

Ep #147: From Surviving to Thriving: 14 Positive Qualities to Cultivate



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

[Habits On Purpose](#) with Kristi Angevine

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Welcome to Episode 147. I'm Kristi Angevine. I'm a Master Certified Coach and an IFS practitioner, and I'm passionate about helping you understand the root causes for your patterns and your habits. This podcast is here to guide you to understand why you think and feel and react as you do.

Today is all about highlighting positive, life-giving qualities and ways of being that give more than they take. Let's get started.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now here's your host, Physician and Master Certified Life Coach Kristi Angevine.

Hello, hello. All right, if you are listening to this in real time, it is the week of U.S. Thanksgiving. You may have lots going on; travel for yourself or for people coming into town to see you, lots of holidays on the horizon, lots of scheduling stuff. And if you are in the middle of a lot of busy things, I'm so grateful that you're taking a minute for yourself to just listen to something. If you celebrate, Happy Thanksgiving.

So as I sat down to record this for the second time, since take one came with some technical difficulties, I took a little time to have some really hot coffee. Mornings weren't always something I enjoyed, but now they're something I really look forward to.

And as I was sipping, kind of going over my to-do list, thinking about recording this episode for the second time, and thinking about the next episode, I just kind of... my eyes gazed over and landed on the side table next to my couch, I just had to chuckle. This side table is covered in books, most of which I have not finished; some of which I have not started. So I can't endorse them fully as "must reads", but I glanced over there and I just laughed because there's just such a pile.

Here's what I have. There's *The Paradox of Choice* by Barry Schwartz, *Why Talking is Not Enough* by Susan Page. I've got two or three old journals, like from back in 2022-2021. One of my favorites, by Seth Kopal,

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is called *Self-Led*. Then there's *The Obstacle Is the Way*, which is by Ryan Holiday.

And side note, Ryan Holiday spoke at the Passive Income MD Conference that I attended and spoke at a while back. And Ryan Holiday was just an excellent speaker. And because I was at that conference, I was also able to get another book that's on my side table, which is *The Purposeful MD* by Laura Suttin, which I've only flipped through and haven't read yet, but it looks really good.

Then let's see, what else is over there? Oh, *Wintering* by Katherine May, *Do Nothing* by Celeste Headlee. There's a three-year couples journal that I found the other day. And it's one of those journals that you're supposed to write in a little sentence every single day, and so is your partner. I flipped through it and there's these sparse entries from back in 2015. Pretty much, it's not been filled out at all.

There's this old intro text to *Internal Family Systems* by Richard Schwartz. And then all of this is surrounded by various and sundry pens in my current journal, etc.

So I used to read one book at a time, but that era is clearly gone. I noticed, as I kind of look at this stuff and share this with you, that I have this eager part that really wants just to ask all of you to tell me your top five favorite books; fiction, nonfiction.

And then, as I noticed that, I thought, "Huh, where would I put all those new book recommendations?" We live in a pretty small house, and my little home library/office/recording studio is already brimming with books. Number two, I find it so funny that I've got this ravenous desire for more books when I already have so many that aren't yet read.

So if we have recently connected in real life, either at the Passive Income MD Conference I mentioned, or I recently spoke at the Institute for Physician Wellness Coaching Summit in Arizona. And I was so lucky to be able to attend the LeadHer Summit in Dallas a few weeks back. I met some

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really amazing people. If you're one of those people, I'm so glad you tuned in.

Long-time listeners, thank you so much for being here. It really means a lot to me. Today is about an uplifting fill-up-your-cup topic, and let's just get straight to it.

Have you ever wondered what makes “the good life”? What makes your experience of your life as good as possible? People have been trying to answer this since people first existed. Psychology traditionally examined ways to improve human suffering. And then along came the field of positive psychology, and it was created to study how to go from okay to thriving.

The brilliance of coaching, in my view, is that it gives a process to explore what's in the way of your good life and what's in the way of going from okay to thriving. And then it pairs that understanding with really practical tools that can help you flourish.

Now, flourishing might seem a bit out of reach some days. The world as we know it here on earth for humans is both beautiful and complex, and concurrently filled with tragedy and greed and meanness and so many terrible, awful problems, most of which we humans create and perpetuate.

So when contemplating the so-called “good life”, what I find important to ask is more than just what makes a good life, but what are useful qualities that help you face the difficulties of ordinary, everyday life and live whatever your version of the good life is?

Now, I don't claim to know the exact answers for myself, much less for you, but I have an inkling of the direction to go, which is what today's episode is about. The qualities that I'm going to discuss are often cited as ways that we feel or qualities that are present when we feel our best, when we are our most sturdy, when we are at ease in our own skin, and when we feel most like ourselves.

