

A COACHING MASTERCLASS ON

# MEANING & VALUED LIVING

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WORKBOOK



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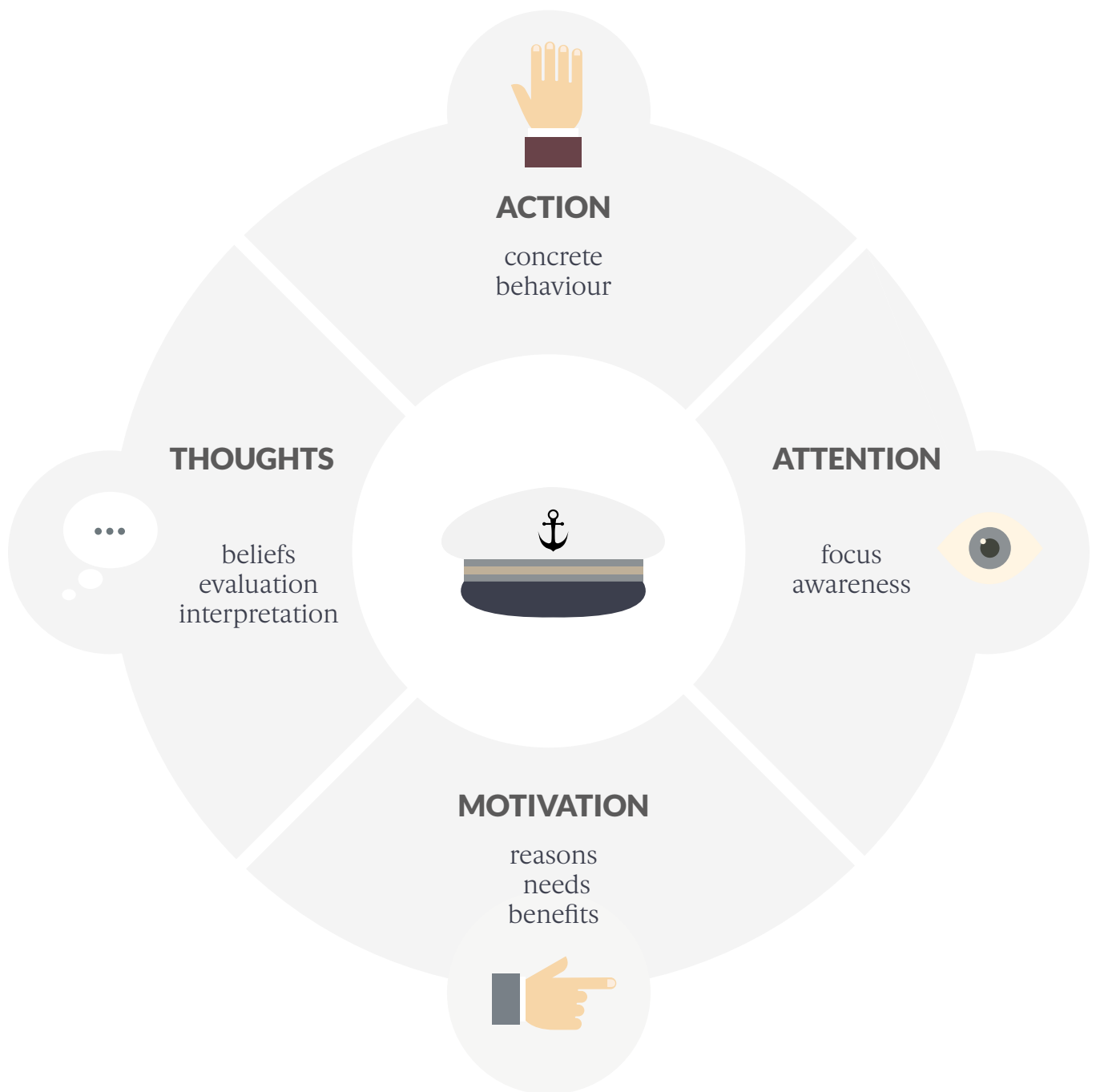
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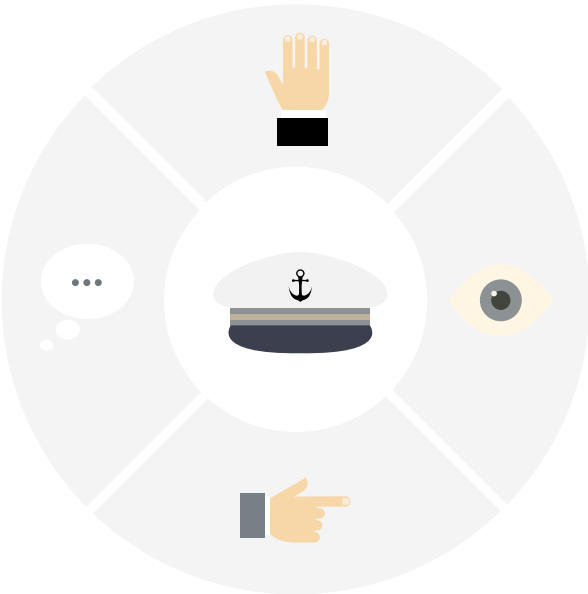
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# THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

■ THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR





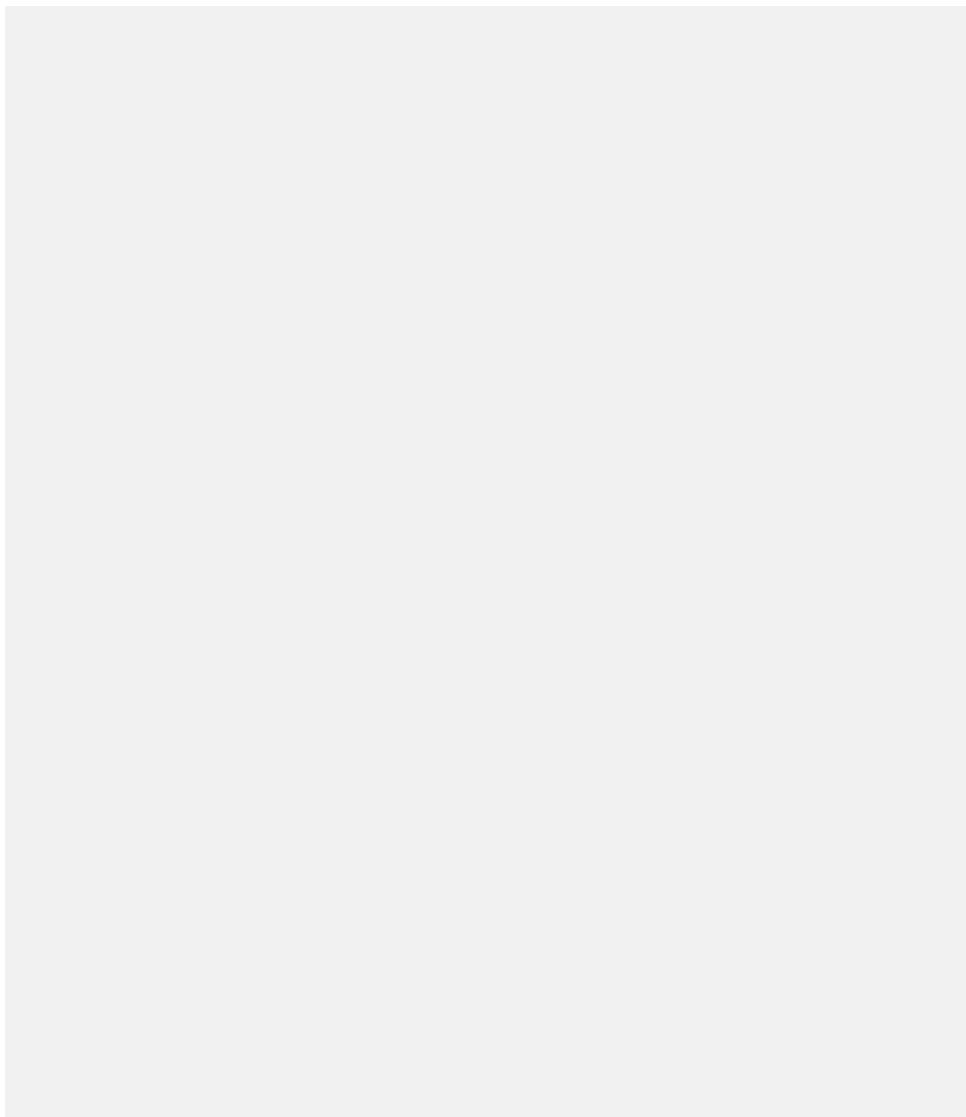


## ■ THE STATUS OF YOUR SAILBOAT

Ask the other person to use the sailboat metaphor to describe how he or she is currently doing. You may ask the following questions:

- What is the current status of your sailboat?
- How would you describe your current journey?

Invite the other person to speak as much as possible in terms of the different elements of the sailboat and their interaction.



2

# MEANING & VALUED LIVING

## ■ A TRINITY OF MEANING REFLECTION

In this reflection, we are going to address meaning in life. When we talk about meaning, we are talking about mattering. Something that is meaningful to you can be seen as something that matters to you. It is something that you consider to be important, something that gives your life purpose.

### ► PART 1 - THE BREADTH OF MEANING

A source of meaning is something in your life that you perceive as meaningful. This can be anything and everything. The specific sources that offer a sense of meaning differ greatly among people. Some people find meaning in their work, others in their relationships, and still others through their faith or belief in a higher power.

