

Week 2

Life Direction - Designing the life you want to live

What emotions do you want in your life? Do you want passion? Security? Love? Happiness? Contentment? Peace? Appreciation? After week 1, you should now have a clear idea of the most important emotional states to you - your Key Values and have started living by these.

The question now is what are you going to do to ensure you experience these emotions *on a regular basis*. What career will enable you to make these part of your life each day? Who will you be with? What will the quality of your relationships be like? What hobbies should you do? What will you achieve in each of these key areas of your life which will enable you to live these Key Values even more in the future? This expression of what you want to do with your life and what you want to achieve is your *Life Direction*.

So why create a Life Direction?

1) Creating a life where you live *your* Key Values - not someone else's

Imagine a truly wonderful life. The life you desire to be living above all others. What would you be doing? Where would you be? How would you be living? Who would your friends be? How wealthy would you be? Stay with this thought for a moment.

Now, a quick warning to you. The life you have just imagined may not be the life that is best for you. "Oh yes it is!" I hear you cry. Well, maybe! But maybe not! Our desires and expectations are often based on what is made desirable through our culture or expectations of friends or family, not necessarily what is right for us. Some cultures focus on the need for money, others on the importance of the family, others obedience, others freedom, others on the local community. Are your desires a product of your culture? Some families value achievement, others education, others love, in others you've got to stand up for yourself. Are your desires just for you, or are they your family's?

Ensure that you are creating a life which is right for you and who you are. Don't let social norms get in the way, doing what your culture expects. Don't work to do something just because it's what someone else wants you to do. Design and live a life which is right, just for you.

2) Live your Key Values today

Returning to your imagined ideal life. Another problem with the picture you created is that it may be a fantastic end result but if it's going to take you 20 years to get there, and that

20 years is one of pain and misery as you slog to be a success, then for much of your life you will not be happy and fulfilled. You may even find that you slog for 20 years and don't even achieve your dream. What a miserable life that would be!

Someone who is living a great life is someone who is living their Key Values on a daily basis.

In this session you will design a Life Direction which will ensure that you are living your life to the full by ***living your Key Values each and every day***. Someone who has a Key Value to feel a "sense of contribution" might make this a part of their life in many ways. They might be a doctor, nurse, a good mother, father or friend, psychiatrist, charity worker, environmental campaigner, teacher, or just simply help people whenever they get the opportunity. There are a whole host of ways in which we can live the same value. Importantly though, we must choose our own direction, based on our own skills and abilities, which will enable us to live our values each and every day - not just when we achieve our final goal.

3) Living your Key Values even more in the future

Some people may find that their current direction in life will enable them to live their Key Values to the full. Someone who is a doctor and wants to contribute to others has a perfect opportunity, as does someone who values love and has a large close-knit family.

Others find that the life they have does not fulfil their Key Values and need to make a change which will make their values more a part of their life in the future. One of the biggest mistakes we make in life is to get into the frame of mind that we are what we are, doing the job we do, having the friends we have, living where we do, and that none of these things can change. This place is often comfortable since it's so familiar. If it's not the life you want though, you can change. Time and time again people have changed career, relationships, attitudes, where they live, how they live, who they are living with, their approach to life, hobbies they do, and many other things besides. They made the change and you can too. It may not be easy, but if you really want to live a life you can look back on and be proud of and feel good about the change may be necessary.

The key to the change you need to make is in your Key Values. These are your guide to what you need to feel in your life for it to be right for you. Take a moment then to consider this following question:

Will your current direction in life enable you to live your Key Values?

I started my working life spending three years qualifying as an accountant. Now, I'm a training consultant and personal development coach. The transition between these careers is huge and with a wife and child to support and mortgage to pay, the transition has not been easy. I've had to take many stepping stones along the way. I went from accountant to marketer, then on to accountancy lecturer, to business and management lecturer, to

training consultant and finally personal development coach. It's been a long hard road to travel. I've been on many courses, worked many, many hours outside my normal working life developing this programme and coaching others, devoted holiday and taken unpaid leave to write this programme, and all to create a life where I could live my Key Values to the full. Accountancy was simply never going to do it for me. I could have lived a comfortable, okay life as an accountant, or a wonderful one as a trainer and coach. Many people have made big changes like these. If you need to, so can you. Now is your chance to create a life where you are living the life you desire. Grasp that chance, make the change.

