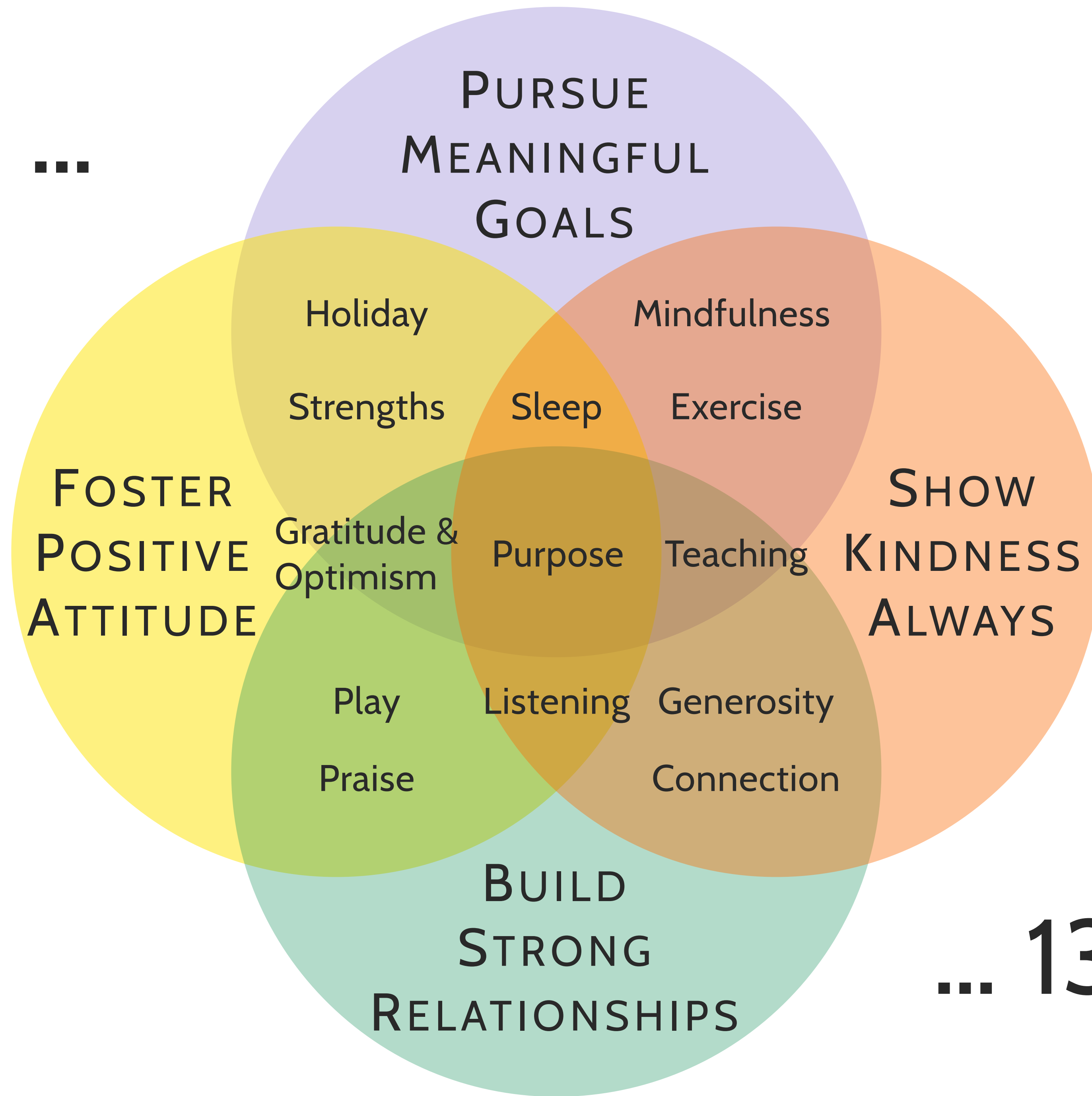
SHOW KINDNESS ALWAYS

Show kindness to *yourself* as well as *others*.

- Being kind does not mean being self-sacrificing or self-effacing. You should still make sure your own needs are met.
- Don't disparage yourself in talk or in thought. Be as kind to yourself as you would a friend.

WHERE TO GO NEXT?

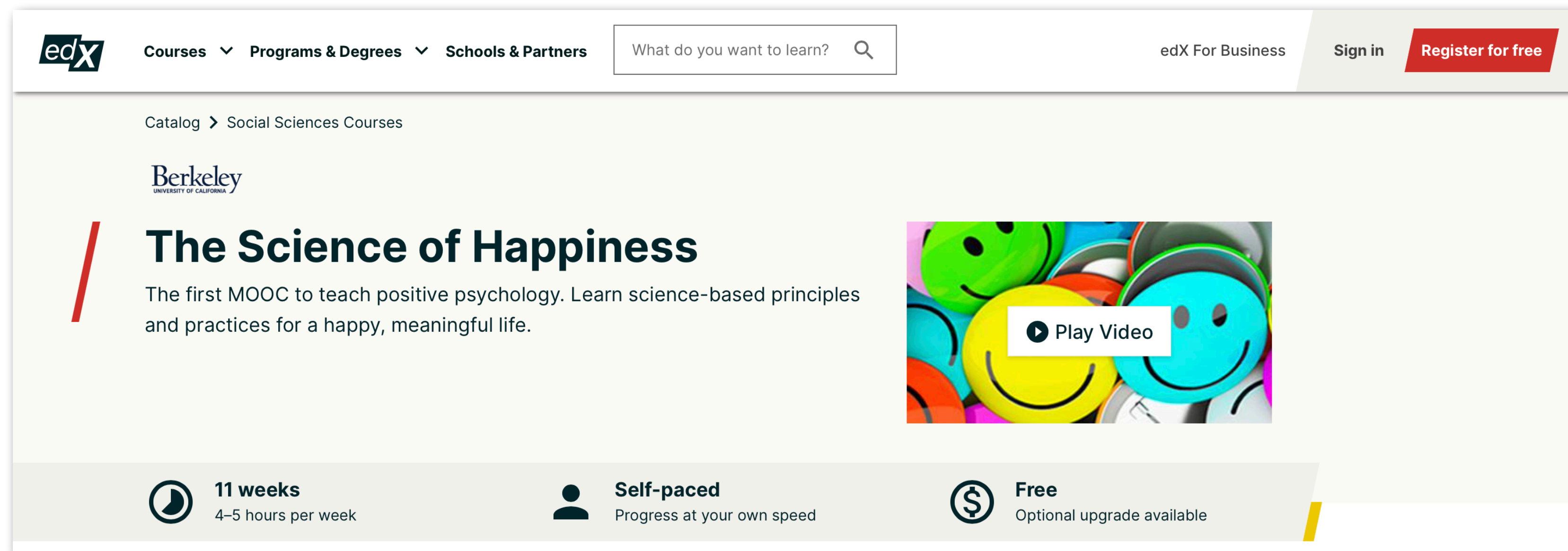
4 POLES ...



