

Reading Group Guide
for Young Adults

*The Art and Science
of Getting Happier*

BUILD

the

LIFE

You

WANT

**ARTHUR C. BROOKS
OPRAH WINFREY**



PORTFOLIO

BUILD *the* LIFE *You* WANT

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- 1 Albina’s ability to find places of power in her own life helped her find happiness despite her adverse circumstances. When was a time that you felt powerless, initially, to navigate a situation? In retrospect, were you really powerless?
- 2 In chapter one, Arthur and Oprah introduce the three “macronutrients” of happiness: enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose. What are the sources of enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose in your life today?
- 3 Oprah and Arthur write that “pleasure is easier than enjoyment, but it is a mistake to settle for it, because it is fleeting and solitary.” What activities on social media bring pleasure? What would need to change for those activities to bring enjoyment?
- 4 Calculate your natural mix of happiness and unhappiness using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) on pages 14–16. Are you a Cheerleader, Mad Scientist, Poet, or Judge? Were you surprised by your result?
- 5 A 2007 study showed that the “second happiest” people tend to have higher salaries and do better in school than the “happiest” group. If you get stellar grades, do you sometimes observe that B students seem happier than you? Why might high earners be less happy than middle earners?
- 6 Arthur and Oprah suggest writing down your emotions as if they are happening to someone else in order to observe and manage them. Spend five minutes now and try this exercise.
- 7 It’s well-known advice not to fight over text. How might this connect to confrontational (limbic) versus metacognitive (prefrontal cortex) responses? How can waiting to calm down and speak face-to-face change a conversation’s outcome?
- 8 Think of a person in your life—perhaps a mentor, parent, or grandparent—who treats you with compassion (instead of empathy). How do you respond?
- 9 How might Instagram or other social media affect the amount of time you spend as your “me-self”? What can you do to balance your “I-self” and “me-self”?
- 10 It’s no surprise that curated online profiles water the envy weed. When scrolling social media, what makes you feel jealous? What strategies can you, or do you, employ to manage that envy?

- 11 Oprah and Arthur describe the four distracting idols in life: money, power, pleasure, and prestige or fame. Which do you find attracts and distracts you most?
- 12 The four pillars of a happier life are family, friendship, work, and faith. Which pillar do you feel most connected to? Which do you feel the least in touch with?
- 13 What is one way you might manage your strongest idol while building up your weakest pillar?
- 14 Young adult novels often preach that opposites attract. Research shows that complementary personalities (such as introverts and extroverts or Cheerleaders and Poets) make healthier pairings. Does that finding surprise you? Can you think of a couple (fictional or not) who embodies this kind of difference?
- 15 Arthur and Oprah reference the South Indian monkey trap in challenge 4: forgiveness. What does “releasing the rice” mean to you? Paradoxically, how can forgiving help the forgiver?
- 16 Have you ever had the unhappiness or negativity of a friend impact your mental state? How did you manage that situation?
- 17 Oprah and Arthur argue that emotional contagion—that is, the spread of emotions from person to person—can create a lasting culture within a family. How would you describe the emotional culture in your family? How do you change it?
- 18 The percentage of Americans who say they have fewer than three close friends has doubled since 1990. Who would you say are your three closest friends? What do you do to foster these friendships and keep them healthy?
- 19 Making in-person friends in the era of screens and social media can feel awkward or even frightening. How much of your socialization occurs on social media? What would it look like in real life?
- 20 Research shows that religious belief is strongly associated with a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Do you practice a religion? If not, what alternative means can you use to develop deeper purpose?
- 21 Oprah writes that “happiness multiplies when we share it.” What is one lesson from *Build the Life You Want* that you will go out and share with others?

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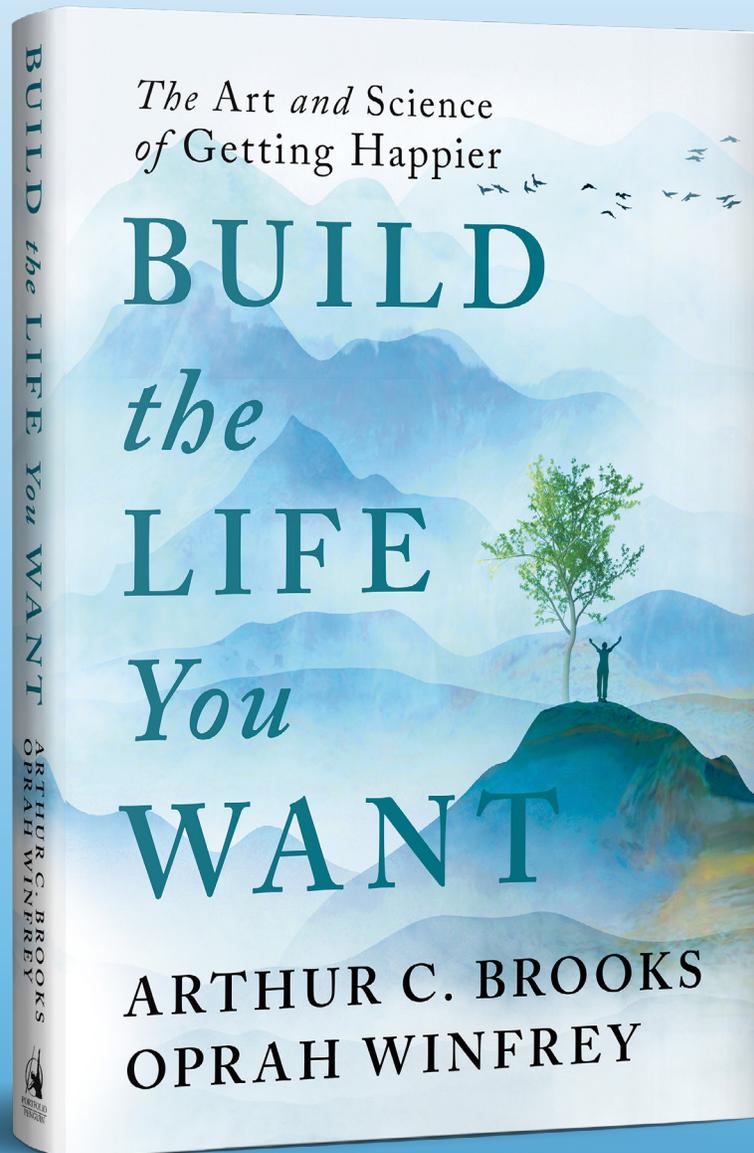
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