

sort

your

life

out

Set your GPS to head
in the right direction

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Start here.

Sure on where you're heading? Problem is, all too often we achieve things that on paper make life perfect. But for some reason, it just doesn't feel all that great. Often we're left wanting more.

If you could benefit from a little more direction in your life, it might be time to identify what's important to you; these are your values. Values are like the GPS coordinates that keep you on track for a life lived on your terms.

A quick five minute exercise will reveal your top three values. Plug these into your GPS and you can be confident you're heading towards what *actually* makes you fulfilled, rather than what *should*.

Reading time: 12 minutes

How do you know,

if you don't know?

Do you remember when you were a kid and your teacher asked what you wanted to be when you grew up? A teacher? An astronaut? A fireman? We start planning these things from when we are just three-feet tall. So it can be quite a surprise when, despite having achieved everything we dreamed of, one day we realise that the life we've worked so hard to get is just not working for us.

Something's off. Something's missing, right?

I've experienced this first hand.

Before I started working in the health and fitness space, I was a design engineer on the London 2012 Olympic Stadium. In many ways, this was my dream job. Literally. I had even listed 'working on an Olympic stadium' as one of my ultimate goals in my university scholarship applications. It was the height of what I had imagined. And I had achieved it by the age of 23. So it came as a surprise when I sat in the stadium during the Olympic closing ceremony and didn't feel the joy I expected. Something was off.

I should have felt at my absolute peak.

Instead I was actually a little sad. That night I went home, sat on my bed and asked myself what was wrong. When I chatted with friends about it, they said I *should* feel so proud and grateful. Of course I agreed. I felt honoured and blessed. Yet I just didn't feel all that lit up inside.

I couldn't ignore that feeling.

So after quite a bit of soul searching, I realised I was sad because I wasn't living life according to what was important to me. I wasn't honouring my values. I wasn't even sure I knew what they were.

I had been making decisions based on how I would best avoid not having enough money or stability in my life, both fears of mine.

In actual fact I was moving away, rather than moving closer to the things things that actually lit me up inside. I had focused on 'shoulds' and 'achievement'.

I had aimed for the highest I possibly could, because that's what I *should* do, right? I had closed my eyes and ears to 'wants' and 'fulfilment'.

I was successful and had stability, but I sure wasn't happy.

It was time to make a change.

Step one?

Figuring out my values.

Face your values.

So, what are values? Values are an idea, a concept captured in a word, that's linked to what you believe to be incredibly important to you and your life. It might be honesty, freedom, creativity or relationships. It might be none of those things. In an exercise later, I've included a whole list of possible values. Of course it's not exhaustive but it's a great starting point.

When we honour our values, we find joy, contentment and happiness. We feel fulfilled. When we don't, we feel it too. But not so positively.

What's your destination?

Ultimately, life is a journey and we're in the driver's seat. Happiness is our aim, our ideal destination and co-pilot for the whole journey. We get to influence where, how fast and how smoothly we go, but it's up to us to set the route. Our values help us do this. Rather than just drifting along in the dark hoping to stumble upon joy and

allowing life to happen to us, knowing our values can show us a clearer path. This lets us create a life that happens *for* us, rather than *to* us.

Our life goals ought to be shaped by our values. For instance, if ‘stability’ is currently important to you, then choosing a career as a freelancer might not be the best idea. If ‘connection’ is key to your happiness, choosing to be a solo Antarctic explorer for years might be too lonely. In this way, your values act as the GPS for your life.

They’re your internal road map in the amazing adventure that is life.

Are you just avoiding traffic?

Of course, we can still set goals and find happiness without knowing our values, and we can still experience periods of fulfillment, but the process can be much simpler if we cut straight to the chase.

There’s a tendency to get lost in running away from things that don’t feel good, that we’re scared of, or just don’t make us feel good. Rather than running *towards* the things we want.

Let’s look at why we’re running.

Growing up, I experienced a lot of scarcity and want. I dreamt of a good job where I earned a lot of money. I was determined. I thought financial stability and career success would allow me the control things and open up limitless opportunities and freedom.

These are perfectly good goals. Only I was focused on them not because they were what I desperately wanted, but rather because they were tied to something I didn't want. I was fearful of not having freedom or control. Yet I found myself in a career that was restrictive and saw me desk bound.

