



Life Tools

Free Personal Development Toolkit

Technique Manual

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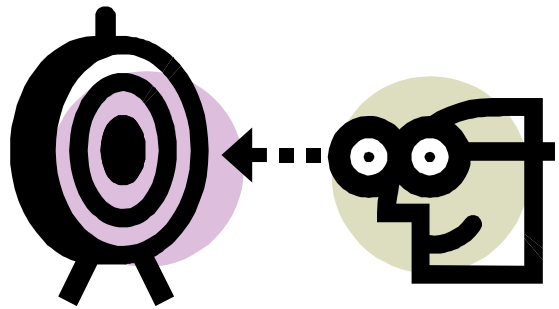
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Defining Your Mission Statement

Do you really know what you want out of your life or do you just trundle along being part of other people's agendas? You owe it to yourself to consider your own purpose and needs.

Having a mission statement in place will make your life more passionate. You will have your goals defined and be motivated to achieve them. Your mission will highlight what you value and lure you towards your future. Follow the steps below to define your mission statement:



1. Find a quiet place where you can be alone and uninterrupted and take a few minutes to clear your mind.
2. Go through the goal setting technique to brainstorm the goals in each major area of your life.
3. Some day you will be no more and considering your death can help you live your life with a real purpose. Think about attending your own funeral and what you would like people to say about you. The goals that you brainstormed should support you in becoming that person. If this is not the case then you should revisit them.
4. Select the top goals from each major area of your life and restate them positively as though you have already achieved them. For example, if you would like to stop smoking do not state "I must stop smoking because it is making me unfit". Instead you should state "I am a non smoker and I am feeling fit".
5. Format your mission statement by writing the positively stated goals concisely and arranging them into logical groups. You may find that it helps to refer to some examples. You can use paragraphs, bullets, headings and even pictures if you wish. You can write one big statement or break it down into the different areas of your life. Choose a format that you are comfortable with.
6. Your range of goals must be holistic so ask yourself how each goal relates to other parts of your life. If you find yourself objecting you need to listen respectfully to your own thoughts as they will highlight any issues you need to work around. E.g. if you are considering a work related goal and you find yourself thinking "This extra work may reduce the amount of time I spend with my partner" you will need to think carefully about how you can find an acceptable solution to meet the needs of both aspects of your life.

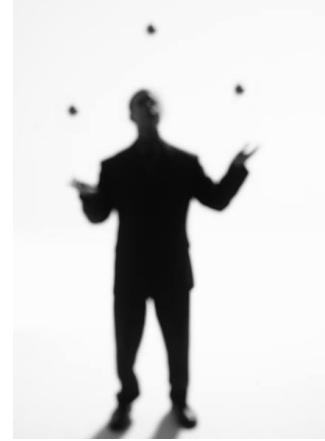
Your mission statement should be reviewed at least every six months as it will change with your personal circumstances. You can use the goal planning techniques to help you create a path from where you are now to where you need to be for each goal. You should integrate your personal mission into your time management and include it in your planning tool to ensure that your time is prioritised effectively.

You may feel that your mission statement looks complete on the surface, but is lacking passion or missing something you cannot put your finger on. If this is the case then you should follow the technique to identify your grand vision and then incorporate it into your mission statement.

Getting Your Priorities Right

Do you understand what your priorities are and consider them when you are going about your day-to-day activities? Review the list below, which may provide possible areas of priority in your life right now. Order the list to reflect your real priorities adding a few more if you wish. This will mean thinking about the actual time you spend on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis, as well as considering how much you feel you care about the different areas of your life. Be brutally honest with yourself and ensure that the list represents your current priorities and not your desired priorities.

- Family
- Friends
- Partner
- Work/School
- Community
- Spiritual Needs
- Health
- Myself
- House/maintenance/development
- Children



Are there any items that you would like to reorder or remove completely? If you are honest with yourself you may find that your current priorities are less than ideal.

Now produce another list, which represents your ideal or desired priorities. Ensure that your own needs are high on the list of priorities. You need to look after yourself properly in order to look after other people and other areas of your life. How far up the priority list did you place yourself? Is it possible to move yourself up the order of priority? Reflect on significant insights, which emerge into the quality of your life right now and how you can improve it. Having reordered the list, spend some time considering if you are truly happy with it and then place it somewhere you can see it on a daily basis to remind you of what's important.

You can use the following Life Tools techniques in order to help you stay aligned to your desired priorities:

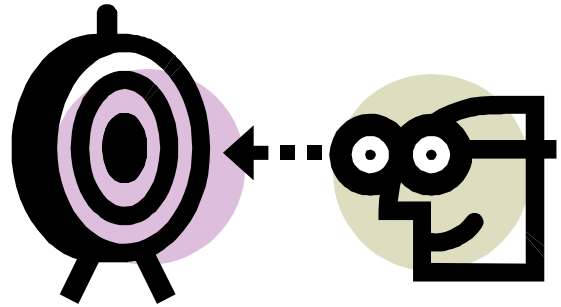
- **Define a Mission Statement** - Feed your priorities into a mission statement that describes what you would like to get out of your life. Your mission statement should highlight your priorities/values and lure you towards your future.
- **Goal Setting** - Set yourself some goals that will help you achieve success in the high priority areas you have identified.
- **Time Management** - Ensure that your desired set of priorities are factored into your weekly planning and that you are spending time on the stuff that counts.
- **Changing Behaviour** - Use this technique to change specific behaviours that are not aligned with your desired priority list.

Live your life with integrity and prioritise your time and energy onto the things that count. By doing this, you will find yourself feeling more fulfilled and confident that you are focusing on the right stuff.

Goal Setting

Clearly defined goals provide you with targets that contribute to fulfilling your mission. Goals can be categorised into four main groups:

- Personal
- Career/business
- Fun and adventure
- Contribution



To brainstorm a list of goals for a group simply take a blank piece of paper, select a group and then write down what you would like to achieve. Write non-stop for around five minutes. Don't be concerned about your limitations whilst you are brainstorming. Work on the assumption that you can achieve anything that anybody else can!

You can use the checklist below to refine your goals:

- ✓ Ensure that the goal is specific and understand how you will know when each goal has been achieved.
- ✓ Ensure that the goal is for you personally and not for someone else.
- ✓ Ensure that the goal has a deadline associated with it.
- ✓ Ensure that the goal fits with the others areas of your life.
- ✓ Ensure that the goal is inline with your values and mission.
- ✓ Make the goal positive. Make it something you want to achieve rather than something you want to escape from.
- ✓ List the compelling reasons why you must achieve your goal and what the consequences will be of not achieving it. This will help motivate you.
- ✓ State the goal in a way that you can achieve it without being dependent upon specific people.

To initiate and move forwards towards a goal:

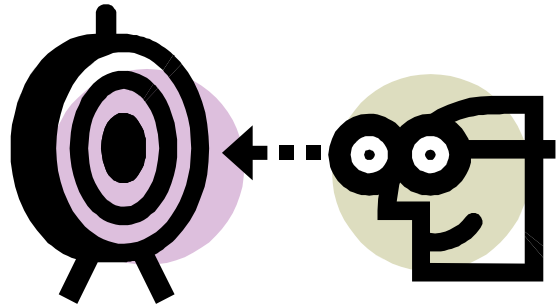
- ✓ Ensure that you are committed to the goal. Simply being interested will not be enough to achieve it.
- ✓ Ensure that you have something that you could start pretty much straight away to create some momentum.
- ✓ Find some place quiet and think carefully about how it would sound/look/feel to achieve your top goals from each group - taste the success! This will keep you motivated and give you clues on how to move forward. You should do this at least twice a week.
- ✓ Refer to the goal planning sheet to learn about how you can take each goal and develop a plan to achieve it.
- ✓ Review your goals during your weekly planning and insert related activities into your schedule.

You may want to include your goals in your planning tool for easy reference. Remember that results are not everything. You will enjoy the process of achieving the goal as you will be learning and personally developing as you go. The direction you are heading is as important as the results. **Progressing towards your goal helps you develop as a person and will take you to greater heights.**

Goal Planning

Once you have set your goals you need to develop realistic plans to help you achieve them. If you have not set your goals using the material in the toolkit then you are advised to refer to the Goal Setting technique before proceeding.

The steps required to achieve some goals will be quite straightforward, but others (especially those that seem more challenging) will require more planning and you may not know where to start!



You can use this technique to create a plan for a particular goal. Make sure that you are some place quiet as you go through the exercise. You may want to ask a friend to talk you through each point, which will allow you to concentrate on the details

You will get the best out of the exercise if you clear your mind beforehand, take your time and concentrate deeply on each point.

1. **Visualise the goal** - Think carefully about how it would sound/look/feel to achieve your goal. Picture it in full detail and enjoy your success. Listen to your own thoughts and sense the date and time.
2. **See the future** - Look even further forward into the future and see how your mission unfolds beyond this particular goal.
3. **See the past** - Now look behind you at the pathway from achieving your goal back to the present day. See yourself working on this goal planning exercise and notice that path from back there to where you are now.
4. **Walk along the pathway** - From the point of achieving the goal walk back in time along the pathway. Notice what you did along the way including the actions you took, the people you involved and the new skills you learnt. Notice the sequence in which the events took place.
5. **Return to the present** - Now return to the present with an appreciation of the steps you will need to take to achieve your goal. Finish the exercise by looking ahead at achieving your goal for a final time and taste the success.
6. **Write up your plan** - Now that you have identified the various activities that need to be completed to achieve your goal you should assign dates to each of them and write them down for future reference. You can optionally use a Force Field Analysis to understand the forces, which are supporting and working against your goal and prepare a plan of action around them.

The exercise above can be used for goals of any size or complexity and can be used many times for the same goal. Review your goals during your weekly planning and insert related activities into your schedule. **Remember that scheduling within your diary gives you the best chances of completing related activities that will help achieve your goals.**

Force Field Analysis

Once you have set goals it is worth understanding the forces that are supporting and blocking what you wish to achieve. Once you understand what these forces are you can work to strengthen those that are working for you and reduce those that are working against you. Forces that help you achieve your goals are known as "driving forces" and those that work against you are known as "restraining forces."



Follow the guidelines below to analyse the forces:

1. Note that you must start with a well defined goal, which you can produce using the goal setting technique.
2. At the top of a large sheet of paper write the goal or change to be implemented.
3. Divide the paper into two columns by drawing a line down the middle.
4. At the top of the left column, write "Driving Forces."
5. At the top of the right column, write "Restraining Forces."
6. Brainstorm a list of driving and restraining forces and record them on the chart in the appropriate column.
7. Once the driving and restraining forces have been identified, ask the following questions:
 - a. Are they valid?
 - b. How do you know?
 - c. How significant are each of them?
 - d. What is their strength?
 - e. Which ones can be altered?
 - f. Which cannot?
 - g. Which forces can be altered quickly?
 - h. Which ones only slowly?
 - i. Which forces, if altered, would produce rapid change?
 - j. Which only slow change in the situation?
 - k. What skills and/or information is needed and available to alter the forces?
 - l. Can we get them?
8. Assign a score to each force, from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). The score is based on (a) the strength of the force and (b) the degree to which it is possible to influence this force.
9. Calculate a total score for each of the two columns.
10. Decide if the goal is feasible. If so, devise a manageable course of action which:
 - a. Strengthens positive forces
 - b. Weakens negative forces
 - c. Creates new positive forces

Be sure to follow through on your actions by ensuring that they are factored into your weekly planning. You will find this technique very useful in many situations ranging from personal change to achieving objectives in a work environment.

