

50 Life Coaching Exercises

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About the Author

David Bonham-Carter, the author of *50 Life Coaching Exercises* is an experienced life coach who provides specialist coaching support and advice for areas that involve negative or distorted thinking patterns, such as confidence & self esteem, assertiveness, anxiety, stress and specialist relationship issues.

David has a Masters Degree in social work from the University of Kent which he passed with distinction. Following this training he practised for many years as a social worker and probation officer helping people with mental health difficulties, homeless people, young people and others to make significant personal and practical changes in their lives and relationships before becoming a life coach and assisting individuals privately to deal with professional and personal problems.

David's work is based on methods which are acknowledged to be effective in helping to people to change behaviour that is problematic for themselves or others and he has received training in the following techniques and methods:

- CBT - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (particularly helpful in dealing with negative and distorted thinking patterns)
- Motivational Interviewing (effective as a model for helping people to change or break difficult habits)
- Person centred therapeutic techniques, such as Gerard Egan's personal centred counselling model and Carl Rogers' person centred counselling model.
- Transactional Analysis
- Brief Therapy (also known as Solution Focused Therapy) - helpful in creating positive thinking strategies.

David writes a free email Newsletter of Life Coaching Tips which you can sign up for at www.davidbonham-carter.com/lifecoachtips.html.

Other Books

You can find details of David's other coaching eBooks on topics such as making life changes, dealing with low self esteem and overcoming jealousy at:

www.davidbonham-carter.com/selfhelpbooks/list.html

How to Use this eBook of Life Coaching Exercises

Welcome to my eBook of *50 Life Coaching Exercises*.

Please use the list of Life Coaching Exercises in the Book on the next page to select those exercises that are likely to be of most use to you (or to those you are helping if you are a coach yourself and want to use the exercises in your work to help others).

You do not need to work through the exercises in order or do all of them. The idea is that you pick those which are most appropriate for you and focus on those in order to achieve maximum benefit for your situation.

The exercises should all be self explanatory. Just follow the instructions in the individual exercise you are trying out.

Where exercises are closely related I have indicated within the instructions for the specific exercise that you may also like to try another particular named exercise within this eBook.

The list of life coaching exercises on the next page is set out alphabetical order but next to each exercise I have listed the topic or topics that the exercise may be particularly useful for. This should assist you in selecting according to your particular interests or concerns.

If you find particular exercises especially useful for your personal situation or if you have any other feedback, please feel free to email me at davidbcarter1@gmail.com. All comments are welcome and may be used to add to or improve further editions.

Best wishes and Good luck

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Life Coaching Exercises in the Book

(The Exercises feature in alphabetical order in the book)

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Advantages & Disadvantages of Change

1. What is the change you are thinking of making?
2. Please list below the Advantages and Disadvantages of making this change. Under the heading 'Disadvantages' include any psychological or emotional 'payoffs' you get from avoiding making the change as well as any practical or financial disadvantages that making the change might bring for you. It is important to acknowledge what 'payoffs' you are getting from not making the change, to help you decide how important it is to you to make the change and whether you really want to make it.

Advantages of Change	Disadvantages of Change

3. Specify two things that you can do or say to yourself to help manage or deal with the disadvantages you listed above:

Note: You may find it useful to do this exercise in conjunction with the exercise called: *The Normal Process of Change*.

Affirmations

Please use the form below to list any of your strengths, positive skills, qualities, abilities and achievements together with an illustration or evidence that demonstrates or supports the affirmation. Once you have completed the exercise you may find it helpful to read through your list of affirmations on a daily basis to help with your confidence or motivation.

Fill in the 'Illustration or Supporting Evidence' column, where applicable, to give an example of when you demonstrated the positive characteristic or your other reasons for believing that you have that quality. Filling in the 'Illustration or Supporting Evidence' column can be helpful in making it clear that there is a solid basis for the belief expressed in your affirmation.

Please express your affirmations in the first person, e.g. *'I did...'* or *'I am ...'* or *'I have...'*

Affirmation of strength, skill, quality, ability or achievement	Illustration or Supporting Evidence (Complete where applicable)

Assertiveness – Using the DEAL Method

The DEAL Method is an approach people can try out who find they have difficulty in voicing their needs to others and in explaining clearly and calmly to others how they would like others to act (or not act) towards them. The acronym DEAL stands for:

1. **D** escribe the situation or behaviour that is troubling you
2. **E** xpress your feelings and thoughts about it
3. **A** sk for reasonable changes that you feel would help
4. **L** isten & Negotiate for a reasonable solution if possible.

To help you see how to use the DEAL method, it is perhaps simplest to give an example: Let's assume that you feel exhausted and resentful because you are doing all the childcare in your household and you would like your partner to help out, but you fear their reaction if you raise the matter. You might approach the issue by going through the Headings 1-4 above and preparing what you will say to your partner in advance. Where possible try to approach the issue with your partner at a time when you both have some space to talk about it rather than at a pressurised moment. The next 2 pages go through the hypothetical example to give an idea of how to use the four steps:

1. DESCRIBE The Situation

In describing the situation it usually helps to be clear and specific, giving an example of what you are finding to be a problem and trying to be accurate in what you say rather than using emotive or generalised language. Thus rather than say "Why do you never help me with looking after the children?" which may well receive a hostile reception, you might for example say:

"I've been thinking about the arrangements for Saturday night and I've realised that it may create some problems for me to look after the children then. I was hoping to go out with my friend X because it's her birthday and it won't be possible to if I have to stay at home with the children..."

NB. Where possible try to use vocabulary and style of language which are comfortable and natural for you – so adapt any of the examples given here to your own style whilst keeping faithful to the underlying principles of:

- Being specific & not using generalisations
- Avoiding over emotive language
- Being polite, clear and accurate in what you say

2. EXPRESS Your Feelings and Thoughts about it

Remember that although your feelings may be obvious to you, the person you are speaking to will not necessarily know what they are unless you tell them, so try as best you can to explain to them how the situation is making you feel. You might, for example, say:

“I feel hurt that you haven’t offered to help out in this situation...and that I am doing most of the child care which is leaving me tired. For example, last week it was me who put the children to bed every night.”

Again, you will want to adapt the actual phrases used to fit your own style and vocabulary, whilst following the overriding principles:

- Usually it is best to avoid extreme or over emotional language
- Keep your statement simple and accurate
- Express your feelings and indicate what is the basis for them.
- Own the feelings as your own – i.e. you are acknowledging that this is how *you* feel, not suggesting that everyone would necessarily feel that way or that you are giving a universal truth.

3. ASK for Reasonable Changes that you Feel would Help

The person you are talking to may not be able to read your mind, so if you know what you would like, it is helpful if you can be precise about it, e.g.

“Would it be possible for you to look after the children on Saturday night so that I can go out? I can take care of them on Friday if you want to go out then. I wonder if we could also talk in advance about the options for sharing responsibilities next week and see if we can agree arrangements which give us both the opportunity to have some time for ourselves.”

In asking for changes, it is again important to be clear and direct about what you are asking whilst trying to be polite and not overpersonalising the request with emotive critical descriptions of the other person.

If there are examples when the other person has done what you would like them to do, then one possibility is to start by focusing on these, e.g. “On Wednesday it really helped when you looked after the children for a couple of hours. If you can do a similar thing again I would appreciate it...”

In the interests of reasonableness and balance, if appropriate make it clear that you are not saying the other person is all bad, by highlighting positives as well as being clear about what you would like them to do differently and why.

4. LISTEN & NEGOTIATE a Reasonable Solution where Possible

Often the other person may have a different perspective on the situation. If you have not voiced your concerns before or have done so in an unassertive way, they may not even be aware of those concerns until you express them clearly.

Alternatively, it is possible that there are reasons or thoughts behind their behaviour and actions which have not occurred to you – for example, the partner in the hypothetical example situation here may actually feel that there are a lot of tasks that they do, which you don't help out with.

Once you have expressed your thoughts and feelings and what you would like, it is therefore usually important to check out what the other person thinks. You might do this by a simple open question, such as simply: "What do you think?" or "What are your thoughts about it?"

Once the other person has responded, if they are not fully in agreement with what you have suggested then you can try to explore with them whether an alternative solution is possible. This will involve considering:

- (a) What is most important to you in this situation and what is most important to them – is it possible to meet both your priorities?
- (b) What alternatives are possible – e.g. could you get a babysitter for the specific instance above and then agree future arrangements?
- (c) In what ways are you both willing to compromise?
- (d) If a compromise cannot be reached, then what are the implications for the relationship and what choices do you have for the future?
- (e) If an agreement is reached, then confirm exactly what it is and clarify any grey areas – in a formal situation you may also want to make a written note of it and share that with the other person if appropriate.

