

Week 5

Mission-Based Living

Many people spend time finding their mission, only to leave it brimming under the surface, acting as a general guide to life which they review once or twice a year. Indeed, there are some benefits to doing this. The act of setting a mission creates a direction for life which will, at least initially, change the way people perceive the things they do, so they can add value to their lives. A mission statement can also provide occasional inspiration in difficult times.

To me, though, using a mission in this way is a great waste! It is like planting some seeds but not watering the plants as they grow - some flowers may develop, but they will not be as beautiful, and there will not be as many of them, as when ongoing care is given. You've spent a considerable amount of time working out what is truly important to you, clarifying the direction you want to take in life, and setting strong, positive personal principles for living. You have created an amazing tool which can be used to inspire you when you are down, to motivate you when you need a push forward, to help you make decisions on a daily basis, and guide your long term direction in life. Use this tool regularly, and it will have a dramatic impact upon your life.

This chapter will show you **how to use your mission** and will provide a number of guided exercises to help you apply it to your life.

A mission a source of inspiration and motivation

We all know what it is like to feel lethargic, fed up, like we can't carry on any longer or push ourselves any harder. In these times we need something to stir us up, get our motor running and push us forward so we can get ourselves back on track and are ready to live for the day.

Reading your mission, and re-connecting with its meaning for you, will provide you with the motivation and inspiration you need in trying times. This is because your mission is a statement of your underlying desires and motivations in life - reading it reminds you of what is truly important and what your life is about. It will put you back in touch with the meaning of your life and act a guide for the way forward.

Particularly useful for this purpose is the *Mission Core*. Remember this is a short one line overview of your mission, and as such it is easy to remember, and recall whenever you need it. On a moment by moment basis *use your Mission Core* to guide you and inspire you.

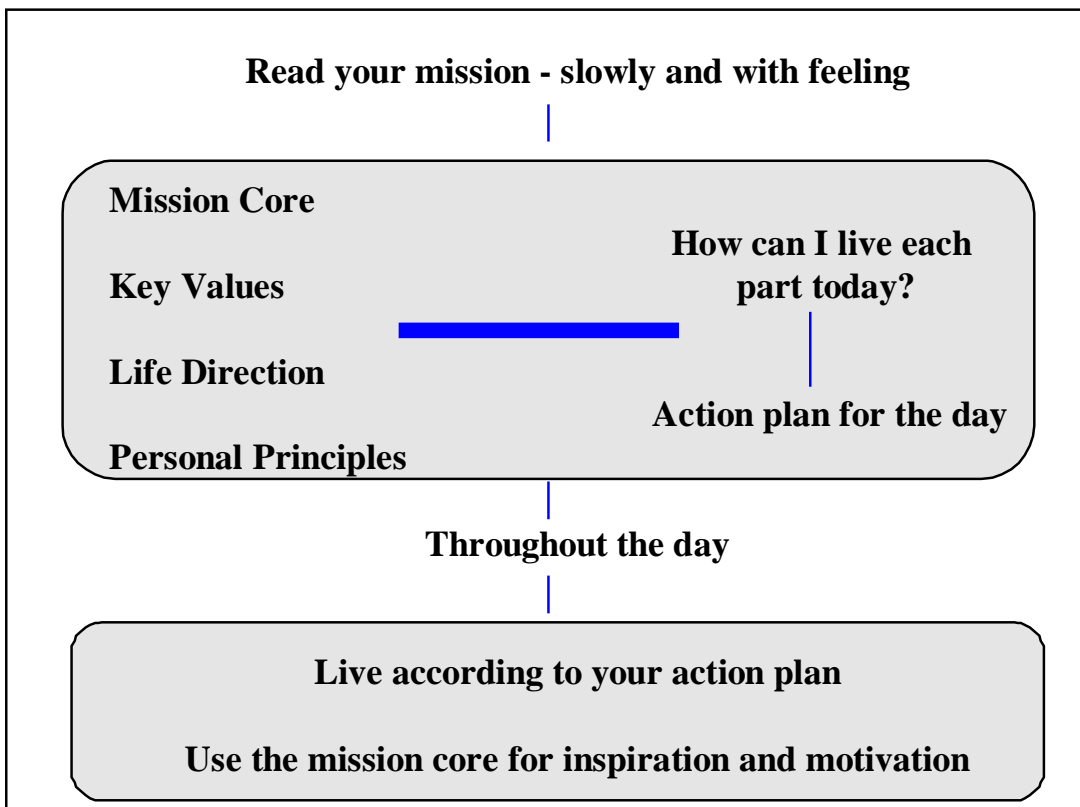
As a guide to daily living

One of the major benefits from having a mission comes from making it part of your life on a daily basis. A great way to do this is by doing the *morning review* - a daily review of your mission which will inspire you, and around which a mission-based plan for the day can be created to ensure you live that day focused on your deepest values and desires.