What are the most potent sources of meaning that you currently have in your life? In other words, what things matter most to you?\*

Current source #1

Current source #2

Current source #3

Current source #4

Current source #5

Current source #6

Current source #7

*\* Some clients may struggle to answer this question. Clients may feel that they don't have any sources of meaning (anymore) or feel that their current state (e.g. depressed or anxious) prevents any source from being perceived as meaningful. It is important to note that exploration of the breadth of meaning can also involve the consideration of potential sources of meaning. Even when clients feel there are currently no sources of meaning available, it is always possible to explore options for engagement in potent sources of meaning. Therefore, when clients struggle to answer this question, they may skip this question and proceed with the next question.*

There are virtually endless possible sources of meaning in life. If you agree, I would like to explore whether there are untapped sources of meaning in your life. These are sources of meaning that you have either never invested in, or are not investing in anymore, but yet may offer you a great sense of meaning in life.

Let's start by considering your past. Which past experiences have been particularly meaningful to you? Which activities have resulted in feelings of satisfaction and fulfilment? When have you felt that life had purpose? Which relationships mattered most to you?

Don't overthink this. Just mention what comes to mind.

experience #1

experience #2

experience #3

experience #4

experience #5

Can you translate these experiences in terms of a source of meaning? (For instance, if you mention having a good time with your friend, you may label the source of meaning underlying this experience 'friendship'.)

Source #1

Source #2

Source #3

Source #4

Source #5

Source #6

Source #7

Are any of your past sources of meaning no longer a source of meaning in your present life? Or, are there sources of meaning that are not so meaningful to you anymore? If so, which ones, and why?

Are any of your past sources of meaning potentially worth investing in again? If so, which ones?

Past source #1

Past source #2

Past source #3

Past source #4

Past source #5

Is there a source of meaning that you have never explored but would be curious or willing to explore? For instance, there may be a sport that you have always been fascinated by but have never tried yourself. Or, you may have always loved listening to music but never tried playing an instrument yourself.

Potential source #1

Potential source #2

Potential source #3

Potential source #4

Potential source #5

## ► PART 2 - THE DEPTH OF MEANING

The depth of meaning refers to the intensity of your relationship with a particular source of meaning. Our relationship with some sources of meaning can be very strong, whilst our relationship with other sources can be more shallow.

So, what causes our relationship with a source of meaning to become intense? One factor is the amount of time we devote to the source. Dedicating a great amount of time to a given source of meaning increases the probability that we develop a

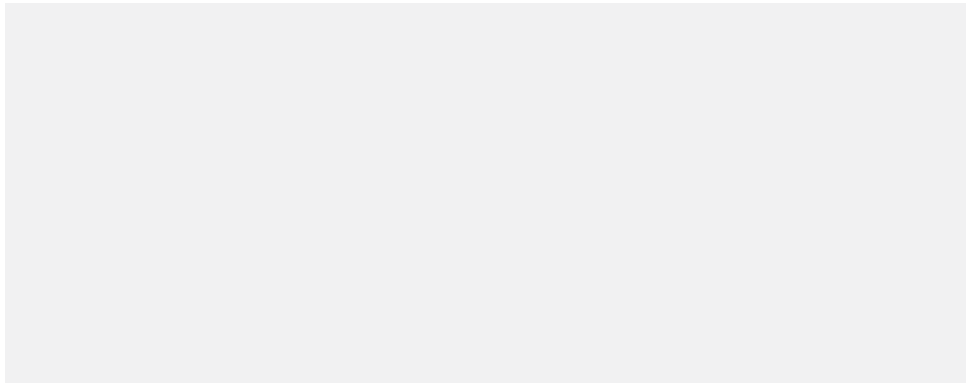
deep, strong and intense connection with this source. However, it is not only the amount of time that contributes to the intensity of the relationship, but also how this time is spent with the source. For instance, we may say that 'work' is a source of meaning. Though if we are constantly distracted while working, engaging in multiple things at once and lacking a clear focus, our relationship with work can best be described as shallow. We may work a lot, but if we are unable to concentrate and devote full attention to what we are doing, the source of meaning 'work' may not have great depth. Of course, this applies to all sources of meaning, including social relationships, hobbies and religion.

We can say that a lack of depth reduces the extent to which we perceive a source as meaningful. In contrast, the more committed and devoted we are to a given source, the greater potential for meaning this source has.

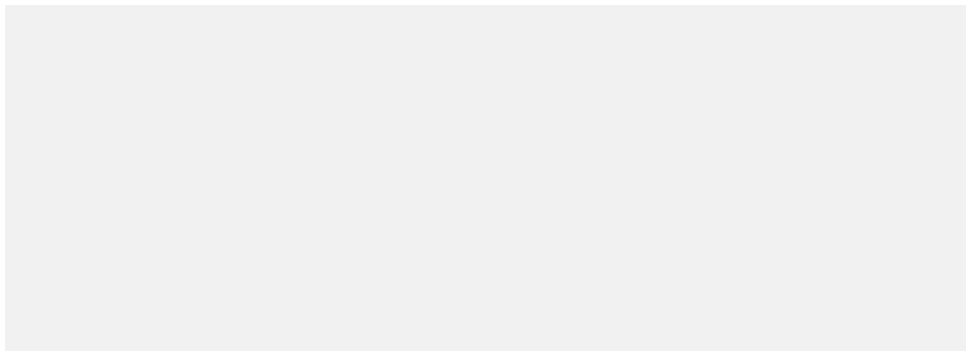
Now let's consider each of the current sources of meaning in your present life that we identified earlier. For each source, indicate the intensity of your relationship with this source. Give each source a number on a scale of 1-10 to indicate how deep you are currently going into every source of meaning (1 not deep at all and 10 being very deep), i.e. how engaged with and committed to the source you are.