Exercise

After reading through the above guidance, use the DEAL Method yourself. Prepare yourself for each of the 4 steps set out below, making your own notes under each step of how the method applies to a situation you are concerned about where you are having difficulty voicing your needs or where you would like someone to change their behaviour towards you. For each step note down what you propose to say and do in relation to that step when you speak to the person concerned.

Step 1: Describe the situation or behaviour that is troubling you

Step 2: Express your feelings and thoughts about it

Step 3: Ask for reasonable changes that you feel would help

Step 4: Listen & Negotiate for a reasonable solution if possible.

Alternative Behaviours

Assertiveness involves expressing your opinions and feelings in a clear way without being aggressive or rude.

If you are someone who is worried about offending others or about creating conflict or if you fear that by acting assertively you may forfeit another person's approval, then you may be inclined to adopt certain 'safety' behaviours – i.e. behaviours which limit the degree to which you act assertively.

Please complete the form below, listing any 'Safety Behaviours' that you might be tempted to use to avoid offending people or to try to gain their approval at the expense of expressing your true feelings or opinions. Then in the right hand column list 'Alternative Behaviours' which would involve doing the opposite or going a little outside your comfort zone.

You can also use this form to help with anxiety – if you find that you use certain 'safety behaviours' to avoid doing things about which you are anxious and that this is causing or reinforcing problems for you then you can use the form to highlight some of those behaviours and what the alternatives might be.

Once you have listed some safety behaviours and alternatives, decide on just 1 or 2 of the alternative behaviours that you would like to try out to start. Try them out in the next week if you can. You may find it easier to start with the Alternative Behaviours which are most manageable for you.

Safety Behaviour	Alternative Behaviour
<i>Example: Putting off telling someone that I am too busy to do something they have asked me to, because of fear of offending them.</i>	<i>Example Alternative: Set a specific time to explain that I don't have time to do the task, put it in my diary and stick to it.</i>

Anxious Thoughts

If you have been experiencing anxiety, it can help you to feel more in control of your situation if you begin to make a note of when they occur and what the anxious thoughts are. This may also help you to spot any patterns and you can use the form as a basis for discussions with your coach if you have one. The form below is one format you can use for logging your thoughts (At the foot of this page are suggestions for further exercises that complement this one).

Use the form to record situations where you might have felt embarrassed or lacking in confidence. For each situation, afterwards record the date and time of the situation, how severe your anxiety was on a scale of 1-5 (1=Not very severe, 5=Extremely severe), how long the episode of anxiety lasted, the precise thoughts that went through your mind when you started getting anxious and what you did.

Date & Time	Situation	Severity of Anxiety (1-5)	Time anxiety lasted	Thoughts (Be as precise as possible)	What I did when I got anxious

Note: Other exercises in the book that may help you to find strategies for improving the outcome in situations where you get anxious are *Focusing on Others, Negative Thoughts & Alternatives* and *Thinking Flexibly*.

Balancing Statements for Negative Self Image

Please identify any typical negative descriptions or statements you make about yourself during the week and write them down in the left hand column. In the right hand column write down an alternative statement which balances the first statement by moderating it in a realistic manner. An example is given, but feel free to do it in the way which seems most useful to you.

In future when you find yourself applying the negative description to what you are doing remind yourself of the realistic balancing statement to relieve the pressure on yourself. Try not to be too hard on yourself!

Negative Description of Self	Realistic Balancing Statement
<i>Example:</i> 'I always sabotage my life' – [Also indicate here the situation in which you applied this description to yourself]	'I overreacted on this occasion. However last week I managed to detach myself and relax more. I will try to do better again next time.'

Building Self Esteem – The List of 3's

Please complete the following questions positively and creatively, then remind yourself of them if you are feeling down or whenever you want to!

1. List 3 positive characteristics that you have
2. List 3 things that you are proud of about yourself
3. List 3 things that you have achieved
4. List 3 ways in which you can treat yourself if you are feeling down or reward yourself if you have done something well. The only problem is you are not allowed to list anything which involves spending large sums of money, overeating or drinking to excess, or misuse of drugs.
5. List 3 things you can do to make yourself laugh
6. List 3 things you can do or have done in the past to help someone else
7. List 3 things that you can do to help you feel good about yourself
8. Complete the following sentence:

'Looking at the above makes me realise that I

.....'

Career – Assessing Your Next Move

1. In your efforts to establish a career, list below what you have done that is positive:
2. What more might you do at this time to further your career?
3. What is currently holding you back from doing it?
4. What realistically might you commit to do now?

Career Options - Analysis

Note: You may find it helpful to create the *Career Options – Initial Questionnaire* exercise before completing this exercise.

1. Please list below your current occupation and a number of new possible career options you might want to investigate or pursue. I have specified the first option as being to stay as you are but try to improve within that situation. Please list any other options that you think apply to you in the boxes below. Then complete the table below to indicate what you see as the possible advantages and disadvantages of each option. In the final column indicate what your next step(s) would be if you intend to pursue or explore that option.

What is the Option?	What are the Advantages of this Option?	What are the Disadvantages of this Option?	What is the next step (or steps) to take to pursue or investigate each option?
1. Stay in current occupation/situation and try to improve it rather than make a dramatic career move.			

2. Given your initial analysis above and the possible first steps you have indicated in the right hand column of the table, please set out below what actions you intend to take next and the timescale within which you intend to take them:

-
-
-
-

Career Options – Initial Questionnaire

1. Please describe your current work situation below, indicating:
 - a. What is your current occupation & how long have you been doing it?
 - b. What are the positive things about your current occupation?
 - c. What are the things about your current occupation that you would like to change or not to have at all?

2. Is there anything you can do to improve the things that you would like to change about your current occupation? If yes, please indicate what:

3. If you can't change very much about the things that you don't like, is there anything you can do to help you deal with the problems or anxieties that these things cause you? If yes, please indicate what:

4. Please list below 3-5 possible alternative options to your current occupation that you might like to consider as a career:

5. How long do you think it might realistically take you to get a job in one of the *new* options set out above?

6. Are there any other options for what you might do in the meantime to make your current situation better, whilst you are exploring the options above. For example, are there any different jobs not listed above that you might try to do on a short term, temporary or trial basis, which might be better than your current occupation *AND/OR* a stepping stone towards one of the new options. Please indicate any possibilities below:

7. Are there any other people whose views would be useful to you in deciding what to do. If so, please indicate who they are and how they might be helpful (If you have already sought their views, please indicate the outcome).

8. Is there any other information that you feel may be relevant to the decision which is not covered above. If so, please specify below:

Once you have completed this initial questionnaire you may like to complete the *Career Options – Analysis* exercise to reflect on each of your career options (including temporary options from 6. above) further.

Core Values

1. What are the most important things in your life?

-
-
-
-
-

2. Is there anything you can introduce into:

- a. Your weekly routine and/or
- b. The way you act towards others and/or
- c. The way you think of and act towards yourself.

Which will help you to feel better about one or more of the things you have listed in 1? Please indicate any suggestions below:

3. What would you do with your life if you were guaranteed success?

4. What needs of yours would you be meeting by doing what you gave as your answer to 3?

5. What alternative ways are there for you to meet the needs you identified in 4?

6. What can you do as a *first step* to take you a little further towards doing what you gave as your answer to 3?

7. What can you do as a *first step* to take you a little further towards doing one or more of the alternatives identified in 5?

Create Your Vision

Select a date in the future – ideally between 6 months time and two years. Imagine that things have changed during that time and write a letter to yourself describing what has happened, all the improvements and progress that has been made, your new situation and how wonderful it is.

In writing the letter focus more on the positive changes you have made than on the absence of some of the things that have annoyed you. Imagine the new situation you are in and describe the actions you have taken to progress your situation and to create a new quality of life and the benefits this has brought for you.

In the letter be sure to comment not just on your practical circumstances but on your feelings, behaviour and actions in the new world in which you are living. Also comment on how your needs and values are now being met and on any positive changes to other areas of your life if these were not your primary area of focus but have benefited as a result of the changes you have made (for example, you may have changed career and found that feeling more relaxed has had a positive effect on your relationships).

Please note that your vision of the future can be very ambitious, but it must be possible. If for example you would like to recreate something you had in the past which is no longer possible or within your control, then it may be that instead you will do best by trying to accept this and create a new future - without losing your memories of that past time or important situation which forms a part of your life and has contributed significantly to the unique human being that you are now.

Write the letter on a separate piece of paper or on writing paper if you prefer or if you think this will help you get into the task. Enjoy it and have some fun. Be creative if you can!