I suggest you do the morning review every day for the next three weeks. Continued repetition is a great way to make real changes in life since it is through repetition that habits are formed. Research into making a new behaviour habitual suggests that this means around 21 days of doing something differently and doing so consistently in that time. By living each of the next 21 days in a mission focused way you will make mission-based living a natural part of your life.

Exercise 7.1 - The morning review

1. Review your mission - read it through, slowly and with feeling.
2. For each of the four parts of your mission:
 - (i) Allow yourself to get back in touch with what that part means to you.
 - (ii) Ask yourself: How can I live this today?
 - (iii) Write down a short list of actions for the day and commit to doing these.
3. Throughout the day:
 - (i) review your list of action points aiming to do as much as you can to live your mission.
 - (ii) use your *mission core* as a source of inspiration and motivation.



Committing to your mission

To make your mission a true part of your life you must commit to it and live by the principles and direction you have set for yourself. One way to do this is to make a true commitment that you really will follow through on the direction you have set for yourself no matter what. Read your mission, learn it perhaps, and as you do make that internal commitment to make it part of your life.

Another way is to let other people know what your mission is. This may make you feel uncomfortable, but there is no better way of showing how committed you are to the principles that are in it. If other people know what you stand for then this also allows them to hold you to it when your behaviour slips. Put it up in your home, at your office, or copy it or e-mail it to people who you know will support you in it.

Mission-based decision making

Your future is defined by the decisions you take today.

I recently met someone who, like me, went to Exeter University. We began talking about the halls of residence in which we had stayed and why we had chosen them. I had chosen mine largely because it had a swimming pool and gym on site. After our conversation it dawned on me what an amazing effect that decision had had on my life. I met my wife in the disco at the hall of residence - my son wouldn't even exist today if I had made a different decision, most of my best friends today (12 years on) also went to that hall, so my social life would be totally different, and my career direction after university was largely influenced by friends from that time. If I had made a different decision then, my life today would be totally different. In fact you would probably not be reading this now! What struck me was that what at the time what a relatively insignificant decision had such an impact on my life.

Can you think of decisions (big or small) that you have made, which have had a similar dramatic impact on your life?

We are making decisions every day, and one small decision can have a huge impact on our life. Of course, you can never make all the 'right' decisions because the future is uncertain, but if you consistently make decisions which are focused towards living your mission, you will find that the life you create will be focused on your most important values and principles, and will move you in the right direction in the long term.

The problem with many people's decisions is that they are not made with a mission in mind. If you work, how did you end up doing the job you do? Did you examine your most important values and the long term direction you want in life, and choose a career in which you would be living these as much as possible? Probably not. What you do does probably reflect your values to some extent or otherwise you would most likely have changed career or not been attracted to the job in the first place, but does it reflect your mission as well as it might? Imagine for a moment now, what career decisions you would have made in the past had you had the mission you now have and been making a decision based on this.

I have been making mission-based decisions now for over six years and in that time have seen my career move from being an accountant to a training consultant and personal development coach. I honestly believe that without a mission to focus my decisions that I would be in a very different position today disconnected from my true desires in life.

When you are making decisions from now on make sure they are mission based:

- 1) ***Re-associate with your mission and what it means to you.***
- 2) ***Make a decision which is consistent with this mission - that will help you to live your Mission Core, your Key Values, and Life Direction as much as you possibly can, while being consistent with your personal principles.***

The Management of Life Decision Making Model

For important decisions you are taking you may like to use a more guided, step by step approach to mission-based decision making, and for this I have created the Management of Life Decision Making Model.

This model does not make the decision for you, but gives you a framework with which to analyse a problem and help you to make your own mission-based decision. This is not a model for daily use, for which I suggest you use the two step approach in the previous section. It is designed to be used as a guide when you are making decisions of medium or high importance.