Mind Mapping

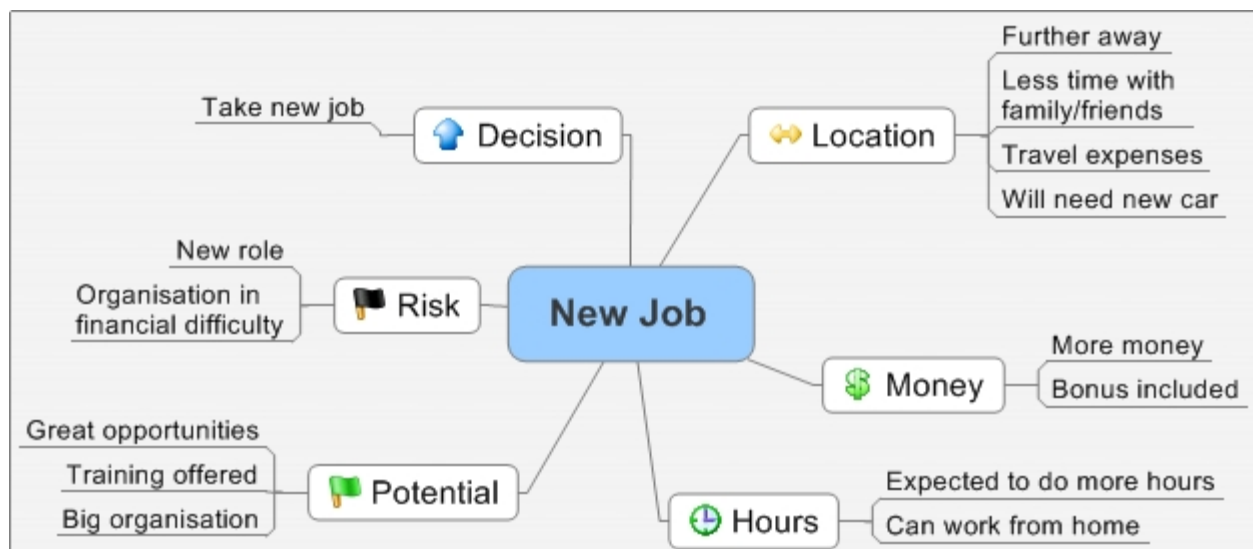
Mind Maps can be applied to most of life's situations that involve learning, thinking and decision making. Similarly to a road map, a Mind Map will:

1. Give you an overview of a large subject/area.
2. Enable you to plan routes/make choices and let you know where you are going and where you have been.
3. Gather and hold large amounts of data for you.
4. Encourage problem solving and decision making by showing you new creative pathways.
5. Enable you to be extremely efficient.
6. Be enjoyable to look at, read, muse over and remember.
7. Attract and hold your eye/brain.
8. Let you see the whole picture and the details at the same time.
9. Assist YOU!

You can mind map with software or on paper. To mind map on paper:

1. Turn a large A4 or preferably A3, white sheet of paper on it's side or use a Mind Map pad/software.
2. Gather a selection of coloured pens, ranging from fine nib to medium and highlighters.
3. Select the topic, problem or subject to be Mind Mapped.
4. Gather any materials or research or additional information.
5. Start in the centre with a title or unframed image.
6. Use expression and colours in the central image in order to attract attention and aid memory.
7. Make the branches closest to the centre thicker, attached to the image and 'wavy' (organic).
8. Place the Basic Ordering Ideas (BOIs) or the 'chapter heading' equivalents on the branches.
9. Branch thinner lines off the end of the appropriate BOIs to hold supporting data (most important closest).
10. Use images wherever possible.
11. The image or word should always sit on a line of the same length.
12. Use colours as your own special code to show people, topics, themes or dates.
13. Capture all ideas (your own or others'), then edit, re-organise, elaborate or clarify.

An example mind map is shown below (generated by Mindjet software) that shows how a mind map could be used to assist in making a decision on whether to take a new job.



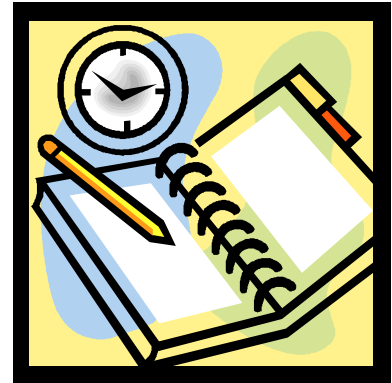
Planning Your Time

Scheduling your activities gives you visibility of what needs to be done and helps you tackle things in the right priority order. If you fail to schedule your activities then you may:

- Spend your time on activities that are unimportant.
- Fail to achieve things you have committed to.
- Take too much on and feel overloaded.

If you plan your time effectively then you will:

- Concentrate on the things that are of real importance to you.
- Be well placed to achieve your goals.
- Feel in more control of your life, have a clearer mind and relax without worrying about things you may have forgotten.



You will need a tool to plan your time with. Refer to the Time Planning Tools technique for advice on this.

To get the best out of your time you must **plan on a weekly basis**. Select a regular slot during each week where you are guaranteed 15-30 minutes quiet time and schedule this for weekly planning. It may seem like a burden to start with, but you will save more time than you invest and soon find the process simple and enjoyable. You will need to work through the following exercise during weekly planning:

1. If this is the first time you are carrying out weekly planning you will need to **identify the various roles in your life** and write them down. The list below provides some examples:

Husband	Mother	Charity Worker	Relative	Wife
Manager	Student	Friend	Sportsperson	Employee

2. **Select your weekly goals.** Think of two or three specific important results you feel you should accomplish in each role and write these down. These short term goals should tie in with your mission statement if you have one. Have a quick glance at the next couple of weeks in your diary so that you are aware of any key events you need to be prepared for such as a meeting or birthday.
3. **Schedule.** Look at the week ahead and schedule time to achieve your short term goals. Ensure that you actually book out the time. For example, if you would like to go out for a run three times during the week then you may choose to block out three one hour slots early each morning. Update your planning tool (diary, PC etc) with the activities.





It is very important to **be realistic** about the time you schedule. Be cautious of using language like "I will try to exercise during that time". If you are in doubt then you will need to go back and reschedule. Also, leave a little spare time for things that come up, which you have not anticipated otherwise you will feel frustrated when they prevent you getting other things done. If you schedule your time realistically it will set you up for success.

Take a few minutes each day to review your weekly schedule to put you in touch with the decisions you made as well as unanticipated things that may have come up. It is worth producing and a 'todo list' with your activities prioritised from A (very important) to E (unimportant). This will focus you on the important activities and help prevent you getting stressed by a large number of unimportant activities, which feel overwhelming.

Time Planning Tools

Planning your time provides visibility of what needs to be done and enables you to tackle things in the right priority order. An appropriate planning tool is a critical ingredient of effective time management. There are various tools available and some examples are provided below. You may choose a single tool to plan your time or use a combination of tools. As a minimum, your planning tool/s should meet the following criteria:

- It should provide sufficient space for you to clearly block out time for key activities.
- It should provide you with space to store your mission statement, roles and goals.
- It should be flexible enough to support your specific needs and style.
- It should be portable so that you can carry it with you most of the time.
- It should be quick and easy to use.
- It should be available within your budget.

Planning Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages
 <p>Low cost paper based diary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low cost ▪ Easy to carry with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many not contain sufficient space for diary entries or mission, roles and goals ▪ May need replacing each year ▪ Data not backed up
 <p>Paper based personal organiser</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive ▪ Flexible ▪ Easy to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May be expensive ▪ May be bulky ▪ Data not backed up
 <p>PC/Laptop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very flexible ▪ Data can be backed up onto disk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not portable ▪ Expensive ▪ May be difficult to use
 <p>Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flexible ▪ Data can be backed up onto PC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expensive ▪ May be difficult to use

Time Management Matrix

The Time Management Matrix helps us to identify whether we are spending our time on effective activities. It covers urgent things, which press upon us like a phone ringing and important things, which relate to getting results like planning for our goals. Our activities are always a combination of urgency and/or importance. We spend our time in one of four ways, which are highlighted in the Time Management Matrix below:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<u>Quadrant 1</u> Crises, pressing problems and deadlines <i>Leads to...</i> Stress, burnout, crisis management and fire fighting	<u>Quadrant 2</u> Prevention, exercising, relationship building, recognising new opportunities, planning and true recreation <i>Creates...</i> Vision, perspective, balance, discipline, control and less time in quadrant 1.
	<u>Quadrant 3</u> Interruptions, some calls, some mail, some reports, some meetings, proximate, pressing matters and popular activities <i>Leads to...</i> Short-term focus, crisis management, feeling victimised, out of control, shallow or broken relationships	<u>Quadrant 4</u> Trivia, busy work, some mail, some phone calls, time wasters, pleasant activities, escape activities <i>Leads to...</i> Total irresponsibility, fired from jobs, being extremely dependent upon others, an escape from quadrants 1 and 2
Not Important		

Activities inside quadrant 1 cover issues, which are both urgent and important and we all have these to deal with from time to time. Activities inside Quadrant 3 are urgent (pressing), but not important like reading junk mail that is poking through our letterbox. Activities inside quadrant 4 involve dealing with trivia such as browsing the Internet without any specific purpose. People who spend most of their time in quadrants 3 and 4 will tend to lead irresponsible lives.

In order to lead an effective and fulfilled life you must make every effort to work inside **Quadrant 2**, which deals with activities that are not urgent, but are important. Weekly planning and working to prevent crises are examples of quadrant 2 activities. If you can spend time working inside quadrant 2 you will find that the number of crises you have to deal with reduces and it will help you achieve your goals.

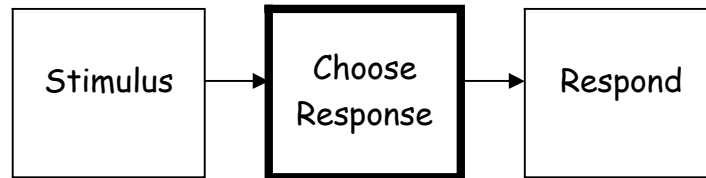
Get into the habit of regularly asking yourself which quadrant you are working within. If you find yourself in Quadrant 3 then you need to learn to say "no" to the things that are not important. If you find yourself in Quadrant 4 you could be trying to escape from something. You can find yourself in quadrants 3 and 4 because you are not clear about what you really want in life and what is important. If this is the case then you should consider defining your mission and goal setting.

You may choose to copy the time management matrix into your planning tool for easy reference. Remember, stay out of quadrants 3 and 4 and work within quadrant 2. This will reduce the time you need to spend in quadrant 1 and enable you to get you the results you deserve.

Responding Positively

Think about a time when you felt that something or someone caused you to react in a negative way. For example, you felt that a traffic jam caused frustration and stress. You may have experienced someone you care about being hurtful and responded by trying to hurt them in return. Logically, these are not positive ways of responding.

