

Happiness Dreamshops

Making the most of your life

**A WINNER IS A DREAMER
WHO NEVER GIVES UP**

- Nelson Mandela

Satisfaction with life scale: Before Dreamshops

The Satisfaction with life scale was developed at the University of Illinois by Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. and published in the Journal of Personality Assessment, 49(1), 71-75. (1985).

Instructions

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

The Questionnaire

___ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

___ The conditions of my life are excellent.

___ I am satisfied with my life.

___ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

___ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Calculate your score

Add the numbers for all 5 questions

Your Satisfaction with Life score:

Meaning of the scores

30 - 35 highly satisfied

25 - 29 very satisfied

20 - 24 Slightly satisfied

20 Neutral

- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

Introduction

This is the manual for the Dreamshops series on Happiness. The aim of the dreamshops is to create happiness by empowering you to be all you can be and make the most of your life. Research shows that happy people are healthier, more productive and successful in both their personal and professional life. The quality of life on many different levels rises as you work on you happiness. The dreamshops are workshops that focus on each element of happiness, forming pieces of a puzzle that combined lead to happiness.

First we will need to review what we mean by happiness. As the general aim is to create happiness, there must be no misunderstanding about what the Dreamshops are working towards. Defining the concept of happiness will minimize the chance of confusion.

There is an extensive amount of literature and research available that deals with happiness. In this manual only the books that have shaped the content of the dreamshops are mentioned. This short literature review will give the reader background information about the topic of happiness. Also, it will show that the pursuit of happiness is a universal quest and that the methods of acquiring happiness show many similarities around the world. Thus, the Dreamshops method can be applied anywhere in the world.

From the theory on happiness will follow that there are two elements that we must work on: creating a meaningful life and becoming balanced as a person. The happiness dreamshops are the first part of the journey. A happy life and a happy you go hand in hand, because by thinking about your talents and passions, you start feeling better about yourself. The second part of the journey is to go deeper into the search for balance and personal power. This manual and the dreamshops do not cover that. There is a program specially designed for your personal development.

After an overview of the Dreamshops, each session will be explained in detail. Here you will find the content of the Dreamshop, complete with the exercises and theory.

Defining happiness

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says: 'I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. That is clear...'¹

What is not so clear is what happiness exactly is. Happiness means different things to different people. So before we start working on our happiness, we need to know what exactly it is we are working towards. In short, you are working on creating a meaningful life and being a balanced person. The

¹ HH Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness*, 1998

balance will help you to enjoy the satisfaction your meaningful life will give you. In the end, the aim is for you to be happy with the life you lead and with the person you are. That is how you create lasting happiness.

Happiness doesn't just happen. And it is not only for lucky people. It starts with the decision that you want to be happy and the commitment that you will find your happiness and make it happen. You work on it and keep evaluating, as it is an ongoing process.

Of course there are circumstances that make it easier to be happy. Lying in a hammock on a beach of a deserted island with good friends, looking at the sunset while dolphins are playing in the surf and tropical birds singing in the background...who would not be happy? (and trust me, there are people who would be holding their cocktail in one hand and their blackberry in the other, forgetting to notice what is happening around them. Or people that have this nagging feeling this is a bit too decadent, too expensive and are worried what the people back home would think of this.) The art is to still be happy when you get home and things are no longer that exotic.

Lasting happiness is not based on external factors. Not on other people, not on circumstances, not on material possessions. True happiness comes from inside and will enable you to feel happy continuously, to enjoy what you have. There are happy, cheerful, laughing poor people and unhappy miserable poor people. The same goes for the rich. There was a sign by the road one day that said: *some people are so poor, all they have is money*. It all depends on your outlook on life. Happiness is a way of thinking, a decision, a promise to yourself to be happy.

Theoretical foundation of the Dreamshops

Forming a definition of happiness seems to be as difficult as achieving it. Many puzzle pieces helped build this seemingly simple idea of finding happiness.

Buddhism

Matthieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk declared Happiest man in a research of the University of Wisconsin, describes happiness as a deep sense of flourishing that arises from an exceptionally healthy mind...an optimal state of being². His Holiness the Dalai Lama states in his book *The art of Happiness* whether we feel happy or unhappy at any given moment often has very little to do with our absolute conditions, but rather, it is a function of how we perceive our situation, how satisfied we are with what we have. Researchers have conducted a number of experiments demonstrating that one's level of life satisfaction can be enhanced simply by shifting one's perspective and

² Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness*, 2007

contemplating how things could be worse. This is a way of looking at happiness from a mental point of view.

Sociology

This mental viewpoint is what sociologist Ruut Veenhoven calls internal qualities. His research shows there are also external factors at play. In a table he shows there are four quadrants that play a role in determining happiness.

life chances	Liveability of- and position in society	Lifeskills
life outcome	Meaningfulness (consequences of your life for surrounding)	Satisfaction (results of your life for yourself, personal experience of your existence and the feeling of satisfaction that brings)
	external qualities	internal qualities

Veenhoven defines happiness as: overall appreciation of one's life as a whole³. Life satisfaction, he says, is a state of mind and has two components. The first is a level of feelings (the degree to which someone generally feels comfortable) and the second is a more rational level where one compares their desired situation with their current reality. In another table he shows happiness should be both lasting and cover life as a whole.

	passing	Lasting
life area	enjoyable moments	part satisfaction
life as a whole	peak experiences	life satisfaction

Veenhoven has done extensive research on the consequences of being happy⁴. The results show that happiness boosts your creativity, activity, health, intimate relations, and citizenship.

Buddhism

The Dalai Lama takes the same perspective as Veenhoven, be it in a different vocabulary and context. He says the purpose of our life is happiness. The method is to gradually increase our awareness and understanding what truly leads to happiness and what doesn't. One must reflect on what brings us happiness and then reset our priorities on the basis of that. A firm resolve to become happy and take positive steps to build a happier life. If you can, serve other people'.

³ Ruut Veenhoven, gezond geluk, 2006

⁴ www.eur.nl/wsf/research/happiness contains an large database on research on happiness

Again, we see that we need to work on both our internal qualities: awareness, and external qualities: creating a meaningful life serving others, adding something to the world. Western science and eastern tradition have great similarities.

Positive Psychology

For the external qualities, or creating a meaningful life, the dreamshops also draw upon the ideas of Positive Psychology. They emphasize the need to create your own future, and make it in such a way that it has meaning for you, using your potential, purpose and pleasure. Again, we see that the Buddhist and scientific theories agree: pleasure is what brings us happiness and our priorities are based on our purpose. Seligman⁵, a prominent member of the Positive Psychology, describes a full (happy) life as experiencing positive emotions about the past and the future, savoring positive feelings from the pleasures, deriving abundant gratification from your signature strengths and using these strengths in the service of something larger to obtain meaning.

According to Tal Ben-Shahar happiness is the highest on the hierarchy of goals, the end towards which all other ends lead⁶. It is to enjoy the journey towards a destination we deem valuable. Happiness, he says, is not about making it to the peak of the mountain, nor is it about climbing aimlessly around the mountain. Happiness is the experience of climbing towards the peak.

Happiness relies on pleasure and meaning. By pleasure Ben-Shahar means that we need to feel positive emotions and our overall state of being should be positive. But we also need the cause of our emotions to be meaningful. We want to know that our actions have an actual effect in the world. To experience a sense of purpose, the goals we set for ourselves need to be intrinsically meaningful. When we think about the most meaningful life for ourselves, we must also consider our potential and how to make full use of our capacities.

