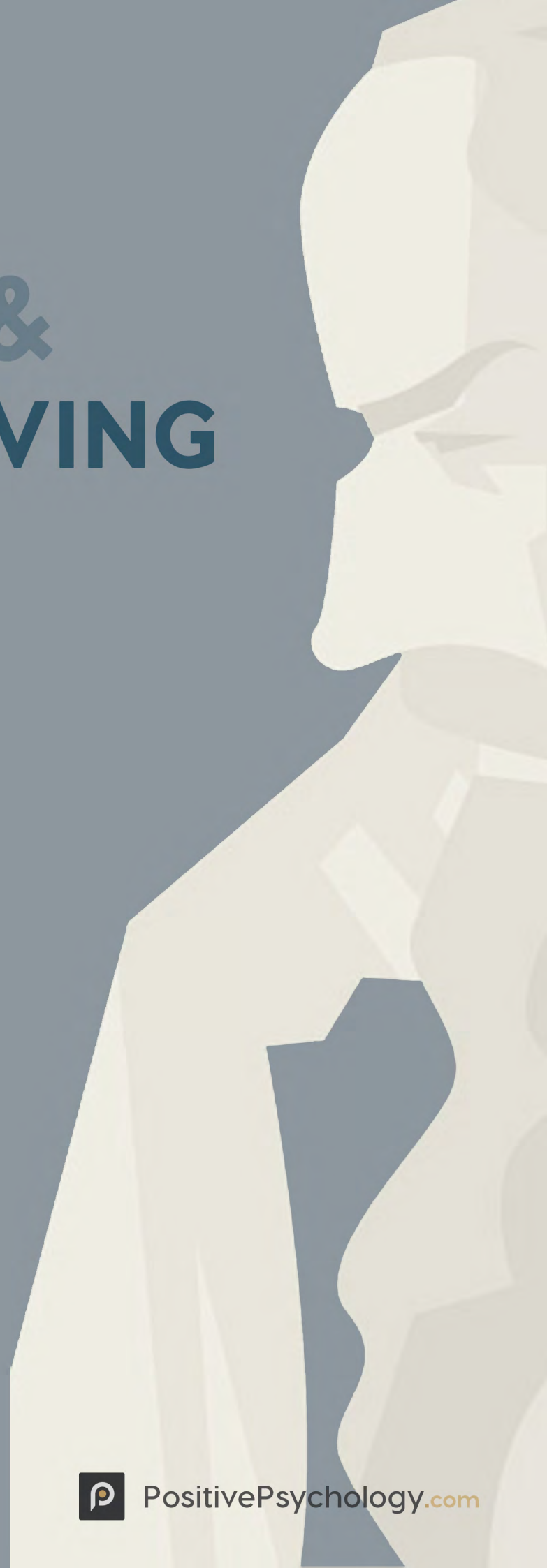


3

MEANING & VALUED LIVING

EXERCISES



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Welcome

It is a great pleasure to offer you this compilation of meaning and valued living exercises. During the past years, Positive Psychology has gained an increasing amount of attention, both from helping professionals and researchers. This attention has resulted in many valuable insights in what contributes to a life wordt living.

Since 2013, our aim with PositivePsychology.com has been to contribute to this field by disseminating the science to psychology practitioners and educators alike.

We hope that the exercises presented here may inspire you too to increase your own meaning in life and that of the people around you. Please feel free to print and share this document with others.

For those who like what they see, make sure to also check out our online searchable database with all kinds of similar practical positive psychology tools:

<https://positivepsychology.com/toolkit/>

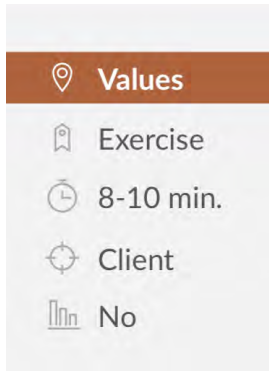
All the best!

Seph Fontane Pennock
Hugo Alberts, Ph.D.