Current source #1	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>
Current source #2	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>
Current source #3	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>
Current source #4	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>
Current source #5	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>
Current source #6	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>
Current source #7	<input type="text"/>	rating (1-10):	<input type="text"/>

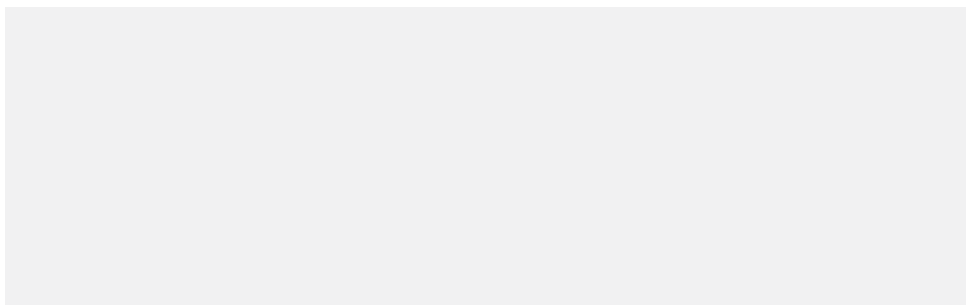
Now let's focus on those sources of meaning with a high 'depth of meaning' rating. What causes you to be so engaged and committed to these sources? How do you typically interact with these sources of meaning?



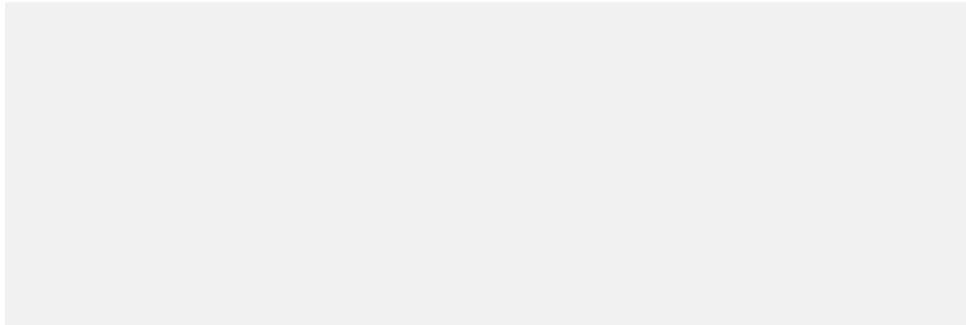
Let's now have a look at those sources of meaning with a low 'depth of meaning' rating. What causes you to be less engaged in and not so committed to these sources? How do you typically interact with these sources of meaning?



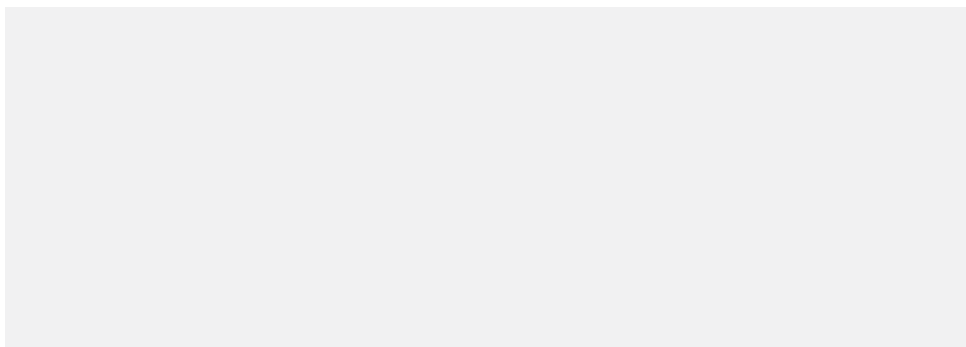
What prevents you from being engaged in and committed to these sources of meaning?



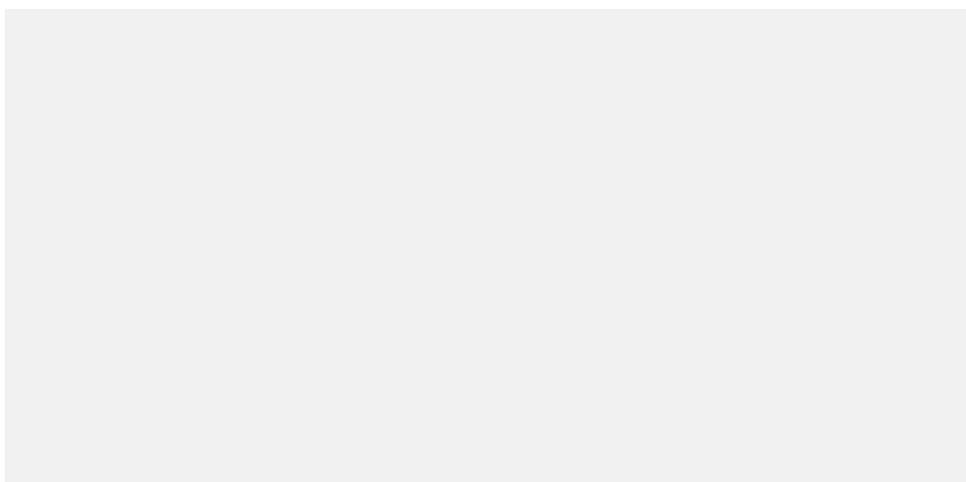
What can you do to increase your engagement and commitment to the sources with a low 'depth of meaning' rating?