Summary

Happiness has 2 components:

External: creating a meaningful life that challenges your talents, fulfills your priorities and let's you live out your passion.

Internal: feeling happy from the inside.

Combining all the above, we arrive at the essence of this book. In this dreamshops series we will cover the first part of the elements that make us happy; a meaningful life. We will cover the external component to create a

⁵ Martin E.P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002

⁶ Tal Ben-Shahar, *Happier*, 2007

sense of purpose. We will examine our current (external) life and make sure that what we do with it is worthwhile to us. The internal component will be the subject of the course that helps you find your inner balance and power.

Dream to create a meaningful life

Why is it so important to have a dream? Because without a sense of direction, we are susceptible to aimless meandering and to being pulled away from our real authentic self. If we know more or less where we are going, we are free to focus our full attention on making the most of where we are now. Choices are easier; if an option brings you closer to your dream, do it, if not, don't. No waste of energy. You can lead a simple life, focused on your goal, all the rest you can forget. Simplify to simply fly... You can slow down the pace of your life and enjoy what's happening. It is not the reaching of the goal that is important, for satisfaction fades and so does despair after failure. It is about enjoying the journey towards a destination we deem valuable. Happiness is not about making it to the peak of the mountain, nor is it about climbing aimlessly around the mountain. Happiness is the experience of climbing towards the peak, says Ben-Shahar. Until we are committed to our dream, there is hesitancy, a chance to draw back, always ineffective. Once you commit, all sort of things occur to help one, that otherwise would not have occurred. Whatever you dream, do it. A goal helps us to find ways of getting there. While having goals is necessary for sustained happiness, the mere existence of goals is not sufficient. The goals need to be meaningful and the journey they take us on needs to be pleasurable for them to bring about a significant increase in our happiness. Ben-Shahar calls these goals self-concordant goals, meaning those we pursue out of deep personal conviction or interest. They stem from a desire to express part of our self rather than impress others.

Robin Sharma has a powerful way of explaining Buddhist thoughts in his book *The monk who sold his Ferrari*. He says, to dramatically improve the quality of your life, you must cultivate a new perspective of why you are here on earth. Stop seeing yourself purely as an individual and start seeing yourself as part of the collective. When you work to improve the life of others, you indirectly elevate your own life in the process. Give yourself to others and contribute in a meaningful way.

The search for a purpose in life is far from new. A 5000 year old yoga scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita* is a practical guide for life that is still applicable now. It is a narrative where the main character is a world famous warrior, who was born to fight. However, faced with a seemingly overwhelming stronger enemy army, he doubts his abilities. The warrior is an analogy for all struggling, doubting humans. Like our warrior, we all are confused about our purpose in life at times. Luckily, our warrior has a God on his team, who offers him his wisdom. He tells our warrior that through activity, through doing our work in life, we find our purpose. The things you do in the world

teach you about your own purpose, as long as you do them with awareness. There are many paths, but the destination remains the same.

The God is telling us not to overthink matters. Just keep doing what you think is right and what brings you closer to your true Self. Reality manifests through intention, it starts in your mind. You have to will it. Dream big, you can't make mistakes, it is all learning. As long as your intentions are good, as long as what you do will contribute in a meaningful way, you can't fail. It may not work out the way you thought it would, and you learn from that, but you will be able to hold your head up high and say at least you tried and will continue to try, in many different ways until you find your way. Even if you have no clue about what your purpose might be, just do something and pay close attention to what the consequences are, for you and the people around you. If they bring you and them happiness, continue, if not, try something else. Often we struggle with frustration or disappointment if things don't go our way. The remedy for this is to loose your attachment to the outcome of your work. You can be attached to the cause, the intention you are doing it with, but don't get attached to the result. You may fail, you may succeed, either way, you tried your best. Your determination should be focused on your intention. Just do your duty with a stable mind. A mind that doesn't rejoice with success, nor does it get upset about failure.

Creating your dream

Every person has a unique set of talents, passions and priorities. We need this set to fulfill our dream, or purpose in life. The moment we gather our courage to start dreaming about what we can contribute to the world with the qualities that make us unique and special, that is the moment our happiness curve will go up steeply. Your life will have meaning.

As soon as you know what you are good at and what you like to do, you can start doing things that give you positive energy. You no longer do things because other people expect you to do them. You do what you enjoy doing. And that encourages you to dream. Lay back in the green grass with your hands behind your head and let all your insecurities and objections float away. Think what you would want if anything was possible. From these contemplations a dream will emerge that will become increasingly clear. Once you have a dream, goals will come from that and you will look at the world differently. You will start looking for opportunities that will bring you closer to your goal. You will begin to see a world filled with possibilities. The positive energy that comes from living your passion and your talent, will give you the conviction that you are capable of reaching your goals. The more you do what suits you, what you are supposed to do, the more your confidence will grow. Not only that, your talents will also grow from using them to their full ability and your willpower to go after your dreams will also increase.

When you have a clear image of your dream, and you make it come to life with detail and feeling, your brain will know which of the thousand thoughts that go through your head needs to be given priority. That way, you put your sub-conscience to work to make your dream come true and you will recognize opportunities better. Just know that no matter how well you know what you want, the road that will take you there will never be what you expect it to be. That is why you need to face the world with an open and flexible mind. One of the pitfalls of dreaming is that you keep dreaming and forget to act. Acting is most important. Because only by doing things, you will find out what your talents are, what you enjoy and what you don't like. Even if you have no idea what you want to do, just keep doing something and you will stumble upon your dream when you least expect it. There will be obstacles to overcome, opportunities to be grabbed, dragons to be slain. Expect the unexpected!

Happiness is the ultimate goal, having a dream is the means to get there (because you use your talents to do what you find important in a way that gives you pleasure), being balanced and powerful as a person is a premise (because you will be the one worrying about others opinions while you're in your hammock, unable to enjoy your dream).

An overview of the Happiness dreamshops

This book will explain the happiness dreamshops method. It will take you on an adventure to find your dream and live it. There are 7 stages in this process.

1. A journey to happiness
Discover what makes you happy and how you can use this more in your life. Using an NLP technique, I will take you back to moments where you were truly happy. We will find out what made those moments so special and look at how you can apply those elements more in your current life.
2. Take a look at your talents
Take a closer look at the things you are good at. The skills you possess, the resources you can draw upon, the things you are naturally good at. Are you using your talents to their full potential? Examine what limiting thoughts are holding you back from living your full potential.
3. Priorities first
If you know what is important to you, you will no longer waste energy on things that do not matter. This brings clarity and focus. We will identify the important areas in your life and formulate how you want each area to flourish.
4. Dream big
Here, anything is possible and we dream as if success is assured. Combining your passion, talents and priorities, you will make a dream board where you collect pictures, quotes, objects... anything that inspires you. This is a visual way to imagine your desired future.
5. If you can dream it, you can do it

With your big dream in mind, you create a five year plan. In it, you describe your life five years from now. The idea is to create an attractive and clear picture, so you will be able to recognize opportunities that cross your path.

