

# How to Self-Coach to improve your Wellbeing

This 4 stage coaching process is called 'Appreciative Enquiry', and covers the following:

- Stage 1 – Discovery
- Stage 2 – Dreams
- Stage 3 – Design (Pathways to dreams)
- Stage 4 – Destiny (action plan)

## Discovery- Stage 1

This first stage is an assessment and identification of your character strengths, special skills, Unique Selling Point (USP), that is, the thing, trait, people mostly identify you with (such as sense of fun or kindness, etc), and your overall wellbeing as assessed on the PERMAH Wellbeing Wheel.

### a) Character Strengths

Character strengths are qualities like, curiosity, creativity, love and be loved....there are 24 of them, and are valued across cultures. You can complete an online survey to confirm them at <https://www.viacharacter.org>

Once you have your list of strengths, the next step is to authenticate the top 3-5, called your signature strengths, and these are the ones which you should try to use as much as possible, in different ways and within the right balance. That is, not to overuse or underuse any. For example, if one of your strengths is 'kindness', one can be too kind or not being kind enough.

Here are some additional criteria for a character strength:

- There is a sense of ownership and authenticity of the strength, that is, this is the real me.
- A feeling of excitement while displaying it, particularly at first.
- A rapid learning curve as themes are attached to the strengths and practiced.
- Continuous learning of new ways to enact the strength.
- A sense of yearning to act in accordance with the strength.
- A feeling of inevitability in using the strength, as if one cannot be stopped from using the strength.
- Invigoration rather than exhaustion when using the strength.
- The creation and pursuit of fundamental projects that revolve around the strength.
- Intrinsic motivation to use the strength.

Character strengths have moral ingredients, across cultures. There is a win-win outcome when someone uses their strengths, but they are not used merely to gain outcomes. Sometimes the environment plays a role in which specific character strengths are given the opportunity to flourish.

Another way to gauge how important a character strength is, is to close your eyes and imagine if you can live without that particular strength. If not, it is probably one of your top strengths.

## b) Skills & Competencies

Once you have a feel, and received feedback on your character strengths, you can make a list of your skills and competencies. It might also be a good idea to reflect on what you have always been good at and what you enjoy doing, which may take you back to school days, to remember possibly what you have not had the opportunity to do because of the environment you were in..

## c) Values

What are your top 3 values and beliefs in the world? Definition of value is 'the worth or usefulness of something'. Character strengths help us live our values, for example, if I value 'helping refugees in the world', my character strengths of 'kindness' will assist me to live my value. If I value places of beauty and peace, my character strengths of 'creativity' and 'appreciation of beauty' could help me build 'places of peace', like meditation centres. Living our values, provides us with the opportunity to be our true selves and the energy to live the values.

In sum, realising your character strengths, values and unique skills, all go into formulating your identity and vision.

## **Dreams – Stage 2**

Some people have dreams; some don't; some have dreams but no pathways towards achieving them; for some, its just enough to survive.

If you already have your dreams, and pathways, that's great. However, if you don't, here is an activity to try:

a) A 'genee' visits you during the night and says that you can have any future in the morning that you wish for....what would your morning look like, who would be there, what would you be doing?

b) Write down your dreams, without thinking about the obstacles. In this way, you can free up the mind to dream, without the restriction of thinking about the obstacles. Once you have done this, you can think about the obstacles to your dreams and how to overcome them. This goes some way in providing Hope.

c) Write about the person you would like to be, for two nights a week, and for about 15 minutes. At the end of the week, read the written pieces and extract key words which keep cropping up.

Once you have completed one or all of the above, you need to look at your character strengths, values and skills, to see how these can help you to achieve your dreams. You may find that your character strengths are well in line to help you to achieve your dreams, however, there may be some strengths which you will need to work on to make them more prominent. 4

Your character strengths are the wind in your sails; but remember to 'plug the hole in the boat', to address any necessary areas.

See if your values are in line with your dreams. Taking an example, if your value is to help refugees in life, you may have a dream to manage a refuge for refugees.