What can you learn from your interactions with those sources with higher 'depth of meaning' ratings and apply to those with lower 'depth of meaning' ratings?



What could you do in order to increase the depth of these sources of meaning in your life? What concrete steps can you take?



► PART 3 - THE WEIGHT OF MEANING

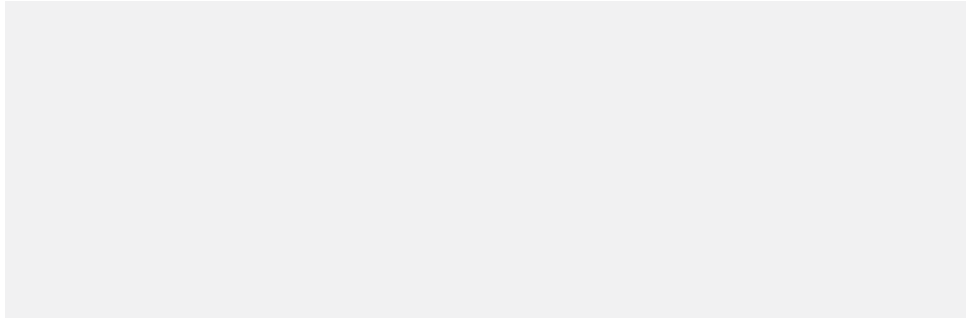
The weight of meaning is the degree to which a given source of meaning fulfills important needs in your life and/or the lives of others. The dimension 'weight' suggests that some sources of meaning offer a greater potential for the experience of meaning in your life than others, based on the extent to which a source fulfills your personal and/or others' needs. For instance, watching television may not have the same weight of meaning as playing sports with friends. By playing sports with friends, you fulfill the need for connection, physical exercise, and self-actualization, whereas watching television may at best satisfy the need for relaxation.

Again, consider each of the sources of meaning in your present life that we identified earlier.

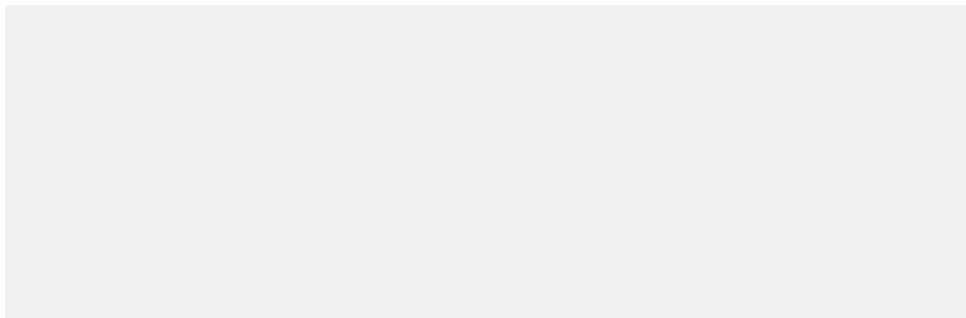
For every source, **list the needs that it is satisfying both for yourself and others.** The appendix provides an overview of common needs.

Name of current source	This source satisfies my need(s) for:	This source satisfied others' need(s) for:

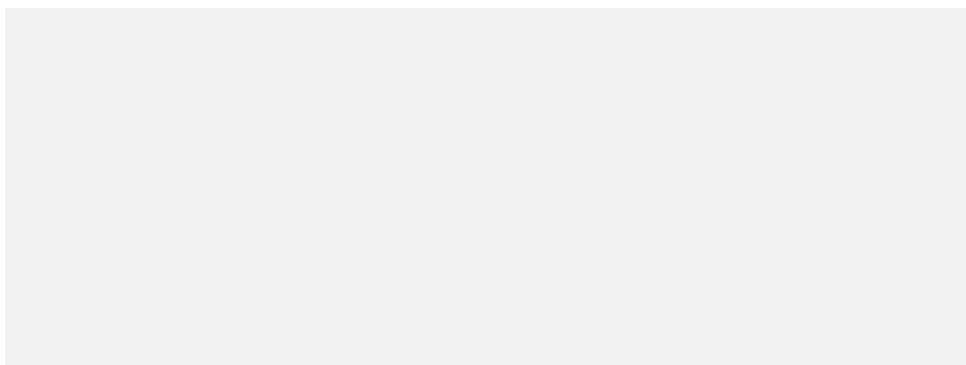
Consider your answers in the previous question. Which sources of meaning have the **highest weight of meaning**? In other words, which sources do you feel fulfill your personal and/or others' needs the most?



