

The Lifestyle Review

(Home Workshop—Interview Format)

Play life with a full deck!

The Lifestyle Interview is a means of periodically taking inventory of how your life is going. It can help you measure your progress, celebrate your accomplishments, spot trouble areas, and reset your direction. You can use it by yourself. It's designed to be used with another person, however, since the "personal touch" gives it increased power. It's like taking a snapshot of yourself at this point in your life. Some parts will look good and others not so good.

To get the most value from this review, it helps to have at least two other tools. Since this assessment will point out areas to work on, one tool that helps is a means of making whatever changes are needed. This could be a goal-setting process, a workshop, some specific program, or any of a variety of change-causing processes.

You'll also benefit from some kind of ongoing personal support to keep you moving forward, if you don't already have it. Two highly recommended support tools are the Goal & Growth Group small group format and the Buddy System format in which two people pair up to support each other with twice-a-week phone calls.

Assessment, support and a self-change process are just three of several ingredients that go into successful self-management and empowerment of others. Consult the list in part D below to make sure you aren't missing a key ingredient. Life's true tragedies happen when people need something and have it available but don't use it. Play life with a full deck!

Preparation Directions

About a week before meeting your partner for the Lifestyle Review, call the other person if s/he hasn't already called you to remind them of the meeting time and place, and to prepare their answers ahead of time. Preparing your answers will allow you to go much faster and get much more out of the Lifestyle Interview.

Read through this interview and decide which questions you'd like your partner to ask you. Star or mark those, then write your answers or notes on a separate sheet of paper. (Or make a copy of this interview to write on.) At the beginning of the interview, give this copy to the other person, and hold on to your notes.

Directions for the actual interview

1. Begin the session by agreeing to confidentiality and by deciding on a length of time for each speaker, after which the listener and speaker will switch roles. Example:

“I agree to keep what’s said here in strict confidence. I plan to devote 100% of my attention to listening to you. Let’s set the halfway point of the meeting to be at [name the time], at which point we’ll switch roles.”

2. During the interview, give brief answers to most questions, so you’ll have enough time to go into more depth on the important “meaty” questions. It’s recommended that you run through all parts of the assessment first, and then go back to explore the meaty questions more thoroughly.

Other Suggestions

1. a) Divide time equally in half. If one person doesn’t finish the core set, more time should be scheduled if both agree to it. b) Set up calls or meetings for 45-90 minutes. It’s strongly recommended that there be as little interruption as possible, in a relatively quiet, semi-private space. Though this can be done by phone or chat-line, face-to-face meetings are preferred because the quality of listening can be so much better.

2. a) The person listening can make short comments, but shouldn’t “take the ball away” from the other person. b) If the speaker is vague or superficial with answers, the listener may ask for more details or depth. c) There should be no distractions or division of attention. Even eating a large meal may interfere with the quality of the listening. If you must eat, please eat first and ask questions afterwards.

3. Basic active listening is recommended. That means occasionally reflecting the core message of what’s being said by describing both the feeling and the situation (experience or behavior). An example would be: “Sounds like you’re frustrated [the feeling] by his lack of communication [the experience or event].”

4. The initial commitment is for just one meeting, but it’s more effective when the commitment is for a year—for example, three meetings at four-month intervals, or two meetings at six-month intervals. Participants may want to get one or two other partners, so they can go through the assessment (or a related question set) more often. Having more than one partner is also a way this material can be made available to others. It’s good to have at least one partner who’s not as experienced as you so you can be more of a mentor, and have at least one other partner equal to or more experienced than you so you can be the recipient of a higher quality of help. That way, in the overall scheme of things, everyone is giving and receiving about equally.

5. You can network, asking for references or contacts who have resources, but never ask your partner directly for money, volunteer time or other resources. Since your partner is

obviously listening to you, let them make the decision to offer help or resources.

6. It's a nice idea to keep a file or binder for your answers. That way, you can have a record of your personal growth.

7. The spirit of the interview shouldn't be one of judgment, or a means of making sure you kick yourself for every mistake you made. Instead, it should be an affirmation of effort and a celebration or acknowledgment of progress.