The constituents of the model are as follows:

- 1) Consider all the ***options available*** to you.
Your starting point is to brainstorm or research the various options open to you and to reduce these in number to the six you are going to decide between. This gives you a manageable number of options to consider.

2) How will each option enable you to live your **Key Values**?
This is the criteria to use to decide between the different options.

3) The **likelihood of success** in each option.
If you were considering a number of career options one of which was to become a professional footballer, although this might enable you to live the life of your dreams, if you are 40 it's just not going to happen. You have to be practical as well as a dreamer!

4) The possible **downside risk** (i.e. the worst consequences) of each option

The downside risk of a 16 year old trying to make it as a professional footballer might be a couple of years of lost education. It would be up to the individual to consider their possible chance of success along with whether they are willing to lose two years of their life trying to succeed.

5) Your **risk profile** for this decision (i.e. how much **risk** are you willing to take in taking the decision?)

You can be:

Risk Averse: You want to minimise the risk you take. You will make the decision which is most likely to give a reasonable result while taking little or no risk. You may decide to do nothing if the risks are too high.

Risk Balancing: You are willing to take some risk but this must be balanced against the likely outcome. The possibility of a really good outcome can make you take a chance over an option which has poor results for less risk.

Risk Seeking: You enjoy risk, and are willing to take a gamble on the best outcome whatever the downside.

You may take a different amount of risk for different decisions you make. You might be willing to take some risk when making an investment decision (risk balancing), but none when it comes to the safety of your child (risk averse). It is important that you consider which risk position you want to take for the decision you are making.

6) **Trust your intuition**

There is a very famous saying about how to come to a decision when you are having difficulty - 'Sleep on it'. Although this may seem more like avoiding making the decision than taking a positive step, in actual fact, taking time away from a problem can help make the decision easier to make. There are two reasons for this:

- (i) Your unconscious mind works on the problem while you are not thinking about it. If you set it a problem it will work to find an answer.
- (ii) After considering a problem for a while your mind may be in analytical, thinking mode, and in addition you may get tense. Neither of these states is the best for decision making. Taking some time away from a problem can give you a chance to refresh your mind and change your state, so that when you return you are better able to find a solution.

Remember the aim of putting the problem aside for a while is to do just that. If you find yourself lying in bed thinking about the decision you are not letting your unconscious work on it. Do whatever it takes to get your mind off the problem and let your unconscious do its work.

You will find that for many decisions you make, the Decision Making Model analysis alone will help you to clarify the option you should choose. If you are still unsure though, do leave the decision open, return to it later, and then trust your intuition.

It's time to make a decision! Pick a relatively simple decision to start with and use the steps outlined in Exercise 7.2 to help you use the Decision Making Model to analyse it. If you want further guidance before doing the exercise yourself you might like to read the Case Study which follows the exercise.

Exercise 7.2 - The Management of Life Decision Making Model

For each question, fill in the answers into the relevant section of the table on page 9.

1. What decision you would like to make?
2. What is your risk profile for this decision, risk averse, risk balancing or risk seeking?

3. What options do you have available to you? If there are many, make a list of them, and reduce the number to the six you are going to decide between using your mission and practicality as your guide.
4. List your Key Values in the table, and for each option assess on a scale of -3 to +3 (see below) how much you feel you will live that value.

Scale	Meaning	Example: To be relaxed
+3	To the full	Totally relaxing
+2	A lot	Very relaxing
+1	Quite a lot	Quite relaxing
0	No impact one way or the other	Not relaxing, not stressful
-1	Opposite value - Quite a lot	Quite stressful
-2	Opposite value - a lot	Very stressful
-3	Opposite value - to the full	Totally stressful

5. Add these up to get a total for each option. The higher the score the more likely it is that you will be fulfilled by this option.
6. You must now make an assessment of how likely you think it is that this option will be successful. Rate from 0 to 5 (5 - very likely, 0 - unlikely) and fill in the “likelihood” column.
7. What are the worst possible consequences of doing each option? Fill in the downside column.
8. Finally note any other considerations you feel are relevant. Other questions you might find helpful to ask yourself are:
 - (i) What does your intuition tell you about each option?
 - (ii) How does each option fit in with your Life Direction?(iii) Are the options consistent with your Personal Principles?
 - (vi) How will this effect other people?
9. **Decide.** If still unsure, then set a deadline by which time you will make a decision, and let your unconscious work on the problem for a while. Do make a decision though, even if that decision is to do nothing!