And this episode is basically to put these qualities on your radar as things to consider deliberately accessing or cultivating more of. Now, in future episodes, we're going to dig into these individual qualities a little bit more

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and then discuss what blocks us from accessing them more, and how to actually have more of them.

You might be wondering, so what does this topic have to do with habits? Well, habits as I see them are the ways that we think, feel, and respond. The ways that we act when we're on autopilot.

Our habits are learned and they usually began as something that served us in some capacity. And since these habits we have are learned, once we understand how they make sense and why we have them, we can unlearn them and learn new ones.

Sometimes our autopilot habits interfere with the positive qualities I'm going to describe. So if your current habits are not helping you access the qualities I'll talk about today, that's just simply good information to know.

And then, when you know what's possible, what you might want more of, it kind of gives you a little bit of a North Star, so to speak. So when you are designing new habits, you know where you might want to head.

A couple of caveats before we talk about these positive qualities. This is not a comprehensive list. This is not a prescriptive list to tell you to go make checkboxes for. It's also not a list to demonize the ups and downs and struggles of ordinary, everyday life.

The human experiences, I live it, and as I see my clients and friends and family experience it, it has all sorts of struggles. It has all sorts of hard emotions. And that's normal. Some days it just sucks. Some years it sucks. And the goal isn't to eradicate the suck and only feel positive things. The goal, as I see it, is to be aware of what we might want more of that could be useful for navigating the inevitable challenges of reality.

And now let me shift from caveat to a bit of a warning. As I'm listing these things off, I want you to watch for these common responses in your brain. You might think, "Shit, I don't have this stuff on the regular, and I have no clue how to get it. This sounds good and all, and maybe somebody else can cultivate these, but not me. I am too messed up. I'm not capable. Must be nice. I'm too busy. I have too much difficulty just getting by."

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I hear you. And I just want you to know that this is what brains do when they hear something they want and don't yet know how to access. These responses are simply cues that you're hearing something that you value, not indicators of your ineptitude. All right?

So let's get to this list. As you listen, this is what I want you to do. Which ones make your ears perk up? Which ones resonate with you? Take these responses as really important nudges. This is your intuition, or the Universe or whatever you want to label it as, whispering, "Hey you, yeah you, listen." It's nudging you towards something important for yourself.

As you listen, which of these things do you have dialed? Which ones are easy to titrate up and down as needed, versus which ones are more difficult or are you missing completely? Which ones do you yearn to have more of? All right?

In no particular order, here are some powerful positive qualities and characteristics that are inspired by the descriptions from Julia Sullivan, Richard Schwartz, and Martin Seligman.

The first one is *Calm*. When you are calm, you are settled and perhaps even serene, regardless of what's going on around you. Instead of hyper-arousal and agitation, calm is more mellow, more trusting. Yet calm is not detached, it's just less reactive.

True calm isn't a facade of this even-keel exterior hiding an internal frenzied tension, but it's genuinely being grounded and centered, kind of like the eye in the storm. Calm is usually slow and open, whereas anxiety and tension are fast and tight. Contrast calm to when you're anxious, rushed, and agitated.

Clarity. When we have clarity, we have a clear undistorted view of situations and ourselves without projection or bias from previous experiences, without extreme beliefs, and without extreme emotions. With clarity, we can look at situations objectively, even if we have a vested interest in them.

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Clarity allows us to see the truth, which means we can see when we've messed up. We can see injustice and unfairness, as well as beauty and positive intentions.

Clarity is missing when we feel really confused and we find ourselves overthinking, over-analyzing, and getting stuck in analysis paralysis and crowdsourcing. Clarity sounds like, "I see it now, I get it."

All right, next is *Curiosity*. Isn't it so fun to feel curious? Curiosity is a nonjudgmental interest in learning and seeking understanding. It presents as fascination and wonder about how things work, why things occur, how things are connected, without any agenda to change things.

Curiosity shows up in listening without formulating what you're going to say next. Learning for the sake of learning. And curiosity can really help us enjoy ambiguity and nuance. Curiosity asks genuine, open questions with the only goal of understanding. Curiosity is humble. It's deliberately embracing not knowing. And I personally find curiosity is the antidote for any time I have resistance or boredom or criticism.

Curiosity is absent when we are the expert who has everything figured out. It's also absent when we feel apathetic.

Playfulness. Playfulness is having fun and laughing and enjoying silliness and goofiness. Children have no trouble with playfulness, but as we age playfulness can fade away. Instead of being serious and uptight, playfulness is light-heartedness and humor. It might present as gentle teasing or snarky wit, belly laughs, and fun for the sake of having fun.

Playfulness is light. Perfectionism is heavy. When playfulness is missing in my life, it's like I have blinders on. I have that feeling of when I'm in a very serious, grim meeting, you know?

