Pillar Three: Live a fulfilling and meaningful life

Is the life that you are currently living truly fulfilling and meaningful? Do you wake up in the morning with a real sense of how good it is to be alive? Are you dedicating your time and energy to the things that truly matter to you?

If your answer to any of these is, ‘No’, then this pillar is definitely for you. A fulfilling and meaningful life is as it sounds – full and meaningful. However, the fullness I am referring to has nothing to do with how busy your schedule is; it’s to do with a deep-seated feeling of inner fulfilment, vitality and well-being – the true happiness that comes from living life in a way that enables your potential, talents, strengths and gifts to shine through. It’s about getting clear in your own mind what truly matters to you and then making sure that you live in alignment with those values.

People who consistently take action that satisfies their values and needs are healthier and happier and show greater levels of well-being after completing their goals, when compared with those who focus on goals that are not chosen on that basis. It’s about bringing all of yourself to life and engaging with it as fully as possible. Not doing this creates a type of pain that I call the pain of unfulfilled potential. It’s a heaviness, an
emptiness and restlessness deep within you that arises whenever you move off course from your values, strengths and unique gifts or whenever you act in a way that is not true to who you are and what you stand for.

It’s so easy to get caught up in your own problems and your own thinking and lose sight of what is right about life and about yourself. But the purpose of life is to share our gifts, talents and strengths in a way that not only enhances our own well-being but that of others too. We are here to thrive and flourish as human beings – not in terms of material wealth, achievements and gain, but emotionally and spiritually.

Of course, you must address those issues that are causing mental distress and you must learn how to have a better relationship with yourself and with others. The key to true happiness, however, lies not in fixing problems, but in embracing a way of being and living that enables you to fulfil your potential. When this happens, you shift from fixing to awakening, and from being self-centred to being of service.

**The foundations – healthy self-care and gratitude**

To live in the world as an emotionally and psychologically mature adult you need solid foundations. Two of what I consider to be the most important foundations for creating a fulfilling and meaningful life are healthy self-care and gratitude. When these two are being actively nurtured each day, they provide the physical vitality, emotional balance and mental clarity for you to thrive and flourish. Let’s start by looking at healthy self-care.
Healthy self-care

I define healthy self-care as the ongoing process of responding to the physical and emotional needs of your body and mind in a way that is balanced and moderate. Our physical needs (which are covered in Pillar Four) are for healthy food, water, physical activity, sleep, rest, relaxation, sunlight and a healthy environment. Our emotional needs, which not many people know about (and are discussed in this pillar), are for security, giving and receiving positive attention, connection with a wider community, an intimate close relationship with at least one other person, autonomy, status, competence, privacy and meaning and purpose.

The intention of healthy self-care is not only to prevent illness and if necessary support your recovery from various health problems, but to take care of your body–mind in a way that enables you to experience your fullest physical, emotional, psychological and social potential.

Why is healthy self-care so important?

Healthy self-care doesn’t come naturally to most of us, and there are many reasons for this. We might, for example, not be aware of what our needs are (this is particularly the case if we are used to focusing on meeting the needs of others); we might have undiagnosed compulsions and addictions (which keep us out of the present moment); we might feel guilty about indulging ourselves by taking care of our needs; or, and this is very common, we are so busy, stressed and caught up in our thoughts that we simply don’t have the mental space to be aware of what our body is asking of us. I also think that
for many people it comes down to the fact that they don’t really value their health and well-being.

**CASE STUDY: Lorraine**

Lorraine, a thirty-seven-year-old mother of two, came to see me because she was experiencing repeated colds, indigestion and exhaustion. In addition to taking care of her children, she did the administration for her husband’s company and was ‘always available to her friends’. On most nights, she didn’t get to sleep until 11 p.m. It wasn’t hard to see that this kind, loving woman was simply overwhelmed by the way she was living her life. She had lost sight of who she was (beyond her roles as mother, wife and friend) and she no longer knew how to take care of her own needs because her energy and attention were on people and things outside of her. While perceived as a super-organised person, on the inside she was empty, alone, tired and unhappy.

It was pretty straightforward to diagnose her as suffering from stress-induced illness, codependency (we examine this in Pillar Eight), sleep deprivation, adrenal exhaustion, anxiety, hormone imbalance and a low-functioning immune system. However, the scale and depth of her challenges made it imperative that I did not overwhelm her even more with a long ‘to-do’ list.

My starting point with Lorraine, as it is for many of my patients was to talk about the benefits of healthy self-care and the need for her to take responsibility for meeting her physical and emotional needs. We identified that her greatest physical need was for more
sleep, and her greatest unmet emotional need was for an intimate, close relationship with at least one other person. Lorraine agreed that for the next two weeks she would make some positive changes in her life. She announced to her friends that she was unavailable after 8 p.m. and ensured that she was asleep by 10 p.m. each night. Her husband agreed to get up every other night if any of the kids woke up. On the emotional need front, she opened up to a close friend about what had been going on for her, and they have since been speaking every other day. For the first time, and within just two weeks, Lorraine felt more rested, supported and happy.

**The benefits of embracing healthy self-care**

If Lorraine’s case hasn’t quite convinced you of the value of healthy self-care consider the findings of a recent Department of Health report. It found that people who embrace and prioritise healthy self-care experience:

- An improved ability to withstand and cope with stress
- A more positive outlook on life
- Better health and significantly improved quality of life
- Increased life expectancy
- Reduction in symptoms, such as insomnia, pain, depression and asthma
- Improved ability to make more informed decisions about health and well-being
- Increased self-esteem and sense of mastery
- A reduction in shame and feelings of estrangement
- Reduced psychosomatic symptoms
- Improved relationships
In addition, they reduce demand on health services and are less likely to require medications. Convinced? I hope so. Let’s start by looking at our emotional needs and how we can go about meeting them.

**meet your emotional needs**

To experience emotional health and reach psychological maturity each of us needs to meet certain emotional needs. Leaving them unmet is a major contributor to emotional and mental distress. My approach to emotional needs is based on the pioneering work of an organisation called the Human Givens Institute\(^\text{18}\) (see Resources, p. 00). The term ‘human givens’ refers to four related ideas:

1. Our capacity to experience mental health, personal growth and optimum functioning is dependent upon our ability to satisfy nine genetically programmed emotional needs in an ongoing and balanced way. These needs are universal in that they apply to all people, regardless of culture or gender.
2. We are instinctively trying to fulfil these needs using specific resources that we are born with.
3. Our emotions are what drive us to take action so that we can get these needs met.
4. If we are unable to meet our emotional needs and/or apply our resources adequately this will inevitably lead to distress (anger, fear, anxiety and stress) and mental ill-health.
What are our emotional needs?

As I pointed out at the start of this pillar, our nine emotional needs are: security, giving and receiving positive attention, connection with a wider community, an intimate close relationship with at least one other person, autonomy, status, competence, privacy, and meaning and purpose. Let’s look at each of these.

1. Security

This includes the security of living in a safe environment and neighbourhood and the safety of knowing that you are physically and emotionally safe in the presence of the people that surround you (both at home and your place of work). Security also includes feeling secure in your work, job and relationship. Feeling safe and knowing how to deal effectively with fear provides us with the necessary environment in which to develop and grow our potential.

2. Giving and receiving positive attention

You just have to watch a child to witness how powerful this need is. But it isn’t confined to children – adults also need to give and receive positive attention. Much of what we do and say and how we dress, interact and project ourselves is influenced by our need for quality, sincere attention. Many of my patients are good at giving, but less so at receiving and digesting the energy of positive attention. This is often rooted in low self-esteem and co- and counter-dependency (see Pillar Eight, page 00).
3. Connection with a wider community

We are intrinsically social creatures and need to feel that we are part of something beyond our immediate family group. Having a wider social network (friends) and enjoying the company of people with similar or common interests is a key need if you are to create total health. Having a network of friends and participating in groups or community-related projects are well known to protect against depression.

4. An intimate close relationship with at least one other person

Intimacy means having meaningful emotional contact with another person. While the depth of the interaction will naturally vary, in respect of emotional growth and healing the most benefit is derived from being able to share the truth of yourself – the good, the bad and the ugly – with them. When this is received with understanding and acceptance, the process of healing is supported. This kind of relationship could include your partner, a friend, therapist and/or spiritual/religious teacher.

5. Autonomy

A person who feels that they have some degree of control in respect of their life situation (work, finances and relationships) is able to withstand stress and life’s challenges much more effectively than someone who has little or no control. Taking responsibility for your health and emotional well-being demonstrates that you are already increasing your autonomy.
6. Status

In any given social situation, we each need to feel that we have our place and purpose – a sense that we are being recognised and respected for who we are. This needs to include our place within the home and at work. Status is something we give to ourselves and receive from others.

7. Competence

Self-esteem – the estimation of yourself – is intimately tied up with feeling competent and having a sense of accomplishment in what you do. This can apply in many aspects of your life, including relationships, lovemaking, work, recreation and sports, and comes about by taking action that is in alignment with your gifts, strengths and values.

8. Privacy

This is not so much about removing yourself from contact with others, but knowing that you can control the amount of contact you have with others, and use your private time to reflect on and consolidate your experiences. It’s also about balance and moderation, i.e. not isolating yourself from others but taking time out regularly to rejuvenate.

9. Meaning and purpose

Our minds are constantly trying to attach meaning to what we do and what we experience. When something has meaning, it takes on importance and adds depth and flavour to life, for better or for worse. Tied in with meaning is purpose – the feelings of determination and drive that come from having a vision and belief in what you are doing.
Taking actions that are aligned with your values, growing and evolving as human being and being stretched and engaged with the world are some of the keys to creating positive meaning and purpose.