Many people feel that it is the stimulus (the traffic or the hurtful words in the previous examples) that control how you respond, but this is not the case. A stimulating event takes place, you choose how you would like to respond to it and then you respond. This is highlighted in the diagram below.



You have the freedom to choose your responses in all situations and there are plenty of examples to support this. Within a traffic jam you can guarantee that some people will be stressed and frustrated, but the more effective people will be looking out of their window appreciating the colour of the sky or relaxing to some music.

You have the freedom to choose your response!

People who fail to take control of the way they respond to situations often use language like "He made me feel terrible" or "This job is making me feel restricted". Many people blame external factors for the way they feel and are letting their environment control them.

We can even choose to respond positively to fearful situations. We cannot escape fear, but we can transform it into our companion. Read '[The Truths about Fear](#)' for more information on this.

If you respond positively on a regular basis it will result in you becoming more effective and in control. Being firmer about how you respond allows you to base your decisions on your values and principles, which will give you strength and integrity. This technique can be used in any situation from a personal conflict to a major crisis.

If you have not used this technique before you can try it out on something that provides a slight irritation. For example, you may get irritated when someone leaves the toilet seat up. Next time this happens choose not to let it bother you. Letting the small stuff bother you can distract you from tackling the bigger opportunities and issues. Once you have mastered this technique for small irritations you can then start using it to respond positively to bigger issues on a regular basis.

It is easy to choose to respond positively in many situations using this technique, but some situations are more challenging. If you cannot respond positively in a challenging situation then you should refer to the Changing Behaviour technique, which can be used for anything from problems in business to being stuck in a pattern of yelling at your children!

By analysing situations where you respond inappropriately you learn useful things about yourself, your environment and those around you. It helps you understand reasons for your own behaviour and that of others.

Being able to choose your response in any situation is a gift that we all have, which builds our strength and confidence. Make sure that you take advantage of it.

Changing Behaviour

The technique below provides a simple yet powerful technique to change your behaviour. It can be used for anything from challenges in relationships, problems in business to being stuck in a pattern of yelling at your children!

If you are not happy with the way that you behave then change it! You have all resources inside you to change. You do not have to settle for behaving in a way that is unproductive or disappointing.

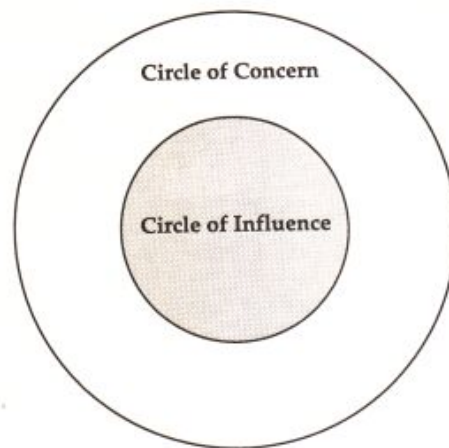
If you have identified a part of your behaviour that you would like to change you can formulate a technique to get the desired results by following the six steps below:



1. **Decide what you really want and what's preventing you having it now.** Ensure the new behaviour is what you would like to move towards rather than something you would like to move away from. For example, "I want to eat healthy food" rather than "I want to stop eating junk food". Also identify the things preventing you from getting what you want. For example, ask yourself "What is preventing me from eating healthy food?"
2. **Get leverage: associate massive pleasure to the experience of changing now and massive pain to not changing now.** Train your mind to link masses of pleasure to making the change and masses of pain to not making the change. This will ensure that you are well motivated. For example, link a great looking body and stacks more energy to eating healthy link a fat body and lethargic attitude to eating junk food.
3. **Interrupt the limiting pattern.** Identify key moments where you need to adjust your behaviour to make this new change and find a way of interrupting your old behaviour. For example, if you are peckish you will need to reach for the fruit bowl rather than a packet of crisps! Find a way of interrupting your behaviour when you are tempted to take the wrong path. You must make this interruption as significant or crazy as you can. For example, if you find yourself reaching for some junk food you could yell "Junk food is making me fat" and run out of the kitchen.
4. **Create a new empowering alternative.** Replace any limiting patterns or behaviours with empowering alternatives rather than letting yourself suffer. For example, if you want to change to a healthy diet you could identify healthier and tasty snacks that replace items like chocolate and crisps.
5. **Condition the new pattern until it is consistent.** Give yourself a pat on the back or a little reward when you behave in the desired way and this will reinforce the behaviour. If you continue to reinforce the behaviour it will eventually become second nature.
6. **Test it.** Now imagine some of the events that would require you to behave in the desired way and imagine yourself applying your new techniques. If you can visualise the new behaviour then you are all set to start using the technique. If you cannot visualise the new behaviour then go back to the first step and work through the exercise again. Also, make sure that your behaviour changes are ecological i.e. they are compatible with other important areas of your life.

Circle of Concern, Circle of Influence

It is helpful to consider how we focus our time and energy in order to make us effective and manage stress. We each have a wide range of concerns - our health, our family, problems at work etc., and it is these things that make up our 'Circle of Concern'. As we look at the things within our Circle of Concern, it becomes apparent that there are some things over which we have no real control and others that we can do something about. We can group the things we can do something about within a 'Circle of Influence'. The two circles are shown below:



Think about times when you have focused your efforts inside your Circle of Concern. A common example is when people are allowing themselves to get frustrated at their place of work and focus their energies on blaming others and complaining - this doesn't help. It would be better to apply the focus on our circle of influence working on things that can help make the job better or even considering an alternative job.

Effective people focus their efforts in their Circle of Influence and do not get stressed or waste time on the things within their Circle of Concern. They work on the things they can do something about and the nature of their energy is positive and enlarging. There are things (like the weather) that our Circle of Influence will never include. We can't change the weather, but we can create and carry our own physical or social weather with us. We must accept the things that at the present we can't control and focus our efforts on the things that we can.

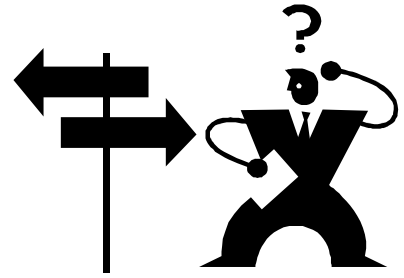
The Circle of Influence grows and shrinks. The more you work within your Circle of Influence the larger it will become and you will become more effective as a result. The opposite is also true. Focusing on your Circle of Concern can shrink your Circle of Influence and therefore your ability to change things for the better.

Some people get extremely anxious and stressed focusing their energies within their Circle of Concern. This is due to the frustration caused by worrying about things that you cannot change over a sustained period of time. In fact, the situation can get quite desperate in some cases leading to mental illness.

You can test this technique by working only in your circle of influence for thirty days. For the next thirty days concentrate on the things that you can do something about and refuse to worry about the things that you can't. If you have been used to spending time in your Circle of Concern in the past you will be amazed at how much more you will achieve and how you feel less anxious and stressed about the things that you can't change.

Making No Lose Decisions

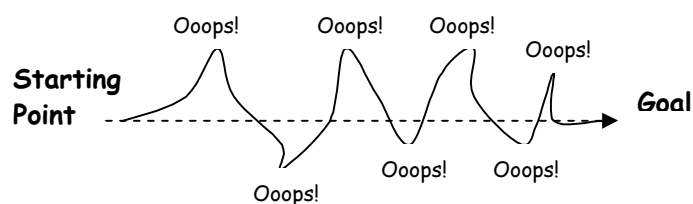
Making a decision is a very powerful and positive thing to do and we must make decisions in order to change and move forward in life. People often fear making decisions and this technique removes that fear. It is a simple approach, which results in a 'no lose decision' every time.



1. **Focus immediately on the fact that you cannot lose by making a decision.** Say to yourself, "I cannot lose, regardless of the outcome. I will learn and grow whichever path I take". Push out any thoughts about what you can lose and focus on what can be gained.
2. **Do your homework.** Talk to as many people about your decision as will listen to you and support your learning and growing. You will find that these types of people will be keen to help. You must not talk to negative people that will constantly put down opportunities that are open to you.
3. **Establish your priorities.** Ensure that the decision you are making is aligned with what you want out of your life.
4. **Trust your impulses.** Your subconscious mind sends messages as to which choice is best and you will be surprised at the good advice it provides. Sometimes it may be the opposite of what others are telling you and you must not be afraid to trust it.
5. **Lighten up.** We live in a world where most people take themselves and their decisions very seriously. Don't take yourself too seriously. Whatever happens as a result of your decision, you'll handle it! **You can handle anything that comes your way.**

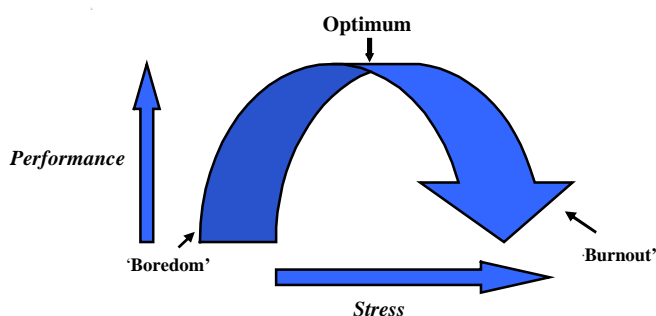
After you have made your no lose decision you should then follow the steps below:

1. **Throw away your picture.** When you make the decision you will have a picture in your mind of what is likely to happen and this is a useful tool, but once the decision has been made you should let it go. You cannot control the future and if the picture does not come through you will be disappointed. You should focus on enjoying whatever the decision brings you, which may be wonderful in a totally different way that you imagined.
2. **Accept total responsibility.** Do not blame anyone if things go wrong as a result of the decision. This will make you less angry with the world and less angry with yourself. See the technique titled 'Taking Responsibility and Reclaiming Your Power' for more detail.
3. **Don't protect, correct.** Once you've made the decision you must commit yourself to it and give it all you've got. However, if it doesn't work then change it and make another decision. You will see from the diagram below that you often need to make corrections to achieve your goals.



Understanding Stress

Stress is the body's reaction to stimulation. Anything out of the ordinary can cause stress and small amounts can feel good and contribute towards your wellbeing. For example, you may feel small amounts of stress whilst you are enjoying watching a football match or playing sport. If you didn't have a little stress in your life you probably wouldn't even bother getting out of bed! However, too much stress is counterproductive to the extent where it can seriously damage your physical and mental health.



The graph on the left shows the relationship between stress and performance. You would be bored with no stress at all in your life, but lots of stress will lower your effectiveness to the point of burnout. Burnout is complete physical and emotional exhaustion as a result of prolonged stress or frustration and can lead to a nervous breakdown and mental illness.

There is an optimum level of stress marked in the centre of the graph, which will maximise your performance. If you can effectively manage your personal stress levels you will avoid burnout and optimise your performance. All sorts of things can trigger stress from big things like a divorce to small irritating things like being stuck in a traffic jam.