Creating Your Project Plan

When you are setting out to make changes in your life or to reach goals, it can be very helpful to write down what you want to do in a clear format.

One approach that can be particularly useful for many people in formulating their goals and objectives is to think of what you are doing as a project in which you are going to try things out to help you achieve the outcomes that you are wanting to achieve.

You can review your progress on the actions you commit to on a regular basis to see how well you are doing and whether the actions are helping you to get closer to the outcomes you want (If they are, then great. If not, then try something else!).

On the next page is a blank form that you can use to set out your project.

Fill in the following details in the form:

1. A name for the Project which encapsulates what you want to achieve or one of the main outcomes you are hoping for. The name should be something which is meaningful to you (it doesn't matter if it means nothing to anyone else!) and which will help you to feel motivated and positive about the project.
2. The outcomes that you are hoping you actions will bring for you – This could be anything from a more fulfilling career to a greater ability to cope with stresses. Again it is personal to you.
3. The actions you are planning to try out to help you start towards those actions and when you will try them out.

You can update your Project Plan at whatever intervals you think appropriate – this might be for example weekly or monthly.

Project Name:

Date of Start of Project:

OUTCOMES TO AIM FOR (Medium Term)

-
-
-
-
-

Actions I am going to try out	When I will try out the action and if it is an action to be repeated often I will do it

Dealing with Procrastination

From time to time we all put off doing things and this may make us feel guilty because we know we are not doing something that we really should or want to do. Although our actions in these instances may seem to be irrational to us, they usually have some sort of short term pay-off to them.

In this exercise I ask you to identify the actions that you are putting off, to reflect honestly on what the short term pay-offs for each action are and then to think about possible things you can say to yourself in this situation to help you to carry out the action despite the short term pay-off from not doing so. For example, if you are putting off talking to someone about difficulties in a relationship because of the short term pay-off of avoiding immediate confrontation, you might remind yourself that in the longer term it is likely to be better to discuss the situation, or remind yourself that if you don't do so then you are likely to have lots of unvoiced negative feelings towards each other which may lead to even more arguments or awkward silence.

Procrastination Table

What is the action you are putting off?	Describe the situation when you are tempted to put off the action	What are the pay-offs of putting off the action?	What can you say to yourself in this situation to help you to complete the action? (List possibilities)
1.			
2.			

Once you have completed the list of what you can say to yourself, select the statements that are most likely to help and use them when the situation arises again.

Dealing with Stumbling Blocks

For each stumbling block which might prevent you achieving something you are trying to do or reaching a dream you want to pursue answer the following questions. The stumbling block may be a practical obstacle or difficulty to overcome or it may be a psychological block which is holding you back. Responding to the questions below may help you to clarify in your own mind what the problem is and how you can overcome or get round it.

1. What is the Stumbling Block and how is it impeding your ability to achieve your dream or targets?
2. What can you do to help you overcome the Stumbling Block or reduce/manage the difficulties it presents even if you can't completely overcome it? – You might specify here actions that you can take or things that you can say to yourself in particular situations to help you manage the potential problem.
3. If you have difficulty thinking up constructive actions in 2. above, then ask yourself if there have been times in the past when you have had some success in overcoming the stumbling block or preventing it arising. What did you do then? Could you do something similar again?
4. If you still have difficulty then ask yourself what would you say to someone else that they might do, if they were in your situation?

5. Could anyone else or any other resources independent of you help or support you to address the Stumbling Block? If so, how?

6. If you still feel that the Stumbling Block is too great to overcome, is there a way in which you can modify your dream or target, so that it feels more achievable whilst still being something you want to pursue? *Only answer this if you don't think you can overcome or manage the Stumbling Block successfully without modifying your dream/target.*

7. In the light of the above answers, what are you going to do?

Decision Making

Answer the following questions to help you clarify your thoughts about a decision you have to make:

1. What decision is it that you have to make?
2. What do you feel about having to make the decision?
3. What is the time frame within which you feel you have to make the decision?
What consequences are there likely to be if you don't make the decision within that time frame?
4. Is there anything that is preventing you making the decision or making it particularly difficult for you, if so what?
5. List what you see as the possible Options in relation to the decision you have to make:

6. For each Option indicated in 5, complete the table below to indicate what you see as the possible advantages and disadvantages of choosing that Option and any particular concerns you have about choosing that Option.

What is the Option?	What are the Advantages of this Option	What are the Disadvantages of this Option?	What particular concerns do you have about choosing this Option?

7. Are there any other people whose views would be useful to you in making the decision? If so, indicate who they are and how they might be helpful (If you have already sought their views, please indicate the outcome).

8. Is there any other information that you feel may be relevant to the decision which is not covered above? If so, specify below:

9. Once you feel you have reached a decision as to what to do, then consider what you are going to do to implement your decision and communicate it to whoever you feel should know about it. Also consider *when* you will do it and *how* you feel it is best to do it. List your chosen actions below:

What I will do next:

When I will do it:

Whom I will communicate it to:

How I will try to do it:

Ending a Relationship

This exercise is for people who have decided definitely to end a relationship but are having difficulty carrying it through, to give you the opportunity to set down what you are going to do. The table applies to a relationship with a partner, but you could also use it for other relationships.

What might you say to your partner to make the break? <i>(If you can think of more than one option, then write down each option before deciding which to use & analyse the advantages and disadvantages of each).</i>	When and where might you say it?	How best can you act after informing your partner of the break up so as to stick to your decision?

Explanations

Most of us feel anxious or experience irrational thoughts from time to time. Often there is a relatively simple background or explanation to why we are acting or thinking in an anxious or irrational way – this may for example be because of certain events in our childhood which make us sensitive in particular situations or it may be because of recent events, or a mixture of the two.

It can be helpful to write down in a few sentences what you believe to be the explanation for your anxieties and then conclude with a positive statement as to what you are starting to do to try to gain control or to react positively when confronted with the anxieties.

Please write down below what you see as the explanation or background to your recent anxious behaviour or thoughts, then conclude with a constructive sentence describing what you are now doing to begin to take control.

Please write your explanation in the first person – for example, you can use a format like: *'I sometimes experience exaggerated worries that... I believe this is because ... I am now learning to...'*

Facing Your Fears

If a fear or anxiety is holding back from taking action or saying something, then you can go through the questions below to analyse how realistic that anxiety or fear is and then decide how you want to act.

1. What is your fear or anxiety?
2. What are your reasons for thinking that the thing you fear might materialise?
3. Are there any reasons for thinking that the fear may *not* materialise or that even if it does it will be manageable ?– list them below:
4. What is it that the fear or anxiety holding you back from doing or saying?
5. What would be the *benefits* of doing or saying the things highlighted in 4?

6. Is there a way in which you can act or say what you want to so as to achieve what you want and at the same time reduce the risk of your fear materialising even if you cannot eliminate it completely? Put down any possibilities here:

7. Given your answers to 1-6 above, how do you now intend to act? Write down what you are going to do below, expressing your intention in the first person ('*I intend to ...*') and being precise about what you intend to do and when:

Fears about Conflict

Complete the table to help you analyse a fear or worry you have about creating a conflict or upsetting someone by expressing your feelings or opinions. This exercise can be used in conjunction with the *Facing Your Fears* exercise:

What <i>exactly</i> are you afraid might happen if you express your feelings or opinions?*	How <i>serious</i> is that (If you think it is serious, then put your reasons)?	How <i>likely</i> is it to happen (allocate a percentage)?	If you <i>don't</i> express your feelings or opinions what is likely to happen & how will you feel?

***NB.** If your worry relates to a significant risk of physical, sexual or emotional violence towards yourself or someone else, then you are advised to discuss your concerns with a suitably qualified professional or other appropriate third party.

Focusing on Others

This exercise can be helpful for people who experience high degrees of self consciousness or suffer from social anxiety. It encourages you to start focusing outside yourself on others which can help to relieve your self consciousness.

What I would like you to do is to aim to start deliberately trying to focus on other people and things in your environment rather than yourself when you can. Use this form to record times when you deliberately do this, observing things about other people such as: What are they wearing? Do they look hot or cold, tired, energetic? What might they be thinking? What are they saying? - You can also focus on things in your environment – what do you notice about the objects around you: colours, smells, noises, size, appearance etc.

Sometimes this exercise is called the *Scientist Experiment* because it can help if you imagine that you are a scientist who is conducting an investigation into the different ways that people behave in situations. Try to approach the situation in as detached a way as you can, imagining that you are a curious scientist, observing people and things outside of you.

You can do this either at times when you are anxious and/or at time when you are quite relaxed. The idea is to do it as often as possible so that you get into a habit of doing it. At first it may seem strange – try to keep it up until you get used to it as something which is more natural and perhaps even enjoyable!