In addition to the nine emotional needs, nature has also endowed us with the specific resources to meet them. These include:

- Curiosity – the ability to develop learn and acquire new knowledge and insight
- The ability to build rapport, empathise and connect with others
- Imagination, which provides the ability to solve problems, plan the future, instruct the subconscious mind and alter memories that might have adverse effects
- A conscious, rational mind that can analyse, make plans and control emotions
- The ability to ‘know’ – understand the world unconsciously through metaphorical pattern matching
- An observing self – a part of us that can step back from and observe our emotions and thoughts
- Dreaming – nature’s way of discharging stress (see page 00)

Using these resources to meet your emotional needs in a healthy and balanced way is one of the most important keys to emotional and mental health. A failure to meet emotional needs leads to emotional and psychological distress – whether you are aware of it or not. Left unresolved, this accumulated distress often deteriorates into anxiety, addictions, depression and, in the predisposed, psychosis. The key, therefore, is to identify which of
your emotional needs is not being met. I ask all my patients to fill in the questionnaire below and I invite you to do the same.

**QUESTIONNAIRE: Are your emotional needs being met?**

Read through each question slowly and rate how well the various emotional needs are being met in your life now. For each one, give yourself a score of between one and seven (where 1 = emotional need completely unmet and unfulfilled and 7 = emotional need completely met and fulfilled). Leave out any questions that are not applicable.

Note: watch out for the tendency to rush this exercise or to score yourself too highly. Once you have a score in mind, ask yourself, ‘Does this feel accurate?’ If it does, write it down; if not, reassess and score again.

- Do you feel secure in all major areas of your life? ____
- Do you feel that you are receiving enough positive attention? ____
- Do you think you give other people enough positive attention? ____
- Do you feel that you have a choice as to how you live your life? ____
- Do you feel connected to some part of the wider community? ____
- Do you take time for reflection when you need and want to? ____
- Do you have at least one intimate relationship in which you are totally accepted for who you are? ____
• Do you feel emotionally connected to your partner?  ____
• Do you feel emotionally connected to your close friends?  ____
• Do you feel emotionally connected to your family?  ____
• Do you feel competent in your main occupation?  ____
• Do you have a sense of accomplishment in what you do on most days?  ____
• Are you respected and acknowledged by your friends?  ____
• Are you respected and acknowledged by your work peers?  ____
• Are you respected and acknowledged by your family?  ____
• Are you respected and acknowledged by your partner?  ____
• Overall, do you feel that your life is meaningful and fulfilling?  ____

Having completed the questionnaire, go through it again and consider whether the score you have given yourself is an accurate reflection of reality. Generally, the lower the score for a particular emotional need, the greater the need for action. My experience has shown that a score of five or less represents a barrier to well-being, and that three or less indicates an unmet need that is almost certainly contributing to stress and/or a mental health problem. Write down your three lowest-scoring emotional needs in a notebook or journal.

**How to meet your emotional needs**

Now that you know what your unmet emotional needs are, it’s time to start taking practical action to meet them. If you are experiencing distress and/or a mental-health problem you may need a friend or even a Human Givens therapist to support you (see Resources, page 00). However, it is possible to make very positive changes by yourself.
I’ll now guide you through the same process that I use with my patients. I have provided a template below using the example of the need for giving and receiving positive attention. Write the questions in your notebook, replacing the example given in italics with the unmet need that you want to work on. You will then need to write your responses to each of the questions. Start with the unmet emotional need that is troubling you the most.

The emotional need-fulfilment process

• What does giving and receiving positive attention mean to me? If my need for giving and receiving positive attention was fulfilled, what would be different and positive about my life right now? (Close your eyes and imagine that this is true for you – what would you see, hear, feel, notice? Give yourself plenty of time to do this.)

• I wonder how I can give and allow myself to receive more positive attention? What underlying beliefs are contributing to my issues around attention? How can I transform them? (See Pillar One – ‘Transform self-limiting beliefs’, page 00.)

• What practical steps can I take today in order to increase my ability to give and receive positive attention?

• Who can I ask for support and help in relationship to this issue?

Here are some suggestions for where to look in this book for support in addressing your unmet emotional needs:

• For security – see Pillar Two, ‘Become skilful in emotional processing’, page 00 (particularly fear); Pillar Seven, ‘Identify the presence of co-dependency/counter-
dependency behaviours’ (page 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it); and ‘Develop and maintain functional boundaries’, page 00.

- **For giving and receiving positive attention** – see Pillar Seven, ‘Practise empathy’ (page 00) and ‘Practise the Four As of Healthy Relationships (page 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it).

- **Connection with a wider community** – consider doing voluntary work, attending local events, getting involved with your local church, attending an evening class, joining a local special-interest group or making an effort to get to know your neighbours.

- **An intimate close relationship with at least one other person** – see all of Pillars Seven and Eight.

- **Autonomy** – see Choose Happiness Now (the section on committed action, page 00); the rest of this pillar, especially the section on values, page 00), Pillar Six, ‘Psychological stress’ (page 00); and Pillar Seven, ‘Identify the presence of co-dependency/counter-dependency behaviours’ (page 00) and ‘Develop and maintain functional boundaries’ (page 00).

- **Status** – see all of Pillars Seven and Eight.

- **Competence** – see the rest of this pillar, especially the sections on values, gifts and strengths, pages 00 and 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it).

- **Privacy** – build time into your day in which you can be both alone and able to reflect on your experiences (see the section on rest and relaxation in Pillar Four, page 00).
• **Meaning and purpose** – see the rest of this pillar, especially the section on values, page 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it). Meaning and purpose also come from spiritual and religious practices, having a life-enhancing philosophy of life and developing new skills. How can you develop any one of these?

**CASE STUDY: Chris**

Chris did the emotional needs questionnaire on page 00 and scored low in security, competence and wider community. Here are the solutions he came up with (with the help of a good friend):

• Security – move house, put additional bolts on the door, install a burglar alarm.

• Competence – ask boss for more training, ask boss to be moved to the human resources team (I have a lot of HR experience), find a new job, take an online course or evening course in business management.

• Wider community – take evening classes, volunteer at local woodland trust, go to meditation classes in local village hall, join rotary club

Chris began putting some of these into action straight away. Despite his fears and reservations about talking to his boss, his boss agreed to move him into HR, and within a month he was doing work that he felt competent in. He felt much more safe having fitted the bolts and burglar alarm; he also subsequently started a neighbourhood watch scheme, much to the delight of some of the local residents and he took up voluntary work and regular meditation classes. Within four weeks, his depression and anxiety had lifted and
he felt ‘more empowered and at peace’ than he had ever been. All because he started meeting his emotional needs.

**embrace gratitude**

One of the most effective (and often quickest) ways to shift the way you feel, lift your mood and enhance your well-being is to practise gratitude. Robert Emmons, the world’s leading gratitude researcher, describes gratitude as the ‘felt sense of wonder, thankfulness and appreciation for life’. Along with healthy self-care, gratitude provides the foundations upon which a fulfilling and meaningful life is built.

One of the many fascinating discoveries to emerge from the field of positive psychology – the study of how human beings flourish – is that the regular and deliberate practice of gratitude can bring about significant relief from stress and considerable improvements in happiness, motivation, optimism, energy levels, sleep and quality of life. It is also a powerful antidote to ‘negative emotions’ and depression, as well as the foundation upon which a fulfilling life is created. In my own work I have found that it is as important to practise cultivating positive emotional states, such as gratitude, as it is to deal with anger, grief and mental illness.

Here are two suggestions for increasing the level of gratitude in your life. I suggest you do both for a week and then stick with the one you enjoy most.
EXERCISE: The gratitude ritual

The following is a five-minute ritual that I highly recommend you do every morning for seven days. It’s a highly effective way to shift yourself into a deep sense of gratitude.

Read through the steps below once, then try them out yourself. While this can be done in your head, for best results you should write parts one, two and three out on a piece of paper or, preferably, in a journal.

1. Today is a new day. The past is past and today I choose to take actions that will support me waking up and growing up and move me more fully into my potential as a human being.
2. Today I open myself to guidance, to true happiness and new ways of bringing joy to myself and others.
3. I am truly grateful for . . . [write down at least three things].
4. Now, taking into account your gifts, strengths and values (which you will discover in the remainder of this pillar), close your eyes and create a mental picture of what a fulfilling and meaningful life would look like for you. Experience yourself living this life as though it is happening now. Take time to see what it looks like? How would you be spending your time? Who would you be surrounded by? How would you be as a person? Don’t worry about seeing it clearly; getting a sense of it will be enough.
5. Keeping your eyes closed, turn your attention to what you are now feeling. Allow yourself to welcome it and feel it fully for ten seconds or so.
6. Eyes still closed, imagine that this new life was really happening and focus on the
gratitude that you have because this is so. Allow those feelings of gratitude to
arise in you and, as they do, feel them fully. Enjoy the feelings you are now
experiencing. When you are ready, move on with your day.

**EXERCISE: Keep a gratitude journal**

Write in a journal some of the things you have to be grateful for. This can be anything
from the beauty of the sky outside to the joy of your children – whatever works for you.
Some people really enjoy doing this every day, others once a week – you will find out
what suits you.

I get my patients to start by writing down two things for which they are grateful and two
things that they appreciate about themselves. For example:

Today, I am grateful for:

1. the aliveness that I’m feeling in my body, as it provides me with the inspiration and
   energy to do my work.
2. the fingers I have, as they allow me to type this message.

