



PositivePsychology.com



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING

A STRUCTURAL APPROACH FOR INCREASING WELL-BEING

WORKBOOK FOR CLIENT

Copyright © 2019 by PositivePsychology.com All rights reserved.

This ebook or any portion thereof may not be reproduced, relabeled, or used in any commercial manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher.

Permission is not required for personal or professional use, such as in a coaching or classroom setting.

PositivePsychology.com
Gandhiplein 16
6229HN Maastricht
The Netherlands

<https://PositivePsychology.com>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	03
SESSION 1 - VALUES AND GOAL SETTING	04
SESSION 2 - STRENGTHS	17
SESSION 3 - BEHAVIORAL CHANGE	24
SESSION 4 - OBSTACLES AND COPING	27
SESSION 5 - POSITIVE EMOTIONS	36
SESSION 6 - EVALUATION AND THE FUTURE	42

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this intervention. The upcoming sessions all share one purpose: to help you move closer to your personal goals and increase your well-being. In order to do so, we adopt a positive focus. Rather than merely focusing on what is wrong and what prevents you from reaching your goals, we will also consider your personal strengths.

In this intervention, we will focus on what is most important in your life and consider all the personal qualities you already possess that will allow you to reach your personal goals and deal with challenges that may arise on your journey.

This manual was created to serve as a guide throughout the coaching sessions. It was designed for several specific purposes:

- to offer a theoretical background and context for the phases of this intervention
- to help you remember the action steps and commitments that you agreed on
- to serve as a logbook for the most important insights that result from this intervention

Good luck!

1

SESSION 1

VALUES AND GOAL SETTING

In this session, we are going to focus on the part of your life that needs most attention right now. We are going to find out what is most important to you in this part of your life and what is needed to move closer to the life you want.

EXERCISE 1.1 - THE WHEEL OF LIFE

Step 1: Your most important life domains

In this first exercise, we are focusing on the different domains in your life. Examples of life domains include Money & Finance, Career & Work, Health & Fitness, Fun & Recreation, Environment, Community, Family & Friends, Partner & Love and Growth & Learning. List the most important domains in your life and a brief description each below. List up to 10 life domains (you may also list fewer domains).

These are the most important domains in my life:

Life Domain 1:

Life Domain 2:

Life Domain 3:

Life Domain 4:

Life Domain 5:

Life Domain 6:

Life Domain 7:

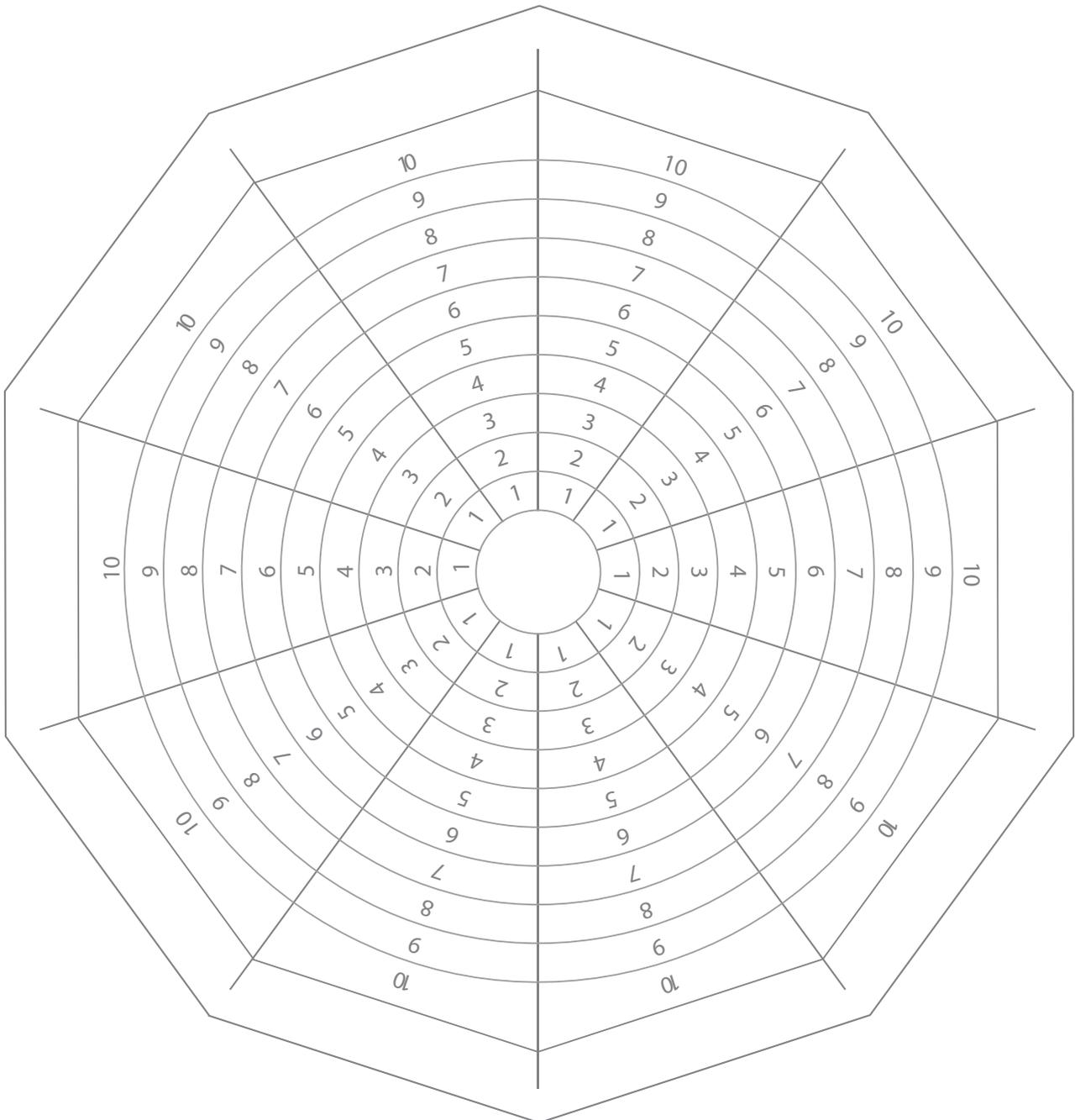
Life Domain 8:

Life Domain 9:

Life Domain 10:

Step 2: Entering the life domains in the Wheel of Life

Now a look at the wheel of life, displayed in the figure on the next page. Enter the names of your most important life domains in the outer rim of the empty wheel.

