Vision and Values Assessment

How to Address the Challenges of Stress and Time Management

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The Real Reason Life Feels So Stressful

The most challenging decisions in life aren't the choices between good and bad, or even between bad and worse. The most challenging decisions are between good and better. These decisions are challenging because they're the most common and the least appreciated. They're the most frequent choices we face that we're the least equipped to make.

A **Tragedy** is a genuine choice between bad and worse, such as America's war in Afghanistan, or how you treat a cancer. These choices can be excruciating, but in today's society, they're relatively infrequent, and they naturally evoke a lot of support from others.

A **Moral Test** is a genuine choice between good and bad, such as cheating on a test at school, having an affair, or embezzling money at work. These choices come with clear laws, rules and consequences, so while they aren't always easy to deliver on, they're relatively simple to make. Much of society, from schools to church to government, is there to help us make these choices.

Think about it. What problems do you feel the most frustrated with right now? Are they Tragedies or Moral Tests? Or are they something else?

Problems tend to feel stressful and frustrating. But in reality, most of our problems are Positive Problems. And **Positive Problems are choices between good and better.**

Note: There's also a fourth class of challenges – what we call Hard Problems or Big Decisions – which we address in the book *Yes Yes Hell No! The Little Book for Making Big Decision* and in our Authentic Leadership development work.

Positive Problems are the most common source of stress, and learning how to master them is the foundation of effective stress and time management.

For example, one of the problems we're currently working with is the question of which school to send our children to. They currently attend a progressive, private school on a beautiful, nature filled campus. The teachers share our values, and are particularly attuned to the specific strengths and challenges of our daughters. The problem is that private schools cost money, and so we have to work harder to pay for this school. That takes away from our ability to be present with our girls, and to spend as much quality time with them as we'd like.

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This challenge regularly feels like a Tragedy, where nothing we do is good enough. And it often feels like a Moral Test, where it seems imperative that we "get it right." But this is really a Positive Problem, where we're optimizing our choices. Do we send them to the best schools and spend less quality time with them? Or do we send them to a good public school and take the pressure off us, so we can be more present in their lives? Both are good choices.

The great irony of modern life is that most of our stress comes from Positive Problems. The key to resolving these problems is to clarify your vision and values, and the tradeoffs you face between them. This exercise will help you do so.

What Do You Want?

What do you want? It's a simple question, which we rarely slow down to answer at depth.

This is a simple, powerful exercise designed to help you get in touch with your personal answers to this question, as the foundational step to clarifying your vision and values. It is designed to take between one to two hours to complete, and consists of five simple steps.

We recommend that you set aside a dedicated block of at least an hour, where you can really sit and explore your truth.

Preparation

To prepare for the exercise, do the following.

1) Print out this document, using single sided printing.
2) Cut along the lines for the cards in last three pages, to create 30 cards.

Part 1 – What Do You Want?

In this part, you will be prioritizing your answers to the question, *"what do I want?"* Each of the 30 cards you cut out contains an answer to this question, such as "Marriage and Family" and "Success and Achievement." This is a representative list, not an exhaustive one. Some of the items may not resonate with you, and there may be some important items for you that are missing. Both are fine.

This is a self-awareness exercise. There are no right answers. This is about finding the answers that are true for you at this time.

However, notice that this is not the "what **should** I want" exercise. This is about what you really want, not what you think you should want, or what you think others want for you.

Outcome: The goal of this step is to create a pile of 30 cards that are sorted according to their importance to you. Number 1 is the most important item to you. Number 30 is the least.

Step 1: Shuffle the cards.

Step 2: Read through the items on the 30 cards.

Step 3: Sort the 30 cards into 6 piles, based on priority – *very high priority*, *high priority*, *moderately high priority*, *moderately low priority*, *low priority*, and *very low priority*. **Note: Even if one of the cards doesn't seem appropriate to you, please include it in order to create accurate results.**

Step 4: Now, starting with the *very high priority* pile, take the first two cards in the pile, and ask yourself which of these two items is most important to you right now – if you had to pick just one or the other, which would it be? Put the higher priority one on top of the lower priority one. You've now created a stack of two prioritized cards.

Your goal is to prioritize all the top priority cards. Take a third card, and compare it to the first. If it is more important, put it on top. If not, keep comparing it with each card in the stack, until you find its place in the stack. Your rank ordering does not have to be perfect – if some items feel equally important to you, flip a coin.

Step 5: Repeat this process with each of the other five piles, and then combine the six stack-ordered piles into one big prioritized stack, with the *very high priority* pile on top, and the *lowest priority* pile on the bottom.

Step 6: In the upper left corner, in the box labeled "Priority", write down the rank order of each card. For the top, most important card in your pile, write the number 1. For the bottom card, write 30. ***IMPORTANT: Make sure you label each card with a different number, 1 to 30.***

Offline and Online Options

There are two ways to complete parts 2-5: offline and online. Offline is a tactile option, where you sort the cards into different piles and then make a note of your answers. Online allows you directly enter your answers online, and saves you 5-10 minutes of time.

To continue online: Sort your cards in the order of priority, from 1 to 30 (highest to lowest). Then visit www.VisionAndValues.us to complete the process and receive your results.