Today I appreciate:

1. the loving respect with which I greeted my daughter this morning.
2. the friendly manner with which I spoke to Susan on the phone.
One of the defining features and experiences of someone who is living in alignment with their true self, is the gratefulness that they have for simply being alive. A good barometer of how in touch you are with your true self is the amount of gratitude that you are aware of in each moment. Take a moment to get in touch with it now.

**identify your life purpose and gifts**

Imagine that within you is a gift that when expressed will bring you and the people around you a great deal of joy. And imagine that one of the master keys to true happiness and inner fulfilment was to discover and start using that gift. You’d be pretty keen to find out what it is, wouldn’t you?

The idea of us each having a gift was something that I discovered when I took an honest look at what brought me and others the most joy in life. I noticed that there were certain moments in which I experienced a deep sense of fulfilment and inner peace and that those moments happened repeatedly whenever I was in a specific situation and able to allow certain qualities to emerge.

This led me to develop the exercise below, which I have since used with my patients to help them discover their ‘outer life purpose’ (what will bring them and others the greatest fulfilment and joy) and their ‘inner gift’ (the qualities from within that are waiting to be expressed through their outer life purpose). The process I use also helps to identify the necessary conditions that allow this to happen. As people use this discovery process and start to focus on using their gifts whenever they can, their fulfilment and happiness levels
increase substantially. It’s not a panacea, but it is an important part of the jigsaw for transforming your life.

EXERCISE: Discover your life purpose and gifts

1. What is your life purpose? Think about what you love to do or would love to do that would bring you a deep sense of fulfilment, as well as making a positive contribution to the well-being of others and/or the planet. If you had no money worries whatsoever, what would you be doing simply because of the joy it brings to you and others? My response to this is: ‘To create a life equal to my potential and to help others do the same.’ Write your own in a journal or notebook.

3. What is your inner gift? When you are doing what you love, what are the exact qualities that you are allowing to emerge from within you? This takes you much deeper and reveals your inner gift. My response to this is: ‘I am allowing clarity, wisdom, insight and kindness to emerge through me.’ Write your own in a journal or notebook.

3. What liberates your gifts? How do you need to be in order to experience your inner and outer gifts? What needs to happen in order for you to experience them? My response to this is: ‘By being present, relaxed and open.’ Write your own in a journal or notebook.
So, to summarise, using my own responses, I discovered that:

- My outer life purpose is to create a life equal to my potential and to help others do the same.
- My inner gifts waiting to emerge through me are clarity, wisdom, insight and kindness.
- I will experience and bring forth my gifts by being present, relaxed, open and trusting.

You might struggle at first to identify your gifts; I did initially. The key is not to rush the process, but to keep playing with your answers until they feel right. You will know when you have discovered the right answer because you will feel a warmth and sense of expansion in your body. You will just know that you have hit the bull’s eye so to speak.

Another good way to do this work is to do it with a friend or partner. Get them to ask the questions and to write down your answers. Alternatively, give it a break for a few days and then come back to it. Being as relaxed as you can be while doing it makes it much easier for your truth to reveal itself to you.

Once you’ve discovered your outer life purpose, your inner gift and how to access it, what next? Two things 1) you allocate more of your time, energy and life to situations in which you are expressing your gift and 2) you start developing the skills that enable your gifts to emerge, in my case the skill was present-moment awareness.
Identify your strengths

One of the keys to happiness and fulfilment is to live life in a way that maximises your strengths and talents and minimises the impact of your weaknesses. A strength is something that you are good at, comes naturally to you and energises you when you use it. A weakness is something that you find hard to do and when you do, it drains you. We all have strengths and weaknesses – that’s part of being human. To help you identify your strengths I recommend using one of the following strengths assessment tools. The first one is called the VIA Strengths questionnaire and it’s free. You can find it at www.viastrengths.org. The other one is and Realise 2.0, which will help identify your strengths and your weaknesses. You can access it at www.cappeu.com for a small charge. Having identified what they are the next step is to start designing your day and your life in a way that harnesses your strengths, as well as your gifts and values.

discover your values

What do you truly value? What is of upmost importance to you in your life? If you took a look at how you spend your life right now what would you discover about what is important to you? Getting clarity around the answers to these questions, discovering your values and then living in alignment with your highest ones is absolutely at the heart of creating a fulfilling and meaningful life.
What are values?

Values embody what is most important to you, they define what really, truly matters to you at the deepest possible level. It’s important to distinguish values from goals. Values provide the direction, goals the destination. Values exist in the here and now – you can always honour a value, whereas goals exist in the future. For example a value of mine is honesty. In any given moment I can honour that value. A goal that is aligned with that value might be to sit down with my partner regularly and share with her how I’m feeling.

However, the problem for nearly all of us is that:

• so few of us are aware of what our values are
• we haven’t assessed whether the values we have and the priorities we assign to them are bringing us the quality of life we desire
• we’re unaware of the self-imposed rules around our values
• we have unprocessed fears that sabotage our ability to live in alignment with our values

So, values are not actions, things, possessions or destinations (goals), but ongoing actions i.e. you can be doing and honouring them on an ongoing basis right here, right now. Here is a list of some common values: honesty, integrity, intimacy, authenticity, acceptance, adventure, connection, contribution, fairness, kindness, love, humility, gratitude, freedom, fitness, creativity, courage, cooperation, compassion, caring, spirituality, beauty, excellence, assertiveness, mindfulness, trust and challenge.
The value of values

Why is working with your values important? In a nutshell, when you honour them they will bring you fulfilment. What’s more, values heavily influence your life choices and decisions, so if you sense that your life isn’t working for you, choosing new values or reprioritising existing values may help you to change your life direction considerably. Also, the human brain appears to be hard-wired for happiness via goal-seeking behaviour. So, setting goals that are aligned with your values and moving towards them will trigger the release of positive emotions, in order to motivate you and reinforce behaviours that support you in maturing as a human being.¹⁹ This explains why so many therapists and psychologists are now encouraging their patients to take values-directed actions that are intrinsically rewarding, in addition to training their capacity to hold their attention (mindfulness), so that they can consciously choose what to focus on and engage with.

EXERCISE: Identify your values

When attempting to discover what their values are, many people fall into the trap of saying what they think they should be, rather than describing what they actually are. The easiest way to get round this is to take an honest look at your life right now. Your life reflects your values back to you; they are observable.

The following questions will help you identify your existing values. Record your answers in a journal or on a piece of paper.
• If you had as much money as you needed and were living a comfortable lifestyle, what would the most fulfilling life possible look like for you? Spend some time reflecting on this and/or discussing it with a friend/partner. What values would you be honouring by living this life? Write them down.

• If you had the time or money, what would you most want to study, practise, master or research? What would you want to become an expert in? What values would you be honouring by living this life? Write them down.

• Make a list of things beyond food, shelter and clothing that you absolutely must have in order to be fulfilled and happy. For each of these things, what values are being honoured? Write them down.

• What causes are you willing to dedicate your life to? What values would you be honouring by living this life? Write them down.

• Identify a series of events that made you feel particularly angry or upset. Choose one of these and think about it for a moment. Now identify what value was not being expressed in that moment. Write it down. For example, Rita, a patient of mine, told me that she gets angry when her husband lies or exaggerates (she has a sixth sense that tells her when he is doing this), and from this she was able to see that the value of being honest wasn’t being respected. Honesty was therefore one of her values.

• Identify a peak moment in time, in which you were completely at peace and in the moment. What values were being honoured in that moment? Write them down. Rita described the feeling of empowerment and peace that she experienced when she was presenting to her business colleagues. The main value that was honoured in that moment was the feeling of connection.
Once you have a list of your values, the next step is to identify your top ten, prioritised in terms of how important they are to you, then to score out of ten the degree to which they are being honoured in your life right now (where 1 = not being honoured at all and 10 = completely honoured; anything less than 7 points to an area that needs to be addressed). Often, values can go together – for example, honesty/integrity or health/vitality (but if you do this, make sure they are compatible; freedom and security, for example are not) and lead with the one that is of greatest value to you. This takes a lot of time and reflection – you might want to write them in pencil first so that you can rearrange them as you wish. Working with a life coach can also help with this (see Resources, p. 00).

Here are Rita’s top ten values and their scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spirituality</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compassion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Honesty/integrity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creative self-expression</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Authenticity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Health/fitness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Service</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Love/connection</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Fun/laughter</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Freedom/independence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It’s not hard to see why Rita wasn’t experiencing fulfilment in her life with so few of her values being honoured. Now make your own list in a journal or notebook.

**Recognising the barriers to values-based living**

Having identified your current values, the next step is to identify clearly those that will and those that will not help you live your highest potential and move you towards a fulfilling life. (You will benefit immensely from increasing the priority of certain values – maybe new ones – and decreasing the priority of old ones.) Remember, values shape your life and life direction, so this exercise has the potential to make a significant difference to the quality of your life.

For each of the values that you identified in the exercise, ask yourself, ‘Is this a value that will support me in waking up and growing up and help me live the most fulfilling life possible?’ If so, write it down; if not, write down those values that *will* help you achieve this – and start to prioritise them. Be prepared, as before, to swap them round and change your mind quite a few times. That’s just part of the process.