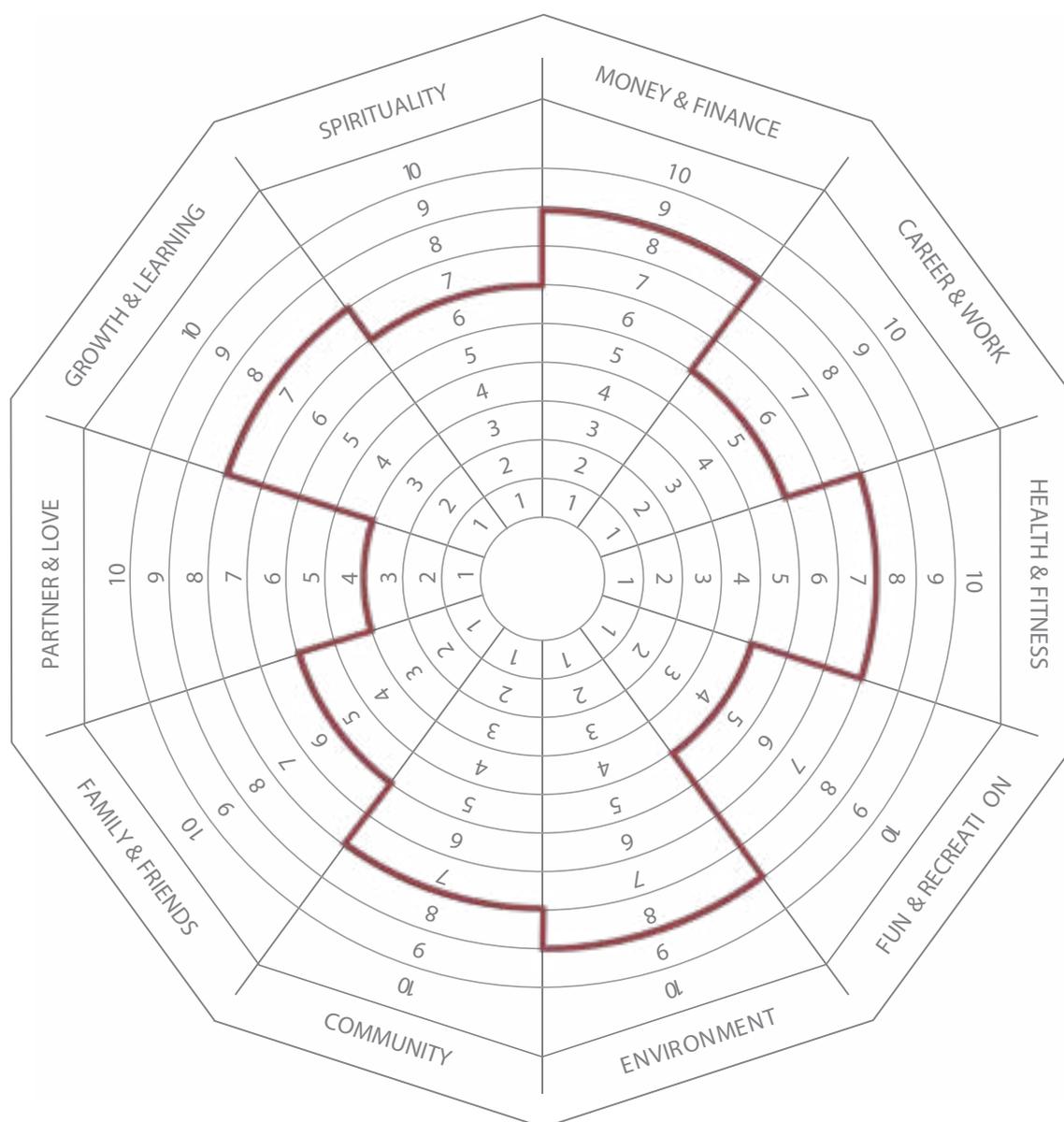


Step 3: Satisfaction rating of life domains

Now use the wheel of life to rate your level of satisfaction in the areas you have labelled on the wheel. 1 means that you are not satisfied at all and 10 means you are highly satisfied. Simply highlight the line that corresponds with your level of satisfaction.

Step 4: Connecting the lines

Connect the lines to form an inner wheel. For an example, see the picture below.



Step 5: Setting Priorities

Now take a look at the completed wheel. Are there ways you would want to change the shape of the inner wheel? If so, which domain(s) do you feel need(s) attention?

These are the life domains that I feel need attention:

What is the one domain that needs most attention right now? In other words, what is the domain that you would like to start working on?

This is the life domain that needs most attention right now:

EXERCISE 1.2 - MY TOP 5 VALUES

The goal of this exercise is to increase awareness of what really matters to you in the life domain that you believe needs the most attention right now. Here we focus on so-called “values”.

Values are the things we consider to be important in life. Values are our heart’s deepest desires for the way we want to interact with the world, other people, and ourselves. They’re what we want to stand for in life, how we want to behave and what sort of person we want to be. Examples of values are: creativity, honesty, freedom, etc.

Values are the answer to the questions:

- What’s important to you in your life?
- What is your life’s purpose?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- When do you feel satisfied and fulfilled?

Your values

Please take a look at the Wheel of Life and consider the life domain you believe needs the most attention right now.