The list below provides a few of the symptoms that you may experience as a result of adrenaline, which is caused by short term stress:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ▪ Sweating | ▪ Nervousness, anxiety |
| ▪ Extreme coldness | ▪ Irritability, impatience |
| ▪ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea | ▪ Frustration |
| ▪ Muscle tension | ▪ Panic |
| ▪ Dry mouth | ▪ Hostility, aggression |
| ▪ Confusion | ▪ Racing heartbeat |

Longer term effects of stress are harder to correct and can include:

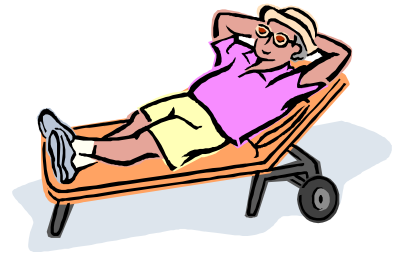
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Depression | ▪ Loss of interest in social activities |
| ▪ Loss or increase in appetite | ▪ Increased addictive behaviour |
| ▪ Frequent minor illnesses | ▪ Chronic headaches, stomach ache, backache |
| ▪ Increased aches and pains | ▪ Acne |
| ▪ Sexual problems | ▪ Impaired immune system |
| ▪ Fatigue | ▪ Increased sensitivity to pain |

The best way to manage excessive stress is to prevent it. You should familiarise yourself with some Stress Busting Techniques so that you can counter the causes of stress and bolster your defences.

Important note: You should take the advice of suitably qualified health professionals if you have any concerns over stress-related illnesses or if stress is causing significant or persistent unhappiness.

Stress Busting Techniques

Anything out of the ordinary can cause stress and small amounts can feel good and contribute towards your wellbeing. However, too much stress is counterproductive to the extent where it can seriously damage your physical and mental health. Once you have an understanding of stress you should prepare yourself some Stress Busting Techniques so that you can counter the causes of stress and bolster your defences. You may choose to use some of the techniques below and you can identify some additional techniques of your own.



- Time Management - Poor time management is a major cause of stress. Managing your time effectively will reduce stress and increase your productivity.
- Dealing with Anger - When you are stressed, anger can soon follow, which is usually inappropriate. It can have negative consequences and lead to even more stress.
- Meditation - This helps you relax and build your defences against stressful situations. If you practise meditation regularly (even ten minute per day) it will bring about mental and emotional calm.
- Relaxation - If you don't get along with meditation you can try some relaxation techniques. Find a quiet room and turn the lights down low. You can listen to some gentle music or some relaxation guiding CDs.
- Assertiveness - Feeling in control helps prevent you from getting stressed. Assertiveness is about standing up for your rights without infringing anyone else's.
- Counselling - If you are suffering from a defined problem such as anger or bereavement you could ask your GP about being referred to a counsellor.
- Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis - This type of therapy can offer practical help for specific problems or examine your unconscious mind for causes of problems and emotions.
- Sort out your finances - Money worries are one of the most common causes of stress. Sorting your finances will greatly reduce your stress level if this is an issue for you.
- Massage - This is one of the oldest stress busting techniques and can relieve muscle tension and promote a sense of well being and relaxation.
- Exercise - Exercise is an excellent stress reducer. It releases chemicals into your blood stream, which specifically counteract the effect of stress hormones.
- Music - Soothing music can be used to relax you and improve your mood. Also, listening to your favourite music can also be a great way of uplifting your spirits.
- Focus on your circle of influence - Focus on the things you can influence/change and not those that you can't. If you focus on the latter then you are likely to get frustrated and stressed about things you can do nothing about - pointless.

Important note: You should take the advice of suitably qualified health professionals if you have any concerns over stress-related illnesses or if stress is causing significant or persistent unhappiness.

Meditation

Our lives are demanding and packed with various challenges that provide lots of mental stimulation. We can only tolerate so much and meditating is a great way of escaping from our daily pressures. It is about making a conscious decision to relax and clear your mind. Meditation is practised within many religions and can also be practised with no religious intent at all.

Scientists report that meditation has a positive effect on the body given that it can reduce stress and help with pain caused by various illnesses. It has also been reported that meditation enables the area of the brain associated with happiness to be more persistent and that experienced meditators don't get as flustered, shocked or surprised by unpredictable events.



The practise of meditation is extremely flexible and there are numerous ways of meditating (the Internet provides a wealth of ideas and techniques). Ideally, you should meditate on a daily basis, but this is flexible. The length of time that you meditate for is also flexible and can range from a few seconds to several hours.

You can meditate in any posture where your spine is kept straight. This can include sitting cross legged or sitting upright in a chair. People react differently to meditation at different times. Sometimes meditation can feel quite bland and non eventful. Other times you may find yourself weeping or smiling and you don't know why. This normal phenomenon is your mind expressing emotions and contentment.

Try meditating ten minutes per day for one week and experience the difference it will make. You've got nothing to lose and can use the simple technique below to get started:

1. Firstly, relax and don't worry about meditating perfectly. It takes time to get it right so do not try to force anything to happen or over analyse the process.
2. Find somewhere quiet and comfortable and sit on down with you arms relaxed and comfortable and your spine straight.
3. Remove any potential disturbances/noises if possible, but do not be concerned if something makes a sound that you cannot control while you meditate.
4. Now use one of the popular methods of meditation by either focusing on a single object like a candle or closing your eyes and just focusing on your breathing for ten minutes.
5. Thoughts will enter your head, but do not let them distract or irritate you. Gently push them out of your mind. As you become more competent you will find it easier to keep your mind clear and separate it from the hustle and bustle of day-to-day life.

Switching Off From Work

It can be a real struggle to switch off from work. You may experience this problem for a number of different reasons and the consequences can be quite severe on your general well being and other areas of your life.

You can use the exercise below to get a handle on why you cannot switch off and prepare an action plan to tackle it.



1. **Understand why you cannot switch off.** Make a list of around five reasons why you feel you cannot switch off from work. Some examples are:
 - You are not coping with your workload.
 - You are worrying about a deadline.
 - You have an issue with somebody at work.
 - You are being the victim of bullying or harassment.
 - You are not capable of doing your job.
2. **Understand why you should switch off.** Think about the negative consequences of not switching off and write them down. These could include feeling anxious, relationships outside of work suffering or a lack of concentration in non-work areas of your life. Now convert the negative consequences into positive consequences and then write them down in a list. For example, you could convert "I am unable to give the children my undivided attention" to "I will be able to give the children my full attention and be a better parent".
3. **Prioritise reasons for not switching off.** Return to your list of reasons for not switching off and prioritise them placing the biggest reason at the top.
4. **Find solutions.** Starting from the top of the list think of ways you can remove the reason for not switching off or minimise the effect it is having on you. For example, you could reschedule your tasks to ensure that you are concentrating on the most important issues. If you are struggling to find a solution to a particular issue then you may wish to identify somebody you know who can help.
5. **Prepare an action plan.** Now make a prioritised list of actions to help you switch off from work. Each action must be clear and have a deadline associated with it. You could use the Goal Setting technique to set yourself some related goals.
6. **Schedule a regular review.** Schedule a few minutes each week to review how your action plan is helping you to switch off from work. It is important to monitor the progress you are making and refine your plan if necessary.

Other related Life Tools technique categories, which may help you to switch off from work:

- Mission and Goals
- Time Management
- Stress Management
- Relationships
- Behaviour & Attitude
- Managing Fear

Understanding and Managing Depression

Everyone feels a little low sometimes, but for some people it's much more serious paralysing their ability to get on with their life. Some of the symptoms of depression are listed below. Note that it is very rare for all of them to occur in one person.

- Variation of moods.
- Disturbed sleep.
- Slowing down of thought, speech and movement.
- Anxiety.
- Tearfulness for no reason.
- Short temper.
- Lack of energy and constant exhaustion.
- Inability to enjoy things.
- Lack of concentration.
- Difficulty making decisions.
- Feeling that you're forgetful.
- Negative thoughts about the future.
- Feelings of guilt.
- Loss of identity.
- Blaming self and low self-esteem.
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- Unrealistic sense of failure.
- Loneliness, even when around others.
- Becoming preoccupied with illness.
- Loss of appetite and resulting loss of weight.
- Reduced desire for sex.

Depression is not black and white. There's a progression from feeling blue to the full clinical illness and even then, you won't suffer from every symptom. It's also important to remember that depression is treatable and, if you take the right steps, avoidable. 7 to 12 per cent of men suffer from diagnosable depression, and 20 to 25 per cent of women.

Managing depression

The starting point for managing depression is to help you learn to spot an episode of depression before it's too late. By using a thought monitoring technique (such as the one provided by the BBC Health Web Site), you can decide which thoughts represent an accurate picture of what's going on around you - and which are unrealistic and created by your mood beginning to fall.

Those closest to you will often be able to recognise the early signs. Talking to them about this problem is probably one of the most valuable ways to deal with it. The kind of tasks you could do with your relative or friend includes: stress auditing, thought and mood inventories, and talking about any incident that's given the family member or friend cause for concern.

There is plenty of support available including the Samaritans, Depression Alliance and support groups run by the national mental health charity MIND. The first person to talk to about this is your family doctor, who may have a practice counsellor who you could talk to. There are a number of therapy options and antidepressants that could be prescribed.

Practical things you can do to help yourself

- Notice 'thinking errors'. Are you overgeneralising? For example, do you imagine every pain is a deadly disease? Do you tell yourself everything is going wrong when only one thing has gone wrong? Do you forget about the good things in life and concentrate on the bad?
- Balance frightening thoughts with reassuring statements.
- Occupy your mind. Concentrating on something can lift your mood.
- Exercise. Physical activity relaxes you and makes you feel good.
- Pay attention to the way you look. Eat a regular diet of wholefoods. Vitamin B6 supplements are helpful too.
- Try a herbal antidepressant.
- Avoid alcohol. It's a depressant, even if it makes you feel temporarily better.
- Investigate alternative and complementary therapies.

If your low mood or loss of interest in life interferes with your home, family or work, lasts for two weeks or more, or brings you to the point of thinking about suicide, you may be experiencing clinical depression and you should seek help. There are many kinds of help available. Talk to your GP or contact a mental health organisation.

Taking Responsibility & Reclaiming Your Power

Are you a "victim", or are you taking responsibility for your life? Victims use language like "it was my husband's fault that the last twenty-five years of my life have been so miserable" or "it is my manager's fault that this job is so lousy". Most of us do not understand what taking control of our life really means. Whenever you are not taking responsibility, you put yourself in a position of pain and decrease your ability to handle [fear](#) in your life. You can control how you react to situations and choose to [respond positively](#).