**Your rules for living in alignment with your values**

So, you’ve identified what truly is important to you – your values – and all you have to do now is live in alignment with this in order to experience happiness and fulfilment. Unfortunately, however, it’s not that simple because we also have rules about how to fulfil our values, and many of us have fears that hold us back from honouring them.
You can elicit your rules by taking each of your values in turn and asking the question: ‘What needs to happen in order for that value to be fulfilled?’ Here is what one workshop participant, Laura, wrote:

- **Health - improving my physical health** I need to be slim, have no skin blemishes, have high energy levels and no health problems.

- **Connections – developing and deepening connections** I need people to be kind to me and to respect me; I need to feel special and appreciated; I need to feel safe with the person I am with.

- **Autonomy – freedom to be me** I need to be able to do what I want when I want; I need people to not control me.

- **Having fun** I need the people who come out with me in the evenings to be relaxed and having fun; I need to have new and exciting experiences when I’m with my friends.

The type of rules that Laura shared are not that uncommon, but there is a major problem. Laura’s rules require things to happen that are out of her control. Take ‘I need people to be kind to me and to respect me’, for example: unfortunately, it’s never going to happen, because she can’t control other people’s behaviour and feelings. For this reason, Laura will feel unloved most of the time (and she confirmed that this is true). So what’s the solution?
The key to fulfilling your rules is to rewrite them as positively stated ones over which you have complete control (and the more rules per value, the better). Here are the new rules that Laura came up with:

• **Health - improving my physical health** I will feel healthy/vital any time I eat healthy food, drink water, get rest and relaxation, meet my physical and emotional needs, exercise and spend time in nature.

• **Connections – developing and deepening connections** I will allow myself to feel love when I respect myself and treat myself with kindness and compassion, when I am kind and compassionate towards others, when I respectfully speak my truth and when I help or inspire others.

• **Autonomy – freedom to be me** I will allow myself to feel freedom when I speak my truth, set clear boundaries and take responsibility for my feelings, words and actions.

• **Having fun** I will allow myself to experience fun by enjoying and making the most of any situation.

What a difference! Laura’s new rules gave her – crucially – control over each action. She moved from disempowerment to empowerment in just a few minutes.

**What are your value-attached fears and feelings?**

You are getting closer to discovering how to live a values-driven life, but there is one more important piece of work to do.
When I compiled my own values list I placed honesty, integrity and sincerity at number one. I did so because when I am able to be honest and act with integrity and sincerity, I notice that all of my other values are much more likely to be fulfilled as a result. However, despite choosing things that were achievable and within my personal control as my highest values and rules, there were – and still are – occasions when I didn’t speak my truth. This is because I have fears that are pulling me away from and sabotaging my ability to fulfil my values. I have, in the past, experienced pain when speaking my truth and pleasure (relief/comfort/safety) by not doing so (usually by withholding or saying what I thought the other person wanted to hear). And, because my brain – like everyone’s – is programmed to avoid pain and seek pleasure, any time I want to speak my truth, past memories of pain would prevent me. The result is a conflict between values I hold dear – honesty, integrity and sincerity – and the fear of rejection or humiliation.

I started to overcome this by identifying the fear (or fears) that existed in relationship to my values – so-called value-attached fears. To do this, simply select each value in turn, and imagine living and experiencing them. Write down exactly what that value means to you, in the form of a value statement (see below). Next, ask yourself the following question: ‘What fears come up for me when I imagine living a life that embraces . . .’ (honesty, integrity and sincerity, for example). You then write down your fears next to your values or value statement. Here are just some of the values and fears that I had.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values statement</th>
<th>Fears</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To live with honesty, integrity and sincerity</td>
<td>That others will reject me and will be upset by what I say/how I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To realise my gifts and potential</td>
<td>That I won’t be able to stay committed and focused; that I will be moved in a direction my ego doesn’t want to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deepen my connection to spirit</td>
<td>That I will lose interest in worldly things, including family and work; I won’t have control over my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be a loving, caring, supportive partner</td>
<td>That I will be emotionally hurt, that I will be smothered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be a loving, caring, supportive father</td>
<td>That I will not know how to be with my children; that I won’t be good enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a healthy and vital body and mind</td>
<td>That I won’t be able to stay committed and focused; that I will lose motivation. That it will be hard work to keep it up and consume a lot of time/energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be broaden and deepen my understanding of the process of health</td>
<td>That I will be regarded as ‘weak’ or ‘wet’; that I will be taken advantage of.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is an example of some of my value-attached fears. You should identify the fears that are attached to all your values. The next step is to process them so that they are no longer strong enough to prevent you from consistently meeting your values. There are many different ways in which to do that; here are just a couple:

- Acknowledge your fears and share/talk about them with a friend.
• Process your fears/feelings fully (Cradling and EmoTrance are particularly useful, see Pillar Two, page 00).

**live in alignment with your highest values**

Having identified your life purpose, gifts, highest values, changed their rules and started to address any underlying fears and feelings, the next and most important step is to take daily action to ensure that you are living in alignment with them. This will liberate the vitality and fulfilment within you.

Try to focus on your top three or four values and, at the beginning of and throughout the day, ask yourself whether you are acting in alignment with them. For example, if your top four values were honesty, integrity, health and connection, you would ask yourself the following:

• How can I share honestly when speaking with people today?
• How can I act with integrity today?
• How can I be healthy and vital in body, mind and spirit today?
• How can I feel more connected and loving towards myself and others today?

**Shall I, shan’t I?**

In addition to asking the questions above at the start of every day (and they do need to be asked every day), there will be plenty of times when you have a decision to make about
some direction in your life. A good way to work out whether this decision will positively impact your life and bring you more fulfilment is to see how it will impact on your values. If, for example, I am offered an opportunity that will increase the fulfilment of my contribution values, but in doing so it reduces higher values, such as connection and intimacy, it’s likely that overall it won’t be the right decision for me. If, however, it increases my higher-ranked values it probably is.

**Setting value-based goals**

Some people love to set goals, as it provides them with a focus and limits distraction. I am all for this as long as the goals are realistic, flexible, authentic (they come from you and not anyone else), positively motivated and rooted in values and emotional needs. Here is a process that I use help my workshop participants set goals for themselves:

**EXERCISE: Set your value-based goals**

1. Bearing in mind your life purpose, gifts and highest values, decide on the specific goal or outcome that you would like.

2. How desirable and challenging is this goal (1 = not challenging, 10 = extremely challenging)? It should score at least five.

3. Think about your goal, breathe deeply and turn your attention to your body – do you feel conflict or harmony?

   Signs of conflict include feeling contracted, uneasy or uncomfortable; confusion; feeling heavy, sleepy and/or tired; doubt; boredom.
Signs of harmony include feeling expanded, light and at peace; clarity and alertness; feeling uplifted, energised and/or content; knowing; enthusiasm and motivation.

4. If you feel conflict, which aspect of your goal is causing this? Look at each part of your goal in turn and tune into the feedback from your body. Alternatively, ask yourself: ‘Am I choosing this goal because of some underlying fear, belief or worry?’ If so, what is that? Create a goal around it. For example, the goal of becoming a millionaire in order to feel successful could become the goal of cultivating self-acceptance, out of which might come financial success.

5. Modify and rewrite your goal until you feel signs of harmony. Write your new goal on a piece of paper or in a journal.

6. Now close your eyes, breathe deeply and create a movie of what your life would look like and how you would feel once this goal was accomplished. Give yourself plenty of time for this. It’s important that you associate with the image of yourself – in other words, you should experience yourself as the person in the movie. If it helps, use the following questions to inspire you:

- What do you see that shows you have solved the problem or achieved the goal?
- What are other people doing or saying that tells you you have succeeded?
- What are other people doing or saying that tells you that you have succeeded?
- What does it feel like?
- When do you realistically want to be in the position that you see in your mind’s eye?
• How will you know that you have achieved your goal?
• Is there a measure you can use?
• How much control or influence do you have with regard to this goal?

7. Now turn your attention to the past. Try and identify a moment or experience from the past when you successfully completed a goal. Relive it and allow yourself to become energised by it. Once you feel that energy running through you, let go of the old memory and animate your new movie with this energy. Infuse it with life and make it as real as possible.

8. Repeat this process three more times. You will know when it’s complete because when you think of your goal you will see and feel it as an energised reality. It will feel real.

9. If you get disorientated, confused or become unsure of what you are doing, just open your eyes, take a deep breath or have a glass of water and start again.

10. Once you have completed this process, the real key to achieving the goal is to reconnect with it at the start of every day. This tuning-in process is important, particularly when it is preceded by a few moments of giving thanks and appreciation for what you have in your life.

Creating goals from a place of fulfilment, rather than poverty, appears to be another critical factor in helping to achieve them.

Be open to the fact that as life circumstances change, and as you continue to grow and evolve, your goals will usually change and evolve also. It’s a good habit to regularly
review them, as with values (see p. 00), to ensure that they still reflect what is true for you. Once a month is about right for most people

**Pillar Three: Summary**

- The foundations of a fulfilling and meaningful life are gratitude and healthy self-care.
- Fulfilment and meaning come from meeting your emotional needs and taking actions that are aligned with your values, strengths and gifts.
- The purpose of life is to share our gifts, talents and strengths in a way that enhances and supports the well-being and evolution of ourselves and others.

**Pillar Three: Live a fulfilling and meaningful life**

[chap. head]

[FO]Is the life that you are currently living truly fulfilling and meaningful? Do you wake up in the morning with a real sense of how good it is to be alive? Are you dedicating your time and energy to the things that truly matter to you?