Please think of the values that are most important to you in this specific life domain.

On the next page is an inventory of core values that you can just read through and see which values ring true for you. Just use ticks and crosses to mark off values or, if you prefer, use a rating to help you work out which are more important. Remember that no list can ever be complete. There may be some additional personal values that are unique to you, so don’t be limited by the list. Just add anything else that feels right.

Please select your 5 most important values in the life domain that needs most attention right now.

Values list:

Acceptance	Fairness	Peace
Achievement	Fame	Personal Development
Advancement & Promotion	Family Happiness	Personal Expression
Adventure	Fast Pace	Planning
Affection	Freedom	Play
Altruism	Friendship	Pleasure
Arts	Fun	Power
Awareness	Grace	Privacy
Beauty	Growth	Purity
Challenge	Harmony	Quality
Change	Health	Radiance
Community	Helping Others	Recognition
Compassion	Helping Society	Relationships
Competence	Honesty	Religion
Competition	Humor	Reputation
Completion	Imagination	Responsibility & Accountability
Connectedness	Improvement	Risk
Cooperation	Independence	Safety & Security
Collaboration	Influencing Others	Self-Respect
Country	Inner Harmony	Sensibility
Creativity	Inspiration	Sensuality
Decisiveness	Integrity	Serenity
Democracy	Intellect	Service
Design	Involvement	Sexuality
Discovery	Knowledge	Sophistication
Diversity	Leadership	Spark
Environmental Awareness	Learning	Speculation
Economic Security	Loyalty	Spirituality
Education	Magnificence	Stability
Effectiveness	Making a Difference	Status
Efficiency	Mastery	Success
Elegance	Meaningful Work	Teaching
Entertainment	Ministering	Tenderness
Enlightenment	Money	Thrill
Equality	Morality	Unity
Ethics	Mystery	Variety
Excellence	Nature	Wealth
Excitement	Openness	Winning
Experiment	Originality	Wisdom
Expertise	Order	

Other values that are not on this list:

My 5 most important values in this life domain are:

Value #1

Value #2

Value #3

Value #4

Value #5

EXERCISE 1.3 - MY GOALS

In the previous exercises, you identified the life domain that needs most attention and the things you find most important in this life domain (your values). Now we are going to focus on the first step to change: finding out what exactly needs to be changed. Ask yourself the following question:

What exactly do I want to change in the life domain that needs most attention?

This is what I would like to change in the life domain that needs most attention:



What would be needed to make this change happen? To answer this question, you may consider the values you chose in exercise 1.2. Are there any values that you believe you are not (sufficiently) living in line with? What action steps would be needed to live more in line with these values?

This is what is needed to make the desired change happen:



Together with your coach, set one or more goal(s) and list them below.

These are my most important goals:

Goal #1

Goal #2

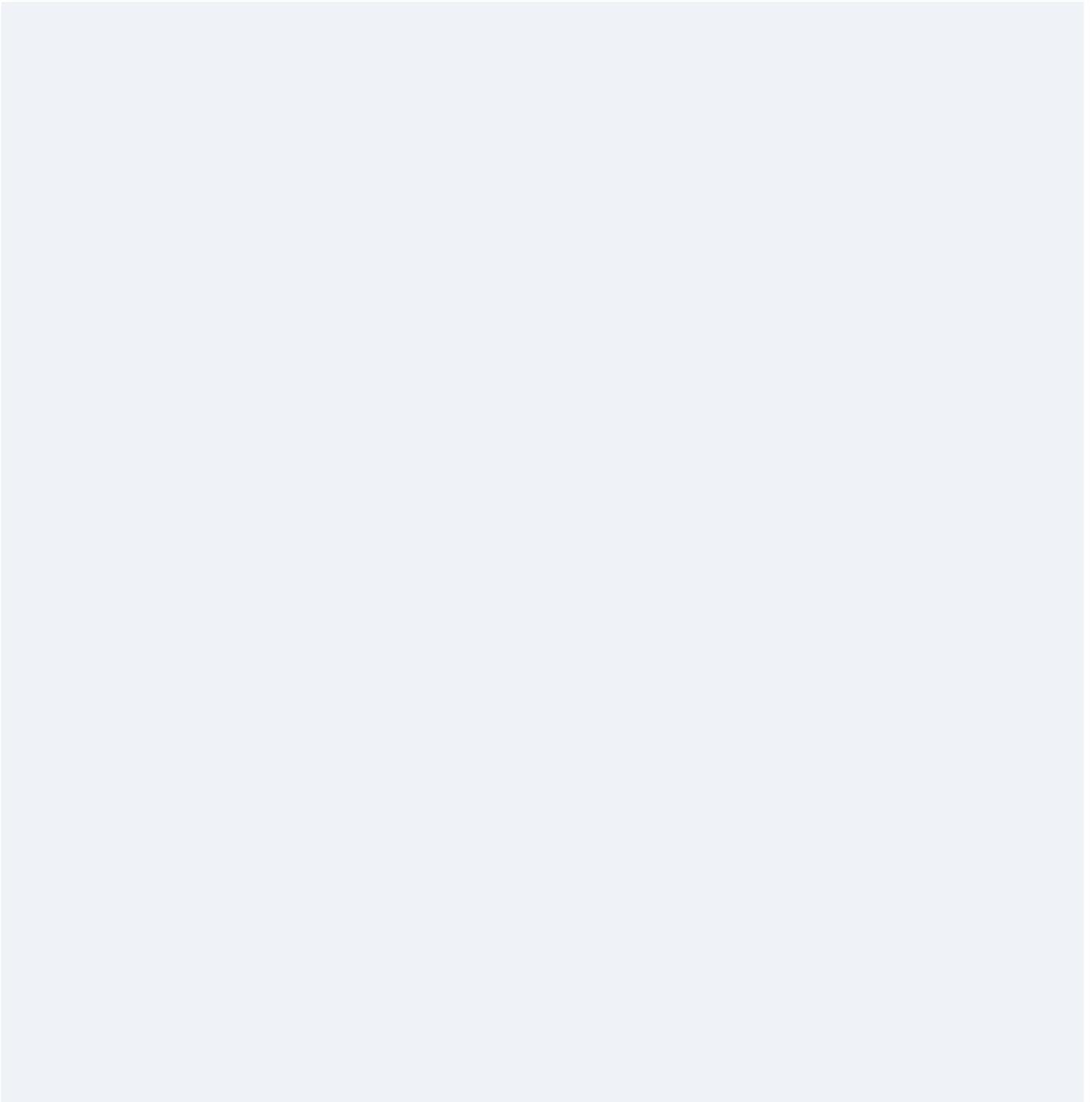
Goal #3

Goal #4

Goal #5

NOTES

Use the space below to write down notes regarding this session. For example, you may write down important insights, things you need to remember, etc. Feel free to use the space in a way that serves your needs.



HOMEWORK

Make a visual representation of your goals and/or values (also referred to as vision board). This can be done digitally, by selecting images, photos, words, names, etc. from the internet and combining them in a PowerPoint file, or by hand, using magazines and other resources. You can use the following three steps to create your own personal vision board:

1. Collect images for your vision board.
Find (positive) images that correspond to your chosen values and goals. Look for images that resonate with you. Choose images that correspond with what you believe is important in life. Use the internet, magazines, and photographs as potential sources.
2. Collect words for your vision board.
You can decide to keep your vision board completely visual, but may also decide to add words to it. Again, make sure that the words you use are a reflection of or are related to your personal values.
3. Put your vision board together.
Once you've selected your images and inspiring phrases, get creative with your arrangement.

If you feel comfortable, bring your vision board to the next session.

2

SESSION 2

STRENGTHS

STRENGTHS - BACKGROUND

In this session and the following sessions we are going to focus on your strengths. Strengths are characteristics of you that allow you to perform well or at your personal best. When you use your strengths, you feel energized and engaged. Examples of a strength are creativity or curiosity.

Strengths can also refer to certain qualities of you that help you to effectively deal with difficult times. Examples of these characteristics include optimism (positive expectations of the future), gratitude (being able to see the positive despite the negative) and mindfulness (being able to live in the present moment).

Scientific research has consistently demonstrated that using one's strengths is associated with higher levels of well-being. For example, people who use their strengths have been found to experience more positive affect, vitality, self-esteem, job satisfaction and work engagement.

NOTES

Use the space below to write down notes regarding this session. For example, you may write down important insights, things you need to remember, etc. Feel free to use the space in a way that serves your needs.

My personal notes for this session:

HOMEWORK

Please complete the VIA questionnaire online:

1. Go to: <https://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths-Survey> and take the free VIA survey.
2. Ask at least three other persons, preferably from different contexts (e.g. a colleague, a family member and a friend) to assess your strengths. Use the overviews with strengths on the next pages and ask these three other persons to select 5 (not more or less) strengths that they believe characterize you. Also ask *why* they believe these strengths characterize you.

Please bring this list to the next session.

3. Become aware of your own strengths and pay attention to positive feelings this week. Feelings like for instance energy, excitement or gratitude. If you want, you can write down what you are doing, who is with you, and if any strengths are at play.

Please read the following descriptions of 24 positive character attributes given below. Select ONLY FIVE (no less, no more) you find characterize me best by placing a check mark in the corresponding box.

Wisdom & Knowledge – strengths which involve acquiring and using knowledge	
	Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
	Curiosity: Openness to experience: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
	Open-mindedness: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides
	Love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
	Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others
Courage – emotional strengths which involve exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal	
	Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, or pain
	Persistence: Finishing what one starts, persisting in a group of actions in spite of obstacles
	Integrity: Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way
	Vitality/Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things half-way or half-heartedly, living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated
Humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others	
	Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
	Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
	Social intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
Justice – strengths that underlie healthy community life	
	Citizenship :Working well as member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
	Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
	Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
Temperance – Strengths that protect against excess	
	Forgiveness & Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
	Humility/Modesty: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
	Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
	Self-regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
Transcendence – Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning	
	Appreciation of beauty and excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science.
	Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things; taking time to express thanks
	Hope/Optimism: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
	Humour/Playfulness: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people, seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
	Spirituality: Knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

Please read the following descriptions of 24 positive character attributes given below. Select ONLY FIVE (no less, no more) you find characterize me best by placing a check mark in the corresponding box.

Wisdom & Knowledge – strengths which involve acquiring and using knowledge	
	Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
	Curiosity: Openness to experience: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
	Open-mindedness: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides
	Love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
	Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others
Courage – emotional strengths which involve exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal	
	Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, or pain
	Persistence: Finishing what one starts, persisting in a group of actions in spite of obstacles
	Integrity: Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way
	Vitality/Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things half-way or half-heartedly, living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated
Humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others	
	Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
	Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
	Social intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
Justice – strengths that underlie healthy community life	
	Citizenship :Working well as member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
	Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
	Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
Temperance – Strengths that protect against excess	
	Forgiveness & Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
	Humility/Modesty: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
	Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
	Self-regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
Transcendence – Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning	
	Appreciation of beauty and excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science.
	Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things; taking time to express thanks
	Hope/Optimism: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
	Humour/Playfulness: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people, seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
	Spirituality: Knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

Please read the following descriptions of 24 positive character attributes given below. Select ONLY FIVE (no less, no more) you find characterize me best by placing a check mark in the corresponding box.