6. And.....Action

Once you have your attractive, meaningful, fun, image of your future, of course you can't wait to start doing what you love to get there. A dreamer is someone who has a passionate dream and gives everything they have to accomplish that dream. To ensure that you know how to reach your dream and overcome the obstacles that will come your way, you make a plan to match your dream with reality.

To top it all off, we will finish with creating a mental image of you doing the things you plan to do. You align your surroundings, your behavior, talents, beliefs and identity to work towards achieving your dream.

Dreamshop 1: A journey to happiness

This is the fun part: we are going to find out what makes you happy. Passion is our first piece of the puzzle to a happy life. Don't let the word put you off. Passion is a big word and many people believe they don't have a passion. In this first dreamshop we will find that powerful feeling of enthusiasm we all carry inside. As Oprah says: passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you. Some get excited more easily than others, and we all have a different way of showing it. The main thing is the energy you feel inside when you do something you really enjoy doing. This feeling will be your driving force, your motivation to seek opportunities and spaces for development. Passion ignores rules that get in the way of achieving that potential. It urges you to explore the unknown and it is a passionate drive to find new possibilities. Passion offers you an intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment in your daily life.

Why is passion important for your happiness?

Energy

Your passion is the fire that gives you the energy to keep going. The enthusiasm of your passion gives you reason to keep learning and working towards mastery. It encourages you to learn and gain knowledge about what you do. You never stop growing in the area of your passion. Passion is the motor for your pursuit of happiness. If you go after your passion, happiness is always the end result.

Perseverance

On the road to our big meaningful dream, we are bound to encounter obstacles. When we are enthusiastic and proud of the things we do, we are better equipped to overcome obstacles. Because of this enthusiasm we are more inclined to work hard at improving our self. The more we like what we do, the better we get at it. Because you enjoy what you are doing, you don't mind getting it wrong sometimes, you just keep getting up and try your best.

Your true Self

When you act from your passion, your motives are pure. Your passion is a part of you, so you are also being honest with yourself. You don't try to please others or pretend to be someone you are not, you are your authentic self.

Focus

Acting from your passion brings you focus. Once you are in touch with your true love in life, you will fearlessly pursue it. You will instinctively know what to do when faced with a decision. If you feel the fire inside go down, you know you're on the wrong path. You set your own rules and don't let anyone stop you.

Connection with others

Sharing a passion will give you something in common with others. Even if they don't share your passion, others can be inspired by your enthusiasm and will want to help you reach your dream.

How can you identify what you are passionate about?

Act

Do awesome things! Embrace who you are, go out and do cool stuff. Surround yourself with inspiring people who encourage you to do the things you enjoy. You have always had your passion inside you, as a kid you did what you enjoyed doing, and didn't make a big deal out of it. Tap into that feeling again, do what you want. Don't try to fit in, try to stand out.

Stop doing things you don't want to do. Often we stay in a situation because we don't know what else to do. By waiting and thinking, you will not find the answer. If you quit your job or remove yourself from the unpleasant situation without knowing what to do next, figuring out your next step becomes urgent. This urgency is powerful as it directs your efforts towards finding a solution. You clear the road for passion to enter the arena.

Follow your curiosity, not the money

Be curious, and observe what it is that you are curious about. Because this taps in to your unique motivations that separate you from others.

What did you adore doing as a child that you've let slip through your fingertips?

Look carefully at what you're drawn to in life. What do you read, watch, listen to, follow?

If you could take one college level course or program for free on anything at all, what would it be?

If you want to spend your life doing something you love, the best way to start is to treat financial concerns as secondary. You limit yourself if you focus on making money instead of focusing on your passion. And in the long run, following your passion will bring you more rewards. Because you will be intrinsically motivated to get better and better at what you do. If your work fits you well, you stand out as uniquely capable and powerful. Connect to your unique interests and motivations and come into your authentic self, this will give you power and energy. It won't even feel like work.

If you knew you couldn't fail and it would all work out beautifully (financially and otherwise), what would you try?

What area do you secretly fantasize about being involved in but feel foolish to say it out loud?

Where are the people who inspire and uplift you? What are they focused on?

In what areas are you drawn to helping others?

Observe your little demon

Listen to what the little voice inside your head is telling you when you think about the questions above. We each have on one shoulder a little angel, telling us we are great, we can do anything we set our mind to etc. On the other side we have a little demon, who tells us the opposite. Observe with which limiting thoughts he tries to keep you from following your passion. What (or who) holds you back most from pursuing what excites you most? What limiting beliefs keep you from following your passion?

Timeline exercise

Sit back, relax, close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Notice how with every exhalation your body relaxes even more. Naturally, thought will arise. That is fine. Just don't look at their contents, let them just float away quietly, while you keep your attention on your breathing. To help with that, you might want to put your hand on your stomach so you can feel your hand and stomach rise and fall with every breath.

While you are feeling so relaxed, let a memory come up of a time that you were very happy. Just let it come to you naturally, all you have to do is relax and let that happy feeling bubble up from inside of you. Notice how easily a situation came to mind when you were feeling that happy feeling. Look around you, where are you? What are you doing? Are you alone or are there other people with you? Can you hear sounds? Voices, songs or other sounds? What makes this situation so special? Often, the first situation that will come up will be a holiday memory. Unfortunately, we can't go on holiday our entire life, so enjoy that experience, relax some more, go back to that happy feeling and let a new situation come to you, this time one where you are in a flow, you are doing something you completely enjoy and you forget what is around you and you lose track of time. When you finish, you have more energy than when you started. Let the memory of that moment come to you and look around you again. Enjoy it and find out what makes that situation so special. Take these special elements with you and float to another situation. You can do this as many times as you like. Every time, let a memory come up, and collect information about what makes you happy. When you are finished floating, make a list of the elements that make you happy. Then evaluate your current life and work out how you can apply these elements in your life. Which of your priorities can use some more happiness?

Keeping in mind what you have just discovered, the form below will help you structure your thoughts and actions:

<p>What life area's are you happy with? (family, friends, work, personal growth, health, finance, relationships, social life, creativity, spiritual life, life mission, fun & recreation, studies, contributing to society, adventure, freedom, you name it....)</p>		<p>What life area's could use some more happiness?</p>	
<p>What made the situation so special?</p>		<p>How can you apply that to make all life area's better?</p>	
<p>What will you keep doing?</p>		<p>What will you add or change?</p>	

Homework after the first dreamshop:

1. Observe and make a mental note when you feel happy over the next few days. When did you feel the positive energy flowing?
2. Ask people that know you well to give you 3 to 5 qualities that they think you have or things they feel you are good at. Try to find people that know different sides of you. Your friends know you in another way than you parents. Colleagues, teachers, family members, friends, anybody that knows you well.
3. On www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu you will find questionnaires that help you locate your strengths.
4. Create the habit of gratitude. Each night before going to sleep, think of 5 things that make or made you happy. Things that you are grateful for. You can choose to write it down. Fully appreciate them, feel the happy and grateful feeling you experience from these things. Don't take them for granted.

Dreamshop 2: Take a look at your talents

Have you ever wondered why you are here on earth? You are here to add something meaningful, something of value and beauty to the world. The world will never see another human being like you. Your uniqueness is your gift. You have skills and strengths that can help others. You can improve the life of others; you can make the world a better place. That is why it is important to identify all your special talents and create a life that lets you use them to the fullest of your abilities, challenging them, making them grow. That is how you become all you can be, all you were meant to be.