Using the tools

This product contains 3 different tools on meaning and valued living. Each tool is structured in the same way, consisting of a background section, a goal description, advice for using the exercise and suggested readings. On the first page of every tool, a legend is shown, consisting of several icons:



- The first icon displays the main category the tool belongs to.
- The second icon shows the type of tool. The following options are available:
 - » Exercise (a tool that describes an activity that is done once, during a session)
 - » Assessment (a tool that aims to assess a trait or characteristic of a person)
 - » Overview (a tool that provides an overview or list of something; research findings, facts, etc.)
 - » Advice (a tool that is directed at the helping professional providing advice on how to carry out a certain activity)
 - » Meditation (a tool that describes a form of meditation)
 - » Intervention (a tool that describes an activity that needs to be done more than once during a certain period)
- The third icon provides an estimation of the duration of the tool. In other words, how long it takes to complete the exercise. This is always an estimation of the total time it takes. Note that for some tool types, like overview, advice, protocol and intervention it is difficult if not impossible to provide an estimation of the duration. In these cases n/a (not available) is written.
- The fourth icon describes the intended audience for this tool; available options include client, coach or group.
- The last icon indicates whether this specific tool has been tested at least once in a scientific study and has been published in a peer reviewed journal (yes or no). Note that if there is a strong theoretical and scientifically tested basis underlying the tool, but the tool itself in its current form has not been directly addressed in research, the icon will still indicate “no”.

Important note


Please note that the tools in this give-away are not a substitute for a clinical or coaching certification program, which we recommend you take before you call yourself an official “therapist” or “coach” and before you see clients or patients.

Note that you are advised to use these tools within the boundaries of your professional expertise. For instance, if you are a certified clinician, you are advised to use the exercises within your field of expertise (e.g. clinical psychology). Likewise, a school teacher may use the exercises in the classroom, but is not advised to use the exercises for clinical populations. PositivePsychology.com B.V. is not responsible for unauthorized usage of these tools.

Practicing exercises on meaning can sometimes be confronting and result in unpleasant experiences, such as agitation, anxiety or discomfort. Although these experiences are often a natural part of the process, we advise you seek psychological support if your emotional reactions are unusually strong.

These exercises should not be used as a substitute for professional psychological advice, diagnosis or treatment. If you are currently under psychological treatment, please consult your psychologist first before using these exercises.

PositivePsychology.com assumes no responsibility or liability for any consequence resulting directly or indirectly from any action or inaction you take based on the information found in these exercises.

 Values Exercise 8-10 min. Client No

The Top 5 Values

Values are a core component of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes & Strosahl, 1999). Values are used to help clients choose directions for their lives that are in line with what is truly important to them and help them construct goals that promote behaviour in those directions. Values are the answer to the question: “In a world where you could choose to have your life be about something, what would you choose?” (Wilson & Murrell, 2004, 135). This exercise can be used to increase the client’s awareness of his/her values.



Goal

The goal of this exercise is to increase awareness of the client’s values and reflect on the personal meaning and importance of these values.



Advice

Instead of using the list with predefined values, your client may first take some time to reflect on his/her core values and list them on a sheet of paper. For some clients, this brainstorming approach works better than selecting the values from a list. Other clients may find it difficult to grasp the idea of values and find it difficult to list their values without any help. For these clients, the attached list of values may be a good starting point.



Suggested Readings

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (1999). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: An experiential approach to behavior change*. New York: Guilford.

Wilson, K. G., & Murrell, A. R. (2004). Values work in acceptance and commitment therapy: Setting a course for behavioral treatment. In S. C. Hayes, V. M. Follette, & M. M. Linehan (Eds.), *Mindfulness and acceptance: Expanding the cognitive behavior tradition* (pp. 120-151). New York: Guilford.

Tool description

Instructions

The goal of this exercise is to increase awareness of what really matters to you by identifying your top five life values. Values are the answer to the questions: What's important to you in your life? What is your life's purpose? What do you enjoy doing? When do you feel satisfied and fulfilled? Being aware of your values by answering the above questions will help you navigate your life in the direction that you choose. You have the potential to live the life of your dreams, but how do you do this without looking inward? Understanding our own core values help guide us towards our passions and desires. Please complete the five steps below.

1. Take ten minutes to brainstorm what your own values are without referring to the list on the next page.

My values are:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Review the values list on the next page and check those values that resonate with you.
3. This list is always a work-in-progress. If you wish, you may add other values from your brainstorming session or those that you think of along the way through this process:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Values list:

Acceptance	Fairness	Peace
Achievement	Fame	Personal Development
Advancement & Promotion	Family Happiness	Personal Expression
Adventure	Fast Pace	Planning
Affection	Freedom	Play
Altruism	Friendship	Pleasure
Arts	Fun	Power
Awareness	Grace	Privacy
Beauty	Growth	Purity
Challenge	Harmony	Quality
Change	Health	Radiance
Community	Helping Others	Recognition
Compassion	Helping Society	Relationships
Competence	Honesty	Religion
Competition	Humour	Reputation
Completion	Imagination	Responsibility & Accountability
Connectedness	Improvement	Risk
Cooperation	Independence	Safety & Security
Collaboration	Influencing Others	Self-Respect
Country	Inner Harmony	Sensibility
Creativity	Inspiration	Sensuality
Decisiveness	Integrity	Serenity
Democracy	Intellect	Service
Design	Involvement	Sexuality
Discovery	Knowledge	Sophistication
Diversity	Leadership	Spark
Environmental Awareness	Learning	Speculation
Economic Security	Loyalty	Spirituality
Education	Magnificence	Stability
Effectiveness	Making a Difference	Status
Efficiency	Mastery	Success
Elegance	Meaningful Work	Teaching
Entertainment	Ministering	Tenderness
Enlightenment	Money	Thrill
Equality	Morality	Unity
Ethics	Mystery	Variety
Excellence	Nature	Wealth
Excitement	Openness	Winning
Experiment	Originality	Wisdom
Expertise	Order	
Exhilaration	Passion	

4. Now prioritize your values and make a selection of five of your most important values. List your top five values below:

- I.
.....
- II.
.....
- III.
.....
- IV.
.....
- V.
.....

5. Take about five to ten minutes to think about, or discuss with a friend or your coach, what each of the above values means to you. Then, generate a definition that resonates and makes sense to you.

Value I:
.....

Means to me:
.....

Is important to me because:
.....
.....
.....

Value II:
.....

Means to me:
.....

Is important to me because:
.....
.....
.....



Value III:

.....

Means to me:

.....

Is important to me because:

.....

.....

.....

Value IV:

.....

Means to me:

.....

Is important to me because:

.....

.....

.....

Value V:

.....

Means to me:

.....

Is important to me because:

.....

.....

.....

Self-eulogy

Values

Exercise

15 min.

Client or group

No

Everyday life is full of situations and experiences that call for thought, decision making, and action. We consider things like *Should I skip the party tonight to visit my grandmother at her nursing home?* and *Should I spend 30 mins longer at work to improve this project?* The decisions we make and the courses of action we take are based on our beliefs, attitudes, and values; and it is these decision-led actions that, at least in part, make us who we are and how we are known to others.

In therapy, values clarification is used to help people identify and clarify the values that influence their decisions and behaviors (Hayes et al., 1999). Values clarification is seen to answer the question, “What do you want your life to stand for?” and includes statements about the type of person a client wants to be and how they want to behave on a consistent basis (Berryhill & Lechtenberg, 2015). A person who has explored their personal values in therapy is often able to identify what will help them to effectively function in life, both personally and within relationships. A classic values clarification exercise is to imagine one’s own funeral service, and what would be said in the eulogy (Kirschenbaum, 2013). The eulogy is the speech delivered by a loved one that describes the life, work, accomplishments, and/or personal qualities of the deceased that he or she will be remembered for. Anecdotes that capture the essence of the person who has passed are often shared. In this exercise, people are asked to consider their own eulogies, as they would like them to be delivered at their (hypothetical) funeral. The purpose of this is to illuminate what is considered personally meaningful and important to the client, and then to discern how well he or she is currently living a life in line with what is valued.



Author

This exercise was adapted from Kirschenbaum’s (2013) Self-Eulogy exercise by Dr. Lucinda Poole and Dr. Hugo Alberts.



Goal

The goal of this tool is twofold: (1) to help clients identify and clarify their values through considering what they would like to be remembered for at their own funeral; (2) to evaluate how well clients are living a life in line with what their values.



Advice

- It is important for clients to realize that the eulogy reflects how they *hope* they come across to others, rather than how they may actually/currently be coming across to others. This tool is not about their current behavior but rather about what kind of person they want to be.
- Practitioners should be sensitive to and accepting of the client's values systems when these differ from their own, as it is considered unethical for practitioners to pressure individuals into developing the same set of values as their own.
- Before carrying out this exercise, check the client is comfortable with the concept by running the general idea of the tool by them. Clients who are currently grieving for the loss of a loved one or are dealing with personal health issues may find the exercise to be too confronting, which is perfectly acceptable.
- When considering doing this exercise in a session with a client, inform clients about the general idea of the exercise and that they are allowed to cease the exercise at any given moment.



Resources

- Berryhill, M. B., & Lechtenberg, M. M. (2015). Acceptance and commitment therapy with adolescents: Identifying and clarifying values. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 26, 25-30.
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K., & Wilson, K. G. (1999). *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: An experiential approach to behavior change*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kirschenbaum, H. (2013). *Values clarification in counseling and psychotherapy: Practical strategies for individual and group settings*. New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press.



Tool description

In this exercise, you will imagine what the most important people in your life would say about you at your own funeral. The idea is to find out what you think is important in life, and how well you are living a life in line with what you value.

