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Find your life's purpose

Never before in history have humans enjoyed such a wealth of possibility. Today, we are free to choose how we live, whom we marry, and the type of work we want to do. This sounds good in theory, but brings with it a uniquely modern problem of its own: that of too many options, too much information and the unbearable pressure to make the right choice when there are so many options and choices. We oftentimes become paralyzed with worry about what to do and thus we allow important opportunities to pass us by. The antidote? Develop a personal mission statement and use it to understand what you **really** want to get out of life and then as a roadmap to achieve your life goals.

The immense power of a personal mission statement lies in its ability to place your destiny in your hands rather than to allow others to determine your destiny. A personal mission statement provides clarity about your unique purpose and it gives you confidence in your daily decisions.

If I could ask only one thing of you, it would be that you lead a life of meaning and purpose and that you stop leaving your life to chance. Return to this workbook as often as you need until your mission statement is fully formed and then return to it often to reconnect; recognize its importance for the rest of your life. Stop saying 'tomorrow' and start working on your personal mission statement today.

I wish you a happy journey of self-discovery!

Sean Covey

NYT bestselling author of **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens**

1.

Your personal mission statement: the most important thing you'll ever write

Am I in the right job? How's my private life? What do I really want to do with my time on earth? More and more of us are finding ourselves pre-occupied by such existential questions – and it is not so apparent how we should answer them. How do we go about discovering the true purpose of our lives?

This workbook is designed to help with step-by-step instructions for drafting your own mission statement. Page by page, you'll be guided to reflect on the things that motivate you, your deeply held desires, and what makes you truly happy. By the time you've completed the book, you'll have a truly meaningful and personal mission statement to help you live a more self-determined and effective life.

What is a personal mission statement?

It is French poet Victor Hugo who is credited with having said, "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come." A mission statement is just such an idea. Some might also call it a credo, a philosophy for life or a reason for being. What matters is that it is formed by reflecting on the following fundamental questions:

- ▶ What is the unique **purpose** of my life – my personal **why**?
- ▶ What do I want to be? What **traits** are important to me?
- ▶ What do I want to do? How do I want to **contribute** to the world?
- ▶ What can I do that others cannot?



- ▶ What **values** and **principles** shape my way of being and doing?
- ▶ What do I want my **life's work** to look like? What **legacy** do I want to leave?

What can a personal mission statement bring to your life?

Your vision, values and principles are more powerful, meaningful and influential than the baggage of the past or the noise of the present. This is why developing a personal mission statement is one of the most important things you will ever do. A mission statement shapes your world view, informs your decisions and affords you a clear sense of direction. It empowers you to act, not simply react to your emotions, external circumstances and the behaviour of others. In challenging situations, it serves as a template for determining a proactive, value-oriented and principled course of action. In short:

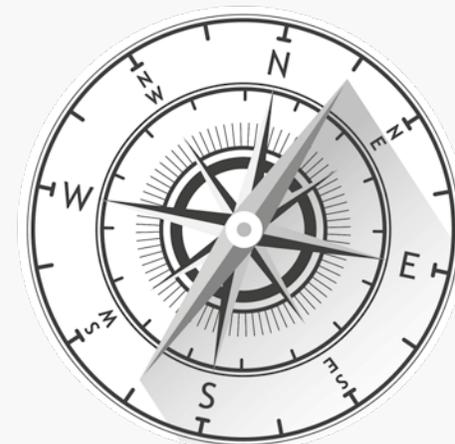


To develop a mission statement is to take active steps towards personal development and the initiation of positive changes in your life. The process will challenge you to rethink your priorities carefully and align your behaviour with your values and principles. You'll find that those around you also notice a change: you are no longer willing to be a pawn of external circumstances.

Working on your mission statement will be an enjoyable and meaningful task: one that will reveal a great number of insights about you and your life. You'll be amazed as you uncover things about yourself you didn't know existed. Note, though, that a mission statement is not something that can be formed overnight. Profound reflection and careful analysis will be necessary to reach the final version, and over time, you may find yourself coming back to tweak things over time. It can take weeks or months to arrive at a result with which you feel comfortable – that is, one that is coherent and authentic to your life. What is indisputable is that the work is worth it. Resolve to start the journey today – and use this book as a compass and source of inspiration to guide you along the way.

Your personal mission statement ...

