

Chapter 7

Step 1: The Energising Step

Exercise 1: Identifying Your Signature Character Strengths

Now it's time to get personal, and for you to think about your Character Strengths. While we all have some awareness of our positive qualities, from experience it is evident that many people are either unaware of, or unable to describe, their own Character Strengths. Let's see if we can help you with this.

Part 1: My intuitive response

Reflecting on your behaviours, how you think of yourself, and how others have described you, you have some awareness of your Character Strengths, and so we invite you to nominate your top-five, based on your intuition.

Below you will find the official list of the twenty-four VIA Character Strengths in alphabetical order. Your task is to select five of these strengths which you feel most strongly describe you as a person at this stage of your life. Please record them below. The formal VIA definition for each Character Strength can be found in Appendix 2.

VIA Character Strengths

- Appreciation of beauty and excellence
- Bravery
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Fairness
- Forgiveness
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Hope
- Humility
- Humour
- Judgement
- Kindness
- Leadership
- Love
- Love of learning
- Perseverance
- Perspective
- Prudence
- Self-regulation
- Social intelligence
- Spirituality
- Teamwork
- Zest

My intuitive top-five

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Part 2: My VIA survey response

The VIA Survey is a free self-assessment that takes around ten minutes to complete. The survey has been translated into more than forty languages and it has now been taken by over twenty million people. On completing the survey, you will be presented with a ranked profile of your strengths. Enjoy gaining valuable self-knowledge from this survey. To complete the survey, visit: www.viacharacter.org/account/register

Having taken the survey, record your Character Strengths profile below:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1 _____ | 13 _____ |
| 2 _____ | 14 _____ |
| 3 _____ | 15 _____ |
| 4 _____ | 16 _____ |
| 5 _____ | 17 _____ |
| 6 _____ | 18 _____ |
| 7 _____ | 19 _____ |
| 8 _____ | 20 _____ |
| 9 _____ | 21 _____ |
| 10 _____ | 22 _____ |
| 11 _____ | 23 _____ |
| 12 _____ | 24 _____ |

When I first saw my VIA Character Strengths profile, I literally thought to myself, *I am a legend!* Perseverance was ranked number one, which is very important to me. Fairness, Zest and Kindness were in my top-five, and I thought, *This survey is pretty cool!* I then looked to the bottom of the list; seeing Appreciation of beauty and excellence at number twenty-four. Social intelligence, Humour, and bravery were pretty far down there as well, and I thought, *Maybe I'm not such a legend!*

Having supported thousands of people to identify and explore their strengths profiles, we believe it's healthy and appropriate to get a bit of a lift from seeing your highest Character Strengths. Our strengths help us believe in ourselves and help us believe in others. Your lesser strengths are simply other opportunities and other tools that you now know exist within you and that you can draw upon in certain situations.

Part 3: My current Signature Character Strengths

Remember the three E words that generally apply to Signature Character Strengths?

Essential, **e**ffortless, and **e**nergising.

Now, keeping in mind your intuitive response, your survey results, and the three Es – we would like you to write down your Signature Strengths. Can we suggest at least three and may be no more than eight. Many people find that five is a good number.

For each of your Signature Strengths, we would like you to write one accompanying sentence, either about what the strength means to you, or how important it is to you, or how you and/or others benefit from your use of this strength. An example is provided below.

Example: Humour – I look for the light and funny moments in life and try to bring a sense of playfulness to others in my life.

My current Signature Character Strengths are:

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

AWE? (And what else?)

A Word Of Caution

It's important to note that the ranking of strengths is not a personality profile. That's because strengths are within our control to develop if we choose to. If you'd like to exercise more Gratitude in your life, for example, there are a range of evidence-based strategies, such as keeping a gratitude journal, that you can practice to increase your access to and refine that strength.

Strengths Blindness

It is common for people to have a level of strengths awareness; these are the strengths they are already aware of as some of their highest strengths, and are therefore confirmed by the survey. However, it is also common for people to have a level of strengths blindness, where they aren't fully aware of some of their Signature Strengths, and the survey helps them to recognise some of their personal qualities in a different light.

For me personally, I was aware that Perseverance was a quality that was very important to me, and it energised me, but I was equally surprised that Fairness was one of my Signature Strengths. Now, through deeper reflection, I notice how Fairness has guided a wide range of my personal and professional actions for many years.

Exercise 2: My Signature Strengths Stories

.....

To help you truly own your Signature Strengths, it can be helpful to describe a time when you felt you actioned a specific strength in such a way that allowed you to be at your best and contributed to enhancing the wellbeing of yourself and/or others.

We have provided space below for you to write a different story for two of your Signature Strengths. If you would like to do this for more of your strengths, please go right ahead and grab some extra paper.

You may wish to close your eyes and think of the countless times you have actioned this strength, and then hone in on one particular story that brings a smile to your face, where you feel proud of the way you harnessed your Signature Strength.

Signature Strength story for _____

Signature Strength story for _____

AWE?

