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## How Can I Becomea Happier Person? Live Like Aristotle!

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### **How Can I Become a Happier Person? Live Like Aristotle!**

Aristotle considered that cultivating moral virtues, such as courage and temperance, was essential to a happy life. His *Nicomachean Ethics* makes clear that embodying these virtues requires habituation. For example, only by facing one's fears on multiple occasions does one become courageous. In *Introduction to Philosophy*, I ask students to immerse themselves in Aristotle's theory and verify it "experientially." Students choose either the virtue of courage or of temperance, and put it into practice over two weeks. Afterwards, they submit an essay where they do the following: present Aristotle's theory of moral virtue and its connection to his conception of happiness; describe three of the actions they undertook to cultivate their chosen virtue; reflect on their experience in order to evaluate Aristotle's thesis that moral virtues can be acquired through habituation.

The assignment has proved to be a favorite in this course, because students are not merely asked to present a philosopher's theory or provide objections and responses to it in the abstract, as traditional assignments in my discipline do, but rather to appraise its merit based on personal experience. The outcomes run the gamut from students curbing "addictions" to sweets or video games (for temperance) to conquering fears of public speaking or driving in Miami (for courage). The assignment speaks to the idea that philosophy can personally transform each one of us and contribute to our flourishing. And this idea is far more exciting than simply telling students that philosophy will improve their critical thinking skills!

I would improve this assignment by adding in-class presentations where students can share their experiences, since so many converge on similar desires or fears when preparing the assignment. I have been personally inspired by many of the students' struggles and victories implementing these virtues, so I want them to be collectively inspired too!