- ... is the compass that guides you on the way to a meaningful, effective and successful life.
- ... succinctly encapsulates your vision for your life.
- ... creates a portrait of who you are and what you want to do with your life.
- ... illustrates your purpose.
- ... defines the principles and values you wish to live by.
- ... helps you to say no to the unimportant because you have a deeper yes burning inside.
- ... helps you understand what you can do each day in order to achieve your goals.
- ... serves as an ever-present reminder of what really matters to you.



Why we spend 90 % of our lives off course

What do you have in common with an airplane? The answer is that you and the plane spend 90 per cent of the time flying ‘off course’.

Plans and course corrections are a vital part of life

Before the aircraft takes off, the pilot knows where the airplane is headed and as the pilot he has a clear idea of the flight path it will take. The airplane takes off and sets course for its destination. Wind, rain, turbulence, other aircraft and myriad other factors repeatedly cause it to divert, in large and small distances, from the plotted route, with the result that the aircraft spends at least 90 percent of its time off course. A disaster? By no means. The pilot regularly checks the suitability of the flight path for reaching the final destination. They monitor the instruments, talk to the control tower and receive ongoing feedback from the air traffic controller, enabling them to making constant corrections to the route. In the end, the aircraft reaches its destination as planned, despite spending 90 per cent of its time on diversion.

Just like the airplane, you have a **destination**: an important, significant place to which you are drawn. This place will be described in your mission statement. Though, like the plane, you will likely spend 90 percent of your time off course, your mission statement will be a means of navigation, a foothold and a source of hope. It will help you return to your course whenever life happens to get in the way.



This, indeed, is the secret power of a mission statement: the ability to return you to your course not once, not twice, but as many times as you need.

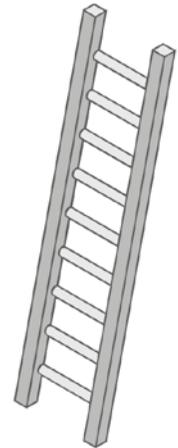
Is your ladder leaning against the right wall?

In order to one day realize your vision, it is important to always be cognizant of whether you’re on course. This is easier said than done. A pilot has a myriad of instruments with which to track the plane’s travel; warning lights and alarm sounds are triggered upon any deviation from the planned flight path. Back-up comes in the form of the control tower and air traffic controllers, who notify the pilot in the event of unplanned changes. In real life, however, it’s not so easy.



“[Many] work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it’s leaning against the wrong wall.”

If your ladder is leaning against the wrong wall, every step you take just gets you to the wrong place faster. You do not draw closer to your destination; on the contrary, you get further and further away from it, even when you are ostensibly moving forwards. This is why the ladder test – a simple exercise to encourage you to think about where your personal ladder is leaning – is so important. Reflect on the questions on the next page and write down your answers.



The ladder test

Am I confident that my ladder is against the right wall?

Yes, because

No, because

Have I moved my ladder lately?

.....

.....

Could it be time to do so now? Why?

.....

.....



.....

.....

2.

Begin with the end in mind

Before you set about developing your mission statement, you must first make sure your ladder is against the right wall. In taking this important step, you take the wheel of your own life. You become the one who sets the course and the direction – and when you control the course, it follows logically that you also begin with the end in mind. Those who have read the book **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** might know this as the second habit. Here's a brief recap of all seven habits.

► Quick recap: The 7 habits of highly effective people

Habit 1: Be proactive

Do not be a victim of your genes, external circumstances or the whims of others. Take your life into your own hands.

Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind

What do you want to do with your life? What legacy do you want to leave behind? By crafting a personal mission statement, you set the course for success.

Habit 3: Put first things first

Establish priorities. Say no to things that are unimportant. Do not allow others to pressure you. Spend time on what matters most.

Habit 4: Think win-win

Forget competition, envy and zero-sum thinking. Instead, make win-win agreements based on trust. Ensure that the benefits are mutual and everyone walks away satisfied.

Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood

Become a master of listening. Strive to understand what others are really thinking and feeling. Listen properly – and take your relationships to a new level. When others feel truly understood, then share your point of view.

Habit 6: Synergize

Sameness is boring and bad for creativity. Appreciate, celebrate, and leverage the power of difference. Learn from others. Draw from their knowledge, experience and strengths.

Habit 7: Sharpen the saw

Make time to preserve and enhance the greatest asset you have – you. Take care of yourself by balancing your four dimensions – physical, mental, social / emotional and spiritual. Allow regular time for self-renewal.