Note: We invite you to look back over your stories – did you truly embrace your Signature Strength, and/or did you throw in some disclaimers or retractions? It is not always easy to own and acknowledge your strengths, but we hope this exercise helped.

Chapter 8:

Step 2: The Courageous Step

Exercise 1: Connecting To My Core Values

It's time to connect to what is really important to you, what you stand for, and how you want to relate to the world. We would love to help you truly know and articulate your core values.

We refer to 'core values' as the values that are most central, most important, most deeply valued by you.

Interestingly, despite how important and impactful they are, it is not particularly common in our society for people to talk about values very much. We suspect you can't think of a time when a friend directly asked you, 'Tell us about your core values?' While it is common for someone to ask, 'How's work going?', I haven't (yet) had anyone ask me, 'How are your core values going?'

On the following page you will find a list of 150 values regarded by most societies as important. We would like you to whittle this list down to the five of the most important values to you – your core values!

- If this feels an almost impossible task to you, you are correct! The following reflection questions may help you as you move through the three steps below.
- Could you live a full and meaningful life without this value?
- Would this value still be important if no-one knew you actioned it?
- Is this value an important part of who you want to be?
- Does this value motivate you to act?

Phase 1: Very important to you.

With a pen in hand, read through the list of 150 values and simply place a tick beside ones that intuitively feel very important to you. Remember, that all of them are important values, but in this first pass we are looking for ones which are very important to you. Maybe aim to tick around twenty to thirty of the values on the list.

Phase 2: Very, very important to you.

Now, just looking at the short-list of values you have ticked, which ones of these are very, very important to you? Place a second tick on around ten of the values on your list.

Phase 3: Very, very, very important to you.

Can you put a third tick on only five of the values? It is helpful and empowering to have a small, manageable list of core values that truly represent your heart's deepest desires for how you want to be as a human being.

(Of course, in reality, you will have far more than five values that direct your life, but knowing and articulating five core values is your goal in this exercise.)

Phase 4: Record your top-five core values.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A List Of 150 Courageous Values

Acceptance	Courage	Happiness	Mindfulness	Self-respect
Accountability	Creativity	Harmony	Openness	Serenity
Achievement	Curiosity	Health	Optimism	Sexuality
Adaptability	Determination	Home	Order	Service
Adventure	Dignity	Honesty	Parenting	Simplicity
Altruism	Diversity	Hope	Patience	Spirituality
Ambition	Efficiency	Humility	Patriotism	Sportsmanship
Assertiveness	Environment	Intimacy	Peace	Stability
Authenticity	Equality	Humour	Perseverance	Status
Authority	Ethics	Inclusion	Personal fulfillment	Stewardship
Autonomy	Excellence	Independence	Pleasure	Success
Balance	Excitement	Influence	Poise	Teamwork
Beauty	Fairness	Initiative	Popularity	Thrift
Being the best	Flexibility	Inner Harmony	Power	Time
Belonging	Faith	Integrity	Pride	Tradition
Boldness	Fame	Intuition	Recognition	Travel
Career	Family	Job security	Reliability	Trust
Caring	Financial stability	Joy	Religion	Trustworthiness
Challenge	Forgiveness	Justice	Reputation	Truth
Citizenship	Freedom	Kindness	Resourcefulness	Understanding
Collaboration	Friendship	Knowledge	Reciprocity	Uniqueness
Commitment	Friendships	Leadership	Respect	Usefulness
Community	Fitness	Learning	Romance	Vision
Compassion	Fun	Legacy	Responsibility	Vulnerability
Competence	Future generations	Leisure	Risk-taking	Wealth
Confidence	Generosity	Love	Safety	Wellbeing
Connection	Giving back	Loyalty	Security	Wholeheartedness
Contentment	Grace	Making a difference	Self-discipline	Wisdom
Contribution	Gratitude	Meaningful work	Self-expression	Write your own:
Cooperation	Growth	Nature	Self-care	

Instead of thinking
**what will others
think of me if I
say or do that, I
started to think
what will I think
of myself if I don't
say or do that.**

Anon

Exercise 2: Core Values Check-In
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Living with integrity implies soundness of moral character, but even more importantly it refers to a state of being fully integrated – of being whole, entire, or undivided. In reality this means living a life where your thoughts, words, and actions are integrated and aligned with your core values.

So firstly, you must articulate your values – tick! Now we invite you to check in on these five values and write down one example of how this value has motivated you to act in the past, and also to record an opportunity for how you might integrate this value into your future life.

1. My core value of _____

An example of how this value has motivated me to act in the past is ...

A future opportunity for how I can integrate this value into my life is ...

2. My core value of _____

An example of how this value has motivated me to act in the past is ...

A future opportunity for how I can integrate this value into my life is ...

3. My core value of _____

An example of how this value has motivated me to act in the past is ...

A future opportunity for how I can integrate this value into my life is...

4. My core value of _____

An example of how this value has motivated me to act in the past is ...

A future opportunity for how I can integrate this value into my life is ...

5. My core value of _____

An example of how this value has motivated me to act in the past is ...

A future opportunity for how I can integrate this value into my life is ...