If your answer to any of these is, ‘No’, then this pillar is definitely for you. A fulfilling and meaningful life is as it sounds – full and meaningful. However, the fullness I am referring to has nothing to do with how busy your schedule is; it’s to do with a deep-
seated feeling of inner fulfilment, vitality and well-being – the true happiness that comes from living life in a way that enables your potential, talents, strengths and gifts to shine through. It’s about getting clear in your own mind what truly matters to you and then making sure that you live in alignment with those values.

People who consistently take action that satisfies their values and needs are healthier and happier and show greater levels of well-being after completing their goals, when compared with those who focus on goals that are not chosen on that basis. It’s about bringing all of yourself to life and engaging with it as fully as possible. Not doing this creates a type of pain that I call the pain of unfulfilled potential. It’s a heaviness, an emptiness and restlessness deep within you that arises whenever you move off course from your values, strengths and unique gifts or whenever you act in a way that is not true to who you are and what you stand for.

It’s so easy to get caught up in your own problems and your own thinking and lose sight of what is right about life and about yourself. But the purpose of life is to share our gifts, talents and strengths in a way that not only enhances our own well-being but that of others too. We are here to thrive and flourish as human beings – not in terms of material wealth, achievements and gain, but emotionally and spiritually.

Of course, you must address those issues that are causing mental distress and you must learn how to have a better relationship with yourself and with others. The key to true happiness, however, lies not in fixing problems, but in embracing a way of being and
living that enables you to fulfil your potential. When this happens, you shift from fixing to awakening, and from being self-centred to being of service.

The foundations – healthy self-care and gratitude [a-head]

[FO] To live in the world as an emotionally and psychologically mature adult you need solid foundations. Two of what I consider to be the most important foundations for creating a fulfilling and meaningful life are healthy self-care and gratitude. When these two are being actively nurtured each day, they provide the physical vitality, emotional balance and mental clarity for you to thrive and flourish. Let’s start by looking at healthy self-care.

Healthy self-care [b-head]

[FO] I define healthy self-care as the ongoing process of responding to the physical and emotional needs of your body and mind in a way that is balanced and moderate. Our physical needs (which are covered in Pillar Four) are for healthy food, water, physical activity, sleep, rest, relaxation, sunlight and a healthy environment. Our emotional needs, which not many people know about (and are discussed in this pillar), are for security, giving and receiving positive attention, connection with a wider community, an intimate close relationship with at least one other person, autonomy, status, competence, privacy and meaning and purpose.

The intention of healthy self-care is not only to prevent illness and if necessary support your recovery from various health problems, but to take care of your body–mind in a way
that enables you to experience your fullest physical, emotional, psychological and social potential.

**Why is healthy self-care so important?**

Healthy self-care doesn’t come naturally to most of us, and there are many reasons for this. We might, for example, not be aware of what our needs are (this is particularly the case if we are used to focusing on meeting the needs of others); we might have undiagnosed compulsions and addictions (which keep us out of the present moment); we might feel guilty about indulging ourselves by taking care of our needs; or, and this is very common, we are so busy, stressed and caught up in our thoughts that we simply don’t have the mental space to be aware of what our body is asking of us. I also think that for many people it comes down to the fact that they don’t really value their health and well-being.

**Display Case Study**

**CASE STUDY: Lorraine**

Lorraine, a thirty-seven-year-old mother of two, came to see me because she was experiencing repeated colds, indigestion and exhaustion. In addition to taking care of her children, she did the administration for her husband’s company and was ‘always available to her friends’. On most nights, she didn’t get to sleep until 11 p.m. It wasn’t hard to see that this kind, loving woman was simply overwhelmed by the way she was living her life. She had lost sight of who she was (beyond her roles as mother, wife and friend) and she no longer knew how to take care of her own needs because her energy
and attention were on people and things outside of her. While perceived as a super-organised person, on the inside she was empty, alone, tired and unhappy.

It was pretty straightforward to diagnose her as suffering from stress-induced illness, codependency (we examine this in Pillar Eight), sleep deprivation, adrenal exhaustion, anxiety, hormone imbalance and a low-functioning immune system. However, the scale and depth of her challenges made it imperative that I did not overwhelm her even more with a long ‘to-do’ list.

My starting point with Lorraine, as it is for many of my patients was to talk about the benefits of healthy self-care and the need for her to take responsibility for meeting her physical and emotional needs. We identified that her greatest physical need was for more sleep, and her greatest unmet emotional need was for an intimate, close relationship with at least one other person. Lorraine agreed that for the next two weeks she would make some positive changes in her life. She announced to her friends that she was unavailable after 8 p.m. and ensured that she was asleep by 10 p.m. each night. Her husband agreed to get up every other night if any of the kids woke up. On the emotional need front, she opened up to a close friend about what had been going on for her, and they have since been speaking every other day. For the first time, and within just two weeks, Lorraine felt more rested, supported and happy.

[END DISPLAY]

**The benefits of embracing healthy self-care**

[e-head]
If Lorraine’s case hasn’t quite convinced you of the value of healthy self-care, consider the findings of a recent Department of Health report. It found that people who embrace and prioritise healthy self-care experience:

- An improved ability to withstand and cope with stress
- A more positive outlook on life
- Better health and significantly improved quality of life
- Increased life expectancy
- Reduction in symptoms, such as insomnia, pain, depression and asthma
- Improved ability to make more informed decisions about health and well-being
- Increased self-esteem and sense of mastery
- A reduction in shame and feelings of estrangement
- Reduced psychosomatic symptoms
- Improved relationships

In addition, they reduce demand on health services and are less likely to require medications. Convinced? I hope so. Let’s start by looking at our emotional needs and how we can go about meeting them.

**meet your emotional needs**

To experience emotional health and reach psychological maturity each of us needs to meet certain emotional needs. Leaving them unmet is a major contributor to emotional and mental distress. My approach to emotional needs is based on the pioneering work of
an organisation called the Human Givens Institute (see Resources, p. 00). The term ‘human givens’ refers to four related ideas:

5. Our capacity to experience mental health, personal growth and optimum functioning is dependent upon our ability to satisfy nine genetically programmed emotional needs in an ongoing and balanced way. These needs are universal in that they apply to all people, regardless of culture or gender.

6. We are instinctively trying to fulfil these needs using specific resources that we are born with.

7. Our emotions are what drive us to take action so that we can get these needs met.

8. If we are unable to meet our emotional needs and/or apply our resources adequately this will inevitably lead to distress (anger, fear, anxiety and stress) and mental ill-health.

What are our emotional needs? [a-head]

[FO] As I pointed out at the start of this pillar, our nine emotional needs are: security, giving and receiving positive attention, connection with a wider community, an intimate close relationship with at least one other person, autonomy, status, competence, privacy, and meaning and purpose. Let’s look at each of these.

1. Security [d-head]

[FO] This includes the security of living in a safe environment and neighbourhood and the safety of knowing that you are physically and emotionally safe in the presence of the
people that surround you (both at home and your place of work). Security also includes feeling secure in your work, job and relationship. Feeling safe and knowing how to deal effectively with fear provides us with the necessary environment in which to develop and grow our potential.

2. **Giving and receiving positive attention** [d-head]

[FO] You just have to watch a child to witness how powerful this need is. But it isn’t confined to children – adults also need to give and receive positive attention. Much of what we do and say and how we dress, interact and project ourselves is influenced by our need for quality, sincere attention. Many of my patients are good at giving, but less so at receiving and digesting the energy of positive attention. This is often rooted in low self-esteem and co- and counter-dependency (see Pillar Eight, page 00).

3. **Connection with a wider community** [d-head]

[FO] We are intrinsically social creatures and need to feel that we are part of something beyond our immediate family group. Having a wider social network (friends) and enjoying the company of people with similar or common interests is a key need if you are to create total health. Having a network of friends and participating in groups or community-related projects are well known to protect against depression.

4. **An intimate close relationship with at least one other person** [d-head]

[FO] Intimacy means having meaningful emotional contact with another person. While the depth of the interaction will naturally vary, in respect of emotional growth and healing the most benefit is derived from being able to share the truth of yourself – the good, the bad and the ugly – with them. When this is received with understanding and
acceptance, the process of healing is supported. This kind of relationship could include your partner, a friend, therapist and/or spiritual/religious teacher.

5. Autonomy [d-head]

[FO]A person who feels that they have some degree of control in respect of their life situation (work, finances and relationships) is able to withstand stress and life’s challenges much more effectively than someone who has little or no control. Taking responsibility for your health and emotional well-being demonstrates that you are already increasing your autonomy.

6. Status [d-head]

[FO]In any given social situation, we each need to feel that we have our place and purpose – a sense that we are being recognised and respected for who we are. This needs to include our place within the home and at work. Status is something we give to ourselves and receive from others.

7. Competence [d-head]

[FO]Self-esteem – the estimation of yourself – is intimately tied up with feeling competent and having a sense of accomplishment in what you do. This can apply in many aspects of your life, including relationships, lovemaking, work, recreation and sports, and comes about by taking action that is in alignment with your gifts, strengths and values.

8. Privacy [d-head]

This is not so much about removing yourself from contact with others, but knowing that you can control the amount of contact you have with others, and use your private time to
reflect on and consolidate your experiences. It’s also about balance and moderation, i.e. not isolating yourself from others but taking time out regularly to rejuvenate.

9. Meaning and purpose  [d-head]

Our minds are constantly trying to attach meaning to what we do and what we experience. When something has meaning, it takes on importance and adds depth and flavour to life, for better or for worse. Tied in with meaning is purpose – the feelings of determination and drive that come from having a vision and belief in what you are doing. Taking actions that are aligned with your values, growing and evolving as human being and being stretched and engaged with the world are some of the keys to creating positive meaning and purpose.