Wisdom & Knowledge – strengths which involve acquiring and using knowledge	
	Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
	Curiosity: Openness to experience: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
	Open-mindedness: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides
	Love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
	Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others
Courage – emotional strengths which involve exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal	
	Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, or pain
	Persistence: Finishing what one starts, persisting in a group of actions in spite of obstacles
	Integrity: Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way
	Vitality/Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things half-way or half-heartedly, living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated
Humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others	
	Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
	Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
	Social intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
Justice – strengths that underlie healthy community life	
	Citizenship :Working well as member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
	Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
	Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
Temperance – Strengths that protect against excess	
	Forgiveness & Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
	Humility/Modesty: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
	Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
	Self-regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
Transcendence – Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning	
	Appreciation of beauty and excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science.
	Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things; taking time to express thanks
	Hope/Optimism: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
	Humour/Playfulness: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people, seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
	Spirituality: Knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

3

SESSION 3

BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

EXERCISE 3.1 - MY SIGNATURE STRENGTHS

“Signature strengths” refer to those character strengths that are most essential to who we are. Please list your 5 signature strengths below.

My 5 Signature Strengths are:

Strength #1

Strength #2

Strength #3

Strength #4

Strength #5

NOTES

Use the space below to write down notes regarding this session. For example, you may write down important insights, things you need to remember, etc. Feel free to use the space in a way that serves your needs.

My personal notes for this session:

HOMEWORK

1. Please list a few concrete actions for the next week that will help you to move closer to your goals.

In order to move closer to my goals, I have planned the following concrete actions for next week:

Action #1

Action #2

Action #3

Action #4

Action #5

2. For the next week, try to become aware of activities that allow you to use your strengths. You may use the exercise “My Strength Moments” on the next page to list activities that give you energy/result in positive experiences. Use the table to list:

- the date of the activity
- a brief description of the activity. Make sure to write down activities that you performed/accomplished, rather than your emotions or someone else’s actions (example, don’t write down “I felt happy for receiving positive feedback on my marketing presentation”)
- what you experienced during the activity (emotions, feelings). Try to be specific when listing your experience and emotions. For example: “I felt happy and accomplished after presenting my new marketing campaign without stuttering.” or “I was feeling dreadful when I realized that I had forgotten my sister’s birthday.” Avoid vague sentences such as: “I enjoyed going to the park with my family.” or “I feel bad that my sister is upset.”
- to which extent you enjoyed the activity
- the amount of energy that the activity provided

4

SESSION 4

OBSTACLES AND COPING

MINDFULNESS - BACKGROUND

In this session, you are going to explore mindfulness and acceptance. What does mindfulness mean? Mindfulness is all about attention. Attention can be directed inside ourselves as well as outside ourselves. Attention for feelings, bodily sensations, thoughts or emotions are examples of attention for the inside world. Attention for a conversation with a friend, trees in a forest, sounds or a book are all examples of attention for the outside world.

Mindfulness is attention for the now. Attention for the things that are happening in this very moment. This may sound easy, but how many times is our attention completely taken by thoughts? Although it is hard to deny that thinking is often very handy – we can make plans and solve difficult problems – at the same time, it is the most important cause of many of our problems. Our mind easily gets lost in endless thinking (worrying and rumination). Our thoughts create emotions and feelings like fear and stress. We lie awake at night because we worry about what might happen tomorrow. We can't stop thinking of that stupid mistake we made last week. In our mind, we are constantly busy with the things that need to be completed. These are only a few examples of how our mind can make life difficult. Mindfulness teaches us by means of attention how to deal with these problematic thoughts. Mindfulness helps us to create a different relationship with our thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Mindful attention means attention without judgment. Often, sensations like tension or fear are automatically labelled as “bad”, “inappropriate” or “unwanted”. When we judge a certain feeling (“I experience fear, this is bad, I don't want this”) we automatically create a conflict; a conflict between the current feeling (“bad”) and how the feeling should be (“good”). Attempts to solve this conflict, for instance by suppressing the negative feeling, do not only require a lot of energy, but can paradoxically cause us to feel even worse.

Acceptance plays a key role in mindfulness. Every feeling, emotion, sensation or thought is allowed to be there. It is there anyway. Instead of fighting against feelings or thoughts, mindfulness fosters willingness to acknowledge, allow and accept these internal states. By letting go of this struggle and fight, we not only save energy, we also experience that the things we fight against, fade away automatically; often even sooner than when we actively fight against them. As soon as an emotion receives room to be there, one can experience that the emotion is only temporary; she comes and goes. In this way, one becomes an observer of one's own inner states. One is no longer identified and completely lost in the content of thoughts and feelings, but observes them. This observer still experiences the emotion or feeling, but now has the choice of being fully taken by them or not. By observing thoughts without judgment, one can experience their transient nature. In addition, we learn that not everything we think is true. In sum, mindfulness can help to identify less with feelings, emotions or thoughts. In other words, you are not the emotion or the thought; you are aware of an emotion or a thought.

EXERCISE 4.1 - THREE-MINUTE BREATHING SPACE

The three-minute breathing space is a very brief mindfulness meditation that can help you to integrate mindfulness into everyday life. It enables you to disrupt automatic patterns of thinking and behavior and increase acceptance-based coping.

The exercise involves the following three steps. The first step is asking oneself “Where am I?” “How am I?” “What am I thinking?” In this way, you can step outside the “doing mode” for a moment, and interrupt habitual patterns. This phase allows you to connect to the present moment. The second step involves a single focus of attention. Attention is directed away from thinking and focused on the breath. During the third and last step, attention is expanded so that it also includes awareness of body sensations. The focus is on the body as a whole. The three-minute breathing space requires willingness to experience what is present.