The list below provides seven ways to take responsibility of your life and reclaim your power:

1. **Never blame anyone else for anything you are being, doing, having or feeling.** Until you fully understand that you and nobody else controls what is going on inside your head, you will never be in control of your life. When you blame an outside force for any of your experiences you are literally giving away power and thus creating pain, paralysis and depression.
2. **Avoid blaming yourself for not being in control.** It is important that you understand that you have always done the best you possibly could, given the person you were at any particular time. There is absolutely no reason to be upset with your past, present or future behaviour. It is all part of the learning process and you must be patient with yourself.
3. **Be aware of when and where you are not taking responsibility for your life.** Learn the clues that tell you that you are not being responsible for what you are being, having, doing or feeling. This happens when you are playing the "victim" role and you are empowering others or the environment to control how you feel. If you having negative feelings such as anger, upset, blame, envy, helplessness etc you must determine what you are not doing in your life that is causing the telltale sign. You will be surprised how easy it is to locate where you are not taking responsibility.
4. **Familiarise yourself with your biggest enemy - your Chatterbox.** The chatterbox is the little voice inside, which holds the key to all your fears. We are so use to its presence that we often don't know it is talking to us. Commit yourself with replacing it with a positive and loving voice. You will find that you will enjoy being alone more once you get rid of the negativity the chatterbox brings.
5. **Figure out the "payoffs" that keep you "stuck".** Payoffs explain why we perpetuate what we don't want in our lives. For example, you may feel stuck in your job and the payoff could be that it is easy and comfortable. Once you find the payoffs, you will quickly be able to become "unstuck" if you are prepared to change. If you sit down with a pen and a piece of paper you will usually list them easily for a given situation and if you can't find them you can always ask a friend for help.
6. **Determine what you want in life and act on it.** Stop waiting for someone to give you what you want because you'll be waiting a long time. Produce a [mission statement](#), [set your goals](#) and [plan](#) for them.
7. **Be aware of the many choices you have** - in both actions and feelings - in any situation that comes your way. Choose the path that contributes to your growth and makes you feel at peace with yourself and others. Choose to [respond positively](#).

The Truths about Fear

Fear is a fact of life. We cannot escape from it, but we can transform it into our companion. We can break fear down into three levels:

Level 1 Fears (Specific) - Specific fears include those that just happen such as ageing or becoming disabled. They also include things that require action such as being interviewed or driving.

Level 2 Fears (States of Mind) - These fears are to do with your state of mind rather than how you respond to external situations. They reflect your sense of self and ability to handle things. Examples include rejections, success, failure, being vulnerable and loss of image.

Level 3 Fear (I Can't Handle It) - At the bottom of every fear is a fear that you cannot handle what life may bring you.

The secret to managing fear is to trust in your ability to handle whatever comes your way. Trust yourself and say **"whatever happens to me, given any situation, I can handle it"**.

The five truths to fear are listed below. If you understand them you will use fear as a companion rather than an enemy:

Truth 1 - Fear will never go away, as long you continue to grow - As long as you are pushing out into the world, stretching your capabilities and taking risks you will feel fear. Fear is natural as you grow so make a point of developing a good relationship with it.

Truth 2 - The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out ... and do it - If you confront situations your fear of them will be dissolved. Feel the fear and do it anyway.

Truth 3 - The only way to feel better about yourself is to go out and do it - By doing something to remove fear you also get the added bonus of boosting your self confidence.

Truth 4 - Not only are you going to experience fear whenever you are on unfamiliar territory, but so is everyone else - Everybody feels fear including those who you may envy because they do not seem afraid to move ahead with their lives. Feel the fear, you are in good company!

Truth 5 - Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness - The point here is that it is better to push through a particular fear rather than to live with it. For example, if you are fearful of aeroplanes you are better to get on one and take a holiday abroad rather than sit at home feeling helpless about not travelling.

A first step in retraining your thinking is to say the fear truths at least ten times a day for the next month. Once they are part of your way of thinking you will be able to use your knowledge of them to your advantage and to [respond positively](#) to fearful situations. So remember - feel the fear and do it anyway!

Neutralising Bad Experiences

The sensations that you link to some memories and experiences can be upsetting and counterproductive. For example, if your boss yells at you, and you mentally rerun that experience for the rest of the day, picturing him or her yelling at you over and over again, then you'll feel progressively worse. If you don't change how you feel about the situation you will continue be upset and negative.



The good news is that these situations do not need to upset you and the sensations you feel when you think about them can be scrambled using the simple technique below. The technique is very flexible and can be used on things that have been bothering on the same day to things that have been bothering you for many years. If you follow the steps carefully it will work in most cases, even where a trauma has been involved.

1. **See the situation in your mind that is bothering you** - Picture it as a movie. Don't feel upset about it, just watch it once.
2. **Take the same experience and turn it into a cartoon**
 - Sit up in your chair with a big silly grin on your face and run the image backward as fast as you can so that you can see everything happening in reverse.
 - If somebody said something, watch them swallow their words! Let the movie run back in very fast motion and then forward again in even faster motion.
 - Now change the colours of the images so that everybody's faces are rainbow-coloured.
 - If there is someone in particular who upsets you, cause their ears to grow very large like Mickey Mouse's and their nose to grow like Pinocchio's.
 - Do this at least a dozen times and create some music in your mind as you do it. The faster you run the movie and more humorous you make it the better.
3. **Now think about the situation that was bothering you and notice how you feel now.** If you have followed the previous two steps effectively, you will find it impossible to get back to the negative feelings.

If you have tried this technique you are likely to be impressed at the results and may be intrigued about how it works. It works because all our feelings are based on the images we focus on in our minds and the sounds and sensations we link to them. As we change the images and sounds, we change how we feel. Conditioning them again and again makes it difficult to get back into the old pattern.

Important note: You should take the advice of suitably qualified health professionals if you have any concerns over stress-related illnesses or if stress is causing significant or persistent unhappiness.

Working Out Your Personal Budget

If you are living on a low income, budgeting is necessary to enable you to manage your money. Working out a personal budget is important because it helps you work out how much money is coming in and what you are spending. It is an essential tool to avoiding debt or tackling debt problems.



Use the sheet below to work out your personal budget. You can either work out the budget for yourself or your family/household. Remember to fill in either weekly or monthly figures on your budget sheet - whichever suits you best - don't mix the two. Select the categories of income and outgoings that are applicable to you. There is room to add other categories if you need to.

Money Coming In	Income
Wages/salary	
Wages/salary (partner)	
Job seeker's allowance	
Income support/pension credit	
Tax credit	
Retirement/works pension	
Child benefit	
Incapacity benefit	
Maintenance	
Non-dependants contributions	
Student loan	
Parental/family support	
Grant/bursary	
Benefits	
Sponsorship	
Other 1	
Other 2	
Other 3	
Total Income	

Money Going Out	Outgoings
Mortgage / Rent	
Second mortgage	
Council tax	
Water rates	
Buildings/contents insurance	
Life insurance/pension	
Gas	
Electricity	
Other fuel	
Housekeeping	
TV rental/license	
Fines	
Vehicle expenses	
Other travelling expenses	
School/work meals	
Clothing	
Laundry	
Telephone/mobile phone	
Prescriptions/health costs	
Childminding	
Savings contribution	
Other 1	
Other 2	
Other 3	
Total Outgoings	

If your outgoings are more than your income you should:

1. Check whether you are entitled to extra benefits such as job seeker's allowance, income support, pension credit, working tax credit, child tax credit or housing benefit/council tax benefit. Ask at your local Works & Pensions office, council or local advice centre.
2. Check that you are spreading out payments on your household bills so that you don't have to pay them all at once.
3. See if you can cut down on any of your outgoings, but try not to cut down on basics like food, gas and electricity.

Managing Debt

Life can feel like an utter mess with no easy way out if you are in debt and cannot pay your bills. The sooner you face the problem, the easier it will be to solve and the action plan below will help you to move forward:



1. **Work out how much you owe** - List all arrears payments, loans and credit commitments and when they are due. Prioritise the list for debts you must deal with first including rent/mortgage, council tax and fuel debts.
2. **Work out your incomings and outgoings** - Use a personal budget sheet (see related Life Tools technique) to check how much money you have coming in and going out. The difference between the two (assuming it is positive) will represent your disposable income that you can offer creditors.
3. **Ensure that you are receiving all the income you are entitled to** - Check to ensure you are not paying too much tax with your local tax office. Check with your Benefits Agency office, Citizen's Advice Bureau or independent advice centre to see if you are entitled to additional benefits.
4. **Try and make extra savings** - If there is nothing left over to pay creditors then divide up your essential outgoings from other expenses like clothes, alcohol, cigarettes and eating out. You will have to make sacrifices. Can you get an extra part time job for a while or sell anything to pay your debts? Do not sell anything on which you owe money.
5. **Talk to your creditors** - Deal with priority debts first.
 - Send your creditors your personal budget sheet.
 - Explain your offer to pay off your debt and show that it is fair given the amount you have to live on.
 - Don't make an offer you cannot afford. A small, but regular payment is better than no payment at all.
 - Check to see whether you have payment protection insurance on your debts.
 - Ask your creditors if they can stop charging you interest on the loans/credit cars for a short while.
 - Be persistent with the people you are talking to and do not be afraid to go higher up if the person you first talk to is unhelpful.
 - Keep copies of all letters and their replies and make notes of all phone calls including the names of the people you speak with.
 - If you reach an agreement by phone follow it up with a letter stating what has been agreed.

Other General Advice

- Loans advertised that pay off existing debts can be very expensive and you could lose your house if you put it forward for security. Get independent advice and think carefully before accepting such loans.
- It is illegal for creditors to harass you, for example, by phoning you late at night or frequently at home or work. If this is happening then tell the police or your local trading standards department.
- If you are called to court do not ignore the court papers. Fill in the forms, return them and seek advice. You may be entitled to free legal aid. You will be treated fairly in court and can only be sent to prison for non payment of certain debts such as tax and maintenance and then only if you have the means to pay but choose not to.
- If you cannot tackle your debt problem by yourself then get free advice from a money advice centre or the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Finding a Partner

If you are looking to find a partner it is critical to understand what you must have and must not have within a future relationship. This should be determined up front to help you select the right partner and avoid problems further down the track. People will often enter into a passionate relationship with a person that they think is their ideal partner only to find at a later stage that their natures are incompatible.

To understand what you must have and must not have within a relationship step through the following process:

1. Get a pen and piece of paper and spend at least five minutes describing your partner from heaven. Try and cover as many aspects and points that you can think of (e.g. physical, spiritual, emotional etc).
2. Your list may be quite long and you may not be able to find someone that meets every point. Mark an asterisk (*) beside each point that is an absolute must and don't mark the things that you can live without.
3. Take five minutes to describe your partner from hell. List the things that you cannot stand.
4. The list of things you cannot stand may be quite long and you may not be able to find someone that doesn't exhibit some of these points. Mark an asterisk beside each point that would definitely prevent you from being their partner. Don't mark the things that you can tolerate.

The next step is to prepare an action plan to maximise your chances of meeting a partner. If you don't take some specific action the chances of meeting your partner will be significantly reduced. Take the following steps to brainstorm ideas to feed into your plan:

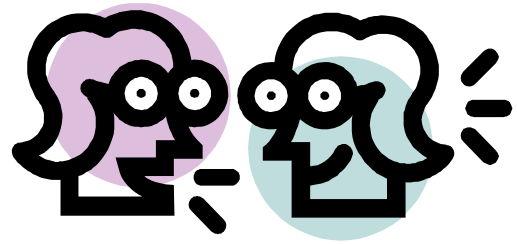
1. Take fifteen minutes to identify all the things that you could do to attract people with the qualities you listed earlier. For example, if you would like to attract somebody who is well dressed then you may choose to be well dressed yourself or show an interest in fashion. Think about what your ideal partner would expect from you in order to find you attractive.
2. Now identify appropriate places and social situations where you are likely to meet a partner with the qualities you listed earlier. These need to be places where you are likely to find people who will understand your values and goals. If you regularly place yourself in the right environment the chances of meeting a partner will increase one hundred fold.
3. A good relationship with yourself will increase your chances significantly as you do not want to go into a relationship feeling emotionally empty and unattractive. Identify your personal characteristics, which you love and think about what you can do on a regular basis to connect with yourself. For example, you could remind yourself on a daily basis that you are proud of who you are and what you believe in.
4. Identify who you can work with to help meet your a partner. Think about opportunities that could exist through your existing network of friends or even a dating agency.