[line break]

In addition to the nine emotional needs, nature has also endowed us with the specific resources to meet them. These include:

• Curiosity – the ability to develop learn and acquire new knowledge and insight
• The ability to build rapport, empathise and connect with others
• Imagination, which provides the ability to solve problems, plan the future, instruct the subconscious mind and alter memories that might have adverse effects
• A conscious, rational mind that can analyse, make plans and control emotions
• The ability to ‘know’ – understand the world unconsciously through metaphorical pattern matching
• An observing self – a part of us that can step back from and observe our emotions and thoughts
• Dreaming – nature’s way of discharging stress (see page 00)

[FO]Using these resources to meet your emotional needs in a healthy and balanced way is one of the most important keys to emotional and mental health. A failure to meet emotional needs leads to emotional and psychological distress – whether you are aware of it or not. Left unresolved, this accumulated distress often deteriorates into anxiety, addictions, depression and, in the predisposed, psychosis. The key, therefore, is to identify which of your emotional needs is not being met. I ask all my patients to fill in the questionnaire below and I invite you to do the same.

**QUESTIONNAIRE: Are your emotional needs being met?**  [quest-head]

Read through each question slowly and rate how well the various emotional needs are being met in your life now. For each one, give yourself a score of between one and seven (where 1 = emotional need completely unmet and unfulfilled and 7 = emotional need completely met and fulfilled). Leave out any questions that are not applicable.

Note: watch out for the tendency to rush this exercise or to score yourself too highly. Once you have a score in mind, ask yourself, ‘Does this feel accurate?’ If it does, write it down; if not, reassess and score again.

• Do you feel secure in all major areas of your life?  ____

• Do you feel that you are receiving enough positive attention?  ____

• Do you think you give other people enough positive attention?  ____
• Do you feel that you have a choice as to how you live your life? ___

• Do you feel connected to some part of the wider community? ___

• Do you take time for reflection when you need and want to? ___

• Do you have at least one intimate relationship in which you are totally accepted for who you are? ___

• Do you feel emotionally connected to your partner? ___

• Do you feel emotionally connected to your close friends? ___

• Do you feel emotionally connected to your family? ___

• Do you feel competent in your main occupation? ___

• Do you have a sense of accomplishment in what you do on most days? ___

• Are you respected and acknowledged by your friends? ___

• Are you respected and acknowledged by your work peers? ___

• Are you respected and acknowledged by your family? ___

• Are you respected and acknowledged by your partner? ___

• Overall, do you feel that your life is meaningful and fulfilling? ___

[FO] Having completed the questionnaire, go through it again and consider whether the score you have given yourself is an accurate reflection of reality. Generally, the lower the score for a particular emotional need, the greater the need for action. My experience has shown that a score of five or less represents a barrier to well-being, and that three or less indicates an unmet need that is almost certainly contributing to stress and/or a mental health problem. Write down your three lowest-scoring emotional needs in a notebook or journal.
How to meet your emotional needs [a-head]

[FO]Now that you know what your unmet emotional needs are, it’s time to start taking practical action to meet them. If you are experiencing distress and/or a mental-health problem you may need a friend or even a Human Givens therapist to support you (see Resources, page 00). However, it is possible to make very positive changes by yourself.

I’ll now guide you through the same process that I use with my patients. I have provided a template below using the example of the need for giving and receiving positive attention. Write the questions in your notebook, replacing the example given in italics with the unmet need that you want to work on. You will then need to write your responses to each of the questions. Start with the unmet emotional need that is troubling you the most.

The emotional need-fulfilment process   [b-head]

• What does giving and receiving positive attention mean to me? If my need for giving and receiving positive attention was fulfilled, what would be different and positive about my life right now? (Close your eyes and imagine that this is true for you – what would you see, hear, feel, notice? Give yourself plenty of time to do this.)

• I wonder how I can give and allow myself to receive more positive attention? What underlying beliefs are contributing to my issues around attention? How can I transform them? (See Pillar One – ‘Transform self-limiting beliefs’, page 00.)

• What practical steps can I take today in order to increase my ability to give and receive positive attention?
Who can I ask for support and help in relationship to this issue?

Here are some suggestions for where to look in this book for support in addressing your unmet emotional needs:

- **For security** – see Pillar Two, ‘Become skilful in emotional processing’, page 00 (particularly fear); Pillar Seven, ‘Identify the presence of co-dependency/counter-dependency behaviours’ (page 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it); and ‘Develop and maintain functional boundaries’, page 00.

- **For giving and receiving positive attention** – see Pillar Seven, ‘Practise empathy’ (page 00) and ‘Practise the Four As of Healthy Relationships (page 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it).

- **Connection with a wider community** – consider doing voluntary work, attending local events, getting involved with your local church, attending an evening class, joining a local special-interest group or making an effort to get to know your neighbours.

- **An intimate close relationship with at least one other person** – see all of Pillars Seven and Eight.

- **Autonomy** – see Choose Happiness Now (the section on committed action, page 00); the rest of this pillar, especially the section on values, page 00), Pillar Six, ‘Psychological stress’ (page 00); and Pillar Seven, ‘Identify the presence of co-dependency/counter-dependency behaviours’ (page 00) and ‘Develop and maintain functional boundaries’ (page 00).

- **Status** – see all of Pillars Seven and Eight.
• **Competence** – see the rest of this pillar, especially the sections on values, gifts and strengths, pages 00 and 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it).

• **Privacy** – build time into your day in which you can be both alone and able to reflect on your experiences (see the section on rest and relaxation in Pillar Four, page 00).

• **Meaning and purpose** – see the rest of this pillar, especially the section on values, page 00) and Pillar Eight (all of it). Meaning and purpose also come from spiritual and religious practices, having a life-enhancing philosophy of life and developing new skills. How can you develop any one of these?

[display case study]

**CASE STUDY: Chris**  

Chris did the emotional needs questionnaire on page 00 and scored low in security, competence and wider community. Here are the solutions he came up with (with the help of a good friend):

• **Security** – move house, put additional bolts on the door, install a burglar alarm.

• **Competence** – ask boss for more training, ask boss to be moved to the human resources team (I have a lot of HR experience), find a new job, take an online course or evening course in business management.

• **Wider community** – take evening classes, volunteer at local woodland trust, go to meditation classes in local village hall, join rotary club
Chris began putting some of these into action straight away. Despite his fears and reservations about talking to his boss, his boss agreed to move him into HR, and within a month he was doing work that he felt competent in. He felt much more safe having fitted the bolts and burglar alarm; he also subsequently started a neighbourhood watch scheme, much to the delight of some of the local residents and he took up voluntary work and regular meditation classes. Within four weeks, his depression and anxiety had lifted and he felt ‘more empowered and at peace’ than he had ever been. All because he started meeting his emotional needs.

[end case study]

**embrace gratitude [mini chap. head]**

[FO]One of the most effective (and often quickest) ways to shift the way you feel, lift your mood and enhance your well-being is to practise gratitude. Robert Emmons, the world’s leading gratitude researcher, describes gratitude as the ‘felt sense of wonder, thankfulness and appreciation for life’. Along with healthy self-care, gratitude provides the foundations upon which a fulfilling and meaningful life is built.

One of the many fascinating discoveries to emerge from the field of positive psychology – the study of how human beings flourish – is that the regular and deliberate practice of gratitude can bring about significant relief from stress and considerable improvements in happiness, motivation, optimism, energy levels, sleep and quality of life. It is also a powerful antidote to ‘negative emotions’ and depression, as well as the foundation upon
which a fulfilling life is created. In my own work I have found that it is as important to practise cultivating positive emotional states, such as gratitude, as it is to deal with anger, grief and mental illness.

Here are two suggestions for increasing the level of gratitude in your life. I suggest you do both for a week and then stick with the one you enjoy most.

**EXERCISE: The gratitude ritual  [exercise-head]**

The following is a five-minute ritual that I highly recommend you do every morning for seven days. It’s a highly effective way to shift yourself into a deep sense of gratitude.

Read through the steps below once, then try them out yourself. While this can be done in your head, for best results you should write parts one, two and three out on a piece of paper or, preferably, in a journal.

7. Today is a new day. The past is past and today I choose to take actions that will support me waking up and growing up and move me more fully into my potential as a human being.

8. Today I open myself to guidance, to true happiness and new ways of bringing joy to myself and others.

9. I am truly grateful for . . . [write down at least three things].

10. Now, taking into account your gifts, strengths and values (which you will discover in the remainder of this pillar), close your eyes and create a mental picture of what a fulfilling and meaningful life would look like for you.
Experience yourself living this life as though it is happening now. Take time to see what it looks like? How would you be spending your time? Who would you be surrounded by? How would you be as a person? Don’t worry about seeing it clearly; getting a sense of it will be enough.

11. Keeping your eyes closed, turn your attention to what you are now feeling. Allow yourself to welcome it and feel it fully for ten seconds or so.

12. Eyes still closed, imagine that this new life was really happening and focus on the gratitude that you have because this is so. Allow those feelings of gratitude to arise in you and, as they do, feel them fully. Enjoy the feelings you are now experiencing. When you are ready, move on with your day.

**EXERCISE: Keep a gratitude journal**

[FO]Write in a journal some of the things you have to be grateful for. This can be anything from the beauty of the sky outside to the joy of your children – whatever works for you. Some people really enjoy doing this every day, others once a week – you will find out what suits you.