Date	What was the situation	What did you observe about the people and things around you?	How did you feel after you had started observing things outside of yourself & how did the situation work out?

Improving a Relationship

This exercise is for anyone who has decided to try to improve an important relationship.

A. OUTCOMES

Please list below one or more outcomes that you would like to aim to reach in respect of a particular relationship which you and the other person agree would represent an improvement in the relationship. Some examples are given below:

- For both of us to feel more relaxed in the relationship
- To be able to discuss things calmly rather than shout at each other
- More quality time together.

The Outcome or Outcomes that I would like are:

B. ONE CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR OR THOUGHT PATTERN

Please indicate below *one* change in either the way that you often behave (or are currently behaving) or in your pattern of thinking that you feel would help you to move towards the main outcome or outcomes above:

The change in my behaviour/pattern of thinking that would be helpful towards the main outcome(s) is:

C. BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

When people are finding it hard to make a change in a habitual behaviour or thought pattern, it is often because for them the perceived drawbacks of change are nearly as strong as the benefits they want to achieve. In some cases these drawbacks may be partly practical or financial. Often, however, the most significant drawbacks may be mental or emotional, e.g. fears or anxieties about whether you can cope with making the change, or about what it will mean to your identity or your pride to make a major change in the way you act, or about what other people will think. It usually assists in making changes to become clear about what your hesitations are and then you can decide how to deal with those hesitations and drawbacks and enable yourself to make the change if you want to.

Please complete the table below in relation to the Change you specified in B. above, listing on one side all the benefits of making that change in behaviour & on the other side all the potential drawbacks you feel there may be (even if those seem irrational):

Benefits	Drawbacks

D. DEALING WITH DRAWBACKS

Specify any things that you can do or say to yourself to help manage or deal with any of the drawbacks you listed above:

E. ACTION

Now specify what you are going to try out in the light of your previous answers to try to make an improvement in the relationship. Indicate:

- How you are going to try to act or change your approach
- When you are going to do it
- How you are going to assess whether it is working
- Whether you are going to tell the other person in the relationship beforehand what you are going to try to do
- Whether you are going to seek feedback (afterwards) from the other person in the relationship on what you try
- Any support you are going to seek (and from whom)

Job Analysis

Complete the table below to clarify what is involved in particular jobs/roles you might be interested in and to reflect on whether you could see yourself doing the role.

For a more detailed analysis – Do the exercise: *Meeting Job Requirements*

Job Title	What is involved in the Job?	Could I see myself doing it? – What are the reasons for my answer?

Job Experience and Suitability

1. Please set out below what jobs you have had in the past and for how long. For each job give your job title, what the role involved and the skills and abilities it required. Then indicate what you liked and did not like in the role.
2. What professional and academic qualifications do you have and what training courses have you completed?
3. What other personal qualities, skills or experience do you have that might be useful in a work setting? Please describe below and give examples of when you have demonstrated the qualities or skills or how you gained the experience.

Leisure Activities

If one of your wishes is to create a balanced lifestyle, then it is important that you do some things every week to meet your own needs. You might choose relaxing enjoyable activities or moderate exercise or something mentally stimulating or something to help you unwind – just make sure these are things you can feel positive about!

Current Leisure Activities

Please list in the table below activities that you currently do in your spare time, who else you do them with and roughly how often/for how long you do them for.

Leisure Activity	Who I do the Activity with	Usual Frequency of The Activity

Possible Other Activities

Please list below any other activities that you *might* like to do. These might be things you have done before but have stopped for one reason or another or they might be things you have never done but might like to do.

Leisure Activity	Who would I do the Activity with?	Frequency of The Activity

Deciding what To Do

After looking at the above tables, make a list of those leisure activities you are going to try out or explore over the next couple of weeks:

What is the Leisure Activity?	When will I do it in the next couple of weeks or what action will I take to find out if it is a possibility?

Looking Outwards

Doing something for others and bringing enjoyment or appreciation into their life can be one of the most rewarding activities. Use this exercise to ask yourself what you might contribute to the lives of others even if in only a small way.

What have you got that you can give to the world?

Perhaps you have a particular skill or skills?

Perhaps you have particular personal qualities - kindness, consideration, intelligence, respect or something else?

Perhaps your experiences have given you knowledge of some aspect of life, which enables you to contribute to and understand people in similar situations?

How can you make use of these qualities to add value to the lives of others?

Write down on a piece of paper a short list of the skills, qualities, experience you have which are most important to you. This doesn't have to be the same as what you think other people might say you have - this is about what you think of yourself. It is fine if you only list 3 or 4 things and equally okay if you list 10 or 12.

How can you develop and make use of those aspects of you in a positive way?

List one or two specific things that you can do over the next week which will develop or make use of those aspects. This could be anything as long as it is a specific action and your focus at the moment is not about getting something in return, but about making use of your attributes and adding value to the lives of others. The actions you choose don't have to be major. They can be small and simple. Anything you like. For example, you might:

- Ring up a friend you haven't spoken to in a while
- Visit a relative
- Investigate a volunteering activity
- Enquire about a course that would develop some skill you already have or that you feel you would be good at
- Cook a meal for someone
- Offer help to someone who you know is struggling with a particular task where you have relevant skills or experience.

If you find that doing these small actions for one week is rewarding, then please think about how you can develop them further or make them into a regular routine in your life.

Managing Risks

If you are embarking on a significant change in your life, it is usually important to assess the risks first and decide how you are going to deal with them. Here is one form you can use:

Specify the situation you are in or the change you are thinking of embarking on which may involve risks:

-

Now create a plan using the table on the next page, setting out proposals for preventing and/or addressing each risk that is involved in your situation (or in changes you are trying or planning to make). If you find it hard to create the Plan immediately, then brainstorm a list of possible options first, analyse the pros and cons of each and select which options you consider most appropriate for inclusion in your Plan:

WHAT IS THE RISK?		ADVANCE ACTIONS (Planning and preventative ideas)		RESPONSE ACTIONS (How to respond if the risk actually materialises)
<i>Identify each risk below:</i>	<i>Priority Rating*: (1 = High 2= Medium 3 = Low)</i>	<i>What can I do now to minimise the likelihood of the risk occurring?</i>	<i>What can I do now which will limit the potential extent, nature or impact of negative consequences if the risk does occur?</i>	<i>If the risk does materialise, then what positive responses might I make to it after it has happened?</i>

***Ideally, your Plan will address all the risks in the situation /project but give particular focus to those risks that you identify as being of highest priority (NB. Even if a risk is not very likely to occur, it may still be appropriate to accord it a high priority if the potential consequences should it occur are very serious).**

Meeting Job Requirements

Please fill in the table below listing the ingredients that you feel are most important for someone to become successful in a particular role or job you might like to apply for. These ingredients should include any relevant personal abilities as well as professional qualifications and skills. In the second column indicate the extent to which you feel you meet the ingredient. In the third column give examples or evidence to support the assessment of your own suitability that you have given. In the fourth column, describe what gaps (if any) there are in the extent to which you fulfil the particular ingredient and what you might do to help fill the gaps. *Use what you write in the 4th column to help you decide where you are going to focus efforts if you want to improve your chances of getting this kind of job.*

List below the different ingredients required to become successful in the job/career you are interested in	Degree to which you feel you currently fulfil each ingredient: Fully/ Mostly/ Partially/ Hardly/ Not at all	Evidence or examples to back up your assessment of the extent to which you fulfil each ingredient (you might cite these in a job interview or application)	What gaps are there in the extent to which you fulfil the ingredient? Indicate what you might do to fill those gaps.

Monitoring Your Progress

You can use the form below to monitor how well you are progressing on Actions you committed to trying out & to decide whether to continue with them or adjust them.

Action Describe in this column: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What the action was that you committed to doing &• When you committed to doing it.	Progress Report <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rate your success in carrying out the action out of 10.2. Comment in words on how successful you were and any reasons for being successful or unsuccessful.	Update List here whether you want/need to continue with the action OR describe a different or modified version of it you want to try out. Be precise in indicating: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What the new action is• When you will do it

Motivation & Actions Checklist

Go through the questions below in relation to any proposed action if you are not entirely sure you will carry it out or if you have previously had difficulty in achieving it and want now to improve your chances of success.

1. On a score of 1-10, how likely do you think it is that you will achieve the action within the timeframe you are proposing?

2. If you have given a score of less than 8, what can you do that would increase the likelihood of implementing the action successfully to 8 or more, e.g. Consider:
 - Modifying or amending the action so that it is more enjoyable to achieve, or
 - Increasing your chances of completing the action by recording what you have to do in a systematic way, such as keeping a diary or 'To Do' list, or
 - Making the timescale easier to achieve or less daunting, say by changing the timescale or proposed frequency for completing the action or the time of day you plan to do it.