If you have followed the steps above you will be armed with powerful information enabling you to prepare an action plan to move forward. The 'Goal Setting' and 'Goal Planning' techniques will help with this. If your action plan involves changing your behaviour then you could refer to the 'Changing Behaviour' technique for support. Fold your relationship desires into your mission statement and refer to the technique titled 'The Truths About Fear' if you are worried or anxious about executing your plan.

Your quality of life is related to the kinds of relationships that you create and nurture. Take responsibility for finding a partner and magnifying your experience of life.

Getting Your Message Across

The greatest single stumbling block to getting a message across to somebody is the one-sided nature of speaking. Most of us think of "communicating" as a one-way process. We concentrate on what to say and how to say it and often forget that at the other end of the conversation is somebody with their own objectives and concerns, which may not coincide with ours.



Two monologues do not make a dialogue. A good exchange between two people is the key to effective communication. So listening to and understanding others are active pursuits for selling your own ideas and getting your message through. Unless both parties are involved in the exchange you may as well be delivering your message to a mirror.

Why would somebody else spontaneously be interested in your message? There are three basic factors that make people listen. Understanding these will start you on the road to a realistic appraisal on what to say and how to say it.

1. **Self Interest** - The best way to get people to listen to you is to discover and present what is in it for them. It is to let them know that you understand their self-interest by focusing on their point of view at the start, before you tell them about yours. Focus on listening to the other person with a real desire to understand them before getting your message across.
2. **Who's Speaking** - Certain basic personal qualities immediately capture us and make us want to listen to other people's messages. The table below provides some positive and negative qualities, which will influence how your message is received:

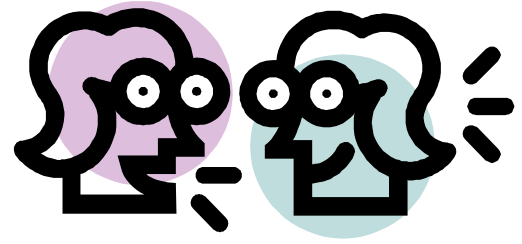
Positive Qualities	Negative Qualities
Warm, friendly, honest and open	Formal and stuffy
Exciting, creating and interesting	Closed and false
Knowledgeable and/or confident	Pompous and/or patronising
Organised	Monotonous and/or lethargic
Authentic	Vague, complex or irrelevant
Inspiring	Unsure, nervous or tense

3. **How You Say It** - Adjust your communication style for the recipient by using the same tone of voice and tempo, which will increase your chances of being understood.

If you need someone to learn about an idea or concept you will run into problems if their existing beliefs are challenged. People will often feel threatened, intimidated, competitive or on unfamiliar ground. The safest way to overcome these obstacles is to discuss the new information by beginning with what they already understand and then adding the new concepts one by one until you have presented the whole idea.

Giving Constructive Feedback

Feedback is a way of learning more about us and the effect our behaviour has on others. Constructive feedback increases self awareness, offers options and encourages development, so it is important to learn to both give it and receive it. Constructive feedback can be positive or negative. Given skilfully, it can be very important and useful. Destructive feedback means that which is given in an unskilled way, which leaves the recipient simply feeling bad.

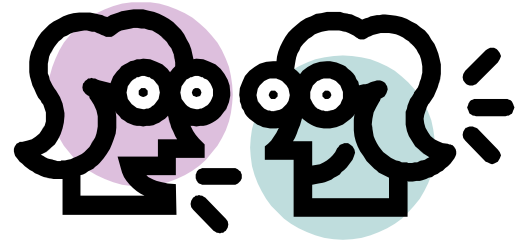


In order to give constructive feedback:

1. **Start with the positive** - Most people need encouragement so start by telling them what you like about them or what they have done well. E.g. "I really like how well you listened to Jim, however on that occasion I did feel you made an assumption about him without checking it out."
2. **Be specific** - Try to avoid general comments such as "you were great." Pinpoint what the person did which led you to label them as "great" e.g. "The way you calmed the other person down really helped". Specific feedback gives more opportunity for learning.
3. **Refer to behaviour that can be changed** - Give the person something to work on. E.g. "It would help if you smiled more or looked at others when you speak."
4. **Offer alternatives** - If you do offer negative feedback then do not simply criticise, but suggest what the person could have done differently. Turn the negative into a positive suggestion. E.g. "The fact that you remained seated when Anne came in seemed unwelcoming. I think that if you had walked over and greeted her it would have helped to put her at ease."
5. **Be descriptive rather than evaluative** - Tell the person what you saw or heard and the effect it had on you, rather than merely something was "good, bad, etc." E.g. "Your tone of voice as you said that really made me feel that you were concerned" is likely to be more useful than "That was good."
6. **Own the feedback** - It can be easy to say to the other person "You are...", suggesting that you are offering a universally agreed opinion about that person. In fact, all we are entitled to give is our own experience of that person at a particular time. It is important that we take responsibility for the feedback we offer. Beginning the feedback with "I" or "in my opinion", is a way of avoiding the impression of being the giver of "cosmic judgements" about the other person.
7. **Leave the recipient with a choice** - Feedback, which demands change or is imposed heavily on the other person, may invite resistance. It does not involve telling somebody how he or she must be to suit us. Skilled feedback offers people information about themselves in a way, which leaves them feeling like they have a choice about whether to act on it, or not. It can help to examine the consequences of any decision to change or not to change, but does not involve prescribing change.
8. **Think what it says about you** - Feedback is likely to say as much about the giver as the receiver. It will say a good deal about our values and what we focus on in others. Therefore, we can learn about ourselves if we listen to the feedback we give others.

Receiving Feedback Effectively

Feedback is a way of learning more about us and the effect our behaviour has on others. Constructive feedback increases self awareness, offers options and encourages development, so it is important to learn to both give and receive it. If we are on the receiving end we can help ourselves by encouraging the giver to use some of the skills required to constructively give feedback (see other technique) and also by:



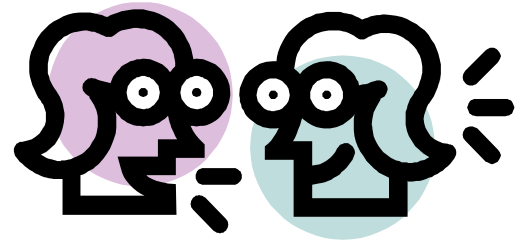
1. **Listening to the feedback rather than immediately rejecting or arguing with it** - Feedback can be uncomfortable to hear, but we may be poorer without it. People may think things without telling us and we may be at a disadvantage. Remember that people do have their opinions about you and will have their perceptions of your behaviour, and it can help to be aware of those. However, do remember that you are also entitled to your opinion and you may choose to ignore it as being of little significance, irrelevant, or referring to behaviour which you may wish to maintain.
2. **Be clear about what is being said** - Try to avoid jumping to conclusions or becoming immediately defensive. If you do people may cut down or withdraw their feedback preventing you from using it fully. Make sure you understand the feedback before you respond to it. A useful technique can be to paraphrase or repeat the criticism, to check that you have understood.
3. **Check it out with others rather than relying only on one source** - If we rely on one source then we may imagine that everybody shares the individual's opinion. In fact, if we check out with others we may find that others experience us differently and we will have a more balanced view of ourselves, which can keep the feedback in proportion.
4. **Ask for the feedback you want, but don't get** - Feedback can be so important that we may have to ask for it if it does not occur naturally. Sometimes we do get feedback, but it is restricted to one aspect of our behaviour and we may have to request feedback we would find useful, but do not get. E.g. "I want you to tell me if you can hear the nervousness in my voice when I give the presentation, or if I am giving off any other indications of anxiety."
5. **Decide what you will do as a result of the feedback** - "It takes two to know one." Each of us needs to know how other people experience us to extend our self-awareness, which is incomplete if it is merely our own version of ourselves. We can use feedback to help our development. When we receive it we can assess its value, the consequences of ignoring it or using it, and finally decide what we will do as a result of it. If we do not take decisions on the basis of it then it can be wasted.
6. **Finally, thank the person for giving the feedback** - We might benefit from the feedback and it may not have been easy for the other person to give. Feedback is a valuable practice to reinforce in any organisation or relationship.

Active Listening and Understanding

Nobody listens to me is a common cry. You may think that you are listening to someone, but if the other person doesn't feel that this is happening they will give up talking to you. Active listening and understanding is important in all situations including confrontations, counselling, work appraisals, chairing meetings and personal/social relationships.

It is vital to let the other person know that you have fully understood what they have said as this will maximise the chances of them taking your views on board.

Use the advice below to help you to actively listen and understand someone:



1. Adopt a listening posture

- Relax and lean slightly forward.
- Have a soft and involved eye contact with the other person.
- Avoid crossed arms and legs as this could be perceived as you not being in agreement with what the other person is saying.
- Sit or stand facing the other person, but be at a slight angle.
- Do not sit or stand directly in front of the other person as this could appear to be confrontational.

2. Say as little as possible

- Do not rush to fill in the other person's silences.
- Nod your head and smile.
- Make encouraging noises like "um hmmm" and "yes".
- Use phrases like "do go on" and "can you tell me more about that?"
- Do not jump in and complete the other person's sentences as it devalues what they are saying.

3. Repeat back the important points that are made

- With practise the person you are talking to will not notice that you are feeding back what has already been said.
- Change the wording slightly and reduce the other person's talking into one or two simple sentences.

4. Reflect back the feelings, which are expressed

- This encourages the other person to provide you with more detail and clarity.
- An example of this would be "You sound very frustrated about the whole business."

5. Summarise

- After you have listened to the other person using the above skills you should offer a short summary of what has been said. This will allow the other person to confirm or disconfirm your interpretation before offering your views.

Handling Conflict and Confrontation

Conflict and confrontation is unavoidable. The ability to handle it in all areas of your life is a critical success factor to your own personal effectiveness and happiness.

A conflict is an interaction with one or more people that involves a disagreement. It results from people having differing opinions or principles and can be constructive if it is handled well. If it is handled badly then it is likely to escalate and create more problems.

We experience a confrontation when we face, meet or deal with a difficult situation or person. It is often when we are communicating with somebody and fear that they will respond negatively because we are telling them something that they do not want to hear. We can also experience confrontation when asking for something that somebody else does not want to give us.

Follow the three steps below to help you handle conflict and confrontation constructively:

1. Do your preparation and find the right time

- Establish your own position by understanding the facts in order to maintain credibility during the discussion.
- Understand the things that you are fearful of in the event of a conflict and decide how you will respond as this will increase your confidence. It may help to talk through these fears with somebody else.
- Think of an appropriate time and location to confront the other person. It is best to find somewhere private where you will not be disturbed.