Chapter 9:

Step 3: The Mattering Step

Exercise 1: POW Cares!

As this is your first run-through, don't be overly fussed about polishing your words – yet! Just write your responses in bullet points as they come to you and leave the refining work for later.

Personal cares – What do I care deeply about?

-
-
-
-

This includes things which matter to you personally, such as wellbeing, health, leisure and interests, and beliefs.

Now that you have got your thinking started, is there anything else you might add?

AWE? (And what else?)

- _____
- _____

Others cares – What do I care deeply about?

- _____
- _____
- _____

This includes family, friends, work, community, and society.

AWE?

- _____
- _____

World cares – What do I care deeply about?

- _____
- _____
- _____

This includes humankind, the environment, our planet and universe.

AWE?

- _____
- _____

Exercise 2: What Impresses Me?

.....

When I am thinking about other people and what impresses me about them, I would have to say integrity: a sense that they are living their lives in complete congruence. As I say this, Sister Brigid Arthur, a Brigidine nun who was the principal of the secondary school I attended as a teenager, comes to mind. I think it is fair to say that my own sense of fairness, justice and equity are derived from this woman.

A small example of Sister Brigid in action might help you picture her. She was in her first principalship when I was a student, and this story comes from a period of many years since, but I just loved it when I heard it. As principal, she was conducting interviews for teaching positions in the school, seeking to appoint a secondary school music teacher.

The candidate she was interviewing was tired of being inauthentic in their career prospects, and told her, 'I just want you to know that I am gay.' Sister Brigid's response was, 'Okay, but can you teach music?' This was in the 1980s!

I love the perspective she showed here – the fairness, and the humour! What a combination!

I would like you to think now of a particular person you know, or know of, who impresses you. Alternatively, write about the kinds of qualities in a person who impress you.

I am impressed by ...

Exercise 3: When Did I Last Experience ...

Let us introduce another method of uncovering the things you care most deeply about by tapping into powerful emotions that all human beings experience.

Below, we have provided a list of ten key positive emotions and invite you to describe a time when you recently experienced each of them. No need to think too hard about this; just write down what first comes to mind. You will find a brief descriptor of each of the ten emotions in Appendix 3.

I surprised myself when I thought about this list, considering recent examples of how each of the emotions have shown up in my life, when *contentment* came up. Really? Yes! As I am writing this book with Justin, and as I am contemplating the next workshop for **my manifesto**, I realise that this work is what I have been preparing for my whole life! I am content. It may sound twee, but until I had 'grown up' I wasn't able to just stop and 'be'. (Of course, when I say, 'grown up', I mean my inner age, not my chronological one!) And of course, this state of contentment is not static – as we can't hold on to emotional states – but I do know it now and will know it again.

I would like you now to take each of these emotions in turn and write an example of when you last experienced them in your life. I hope this brings you joy.

I last experienced ...

Positive emotion	Describe a time when you recently experienced this positive emotion
Joy	
Gratitude	
Contentment	
Curiosity	
Hope	
Pride	
Amusement	
Inspiration	
Awe	
Love	

Reflection

Having completed this exercise, we invite you to write a reflection on what this uncovered for you. Did it raise any other deep cares?

AWE?

Intentionally, we haven't asked you to complete this exercise for ten common negative emotions, but we acknowledge that this can be another very powerful exercise and can also result in uncovering deep cares.

Chapter 10:

Step 4: The Visionary Step

Exercise 1: POW Dreams!

.....

We invite you to target each of the POW! themes as you identify your dream elements and build them from your imagination.

Personal: Includes your wellbeing, health, leisure, interests, beliefs.

Others: Includes family, friends, work, community, society.

World: Includes humankind, the environment, our planet and universe.

If you find it too hard to free yourself from your current reality when thinking of your dreams for your life, try moving ahead in time (say two, three, five, or however many years) to see if this releases you.

Personal: My dreams for myself – What arises for me?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Regularly asking yourself the helpful inspiring AWE question gives you more options – maybe even better options.

AWE? (And what else?)

- _____
- _____

Others: My dreams for others – What arises for me?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

AWE?

- _____
- _____

World: My dreams for our world – What arises for me?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

AWE?

- _____
- _____

Exercise 2: Another Angle

.....

What does my version of excellence and success look like?

This question may suit you better, particularly if you are doing this exercise with a work focus. Sometimes, if this is your intention, 'dreams' may not resonate with you. Similarly, you may choose excellence or success or a combination of both as your preferred terms. It is all about what works for you. Notice it is also *your* version, with the implicit understanding that everyone has their own benchmarks for excellence and success.

'What does my version of excellence and success look like?'

Personal – What does my version of excellence and success look like in me?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Others – What does my version of excellence and success look like in others?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

World – What does my version of excellence and success look like in our world?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Oftentimes when we are living our lives, when we feel most on track, we notice things around us that seem to support us. This is not a new phenomenon; it has been labelled ‘synchronicity’, and I have seen it attributed to Carl Jung’s teachings, though it has many followers. It is a practice of mine to keep a synchronicity journal, as I intentionally look for signs – small ticks of approval – from the world around me. I feel affirmed when I notice it happening. I can also reward myself for these ticks with small or big acts of self-compassion as visible signs that I am living my life well.