A. Current Inventory, General

Is there anything special you'll want from the listener?

How are you feeling right now?

How do you feel about the period of time since the last Lifestyle Interview? (Or roughly two or three months.)

What is going well in your life? What are some successes and moments of appreciation in your life?

What isn't going well? Are there situations where the quality is below your standards?

What are the different roles you play?

professional

volunteer

family

informal

In the last couple of months, which of these roles have been draining, and which have been stimulating and affirming?

Do you feel under a lot of stress? How are you dealing with it? Do you think you're dealing with the stress adequately? If not, can you talk about a plan or goal to manage or reduce it?

Is there someone or a group of people you actively resent, or haven't forgiven?

Is there someone who actively resents you, or hasn't forgiven you?

B. Facets of Life Inventory

Assess yourself in the following areas, using either +, ✓ or – to signify progress, no change, or backward movement, or “Good,” “Okay,” “Unsatisfactory”—or use a grading system, A to F. You can assess yourself in three different aspects: 1) recent changes over the last two to three months; 2) your efforts (which can be good, even though your situation might not be satisfactory); and 3) a lifetime average.

a) Your health (diet, exercise, sleep, check-ups, chronic problems)

b) Your finances (debts, savings, investments)

- c) Your personal organization (planning, personal files, bills, financial records, health records)
- d) Your mental health (stress, thought patterns, emotional patterns)
- e) Your spirituality (study, prayer or contemplation, worship community participation, behavior, ethical development, openness to Higher Power)
- f) Your overall effectiveness, your capacity to change and adapt (time management, personal organization, reserve savings, energy, network of relationships)
- g) Your sexuality (self-expression, self-control)
- h) Your efforts to learn and change (habits, attitudes, skills, value clarification)
- i) Your living space (quality, maintenance, repairs)
- j) Your environmental, political, economic and community responsibilities
- k) Your career advancement/work life
- l) Your legacy—what you leave behind (children, creative work, estate, service)
- m) Your enjoyment and appreciation of life/pleasure (nature, the arts, people, popular culture)
- n) Your volunteer roles, if any
- o) Your organizational and group-member relationships (clubs, support groups, and professional organizations)

- p) Your handling of major losses and setbacks (death, major illness, unemployment, separation)
- q) Your important personal relationships (communication, commitment, division of control, openness/honesty, acceptance/forgiveness, intimacy, and your personal contribution) On a separate page, list their names and consider them individually.

Can you think of other areas not mentioned? How are they going?

C. Your Personal Mission, Your “Center”

“...if you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the thing I want to live for.” —Thomas Merton

Many of the above areas of your life can be going well, but you could still be very unhappy if whatever you’re living for is not going well. From the above list, or any other you can think of, put down the things you’re living for—the “ends” in your life, the center of your life. For instance, one person might be living for his wife and children, so that the other parts of his life (career, learning, maintenance) just become means for taking care of them. Another person might be living for their creative works and family; a third might be focused on personal enjoyment and a fourth on their spiritual path and God. If there are more than one center, list them in order of importance from greatest to least.

Please write your response to at least three of the following questions: What are you living for? What makes you feel most alive? What kind of play did you enjoy as a child (before the adults praised you for what they liked to see you do.) What is your special gift or talent? What's your greatest dream? Of all the accomplishments in your life, which makes you feel the happiest and most satisfied? For what do you want to be remembered after you are gone? What's the most important thing in life?

How does your performance in the recent past connect with your sense of personal mission? In other words, is what you're doing right now the best, most loving use of your time? How much congruence is there between what you're doing and who you are, or who you feel you are meant to be?

D. Ingredients of Empowerment Checklist (What's Missing?)

"The Art of Peace is to fulfill that which is lacking." —Morihei Ueshiba

Which of the following ingredients are you missing or low in? Which of the following most limits your effectiveness? In other words, what is the biggest bottleneck in your life right now? Going through the following list may give you an "Aha!" experience as you suddenly identify an ingredient you've been missing for a while. (You can apply this list both to the center or purpose you identified in Section C and to areas from Section B that you're not happy with.)