Someone who is living a great life is someone who is living their Key Values on a daily basis, and is working towards a life where they can experience them even more in the future.

If someone values "respect", then they should firstly build a life where they can have respect regularly in their life on a **day to day basis**. This may mean surrounding themselves by people who respect and like them for who they are, doing their best at whatever they do, or perhaps acting with integrity. Secondly they should **look to the future** and think "**How can I gain more respect in the future?**" Perhaps that means being higher up in their organisation at work, so they focus on trying to get a promotion. It could be through doing their job better, so they concentrate on improving job skills. Alternatively it might mean learning better social skills, improving self-confidence, or working out to improve physical condition. It just depends on that person and what is necessary or right for them.

It's not always about dramatic change either. I remember when I first defined my Key Values that one was "excitement", yet I had hardly any excitement in my life. I needed to make this more a part of my life and my response was sign up for a paragliding course, go rock-climbing, run a half-marathon and go karting. I now always take the opportunity to get involved in different and exciting pursuits and use this as a way to build the excitement that's so important to me into my life.

4) **Setting a target**

By creating a vision for the future, you set up a mental target towards which your behaviour will be guided. As you make choices in life you will do so with your Life Direction in mind so each decision will move you towards making this vision a reality. A Life Direction acts as an ultimate long term goal for what we want to achieve with our lives.

Achieving this overall target will require many small steps. By setting shorter term goals which are consistent with our Life Direction we ensure that they all lead in the right direction for our overall fulfilment in life. We shall see how to set shorter term goals that get results in Week 6.

5) **Motivation**

There is nothing quite like the motivation which comes from a truly meaningful Life Direction. Imagine a vision which is based on the core of who you are, which when you read it feels good and right and which you know will create fulfilment for you. Your Life Direction will motivate you to make this vision for your life a reality.

How will you live your Key Values?

The world is a wonderfully diverse place. The way we can spend our life can vary dramatically from person to person. Some people are builders, others doctors, accountants, lawyers, nurses, call centre operators, office workers or plasterers. Some people get married, others have many partners, some fall in love once, others time and time again. Some people strive for money, others peace. Now is your chance to define your Life Direction: what **YOU** will **spend your time doing**, and **what you will achieve**, so that you are living your Key Values to the full in your life. You will be designing a life which is right for you.

To design a life right for us we will look at three areas:

1) **Our roles in life**

The main areas of our lives which are important to us, such as husband, wife, worker, manager, entrepreneur, friend, gardener, golfer and so on. By clarifying what these are we ensure we create a balanced life which focuses on all the areas of importance to us, and doesn't concentrate on one area at the expense of others.

2) **Day to day living**

What we want to be doing in each of these roles on a daily basis that will enable us to live our Key Values each day. The career we'll be in. The relationships we'll have. The hobbies we'll do, and so on.

3) **Achievements**

What we want to achieve in each of these roles as we progress through life so that we live our Key Values to the maximum in the future.

Like the rest of your mission your Life Direction should be short and focused, so that it can act as a guiding force in your life. As such it should be expressed in a short paragraph of four to five lines. You can worry about the detail when we set detailed goals in Week 6.

Here are some examples of Life Direction statements:

“To touch the souls of others through music, by writing, producing, and playing music to the best of my abilities. To inspire others to help themselves. To find and maintain the deepest love.”

“My aim is to do all I can to bring my children up to be happy, secure, confident and loving and to support my wider family whenever I can. I will aim to improve my painting skills year by year until I reach the stage where people will pay to buy my work, and this will provide me with a good income.”

“To have a bank balance of one million dollars, and to have fun getting it. To maintain great friendships which are warm, sharing and most of all fun. To continue to regularly play golf, and get my handicap down to 4.”

“To be an inspirational manager and guide our division to be the most profitable in the country. To explore the world, taking in a new country every year. To be financially secure and have a happy, family life”

“To be in a career which provides me with financial security, where I enjoy each and every day, and where I continue to progress both professionally and financially. To help many people to get the most from their lives. To take time to really enjoy life. To build a family which is together, supportive of each other, loving, and to enjoy our time together.