I get my patients to start by writing down two things for which they are grateful and two things that they appreciate about themselves. For example:

Today, I am grateful for:

3. the aliveness that I’m feeling in my body, as it provides me with the inspiration and energy to do my work.
4. the fingers I have, as they allow me to type this message.

Today I appreciate:

4. the loving respect with which I greeted my daughter this morning.
5. the friendly manner with which I spoke to Susan on the phone

[FO]One of the defining features and experiences of someone who is living in alignment with their true self, is the gratefulness that they have for simply being alive. A good barometer of how in touch you are with your true self is the amount of gratitude that you are aware of in each moment. Take a moment to get in touch with it now.

**identify your life purpose and gifts** [mini chap. head]

[FO]Imagine that within you is a gift that when expressed will bring you and the people around you a great deal of joy. And imagine that one of the master keys to true happiness and inner fulfilment was to discover and start using that gift. You’d be pretty keen to find out what it is, wouldn’t you?

The idea of us each having a gift was something that I discovered when I took an honest look at what brought me and others the most joy in life. I noticed that there were certain moments in which I experienced a deep sense of fulfilment and inner peace and that those
moments happened repeatedly whenever I was in a specific situation and able to allow certain qualities to emerge.

This led me to develop the exercise below, which I have since used with my patients to help them discover their ‘outer life purpose’ (what will bring them and others the greatest fulfilment and joy) and their ‘inner gift’ (the qualities from within that are waiting to be expressed through their outer life purpose). The process I use also helps to identify the necessary conditions that allow this to happen. As people use this discovery process and start to focus on using their gifts whenever they can, their fulfilment and happiness levels increase substantially. It’s not a panacea, but it is an important part of the jigsaw for transforming your life.

EXERCISE: Discover your life purpose and gifts [exercise-head]

1. What is your life purpose? Think about what you love to do or would love to do that would bring you a deep sense of fulfilment, as well as making a positive contribution to the well-being of others and/or the planet. If you had no money worries whatsoever, what would you be doing simply because of the joy it brings to you and others? My response to this is: ‘To create a life equal to my potential and to help others do the same.’ Write your own in a journal or notebook.

2. What is your inner gift? When you are doing what you love, what are the exact qualities that you are allowing to emerge from within you? This takes you much deeper
and reveals your inner gift. My response to this is: ‘I am allowing clarity, wisdom, insight and kindness to emerge through me.’ Write your own in a journal or notebook.

3. **What liberates your gifts?** How do you need to be in order to experience your inner and outer gifts? What needs to happen in order for you to experience them? My response to this is: ‘By being present, relaxed and open.’ Write your own in a journal or notebook.

[line break]

So, to summarise, using my own responses, I discovered that:

- My outer life purpose is to create a life equal to my potential and to help others do the same.
- My inner gifts waiting to emerge through me are clarity, wisdom, insight and kindness.
- I will experience and bring forth my gifts by being present, relaxed, open and trusting.

[FO]You might struggle at first to identify your gifts; I did initially. The key is not to rush the process, but to keep playing with your answers until they feel right. You will know when you have discovered the right answer because you will feel a warmth and sense of expansion in your body. You will just know that you have hit the bull’s eye so to speak. Another good way to do this work is to do it with a friend or partner. Get them to ask the questions and to write down your answers. Alternatively, give it a break for a few days and then come back to it. Being as relaxed as you can be while doing it makes it much easier for your truth to reveal itself to you.
Once you’ve discovered your outer life purpose, your inner gift and how to access it, what next? Two things 1) you allocate more of your time, energy and life to situations in which you are expressing your gift and 2) you start developing the skills that enable your gifts to emerge, in my case the skill was present-moment awareness.

[box]

**Identify your strengths**

One of the keys to happiness and fulfilment is to live life in a way that maximises your strengths and talents and minimises the impact of your weaknesses. A strength is something that you are good at, comes naturally to you and energises you when you use it. A weakness is something that you find hard to do and when you do, it drains you. We all have strengths and weaknesses – that’s part of being human. To help you identify your strengths I recommend using one of the following strengths assessment tools. The first one is called the VIA Strengths questionnaire and it’s free. You can find it at [www.viastrengths.org](http://www.viastrengths.org). The other one is and Realise 2.0, which will help identify your strengths and your weaknesses. You can access it at [www.cappeu.com](http://www.cappeu.com) for a small charge.

Having identified what they are the next step is to start designing your day and your life in a way that harnesses your strengths, as well as your gifts and values.

[END BOX]

discover your values  

[mini chap. head]
What do you truly value? What is of upmost importance to you in your life? If you took a look at how you spend your life right now what would you discover about what is important to you? Getting clarity around the answers to these questions, discovering your values and then living in alignment with your highest ones is absolutely at the heart of creating a fulfilling and meaningful life.

**What are values?**

Values embody what is most important to you, they define what really, truly matters to you at the deepest possible level. It’s important to distinguish values from goals. Values provide the direction, goals the destination. Values exist in the here and now – you can always honour a value, whereas goals exist in the future. For example a value of mine is honesty. In any given moment I can honour that value. A goal that is aligned with that value might be to sit down with my partner regularly and share with her how I’m feeling.

However, the problem for nearly all of us is that:

- so few of us are aware of what our values are
- we haven’t assessed whether the values we have and the priorities we assign to them are bringing us the quality of life we desire
- we’re unaware of the self-imposed rules around our values
- we have unprocessed fears that sabotage our ability to live in alignment with our values
So, values are not actions, things, possessions or destinations (goals), but ongoing actions i.e. you can be doing and honouring them on an ongoing basis right here, right now. Here is a list of some common values: honesty, integrity, intimacy, authenticity, acceptance, adventure, connection, contribution, fairness, kindness, love, humility, gratitude, freedom, fitness, creativity, courage, cooperation, compassion, caring, spirituality, beauty, excellence, assertiveness, mindfulness, trust and challenge.

**The value of values**  [b-head]

Why is working with your values important? In a nutshell, when you honour them they will bring you fulfilment. What’s more, values heavily influence your life choices and decisions, so if you sense that your life isn’t working for you, choosing new values or reprioritising existing values may help you to change your life direction considerably. Also, the human brain appears to be hard-wired for happiness via goal-seeking behaviour. So, setting goals that are aligned with your values and moving towards them will trigger the release of positive emotions, in order to motivate you and reinforce behaviours that support you in maturing as a human being. This explains why so many therapists and psychologists are now encouraging their patients to take values-directed actions that are intrinsically rewarding, in addition to training their capacity to hold their attention (mindfulness), so that they can consciously choose what to focus on and engage with.

**EXERCISE: Identify your values**  [a-head]

When attempting to discover what their values are, many people fall into the trap of saying what they think they should be, rather than describing what they actually are. The
The easiest way to get round this is to take an honest look at your life right now. Your life reflects your values back to you; they are observable.

The following questions will help you identify your existing values. Record your answers in a journal or on a piece of paper.

• If you had as much money as you needed and were living a comfortable lifestyle, what would the most fulfilling life possible look like for you? Spend some time reflecting on this and/or discussing it with a friend/partner. What values would you be honouring by living this life? Write them down.

• If you had the time or money, what would you most want to study, practise, master or research? What would you want to become an expert in? What values would you be honouring by living this life? Write them down.

• Make a list of things beyond food, shelter and clothing that you absolutely must have in order to be fulfilled and happy. For each of these things, what values are being honoured? Write them down.

• What causes are you willing to dedicate your life to? What values would you be honouring by living this life? Write them down.

• Identify a series of events that made you feel particularly angry or upset. Choose one of these and think about it for a moment. Now identify what value was not being expressed in that moment. Write it down. For example, Rita, a patient of mine, told me that she gets angry when her husband lies or exaggerates (she has a sixth sense
that tells her when he is doing this), and from this she was able to see that the value of being honest wasn’t being respected. Honesty was therefore one of her values.

- Identify a peak moment in time, in which you were completely at peace and in the moment. What values were being honoured in that moment? Write them down. Rita described the feeling of empowerment and peace that she experienced when she was presenting to her business colleagues. The main value that was honoured in that moment was the feeling of connection.

Once you have a list of your values, the next step is to identify your top ten, prioritised in terms of how important they are to you, then to score out of ten the degree to which they are being honoured in your life right now (where 1 = not being honoured at all and 10 = completely honoured; anything less than 7 points to an area that needs to be addressed). Often, values can go together – for example, honesty/integrity or health/vitality (but if you do this, make sure they are compatible; freedom and security, for example are not) and lead with the one that is of greatest value to you. This takes a lot of time and reflection – you might want to write them in pencil first so that you can rearrange them as you wish. Working with a life coach can also help with this (see Resources, p. 00).

Here are Rita’s top ten values and their scores:

[display]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Spirituality</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Compassion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty/integrity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative self-expression</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/fitness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love/connection</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/laughter</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom/independence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s not hard to see why Rita wasn’t experiencing fulfilment in her life with so few of her values being honoured. Now make your own list in a journal or notebook.

**Recognising the barriers to values-based living [a-head]**

Having identified your current values, the next step is to identify clearly those that will and those that will not help you live your highest potential and move you towards a fulfilling life. (You will benefit immensely from increasing the priority of certain values – maybe new ones – and decreasing the priority of old ones.) Remember, values shape your life and life direction, so this exercise has the potential to make a significant difference to the quality of your life.

For each of the values that you identified in the exercise, ask yourself, ‘Is this a value that will support me in waking up and growing up and help me live the most fulfilling life possible?’ If so, write it down; if not, write down those values that *will* help you achieve...
this – and start to prioritise them. Be prepared, as before, to swap them round and change your mind quite a few times. That’s just part of the process.