2. Discuss the issues

- Actively listen to the other person and show them that you understand how they are feeling.
- Ensure that you reference specific behaviours rather than over-generalising by using statements such as "Everyone feels that..." or "You always...". Avoid blaming or accusing the other person.
- Avoid acting more superior than the other person as it could make them feel threatened.
- Use open and non-confrontational body language. Avoid crossing your arms and maintain good eye contact to avoid looking shifty.

3. Find a solution and make a commitment

- Once you have discussed the issues you must find a solution. Go for a Win-Win solution wherever possible so that you can both benefit, which will strengthen the relationship.
- If you cannot find a Win-Win solution it is better off to go for a No Deal option and agree to disagree. This way, none of you will lose out, which will do less damage to the relationship.

You may find these related Life Tools techniques useful:

- Getting Your Message Across
- Active Listening and Understanding
- Giving Constructive Feedback
- Receiving Feedback Effectively
- The Truths About Fear



Bullying and Harassment at Work

What is Bullying and Harassment? Bullying and harassment are words that are interchangeable. They include all unwarranted and unwelcome behaviour possibly relating to:

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion
- Nationality
- Any personal characteristic
- Competence and popularity

Bullying may be an isolated incident or it could be a recurring event. Bullying can be defined as: 'offensive, intimidating, abusive, malicious or insulting behaviour, misuse or an abuse of power which intends to undermine, injure or humiliate the recipient.' Examples of Bullying are:

- Personal insults
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Teasing and practical jokes
- Aggressive gestures
- Unreasonable fault finding
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone
- Overbearing supervision or misuse of power
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker
- Intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- Constantly undervaluing a person
- Setting unattainable deadlines
- Removing areas of responsibility without reason

Bullying may happen face-to-face, or by email, or phone. It can occur within and across gender, age, ethnic and disability groups and at all levels of an organisation. It is not acceptable in any UK work place and all companies should have a bullying policy. It is not always clear if you are being bullied, sometimes it can be the result of a subtle shift over time. Stress can cause you to feel harassed, especially in changing circumstances. The effects of Bullying and harassment can manifest into emotional distress creating stress related symptoms and physical illness.

Harassment not only affects the individual but also the business, it can cause:

- Increased absence and sickness
- Increased stress and low motivation
- Reduced performance and productivity
- Low morale within a team environment
- High staff turnover
- Disaffection and disloyalty
- Constant conflict
- Inefficiency

Bullying and harassment can be unambiguous; sometimes you can be unsure, for example if the working environment has changed such as a new manager or organisational style and you need time to adjust. If you think you are being bullied:

- Keep a diary of events: record times, dates, witnesses and keep copies of any relevant documents.
- It may not be easy to confront a bully, use a trusted colleague, manager, Equal Opportunities Adviser or Trade Union representative.
- Be calm and firm and not aggressive, stick to the facts and just describe what happened.
- Perhaps refer to books on assertiveness for some advice
- If you make a formal complaint, follow your employer's procedures. Every employer should have a procedure for dealing with bullying and harassment. You should find details in the staff handbook if you have one. If not speak to a sympathetic manager or personnel officer.

Some links to other resources providing additional help on bullying can be found on the Life Tools web site.

How to be Highly Attractive

You are as attractive as you consider yourself to be. If you feel attractive then others will also find you attractive. If you feel unattractive then others will also find you unattractive. It is in your interest to feel great about yourself. **You are equal to anyone else and have your own magnetism and special blend of attractiveness.**

Being beautiful, pretty or handsome is dependent on your genes. However, attractiveness does not necessarily mean pretty or handsome, which means that you can work on it and get results. There are people that are extremely pretty or handsome who regard themselves as being unattractive. Also, it is possible to meet someone that you do not feel is pretty or handsome, but still find yourself attracted to them. This proves that **you are as attractive as you feel.**

Ask yourself the questions below in order to root out any negative beliefs you may have about yourself:

1. A negative thought I have about my looks is... (repeat five times)
2. Above all, the most negative thought I have about my looks is...
3. Something I learned from my mother/father/others about my looks is... (repeat five times)
4. Above all, the main thing I learned from my mother/father/others about my looks is...
5. The main message I project to others about my looks is...
6. What I expect others to think of my looks is...
7. The ways in which this holds me back are... (list five)

These feelings will only be true if you continue to believe and feed them. Here are some replacement beliefs:

1. I no longer need to believe that I am fat or ugly.
2. I no longer need to believe my mother's/father's/other's negative thoughts about me.
3. I am completely free of my mother's/father's/other's negative thoughts about me.
4. I now appreciate my natural beauty and attractiveness.
5. I am wonderful just as I am.
6. I like myself.
7. I love and approve of myself.
8. I now choose to appreciate myself exactly as I am.
9. I now radiate vitality.

Choose three beliefs to start working on. Change or add to them to make them more personal to you. Begin today by writing them down ten times in the morning and ten times at night. Say them to yourself repeatedly throughout the day. As you discipline your subconscious mind to think these thoughts you will begin to see yourself as more attractive and others will too. Try this for thirty days before selecting some other beliefs to work on.

Once you've worked on the inside it is time to do some work on the outside by looking your best. People who often don't put effort into grooming themselves are often martyrs and complete bores, attending to everyone else's needs above and beyond their own. Get the sharpest haircut you can and only ever wear clothes that you love - even in private. Make sure you are comfortable with your appearance first and foremost.

Become more confident, relaxed, interesting and amusing. Make yourself feel happy and do not appear desperate. Be a little mysterious by letting people know that there is more to you than meets the eye; exactly what that is, is your business. Remember, **you are as attractive as you feel.**

Defending Yourself and Your Property

Would you know what to do if you were confronted by a thug, a trespasser, a vandal attacking property, a burglar or anti-social behaviour? There's no time to think, an instant decision is needed! But what does the law expect of you and more importantly, what can you expect of the law if you become involved? How fine is the line between defender and offender? What is justifiable force?



This technique gives you a brief overview of where you stand in relation to defending yourself and your property. You can purchase the book 'Justifiable Force: The Practical Guide to the Law of Self Defence' referenced alongside this technique if you would like a comprehensive guide, which provides some interesting case studies.

Let's take this one step at a time and start by describing some events that may prompt you to defend yourself or your property:

- You are threatened or attacked in public.
- Somebody else is threatened or attacked in public.
- An intruder is on your property.
- An intruder is on somebody else's property.

You must quickly ask yourself what the potential offender is doing and whether they are committing a crime. You must then decide whether you are going to prevent the crime or not considering the safety of yourself and those around you. You may:

- ✓ Stay away from the scene of the crime and report it to the police as soon as possible.
- ✓ Intervene physically if necessary, but only use a proportionate level of force.

Once you have prevented a crime you may:

- ✓ Release the criminal.
- ✓ Detain the criminal using reasonable force until the police arrive at the scene of the crime (make a citizen's arrest).

You must not respond in any of the following ways, which could lead to you being prosecuted:

- ✗ Punish the criminal in retaliation or to gain revenge.
- ✗ Act out of malice.
- ✗ Apply any levels of force that are not reasonable.

An example of an unacceptable response to a burglary would be to scare the criminal away from your property, but then whack them around the back of the head as they were escaping. This would be deemed as taking revenge and acting out of malice.

If you are in a moment of crisis you are not expected to be able to measure the force you use perfectly; an honest and instinctive reaction is good evidence that you have used reasonable force. The incident may be investigated by the police and you might be called to give evidence against the criminal, but you must understand that not all cases are black and white. You cannot guarantee that witnesses to an incident will tell the truth either through deception or innocent confusion. Witnesses may be friends of the criminal you are up against and could tell lies to the police or in court to set you up. Remember that you could be the one standing in the dock! It is for this reason that you must be very cautious about using force against criminals as it does carry an element of risk.

Staying Safe at Home and on Public Transport

The best way of optimising your chances of staying safe inside your property is by taking sensible precautions:



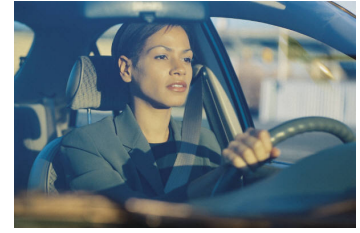
- Make sure your house or flat is secure. Always secure outside doors. Fit barrel locks top and bottom. If you have to use a key, keep it in a safe place away from the door where you can find it quickly in an emergency - you may need to use the door in the event of fire.
- If other people such as previous tenants could still have keys that fit, change the locks. Don't give keys to workmen or tradesmen, as they can easily make copies.
- If you wake to hear the sound of an intruder, only you can decide how best to handle the situation. You may want to lie quietly to avoid attracting attention to yourself, in the hope that they will leave. Or you may feel more confident if you switch on the lights and make a lot of noise by moving about. Even if you're on your own, call out loudly to an imaginary companion - most burglars will flee empty-handed rather than risking a confrontation. Ring the police as soon as it's safe for you to do so. A telephone extension in your bedroom will make you feel more secure as it allows you to call the police immediately, without alerting the intruder.
- Draw your curtains after dark and if you think there is a prowler outside - dial 999
- Use only your surname and initials in the telephone directory and on the doorplate. That way a stranger won't know if a man or a woman lives there.
- If you see signs of a break-in at your home, like a smashed window or open door, don't go in. Go to a neighbour and call the police.
- If you are selling your home, don't show people around on your own. Ask your estate agent to send a representative with anyone who wants to view your house.
- When you answer the phone, simply say 'hello'; don't give your number. If the caller claims to have a wrong number, ask him or her to repeat the number required. Never reveal any information about yourself to a stranger and never say you are alone in the house.
- If you receive an abusive or threatening phone call, put the receiver down beside the phone, and walk away. Come back a few minutes later and replace the receiver; don't listen to see if the caller is still there. Don't say anything - an emotional reaction is just what the caller wants. This allows the caller to say what he or she wants to say, without causing distress to you. If the calls continue, tell the police and the operator and keep a record of the date, time and content of each phone call. This may help the authorities trace the caller.

You should take the following precautions in order to optimise your chances of staying safe on public transport:

- Try to stay away from isolated bus stops, especially after dark.
- On an empty bus, sit near the driver or conductor.
- On a train, sit in a compartment where there are several other people - ideally one which will be near the exit of your destination. Check to see where the emergency chain is.