Step 1. Imagine your funeral

Imagine that you have died (fortunately a natural death) and today is the day of your funeral. All of your nearest and dearest have gathered together for the funeral service. Without getting too morbid, take a moment to picture your funeral in your mind.

Step 2. List key speakers

Now, a few significant people will get up today to say a few words about you during the funeral service. Who would these people likely be?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 3. Imagine your eulogy

Close your eyes now, and take a moment to imagine these key people delivering their speech/eulogy at the service. What would you hope these people say about you?

After each person speaks, open your eyes briefly and jot down the key points he or she made about you. For instance, you might jot down “a good listener”, “always kind” and “a hard worker”.

Key person #1:

-
-
-

Key person #2:

-
-
-

Key person #3:

-
-
-

Step 4. Extract values from eulogies

Values are the things we consider to be important in life. Examples of values are leadership, kindness, helping, learning, etc. Now consider your answers to the previous step. What values can you extract from what you hope your loved ones said about you? To help you extract values from these eulogies, you might like to refer to the list of values in Appendix A. In the table below (first column), list as many values as you can extract from the kind words your loved ones shared at the funeral service.



Value	Currently living by (Yes/No)

Step 5. Identify discrepancies between eulogies and current life

Consider how well you are currently living by the values you identified in the previous step. Work through each value one at a time, and ask yourself, “Am I embodying this value in my life at the moment?” In the table above (second column), place a tick (✓) next to the values you feel you are currently living in line with, and a cross (✗) next to those that you feel there is room for improvement.

Step 6. Move toward valued action

The values that you have marked with a cross indicate discrepancies between the type of person you ideally want to be and the type of person you are actually being. But do not be alarmed, as identifying these discrepancies is the purpose of the exercise, and there is always room for improvement when it comes to acting in line with our values!

We will now consider how you can reduce such discrepancies so that going forward you can start living a life that is more in tune with your personal values so that you can be the type of person you *want* to be. For each value marked with a cross, come up with at least one actionable step you can take to reflect this value in your personal life. This need not be a major change; sometimes the smallest actions are the most powerful. For example, if you marked a cross next to your value “kindness”, an actionable step to reduce this discrepancy could be to buy a coffee for the homeless person you pass on your way to work.



Value	Actionable step

Step 7. Take that first value-inspired step

Of the value-inspired steps you came up with in Step 6, which would be the most feasible one to action first? By feasible, we mean the easiest and most achievable thing to do. Once you have decided on the most feasible action, go ahead and take this first step toward being the person you want to be.



Appendix A: List of Values

Acceptance	Effectiveness	Influencing Others	Purity
Achievement	Efficiency	Inner Harmony	Quality
Advancement & Promotion	Elegance	Inspiration	Radiance
Adventure	Entertainment	Integrity	Recognition
Affection	Enlightenment	Intellect	Relationships
Altruism	Equality	Involvement	Religion
Arts	Ethics	Knowledge	Reputation
Awareness	Excellence	Leadership	Responsibility
Beauty	Excitement	Learning	Risk Safety & Security
Challenge	Experiment	Loyalty	Self-Respect
Change	Expertise	Magnificence	Sensibility
Community	Exhilaration	Making a Difference	Sensuality
Compassion	Fairness	Mastery	Serenity
Competence	Fame	Meaningful Work	Service
Competition	Family	Ministering	Sexuality
Completion	Happiness	Money	Sophistication
Connectedness	Fast Pace	Morality	Spark
Cooperation	Freedom	Mystery	Speculation
Collaboration	Friendship	Nature	Spirituality
Country	Fun	Openness	Stability
Creativity	Grace	Originality	Status
Decisiveness	Growth	Order	Success
Democracy	Harmony	Passion	Teaching
Design	Health	Peace	Tenderness
Discovery	Helping Others	Personal Development	Thrill
Diversity	Helping Society	Personal Expression	Unity
Environmental Awareness	Honesty	Planning	Variety
Economic Security	Humor	Play	Wealth
Education	Imagination	Pleasure	Winning
	Improvement	Power	Wisdom
	Independence	Privacy	

Values

Metaphor

5 min.

Client

No

The Scoreboard Metaphor

On the surface, values may seem very close to goals. Both constructs concern what people believe to be important, what they conceive of as ideal, and what they want to strive for and bring about in their lives (Emmons, 1989; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Consequently, when people are asked to reflect on their values, they often mention goals. For example, they describe the job they want or the partner they would like. They may also describe feelings, like self-esteem or joy. When working with values, it is important to differentiate between goals and values. Goals can be accomplished whereas values represent an ongoing direction. For instance, one can accomplish the goal of “buying a new piano” but never accomplish the value “creativity.” The latter involves an ongoing process of investment.