During the day, pause at random or fixed moments (e.g., you can set a timer on your phone) and perform the three-minute breathing space. Take about 1 minute per phase:

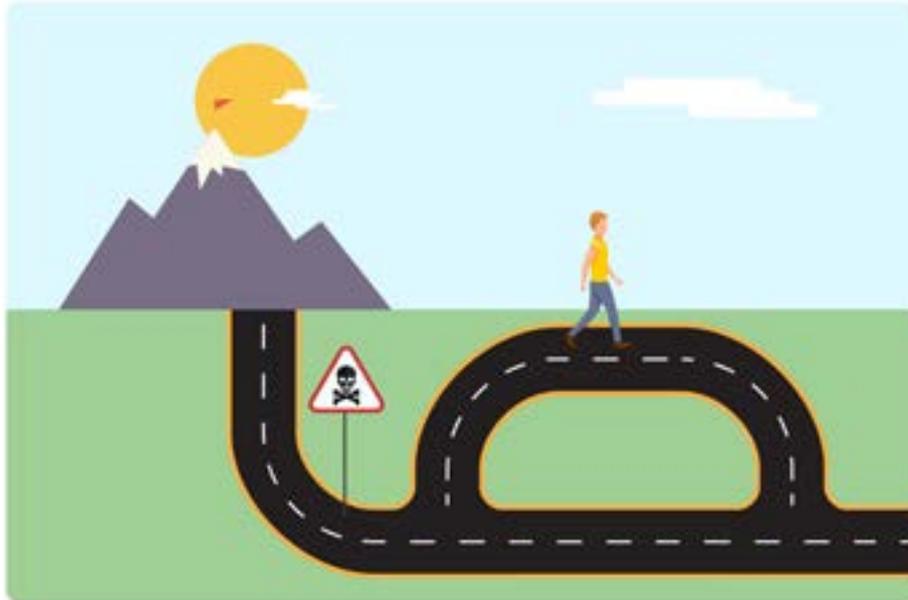
1. **Awareness:** Ask yourself the question: How am I doing right now? Focus your attention on your inner perception. Notice which thoughts, feelings and physical sensations you are experiencing. Try to translate your experiences into words. For example: “there are self-critical thoughts” or “I notice I am tensed”. What are you feeling in your body? Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling in the current moment. Accept it. You can tell yourself that it’s okay what you’re feeling, and that whatever is there is fine just the way it is.
2. **Breathing:** Focus your full attention on your breath. Follow the breathing with your attention.
3. **Expansion of attention:** Allow your attention to expand to the rest of your body. Feel how your breath moves throughout your whole body. With every in-breath you can feel how your body expands a little and with each out-breath how it shrinks a little.

Note that during this exercise your attention might get distracted by certain thoughts or feelings. Simply notice this, you can decide to observe these thoughts and feelings for a while and then return your attention to your breath or your body.

EXERCISE 4.2 - FEELINGS BLOCKING GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

The most common feeling that prevents us from achieving our goals and living in line with our values is fear. Fear can cause us to stop moving in the desired direction. We often spend so much time dealing with negative thoughts and emotions by resisting them, that we lose track of the desired direction. Therefore, it is important to be able to deal with fear in a way that allows you to follow your values and reach your goals.

Please take a look at the picture below. In this picture, behavior and choices (the route the person is walking) are guided by fear (the sign). The route that leads to the mountain is a valued pathway. It includes choices and behavior that are meaningful to the person. However, although the route to the mountain is considered personally meaningful, the person fearfully avoids this route. The unknown of the future (the person does not know what the route to the mountain looks like) causes fear to rise and the person prefers to stay within his/her comfort zone. The fear is blocking his/her personal goals and values and he/she will keep walking in circles.



Now consider the goals you want to achieve. Which fears are currently blocking the pathway to your goals? Try to be as specific as possible and list up to 5 fears on the next page.

Fears that are currently blocking the pathway to my goals:

Fear #1

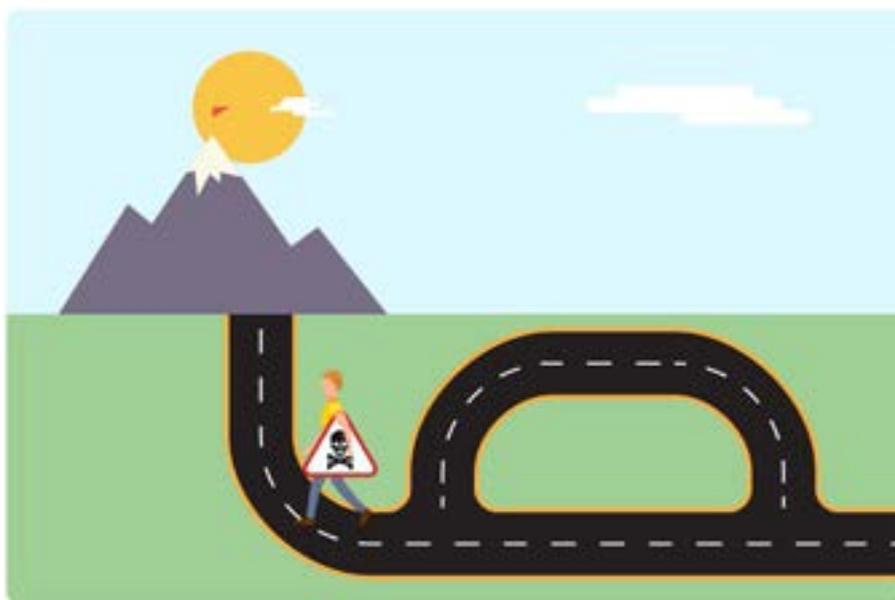
Fear #2

Fear #3

Fear #4

Fear #5

Now take a look at the second picture below. In this picture, the person is taking action despite his/her fear. In this scenario, the fear is no longer blocking his/her personal goals and values. The person is willing to experience the fear, but without following through on fearful instincts and fear-based decisions. The fear may still be present, but it no longer determines the choices the person is making. The person is willing to trade his/her comfort zone for a life that is in line with his/her values, even if this new route is (occasionally) accompanied by fear. This also allows the individual to expand his/her comfort zone, as the new path, once followed, will become more comfortable. Acceptance means allowing negative thoughts and emotions to be present, experiencing them fully, but not letting them stop you from living the life you want.



EXERCISE 4.3 - ACCEPTANCE OF FEELINGS

Acceptance of feelings involves two steps: Awareness and willingness to experience what is present.