You are free to choose if you want to share your talents with the world or not. When people decide to share their talents, the world becomes a different place. Those who hide their talents deny the world the benefits of their gifts. So please take a look at what is keeping you from being great at what you do. Here are some tips to help you to greatness:

Don't judge what makes you special. There is something valuable and special about every talent. Embrace the talents you were born with and decide you're going to make the most of them, instead of wishing you had a talent you haven't. Embrace your talents, be grateful for them. Often we find ourselves comparing our skills with those of others around us. It is not hard to find someone who is better at something than you. This will only get you down. It is the unique combination of your talents, passions and purpose that makes you special.

Don't let others judge your talents. Sometimes our natural talents get obscured when we live by others' expectations of what we should be good at. Remember that your talents are what make you you, and they can't be dictated by anyone else. They're part of your natural makeup. Even if it's "weird" in your group of friends, you're guaranteed to find another group who thinks it's amazing and special.

Nurture your talents. Practice them. The power to be great at something is inside you, but that doesn't mean you'll excel without practice. Learn everything you can about them. Do some research to find out more about how you can explore your talents.

Find a mentor to teach you more. Seek out people who have been practicing the same talent and can share their wisdom with you and help you grow.

Bounce back from failures. You will definitely make mistakes from time to time. Don't give up, learn from it. That is how you will reach your full potential, by expanding, trying new things and failing at them, so you can learn and do better next time. Without challenges you cannot unlock your full potential. Obstacles are opportunities for growth.

To do:

Make a list of everything you are good at. Write down everything that comes naturally to you – things for which you seem to have a “knack”.

* Include work-related and non-work-related things in your list. Sometimes talents are those things that we consider fun and not “work”, even if we do them in a work related context.

* Don’t include those things where you think you have developed a skill, but have no real natural talent.

* Think about times when you are in flow – when you lose track of time because you are enjoying what you are doing. These might be times that hold clues as to your talents.

Visualize

Focus completely on these talents. In your mind, let them grow and flourish. Visualize yourself as a person with these exceptional skills, gifts, and capabilities. Make a mental Super-You, be all you can be and all you need to be to make your big dream come true. You can also draw yourself as your Super-You, to reinforce the image.

To do: find out what is stopping you

What do you think are the TOP 3 personal issues that stop an individual from pursuing their life purpose and developing their talents?

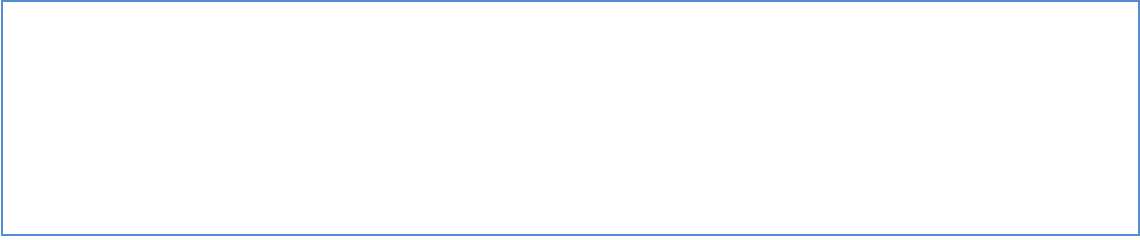
What is holding you back in developing your talents to the fullest?

Homework after second dreamshop :

As a preparation for the next session, watch Adam Leipzigs TEDx talk called how to know your life purpose in 5 minutes. He says in 5 simple questions, you can formulate your life purpose. He reminds us that happy people make it a point to make others happy. Ask yourself these 5 questions:

1. Who are you?
2. What do you do? What is the one thing you could teach others?
3. Who do you do it for? Who do you serve?
4. What do they need or want?
5. How do they change as a result of what you do? What does it change for them?

Then, say these 4 things in one sentence and that's your purpose in life:



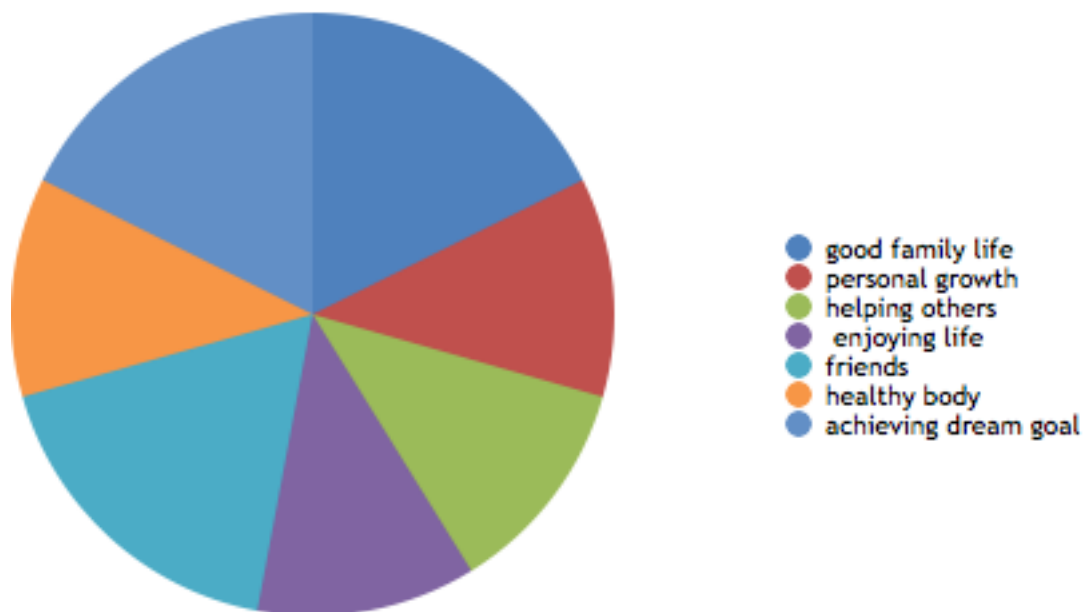
Dreamshop 3: Priorities first

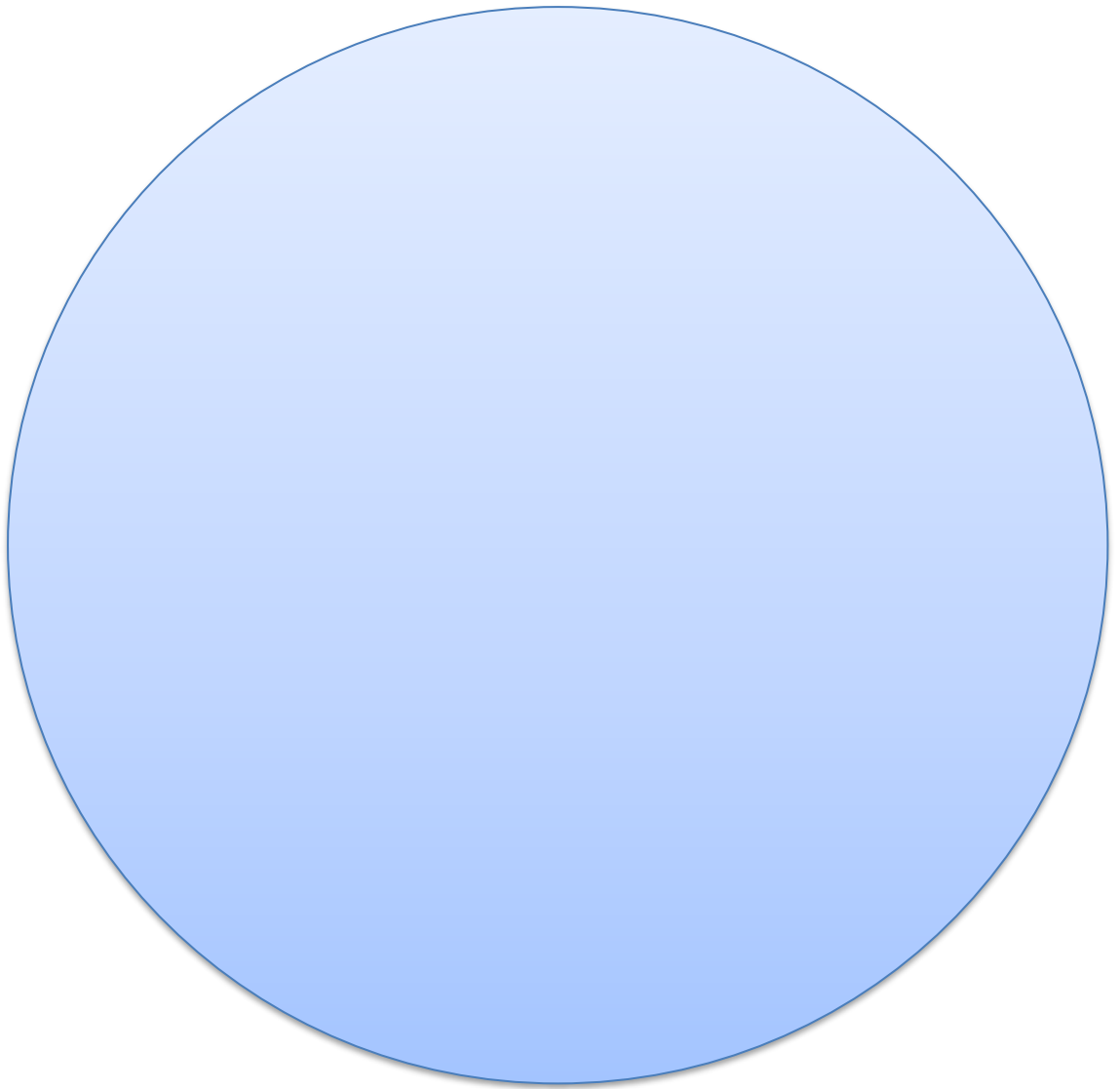
Priorities

Continue your dreaming process by asking yourself, what is important to me? What means something to me? What can, or already does, provide a sense of purpose to my life? Issues that can upset you, are usually things that are close to your heart and thus mean a lot to you. What makes your life worth living? What can you add to the world or to the people around you if you use your talents and your passion?

Define 3 to 8 areas in your life that you find important and you want to spend time and energy on to make the most of it. List the things that are most meaningful and pleasurable to you, that make you happiest. Make a diagram by drawing a circle and dividing it into slices. Each slice represents one of your priorities. The size of the slice corresponds with the importance of the priority.

priority diagram





To do

Write for every priority what you can do for the priority to flourish. For example, for a good family life, I am....(patient, loving, structured etc.) See yourself as that person. What do you look like when you are patient? What do you do? In what situation do you need to be patient? What do you need to be patient? Visualize yourself in that situation, being patient. Repeat this as many times as you need in increasingly more difficult situations until you are confident you can do it for real.

If you have listed a more abstract priority, for example making the world a better place, or fighting poverty, add one step:

I can contribute to making the world a better place by.....
To do that, I am.....

How to Find Your Life Purpose

So far, we have been thinking about ME. My talents, my passion, my priorities. To find our purpose, we need to zoom out to see the bigger picture. As Leo Babauta says, learn to step out of your personal bubble, the small world where you are the center of the universe. Robert Holden calls it the voice in your head that believes you are separate from everyone else.

Once we step outside our bubble and connect to a bigger picture, we will learn that the life we have been given is a gift, and we must make the most of it, and not waste a second. Once you do that, you learn that you have a purpose in life. And that connection is the key to inspiration.

Because your purpose is not just about you; it involves your family, your friends and ultimately all of humanity. We all need to work together to make this world a better place. Knowing this helps you to open yourself up to inspiration and help from other people.

You may have been thinking about your life's purpose before, and you may recognize the feeling of having a really big purpose, but feeling stuck, not knowing where to begin. This is where we need to stop overthinking. Trying to work it out all by yourself, in your head, will get you nowhere. You need to connect with others, talk about it, share your thoughts. Connect, love and act. Your purpose comes from the heart. Listen to your heart, your heart knows your true purpose.

Act, means taking steps towards what you want, and removing those things in your life that you don't want. The more we act, the more we get clear on things. Let go of thinking there is only one purpose for you and embrace the idea that our purpose in life is to love life fully by putting ourselves into our life! This means we jump in and try new things; we stop resisting the unknown and we fully engage in what is happening right here, where we are. Your purpose is something you give from your heart to the world.

To do: Exercises to help you find purpose

Write down the names of people that you admire, and why you admire them. Adopt these admirations of others as a way for you to show up in the world. These are your actions.

Spend 10 minutes each morning doing something from the list of your passions. Especially do the ones you have been avoiding because it is so scary. Feel your fear and do it anyway. If it is worth doing, you are probably going to feel a little scared doing it. Just think of the fear as the energy you need to take the next step.

Create your own unique business cards. Instead of writing your job title on this card, you get to write your purpose, using a maximum of three words to name your purpose. For

example, a hairdresser could write “Self Esteem consultant”, as the purpose of his work is to help people feel good about themselves. You can also add a motto, an affirmation, a symbol, a mission statement or anything else. The idea is to identify your real work.

Homework after the third dreamshop

Read the chapter for dreamshop 4 and make a dreamboard.

Dreamshop 4: dream big

Many of us were taught that big disappointments would inevitably follow big dreams. So we learned to protect ourselves by keeping our dreams small. But what if “they” were wrong... what if big dreams attract much more abundance?

Because when we dream bigger, we get more excited and have lots of energy to get things done. When we dream, we expand our vision of what we want which opens up creative possibilities and we stretch our capacity for how we can serve others.

What fears or beliefs block you from having bigger dreams? Do you have simple limiting beliefs about deserving big dreams, or being worthy enough to have big dreams? Or do you think it’s a waste of time to dream big? Maybe you were taught that people with big dreams never get anywhere because they’re always dreaming, and never moving forward. Big dreams pull us forward... and make amazing things possible.

Keeping in mind your unique combination of priorities, passions and talents, start dreaming. Allow yourself to dream. Dream of something wonderful and different from what your life is like today. Imagine that you have no limitations on what you can be, have, or do in life. Just for the moment, imagine that you have all the time, all the money, all the education, all the experience, all the friends, all the contacts, all the resources, and everything else you need to achieve anything you want in life. If your potential were completely unlimited, what kind of a life would you want to create for yourself and your family?

Be brave and dare to tap into your greatness, the power that lies inside you. Don’t accept a life of mediocrity, when you can be great. Anything is possible, you can do anything you want, what will you do? Act as if failure is impossible and your success is assured. Wipe out every thought of not achieving your objectives⁷.