All things are created twice

The second habit – begin with the end in mind – is based on the principle that all things are created twice.

1. Mentally – in your mind**2. Physically – in reality**

You might not realize it, but you already follow this principle in many areas of your life.

- ▶ You write a shopping list before going to the supermarket.
- ▶ You read a recipe before baking a cake.
- ▶ You draft a concept before giving a presentation.
- ▶ You plan a vacation for weeks before it actually happens.

That everything is created twice is a simple fact of life. To understand its ramifications for your own life, consider the analogy of a jigsaw.

The jigsaw puzzle of your life

Picture the scene: you tip the 1000 pieces onto the table, then flip the lid to see how they should look. To your surprise, you find there is no picture. How can you do the puzzle without knowing what it looks like? If you could only see the image for a moment, you think, that would be enough. Without it, you don't have the slightest clue where to start.

Now imagine that your life is a jigsaw puzzle. Do you have an idea of what the finished product should look like? Is there a clear vision for your life? Are you beginning with the end in mind?

Make your life a masterpiece!

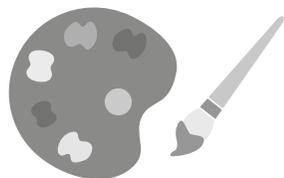
Imagine that your life is a painting
and you are the artist.
The painting can be anything you like.
What would you paint?

.....

.....

.....

IT'S YOUR LIFE:
MAKE IT
A MASTERPIECE!



Where will your life's journey take you?

Beginning with the end in mind helps you figure out the path your journey should take. We see this concept illustrated clearly in the example of building a home.

First plan, then build!

When you build a house, you plan every detail in your mind's eye before breaking ground. First and most importantly, you need a clear idea of the kind of house you want. A cozy nest for two? A place for working and living? A house with a huge garden, or plenty of space for the family? In the case of a family home, you might design the living room as a gathering place for all ages. You might plan a playroom for your children and a barbecue area in the garden. You continue to think about your dream home until a clear picture has formed in your mind. Next, you convert this mental picture into a building plan. Only when everything is set out in meticulous detail does the actual construction work begin.

Now imagine what would happen if you skipped the planning phase and went straight to building. Changes and corrections aplenty would be called for – all costing time and money. There is an old carpenter's motto that says "Measure twice, saw once" – in other words, you must be one hundred percent sure that your initial design, your building plan, is the one you really want. Every part of the plan must be carefully considered in order for it to be successfully realized. It's important to keep a close eye on your plan throughout the construction phase: that way, you'll know exactly what is to be done at any given moment in time. You begin with the end in mind.

Why the second habit is so important

The following story, told to me by my friend Annie, illustrates the importance of the second habit: beginning with the end in mind.

Community college days

“For many years I taught courses at a community college, where I the 7 habits as a semester long course. I found it very rewarding to educate my students – some very young, some rather older and some who had lived very atypical lives – about the power of habits, goals and principles. As their tutor, mentor and friend, I was curious to see what effect the 7 habits had had on their lives and, in particular, what they had found the most thought-provoking. I also wanted to know which parts of my teaching they thought most useful, so I smuggled a ‘bonus question’ into the final exams. This question was as follows:

‘Which of the 7 habits of highly effective people is most important to you – and why?’

My students’ answers to the bonus question took me very much by surprise. Almost all of them chose the second habit, ‘begin with the end in mind.’ Why was this so important to them? The reasons they gave varied, but there was a clear common trend: for most of them, the second habit represented their first ever attempt at mapping out a clear course for their lives. At the beginning of the semester, very few had even a rough idea of what their future lives would look like. They didn’t know what they wanted to study after college or what careers they wanted to pursue. Many were only in college because it was expected of them or because they simply didn’t know what to do instead. Reading the answers to the bonus question, I came to a very significant realization:



At the beginning of their college years, almost none of my students had a clear vision for their lives. They had no purpose that drove them; no contribution they were seeking to make. At the end of the semester, they agreed without exception that the second habit had opened their eyes. For the first time, they had been able to recognize the individual meaning and purpose of their lives.

Why did I find this so surprising? Probably, I thought, it was because I had figured out my own major goals at an early stage. I don’t know who or what made me focus on them, but I did – and I assumed that everyone else was doing the same.”

*“I am who I am today
because of the choices I made yesterday.”*

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

*“The two most important days in your life
are the day you are born
and the day you find out why.”*

MARK TWAIN

Are you living life, or is it living you?