**Your rules for living in alignment with your values**  
[FO]So, you’ve identified what truly is important to you – your values – and all you have to do now is live in alignment with this in order to experience happiness and fulfilment. Unfortunately, however, it’s not that simple because we also have rules about how to fulfil our values, and many of us have fears that hold us back from honouring them.

You can elicit your rules by taking each of your values in turn and asking the question: ‘What needs to happen in order for that value to be fulfilled?’ Here is what one workshop participant, Laura, wrote:

- **Health** – improving my physical health I need to be slim, have no skin blemishes, have high energy levels and no health problems.

- **Connections** – developing and deepening connections I need people to be kind to me and to respect me; I need to feel special and appreciated; I need to feel safe with the person I am with.

- **Autonomy** – freedom to be me I need to be able to do what I want when I want; I need people to not control me.

- **Having fun** I need the people who come out with me in the evenings to be relaxed and having fun; I need to have new and exciting experiences when I’m with my friends.
The type of rules that Laura shared are not that uncommon, but there is a major problem. Laura’s rules require things to happen that are out of her control. Take ‘I need people to be kind to me and to respect me’, for example: unfortunately, it’s never going to happen, because she can’t control other people’s behaviour and feelings. For this reason, Laura will feel unloved most of the time (and she confirmed that this is true). So what’s the solution?

The key to fulfilling your rules is to rewrite them as positively stated ones over which you have complete control (and the more rules per value, the better). Here are the new rules that Laura came up with:

- **Health – improving my physical health** I will feel healthy/vital any time I eat healthy food, drink water, get rest and relaxation, meet my physical and emotional needs, exercise and spend time in nature.

- **Connections – developing and deepening connections** I will allow myself to feel love when I respect myself and treat myself with kindness and compassion, when I am kind and compassionate towards others, when I respectfully speak my truth and when I help or inspire others.

- **Autonomy – freedom to be me** I will allow myself to feel freedom when I speak my truth, set clear boundaries and take responsibility for my feelings, words and actions.

- **Having fun** I will allow myself to experience fun by enjoying and making the most of any situation.
What a difference! Laura’s new rules gave her – crucially – control over each action. She moved from disempowerment to empowerment in just a few minutes.

What are your value-attached fears and feelings? [b-head]

You are getting closer to discovering how to live a values-driven life, but there is one more important piece of work to do.

When I compiled my own values list I placed honesty, integrity and sincerity at number one. I did so because when I am able to be honest and act with integrity and sincerity, I notice that all of my other values are much more likely to be fulfilled as a result. However, despite choosing things that were achievable and within my personal control as my highest values and rules, there were – and still are – occasions when I didn’t speak my truth. This is because I have fears that are pulling me away from and sabotaging my ability to fulfil my values. I have, in the past, experienced pain when speaking my truth and pleasure (relief/comfort/safety) by not doing so (usually by withholding or saying what I thought the other person wanted to hear). And, because my brain – like everyone’s – is programmed to avoid pain and seek pleasure, any time I want to speak my truth, past memories of pain would prevent me. The result is a conflict between values I hold dear – honesty, integrity and sincerity – and the fear of rejection or humiliation.

I started to overcome this by identifying the fear (or fears) that existed in relationship to my values – so-called value-attached fears. To do this, simply select each value in turn, and imagine living and experiencing them. Write down exactly what that value means to
you, in the form of a value statement (see below). Next, ask yourself the following question: ‘What fears come up for me when I imagine living a life that embraces . . .’ (honesty, integrity and sincerity, for example). You then write down your fears next to your values or value statement. Here are just some of the values and fears that I had.

[display]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values statement</th>
<th>Fears</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To live with honesty, integrity and sincerity</td>
<td>That others will reject me and will be upset by what I say/how I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To realise my gifts and potential</td>
<td>That I won’t be able to stay committed and focused; that I will be moved in a direction my ego doesn’t want to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deepen my connection to spirit</td>
<td>That I will lose interest in worldly things, including family and work; I won’t have control over my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be a loving, caring, supportive partner</td>
<td>That I will be emotionally hurt, that I will be smothered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be a loving, caring, supportive father</td>
<td>That I will not know how to be with my children; that I won’t be good enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a healthy and vital body and mind</td>
<td>That I won’t be able to stay committed and focused; that I will lose motivation. That it will be hard work to keep it up and consume a lot of time/energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be broaden and deepen my understanding of the process of health</td>
<td>That I will be regarded as ‘weak’ or ‘wet’; that I will be taken advantage of.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is an example of some of my value-attached fears. You should identify the fears that are attached to all your values. The next step is to process them so that they are no longer strong enough to prevent you from consistently meeting your values. There are many different ways in which to do that; here are just a couple:

- Acknowledge your fears and share/talk about them with a friend.

- Process your fears/feelings fully (Cradling and EmoTrance are particularly useful, see Pillar Two, page 00).

live in alignment with your highest values [mini chap.

head]

Having identified your life purpose, gifts, highest values, changed their rules and started to address any underlying fears and feelings, the next and most important step is to take daily action to ensure that you are living in alignment with them. This will liberate the vitality and fulfilment within you.

Try to focus on your top three or four values and, at the beginning of and throughout the day, ask yourself whether you are acting in alignment with them. For example, if your top four values were honesty, integrity, health and connection, you would ask yourself the following:
• How can I share honestly when speaking with people today?
• How can I act with integrity today?
• How can I be healthy and vital in body, mind and spirit today?
• How can I feel more connected and loving towards myself and others today?

Shall I, shan’t I?  [a-head]

[FO]In addition to asking the questions above at the start of every day (and they do need to be asked every day), there will be plenty of times when you have a decision to make about some direction in your life. A good way to work out whether this decision will positively impact your life and bring you more fulfilment is to see how it will impact on your values. If, for example, I am offered an opportunity that will increase the fulfilment of my contribution values, but in doing so it reduces higher values, such as connection and intimacy, it’s likely that overall it won’t be the right decision for me. If, however, it increases my higher-ranked values it probably is.

Setting value-based goals  [a-head]

[FO]Some people love to set goals, as it provides them with a focus and limits distraction. I am all for this as long as the goals are realistic, flexible, authentic (they come from you and not anyone else), positively motivated and rooted in values and emotional needs. Here is a process that I use help my workshop participants set goals for themselves:
**EXERCISE: Set your value-based goals** [exercise-head]

11. Bearing in mind your life purpose, gifts and highest values, decide on the specific goal or outcome that you would like.

12. How desirable and challenging is this goal (1 = not challenging, 10 = extremely challenging)? It should score at least five.

13. Think about your goal, breathe deeply and turn your attention to your body – do you feel conflict or harmony?

   Signs of conflict include feeling contracted, uneasy or uncomfortable; confusion; feeling heavy, sleepy and/or tired; doubt; boredom.

   Signs of harmony include feeling expanded, light and at peace; clarity and alertness; feeling uplifted, energised and/or content; knowing; enthusiasm and motivation.

14. If you feel conflict, which aspect of your goal is causing this? Look at each part of your goal in turn and tune into the feedback from your body. Alternatively, ask yourself: ‘Am I choosing this goal because of some underlying fear, belief or worry?’ If so, what is that? Create a goal around it. For example, the goal of becoming a millionaire in order to feel successful could become the goal of cultivating self-acceptance, out of which might come financial success.

15. Modify and rewrite your goal until you feel signs of harmony. Write your new goal on a piece of paper or in a journal.

16. Now close your eyes, breathe deeply and create a movie of what your life would look like and how you would feel once this goal was accomplished. Give yourself plenty of time for this. It’s important that you associate with the image of yourself – in other
words, you should experience yourself as the person in the movie. If it helps, use the following questions to inspire you:

- What do you see that shows you have solved the problem or achieved the goal?
- What are other people doing or saying that tells you you have succeeded?
- What are other people doing or saying that tells you that you have succeeded?
- What does it feel like?
- When do you realistically want to be in the position that you see in your mind’s eye?
- How will you know that you have achieved your goal?
- Is there a measure you can use?
- How much control or influence do you have with regard to this goal?

17. Now turn your attention to the past. Try and identify a moment or experience from the past when you successfully completed a goal. Relive it and allow yourself to become energised by it. Once you feel that energy running through you, let go of the old memory and animate your new movie with this energy. Infuse it with life and make it as real as possible.

18. Repeat this process three more times. You will know when it’s complete because when you think of your goal you will see and feel it as an energised reality. It will feel real.

19. If you get disorientated, confused or become unsure of what you are doing, just open your eyes, take a deep breath or have a glass of water and start again.
20. Once you have completed this process, the real key to achieving the goal is to reconnect with it at the start of every day. This tuning-in process is important, particularly when it is preceded by a few moments of giving thanks and appreciation for what you have in your life.

[FO]Creating goals from a place of fulfilment, rather than poverty, appears to be another critical factor in helping to achieve them.

Be open to the fact that as life circumstances change, and as you continue to grow and evolve, your goals will usually change and evolve also. It’s a good habit to regularly review them, as with values (see p. 00), to ensure that they still reflect what is true for you. Once a month is about right for most people.

**Pillar Three: Summary [box head]**

- The foundations of a fulfilling and meaningful life are gratitude and healthy self-care.
- Fulfilment and meaning come from meeting your emotional needs and taking actions that are aligned with your values, strengths and gifts.
- The purpose of life is to share our gifts, talents and strengths in a way that enhances and supports the well-being and evolution of ourselves and others.