From the work done in the above, you will be on your way to identifying an authentic identity and vision for yourself.

### **Design : Pathways to Dreams – Stage 3**

Once you have an idea of your identity, dreams and vision, the 3rd stage involves identifying pathways to your dreams. There is usually more than just one pathway to your dreams. It is during this stage that you will have to consider obstacles to your dreams and ways to get around them.

One of the common obstacles cited to achieving dreams is finance, so you will have to think about ways to finance your dream, if it requires funds. Sometimes, when you start to look at possible solutions, you may stumble upon one which might be doable. By doing this exercise as detailed as possible, you are in the process of creating hope, that is, tangible ways of achieving your dreams.

Character strengths can also be used in this stage, for example, using creativity to think of ways to achieve dreams, or curiosity in researching ways to gather information. The strengths of 'appreciation of beauty' and zest are the two which can have a profound affect on happiness.

### **Destiny: Action Plan – Stage 4**

When writing an action plan, the normal way is to plan forward; another way of doing this, is to plan backwards from a date you wish something to happen. For example, if you want to start your gardening services business in Feb next year, you can work backwards from a line on the floor, say demarcating Feb, to Jan, and ask yourself, what you need to have in place by end of Jan in order to start your business in Feb. Then work backwards from the Jan line to Dec, and ask the same question. In this way, you arrive at the present day and time, and you will know what you have to do tomorrow, in order to start your business by Feb next year. This way also prevents a concertina-like squish prior to Feb when you are trying to get many things done.

PERMAH Wellbeing wheel – looking at the wheel segments below, you can take one or two areas to work on, and use the same 'walking backwards' process. For example, if you choose the health segment, and set a target of doing a marathon in Dec, by working backwards from that date to the present, you will know how many miles to run today to prepare.

Prompt- Routine – Reward

Another way of developing a 'habit' is to think of a prompt for a routine, and a reward for doing it. For example, if the routine is to run each day, you could leave your running shoes at the side of the bed so the first thing you see in the morning is your running shoes. This is your prompt, and then the reward is how good you will feel during and after your run. Once this is set in process, the routine should continue until it becomes a habit, if you can maintain the routine for anything between 21 and 65 days. 6

Draw two lines in the sand, an A and a B line.

Walk along the B line, a week at a time, asking yourself how you would feel if you did nothing each week in preparation for the marathon, and finally how you would feel a week before the date.

Then walk along the A line, and ask yourself along the way, how you would feel if you were training each week, and finally, how you would feel a week before the race? This should have the effect of motivating you to train each week.

## Self Coaching

Now that you have the process of Destiny, Dreams, Design (pathways) and Destiny (action plan) and how you can use this process to increase each area of the PERMAH Wellbeing Wheel, you can self coach, by moving through the process, and asking yourself the appropriate questions along the way.

Dreams, and so do resources change, so revisit this process every week, to see if you are still on track, or do you need to nurture a certain character strength in order to achieve a dream or job requirement which has changed.

A few questions to ask yourself to assist you with self-coaching:

- 1) What resources do I have at my disposal, including character strengths, values, identity, vision, skills, my environment, support?
- 2) Do I have any dreams? If not, how could my top character strengths assist me to think and formulate some dreams?
- 3) What are some of the different pathways to my dreams?
- 4) How can I get around, or over, the obstacles to my dreams?
- 5) How can I make a routine into a habit?
- 6) Which emotion can I choose first thing in the morning, to boost my emotions positively and how will it affect the other segments of PERMAH Wheel?
- 7) Are my character strengths suited to the job I am doing? If not, which employment sector should I be in?
- 8) Can I improve, and do I want to, improve the character strengths required for this job?
- 9) Do I have the appropriate values for this job or is there a mismatch?
- 10) Am I surrounded with positive people, and if not, can I ignore any toxic relationships?
- 11) What is my purpose in life? Why am I here?
- 12) What am I achieving on my journey to realise my dreams?
- 13) Is my health what it could be, in order to achieve my dreams?
- 14) Am I using my natural character strengths and skills to 'live my values', and in so doing reaching my vision for myself?

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