Without a plan for your life, you lose control of the rudder. Even worse than this, you allow other people and external circumstances to assume control of large parts of your life in your stead. You are reduced to merely **reacting** and to doing what others expect of you and dictate to you. It is those around you that set your course and shape how you live, not your own values and principles. Your mission statement is written by others; you simply follow the script that is handed to you. You do not live life – it lives you. Or, to put it another way:



You have two choices. You can be the result of your own proactive life plan – or you can be the result of external circumstances, the dreams and schedules of others, or your own past experiences.

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” Alice asked the Cat.

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where—” said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

From Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

Congratulations!

Before you sit down to read the next few pages, find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Make yourself comfortable and focus solely on the words on the page. Set aside your cares and worries. Let your imagination roam free as you embark on the mental journey – right down to the smallest detail.

Celebrate your life

Today is your 80th birthday, and you’re lucky enough to be celebrating with those who are dearest to you.

Picture the beaming faces of your family members, friends, former colleagues and companions. Each one of them is there to wish you well. As the guests sit happily assembled after dinner, four of the well-wishers give a speech in your honor.

- ▶ The first speaker is someone from your **family**: one of the many children, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins who have traveled from all over the country to be with you.
- ▶ The second speaker is a **friend**: someone who knows well what you are like as a person.
- ▶ The third speaker is someone you know professionally: a **colleague** you have worked with for a long time.
- ▶ The fourth speaker is a valued **acquaintance**. They come from an organization you’re close to – for example, a charity for which you do voluntary work.

Take time to reflect on the following questions:

- ▶ What would I like to hear each speaker say about me and my life?
- ▶ What type of partner, father or mother would I like to be described as?
- ▶ What type of son, daughter or cousin?
- ▶ What type of friend?
- ▶ What type of colleague?
- ▶ What would I like the speakers to say about my personality and character?
- ▶ Which of my contributions and achievements do I particularly want the speakers to remember? What would I like to have contributed to their lives? What legacy do I want to leave behind?

Do not simply skip this step and continue to read. Think carefully about the questions and use the following pages to note down what comes to mind. Keywords are more than sufficient.



Have you ever asked yourself why you really do the things you do?



The four birthday speeches

My family says:

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My friends say:

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My colleagues say:

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My acquaintances say:

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3.

Your Life Center

Have you reflected on what you want the speakers at your funeral to say? The purpose of the four birthday speeches is to indicate what really matters to you as well as to provide valuable information about your **life centers**. But what are life centers, anyway? Whether consciously or unconsciously, each of us has a life center (or centers) from which we derive security and succor. Some typical examples of life centers are given below.

Partner

A marriage or romantic partnership can be the most intense and beautiful of all human relationships. With this in mind, it may seem natural to choose one's partner as one's life center. Yet this tends not be a good idea, since almost all partner-centered people are characterized by strong emotional codependence. One partner's self-esteem is contingent on the behavior, feelings and moods of the other, leaving them insecure and vulnerable.

Family

Love, comfort, and a feeling of belonging: family offers many things that make life worth living. Adopting family as a life center, however, can jeopardize the very things we gain from it. Family-centered individuals derive their security and self-esteem from their family's tradition, culture or reputation, making them vulnerable to changes or external influences that affect these things.



Money

Those who center money often put family and other priorities lower down the list. They justify this with seemingly good reasons such as the desire to provide their families with the best. While this is of course important, money-centered individuals tend to neglect the people and things that really matter.

Work

Work-centered people are at risk of becoming workaholics, often sacrificing their free time, health or relationships for their career. They define themselves by what they do: "I'm a manager ...", "I'm a consultant ...", "I'm a salesperson ...", "I'm a head of department ...". As a result, they are usually very ineffective in other areas of life.

Possessions

For many people, the desire to possess things is a major driving force. Possession encompasses not only material things like houses, cars, boats, jewelry or designer clothes, but intangible things like fame, notoriety or social recognition. Most of us recognize only too well how unstable this center is. It is at the mercy of so many external circumstances that it can quickly vanish into thin air.

Pleasure

Immediate gratification has never been easier – and we are constantly encouraged to submit to it. The Internet and social media are packed with colorful images showing what others have and can do. Yet fun and pleasure do not bring a deep, lasting sense of fulfilment. Pleasure-centered people quickly get bored. They always want more and are constantly on the hunt for the next, bigger dopamine hit. They fail to see that they are wasting their lives on ultimately trivial things.