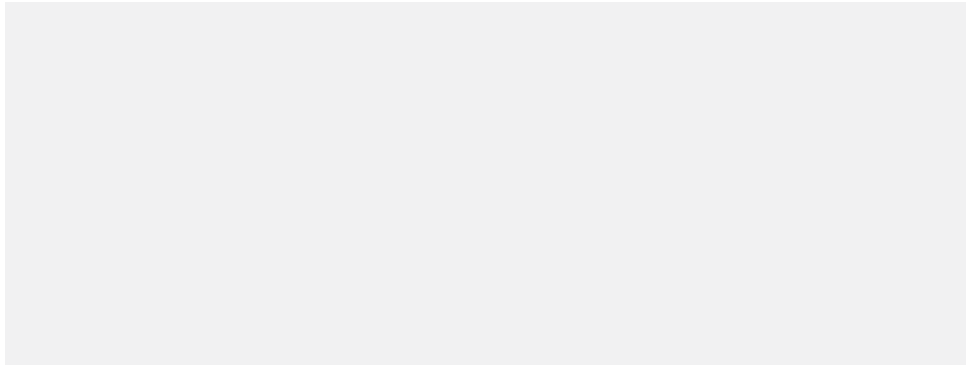
Which sources of meaning have the **lowest weight of meaning**? In other words, which sources do you feel fulfill your personal and/or others' needs the least?



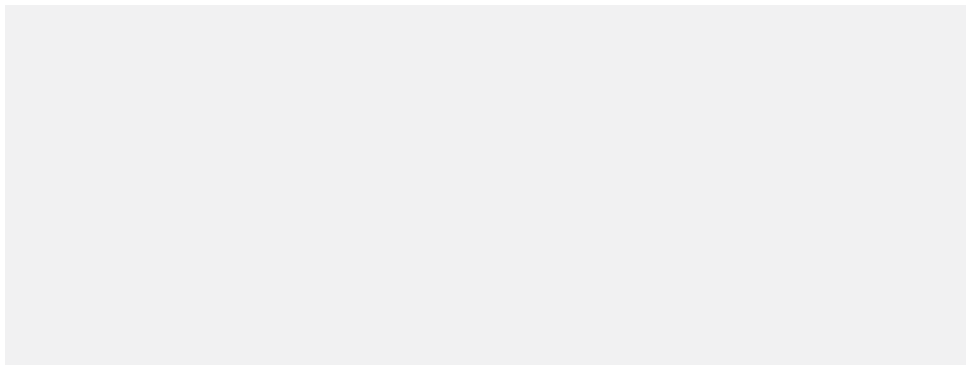
Within these 'low weight' sources, what can you do differently to satisfy more of your or others' needs? (For instance, by going to the gym with a friend or family member, you can satisfy your need for connection and stay fit at the same time. Or, by doing something creative with friends next time you meet up, you can satisfy your need to express yourself and be creative instead of just meeting up and talking.)



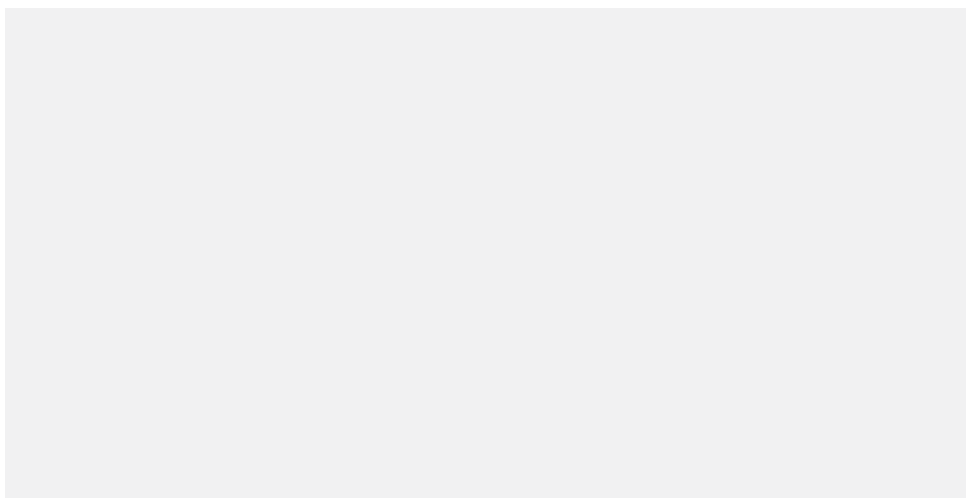
Are there any important needs that you feel are not being satisfied at this moment in your life? If so, which needs?



Is there a source of meaning that could satisfy some of these needs?



What could you do in order to introduce or amplify this source of meaning in your life? What concrete steps can you take?