You might like to look for ticks and note down what you see in the next day or two. Remember, meaning is what you make of it. Life does not have an objective meaning or order – beyond that of the natural order of the seasons. (Daylight savings debunked my naive view of time! Another human construct!)

Reflection

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Exercise 3: How Did You Do That?

.....

It is rare when thinking about what we dream about and what we might hope for, to come up with something entirely unrelated to your current reality. However, what you dream about may well be a magnification of an aspect of your life that you wouldn’t ordinarily allow yourself to give much airplay, but here is the time and place to go there! I am sticking my neck out by suggesting that all our dreams have some link to our current life *and* that in fact, all the dreams you have listed in Exercise 1 have some link to your life already!

Exercise 1 invited you to identify what your dreams are in the many contexts of your life. Exercise 2 broadened into viewing dreams in an alternate way, such as in excellence or success. Exercise 3 invites you to hone in on those times in your past when you may have caught glimpses of aspects of your dreams, or your success story, being touched on.

For this exercise, let’s consider using the blanket term ‘vision’ for your version of your dreams, or your ideas for what excellence and success looks like.

Ask yourself this question: ***When in my life have I seen a glimpse of my vision?***

Describe that time in as much detail as you can. Spend time with it.

Having focused on that time, ask yourself with genuine curiosity:

How did I do that?

Spend time spotting the way this came to pass. Was it because you were using one of your Character Strengths? Can you see one or more of your core values in play? Is it an aspect of your POW cares? Really dig deep here. If you were able to see a dream or success story even only minutely realised, *and* you are able to identify the reason, *and* it was because you were using a Character Strength, or tapping into a core value, or doing something you really care deeply about – *then* you can do it again. You can even add, expand, and grow that little glimpse into something big.

To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.

Anatole France

Chapter 11:

Step 5: The Releasing Step

Exercise 1: Naming The Problem

Coaches know that if you can 'name the problem' – the thing that is blocking you – and pin it down, this is the starting point to being able to manage it. No matter what the external reality might be, many of our problems have their own energy. We'll call these 'limiting beliefs': those hard-to-shake beliefs which threaten to take us down the moment we step outside our comfort zone.

Let's start with the problems that are near to home and of our own making!

Before I ask you to do something that I wouldn't do myself, I will let you in on one of my **self-limiting beliefs**: I am not a risk-taker; I play it safe. But, when I did the exercise below about my *self-supporting* beliefs, I placed on the list, 'I go first!', and, 'I say "Yes to life!"' Seems a bit contradictory, doesn't it? Go on, laugh! You have my permission.

Taking a moment to reflect on both my self-supporting statements, I realised they are deliberate strategies chosen precisely because I know I have the tendency to hide and stay safe. I may not be able to rid myself of these self-limiting tendencies – because I recognise their roots in my childhood fears – but I can manage them by adopting specific self-supporting tools to ensure they do not immobilise me.

Self-limiting beliefs

Part 1: My self-limiting beliefs

Write down any self-limiting beliefs that you have about yourself. I would like to encourage you by sharing some of mine.

- I am not a risk-taker.
- I am not a good enough writer.
- I am intellectually no giant.
- I am self-absorbed.
- I am no fun to be with.

That is enough! My cheeks are burning.

Your turn

Part 1: My self-limiting beliefs

- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____

Part 2: My self-supporting beliefs

These are all the positives that you know (really, you do) about yourself and your capabilities. They are yours alone to see. Don't hide from yourself what you are probably – like me – an expert at hiding from (or admitting to) others. By the way, there is no scarcity paradigm here: you declaring yourself capable of something does not prevent someone else from being capable of it, too! It is also not a competition. Be in integrity as you attest to your skills and attributes.

Here are some of mine to start you off:

- I am loving.
- I am resourceful.
- I am spiritually alive.
- I am compassionate.
- I am human.

Your turn

Part 2: My self-supporting beliefs

- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____
- I am _____

Part 3: Let's see these lists side by side

We invite you to compare the lists and spot the contradictions! How can you be both? In believing the self-supporting list, we encourage you to rip, throw out, or burn the self-limiting beliefs list (be careful to remove it from the book first!). This ceremony makes the point that we are all holding ourselves back with the language we adopt about ourselves, despite the in-your-face absurdity and contradictions of much of it! What this language does is stop us in our tracks; immobilises us. To meet our problems, it is essential we release ourselves from such language by understanding that we are allowing it to not only define us but also to limit us.

Your turn

Part 3: My self-limiting and self-supporting beliefs

My self-limiting beliefs	My self-supporting beliefs

Having seen your lists side by side, we invite you to reflect on what you have uncovered about yourself.

How are you feeling, and what are you noticing about yourself, having completed Exercise 1? Try to put this into words here, now.

Reflection

Now that you have named your problems – those which lie within your own self-limiting beliefs – and summarily dismissed or at least managed them, I invite you to have fun with the challenge of flipping the problems you really have to find a way to live with.