To continue with the cards: Continue following the instructions below. Once you are finished with the cards, you'll visit the web site to enter your answers and receive your results.

Part 2 – Current Satisfaction

In this part, you will be rating each item from 1-6 in terms of how satisfied you are with it right now. In the upper right corner of each card, in the box labeled "Satisfaction," write down how satisfied you are (1-6) for the item on each card. This is not about how satisfied you *should* be with each time. It's an honest and accurate assessment of how you feel about where you're presently at with your life.

6: Highly Satisfied. Items that you are highly satisfied with, so much so that they may not even cross your mind. If you tend to take it for granted or are delighted with it, it's a 6. If you feel you have completely obtained or accomplished something you want, or are very happy with your level of experience of something you want, it's a 6.

5: Satisfied. Items that you are actively satisfied with, but which you could be more satisfied about.

4: Moderately Satisfied. Items that you are more satisfied than dissatisfied with.

3: Moderately Dissatisfied. Items that you have a moderate level of dissatisfaction with. You aren't happy with this area and wish it was significantly better.

2: Dissatisfied. Items that you are actively dissatisfied with. You clearly want more of it, and will not be satisfied until you have it.

1: Highly Dissatisfied. Items that you are highly dissatisfied with, and would really like to change, improve or have more of.

*IMPORTANT: Please make sure you label the cards that are **highly satisfied as 6** and those that are **highly dissatisfied as 1**.*

Part 3 – Current Investment

In this part of the exercise, you will be rating each item from 1-6 in terms of how much time and energy you are investing in each of these areas. In the lower left corner of each card, in the box labeled "Investment", write down the level of investment (1-6) for the item on each card. Again, this is not about what you *should* be spending your time and energy on, it is an honest and accurate assessment of where you presently are at in your life.

Pile 6: Very High Investment. Items that are your current top priorities, that you spend most of your time and energy on, or that you spend the most time thinking about. If it feels like an item really controls you on a **near constant** basis, it's a 6. If an item fills your thoughts every day, or you spend at least 40 hours a week on it, it's a 6.

Pile 5: High Investment. Items that are your important priorities, that you spend a lot of time and energy on every week, or that **frequently** occupy your thoughts.

Pile 4: Moderately High Investment. Items that you spend significant time and energy on every week, or that **regularly** occupy your thoughts during the day.

Pile 3: Moderately Low Investment. Items that you spend at least some time and energy on every week, or that at least **cross your thoughts** most days.

Pile 2: Low Investment. Items that form your "Someday Maybe" priority list, that you invest time and energy on from time to time, or that cross your thoughts **occasionally**.

Pile 1: Very Low Investment. Items that don't actively concern you right now, that you don't invest time and energy in, or that you don't really think about.

*IMPORTANT: Please make sure you label the cards that are **very high investment as 6** and those that are **very low investment as 1**.*

Part 4 – Stress and Fear

In this part of the exercise, you will be rating each item from 1-6 in terms of how much stress or fear you have with each of these areas. How much stress and worry do you feel around it? In the lower right corner of each card, in the box labeled "Stress", write down the level of investment (1-6) for the item on each card. Again, this is not about how much stress or fear you *should* be experiencing, it is an honest and accurate assessment of where you presently are at in your life.

Pile 6: Very High Stress. This pile contains items that cause you a very high level of stress, or that you regularly feel intense fear around.

Pile 5: High Stress. This pile contains items that cause you a high level of stress, or that you regularly feel significant fear around.

Pile 4: Moderately High Stress. This pile contains items that cause you a moderately high level of stress, or that you regularly feel fear around.

Pile 3: Moderately Low Stress. This pile contains items that cause you a moderately low level of stress, or that you regularly feel some fear around.

Pile 2: Low Stress. This pile contains items that cause you a low level of stress, or that you occasionally feel some fear around.

Pile 1: Very Low Stress. This pile contains items that cause you a very low level of stress, and that you rarely if ever feel fear around.

*IMPORTANT: Please make sure you label the cards that are **very high stress as 6** and those that are **very low stress as 1**.*

Part 5 – Entering Your Results

Once you have finished the previous steps, sort your cards in order of priority (1-30, from highest to lowest) and visit www.VisionAndValues.us to enter your answers in the form on that page. Your results will be emailed directly to you.

Priority Satisfaction

1

Salary and Income

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

2

Doing a Good Job

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

3

Feeling Valued

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

4

Success and Achievement

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

5

Career Advancement

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

6

Confidence and Self Trust

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

7

A Sense of Purpose

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

8

Making a Difference

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

9

Being a Benevolent Leader

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

10

Financial Security

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

11

Home, Cars and Possessions

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

12

Financial Freedom

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

13

Sex and Sensuality

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

14

Marriage and Family

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

15

Feeling That You Belong

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

16

Beauty and Attractiveness

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

17

Connecting With Friends and Family

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

18

Self Love

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

19

Deep Connection With Your Partner

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

20

Raising Great Children

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

21

Spiritual Connection

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

22

Health and Fitness

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

23

Fun and Adventure

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

24

Feeling Safe and Secure

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

25

Social Recognition

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

26

Learning and Education

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

27

Happiness

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

28

Integrity

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

29

Personal and Spiritual Growth

Investment Stress

Priority Satisfaction

30

Joy and Creativity

Investment Stress