3. Will telling a friend or family member or someone else what you are going to do or asking their support increase the likelihood of success? If so, who will you tell and what support will you ask for?

4. Is there any other resource (e.g. self help book or information on the internet) that you could consult or make use of to help you carry out the action? How can you make use of that resource?

5. How can you monitor your progress in achieving the action so that you can assess how you are doing? How can you reward yourself if you achieve the action?

Now refine your proposed action and any methods for monitoring your progress in line with any suggestions arising from the above Checklist.

Myths of Change

A Myth of Change is an unfounded belief whether conscious or unconscious, which is preventing you from maximising your potential.

Examples of personal Myths of Change might be:

- I do not deserve to be happy/ successful/ in a positive relationship
- I am too old to make a major change in my life
- You need an outgoing personality to set up a business successfully and I haven't got one
- It is wrong to earn too much money
- I am not attractive enough to be in a good relationship
- I should always put other people's needs before my own

Myths of Change tend to be over-definitive statements, which say that something *must* be the case or that you *should* act in a certain way or that something is *always* or *never* the case. They are quite pernicious because once you start believing that something must be the case you rarely try to do anything to change it. Different people have different kinds of Myths of Change.

Please do the following exercise:

1. Identify your Myths of Change

Write down those statements which you say to yourself that have impeded you from taking steps to change. One way of recognising such statements is to think of the change that you would like to achieve and then see what first comes in to your head when you complete the sentence below:

'I cannot achieve [*Specify here the change you want*] because

.....'

2. Think of an Example when you allowed the Myth of Change to dominate

Think of a situation when, whether consciously or not, you allowed the thought that you have indicated in 1. above to stop you taking a positive step, even a small one, towards change.

(a) Write down what the negative consequences of not taking that positive step were:

(b) Now write down what you can say to yourself every time the thought highlighted in 1. occurs again, to encourage you to challenge its correctness or to explore alternative possibilities.

3. Try saying something different from the Myth of Change

When a similar situation to that described in 2 next occurs, try saying to yourself the statement or statements that you identified in 2 (b) and see if they help you to do something different or to feel differently about the situation.

Negative Thoughts & Alternatives

This exercise is concerned with Automatic Negative Thoughts (known as an “ANT”s) such as

- I’ve failed again’
- ‘I’m always hurting people’
- ‘I’ll never succeed’

An Automatic Thought is a thought that pops into your mind regularly, frequently or in certain types of situation. An Automatic Negative Thought is an automatic thought which involves a negative assumption or conclusion, often with a self critical element. ANTS sometimes involve exaggerations or generalisations and use of phrases such as ‘always’ or ‘never’ which may well not be justified by the actual evidence.

What are the personal ANTS which are causing you problems at the moment? Record on the next page occasions when you say something negative about yourself which you think is a fairly typical put down that you say to yourself or a negative assumption about a situation. In the right hand column, list alternative possible thoughts to try to say to yourself in the situations when you find your particular ANTS occurring.

The idea in generating alternative thoughts is to be as creative as you can – you can use humour, logic, self knowledge to brainstorm possible ideas. There is no right or wrong here, just try to create possibilities that might work for you to take the stress out of the situation and make you feel more positive. *What you are trying to achieve is a change in mood.*

Example ANT & Alternative Thoughts

What is the ANT?	When and in what situation did it Occur?	What Possible Alternative Thoughts could I say to myself in future to achieve a change in mood?
I am always a burden to everyone.	4 July – John got annoyed with me when I took a long time getting ready before we went out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Relax – John may have had a bad day</i> • <i>Nobody’s perfect</i> • <i>Sometimes I’m slow but the end result is worth it</i>

Exercise for Automatic Negative Thoughts

Please identify any typical negative descriptions, assumptions or statements you make about yourself or your situation during the week and write them down in the left hand column. In the right hand column write down an alternative statement which balances the first statement by moderating it in a realistic manner, putting it in perspective or giving it a simple positive ending to it.

Automatic Negative Thought	Alternative Statement

Negotiation and Compromise in Relationships

This exercise can be useful if you find it difficult to get across your point of view in a personal relationship and ask someone to treat you in a different way or where you want to resolve a conflict and reach compromise with someone close to you. Sometimes the tips can also be relevant in professional or work situations, although that may depend on the nature of the situation and the degree of power or influence that you and the other party have respectively in the situation.

To prepare yourself before you enter into discussion where you want to achieve an agreement from another party to act differently or treat you differently or where you are trying to resolve a conflict, run through the following checklist of 15 points:

1. Identify for yourself what things you are prepared to compromise on and which things you are not willing to compromise on because they are too important to you.
2. In the light of your knowledge of the behaviour and personality of the person you are going to be in discussion/negotiation with, give some thought in advance to what they might ask for and how you might choose to respond.
3. Be prepared to listen to what the other person has to say but also think about how you are going to ensure that you get an opportunity to put your point of view and feelings across – in some cases it may be helpful at the outset of the discussion for you to suggest to the other person that you agree to allow each in turn to express your views without interruption.
4. Prepare for how you may try to move discussion forward once you have both expressed your views – for example, this might involve you summarising the differences and similarities in each of your views and then trying with the other person to explore (or ‘brainstorm’) what different possible solutions there might be and what the advantages and disadvantages are of each proposed solution for both of you.
5. In respect of those aspects where you might compromise, think of possible suggestions that you might make to the other party about what you would like in return from them if you compromise on those aspects.
6. In respect of those aspects where you are not willing to compromise, be clear in your own mind about what the consequences might be if the other person still refuses to meet those ‘bottom-line’ requests and what you will do.
7. In most cases you will be hoping that a productive compromise can be reached. However, if your bottom-line requests are not met then be prepared to act in the way you decided beforehand (under 6. above). If you are not prepared to carry through this commitment then you may decide that actually what you considered to be a ‘non-negotiable’ or ‘bottom-line’ request is actually just a strong preference. It is best to be clear about this in your own mind beforehand if possible.
8. In the light of your relationship with the other party and your knowledge of them, give some thought in advance to what style of approach is most likely to encourage the other party to respond positively to your request – will it help for you to be encouraging and constructive and try to engage in a joint search for solutions or will it be more likely to be productive if you

take a firm stance from the outset, indicating absolutely clearly what you want and what will be the consequences if your wishes are not met or at least are not met in full? The best style of approach may vary for different situations.

9. When, where and how do you want to approach the topic to give yourself the best chance of getting a friendly constructive or at least helpful response from the other party. In most cases if possible you may want to raise the subject at a time when both you and the other party can give full attention to the discussion without distractions and when you are not preoccupied with other matters or very tired or stressed.
10. Whilst you are looking for a good time to raise the topic, as indicated in 9. above, don't put off the moment for ever! The *perfect* time will probably never happen. If you find yourself delaying too much, then select a specific time or occasion to raise the matter and keep to your commitment.
11. Recognise that the person you are going to be talking to may say some things that you are not anticipating. If you are worried about committing yourself to something that you later regret then prepare a stock response for the unexpected which will allow you time to think further before you make a decision – e.g. something as simple as: “I need to think about that before I give you my answer”.
12. When you have considered all the above points, write down a summary of your conclusions and go through it before the meeting or discussion with the other party so that you are prepared – also write down the outline of what you intend to say using the first 3 steps of the DEAL method if you are using that (see the exercise: *Assertiveness: Using the DEAL method*).
13. When you discuss the issue with the other party, if suggestions as to how to move forward are agreed, then go over them at the end to check that you are both clear about what they are and clarify any possible points of doubt. If you think that what is agreed may be disputed later, then record the main points in writing and ask the other party to confirm that they are in agreement with your record.
14. If you can't resolve every issue, you may still agree to implement changes in respect of some issues and perhaps set a further date to talk further about any outstanding differences after you have both thought further about possible ideas for dealing with them.
15. If appropriate, decide how you both are going to keep track of whether the agreed actions have been implemented and what you would both regard as successful implementation – if appropriate set a provisional date for a further discussion to review progress and to discuss whether the agreement has worked or needs to be changed.