Friendship

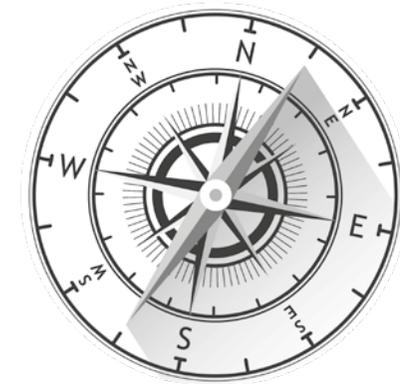
Young people, in particular, have a tendency to be friend-centered. The desire to be accepted by and belong to a peer group is so great that everything else pales into insignificance. Such people are virtually addicted to social recognition. Unfortunately, this creates a strong dependence on the whims, feelings, attitudes and behaviors of others.

Enemy

Individuals often become enemy-centered when they feel they have been unfairly treated by someone close to them. This can be seen, for example, in divorced ex-partners, many of whom regard each other with anger and resentment. They are still married in their minds and attempt to blame each other for the failure of the relationship. They make each other's lives difficult. But as temporarily gratifying as this may be, it keeps both parties trapped in the shadows of the past.

Self

The most common life center is probably the self. Self-centeredness is the most manifest form of selfishness. Self-centeredness goes against most people's stated values, yet many believe that the world revolves only around them and their problems. They are so preoccupied with themselves that they hardly notice the people around them.



What will you decide?

To understand the extent to which different life centers influence our decisions, we can examine a concrete problem through the lens of each in turn.

Imagine that you have invited your partner to a concert tonight. It's 4.30pm, and you're about to head home. Your boss calls to say that she urgently needs your help tonight to prepare for an important meeting first thing in the morning. You have a choice: overtime or concert. Your decision will depend on your life center.

Partner

If your partner is your life center, you'll do anything not to disappoint them. You tell your boss that you cannot stay and go to the concert.

Family

If you are family-centered, you'll opt not to do the overtime. You don't want to annoy your partner. You know that when the harmony at home is disturbed, it puts a strain on family life.

Money

With money as your life center, you are motivated first and foremost by the overtime pay and the prospect of a raise as a reward for your commitment. You call your partner and tell them you need to cancel. You assume your partner will understand that finances come first.

Work

If work is the center of your life, you'll be quick to see the opportunities of overtime: winning favor with your boss and advancing your career. You enjoy proving what a great employee you are. Your partner should be proud of you!

Possessions

If you are possession-driven, you'll think of all the things you can buy with the overtime pay. You are sure that your partner will enjoy the benefits, too. You stay longer at the office and forgo the concert.

Pleasure

With pleasure as your life center, it's easy to leave work behind. You deserve a fun outing, after all!

Friendship

Are you friendship-oriented? If so, your decision will depend on whether friends are invited too. If they are, you won't be working – and if they're staying late at the office, you'll cancel the concert and gladly share the extra shift.

Enemy

If you are enemy-oriented, you'll stay extra late: that will give you the advantage over the colleague you hate. While he's having a good time, you'll be slaving away. You'll prove to everyone that you, not he, are a great asset to the company.