... 13 TACTICS

SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS COURSE

“Offers students practical strategies for tapping into and nurturing their own happiness, including trying several research-backed activities that foster social and emotional well-being, and exploring how their own happiness changes along the way.”



The screenshot shows the edX website interface for the course 'The Science of Happiness'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the edX logo, links for 'Courses', 'Programs & Degrees', and 'Schools & Partners', a search bar with the text 'What do you want to learn?', and links for 'edX For Business', 'Sign in', and 'Register for free'. Below the navigation bar, the breadcrumb trail reads 'Catalog > Social Sciences Courses'. The course title 'The Science of Happiness' is prominently displayed, followed by the Berkeley University of California logo. A description states: 'The first MOOC to teach positive psychology. Learn science-based principles and practices for a happy, meaningful life.' To the right of the text is a video player thumbnail featuring colorful smiley faces and a 'Play Video' button. At the bottom of the course card, three key features are listed: '11 weeks' (4-5 hours per week), 'Self-paced' (Progress at your own speed), and 'Free' (Optional upgrade available).

<https://www.edx.org/course/the-science-of-happiness-3>

JOIN THE GROW INTO YOUR PHD COMMUNITY



Let's take the Science of Happiness
Course together and continue the
conversation on Slack.



growintoyourphd.com



13 TACTICS

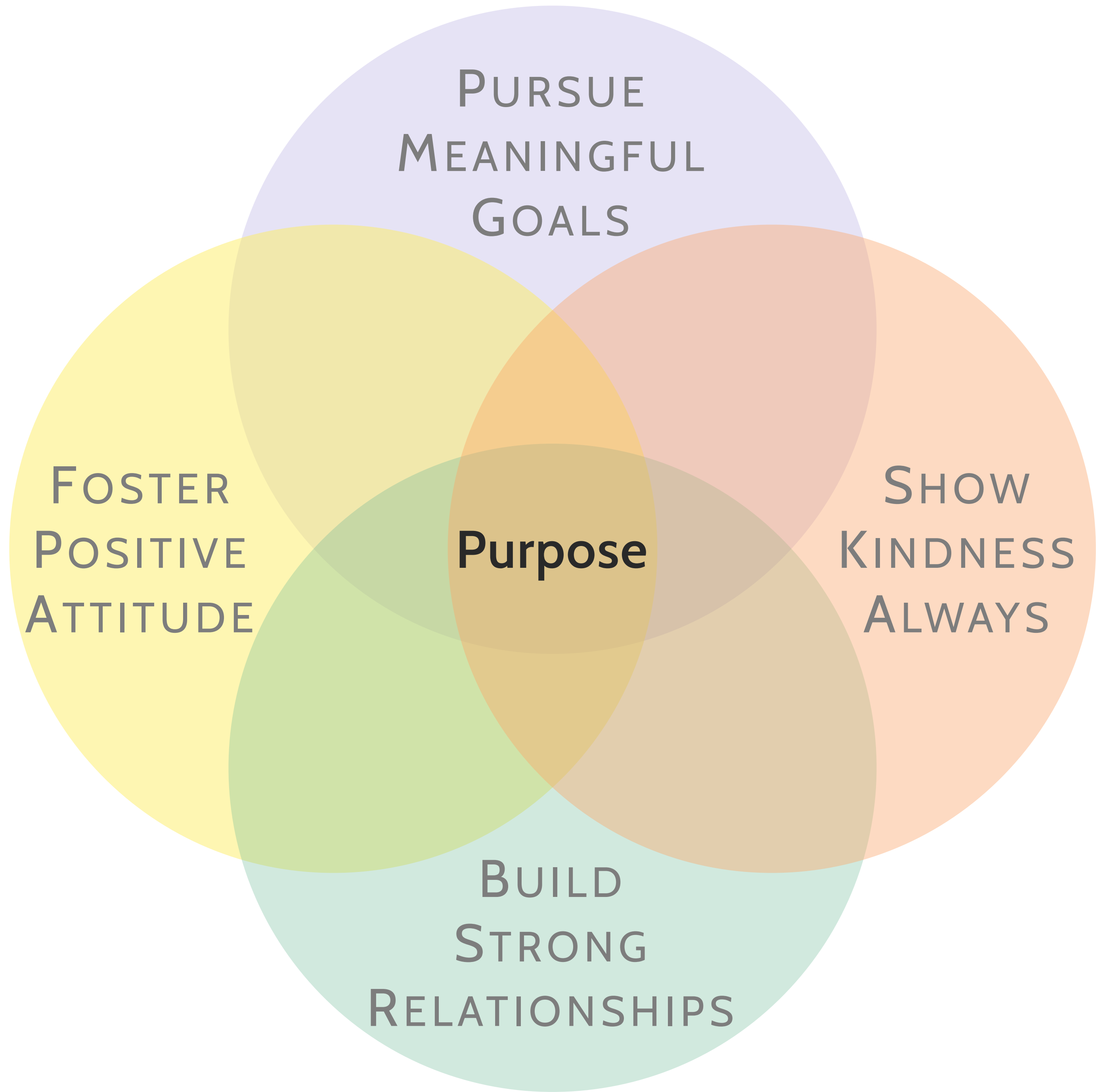
A WORD ABOUT FOCUS

By trying to accomplish everything, everywhere, all at once,
we end up doing nothing.