Next is *Compassion*. I have a few things to say about this that are a little bit more elaborate than what I've said about the other ones. Compassion is a kind, warm, active appreciation of the suffering and difficulties experienced by yourself or others. Compassion acknowledges, validates, normalizes, and is an eyes wide open awareness of the deepest of difficulties.

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Now, it differs from pity and empathy in really important ways. Pity is feeling sorry for someone. And it can have this underlying air of superiority, as if the person that you're pitying is a little bit less capable or weak or powerless.

Empathy is feeling with and identifying with someone's pain in a way that runs the risk of being overwhelming and draining. And runs the risk of you wanting to sort of distance yourself or feel fatigued or fix the pain immediately.

Pity sounds like, "I feel so sorry for them." Empathy sounds like, "I know how hard that is and it makes me so sad too." Compassion sounds like, "That must be so, so difficult, and I'm here for all of it." Can you hear the difference between pity, empathy, and compassion?

Now, compassion is missing when we judge, criticize, and indict other people and ourselves. It's also important to note that compassion has this reputation of being really passive and soft, *and* it's a slippery slope to excusing harmful behavior. Like, "If you could just be compassionate to that person who's in charge, you would understand how hard their job is," even though perhaps they're doing some really abusive things.

The reputation of compassion being really soft and passive is totally bullshit. Real compassion requires toughness. Think about it. Compassion is the ability to face suffering without turning away, without needing to rescue, without judgment, and this requires discipline and strength.

All right, *Patience*. The quality of patience is one of slowing down. Instead of needing to get somewhere fast or pushing to pick up the pace, saying, "Come on, come on, come on! Let's go, let's go!" patience allows things to unfold at their own natural pace without a need to rush or hurry.

With patience, we are comfortable with silence, with waiting. Patience is not a passive indifference, but it's a deliberate allowing of whatever pace or rhythm that someone or something needs. Patience sounds like, "Take all the time that's necessary."

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All right, now to *Confidence*. Confidence is a sturdy self-trust and a knowledge that you can handle whatever comes your way. It can be for other people, “They can handle whatever comes their way.”

Even if you make mistakes, with confidence there's an unwavering belief that you're intrinsically worthy, intrinsically good, and you trust your capacity to be present and deal with whatever shows up. You trust yourself to make repairs and apologies when needed. With self-confidence, you're open to failing, you're open to mistakes, because you know that's just part of life and learning.

Confidence is a quality that many of my clients worry is going to lead to arrogance. And that's because we sometimes mistake flashy cockiness and superiority with a sense of inherent worth and self-assurance. Confidence sounds like, “I trust myself, and I have my own back. We will figure this out, no matter what the consequences are.”

Contrast this with self-doubt, insecurity, or feeling like a fraud.

Next is *Presence*. The quality of presence is a state of attunement and awareness related to mindfulness, related to embodiment, and is being grounded in the present moment, whatever comes up.

With presence, you pay attention to your internal experience as well as to external circumstances with an openness to being with whatever is there. Presence is this intentional “being with”. Being with whatever may be going on for others. Being in the moment. Being here. Meeting yourself where you are.

Contrast presence with checking out and being distracted. Being at home with your body, but being at work with your mind.

Now, *Courage*. Courage is the willingness to act when it would be easier not to. Courage drives standing up to injustice. It's a strength in the face of uncertainty, danger, or challenge. Courage is active.

It's articulating something that is important, even if it might be hard for the other person to hear. Sometimes it's speaking up instead of staying quiet.

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We are courageous when we initiate a difficult conversation instead of avoiding it.

But courage isn't fearlessness. It's recognizing fear is real and is present, and figuring out how to act, and acting, despite that presence of fear. Courage isn't always flashy. It's not always big. It takes courage to just interrupt somebody. It takes courage to press send when you're not 100% sure. It takes courage to learn in public. It takes courage to try.

Creativity. When you access creativity, you are able to use your imagination and make interesting connections. You generate solutions and original ideas. Creativity is accessible when your inner critics are quiet, your intuition surfaces, and you immerse yourself in the process of creation and problem solving.

Creativity is characterized by spontaneity and fluidity. It's more flow and intuition than logic and formula. When you combine creativity with confidence and courage, it's like fuel to pursue your vision, no matter how outside the box that vision may be.

Next is *Belonging*. We have a sense of belonging when we feel safe to be ourselves. Belonging is trusting that we will be seen and heard and understood and valued. Belonging is being able to relax because you know you won't be judged, controlled, or mischaracterized.

Contrast this with feeling excluded, "othered", invalidated, rejected.

Now, related to belonging, is the sense of connectedness. *Connection* is a quality of relating to and seeing our common humanity. It's a sense of companionship and partnership with other people, with communities, with nature, with yourself. And deep connectedness is knowing that division and separateness is all just an illusion.