Positive Rehearsal

The technique below is designed to help you prepare for an event you are anxious about – for example where you are worried that a panic attack might happen. In Psychology the technical phrase “Imaginal Rehearsal” is sometimes used to describe this exercise. I prefer to use the phrase “Positive Rehearsal” because it conveys the fact that you are creating a constructive mental approach towards the potential event as you prepare yourself for it, so as to retrain your mind to think differently about the experience. The exercise is as follows:

1. Set yourself in a comfortable environment and then do a relaxation exercise to help get you into a relaxed frame of mind. If you have a familiar relaxation exercise which works for you then use that. Otherwise you can find 3 different suggestions in the article: *Relaxation Techniques for Stress and Anxiety* at www.davidbonham-carter.com/article-relaxationtechniques.html
2. Next you are going to picture yourself entering the situation that you are anxious about:
 - (a) Just before you do so, tell yourself that you are going to see the experience in a positive way – as an adventure or as an enjoyable experience.
 - (b) Now slowly start imagining yourself in the situation, bearing in mind that even if you are nervous, this is because this is a positive opportunity for you to show the capabilities that you have.
 - (c) As you go through the experience tell yourself that you are in control & remind yourself of any thoughts or statements that you can say to yourself to help you manage the situation.
 - (d) To help you know that you are in control – plan some escape routes from the situation, but remind yourself that you are only going to use them if you really need to. *If you don't think there are any practical 'escape routes' then leave this step out.*
 - (e) If you start to feel panicky then set yourself a small target to get to – for example to get through the next 10 or 15 seconds. Remind yourself that what you are experiencing is a mental/emotional reaction to the situation, that it will pass and that you can control it.
 - (f) If it helps you then focus on breathing slowly and calmly or focus specifically on the task that you have to do, concentrating on the next small step that you have to do in it, completing that first and only then moving on to the next step.
 - (g) As you get through each target you set yourself (10/15 seconds, one minute, or completion of a specific step in the task, whatever target you set) congratulate yourself that you have achieved that target.
 - (h) Once you have completed the task in your imagination then take yourself out of the situation, take a few deep calming breaths and focus on something in your immediate environment, such as a chair or the colour of the wallpaper to take you back into your real life current situation.
3. After you have completed the exercise, write down the thoughts that went through your head, those parts of the task that you managed to complete and what helped you to get as far as you did in the task. If you managed

to complete it successfully give yourself big congratulations. If you got through it partially then congratulate on getting to the stage you did get and set yourself a target slightly ahead of that stage to try to get to the next time you do the exercise.

4. Repeat this exercise on different days, as you build up to the event you are anxious about, until it becomes a routine that you are familiar with. When you come to the situation in real life, remind yourself of what you did in the exercise and aim as best you can to repeat the positive aspects of it in the real life situation.
5. If you have anxieties about doing the exercise, then you can arrange to do it when a trusted friend, relative or partner is on hand (say, in nearby room). You can tell them what you are going to do and arrange to confirm with them once it's completed. In most cases however you will not need this support, just be aware of your own limits as you go through the exercise – push yourself to go a little bit further than you might have done in the past in the real life situation but if you get to a point where you feel you really have to take a time out from the imagined situation, then do that. There is nothing wrong in taking this in stages and gradually improving your progress and confidence. Don't feel that you have to do everything in one go.

QUALITY OF LIFE ASSESSMENT (Short Form)

The form below provides a quick snapshot of how you feel about different areas of your life. For a more detailed scoring assessment you can use the *Quality of Life Assessment (Long Form)*. You can redo the assessment after a certain interval without looking at your initial scores as part of an assessment of how you have progressed.

Please note that this Assessment Questionnaire is best used in conjunction with other more discursive questionnaires such as the *Change Questionnaire* where you reflect in your own words on your current situation and what you want to achieve. Remember that some of your Quality of Life Assessment scores may change depending on how you are feeling on a particular day, so you need to use your own judgement about whether the scores you give on a particular day are representative and give an idea of where you might focus efforts for improvement.

Name:

Date:

To complete: Give a score of between 0 and 10 for each item

Life Area	Your Current Level of Satisfaction with each Life Area (10 = Very Satisfied)	Importance to you of the Life Area (10 = Very Important)
1. Job or other Daily Occupation		
2. Finances		
3. Family Relationships (Other than partner)		
4. Relationships with Friends		
5. Use of Leisure Time		
6. Relationship with Partner		
7. General Physical Health		
8. Level of Physical Fitness & Exercise		
9. Feeling Relaxed and in Good Mental Health		
10. Feeling in Control of Your Life		
AVERAGE SCORES (Add up all the scores in a column and divide the total by 10 to give the average score in that column)		

QUALITY OF LIFE ASSESSMENT (Long Form)

The form below provides a snapshot of how you feel about different areas of your life. For a shorter scoring assessment you can use the *Quality of Life Assessment (Short Form)*. You can redo the assessment after a certain interval without looking at your initial scores as part of an assessment of how you have progressed.

Please note that this Assessment Questionnaire is best used in conjunction with other more discursive questionnaires such as the *Change Questionnaire* where you reflect in your own words on your current situation and what you want to achieve. Remember that some of your Quality of Life Assessment scores may change depending on how you are feeling on a particular day, so you need to use your own judgement about whether the scores you give on a particular day are representative and give an idea of where you might focus efforts for improvement.

Name:

Date:

To complete: Give a score of between 0 and 10 for each item

Quality of Life Issue	Importance to you of the Issue (10 = Very Important)	Current Level of Satisfaction (10 = Very Satisfied)	Perceived Difficulty in Achieving what you want (10 = Very Difficult)
1. Where you live (geographical location)			
2. Nature of accommodation (Standard, Size, Ownership status etc.)			
3. Nature of work or daily occupation			
4. Relationships in work/daily occupation			
5. Your level of income			
6. Your level of savings			
7. Amount of contact with family			
8. Quality of contact with family			
9. Amount of contact with friends			
10. Quality of contact with friends			
11. Amount of time spent doing leisure activities			
12. How you use your leisure time			
13. Looking attractive			
14. Having a partner			
15. Quality of relationship with partner			
16. Being in good physical health			
17. Being physically fit and exercising			
18. Feeling relaxed and in good mental health			
19. Feeling in control of your life			
20. Feeling that your life has purpose			
21. Living in accordance with values (spiritual/religious/moral)			
AVERAGE SCORES (Add all the scores in a column & divide total by 21 for average)			

Regrets and What You Can Do about Them

This exercise is designed to be used to help you come to terms with actions you feel bad about which when you look at them in the context of the world's worries really aren't quite so bad!

1. If you find yourself thinking 'I should have done X' or 'I should not have done Y', think of positive thoughts that you can say in your mind as constructive thoughts to take the place of the negative thoughts or as comments on the situation which make you realise it may not be as bad as it looks, or that you may not be to blame so much as you think. Replacement thoughts might be:
 - At least I did *something!*
 - Maybe what I did wasn't quite as significant as I think
 - Relax, nobody's perfect
 - There are positives which could be taken from the situation
 - What can I learn from this and put to use?
 - Am I jumping to conclusions?
 - What happened is not entirely my fault
 - Maybe the other person's reaction had nothing to do with what I did, but was more to do with something else they are worried about at the moment or with their attitude
 - I'll do something different next time
 - Every cloud has a silver lining
 - Our relationship is strong enough to cope with what I did & if it isn't then it may not be worth it anyway!
 - I wouldn't be so hard on someone else if they had acted in this way to me
 - Time to move on and do something else
 - I'll discuss what happened with the other person next time we meet and check out if their perception of what happened is the same as mine
 - In the scope of the universe, this is not the most momentous event that's ever happened
 - At least life's not boring

2. Think of two situations you have experienced recently where you have reflected afterwards that you should have done something different or that you should not have done what you did. Then complete the table on the next page, specifying in the left hand column what you said to yourself (e.g. 'I should not have done X...'). In the right hand column think of at least three alternative thoughts you can substitute for the negative thought to create a more balanced and more constructive approach. The examples above give some idea of the sort of alternatives you might create, but feel free to create your own.

Regrets Table

Describe Your Regret	Possible Alternative Thought
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••

Relationship Pros and Cons

1. Use the table below to list the things you like about a particular relationship and the good feelings generated by them as well as the things you dislike about the relationship and the negative feelings generated.

Positive Aspects of the Relationship	<i>Feelings Generated by the Positive Aspects</i>	Negative Aspects of the Relationship	<i>Feelings Generated by the Negative Aspects</i>

2. Looking at the *feelings* generated by the negative aspects, what could you do to reduce the negative impact of those feelings. This might involve either or both of:

(a) *Finding a way of changing the thing which has given rise to the feeling:*

-
-
-

OR

(b) *Finding a way of reacting differently to it:*

-
-
-

Reviewing Your Project Plan

This exercise follows on from the earlier exercise on *Creating Your Project Plan*. If you have used the Project Plan format from that exercise then you can use the Project Review format on the next page to review your progress after a pre-planned interval, say 1 month or 3 months or 6 months.