Choose between 1 and 3 tactics and try to build them into your routine.

Then you can take on a few more and so on.

Build slowly but surely.



PURPOSE

START WITH WHY

Why are you finishing this *Master thesis*?

Why are you doing this *PhD*?

Why are you interested in this research topic?

Why do you want this *postdoc or tenure track position*?

Why do you get up in the morning to get to work?

Start with one of these questions.

Then ask why 5-7 times to get to a deeper answer.

PURPOSE

Why are you finishing this *Master thesis*?

Because I want to publish a paper with the results and the first step is writing my thesis.

Why do you want to publish a paper?

Because it will give me a better chance for my future PhD applications.

Why do you want to apply to PhD positions?

Because I love research and I want to try to make it my career.

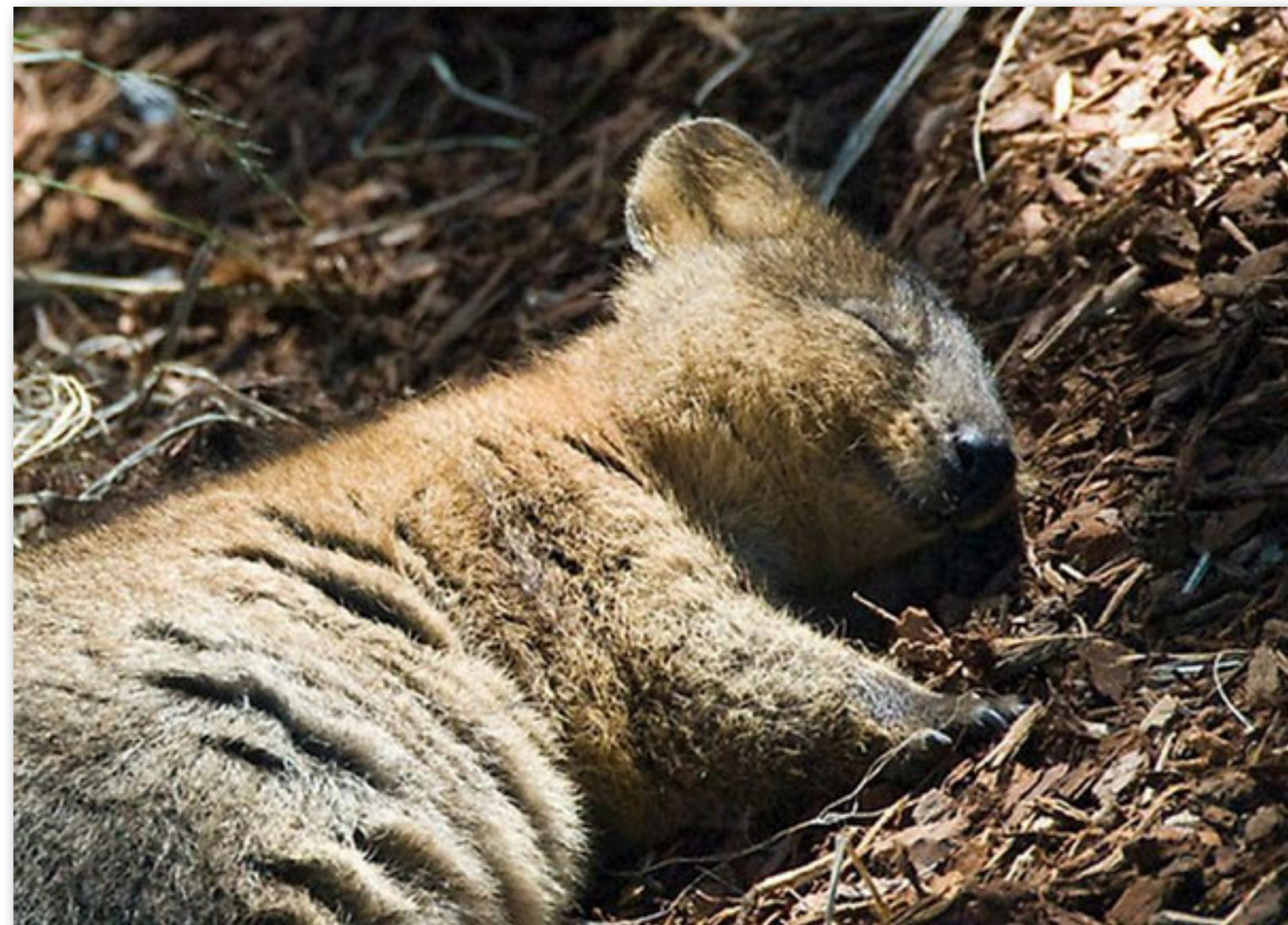
...

Continue until you hit an answer that really resonates with you.



SLEEP

- Accommodate your chronotype (early bird, night owl or in the middle?)
- Wake up at the same time every day





HOLIDAY

When was your last holiday?

How long was it?

How many days do you still have “in stock” from last year?

Do you need a break?