The Management of Life Decision Making Model

Decision:								Risk profile:	
Options	Likelihood	Key Values						Downside risk	Other Considerations
							Total		
Decision made and why:									

The Decision Making Model - Case study

Joel was trying to decide where he and his family should go on holiday. At the time he was 28, living in the UK, and was going with his wife, Sam, 25, and their son, Matthew, who was just six months old. In the past Joel and Sam had been on a variety of foreign holidays ranging from long-haul trips to the Far East and the USA, to beach holidays in the Mediterranean. As well as considering going abroad again they were also considering staying in the UK since they thought that this would be a lot more practical with Matthew who they were wary of taking abroad. Joel was worried that staying in the UK would be a bit dull though. You can see Joel's decision making model on the page 12.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the trip to Thailand provided the highest Key Value total. Someone who was risk taking might decide to do this. Joel (who wanted to balance the risks and rewards) decided that the possibility of Matthew travelling badly meant that there was too much risk in this option (as was also true of the Greece option). He was also concerned about the expense, which he felt was too high considering the risk that things might not go well.

Of the other options, it is interesting to note that the 'planned' holiday cottage option was added as he worked through the options. He had reservations about going into a holiday cottage as he could see them becoming stuck in the middle of nowhere where they would struggle to find things to do. As he started to think about the types of things he could do, spend time at the beach, learn to surf, go fishing, and go for walks, the idea of a 'planned' option where they planned the location and their activities prior to leaving became attractive. Joel could live his mission far more than he had previously thought possible by going to a cottage.

Joel's preferred option though, was to go to a holiday park, where he felt they could do activities which would be new and enjoyable in an environment set up for children, and for relatively little risk.

Of course it's worth pointing out that just because Joel did this analysis, it didn't mean that Sam would necessarily agree with his choice. One problem when we are making decisions which effect more than one person is having to take account of everyone's values and it is important that we remember this when we make decisions. As it turned out Sam agreed with Joel, and their holiday was so successful they have booked up to go back to the same holiday park again.

So was it worth doing the process? Joel commented that they had been spending a number of weeks trying to decide, and that doing the exercise had particularly helped him because he realised he could have a much better time than he thought

by staying in the UK, and that this made him much happier about their final choice than he would otherwise have been.

Joel’s Holiday Making Decision

Decision: <i>Where should we go on holiday this year?</i>								Risk profile: <i>Risk Balancing</i>	
Options	Likeli- hood	Key Values						Downside risk	Other Considerations
		<i>Happiness</i>	<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Passion</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>Relax- ation</i>	Total		
<i>Thailand</i>	2	2	1	3	2	-1	7	<i>Expensive. Journey could be a nightmare if Robert does not fly well.</i>	<i>Sam is very wary of taking Robert abroad. Fits in with Life Direction to travel the world.</i>
<i>Greece</i>	3	2	1	2	2	-1	6	<i>Journey could be a nightmare.</i>	<i>Sam is very wary of taking Robert abroad</i>
<i>Holiday cottage in UK - without planning</i>	4	0	2	-2	0	1	1	<i>Little downside</i>	
<i>Holiday park - UK</i>	5	1	1	1	1	1	6	<i>Little downside</i>	<i>Entertainment readily available, creche, very easy</i>
<i>Holiday cottage in UK - with planning</i>	5	1	2	1	1	2	6	<i>Little downside</i>	
Decision made and why: <i>Holiday park - UK. The foreign options might be fun, but they could be a high cost disaster if Matthew doesn't travel well. Of the UK options the holiday park offers the easiest option with a good likelihood of it being a success.</i>									

Using your mission to guide long term goal setting

The final constituent of mission-based living is to make goals which are consistent with and support our mission. By setting mission-focused goals we can ensure that as we achieve them we are taking steps on the road towards true fulfilment. Goal setting is the subject of week 6.

Living your mission

As you do the morning review and through this begin to live your mission each day, use your mission as a source of inspiration, and make mission-based decisions, you will find that you start to make changes in what you do and the way you do it. You will be guiding your life in the direction of long term fulfilment. Your mission is a powerful tool to motivate and guide you. It's now up to you to use it!