

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.

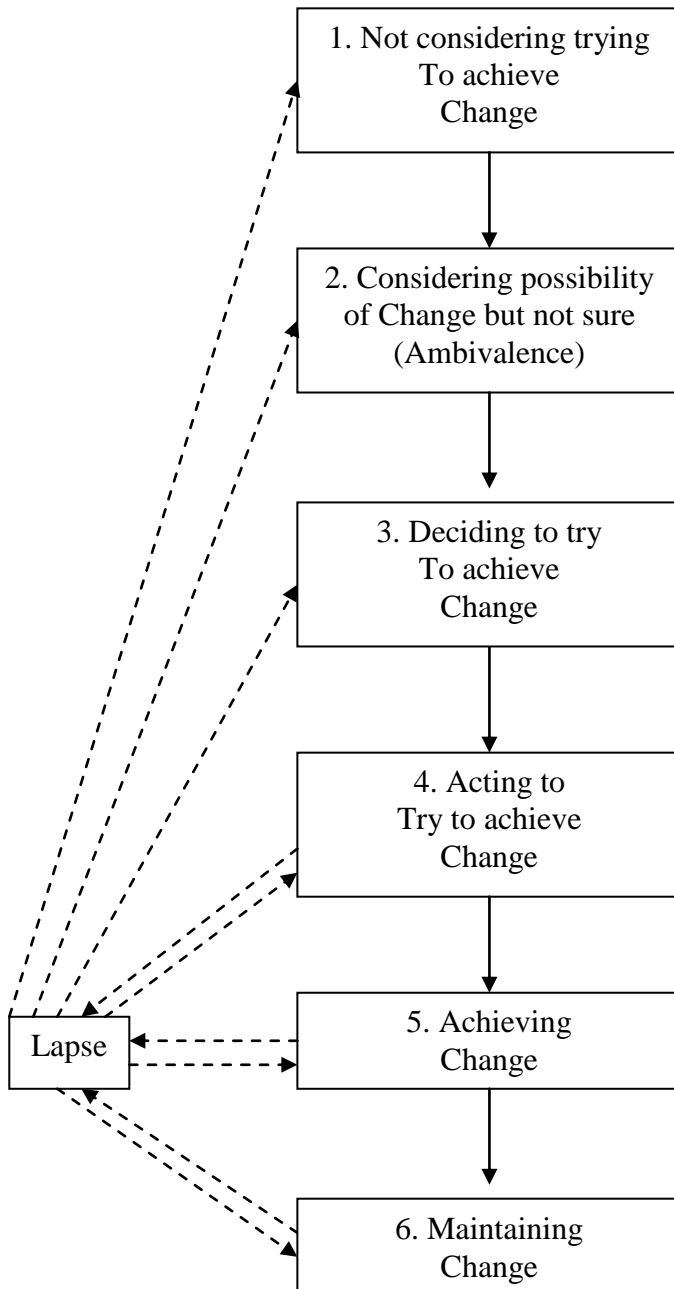
The Miracle Question

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:

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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