Declaring yourself capable of something does not prevent someone else being capable of it too!

Exercise 2: Flipping The Problem

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Exercise 1 was aimed to help you see that your near-to-home problems, those of your own making, are often perceptions of yourself which need to be challenged and managed. Exercise 2 is concerned with those problems which arise in your world and may be out of your control. We pick up on Viktor Frankl's wisdom: that while you often cannot change these problems, you can change your attitude to them.

In the spirit of vulnerability ...

I have made choices in my life which, with the benefit of hindsight (20/20 I believe!), make complete sense to me. I even recognise that I *did* have a choice, however unapparent at the time that might have been. One of these choices was to remarry for love again as part of my search for unconditional love, freely given (which I have identified as one of my deepest yearnings). Despite this choice being evident to me now, along the way I bemoaned the fact that, although I married for love, I didn't have many of the trappings of material success. My problem sometimes may have looked like: 'If only I had a new car, a beautiful home with all mod cons, overseas holidays, blah, blah, blah ...'

Thank goodness I have now acquired wisdom through the work that Justin and I have passed on to you in this book, as I am able to own my decision and flip it into seeing my choice as the most releasing fulfilment of a fundamental need I have. I am rich indeed. My flip might be, 'How rich am I to have satisfied my deepest yearning?'

Part 1: Listing my 'If only ...'

Here are some examples of problems which others have experienced:

- If only I had more money ...
- If only it was up to me ...
- If only I had no fear ...
- If only no-one else needed to be involved ...
- If only I had more time ...
- If only I knew I couldn't fail ...

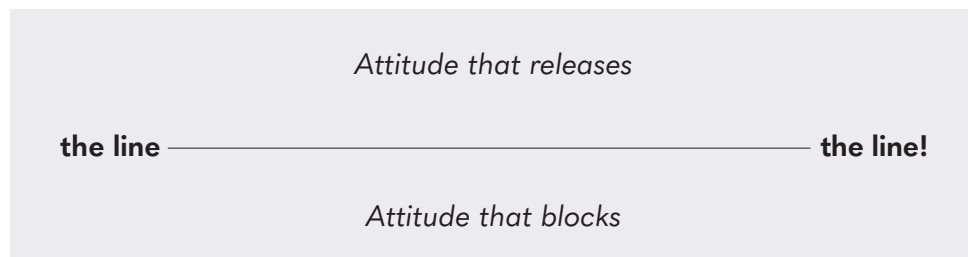
Your turn

Part 1: Listing my 'If only ...'

- If only _____
- If only _____
- If only _____
- If only _____
- If only _____
- If only _____

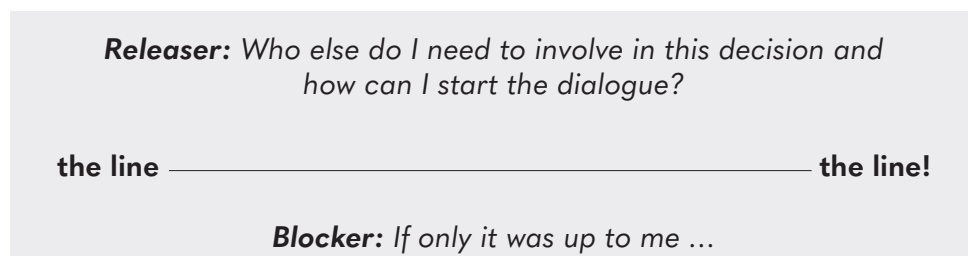
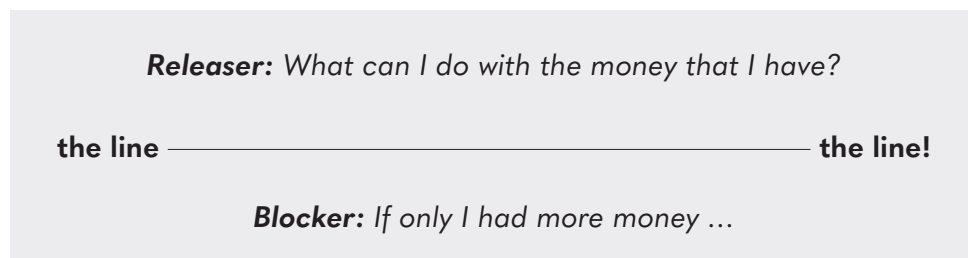
Part 2: Flipping my 'If only ...'

We have intentionally used a visual that represents 'below the line' and 'above the line' thinking. The 'line' represents thinking that serves your best interests. Below the line, therefore, is thinking that does *not* serve your best interests; and above the line is thinking that *does*.