STRENGTHS

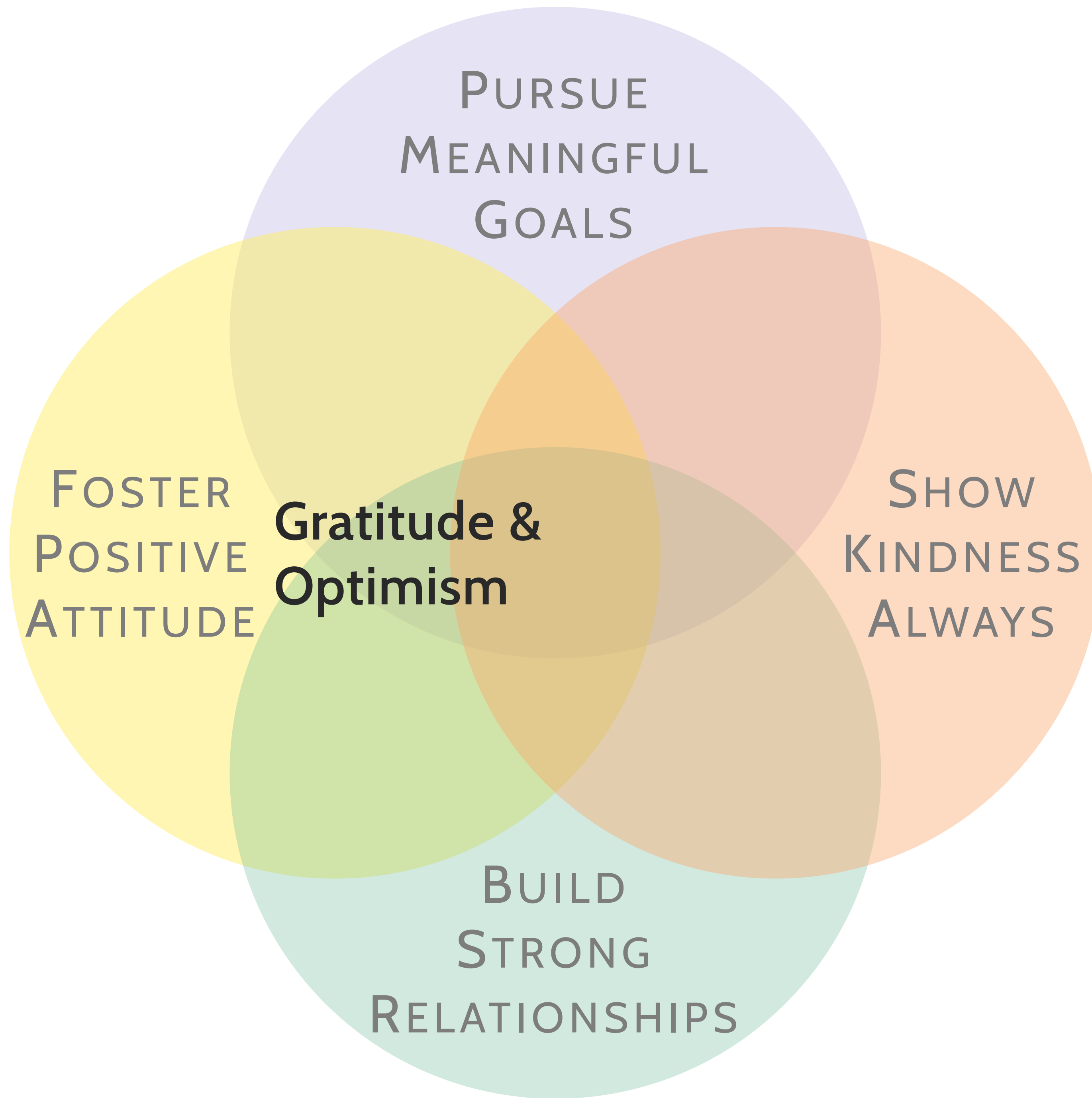
What are you great at?

What can you do for hours without getting tired?

What lights you up?

Make a list of your top 5 strengths (personal, work related or both).

Then try to use one of these strengths every day in a new way.



GRATITUDE & OPTIMISM

I feel happy ... spending time with my friends this week.

I feel grateful ... that you all decided to attend my talk.

I feel secure ... in my new flat.

I feel hopeful ... that I will succeed in my career change.

Write down everything that comes to mind for each positive emotion.

Then move on the next.