Goals should excite us. Draw us in. Not be driven by fear.

Achievement versus fulfilment.

Do you want to be successful? Yes, me too. We all do, right?

Let's consider achievement and fulfilment for a moment, because although both are linked to success, they're actually quite different concepts.

Achievement tends to be about what society says you should do. It's tied to conforming to cultural norms. It might be having a fast car or a lot of cash, and it's usually driven from a place of comparison, status and ego.

But just imagine you took these achievements to the moon. There's nothing there, right? Without anything surrounding you and no comparisons, would these achievements mean something to you? Still make you happy?

You see, often 'should' plays a big role in achievement. When we say a sentence using 'should' — like 'I *should* be happy', 'I *should* take that promotion' — it indicates that it's probably coming from a place of either your own, or other people's judgement. 'Should' needs to take a back seat and be fastened up, tightly. Instead it's important to ask: *Are* you happy? Do you *want* to take that promotion? Does it excite you? What do you actually want?

Fulfilment is much more about what lights you up inside. What feels good to you? What puts you into a state of 'flow' where time goes by, things happen effortlessly and you forget your worries? It might not have status or money tied to it. Instead it's often what happens when you honour your values and take actions accordingly.

Just look at the word 'fulfilled': full and filled. When you say that you're fulfilled, what you're actually saying is that you're full to the brim with everything that excites you. Full of life and passion. You have little space for sadness or negative feelings. No one can rain on your parade when you're fulfilled.

So both achievement and fulfilment can lead to feelings of success. And success always feels good. But fulfillment often trumps achievement in terms of the feel-good factor.

I've realised that the biggest benefit of living according to my values is that I've reduced the odds of waking up one day thinking 'oh my god, I've lived according to what I feared most, what society said, my parents said, my partner said, and what people expect of me; but I wasn't actually being true to myself'. When you live according to your values, you're abundantly fulfilled. And that, right there, feels amazing.

So let's talk about how we can get more fulfilled.

The 3 steps to set your GPS.

I mentioned I've worked as a design engineer. In an architecture project, the process starts with a design brief. We analyse the brief and this shapes absolutely every decision we take.

For the London 2012 Olympic Stadium, the design brief was surprisingly simple: we needed a venue large enough for the opening and closing ceremony; there had to be around 80,000 seats, a field and a track; and we had to create an environment conducive to world records.

We took the design brief and focused on decluttering and simplifying it.

At every stage of the design we asked ourselves if we were meeting the brief.

Our goal wasn't to add more complexity and additional embellishments. We wanted things as simple and lean as possible. So we questioned absolutely everything in our design process. Do we have to have a roof? Are we required to have lights? Even though the project won a lot of architectural acclaim, the resulting stadium was very simple, very easy and very effective.

Simple. Easy. Effective. Isn't this what want life to be?

In the next five minutes we're going to figure out the design brief for your life, identifying the exact values that allow you to be happy and fulfilled. These are your non-negotiables, and every decision, big or small, that you make needs to align with these. This is the criteria for leading an abundantly fulfilled life. This is your personalised GPS and will keep you on track each and every day.

Ready? Let's jump in.

Let's discover your life's GPS.

Step 1. Work out your GPS settings.

Two minutes – Take two minutes and quickly circle about 15 values that speak to you the most. Focus on words that resonate with what’s important to you and what excites you. Don’t think too hard about it or stress about perfection. Just do what feels right.