Appendix. Overview of the most common needs

Connection	Connection	Peace	Honesty
acceptance	trust	beauty	authenticity
affection	warmth	communion	integrity
appreciation		ease	presence
belonging	<b>Meaning</b>	equality	
cooperation	awareness	harmony	<b>Play</b>
communication	celebration of life	inspiration	joy
closeness	challenge	order	humour
community	clarity		
companionship	competence	<b>Autonomy</b>	
compassion	consciousness	choice	
consideration	contribution	freedom	
consistency	creativity	independence	
empathy	discovery	space	
inclusion	efficacy	spontaneity	
intimacy	effectiveness		
love	growth	<b>Physical well-being</b>	
mutuality	hope	air	
nurturing	learning	food	
respect/self-respect	mourning	movement/exercise	
safety	participation	rest/sleep	
security	purpose	sexual expression	
stability	self-expression	safety	
support	stimulation	shelter	
to know and be	to matter	touch	
to see and be seen	understanding	water	
to understand and be understood			

## ■ BENEFIT FINDING

In this exercise, the client will be asked to recall a stressful/traumatic life event. Be extra attentive of the client during the exercise. For most clients thinking of a difficult event will trigger negative thoughts and/or feelings.

Also make sure to acknowledge the painful experience. If the practitioner proceeds to the positive aspects of the event too early, the client may feel that he/she is not being understood or that the severity of the event is being underestimated. Consequently, the willingness to look at the event from another perspective is likely to be reduced.

Considering life events from different viewpoints can be seen as a way to reduce dichotomous (black and white) thinking. The aim of this exercise is to create a balanced perspective on negative life events, rather than to stimulate positive thinking. Even when positive thinking is used to avoid negative feelings that accompany the traumatic life event, it can be considered as a form of experiential avoidance, and should be discouraged. It is important to inform clients about this distinction.

In general, the exercise works best when the event that is chosen lies far enough in the past to allow time to also consider positive aspects, like personal growth, renewed friendship and so on. When an event is chosen that occurred very recently, it can be very difficult if not impossible for a client to address the positive aspects of it. A client may be struggling too much with the negative emotions that arose from the event. Respect your client if he/she cannot make a positive shift in perspective and inform him/her that he/she can stop with the exercise at any given moment.

Benefit finding may not work for everyone. Although most studies show positive effects, mixed results have been obtained in the cancer literature. For instance, Sears, Stanton, and Danoff-Burg (2003) found no relation between initial benefit finding and distress a year later. In a study by Tomich and Helgeson (2004), initial benefit finding predicted elevated distress months later. Carver and Antoni (2004) have speculated that the experience of finding benefit may promote greater emotional turmoil in individuals with worse prognosis, causing negative affect.

### *References*

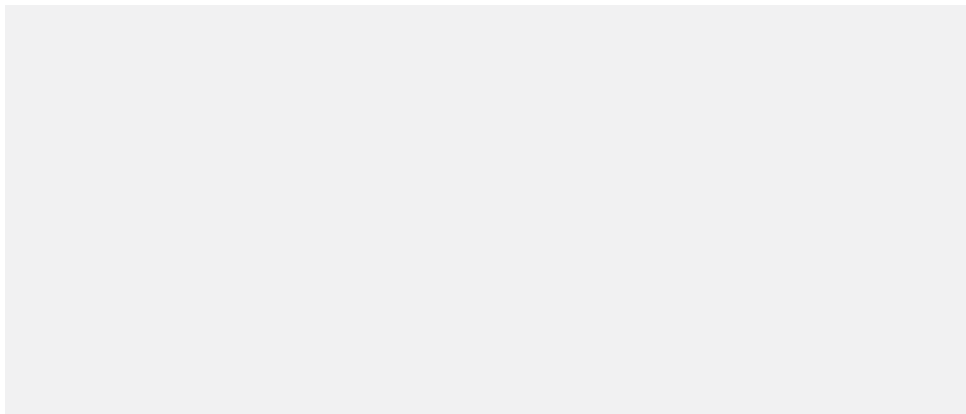
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Tomich, P. L., & Helgeson, V. S. (2004). Is finding something good in the bad always good? Benefit finding among women with breast cancer. *Health Psychology, 23*(1), 16-23.

Carver, C., & Antoni, M. (2004). Finding benefit in breast cancer during the year after diagnosis predicts better adjustment 5 to 8 years after diagnosis. *Health Psychology, 23*, 595-598.