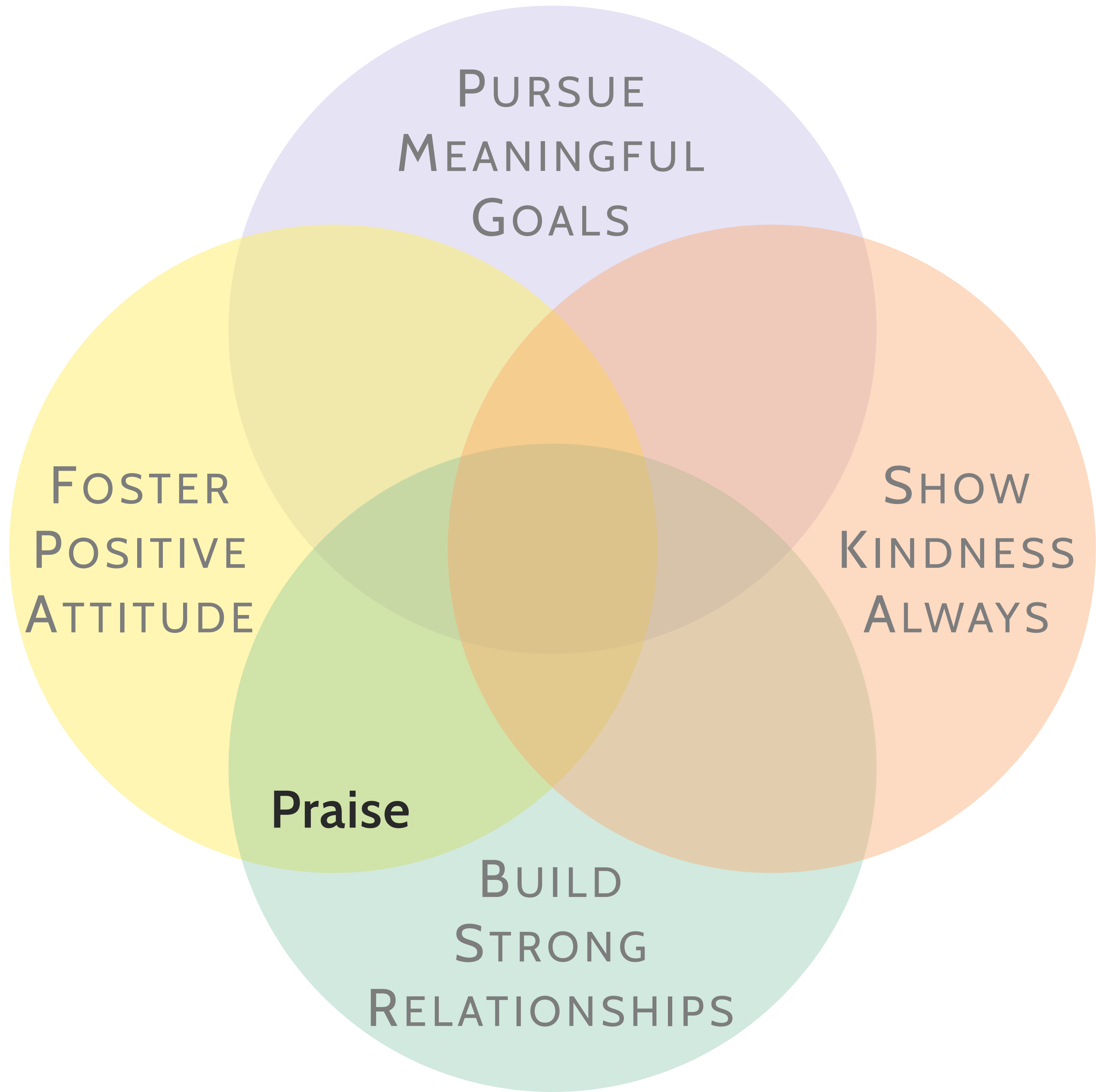
PLAY

Do you like to draw? Write? Play theatre?

Code dart simulations? Play chess? Read?

Play your favourite video game?

Plan at least one evening per week to do something that's pure fun.



PRAISE

“You did great today!”

“You’re learning this very fast, good job!”

“Look at the progress you’ve made. You should be very proud of yourself.”

“I know it sounds scary, but you’ve got this. I believe in you.”

Words of encouragement are easy to give and they can have a great impact on the recipient.

Dispense praise generously to the people around you.



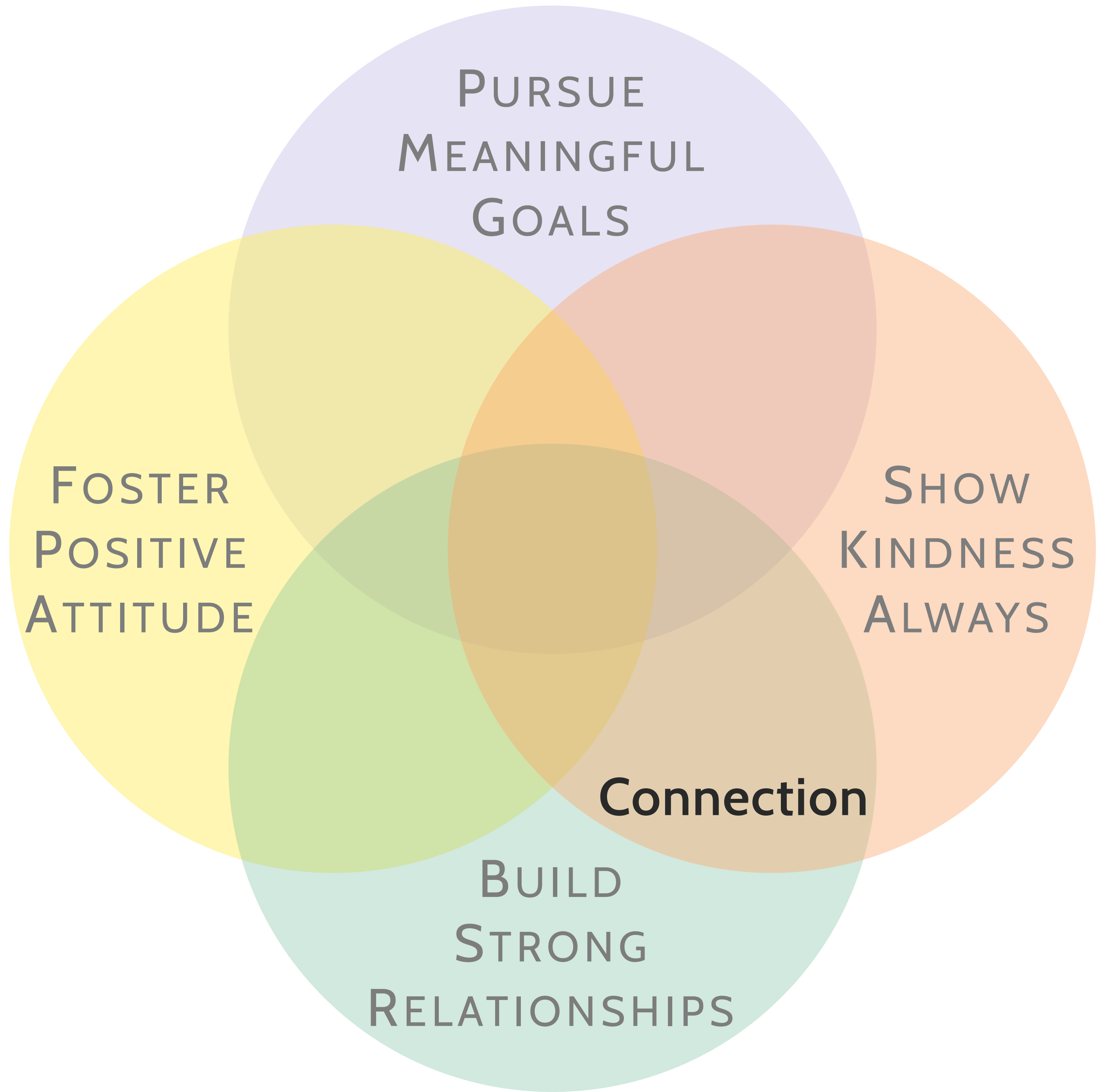
LISTENING

“Listening is a gift of spiritual significance that you can learn to give to others. When you listen, you give one a sense of importance, hope and love that he or she may not receive any other way. Through listening, we nurture and validate the feelings one has, especially when he or she experiences difficulties in life.”

