

**“Community Conversation” Book Club Discussion – May 8, 2023**  
**Strength to Strength by Arthur C. Brooks**  
**Summary of Key Quotes**

*In this book, the author explains how the end of your career is a perfect time to start a new career and step on the second curve of happiness and satisfaction. As abilities diminish and careers end, it is natural to feel hard feelings, and this book acknowledges this and provides advice on how to cope with them. But it also offers numerous examples of how inevitable changes in the lives of great people were new beginnings that did not necessarily involve suffering.*

**INTRODUCTION – The Man On The Plane Who Changed My Life**

“I came to call this the “striver’s curse”: people who strive to be excellent at what they do often wind up finding their inevitable decline terrifying, their successes increasingly unsatisfying, and their relationships lacking. Instead of denying change in your abilities, you can make the change itself a source of strength.”

**CHAPTER ONE – Your Professional Decline Is Coming (Much) Sooner Than You Think**

“The more accomplished one is at the peak of one’s career, the more pronounced decline seems once it has set in.”

“Older adults can enhance their cognitive effectiveness precisely by taking their own advice: turn off the phone and music and go someplace completely quiet to think and work.”

“It’s actually a triple whammy, because as we try to stay even, we wind up in patterns of addictive behavior such as workaholism, which puts strivers into unhealthy relationship patterns at the cost of deep connection to spouses, children, and friends.”

**CHAPTER TWO – The Second Curve**

“Decline is unavoidable. Period. With age, people are better at combining and utilizing complex ideas.”

“Fluid intelligence is the ability to reason, think flexibly, and solve novel problems

“Crystallized intelligence the ability to use a stock of knowledge learned in the past.”

Translation: When you are young, you have raw smarts; when you are old, you have wisdom. When you are young, you can generate lots of facts; when you are old, you know what they mean and how to use them.”

“Cicero believed three things about older age. First, that it should be dedicated to service, not goofing off. Second, our greatest gift later in life is wisdom, in which learning and thought create a worldview that can enrich others. Third, our natural ability at this point is counsel: mentoring, advising, and teaching others,

The three things to do now to make the second curve better than the first: Develop your relationships, Start your spiritual journey, Embrace your weaknesses.

**CHAPTER THREE – Kick Your Success Addiction**

“Maybe I would prefer to be special rather than happy.”

“Anyone can do the things it takes to be happy—go on vacation, spend time with friends and family . . . but not everyone can accomplish great things.”

“Something is clearly wrong when the idea of being “normal” induces enough panic to make someone neglect the people they love in favor of possible admiration of strangers.”

“Self-objectification leads to a sense of invisibility and lack of autonomy and has a direct relationship with eating disorders and depression.”

“We love the image of ourselves as successful, not ourselves in true life.”

#### **CHAPTER FOUR – Start Chipping Away**

“As we age, we shouldn’t accumulate more to represent ourselves but rather strip things away to find our true selves—and thus, to find our second curve.”

#### **CHAPTER FIVE – Ponder Your Death**

They say: live in such a way as to be always ready to die. I would say: live in such a way that anyone can die without you having anything to regret.” – Leo Tolstoy

“We should not avoid the truth. We should stare right at it; contemplate it; consider it; meditate on it.”

#### **CHAPTER SIX – Cultivate Your Aspen Grove**

Humans are naturally interconnected — biologically, emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, and spiritually. Creating an isolated self is dangerous and damaging because it is unnatural.

The crystallized intelligence curve is predicated on interconnectedness. Without it, my wisdom has no outlet.”

“[Happiness](#) is love. Full stop. There are two pillars of happiness... One is love. The other is finding a way of coping with life that does not push love away.”

In terms of health outcomes, loneliness is comparable to smoking fifteen cigarettes per day and is worse than obesity. Strongly associated with cognitive decline and dementia.

Contact with unrelated friends is more strongly correlated with well-being than contact with adult children. The number of real friends needs to be more than zero and more than just your spouse.”

#### **CHAPTER SEVEN – Start Your *Vanaprastha***

“Mountains of research show that religious and [spiritual](#) adults are generally happier and generally suffer less depression than those who have no faith.”

If you are in a transitional state in your life and find your interest in transcendental growing — even if you have marginalized this part of life in the past—you are right on schedule. Don’t resist.

Gratitude walk [is] the practice of focusing on the positive events in your life while walking, helping you to savor happiness by amplifying gratitude.”

#### **CHAPTER EIGHT – Make Your Weakness Your Strength**

“The secret to going from strength to strength is to recognize that your weakness — your loss, your decline — can be a gift to you and others.”

“It is easy to imagine that attempts to eliminate pain and weakness from daily life could lead to a sort of emotional allergy — that when hard times come and someone feels grief or fear that is impossible to ignore, that person will not have the tools to face these feelings.”

## **CHAPTER NINE – Cast Into The Falling Tide**

“Significant change in life occurs, on average, every eighteen months. Nothing is more predictable than change.”

“Almost every transition—even the most difficult one—bears some positive fruit; we usually see and treasure it in the long run.”

“There are four learning steps in becoming a “modern elder”: evolve from a fixed to a [growth mindset](#), learn openness to new things, collaborate with teams, and counsel others.”

“At the nexus of enjoyable and meaningful is interesting.”

## **CONCLUSION – Seven Words To Remember**

“Nature is not destiny and, sometimes, we must [fight](#) our natural instincts if we want to be happy.”

**“Use Things, Love People, Worship the Divine”**

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Overall impression of the book? What most/least called to you?
2. Actions you will/may take after reading?
3. What want to hear more about?