All right, there are two more qualities left.

The second to last one is *Perspective*. Perspective is one of my favorite qualities to access. Perspective is being able to see the big picture as well as all of the details. Perspective allows us to see where we've been and

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anticipate what might come in the future. When we feel unmoored or bogged down, perspective is what allows us to see beyond the present moment hopelessness.

Perspective is the panning back far enough so we can see relationships and we can place ourselves and our experience, or an occurrence, in a meaningful context that helps us understand it better.

The last one is *Persistence*. When things are tricky and you get knocked down after your first couple of tries, persistence is getting back up and trying again. Now, persistence can be misused in a very moralistic way to perpetuate an unfair power dynamic. And when it's misused, it sounds like this, "You know, if you just had a better work ethic, you would keep trying."

This is not what this quality is about, though. Generally speaking, persistence is being able to maintain focus and commitment to the long haul, even when you hit a snag or you get stuck. Persistence demonstrates how much something matters to you. And it really relies on other qualities like confidence and patience and perspective.

Now let's review. As I review this, I want you to make a note mentally, or if you've got access to paper, or in your computer, make a physical note of the qualities that you would like to access more of: Calm – Clarity – Curiosity – Playfulness – Compassion – Patience – Confidence – Presence – Courage – Creativity – Belonging – Connectedness – Perspective, and Persistence. I think I got all of them.

When I consider these qualities, I see them as rich soil from which so many other things that make life good can grow. When I feel these things, I feel like myself. And they open the door to me accessing intuition and wisdom and so much gratitude. They pave the way for doing hard things, for going for audacious goals, and for dealing with the shitstorm of reality that we face sometimes. And they are like cofactors for joy and awe and love.

When you take these qualities and you combine them, that's where the magic happens. Just like with baking or cooking, flour is great and butter is

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great, but when you combine flour and butter and sugar, you can make cookies.

When you combine clarity with courage, and you have the confidence to have your own back after you mess up, you're going to take action towards something you find deeply meaningful.

When you combine perspective with patience, you turn the dial down on the distress of being overwhelmed by a mile-long to-do list that you don't have time to deal with as you're getting everyone out the door.

When you deliberately invoke compassion and persistence and creativity, the difficult circus that parenting can feel like some days is much easier. Take any tight, tense situation and think about what happens when somebody brings in some humor, levity, and playfulness.

As I went through this list, which of the qualities or characteristics spoke to you? Which ones did you notice a little bit of something stirring inside you? Which ones are already easy for you to tap into? And which ones are not so easy?

This week, I want you to pay close attention to when these things are present, and close attention to when these things are absent, but could actually be really, really useful.

And in a future episode, we'll keep this conversation going. We'll talk about the "how", in terms of, how do you actually, intentionally, cultivate and access these things more regularly? How do you access them in everyday life? How do you access them when you're struggling or facing a hard situation? How do you tap into them when you're going after a big goal?

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode. I'm really glad that you're here. And if you have a minute, before the next show in your rotation plays, to leave a rating and a short review, it would mean so much to me. Word-of-mouth is the most powerful thing. This is the way other people find the information in this podcast. And when you leave a review, you're essentially paying it forward.

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Now, I'll just be honest. Personally, at my baseline, I was terrible at following through at ratings and reviews. It's just tedious. It seems like a waste of time. I had a part of me that's like, "Really, who cares? What's it matter?"

But now I realize the importance of these reviews. And to me, when I leave a review, it feels a little bit like I'm supporting a local business. It's my way of saying, "This thing here, this matters. I like it." So that's my plug to hopefully nudge you away from inertia and into taking action.

And right now, go to the show, scroll down to where it says "Ratings and review", tap the little stars to rate. And then, most importantly, right below the stars and right below that first box with a recent review, you'll see in teeny-tiny font, at least on my phone, it's in purple letters, it says, "Write a review." Just click that, type a tiny phrase — type a novel, whatever suits you — and press "Submit".

Thank you to the moon and back! And until next week, I'll talk to you soon.

Are you on the Habits on Purpose email list yet? I send my community emails with practical information, habit-change tips, and announcements about workshops, lectures, and in-person events that I'm going to be attending. I share things that I don't share here on the podcast, and I let you in on what I'm studying, what I'm learning, and what I'm going through in my life.

When you're on the list, you can always press "Reply" and ask me a question and you'll hear back from me; not from my team, not from AI. You'll hear back from me. So to connect in your inbox, go to HabitsOnPurpose.com and join the email list.

You can also find me on Instagram and Facebook. And get ready for it, eventually, gasp, you will find me on TikTok once I actually open an account. So take care, and I look forward to connecting.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit HabitsOnPurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.

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