H. Norman Wright

Instead of starting the conversation with an anecdote about yourself, start by asking a question about the other person's life.

Then listen intently.



CONNECTION

How long has it been since you called your sibling?

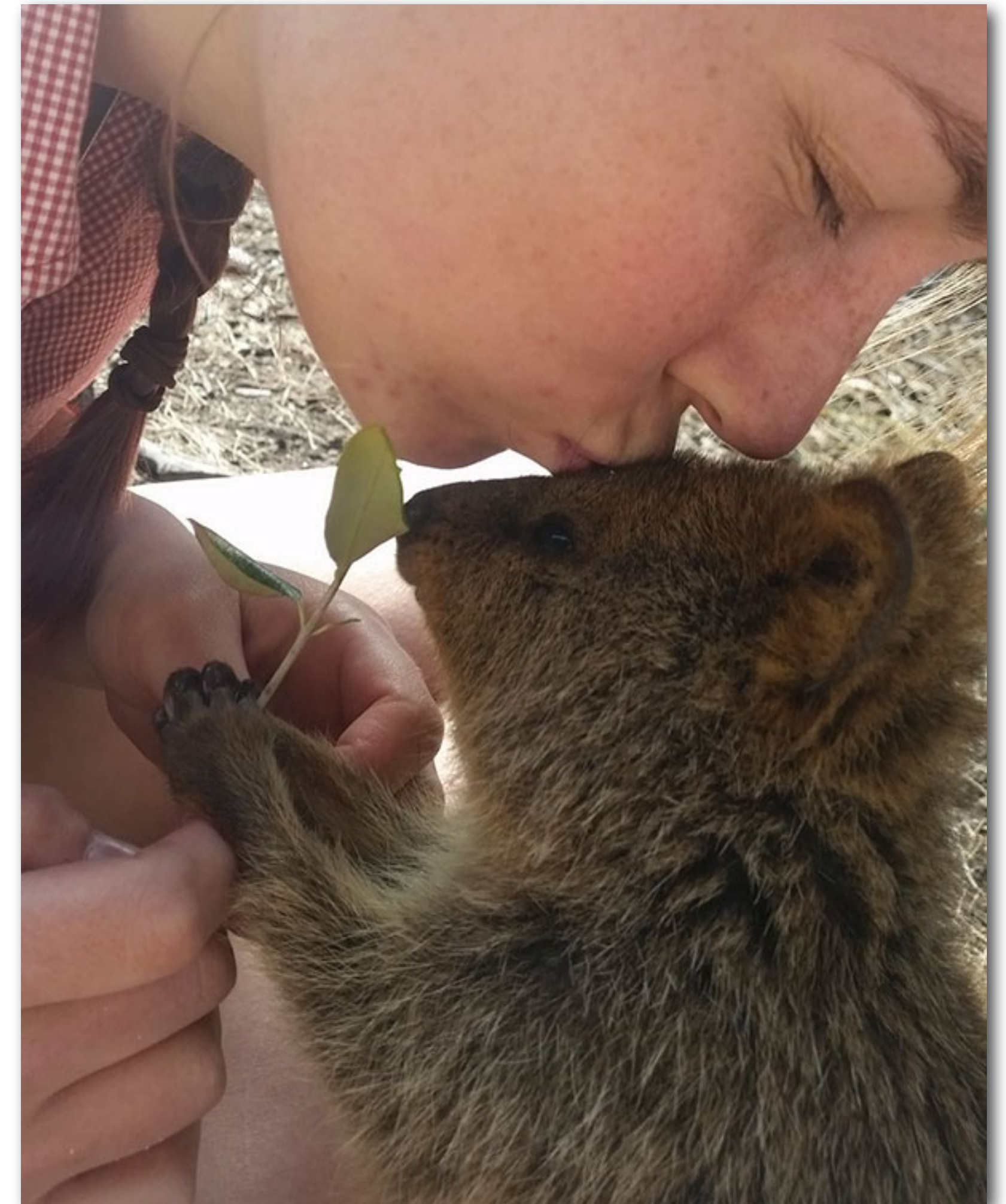
How long since you saw your best friend?