You may already be clear about the direction you wish to take in life, and indeed you may already be on track. On the other hand you may be confused and unclear about what you want to do. Whatever your current position the following exercises will help you open the door to a life direction which is right for you.

Finding your Life Direction

The aim of the first exercise is to uncover those things which have brought you true satisfaction and fulfilment from life. This acts as a base from which to build a Life Direction as this gives you an idea of the types of experiences you need to be building into your life on a regular basis.

Exercise 1 - Discovering your passions

1. Taking a look at your Key Values, recall a number of times from your life where you have experienced these values to the full. It may be individual occasions or periods of time.
2. What was it about these experiences which enabled you to live your Key Values?
3. What will have to happen in your future for you re-experience these emotions on a more regular basis?

Roles

We all have a number of roles we play in life. They define who we are and what we do. Some examples include:

Relationships	Work	Leisure time	Other roles
Mother/Father	Project manager	Athlete	Charity worker
Son/Daughter	People manager	Adventurer	Friend to self
Family member	Entrepreneur	Songwriter	Council member
Friend	Marketer	Golfer	Revolutionary
Neighbour	Accountant	Cinema buff	Shopper
Lover	Colleague	Sports fan	Gardener

Some of these may be familiar to you as roles that you have in your life - others are probably not. We all have different roles. You have probably got other roles which are appropriate to you and your life too.

As we progress through life, in the hustle and bustle of each day, it is very easy to let some important roles lapse. Maybe we concentrate on our work role at the expense of our family life, or our social life at the expense of our responsibilities at home. By using all our main roles in life as the basis for our Life Direction we ensure we are constantly focused on creating a life which is balanced between all the areas of importance to us.

Although you may have many roles in life, we are going to look at the six most important to you, which summarise the main activities in which you participate. As with our values, reducing these down to a small number enables us to focus on a clear manageable total.

Lets take a look at your roles now:

Exercise 2 - Finding your roles

1. What are the roles you have in life? Write out a list of as many as you can think of. You may like to use the list above as a starting point, and then brainstorm any others which are appropriate just to you.
2. Now, reduce these to six overall roles which cover all the main roles which you have in life.

For instance you could have just one role for your work rather than breaking it down into parts. That's up to you. What is important is that you find six roles which cover the most important areas of your life where you spend or would like to spend the majority of your time.

Designing your future

The next exercise aims to help you to design your perfect future as a stepping stone to your Life Direction. You are going to design a future for your life which is inspiring and connected to your deepest desires. Use the following guidelines as you do the exercise:

- Use your experiences from Exercise 1 to guide you. Do what you love not what you have always done - it is often the passion which comes from doing what you really desire that brings true fulfilment.
- Be guided by your feelings as to what is right or wrong for you.
- Allow yourself to dream, but do ensure what you decide to do is achievable.

The exercise is best done in a room with plenty of space. The physical element of the exercise helps to make it more effective. If this is hard for you to do where you are at present then simply use your imagination to create the special element. You may also find it useful to write out your Key Values on a card or small piece of paper, and keep this with you as you do the exercise.