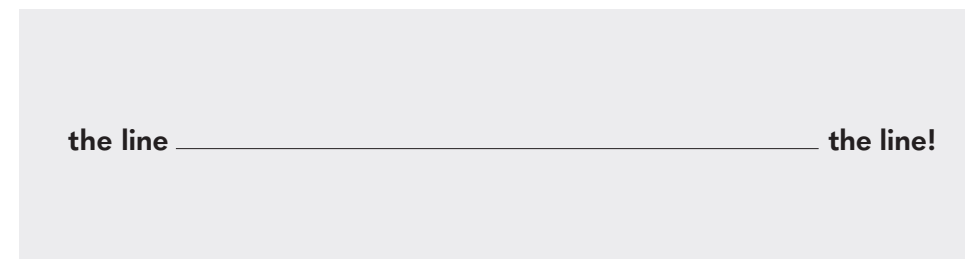
Examples:

In the two examples below, the attitudes that block were listed first, and then – through the skill of flipping – the attitudes that released were created.



Your turn

We invite you to flip four of your blockers.



AWE? (And what else?)

You are reframing your constraints in a way that releases you to begin to make change, to grow into your preferred self and realise your dreams, one step at a time. This is a way of reframing your attitude to serve you, not work against you.

Exercise 3: Vanishing The Problem

We hope you now recognise that some of your beliefs about yourself have been holding you back, but that you have the power to manage these beliefs and to change the attitudes that do not serve you.

Let's play with the idea that you can make your problems vanish and, in so doing, can imaginatively experience the changes of doing something differently!

Vanishing the problem is based upon the Miracle Question of Solution-Focused coaching, pioneered by Mark McKergow.

Scenario: You go to bed one night and when you wake in the morning, a miracle has happened: your problem has vanished. But, as you were asleep, you don't realise this straight away. What would be the first tiny indication that your problem is gone? Record your reflections below.

The aim is not to change what the client does, but to change what the client sees as open to them.

Mark McKergow

Part 1: Signs of change

We invite you to imagine this miracle scenario happening to you. What has changed? What are you doing and saying? What are you noticing now that the problem has vanished?

Note: This is not an exercise in self-delusion, nor are we asking you to accept that we are in a new age of miracles. What we want you to notice is the effect on and changes in your behaviour when you take your gaze away from the problem – specific things you might *do*, or *say*, when the problem vanishes. The more you are able to imagine your changed behaviour, the more you will be able to imaginatively experience a release from your problems. This experience will raise your awareness of the behavioural changes you might want to bring into your life.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Part 2: Expanding the description

We now invite you to ask yourself these additional questions about what has changed when your miracle occurred. Be as detailed and specific as you can be.

- What difference would the changes make to person X?
- What would they do/say/feel when they noticed?
- How would you respond to person X?
- What happens next?
- Who else would notice the changes?

Chapter 12:

Step 6: The Connection Step

Exercise 1: My Social Web

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We invite you to draw up your current social network, so that you can see and appreciate your treasured relationships.

Have you ever deeply considered the full range of roles that you have in your life? Below is a list of almost twenty roles – it is an extensive but not exhaustive list and we have also left several blank spaces for you to enter any other roles that are relevant to you.

Part 1: List of roles

Look over the list of roles below and highlight those that are relevant to you.

Partner	Neighbour	Sibling	Friend
Child	Team-mate	Parent	Cousin
Leader	Parent	Volunteer	Godparent
Pet parent	Daughter or Son-in-law	Mentor	Aunt or Uncle
Colleague	Sister or Brother-in-law	Grandparent	Grandchild
Coach			

With some roles, there may be various subsets of groups, for example: Friends – maybe friends you grew up with, friends from school, or friends from when you lived in a different town. You may well have colleagues from various workplaces. You may think of a past colleague more as a friend. Of course, all of this is fine; do whatever feels right to you at this current moment.

Part 2: Draw your social web

By referencing your roles rather than using specific individual names, draw a visual representation and connection of all your roles at this point in time.

We were going to start you off by placing 'ME' at the top of the following page, but then we thought that where you want to place this starting word may have a particular significance to you. So, you'll need to place a 'ME' somewhere on the page, and then enjoy drawing lines, arrows, circles, and any other relevant shapes or images that represent all the roles in your life at this moment. This 'social web' map will be completely unique to you. You may enjoy visualising particular people as you create your diagram. Enjoy.

*My social web***Part 3: A deeper dive into two particular roles**

We invite you to select two particular roles and reflect on what each role means to you, and how you wish to be in this role.

As you reflect, keep in mind that you cannot control the actions or behaviours of others; all you can control are your own actions and behaviours.

My role as a: _____

What does this role mean to me?	How do I wish to 'be' in this role?
What is one tangible act I could do to show the importance of this role in my life?	What do I receive from this role?

My role as a: _____

What does this role mean to me?	How do I wish to 'be' in this role?
What is one tangible act I could do to show the importance of this role in my life?	What do I receive from this role?

As an interdependent person, I have the opportunity to share myself deeply, meaningfully, with others, and I have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings.

Stephen Covey

Striving For Interdependence Not Independence

We each begin life as babies, totally *dependent* on others. We are nurtured and sustained by others. We immediately start taking; we take food, we take air, we take comfort. Then gradually, over months and years, we become more and more *independent*, until eventually we can essentially take care of ourselves. For some people, they think this means they have made it – the ultimate goal of being independent. Can we suggest to you that there is a higher state? As we continue to mature and gain wisdom, we realise that life and nature are *interdependent*; that our relationships with others are vitally important and they, too, are interdependent.

Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own efforts. And, interdependent people can combine their efforts with the efforts of others to achieve great things.

I am extremely grateful for my interdependent relationship with Sue, from whom I receive so much wisdom and support. I am also grateful for my ancestors* who wrote down their wisdom that I could learn from; those who designed the computer so that I can type these words; those who enabled me to live in comfort with shelter, hot water, and electricity. I could go on, and I will: My parents, who filled me with love and inspired me to make a difference; my teachers, who taught me academic and life skills; and I am still only scratching the surface. To think that I have independently written this chapter would be far from the truth! 'We' have written this chapter, and I can't even fathom all the people who are an important part of that 'we'!

* The reference here to ancestors is literally fellow human beings who have come before us.

Exercise 2: Interdependent Me

.....

This exercise invites you to reflect on key interdependent relationships in your life.

An interdependent relationship is where both people recognise and value a strong emotional connection, and also maintain a solid sense of self within the relationship dynamic. There is a healthy balance of independent selves and mutual reliance.

We provide room for you to reflect on three such relationships, but you can find printable templates on our website if you would like to consider additional people. We know you could write volumes about each person, but your challenge is to distil your thoughts down to one (or two) sentences for each of the four prompts.

My interdependent relationship with: _____

How has this person benefited me?	How have I benefited this person?
If this person was asked to describe me in one sentence, what would they say?	In five years' time, if this person was asked to describe me in one sentence, what would I like them to say?

My interdependent relationship with: _____

How has this person benefited me?	How have I benefited this person?
If this person was asked to describe me in one sentence, what would they say?	In five years' time, if this person was asked to describe me in one sentence, what would I like them to say?

My interdependent relationship with: _____

How has this person benefited me?	How have I benefited this person?
If this person was asked to describe me in one sentence, what would they say?	In five years' time, if this person was asked to describe me in one sentence, what would I like them to say?

AWE? (And what else?)

P.S. You may also wish to write any of these people a gratitude letter, where you express how important and valuable their relationship is to you. Just a thought!

P.P.S. For interest, and self-awareness, you may choose to ask any of these people to actually describe you in one sentence. We wonder how similar their response would be to what you wrote.

Exercise 3: Character Strengths Mirror

.....

Back on *Step 1: The Energising Step* we explored your Signature Strengths – your positive qualities which energise you, are relatively effortless for you to use, and feel essential to who you are.

Well, now that you are on *Step 6: The Connection Step*, we would like you to check in with a select number of people who know you well and seek their input on what are the highest positive qualities they see in you.

You may like to ask several family members, friends, and colleagues. Provide them with a list and definition of the twenty-four strengths and suggest they choose five key strengths they see in you. Of course, this may feel a little awkward, but it will provide you with rich insights. You may also like to return the favour.

In Appendix 4 you will find a sample letter that you can give to each of your strength spotters!

Strengths feedback

Reflection

- Having received feedback from your friends, what have you discovered?
- Did you uncover any strong Signature Strengths – strengths that were high on your VIA survey, and frequently recognised by others?
- Can you identify some ‘strength blind spots’ – strengths that were quite low on your VIA survey, but frequently recognised by others?
- And what about some ‘strengths opportunities’ – these are the strengths that are high on your VIA survey, but not regularly spotted by others. You have opportunities to action these particular strengths in a broader array of contexts.

Reflection

AWE?

Chapter 13:
**Step 7: The
Contribution Step**

- The sheep who provided wool for your warm jacket.
- The musicians who produced the music you listen to.
- The satellite navigation system that provided you with the latest traffic report.

A.J Jacobs took this gratitude exercise several steps further! The premise of his latest book, *Thanks a Thousand*, was based on his challenge of travelling around the world to personally thank every person who made even the smallest contribution to his morning cup of coffee. This turned out to be over 1000 people and included coffee bean farmers, truck drivers, logo designers, and of course the barista!

Exercise 1: Ten 'Gifts' I Am Grateful To Have Received

.....

Before thinking about the ways you can give to others, we invite you to pause for a moment and think about some of the many things you have received.

You may choose to focus on the immaterial gifts you have received, and/or continue to receive from family and friends. Alternatively, you may choose to focus on the material gifts for which you are grateful. You may like to consider your mentors, or people who have come before you, who you may or may not even know. This aligns with Sir Isaac Newtown's view that, 'If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.'

Of course, as you consider your 'gifts', you may wish to combine ideas from each of the above approaches. We know ten is not nearly enough, but we hope you will enjoy compiling a sample of your unique and treasured 'gifts'.

Gifts I have received:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

AWE? (And what else?)

You started this journey with *Step 1: The Energising Step* to discover your unique Signature Strengths. We hope that each subsequent step has also provided you with additional energy, confidence, and inspiration.

And now, having just compiled your list of ten treasured gifts, we anticipate you are bursting with energy! What better way to harness this energy than to consider how you can take action that serves others and how you can give back.