This tool introduces the scoreboard metaphor (Stoddard & Afari, 2014). The scoreboard metaphor illuminates the difference between values and goals. It is used to demonstrate the possibility of a life in which values add meaning and purpose to our lives whereas goals, as important as they are to have, are in and of themselves merely an endpoint. In the scoreboard metaphor, the client is the player, the score on the scoreboard is the client’s goal, and how the client plays the game is his or her values. The scoreboard metaphor is usefully applied in the context of psychoeducation, helping clients clarify values from goals, as well as in instances of excessive goal focus.



Author

This tool was adapted from The Scoreboard Metaphor (Gammon & Stoddard, 2013) by Lucinda Poole (PsyD).



Goal

The goal of this tool is to (1) demonstrate to clients the difference between goals and values through the use of the scoreboard metaphor, and (2) highlight the importance of considering values in the pursuit of personal goals.



Advice

- Practitioners can tailor the metaphor to specific clients by using different sports (i.e., if the client plays tennis, adapt the metaphor to a tennis match scoreboard) or different activities (e.g., playing a musical instrument at a concert, and cutting to the bow and applause at the end of the performance).
- This tool is particularly relevant for clients with an excessive focus on goals. The scoreboard metaphor can be used to help these clients focus more on values and actions that can be taken in the service of values.
- A common issue that arises with goals in therapy is that, if they are not achieved, clients can sometimes stop other actions in the service of the underlying value. For example, a client who does not follow through with his goal of making a toast at an upcoming social event may stop speaking up at work meetings and other public speaking opportunities, undermining his value of 'contribution.' In such cases, you can return to the scoreboard metaphor and ask, "If you hadn't won the game, would it still be important to you to keep playing?" Practitioners can work with clients here to facilitate committed action despite unmet goals.



Suggested Readings

- Emmons, R. A. (1989). The personal strivings approach to personality. In: L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal concepts in personality and social psychology* (pp. 87–126). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum
- Hayes, S. C. (2004). Acceptance and commitment therapy, relational frame theory, and the third wave of behavioral and cognitive therapies. *Behavior therapy*, 35, 639-665.
- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theory and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. Zanna, (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 25, 1–65. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Stoddard, J. A., & Afari, N. (2014). *The Big Book of ACT Metaphors: a practitioner's guide to experiential exercises and metaphors in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.

Tool description



Imagine that you are playing a game of basketball. You are lined up with your team on the court, facing your opposition and about to start playing. Your center player taps the first ball to you, which you catch and then dribble down toward your goal circle. You take your first shot at goal and swish, the ball travels straight through the basket. Everyone cheers and you run with the team back to the center to re-position yourselves for the next play. And so it goes for the next hour, up and down the court, offense and defense, catching and dribbling, scoring and missing, cheering and high-fiving teammates. The other team scores, your team catches up. The other team leads again, but in the last nail-biting seconds of the game, your team orchestrates a big play for the win! The final score on the scoreboard at the end of the game reads 44 for your team and 42 for the opposing team.

- Now, what if the scorekeeper were to come along at the beginning of the game and offer to put that score up on the board for you? Your team gets its 44 points, and the other team gets 42, so you win—game over; no need to play for it. Would you take the scorekeeper up on it? If no, why not? *Allow clients to answer.*
- So this is like the difference between values and goals. Winning the game might be your *goal*, and you may or may not accomplish it. But what is truly important is the process by which you achieve that goal. In other words, it's all about how you played the game; showing up, being a team player, doing your best, encouraging your teammates. These are *values*. Whereas goals can be achieved, values are moment-to-moment ways of being.



Step 2. Apply the scoreboard metaphor to personal situation

Is there something in your life that you are currently working towards (i.e., a goal)? Write down the goal below:

Now imagine that, just like in the scoreboard metaphor, you were offered a chance to have this goal completed now, without having to put any additional effort in achieving the goal. Would you take this chance? If so, why? If not, why not?

If you answered “yes” in the previous question, please consider the next question. Otherwise, proceed with the following question.



It seems like achieving the goal is more important for you than your pathway towards the goal. You feel that the pathway to your goal is not “valuable” enough and prefer to skip it. In other words, the pathway does not align enough with your values. What could you do to make the pathway to your goal more valuable/ meaningful?

If you would *not* take the chance to complete this goal without putting any additional effort in it, it sounds like the pathway to the goal is either enjoyable, meaningful, or both, to you. You feel that something is gained by walking the path to the goal. In other words, the pathway is valuable to you; it aligns with your values. Can you describe the values that you live in line with by moving closer to your goal?