Exercise 3 - A future for you

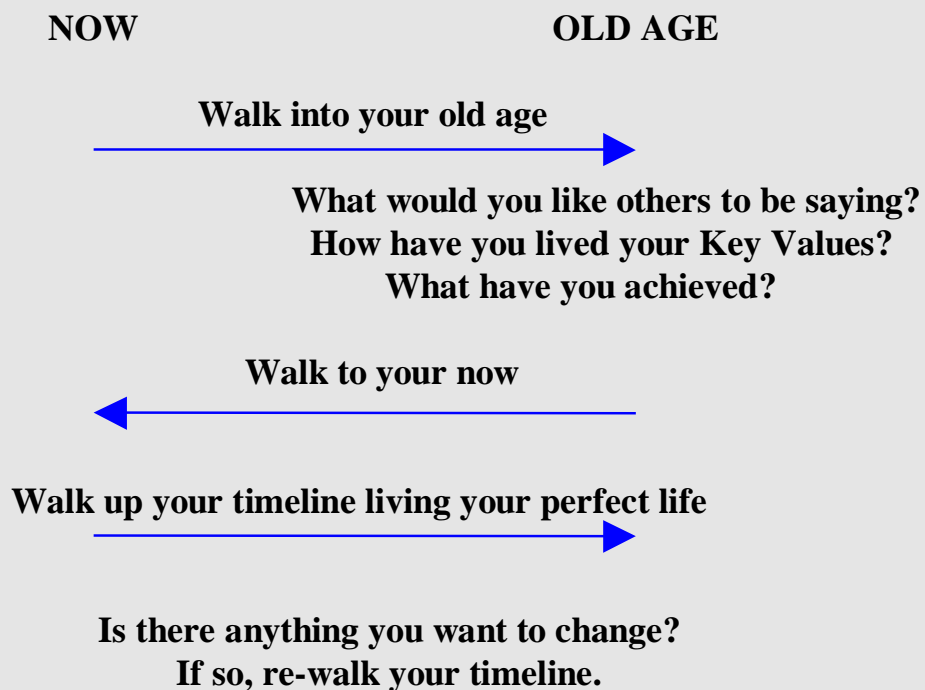
1. Standing in a room or open space, imagine that there is line of time in front of you from “Now”, where you are standing, stretching out to your “old age” at the far edge of the room or space.
2. Think of the first of the roles you defined in Exercise 2

Walk forward into your old age and turn back to see yourself as you are now in this role.
4. Remembering you are now at the end of your life, and imagining a great future for yourself, ask yourself:
 - (i) What would I like people to be saying about me in this area of my life?
 - (ii) How have I lived my life to live by my Key Values each day?
 - (iii) What have I achieved that has enabled me to live my Key Values as my life has progressed?

5. Once you have a clear image, walk back to the 'now', and *slowly* walk up the line to your old age, feeling, seeing and hearing how your life will be as you get older, savouring every step of your future in this role.
6. When you reach 'old age' look back. Is there anything you would like to change about the life you have imagined? If so, repeat steps 5 and 6 until you are satisfied you have designed a life which is right for you in this role.
7. Repeat steps 3 to 7 for each of your main 6 roles.

Diagram of Exercise 3

For each role:



Stepping stones to your life direction

You may find at some point in this exercise that you simply don't have enough information to clearly imagine how your future will be. You might for instance have clarified what you want to get out of work, but not the exact career you will need to follow to get what you want. Alternatively you might have a view of where your career is going for the next 5 years but not after that.

Whatever stage you've got to, you've taken that vital first step to find the direction in life that's right for you. You've also learnt about what you do want from life, and perhaps a few things that you don't want and identified areas of your life where you perhaps need to do a little more thinking, research, or look out for new opportunities. In these areas return to the exercise at a later date and fill in the blanks.

Writing a Life Direction

It is now time to put the life you desire into a written statement that you can use to as a source of motivation, and as a reminder to you of the direction you are aiming in life.

Exercise 4

1. In 4-5 lines summarise what you would like to achieve in your life. Include a comment on each of your most important roles.
2. It is now time to test if this is right for you. Re-write the statement in the form of an obituary, as if you were at the end of your life, and if it was written by someone else.

If as you write or read this statement you feel connection with it, and sense of congruence and completeness, then you have found an appropriate Life Direction. If not then repeat any part of the exercises you feel would be useful until you find a statement that feels right. You can also experiment with other roles if you feel this would be appropriate.

3. Write out your final statement in your mission statement in Appendix 1 of Week 1.

Life Direction

Finding a life direction can be one of the most difficult yet important things you'll ever do in your life. If your new direction is very different from your current one, making the commitment to change can also be one of the bravest things you'll ever do. It's worth being brave though. You can't always be right, and you may find that the direction you choose does not work out for you, but whatever happens you'll learn about yourself from these experiences and will be able to define a new way forward in the future with a better insight into yourself, your skills, and what you want from life. Taking the bold step of creating a life direction, and committing to it, will be one of the best things you'll ever do.