Step 1 - Awareness

The first step in accepting feelings is awareness of those feelings. As soon as you notice that (negative) feelings arise, pay attention to them. What feelings or emotions are you experiencing? What thoughts are going through your mind?

Then try to focus on your body. Often, emotions are represented in our body. What feelings arise in your body? Simply observe what you feel in your body. Maybe you feel tension or other sensations. Perhaps you experience a tightness in your stomach, around your heart or neck. Whatever you experience, try to stay with the sensations and be gentle on yourself.

You can use the breath as a vehicle to do this. Direct awareness to the part of the body where those sensations are strongest. 'Breathe into' that part of the body on the in-breath.

Step 2 - Willingness to experience

Rather than pushing this experience away, try to let it be. In silence, you can say to the feeling: "It is OK, you are allowed to be here." "Whatever it is, it's OK. Let me feel it". See what happens if you allow yourself to experience whatever you experience in this moment. Just stay with the awareness of these bodily sensations and your relationship to them, breathing with them, accepting them, letting them be. You can repeat "It's OK. Whatever it is, it's OK."

Perhaps you notice that the feeling gets more intense. Maybe the feeling remains the same or reduces. It may also move in your body. Whatever happens, it is OK. Simply allow it to be. Observe what happens. Remember to stay with the experience with curiosity and kindness. You are experiencing sensations without reacting.

Often, thoughts can distract us from the present moment experience. Maybe there are thoughts about what happened or about this exercise. That's OK. Simply notice when your attention is focused on thoughts and then kindly direct your attention back to your experience in the present moment.

Continue to discover what happens within your body and mind without tightening or resisting it. You can try to hold together in awareness both the sensations in your body and the sense of the breath—breathing with the sensations. When you notice that the bodily sensations are no longer pulling for your attention, simply return 100% to the breath and continuing with that as the primary object of attention. If, in the next few minutes, no powerful sensations in your body arise, try this exercise with any bodily sensations that you experience, even if they have no particular charge.

4.4- PRACTICAL ADVICE

When practicing mindfulness and acceptance, please make sure to adopt the right attitude during practice:

Without judgment

We are very used to judging everything and everyone around us. We compare present experiences with past experiences or expectations and judge automatically. We experience something and we automatically start thinking about and judging this experience. This process of judgment prevents us from being fully present in the now. We see the present through the lens of our judgment.

Trying to stop the judgment is difficult, if not impossible, because it is often automatic, and created by our mind. Trying not to judge is similar to trying not to think of a white bear. It is enough to become aware of judgment. During practice, notice when your mind judges, and direct attention in a friendly way back to the practice again.

Endlessly starting over again

Mindfulness is about starting over again, again and again. Once you get distracted during practice, you redirect attention back again. You do this many times. In fact, it is part of the exercise. In this way, you train redirection of attention, a crucial aspect of attention regulation. Mindfulness cultivates open awareness, the hallmark of a beginner's mind. It is as if we look at reality for the first time, like a young child who experiences something for the very first time.

No striving

It is perhaps the aspect of mindfulness that is most paradoxical and most difficult to explain; there is no goal to achieve with the exercises. This may sound very strange. People often apply mindfulness techniques and strategies because they wish to achieve the goal of worrying less, experiencing less stress, less pain etc. The goal of mindfulness is not to achieve a future goal (like becoming relaxed or becoming the best meditator ever), but to be present with whatever arises in the present moment. The goal of mindfulness is to cultivate a different relationship with feelings and emotions, rather than to change them. When using mindfulness to get rid of negative feelings or change emotions, this will most likely be counterproductive.

Acceptance

Acceptance starts with perceiving reality as it is right now. In the first place, acceptance is about acknowledging what is present. In general, we often don't see what we don't want to see and what we wish to see differently. We devote a lot of time to denying what is there. Consequently, we waste a lot of precious energy by resisting something that cannot be changed in the first place. During practice, both pleasant and unpleasant sensations, emotions and thoughts may arise. Instead of denying them and pushing them away, mindfulness requires willingness to let them be as they are. Remember that the goal of mindfulness is not

to get rid of these internal states, but to change one's relationship with these states. Mindfulness cultivates a more friendly, acceptance-based relationship with internal states. In other words, when unpleasant states arise, try to welcome them and perceive them as part of the exercise, part of reality. Let them be as they are.

Letting go

Sometimes, positive experiences arise during the exercises. People often want to hold on to these experiences. We attempt to prolong their duration and make them last longer. Mindful awareness means detachment of all events. In fact, when we try to change the course of positive experiences, we are doing exactly the same thing as when we try to push away the negative states. In both cases, we try to alter reality instead of experiencing it with an open, detached attitude. It is enough to observe and give the positive experience room to follow its natural course. The more freedom you provide for experiences to occur, the more freedom you will experience.

Compassion

Practice compassion. Don't be angry at yourself when you get distracted during the exercises. Thoughts and feelings will always arise. It is how the mind works. Every mind operates like this. Your mind is no exception. Awareness in this moment provides the opportunity to direct attention back to the exercise in a friendly, compassionate way. So be kind to yourself when you notice pain, anger or fear. Be kind when you notice that you judge, that you get distracted, that your mind wants to avoid pain. Practice friendly, open awareness.

HOMEWORK

1. Please list a few concrete actions for the next week that will help you to move closer to your goals.

In order to move closer to my goals, I have planned the following concrete actions for next week:

Action #1

Action #2

Action #3

Action #4

Action #5

2. Try to reserve a few timeslots per day and apply **Exercise 4.1 - 3 Minute Breathing**.
3. When experiencing difficult feelings or emotions, try to practice acceptance of these feelings. You may use the written instructions of **Exercise 4.3 - Acceptance of Feelings**.

NOTES

Use the space below to write down notes regarding this session. For example, you may write down important insights, things you need to remember, etc. Feel free to use the space in a way that serves your needs.