The very act of allowing yourself to dream big dreams actually raises your self-esteem and causes you to like and respect yourself more. It improves your self-concept and increases your level of self-confidence. It increases your personal level of self-respect and happiness. There is something about dreams and visions that is exciting and that stimulates you to do better than you ever have before.

If your dreams don’t scare you, they are not big enough.

Dreamboard

⁷ free after Robin Sharma The monk who sold his Ferrari, 1997

A nice way to gain focus is by making a dreamboard. That is a poster with images that make your dream come to life.

1. Collect clippings of images, people, quotes, objects, articles, situations anything that inspires you. Take your time to find the exact images that speak to you and express exactly what you want to accomplish. Be as specific as you possibly can. Gather all the elements you want in your dream and then put it together.
2. Cut them out and stick them on a large piece of carton or paper. By making this collage-style image, you create a visual picture of your life's dream. You can also do it digitally and use it as your screen saver.
3. You can add your own texts to it if you want.
4. Hang your dreamboard in a place where you can see it. Every time you look at it, imagine that you have accomplished what you see in your dreamboard. Feel how it will feel to have done so. Make your dream come to life in your imagination, see it, feel it, hear it, smell it. Remember, things are always made twice; first in your mind, then in reality.

Homework after dreamshop 4

In 7 habits of highly effective people Stephen Covey describes a technique where you write your own eulogy. Imagine the setting of your funeral. Where will the service be held? Who will be there, who are important to you? Who will speak on your funeral? Which colleagues, family members, friends will address your loved ones? What would you like them to say about you and your life? We are dreaming big, so naturally the media will cover the loss of such a significant member of the community.

Dreamshop 5: If you can dream it, you can do it

To make your dream even more powerful, you can write down how you want your life to be, five years from now. Start by writing a script for all your priorities. You do that by firstly stating the priority and a short intention for that priority. What is it you want to accomplish in that area? When would you be proud?

Then using your senses make it come to life. Describe what you will see, what you will hear, smell, taste, and feel.

Finally, combine these scripts into one story. Project yourself forward five years. Imagine that five years have passed and that your life is now perfect in every respect. What does it look like? Write it in present tense, as facts. What have you accomplished? How are you feeling? What are you proud of? Connect with your inner passion and your life purpose and mentally go five years forward in time. What does your life look like? Write it down in as much detail as you need to make it come to life, to make it real. Put it out there, let God, the Universe or your sub-conscience know what you want, what is important to you. Feel how important it is to you; state it as a need rather than a wish. For your life to be meaningful, you need this to happen.

Create a vision for yourself for the long-term future. The more clear your vision of health, happiness, and prosperity, the faster you move toward it and the faster it moves toward you. When you create a clear mental picture of where you are going in life and set clear goals, you become more positive, more motivated, and more determined to make it a reality. You trigger your natural creativity and come up with idea after idea to help make your vision come true.

When you are finished, put it away and don't look at it for five years. Let God, the Universe or life work its magic. You keep doing what you are doing with an open mind, ready to go when an opportunity comes your way. Simply follow the path of your dreams, in full expectation of the bounty that is certain to flow.

What is stopping you?

It's almost impossible to go through life without experiencing some kind of failure. The wonderful thing about failure is that it's entirely up to us to decide how to look at it.

We can choose to see failure as 'the end of the world,' or as proof of just how inadequate we are. Or, we can look at failure as the incredible learning experience that it often is. Every time we fail at something, we can choose to look for the lesson we're meant to learn. These lessons are very important; they're how we grow, and how we keep from making that same mistake again. Failures stop us only if we let them.

It's easy to find successful people who have experienced failure. For example:

- Michael Jordan is widely considered to be one of the greatest basketball players of all time. And yet, he was cut from his high school basketball team because his coach didn't think he had enough skill.
- Warren Buffet, one of the world's richest and most successful businessmen, was rejected by Harvard University.
- Richard Branson, owner of the Virgin empire, is a high school dropout.

Most of us will stumble and fall in life. But imagine if Michael Jordan had given up on his dream to play basketball when he was cut from that team. Imagine if Richard Branson had listened to the people who told him he'd never do anything worthwhile without a high school diploma.

Think of the opportunities you'll miss if you let your failures stop you.

Often, valuable insights come only after a failure. Accepting and learning from those insights is key to succeeding in life.

If fear of failure is holding you back in your dreaming or going after your dreams, start by setting a few small goals . These should be goals that are slightly, but not overwhelmingly, challenging. Think of these goals as 'early wins' that are designed to help boost your confidence.

Try to make your goals tiny steps on the route to much bigger goals. Taking one small step at a time will help build your confidence, keep you moving forward, and prevent you from getting overwhelmed with visions of your final goal.

Just remember, that failure is only that if you forget to learn from your experience. Otherwise, it is just an opportunity to try again through revised eyes. Reflect, learn and go again.

To do:

If you were absolutely guaranteed of success in any one goal in life, large or small, short-term or long-term, what would it be? What one great goal would you dare to dream if you knew you could not fail?

Make a list of everything you would do or attempt if you were absolutely guaranteed of success. Whatever it is, write it down and begin imagining that you have achieved this one

great goal already. Then, look back to where you are today. What would you have done to get where you want to go? What steps would you have taken? What would you have changed in your life? What would you have started up or abandoned? Who would you be with? Who would you no longer be with? If your life were perfect in every respect, what would it look like? Whatever it is that you would do differently, take the first steps today.

Dreamshop 6: and.....Action

Send your dream to the stars

The end is the tricky part. On the one hand, you have to let go, detach from the outcome of your dreams to let the Universe work it's magic. On the other hand, you need to do your part, act and make it happen. How does that work exactly?

Detach yourself from the outcome of your dream. The intention is still there, your big dream is always present in the back of your head and serves as your compass for life. But your attention is on the here and now. Whatever your current situation is, accept it and enjoy it. See the beauty around you. Be grateful and thankful of everything that comes your way. Live for today, because it might be your last. Don't put things off for what you hope to get in the future. Life is now. Live it. But let your dream guide you. Your intention is on the future, your attention is on the present.

Doing your part to make your dream come true

Dreaming big dreams is the starting point of achieving your goal. Once you have your attractive, meaningful, fun, image of your future, of course you can't wait to start doing what you love to get there. Here is what you do. You know your talents, you know your passion, you know your priorities and you know your purpose. You have combined them into a dream. How this dream will unfold, you don't know. You have no control over that. Like our warrior, we don't know how it will end. All we can do is do your best and keep going. Try and try again in many different ways. Share your dream, look for connections, offer your help to others, creating a network of dreamer that are working toward a better world. By now you know that a dreamer is not someone who sits in his comfortable chair and fantasizes about the future. A dreamer is someone who has a passionate dream and gives everything they have to accomplish that dream.

If you keep checking if you are using and challenging your talents -you will know you are doing this when you do things that make you feel uncomfortable, at times even scared.- if you are working from your passion- you will know you are doing this when it does not feel like work, but gives

you loads of energy and you get all excited when you talk to people about it- and if you are working towards your purpose -with every decision you ask yourself if it will bring you closer to your dream and if it will help others- then enjoy the ride, enjoy the surprises.

In his book, *Making hope happen*, Shane J. Lopez urges his readers to dream (he calls it hope, I will not get into a discussion about definitions here) and then plan for obstacles that you will surely run into.