Vehicle Safety

Vehicle crime accounts for about a fifth of all crime. Follow the advice below and reduce the risk of becoming a victim:



- Before a long trip, make sure your vehicle is in good condition.
- Plan how to get to your destination before leaving, and stay on main roads if you can.
- Make sure you have enough money and petrol. Carry a spare petrol can.
- Keep change and a phone card in case you need to make a telephone call. Carry a torch.
- Before you leave, tell anyone you are planning to meet what time you think you will get there, and the route you are taking.
- If someone tries to flag you down, drive on until you come to a service station, or somewhere busy, and call the police. Do not pick up hitch-hikers.
- Keep doors locked when driving. If you have the window open, only wind it down a little. Don't wind it down far enough to allow someone to reach in while you are stopped in traffic.
- Keep any bag, mobile phone or other valuables out of sight. Also, remove the front panel from your car stereo if possible when leaving the car unattended.
- If you think you are being followed, try to alert others by flashing your lights and sounding your horn. Make as much noise as possible. If you can, keep driving until you come to a busy place.
- If your car develops problems, find a telephone. On motorways follow the marker arrows to the closest phone. They are never placed any more than a mile apart, on opposite sides of the motorway. Never cross the carriageway to use a phone.
- While on the hard shoulder or telephoning, keep a sharp look-out and don't accept lifts from strangers - wait for the police or breakdown service. Don't wait in the car - there is a high risk of an accident. Wait on the embankment nearby with the front passenger door open. If someone approaches you or you feel threatened, lock yourself in the car and speak to them through a small gap in the window.
- If you frequently have to travel after dark, or if your job involves visiting people at home, e.g. a health visitor or a district nurse, consider getting a mobile phone or ask your employer to provide one.
- After dark, park in a well-lit, busy place. Look around before you get out. If you're parking in daylight, but coming back for your car at night, think about how things will look in the dark.
- Every time you leave the car - lock the doors and close windows, even at petrol stations. Open cars will only encourage thieves.
- Car keys are precious - never leave keys in the ignition even when the car is on your drive or in the garage. Thieves have also been known to break in to houses for the keys and then steal the car.
- Take a few moments to check you haven't left anything lying around and doors and windows are shut properly - get into a routine before you leave your car.
- Have your key ready when you go back to your car. Make sure there is no-one in the car.
- Reduce theft by installing a deterrent like an alarm or immobiliser.

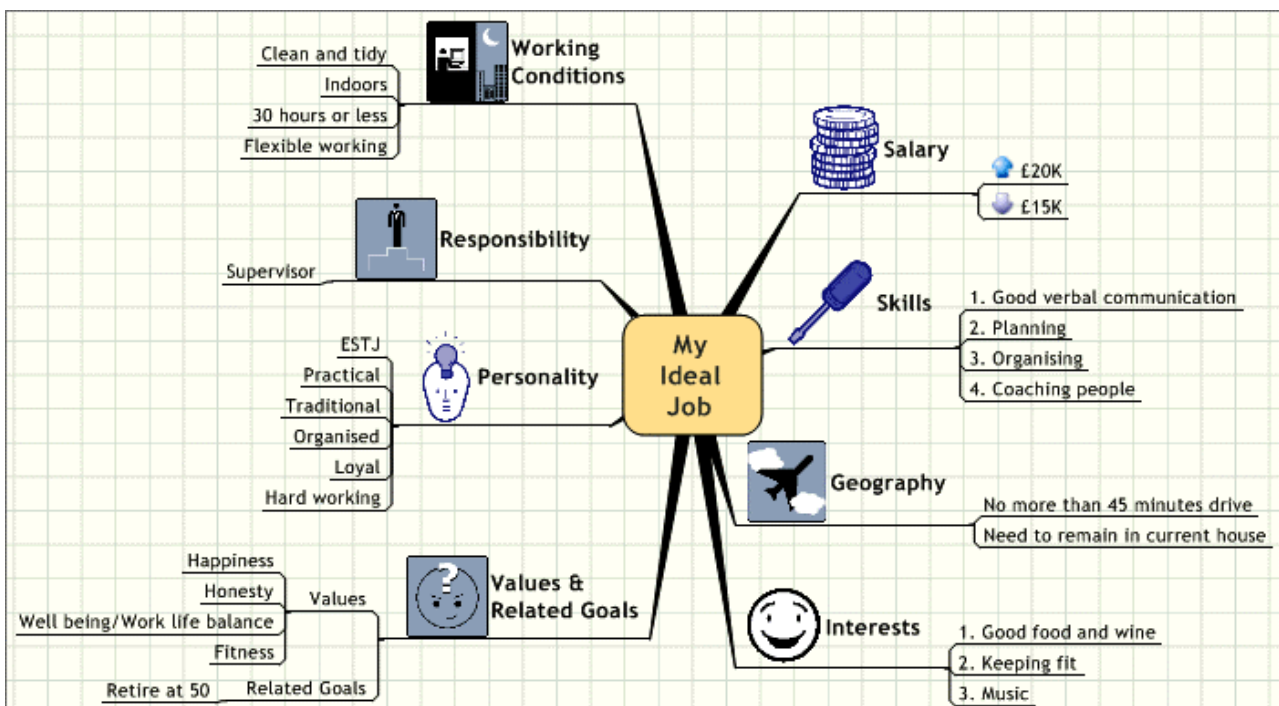
Your Ideal Job

Use this technique to understand what your ideal job may look like. It is useful if you would like to review your current position or if you are thinking about a career change. It may help to define your mission statement before you start this exercise so that you can ensure that your career aspirations are compatible with the other areas in your life. Life Tools recommends that the output from this technique is captured using a mind map. A sample map is shown at the bottom of this page.



1. Determine the lowest salary you are prepared to work for and the highest salary you could demand.
2. Determine the level of responsibility you would like e.g. shop floor, manager, director.
3. List the specific skills that you possess, which can be transferred to any job. These can be physical skills (e.g. making or repairing things), mental skills (e.g. analysing or organising) or interpersonal skills (e.g. negotiating or presenting). If you have problems identifying them it may help to think about times when you have achieved good things in the past and to look for the skills that you used along the way. Alternatively, you could ask your friends, family or work colleagues what they see as being your key skills.
4. List any preferences or constraints in relation to your work location.
5. List your main interests. Your ideal job should relate to one or more of them.
6. List your values and any related goals from your mission statement.
7. List the main attributes of your personality. You can refer to links on the Life Tools web site and take a free personality test to help you with this.
8. List the important factors relating to your working conditions. E.g. you may wish to work a certain number of hours or have a preference to work indoors.

Now you can review the picture of your ideal job and use it to help you select jobs that will suit you best. You can take as little or as long as you like with this technique and it can be repeated over time as your circumstances change.

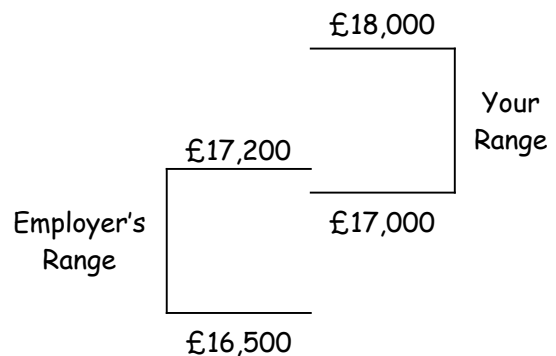


Salary Negotiation

This technique enables you to confidently negotiate a salary using the seven secrets of salary negotiation, which are detailed further in Richard Bolles' book 'What Colour Is Your Parachute'. Do not underestimate how beneficial it is to prepare for a salary negotiation. For example, if you negotiated an additional £2,000 per annum by taking one day to prepare this would make you £10,000 over five years! Here are the secrets...



1. **Never discuss salary until the end of the interviewing process, when they have definitely said they want you.** Only discuss salary when a job offer has been made. If you are asked about salary by an interviewer beforehand then put them off by explaining that you want to ensure that you are right for the job before having the discussion. If you are really pushed for a figure then you should provide an answer in terms of a range e.g. between £20K and £30K per annum.
2. **The purpose of salary negotiation is to uncover the most that an employer is willing to pay to get you.** Employers will often start bidding at a salary that is lower than what they are prepared to offer as one of their goals will be to save money if possible.
3. **Try never to be the first one to mention a salary figure.** Whoever mentions a salary figure first is likely to lose out during the negotiation.
4. **Before you go to the interview, do some careful homework on the salary you will need, if you are offered this job.** Be clear about the salary that you are prepared to work for. You may need to work out your personal budget (using the associated Life Tools technique).
5. **Before you go to the interview, do some careful research on typical salaries for your field and/or organisation.** This will help you to understand whether the figure offered by the employer is their final offer or starting bid. A search on the internet for 'salary comparison' will help you with this.
6. **Define a range that the employer has in mind and then define an inter-related range for yourself.** Try and find out what the least and most the employer may be willing to pay. You may be able to use contacts that you have inside the organisation. Alternatively, try and find out what their competitors are offering in the same geographical area. Once you find out you should define your own range with your bottom line below their top line and your top line above their top line. This is shown in the diagram on the right. Be prepared to justify your upper limit if required. You may want to explain that your productivity justifies it or explain how you can make or save the organisation money.
7. **Know how to bring the salary negotiation to a close; don't leave it 'just hanging'.** Your negotiation will not be over until you have negotiated fringe benefits such as life insurance, health insurance, company car, holidays etc. Understand what benefits are important to you before you enter the interview. You may also want to ask the employer their policies for future salary increases.



The single biggest secret is to ensure that you always have alternatives in case you do not get offered the position. These alternatives could be other things you could do with your life or alternative job prospects. Be sure that you are pursuing more than one employer until you accept a position.

Making a Career Change

There are a number of reasons why you may be considering a career change including a change in personal circumstances, unhappiness in your current role or redundancy. Many people find that changing their career is the best decision they have ever made. This technique offers ten considerations to help you make a well informed decision before you start the transition.



1. **Understand why you want to change career.** Write down the specific reasons for wanting to change career, which can be used when you consider alternatives. Understand whether your reasons are valid over the medium to longer term or are the result of an isolated incident that you may be blowing out of all proportion.
2. **Use the "Your Ideal Job" Life Tools technique.** This technique will take you through a process to define what your ideal job may look like. It helps you to consider various factors such as salary, location, personality and interests.
3. **Agencies or careers advisors must be selected carefully.** Make sure that you do your research and follow up on references before taking any advice from an agency or careers advisor. Good advisors can be worth their weight in gold, but they will not make the decisions for you. Instead, they will often coach you to so that you can come to your own conclusions.
4. **Speak to as many people as possible.** Talk to your friends and family members about your career change. Considering a career change can be a little daunting and talking to people will make the process less stressful. People will also challenge your reasons for changing and provide ideas relating to career options that you may not have considered.
5. **Invest quality time into your career change.** Your chosen career may turn out to be one of the most important decisions you make. Therefore, you must allocate an appropriate amount of quality time to the task. You should use the "Weekly Planning" Life Tools technique to schedule the time into your diary based on related goals. You cannot make an informed decision on your career change overnight and must invest the time until you are feeling confident about the move.
6. **Consider a wide range of opportunities.** Do not limit your new career to opportunities that you are familiar with. Use the "Your Ideal Job" technique to understand your personality and transferable skills and consider jobs that are fundamentally different to what you are used to.
7. **Don't bite off more than you can chew.** Although it is important to consider lots of different options you must be wary about accepting too much change. For example, you may want to change industry or job type, but not both.
8. **The transition to a new career may take years.** You do not have to put a tight time limit on the length of time it takes to make a career change. It may be more appropriate to create a plan that moves you towards your desired career over the course of one or more years. You may need time to obtain qualifications or to wait for a change in your personal circumstances.
9. **Use the "Goal Setting" and "Goal Planning" techniques.** These Life Tools techniques will help you set specific goals relating to your chosen career and produce a plan to realise them. These techniques give you a structured way of specifying exactly what you want and how you are going to get it.
10. **Consider how the career change supports your mission statement.** If you have a mission statement you will want to understand how your career change helps you achieve your life goals and ensure that it is holistic with the other areas of your life. See the "Defining Your Mission Statement" technique for more information.