My personal notes for this session:

5

SESSION 5

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

POSITIVE EMOTIONS - BACKGROUND

Positive emotions like happiness, joy and enjoyment are not only pleasant, they have also been found to broaden one's awareness and encourage new, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions. In other words, when we experience positive emotions, we look at the world in a different way; a way that is characterized by more openness to new experiences, a broader scope of visual attention, more creativity and so on. Simply put, we "open up" when we experience positive emotions.

Positive emotions can undo lingering negative emotions because they put the negative emotions in a broader perspective. If we can cultivate these positive emotions, we can use them to deal with negative emotions. Also, because of their broadening effect, positive emotions allow us to find good in future events. People who are able to quickly bounce back from stressful events in life have been found to experience more positive emotions even in the face of stress. Having these positive emotions is what helps us to build up resources to cope with negative emotional experiences in the long run.

EXERCISE 5.1 - GRATITUDE FOR IMPORTANT PEOPLE

In this session, we are going to focus on positive emotions. An example of a positive emotion is gratitude. In this exercise, we are going to explore the positive feeling of gratitude by remembering people who have profoundly influenced you in your life. These are the people who had a great positive influence on you: grandparents or parents, teachers, bosses, a spouse, a child, or some iconic person you have never even met. Consider three of these people, mention their names, and tell your coach how they contributed to your life.

Person #1 - Name:

How this person has positively contributed to your life:

Person #2 - Name:

How this person has positively contributed to your life:

Person #3 - Name:

How this person has positively contributed to your life:

EXERCISE 5.2 - POSITIVE EMOTION BRAINSTORM

A powerful way to generate more positive emotions is by generating possible ideas for increasing positive emotions in daily life. The exercise below can be used for this purpose and targets the type of positive emotions that are experienced least often/are most underrepresented from your day-to-day life.

Step 1

From the list below, which of the ten positive emotions do you feel least daily? Choose one number to work with.

Types of Positive Emotion:

1. Amused, fun-loving, or silly
2. Awe, wonder, or amazement
3. Grateful, appreciative, or thankful
4. Hopeful, optimistic, or encouraged
5. Inspired, uplifted, or elevated
6. Interested, alert, or curious
7. Joyful, glad, or happy

8. Love, closeness, or trust
9. Proud, confident, or self-assured
10. Serene, content, or peaceful

Step 2

Write the three words from the number that you picked under “My least experienced positive emotions” below.

My least experienced positive emotions:

Emotion #1

Emotion #2

Emotion #3

Step 3

Take ten minutes to discuss how you can increase the opportunities in your life to experience the three emotions more often. Let your mind wander and don't limit your possibilities. Possible categories for your ideas include:

- Activities that you already do, but could do more often
- New activities
- Changing your mindset about current activities

List ideas on the following page.

Ideas:

Idea #1

Idea #2

Idea #3

Idea #4

Idea #5

Idea #6

Idea #7

Idea #8

Idea #9

Idea #10

HOMEWORK

1. Please list a few concrete actions for the next week that will help you to move closer to your goals.

In order to move closer to my goals, I have planned the following concrete actions for next week:

Action #1

Action #2

Action #3

Action #4

Action #5

2. Select one or more positive activities to carry out this week. These positive activities can (but do not necessarily have to) serve as consequences for being able to successfully commit to the goals. In other words, these positive activities serve as a reward for you to act in line with your goals and values. For example, you may think of small rewards like watching television, buying a small gift, spending time with friends, etc. You may also use the list of activities that was generated in the previous exercise as a guide or source of inspiration. In any case, these activities should elicit positive emotions.

NOTES

Use the space below to write down notes regarding this session. For example, you may write down important insights, things you need to remember, etc. Feel free to use the space in a way that serves your needs.

My personal notes for this session:

6

SESSION 6

EVALUATION AND THE FUTURE

EXERCISE 6.1 - MY TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Consider the things you learned about yourself during the past weeks. What is the most important lesson you learned? Write down a personal take-home message below.

My personal take-home message:

EXERCISE 6.2 - COMMITMENTS

Please consider how you want to proceed after these sessions in order to stay on track, maintain or further improve a valued way of living and/or moving closer to your goals:

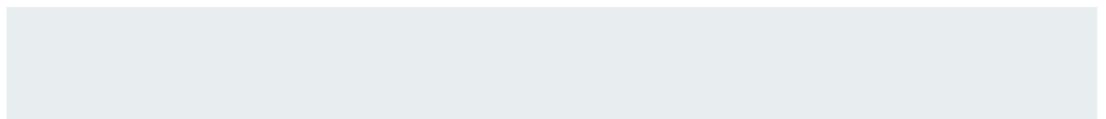
This is how I would like to proceed after this intervention:



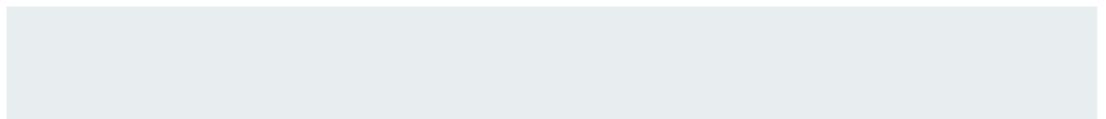
Are there certain commitments that you want to make? Perhaps there are actions, exercises or other aspects of the intervention that you would like to continue doing or develop further in the future.

These are commitments I would like to make to my self:

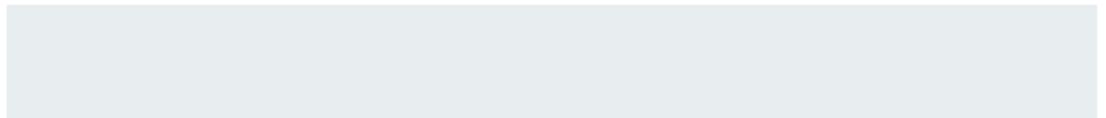
Commitment #1



Commitment #2



Commitment #3



Commitment #4



Commitment #5