Note: When compiling a list of ‘gifts we have received’, it is common to experience feelings of warmth and appreciation; however, feelings of indebtedness can also arise, which can also cause people to feel overwhelmed. If this is the case for you, you may prefer to consider how you can ‘pay it forward’ (or, as we like to say, ‘live it forward’) rather than ‘paying it back’.

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.

Winston Churchill

Exercise 2: Going MAD – Making A Difference!

A helpful way to think about contribution is considering the difference you wish to make. We all have a tremendous opportunity, and a responsibility, to make a constructive difference to our loved ones, our neighbours, and our world.

We have no doubt that you are already making a meaningful contribution to others. As you consider this exercise, please list things that you are currently doing, or things that you have previously done.

While of course there are no limits to the contributions you can make, for the purpose of this exercise, we are constraining your list to *three* main contributions for each of the following three contexts.

Context 1: Your near and dear

As you bring to mind close loved ones and dear friends, consider: How do you, and how can you, make a difference in their lives? Vying for your three choices may be ways you can make people feel (safe, loved, confident, at ease ...); ways you can offer support (companionship, sounding board, jobs ...); or ways you can provide, enable, empower, or inspire.

Three ways I can contribute to those near and dear to me are:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Context 2: Your neighbours and colleagues

We now invite you to turn your mind to people you know and connect with in your community. These may include your neighbours, colleagues, and team-mates. Let's ask the question again: How do you, and how can you, make a difference in their lives? You may consider ways you can show up for these people, ways that you can assist their growth, ways that you can lead, and ways that you can follow.

Three ways I can contribute to my neighbours and colleagues are:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Context 3: Your fellow global citizens

Our third context is considering fellow humans: people who you may just come into occasional contact with (a customer, a barista, a service provider, a fellow public transport rider ...); or someone you may never know (someone who receives a blood donation, someone who benefits from a charity organisation, someone who enjoys nature and the environment ...).

How do you, and how can you, make a difference in these people's lives?

- _____
- _____
- _____

The reason for inviting you to reflect on how you do, and can, make a difference in the lives of others is to grow your awareness of being 'other-oriented'. A general outlook of, 'How may I be of benefit?' can forge strong bonds between individuals, cultures, and communities.

We acknowledge there is a paradox of service – that in giving to others we also give to ourselves. This strong two-way connection between helping others and helping ourselves is self-generating. The more we help others, the happier we become, and the happier we become, the more we want to help others. However, it is also important not to neglect our own happiness for the sake of living for others.

Unhappy people are less likely to be benevolent, which then leads to further unhappiness. On occasions, it is important to take a birds-eye view of your life and to consider your current balance or imbalance of caring for others and caring for self.

Acknowledging Personal Challenges

Before we explore our final exercise, we wish to acknowledge that some, possibly many, and maybe even all of us go through difficult experiences and challenging times. For some, even thinking about contributing to others may feel out of reach due to the personal difficulties they are facing in their own lives.

Inspiring author and psychologist Maria Sirois compassionately helps readers navigate life's difficulties in her book, *Happiness After Loss*. Her writing and personal stories honour the emotions of grief, sadness, and loss, while also charting a path forward to hope and love.

When Maria was asked in an interview, 'What is the meaning of life?', her response was:

'To become awake and aware enough to find a way to love our lives, no matter how hard, and from that place of living, return love through generous hearts, open minds, and caring spirits. Rumi once wrote, "We are all just walking each other home." No matter how difficult our lives, how harsh our histories or limited our choices this we can do: we can find a way to walk at least one other being home once we have found a way to come home within ourselves with love.'

Whenever I read this paragraph I feel a rush of hope. I know that we all matter, and I believe that we can all make a difference, even when these differences run alongside the personal challenges we face.

When you make a difference in the lives of others, you feel a sense of connection with something greater than yourself. This is an incredibly powerful feeling. Is there a way that some of the differences that you make can have more of a lasting impact; can they become a part of your legacy? It is this concept of a legacy mindset to which we now turn our attention.

Exercise 3: Being A Good Ancestor

.....

We find ourselves in a world plagued by short-term thinking, which causes many negative impacts on our species and our planet. Here, we invite you to carry out some long-term thinking, a skill espoused by philosopher Roman Krznaric in his powerful book titled *The Good Ancestor: How to think long term in a short-term world*.

The premise of the book is that the most important question we can ask ourselves individually, and collectively, is 'How can we be good ancestors?' What this question demands us to consider is how we can live in such a way that future generations will speak of our wisdom.

In the previous exercise, your contribution was generally couched in terms of the present moment. Now, we wish to stretch your timespan and encourage you to consider your contribution to those still yet to be born. How can you become a giver of gifts to future generations?

Part 1: Working long-term contribution

We invite you to think about the contribution you can achieve through your work life. What lasting impact can you make? What can be a part of the legacy you create and leave behind through your work?

Part 2: Personal long-term contribution

We invite you to think about the contribution you can achieve through your personal life. What impact can you have on younger generations? What positive social changes can you be a part of? What example can you live?