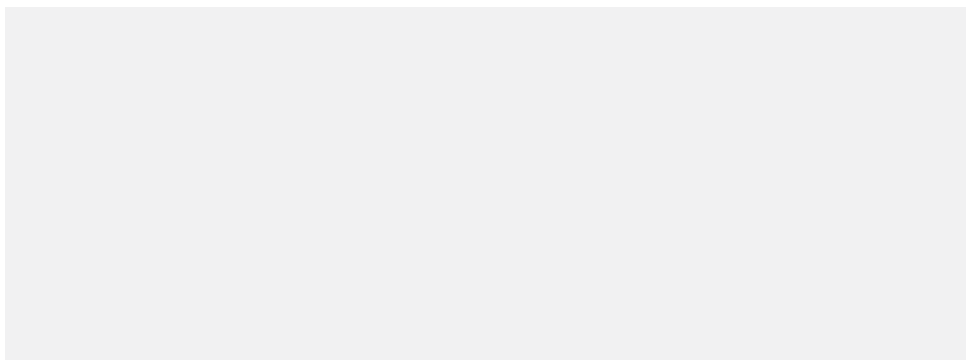
### ► THE INTERVIEW

Have the client talk about a stressful/traumatic event (e.g. loss, severe physical injury, etc.) in as much detail as possible for a few minutes. Have the client try to freely express any and all emotions and thoughts they have about the experience.



Now have the client focus on the positive aspects of the experience. Below are some questions to help guide the client:

How has the experience changed you?



What has the experience taught you?

How has the experience made you better equipped to meet similar challenges in the future?

## ■ VALUE IDENTIFICATION

### ► STEP 1

Ask the other person to consider the life domain that needs the most attention right now (see the exercise “Required Actions” from day 1).

Ask him or her to respond to the following question:

In this life domain, what kind of person would you like to be? Describe as accurately as possible how you would like to think, behave and feel in this life domain.

### ► STEP 2

The interviewer’s task is to identify the potential values underlying the other’s answers. These are the potential values:

Value #1

Value #2

Value #3

Value #4

Value #5

Value #6

Value #7

### ► STEP 3

Share your observations with the other. Does the other person recognize himself/herself in the values that you identified?

## ■ THE WILD QUESTION TECHNIQUE

In order to gain insight in the most authentic values and goals of the client, it is often necessary, at least temporarily, to bypass the inner editor that always sees reasons why things cannot happen.

Often, when clients are asked to reveal their dreams, aspirations or most valued goals, there is an inner voice that immediately reminds the client of the reasons why this is a bad or unrealistic idea. Examples include: „You can't earn any money that way“ or „You don't have the experience and the knowledge to do this“. Obviously, there will always be reasons why clients can't or shouldn't do something. But if they let these stop them from even considering what they really want, motivational energy gets cut off at its source.

The most common reactions when clients are asked to reflect on one or more of the the questions in this exercise are: „I don't see how this is helping me to construct realistic goals“, or „It is nice to dream but reality is hard to deny“. It is important to explain that the goal of the present exercise is not to create a dream that one should pursue, but rather to gain insight in the most authentic values and goals of the client. The next step is to discuss the possibilities to implement these values and goals taking the context of the client into consideration. Again, the inner editor of the client may respond that „quitting his current job“ or „moving to another continent“ are no realistic options. This black and white style of thinking is very common and can be addressed by the coach suggesting small changes, rather than profound changes. A client may for instance start by working 4 days rather than 5, rather than fully quitting his job.

## ► THE INTERVIEW

This technique could be useful for a greater insight into the personal values of a client. These types of questions allow you to see past the anxiety and disbelief that blocks the clients' ability to look past their normal limitations.

The following are an example of possible wild questions you could ask your client:

- What would you do if you won the lottery tomorrow?
- What would you do if you were free from fear?
- What would you do if you knew you could not fail?
- If you were granted three wishes, what would they be?
- What have you always wanted to do but life always got in the way or you held yourself back?

## ■ DEATH REFLECTION

### ► STEP 1

Invite the other person to consider the following scenario:

*Imagine that your life is almost over. On your last birthday, there is a big party where your best friend will give a speech about you. What do you hope your friend would tell the audience about you?*

### ► STEP 2

The interviewer's task is to identify the potential values underlying the other's answers. These are the potential values:

Value #1

Value #2

Value #3

Value #4

Value #5

Value #6

Value #7

### ► STEP 3

Share your observations with the other. Does the other person recognize himself/herself in the values that you identified?

## ■ VALUE-CONGRUENT ACTIONS

### ► STEP 1 (ALONE)

Take a look at the dartboard below. Think of your value as the “bull’s eye” (the middle of the dart board). The bull’s eye is exactly how you want your life to be, a direct hit, where you are living your life in a way that is consistent with your value.

Consider the values that were identified in the last two exercises and choose 4 values that you consider to be the most important right now. List them in the dartboard below under “value”.

*My life is far from how I want it to be.*

*My life is just as I want it to be*

value: \_\_\_\_\_

Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Value: \_\_\_\_\_

**► STEP 2 (COMPLETE ALONE)**

Now, make an X on the dart board for each value that best represents where you stand today. An X in the bull's eye means that you are living completely in line with this value. An X far from the bull's eye means that you are not living at all in congruency with this value. Since there are four values, you should mark four Xs on the dart board.

**► STEP 3 (COMPLETE TOGETHER)**

Share your observations with the other:

What did you learn from this exercise?

Are there values that you feel need more attention? If so, which values?

If you feel you would like to live more in line with one or more of these values, what is currently preventing you from doing so?

What actions are required for you to live more in line with these values?