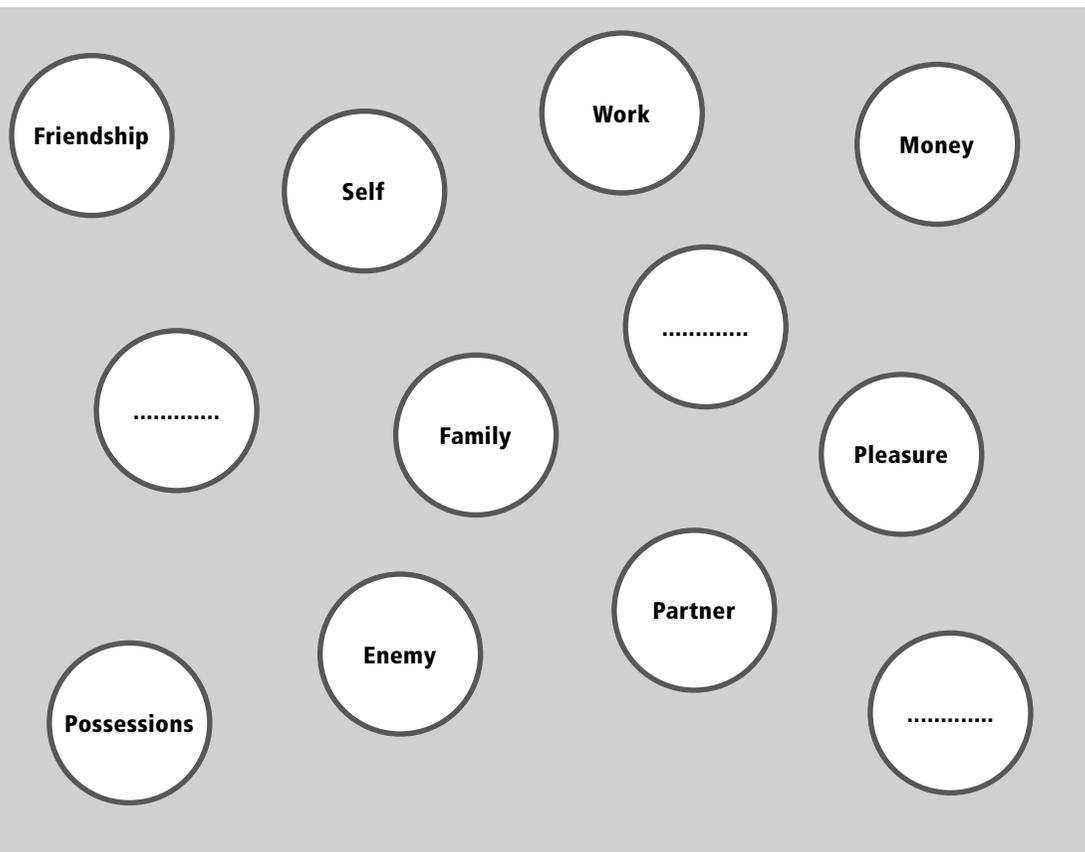
Self

If you are self-oriented, you'll do what's best for you. Is it better for you to go out with your partner or to score some points with your boss?

I hope it is now a little clearer how different life centers can influence our decision-making. Time, then, for us to figure out your own.

What is your life center?

It is often much easier for us to recognize another person's life center than our own. You probably know someone who prioritizes money above all else or who is in constant conflict with an ex-partner. But what about you? What is the center of **your** life? Your task is to figure it out. Take a quiet moment to read through the centers below, then color in the one you believe applies to you. If you have a center that is not listed below, color in one of the empty circles and label it. Note that it is quite possible for you to have several life centers. If this is the case, color in all that apply.



Is your life a rollercoaster?

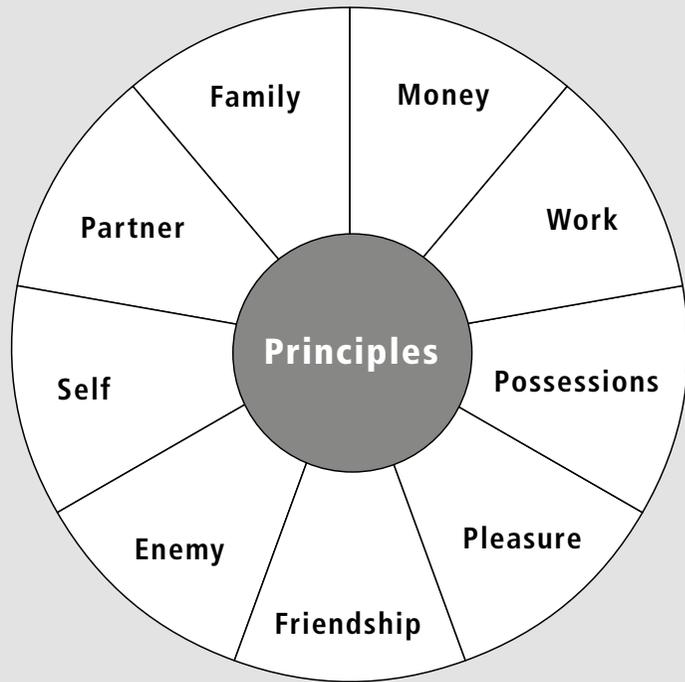
Were you able to identify your own life center(s)? Do you have one or more? Of course, many people also jump frequently from one center to the next – a consequence of our unwitting status as **'punching bags'** of the various influences in our lives. No sooner is one center activated in response to current circumstances than the needs underpinning it are met and another center becomes the driving force. Unfortunately, this is how one's life comes to resemble a rollercoaster.