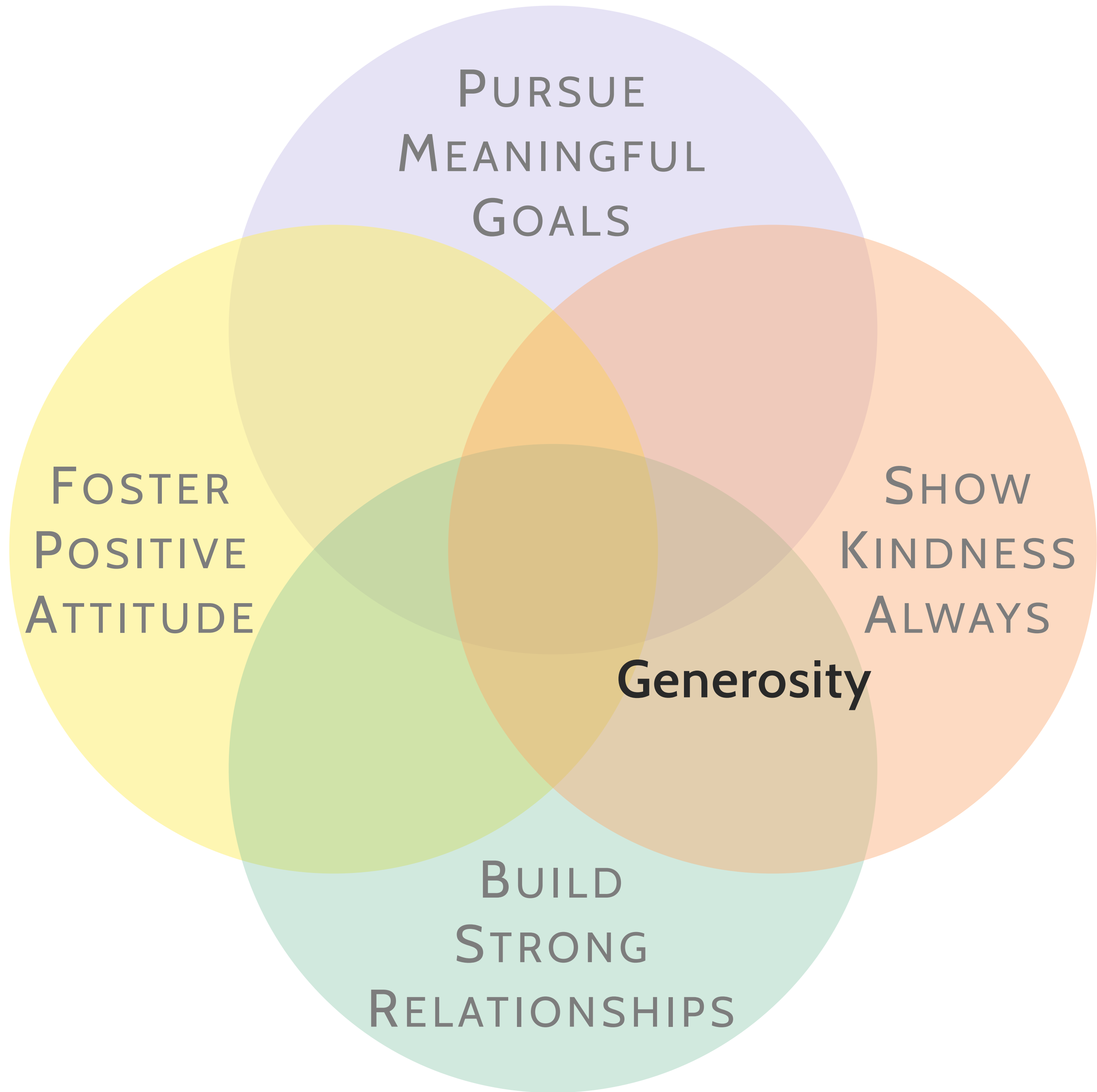
Since you gave someone a warm hug?

Since you met someone new?

Start, deepen or re-kindle a bond.

Connect with someone in a meaningful way.





GENEROSITY

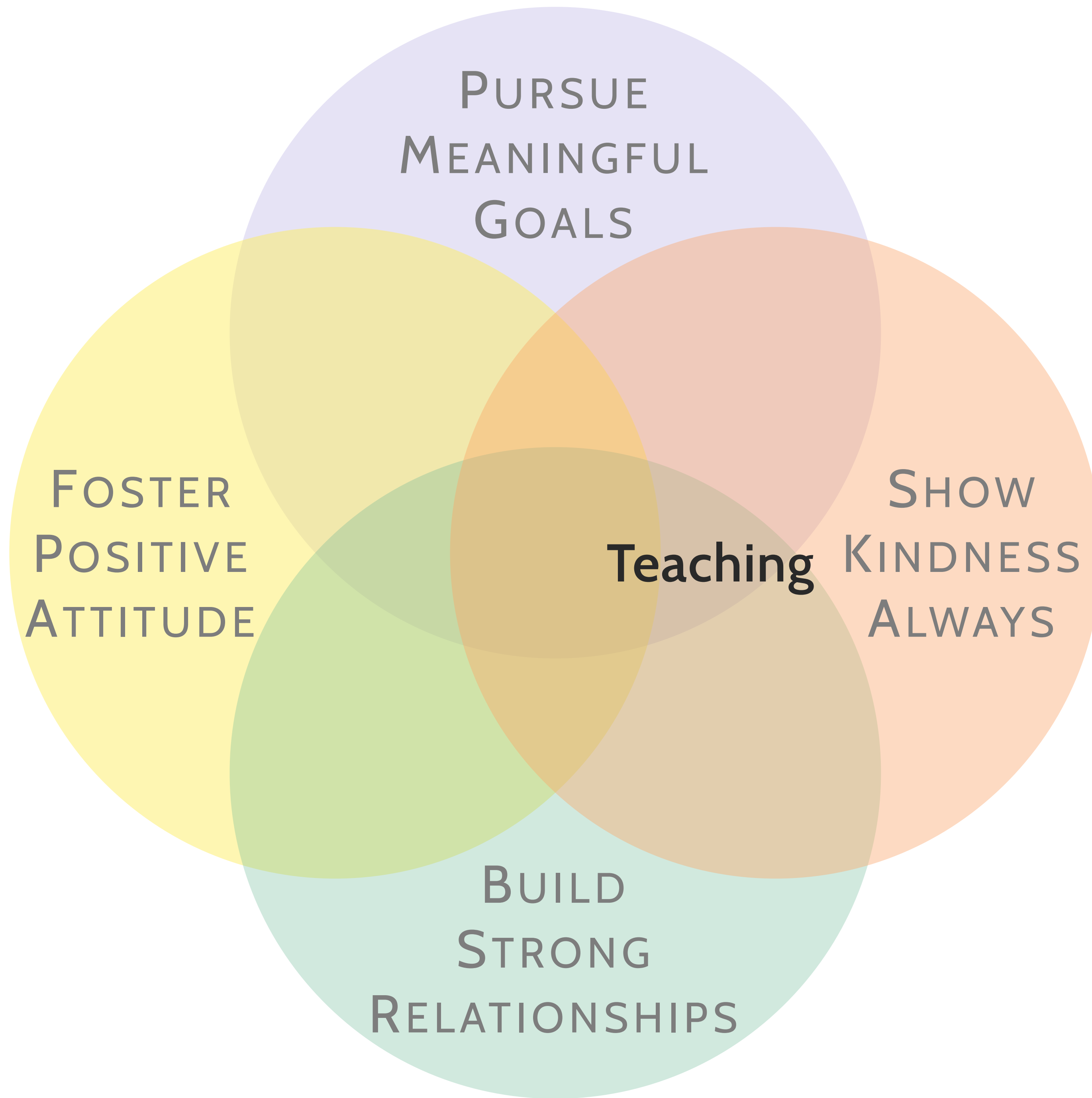
What you do for others makes a difference. You have the power to impact others' lives positively.