Lopez writes that the core beliefs of hopeful people are:

- The future will be better than the present
- I have the power to make it so.
- There are many paths to my goals.
- None of them is free of obstacles.

Our thoughts look ahead and tell us what we need to do today to get where we want to go. Our feelings about our dream lift us up and give us the energy to sustain our effort.

Think the future will be better and you have a role in making it so. To be successful you need to combine high expectations with realistic thoughts about the process of getting there and a clear eyed view of the obstacles that we need to overcome in order to get there.

If you have too much positive thoughts and fantasies, you don't try as hard. Then you are just engaging in wishful thinking. When you fantasize something very positive, it is like you are actually living it. The mind acts as if the goals have already been achieved. Research shows that if you fantasize about your 'ideal' week, you are lower in energy and you accomplish less than when you think about the week ahead without fantasizing. We are better off when we imagine ourselves surmounting obstacles, problems and setbacks. Future thinking that is rich with imagery is a core ingredient of a good dram, but it is only benefits you if your thoughts about it spark action.

How do you make a realistic plan?

After writing your dream in a detailed, lively way, like you did in Dreamshop 5, you need a plan that tells you how to get there.

1. State your goal clearly. Juggling too many big goals undermines progress. One big goal at a time is a good rule of thumb, on that you care about deeply. Which goal are you most excited about? A clear and specific goal calls up more energy than a fuzzy one. Specify it by future casting. Future casting is the ability to preview the future. To get into a time machine and see what it will be like in the future. Ask yourself, what would I be doing. How would a typical day change? Do more of what you do well. Bring the future as close as you can. (By free app Dreamcatcher)
2. Think about the steps involved in reaching your goal. Having a concrete plan to execute in a well-defined situation brings hope to life. Visit the

future to specify when and where you will work on your project. List interim goals in this plan that make visible changes. Each interim goal achieved inspires new, more complex efforts. Who can help you with your dreamgoals? Associate with people who share your goals to get an automatic boost of focus and motivation. Assemble a support team to cheer you on. Share your big idea with others.

3. Think about the different strategies and ways that you have for reaching your goal. Create multiple pathways to your goals. That way you will not feel stuck when one way doesn't work, you can switch to plan B, C or D. Don't stop at one strategy, use several.
4. Anticipate obstacles. Identify which inner states might get in the way from doing the work to get to your goal. Then craft if/then statements, such as 'if I feel frustrated, I will calm myself and tell myself 'I will get there''.
What problems might you run into while pursuing your dream? What might stop you from getting where you want to go? Then think of alternatives you can use to overcome the problems.
5. In your mind, rehearse what you will need to do during the pursuit of your goal to be successful in reaching it. Go beyond visiting the future by actively contrasting the now- your present reality- with the then -your hoped-for future. What obstacles might keep you from making that desired future possible? Make an honest assessment of the now. Then contrast it with the desired future. Thinking about how to do more of what you do best can lead to many pathways of growth.
6. If you are stuck, figure out way to get unstuck. "What do you think you could do? Can you think of more than one possibility? Which one would work best?
Ask the opinion of your future self. In 5 or 30 years from now, will your future self be glad that you bought that car? If you are in the midst of making your next big life decision, seek the opinion of the future you.

You don't have to take a big, bold action to spark change. You can start small. But you have to get off the sidelines. Change requires some action. When you think 'i wish someone would do something about that.' Or ' I wish that person would catch a break' turn that wish into hope. Recruit a friend to help you define and address the problem. Make a visible change that addresses the problem. That way, you inspire others

What is stopping you?

People who have no fear of failure are merely dreamers. Have a vision and a healthy fear that drive you, to be more persistent, work harder. We should balance hope and fear, to hold your hopes in check with realistic limits. When we attach ourselves to the future through goals that matter to us, our brain tells us to reach out, find more resources and get some support.

If you recognize thoughts that undermine your hope, acknowledge the fear they are coming from and remind yourself that even the smallest effort to move forwards chips away from that fear. Negative messages or beliefs will keep you stuck. Disputing those messages will help you reclaim motivation.

Often, people will think they are not smart enough, don't have the right diploma's, don't have enough money etc. to live their dream. Just know that there is no relationship between intelligence and hope. There is no relationship between hope and income. Hopeful people are masters at attracting resources. Determination and hope may attract money to turn big idea into reality. Our energy comes from excitement about what's next and from the supporters we recruit.

Exercise:

Upload your dream and your plan to the group space. That way we can cheer you on, celebrate your successes with you and motivate you during difficult times.

Futureme.org: you can write a letter to your future self. You will receive your emails periodically along the way to your 5 year plan.

Vision walk

To top it all off, we will finish with creating a mental image of you doing the things you plan to do. You align your surroundings, your behavior, talents, beliefs and identity to work towards achieving your dream

1. **Connect with your dream.** If you had a hard time finding your dream, you can also use this exercise to find out more about your dream. In that case, connect with your priorities, passions and talents.
2. Stand somewhere with at least six feet of empty space in front of you. Some people like to write out the names of each category on pieces of paper and lay them out on the floor like a series of stepping stones (particularly useful if you are doing the exercise on your own or for the first time).
3. Step into the first space marked '**Environment**'. Answer the following questions:
 - **Where are you** when you engage in this area of your life?
 - What do you see and hear?

· Who else is there with you?

4. Step into the second space, marked 'Behavior'. Answer the following questions:

- What do you do when you engage in this area of your life?
- What activities do you engage in?
- If someone was watching you on a video, what would they see you do? What would they hear you say?

5. Now, step into the third space, marked 'Capabilities'. Answer the following questions:

- What capabilities do you tap into in this area of your life?
- What skills do you put into practice?
- What areas of expertise do you draw on?

6. Next, step into the space marked 'Beliefs and Values'. Answer the following questions:

- What's important about this area of your life? Why does it matter? What's most important about it?
- What's true about this area of your life? What would be the most important thing for someone you love to know about it?
- Complete the following sentences:
"The reality of (whatever you're exploring) is..."
"The most important thing about (whatever you're exploring) is..."

7. Take a step forward into the space marked 'Identity'. Answer the following questions:

- Who are you in this area of your life?
- Who are you when you do the things you do?
- Who are you at your best in this area of your life?
- Who are you at your worst in this area of your life?

8. Finally, take a step into the space of Spirit. Close your eyes and take as long as you like to connect with the best and highest thing you can imagine – that which is beyond anything you have been exploring, whether you think of that as God, your highest self, connection with others, or how it all connects with the big picture of your life.

9. When you're ready, turn and face back down the way you came. Carrying that sense of the beyond with you, step into the space marked 'Identity.' Once again, ask and answer the question 'Who are you?' in this area of your life.

10. Bringing your sense of connectedness to Spirit and your new or heightened sense of identity with you, step into the space of 'beliefs and values'. What's true about this area of your life? What's important about it? Why does it matter?

11. Carrying your connection to Spirit, your identity, and an awareness of your beliefs and values with you, step back into the space of your **capabilities** and skills. What new or additional capabilities and **skills** are you aware of that you draw on (or could draw on) in this area of your life?

12. Still steeped in your connection with Spirit, identity, beliefs, values, and capabilities, **what do you do or could you do** in this area of your life? How have they changed? How have they stayed the same? What new things occur to you?