An effective, successful and meaningful life requires a center that is stable and unchanging.

We need a center that provides security, direction, insight and strength; one that strengthens our self-confidence, increases our proactivity and maintains balance. The good news is that this center does in fact exist: it is formed of **fundamental principles for all areas of life**.

- ▶ Principles are consistent.
- ▶ Principles do not get angry and treat us differently completely out of the blue.
- ▶ Principles do not tempt us with shortcuts and so-called miracle solutions.
- ▶ Principles do not fluctuate depending on the behavior of others, the world around us or passing trends.
- ▶ Principles are not there one day and gone the next. We know we can rely on them!



4.

Principles make the difference

Gravity dictates that when we throw a ball in the air, it comes back down again. This is a **law of nature**; a principle. Just as principles govern the world of physics, they also govern the way we coexist as humans. Principles determine the actions that each of us take, everywhere and at all times. There are no exceptions. Principles include such things as honesty, love, industriousness, fairness, respect, gratitude, modesty, justice, integrity, loyalty and responsibility to others. These are just a few examples – there are dozens and dozens of principles that shape how we live. It is not difficult for us to recognize a principle:



Just as a compass always points towards magnetic north, so we as humans have an inherent sense of what a principle is.

Principles are what govern our growth, our success and our happiness.

At the most basic level, principles are things against which there can be no rational argument. They cannot be refuted or relativized. To understand this, think about the opposite concepts of the principles above and imagine adopting them as the basis for your life. Who would seriously propose injustice, deception, mediocrity or regression as the foundation for lasting happiness and success?

► Living by principles has many advantages!

When you make timeless, universal principles the center of your life ...

- ... you lay the foundation for ongoing growth and personal development.
- ... you refuse to allow external circumstances and those around you to determine the course your life. Instead, you make decisions in a proactive, conscious and self-determined fashion.
- ... you have a clear idea of the results you'll achieve before you act – and are confident that these results will last.
- ... you ensure that you achieve the goals that are important to you in the long term.

There are many reasons, then, to place timeless, universal principles at the center of our lives. Those who do so find that life becomes in many ways easier and more straightforward. Why is this?



Unlike other life centers, your principles will never let you down. They will not stab you in the back or simply desert you. By their nature, principles will never favor one person over another on account of their background, bank balance or appearance.

Principles are unshakeable and unerring.

Identify your life principles

Principles are the most stable and steadfast of all the foundations upon which to build a life. Which of them are important to you? Check all that apply below.

- Courage ● Creativity ● Love ● Ethical behavior ●
- Balance ● Care and diligence ● Happiness ● Patience ●
- Communication ● Loyalty ● Effectiveness ●
- Compassion ● Confidence ● Excellence ●
- Caring for the environment ● Industriousness ●
- Satisfaction ● Equality ● Professionalism ● Modesty ●
- Willingness to play one's part in jobs or tasks ●
- Fairness ● Learning ● Community spirit ● Charity ●
- Reliability ● Strength ● Attentiveness ● Justice ●
- Cooperation ● Optimism ● Understanding ●
- Respect ● Integrity ● Personal development ● Kindness ●
- Humor ● Spirituality ● Team spirit ●
- Responsibility ● Friendship ● Motivation ● Purpose ●
- Humility ● Generosity ● Harmony ●
- Openness ● Regard for things and people ●

Can you think of any other principles? Write them down here:

Which principles are most important to you?

Did you tick several of the principles on the list? Your next task is to decide which of them are the central tenets around which YOU wish to build your life. Be careful not to spread yourself too thin. Choose only those principles that feel most important to you.

My life principles

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Your roles and goals

To understand how to embody your principles in day-to-day life, it can be helpful to examine your **life roles**. Each of us occupies a unique combination of roles in relation to ourselves and those around us. Take a look at the roles in the box below, then check off all that apply to you.

- Partner
- Son or daughter
- Father or mother
- Brother or sister
- Organizer of family life
- Godfather or godmother
- Friend
- Neighbor
- Member of a community or club
- Amateur athlete
- Pet guardian
- Manager
- Employee
- Colleague
- Business owner

Have you ticked all that apply? Of course, this list is not exhaustive, and you will almost certainly occupy other roles alongside. Take a moment to note these roles here.