If you are using a different Project Plan format then you may want to adapt the Project Plan Review format overleaf so that it fits the Project Plan format you are using.

Go to next page for suggested Project Plan Review format:

5. How close would you say you are to achieving the *Outcomes* you are aiming for now?

6. Do you still want to aim to achieve the same *Outcomes* or are there new or additional *Outcomes* you would like to achieve? Please list updated *Outcomes* you are seeking below or state if they remain the same as before

-
-
-
-
-

7. Create an updated Project Plan, using the format you used before, setting out your updated outcomes and any new actions that you want to try out to help you to move towards those outcomes.

Setting Goals

Use this exercise to help you create goals and related actions.

It is sometimes said that the goals you set should be SMART. The acronym SMART has been defined in different ways. For example, the letters can stand for the following features:

S pecific or significant
M easurable and motivational
A chievable
R ealistic and relevant
T ime framed

1. Ask yourself what *Outcomes* you would like to achieve in the next 3-6 months, where the word 'Outcome' refers to a change in your feelings or in your quality of life or relationship or satisfaction in a particular area. Write down 1-3 important Outcomes that you would like to move towards:

-
-
-

2. Now for each outcome you have listed above, set yourself a *Personal Goal* that meets the SMART requirements above that you want to aim to achieve within a specified time, which you believe will help you towards the outcome:

-
-
-

3. Finally, list below the *Actions* that you will start on within the next 2 weeks to help you start to move towards each goal. For each action, specify what it is, when you will do it & which goal it is relevant to:

The ABC Model

The ABC Model is used in cognitive behavioral coaching or therapy as a tool for analysing a sequence of events in terms of:

A = Activating Event – The situation or event that prompted you to act, feel or think in a certain way.

B = Beliefs – The thoughts that went through your head when the activating event occurred (or after it)

C = Consequences – How you acted & felt in the situation and what then happened.

The model can be particularly helpful in relation to situations where you find yourself repeating a pattern of behaviour which is not helping the situation or making you feel better.

Think of a situation of this kind where you often find yourself acting in a certain way and it doesn't seem to be helping.

Use the table below to analyse the situation, using the ABC Model:

Acting Event	Beliefs	Consequences

Once you have completed the table ask yourself:

1. What can I say to myself in this kind of situation when I have these beliefs that will help me to act in a more constructive way?
2. What different actions can I try out in this kind of situation next time, to see if it produces different results?
3. If you have difficulty producing options for 1. & 2. Ask yourself what a friend whose judgement you respect might suggest you try out or alternatively what you might suggest to someone else to try out in that situation.

Note: You may find that the exercises on *Negative Thoughts and Alternatives* and *Thinking Flexibly* help you to analyse the situation further.

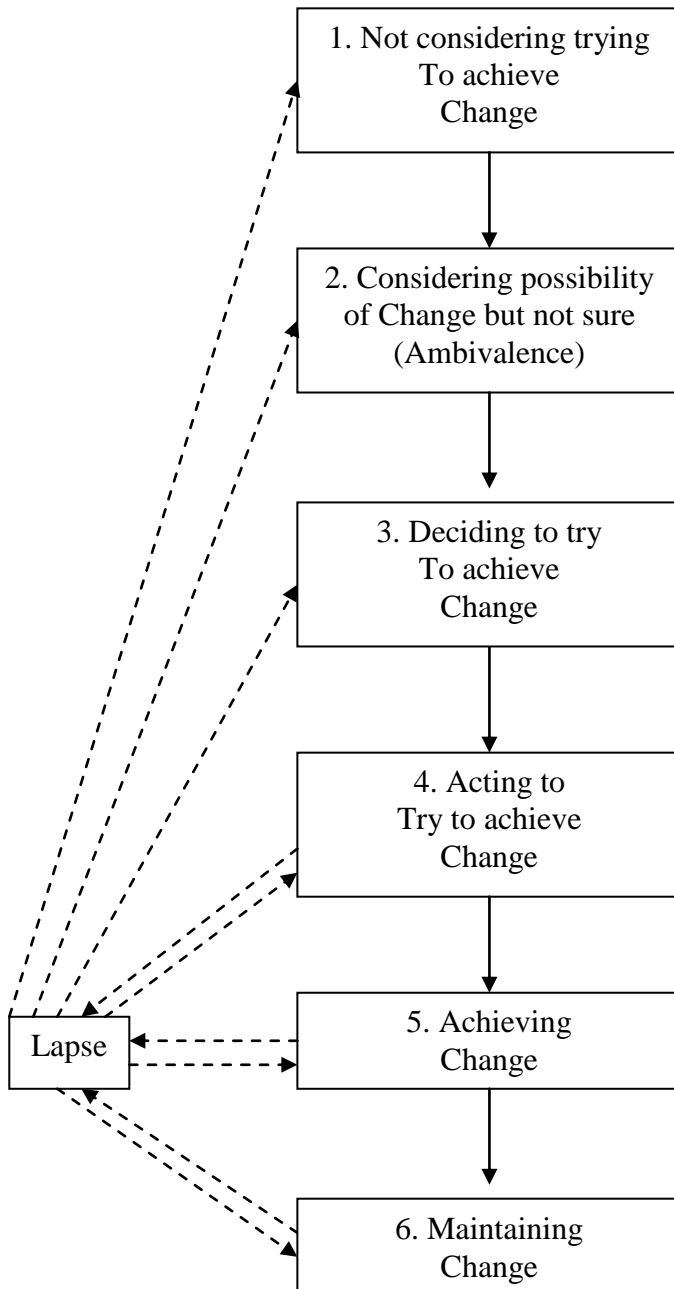
The Miracle Question

1. Imagine that tomorrow morning you wake up and suddenly find that a magical transformation, a miracle, has taken place! Your world is just as you would like it to be and you have resolved all your problems or come to terms with all the things that were bothering you. Describe what is different and what are the particular things that tell you that things have changed? Enter into as much detail as you can.

2. What can you do that would help you to move even if in only a small way towards the new world you have described?

The Normal Process of Change

The flowchart below indicates the stages in the normal process that people go through when making significant changes in their life. It is quite usual for a person to 'lapse' at different points in the process, so don't take it personally if it happens to you! As indicated by the dotted arrows, if you lapse you can choose to get back on track (using the 'lapse' as something to learn from and increasing your chances of more progress next time) or you can slip backwards one or more stages. Learning how to deal with the possible paths presented by the dotted arrows, whether with the support of a coach or on your own, is often crucial to making successful changes.



This flowchart is an original creation of David Bonham-Carter. The theory behind it is inspired by J. Prochaska and C. Di Clemente's Cycle of Change and the principles of Motivational Interviewing espoused by W. Miller and S. Rollnick.

Change Process Exercise

1. Specify below a change in something that you do or in a way that you often act or behave, which you are thinking you might like to make or which you have already started making. This change might involve stopping doing something that you currently do or it could involve doing something different or differently:

The Change I am aiming for is:

2. Looking at the flow chart on the previous page, what stage do you think you are currently at in relation to the change you are trying to make?
3. Specify below one thing that you might do to help you move nearer to the next step in the normal process of change:
4. What can you do or say to yourself if you lapse or are tempted to lapse to help you stay on track or get back on the path to change?

After you have completed this exercise you may like to complete the *Advantages and Disadvantages of Change* exercise if you have not already done so or to remind yourself of the answers to that exercise if you have already completed it, to help reinforce your motivation to change.

Thinking Flexibly

On the next page, some rigid types of thinking are described:

- Black and White Thinking
- Mind Reading
- Fortune Telling
- Generalising
- Labelling People or Situations
- Making Demands

Exercise

Fill out the table below giving one example, whether current or in the past, of each type of rigid thinking listed in the left hand column. For each example you should describe a particular situation where you have found yourself thinking in the particular rigid way listed in the left hand column (see next page for a more detailed description of each type of rigid thinking). Please describe what the situation was, what you thought and what was the outcome. Once you have completed the exercise and read through the attached sheet, decide whether you want to try out any of the options listed in the next page for dealing with each type of rigid thinking.

	Describe Situations		
	<i>In the 3 columns below please describe a particular actual example of where you think you may have demonstrated each type of rigid thinking highlighted in the left hand column:</i>		
Type of Rigid Thinking	What was the Situation?	What did you Think?	What was the outcome (i.e. what then happened &/or what were the consequences)?
<i>Black and White Thinking</i>			
<i>Mind Reading</i>			
<i>Fortune Telling</i>			
<i>Generalising</i>			
<i>Labelling People or Situations</i>			
<i>Making Demands</i>			

Rigid Types of Thinking (Information Sheet)

From time to time most of us can get into the habit of thinking in quite a rigid way about a person or event. When we do not get the response that we think we want from the situation or person, it is possible to get locked into that way of thinking even more, so that we seem almost trapped in it. There are some possible ways of breaking out of this and thinking in ways which will be more productive for us and those around us. Below I give some possible types of thinking which can be a little rigid and then some positive suggestions as to the kind of things that you might try out if you find yourself thinking in one of these ways, so as to help free you from the trap!