13. Finally, take everything you have learned and experienced along the way back into the space of **environment**. **Where are you?** Where else? What do you see? What do you hear? Who else is there with you? Who is no longer there?

Take all the time you need to allow all the learnings and changes you have made to integrate fully before you resume your normal activities. You may like to take notes of what you learned and experienced, and you may find the changes and insights continue to come for hours and sometimes days afterward.

Evaluation form for Dreamshops^[1]_{SEP}

Below you will find the goals for each *Dreamshop*. Please give a number from 1 to 10 indicating to what degree you feel we have reached that goal today. Please feel free to leave your comment at the back of the form, as it will only help to improve the quality of the program.

Dreamshop 1: To know what makes you happy, what you enjoy doing, what gives you energy, what your passion is, what gives you pleasure.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
totally not accomplished accomplished

Dreamshop 2: To know what your talents are, what you are good at, what your skills are, what your strengths are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
totally not accomplished accomplished

Dreamshop 3: To know what your priorities are, what you think is important, what is worth your time and energy, what you can contribute, what makes your life meaningful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
totally not accomplished accomplished

Dreamshop 4: To know what you want in life, what elements need to be in your life to be using your talents and make life meaningful and fun.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
totally not accomplished accomplished

Dreamshop 5: To have a clear picture of your desired future.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
totally not accomplished accomplished

Dreamshop 6: To know how to create this future and follow your dream.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
totally not accomplished accomplished

Satisfaction with life scale: after Dreamshops

The Satisfaction with life scale was developed at the University of Illinois by Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. and published in the Journal of Personality Assessment, 49(1), 71-75. (1985).

Instructions

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

The Questionnaire

___ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

___ The conditions of my life are excellent.

___ I am satisfied with my life.

___ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

___ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Calculate your score

Add the numbers for all 5 questions

Your Satisfaction with Life score:

Meaning of the scores

- 30 - 35 highly satisfied
- 25 - 29 very satisfied
- 20 - 24 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

30 – 35 Very high score; highly satisfied

Respondents who score in this range love their lives and feel that things are going very well. Their lives are not perfect, but they feel that things are about as good as lives get. Furthermore, just because the person is satisfied does not mean she or he is complacent. In fact, growth and challenge might be part of the reason the respondent is satisfied. For most people in this high-scoring range, life is enjoyable, and the major domains of life are going well – work or school, family, friends, leisure, and personal development.

25- 29 High score

Individuals who score in this range like their lives and feel that things are going well. Of course their lives are not perfect, but they feel that things are mostly good. Furthermore, just because the person is satisfied does not mean she or he is complacent. In fact, growth and challenge might be part of the reason the respondent is satisfied. For most people in this high-scoring range, life is enjoyable, and the major domains of life are going well – work or school, family, friends, leisure, and personal development. The person may draw motivation from the areas of dissatisfaction.

20 – 24 Average score

The average of life satisfaction in economically developed nations is in this range – the majority of people are generally satisfied, but have some areas where they very much would like some improvement. Some individuals score in this range because they are mostly satisfied with most areas of their lives but see the need for some improvement in each area. Other respondents score in this range because they are satisfied with most domains of their lives, but have one or two areas where they would like to see large improvements. A person scoring in this range is normal in that they have areas of their lives that need improvement. However, an individual in this range would usually like to move to a higher level by making some life changes.

15 – 19 Slightly below average in life satisfaction

People who score in this range usually have small but significant problems in several areas of their lives, or have many areas that are doing fine but one area that represents a substantial problem for them. If a person has moved

temporarily into this level of life satisfaction from a higher level because of some recent event, things will usually improve over time and satisfaction will generally move back up. On the other hand, if a person is chronically slightly dissatisfied with many areas of life, some changes might be in order. Sometimes the person is simply expecting too much, and sometimes life changes are needed. Thus, although temporary dissatisfaction is common and normal, a chronic level of dissatisfaction across a number of areas of life calls for reflection. Some people can gain motivation from a small level of dissatisfaction, but often dissatisfaction across a number of life domains is a distraction, and unpleasant as well.

10 – 14 Dissatisfied

People who score in this range are substantially dissatisfied with their lives. People in this range may have a number of domains that are not going well, or one or two domains that are going very badly. If life dissatisfaction is a response to a recent event such as bereavement, divorce, or a significant problem at work, the person will probably return over time to his or her former level of higher satisfaction. However, if low levels of life satisfaction have been chronic for the person, some changes are in order – both in attitudes and patterns of thinking, and probably in life activities as well. Low levels of life satisfaction in this range, if they persist, can indicate that things are going badly and life alterations are needed. Furthermore, a person with low life satisfaction in this range is sometimes not functioning well because their unhappiness serves as a distraction. Talking to a friend, member of the clergy, counselor, or other specialist can often help the person get moving in the right direction, although positive change will be up the person.

5 – 9 Extremely Dissatisfied

Individuals who score in this range are usually extremely unhappy with their current life. In some cases this is in reaction to some recent bad event such as widowhood or unemployment. In other cases, it is a response to a chronic problem such as alcoholism or addiction. In yet other cases the extreme dissatisfaction is a reaction due to something bad in life such as recently having lost a loved one. However, dissatisfaction at this level is often due to dissatisfaction in multiple areas of life. Whatever the reason for the low level of life satisfaction, it may be that the help of others are needed – a friend or family member, counseling with a member of the clergy, or help from a psychologist or other counselor. If the dissatisfaction is chronic, the person needs to change, and often others can help.

Part that is common to each category

To understand life satisfaction scores, it is helpful to understand some of the components that go into most people's experience of satisfaction. One of the most important influences on happiness is social relationships. People who score high on life satisfaction tend to have close and supportive family and friends, whereas those who do not have close friends and family are more

likely to be dissatisfied. Of course the loss of a close friend or family member can cause dissatisfaction with life, and it may take quite a time for the person to bounce back from the loss.

Another factor that influences the life satisfaction of most people is work or school, or performance in an important role such as homemaker or grandparent. When the person enjoys his or her work, whether it is paid or unpaid work, and feels that it is meaningful and important, this contributes to life satisfaction. When work is going poorly because of bad circumstances or a poor fit with the person's strengths, this can lower life satisfaction. When a person has important goals, and is failing to make adequate progress toward them, this too can lead to life dissatisfaction.

A third factor that influences the life satisfaction of most people is personal – satisfaction with the self, religious or spiritual life, learning and growth, and leisure. For many people these are sources of satisfaction. However, when these sources of personal worth are frustrated, they can be powerful sources of dissatisfaction. Of course there are additional sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction – some that are common to most people such as health, and others that are unique to each individual. Most people know the factors that lead to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, although a person's temperament – a general tendency to be happy or unhappy – can color their responses.

There is no one key to life satisfaction, but rather a recipe that includes a number of ingredients. With time and persistent work, people's life satisfaction usually goes up when they are dissatisfied. People who have had a loss recover over time. People who have a dissatisfying relationship or work often make changes over time that will increase their dissatisfaction. One key ingredient to happiness, as mentioned above, is social relationships, and another key ingredient is to have important goals that derive from one's values, and to make progress toward those goals. For many people it is important to feel a connection to something larger than oneself. When a person tends to be chronically dissatisfied, they should look within themselves and ask whether they need to develop more positive attitudes to life and the world.

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