Once a week, perform 5 random acts of kindness. Big or small.

Write a sentence about each one and how they made you feel.

Examples:

- Help a colleague with a problem they have
- Do one of the chores at home to relieve your stressed roommate
- Buy coffee or ice-cream for a friend
- Right a fallen bike for a stranger
- Give a meal to children in need via the [ShareTheMeal World Food Program](#)



TEACHING

Sign up to be a tutor.

Start an outreach social media account.

Promise to give a presentation on a new topic.

We're in this career because we all love to learn.

Share the joy of learning with someone else.



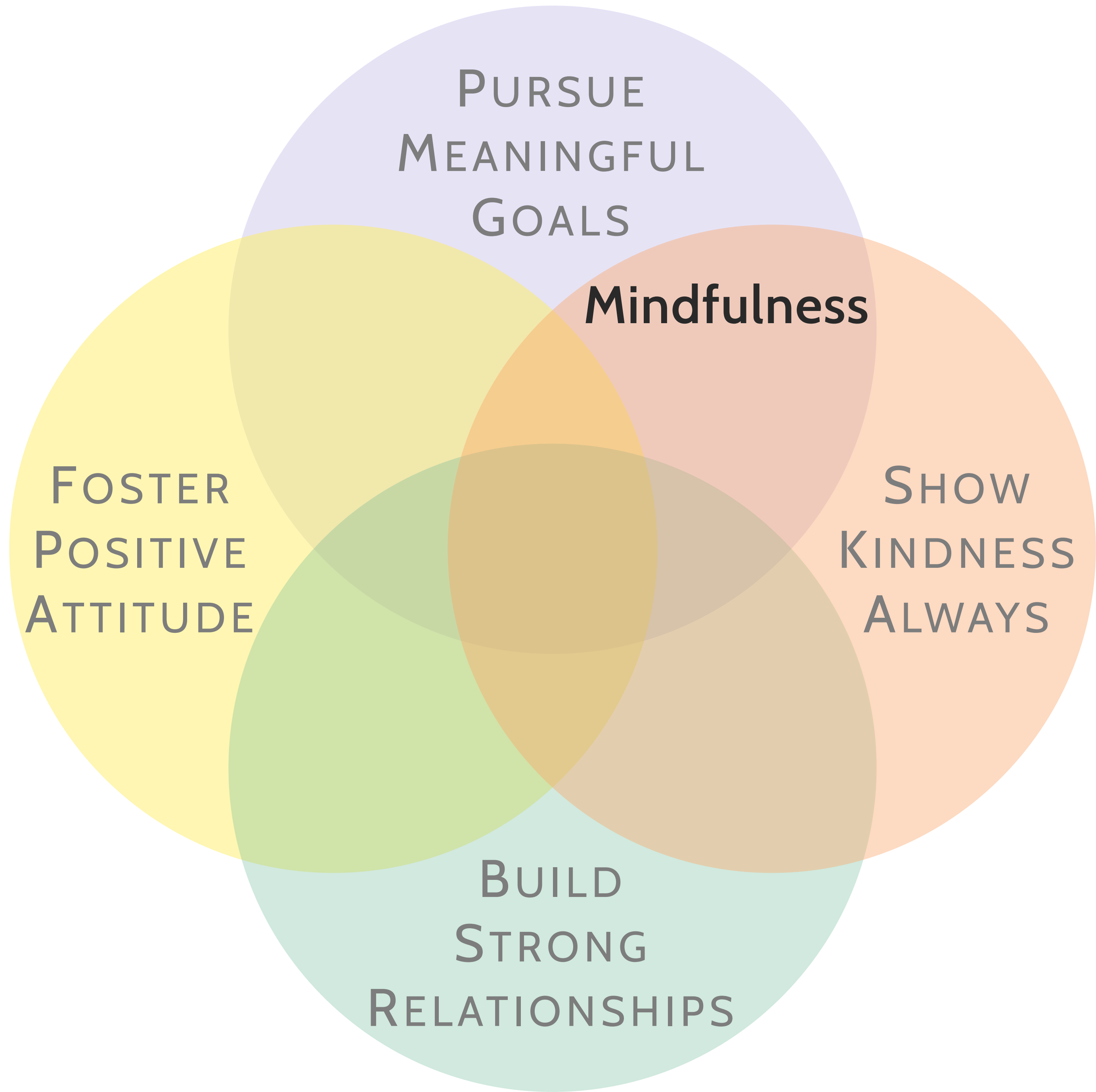
EXERCISE

What's your preferred way to move your body
and let off some steam?

Climbing? Running? Tennis Table? Rowing?
Lifting weights? Boxing?

Plan at least one session of exercise per week.





PURSUE
MEANINGFUL
GOALS

Mindfulness

FOSTER
POSITIVE
ATTITUDE

SHOW
KINDNESS
ALWAYS

BUILD
STRONG
RELATIONSHIPS

MINDFULNESS

This can be as simple as controlling your breath: inhaling and exhaling slowly, feeling the air move through your body.

Or you could visualise a safe and happy place in as much detail as possible.

Or see yourself feeling happy and confident after the exam has passed and imagine going through it backwards to where you are now.

Choose a mindfulness exercise (or an app).

Use it to help you fall asleep or to ground yourself when stressed.

FOR MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS

- **Fit:** tactic shouldn't feel like a burden or a chore
- **Variety:** is a necessity, otherwise we get accustomed
- **Motivation:** you want to be happier, take this on voluntarily
- **Effort:** the more you put in, the more you will get out
- **Social support:** having people around you can motivate you to keep going