Abundan	Continui	Fai	J	Qui
Acceptan	Contributi	Fam	Justi	Rationali
Accomplishme	Conti	Flexibili	Kindne	Recogniti
Achieveme	Convicti	Flo	Knowled	Relationshi
Acknowledgeme	Coura	Forgivene	Learni	Reliabili
Adventu	Creativ	Freedc	Log	Resourcefulne
Affecti	Curiosi	Friendsh	Lo	Respe
Ambiti	Dari	Fu	Loyal	Responsibil
Appreciati	Decisivene	Generosi	Maste	Ri
Assertivene	Delig	Givi	Meani	Roman
Awarenc	Dependabil	Gratitu	Mindfulne	Safe
Balan	Determinati	Grow	Mon	Securi
Beat	Digni	Happine	Motivati	Selflessne
Belongi	Diligen	Harmo	Natu	Self-estee
Brave	Discipli	Hardwo	Openne	Self-respe
Brillian	Discove	Heal	Opportuni	Servi
Carefulne	Divers	Helpfulne	Optimis	Simplici
Cari	Dri	Hones	Organisati	Sinceri
Certain	Educati	Hon	Originali	Sk
Challen	Effectivene	Hopefulne	Passi	Spi
Chan	Efficien	Humblene	Pea	Stabili
Chari	Elegan	Humil	Perseveran	Streng
Clar	Empat	Hum	Persisten	Sty
Cleanline	Encourageme	Imaginatio	Personal grow	Teamwo
Collaborati	Ener	Independen	Pleasu	Timeline
Commitme	Enjoyme	Ingenui	Positivi	Toleran
Communicati	Equal	Inner-pea	Pow	Tranquili
Commun	Excellen	Innovati	Practical	Tru
Compassi	Exciteme	Inspirati	Priva	Tru
Competen	Experien	Integri	Proactivi	Varie
Confiden	Experti	Intelligen	Progre	Weal
Connecti	Explorati	Intima	Prosperi	Wellbei
Consisten	Fairne	Inventivene	Qual	Wisdo

Do you have around 15 words circled? Welcome to the macro-map of your values. This is your life design brief. A list of criteria that's important to you. But to make it a bit more manageable let's condense those down to your micro-map of values.

Two minutes — Look at your 15 values and bunch them into as few categories as possible. Link words that feel similar. I usually grab a pen and paper and scribble things down in a mind map. Take no more than two minutes.

Simplify.

Declutter.

But keep those that really stand out and speak to you.

For each group of words, pick one word that best sums up that category.

One minute — Ok. Hopefully you have seven or eight words. I want us to simplify even further. More. We're looking for a really tight design brief so you are left with the few things that, if you were back on that moon, they would still be important to you and bring you fulfillment.

Look at those words. Which three values are the most important to you? The absolute bare-bones, non-negotiable words that you would prioritise above the others?

Write them down. Allow yourself just a minute.

Step 2. Drive with confidence.

In just five minutes, we've figured out your top three prized values. That's pretty exciting, right? These are your gold, silver and bronze values. Wear them with pride.

Now there are two important things to note.

Conflict -- First, values often conflict. I've had clients who do this and end up with 'security, joy and freedom'. There are situations where having security might mean less freedom, or when you might have freedom and joy but limited security. That's just part of being a complex human being.

Balance -- Second, values may have different levels of importance at different times and carry different weights. That's perfectly ok.

We don't have to achieve perfection in each of these values all the time. It's about balancing them, a process I call 'optimisation'.

With the Olympic stadium, there were hundred of engineers and designers creating different sections of the project, each with their own priorities.

Once we know what our values are, it's so much easier to shape our actions accordingly.

For me, the values of freedom, creativity and growth are really important. I walk around carrying my passport, laptop, notepad and pens, phone and money in a bag. Really, I do! I manage my own time, no exceptions. I ensure I'm always discovering new things and new places, and I intentionally own few possessions, only what is necessary.

In design it's impossible to achieve perfection for each and every element without negatively impacting the project as a whole. Instead the goal is to find a balance, one where we acknowledge the competing goals and achieve a holistic yet effective design.

Step 3. Keep an eye on the road.

Caution! Values can change. If I ask a five-year-old boy what his values are, he'd probably say sweets, playing and television. Those will obviously shift throughout his life. Our values do the same.

They're steadily evolving, adjusting to respond to what's going on around us and our perception of the world, perhaps even daily.

That's why it's important to do a regular 'check-up'. Every year, or maybe every six months, give yourself a few minutes and do this exercise. Spend some time thinking about what matters to you right there, in that moment. Because often, when we find ourselves not feeling fulfilled in life, it's because we're not honouring our values. Perhaps the space between our situation and our values has grown a little too big for comfort.

I like to think of the whole thing as an internal audit that helps keep you on track. The more you understand your reality and what's truly important to you, the more you'll live a life that lights you up. Remain true to your values to be the most fulfilled character in your story.

End here.

In just five minutes you've sorted out what really matters. You've revealed your top three values to give your life direction on a daily basis. Remember to check in and keep them updated. This way you've always heading in the right direction.

Buckle up and enjoy the ride... life's about to get a whole lot clearer!

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