

Field Work: Using the Wheel of Life – Exercise 1

"Begin with the end in mind" (Covey, 1989)

Stephen Covey has a visualisation exercise that encourages people to imagine attending their own funeral and listening to speakers from 4 different groups –family, friends, colleagues, church / community organisation. The exercise is to identify what you would like these speakers to say about you and your life. In imagining what you would like them to say, you can start developing a personal frame of reference. Developing this framework can assist you in making decisions and make a positive impact on your daily behaviour so that it can "fit" with what people may say about you and your life at your funeral. This concept of "beginning with the end in mind", can be useful in clarifying your values and what success means to you.

How to apply this concept of "beginning with the end in mind" to your daily life and using your "Wheel of Life"

Step 1: Identifying the different areas in your life

- Look at the labels on the sample "Wheel of Life".
- Do the names of the labels suit your situation, and cover all aspects of your life? If not – change the name on the labels to make it more meaningful for you.

Step 2: Focus on one area of your life

- Select one of the areas of your life from the "wheel" to think about.
- Find a place that assists you to relax whether it is sitting by a fireside; while you are out fishing or running; lying in the sun on a beach or sitting in your favourite chair.
- Turn your thoughts to this area of your life, and imagine that you have achieved all your dreams and goals in this area. You have been very successful in this area of your life, and you feel very proud / content with your achievements. What would your life look like? How would you feel? Allow your thoughts to flow freely.

Step 3: Record your ideas

- Once you have thought about this area of your life, take out a large piece of paper. In the centre of the paper write the name of the area of your life that you are evaluating.
- Draw lines from that word and record the thoughts you have had of how you really want this aspect of your life to be. Write as much detail as you can to describe your thoughts, feelings and desires.
- Now turn to chapter 5 (Page 81) and review your values. Will your professional and personal values be met in the ideas you have recorded? Use your values to give more depth to your ideas.

Step 4: Visualise living your life the way you want it to be

- We have explained visualisation techniques on P51-2, 73, 163. Read these to either refresh or teach yourself the technique.
- Picture yourself acting, thinking and feeling "successful" in this area of your life.

Step 5: Act as if.....

- Start acting as you have visualised yourself to be. Are your actions showing you being your “best” self? Would someone observing your behaviour be able to correctly assess what values are important to you?
- Use the visualisation you have created as a reference point. e.g. if you are making a decision, ask yourself, “ will this decision ‘fit’ with my visualisation of who I want to be?”

Focus on your next area

- Now that you have developed the technique, select another area of your life from your “wheel” and follow the same process.

Developing each area of your Wheel of Life takes time. It requires you to clarify your values and what you need to feel successful and satisfied in different areas of your life.

Mark continues his story to illustrate how he applied this technique to improve his relationship with his partner.

Mark’s story:

Mark identified from his Wheel of Life exercise that he was not satisfied with some of his personal relationships. He acknowledged and took responsibility for the fact that he spent less time and energy on these relationships than his professional activities. Mark started thinking what he wanted from his life partner. He wondered what it would be like if he had a partnership that was really great instead of one that he admitted he took for granted.

Having a coach provided Mark with time and a confidential environment in which he could talk about his ideas. I asked him what he needed to feel loved. What did his partner need to feel loved? Mark had no idea, so I gave him ‘The 5 Love Languages’ by Gary Chapman to read. Chapman identified that people can express their love for someone else in 5 different ways. As the person experiencing the feeling of being loved, we may have a preference as to what is important to us. Chapman called the 5 “languages”:

- 1. Words of affirmation*
- 2. Receiving gifts*
- 3. Quality time*
- 4. Acts of service*
- 5. Physical touch*

Mark assessed himself as a person who gives gifts as his main expression of demonstrating his love for someone. He talked to his partner about the book and discovered that they felt loved when Mark spent quality time with them. Mark realised that was the one thing he was not doing. This conversation with his partner was a turning point for Mark. It got him thinking about what he needed to feel loved, and what he wanted from his relationship. He allowed time for reflection and did not rush this process. He observed other people’s relationships more closely, and also started talking to his partner about they wanted. As a couple they started communicating at a different level, and each used the “begin with the end in mind” technique to clarify their thoughts, expectations and dreams. As they became clearer about what they wanted, they would discuss their findings. Mark was amazed at how his attitude changed towards his life partner through these discussions. He found this exercise enlightening and a vehicle for talking about issues that he would normally struggle to talk about. As he found out more about himself and his partner he acted differently and therefore took a step closer to making his visualisation a reality.

Mark's story illustrates other essential points if we want to make changes in our life. Firstly, we need to be aware what needs are not being met. Mark's awareness was created through his Wheel of Life assessment and talking to his partner about their needs. Secondly, we have to know what it is we want so that we can develop a plan to make the desired changes. The final step is that we need to act on our plan to make the change. These steps can be summarised in the formula:

AWARENESS + SELFKNOWLEDGE + INTENTION + ACTION = CHANGE

What do you want most?

Practice giving that.

Stephanie Dowrich