Possible Rigid Types of Thinking	What You Can Try To Do
<p>Black and White Thinking This involves for example thinking that a situation is either perfect or else it's hopeless, someone is a demon or else they are a saint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think of some in-between possibilities, if you can - Recognise that people (whether you or someone else) may have some good characteristics and some not good characteristics - Recognise that you may not have all the information needed to understand the situation fully
<p>Mind Reading This involves for example <i>assuming</i> that others are thinking certain things about you or doing things for a particular reason</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to generate some alternative possible explanations for what the other person is doing or saying - Imagine purely for the sake of argument that you <i>are</i> right about the explanation of the other person's behaviour. Try to clarify for yourself <i>why that matters</i> so much to you? - Ask yourself what is the most constructive response you can have to the possibility that you might be right?
<p>Fortune Telling This involves predicting how things will happen, either in an overly gloomy way or in an overly optimistic way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check that your prediction is supported by evidence (and if it is not, then adjust it) - Remind yourself of other possibilities - Acknowledge that sometimes the future is not completely predictable
<p>Generalising This involves saying things like: 'You <i>always...</i>' or 'You <i>never...</i>' (This might be a thought about someone else OR a self critical thought about yourself)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask yourself if a more qualified or moderate claim might be more accurate, e.g. 'You <i>sometimes</i>' or 'You <i>often</i>' - Do you want to come across as bossy or judgemental? – If not, then try to avoid saying bossy or judgemental things if you can! - The same applies to self critical statements: consider whether a more

Possible Rigid Types of Thinking	What You Can Try To Do
	<p>moderate or constructive claim or criticism of yourself might be appropriate and try not to be too judgemental of yourself!</p>
<p>Labelling people and situations Examples might be describing people in simple categories – e.g. ‘You are hopeless/bad/unemotional/useless’ (Again this might be a thought about someone else OR a self critical thought about yourself)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remember that people and even situations are complex. - Allow for degrees and the possibility that some people (including you) may be good at some things and not so good at others. - Allow the other person to be imperfect sometimes - Equally allow <i>yourself</i> to be imperfect sometimes.
<p>Making Demands This involves using words like ‘Must’, ‘Should’, ‘Ought’ (Again this may be about others or about yourself)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to avoid dogmatic moralistic words like ‘must’, ‘should’ and maybe try out ‘wish’, ‘prefer’, ‘want’ or other words which reflect your feelings and wishes rather than impose a demand on others or on yourself - Ask yourself, will it be helpful if I impose demands or expectations (whether in word or thought)? An alternative might be to make a request or slightly to lower your expectations of the other person (and of yourself as well if you expect to be always perfect in a particular role). None of us is perfect. - Retain your own standards, ideals and preferences but try not to <i>insist</i> that the world (or you) always operate by them or <i>should</i> do so, as the world may not agree! Instead, acknowledge simply that you would <i>prefer</i> or <i>like</i> it if the world or another person (or yourself) acted differently (if appropriate you may express that <i>preference</i> to the other person - or write it down as an intended commitment for yourself if you are the person in question – it depends whether in the situation you think that will be helpful). - If another person’s behaviour is obviously aggressive or harmful, don’t collude with that, but ask yourself what options you have to help you prevent the harmful effects or change the situation.

Weekly Diary

Week Commencing:

Fill in the timetable below to indicate what you were doing at different times during the week. Indicate against each entry roughly how much time you spent on each activity. You can also add comments about how you felt.

Please rate your satisfaction with how the day went at the end of each day.

At the end of the week look back over your diary and decide whether there is anything you want to change in your routine or plans for the next week.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Rate satisfaction with the day on a scale of 0-10 (10=100% satisfied)
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Weighing Up Two Options

This exercise is designed for a situation where you have two contrasting options – for example:

- To spend the afternoon working or not to spend the afternoon working
- To answer the telephone or to leave it on voicemail
- To react angrily to a situation or not to react angrily

1. In the table below, list the two contrasting options and the advantages of each:

= <u>OPTION A</u>	= <u>OPTION B</u>
ADVANTAGES of Option A	ADVANTAGES of Option B

2. Looking at the above, which option would it be better for you to choose (bear in mind not just the number of advantages but the importance or weight to attach to particular advantages)?
3. Is there an Option C which would combine some of the benefits of each Option and be better than either of them? – this might be a compromise option or a completely different option. Alternatively, you may feel that realistically there is no third option and that the choice is strictly between A & B.

What Are Your Needs?

This exercise is designed to start you thinking about which of your important needs are not being met and where you want your priorities to be.

One way of classifying needs is that developed by Abraham Maslow in his theory explaining human motivation. In the most advanced version of his theory, he set out a number of categories of basic needs (“Deficiency Needs”) and also a number of categories of higher order needs (“Growth Needs”) relating to personal growth and development. The types of needs are as follows:

Deficiency Needs:

Physiological needs – basic biological needs, such as the need for oxygen, water, food. Also the need for sleep, sexual needs and the need to avoid pain.

Safety & Security Needs – the need for security, stability, protection from harm, perhaps also the need for a stable job or income and a home.

Love & Belonging Needs – the need for relationships of different kinds, family, friends, romance, community.

Esteem Needs – the need to have the respect of others and the need for self respect, self confidence, independence and freedom.

Growth Needs

The Need to Know and Understand – the need to gain knowledge and understand the world and one’s environment

Aesthetic Needs – the need for symmetry, balance and beauty

Self-Actualization Needs – the need to achieve one’s potential and find fulfilment

Transcendence – The need to connect to something beyond the ego or to help others find fulfilment and realize their potential.

Bearing in mind the above categories or any other needs which you think are not covered by them, answer the questions on the next page:

- 1. Which category of needs do you most want to meet better in your life now?**

- 2. What will be the potential impact on other categories of needs from you doing so?**

- 3. What sort of balance do you want to achieve between the different categories of needs? To what degree do you want to shift your current priorities?**

- 4. What would be the potential consequences of shifting your priorities?**

- 5. Given your reflections in 1-4 above are there any actions or commitments you would like to make to mark a rebalancing of your priorities?**

What Are Your Rights?

People with low self esteem or in difficult situations sometimes forget that they have rights, those rights might include things like

- To be treated with respect
- To express my opinion
- To share responsibilities and tasks with others.

1. What would you say are your rights? List them below:

2. Are there any situations in which you feel your rights are not currently being met? If yes, please list them below:

3. In relation to any of the situation you highlighted in 2.above, indicate options for what you might do to try to improve your chances of having your rights met in that situation. For each option you list, assess the advantages and disadvantages of trying out that option.

Your Priorities in Life

Make a list of everything that is most important to you in life. This might include, for example:

- particular relationships such as partner, family or friends
- having stimulating or rewarding work
- being well respected
- making the most of your creative talents
- living in a home where you feel comfortable
- being in good health
- physical fitness
- partaking in sports
- spiritual wellbeing
- being a respected member of a particular group or community
- independence
- having time to relax
- taking on challenges

Now do your best to order these in order of importance with the most important first. If you have a lot of things on your list you may if you wish decide to limit the list to say the top five or top ten priorities for you.

Once you have got your list in order of importance, spend a few minutes reflecting on how the current way that you spend your time matches (or doesn't match as the case may be) the order of your priorities. In the light of your reflection on your priorities are you happy with how you are now living or is there anything you would like to adjust in your typical daily or weekly schedule to allow you to focus more time and energy on your priorities? If there is, then make a commitment – even if only a small one – as to how you will adjust your use of time in the desired way.

Making Decisions

If you have decisions to make and are not sure what option to choose, you can use the list you have created as a benchmark to help you decide what you want to do. This does not mean that in every situation you will choose an option that reflects the number one priority on your list, merely that in making your choices you will at least be aware of the different competing priorities that may inform the choices you make and you can make a decision based on how you would like to balance the priorities or follow one rather than another.

POSTSCRIPT

Other Coaching Books by David Bonham-Carter

“CBT Techniques to Beat Negative Thinking”

“Changing Your Life - A Practical Guide”

“AWAKE from Anxiety”

“Low Self Esteem – How to Deal with It”

“Overcoming Jealousy – A Practical Guide”

“Dealing with a Jealous Partner”

“How to Be Assertive”

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