Form

Examples

Resources—Time, money, material goods

Power/Authority—Giving control of money, time, people, materials, decisions (trusting)

Information/Concepts/Facts—Where to find help, how to do something. (See page 79.)

Praise/Reward (conditional)—Words: "Good job!" "Way to go!" "I'm impressed by your..." Actions: take to lunch, give awards or bonuses.

Appreciation (valuing of behavior)—Words: "Thanks." "I appreciate that you..."
Actions: Same as with Praise.

Affirmation (unconditional)—Words: "I like you the way you are." "I appreciate you."
"I love you." Actions: careful listening, acts of courtesy, smiling, hugs.

Encouragement—Words: “When you’re trying something new, it’s okay if it feels awkward.” “Just give it your best shot, and see what happens!” “There’s something you can contribute that no one else can.” Actions: (As appropriate) a pat on the back. An arm around the shoulder. A squeeze of the hand. A hug.

Active listening—Words that reflect back the feeling and experience, such as “Sounds like you’re disappointed in yourself because you didn’t win.” Actions: Good eye contact, and a posture that shows that you’re listening—for example, uncrossed arms and a slight lean forward.

Access to resources—Where to find help or resources, how to network in a certain field.

Inspiration, fun, beauty—Quotations, photos, movies and stories, contact with inspirational people (including autobiographies).

Feedback and other points of view—Subjective (based on feelings): “The article you wrote was very moving to me.” Objective (based on facts): “There’s a huge piece of lint on your back.”

Perspectives—Ways of looking at the world that are more effective/self-consistent.

Training in skill—Communication, problem-solving, assertiveness, conflict resolution, goal-setting, public-speaking, etc.

Values—Through modeling, role-playing, and discussion that reflect on experience.

Questions—Focusing: “Out of all the issues you have to deal with, which is most urgent?” “Which has the most leverage for change?” Broadening: “That’s one approach; can you think of any others?” Reframing: “Instead of a money problem, is there another way to look at this?” Confronting: “Are you avoiding your feelings?”

Contact—Make contact with people who need caring, with role models, or with personal support and community.

Creating capacity—Letting go of less important desires through “want management”; building efficiency with time, money, or attention.

Ongoing support—One-to-one meetings, telephone buddy system, small groups, e-mail, and/or correspondence.

Walking with/joining—Endorsing, mentoring, forming a team, committing to a relationship, community, friendship, or sharing the same goal.

Witness/modeling—Just showing others how something can be done, by example.

Prayer—Praying for others, praying for yourself as you help others.

Allowing time—Time is needed for growth and maturation – giving a person the room, time or structures to mature or heal.

Self-image—Challenging “I-can’t” assumptions, and attitudes that limit fulfillment and effectiveness.

Other means—Forgiveness, new experience, attention, challenge, providing context, humility.

(Note: As a bonus, this list is a powerful way to help others. By thinking of a particular person as you go through the list, you might get an insight into a particular form of empowerment they’re missing. Or you can read the list to them and ask them for their own reactions to each, and then discuss with them.)

E. Focus

What are the biggest challenges in your life right now?

What is the most critical area for you to explore? In other words, which of your roles or situations is the most urgent or promising? Which situation has the most leverage, either positively or negatively?

F. New perspective

Digging deeper, what are the relevant dynamics in this? What’s really going on here? What combination of factors are involved? What are different ways of looking at the situation you’re in? (This question can address the whole period in question, or just a particular key area.)

G. New Direction

What would you like to see happen in this area? (This is the beginning of goal-setting, and is optional.)

H. Closing. Ask your Lifestyle Review partner the following:

How did you feel about this session?

Can you give me some feedback on my listening? Is there anything that I can improve?

Do you have any people in mind with whom you'd like to share the Lifestyle Interview?
Have you made plans to contact them?

When should we continue this? When should our next session be? (Date and time.)

→ You can use the *Goal or Dream Sheet* to turn any of the insights you've received into goals. Look back especially at your responses in sections C, E and G to determine if you want to do this.