

A Useful Guide to Self Management



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Preface

Much is written about goals, aspirations and the achievement of potential. Some of what is out there is based on academic research, proven psychological principles and is accompanied by sociological norms and customs. Equally some material is more 'university of life' oriented leaning towards the alternate school of thinking.

Mixing and matching from these and other sources can bring about enlightenment but can also create confusion. Rather like the urge for sweets or chocolate when you are confronted with such a vast array of choices you can end up leaving the shop with nothing.

This Useful Guide will lead you through some of the critical thinking relating to how to manage yourself more effectively and offer you a palatable array of products for your consumption along the way.

You can download your toolkit from [here](#). The toolkit contains MS Word® versions of the tools you will find in the Appendix. This allows you to use the tools on your own computer and easily keep your data up to date.

CHAPTER ONE - Being your own best friend

In this chapter you can expect to ...

- Read why it is important for you to be good at self management.
- Read why values and beliefs are important to behaviour.
- Learn why you ought to be pro-active in developing the skills of self management.
- Be advised of some less obvious reasons for improving your ability to manage yourself.

Before any of us can truly befriend another person we have to be a friend to our own self. This not only sounds sensible it also makes good practical sense. How can any of us care for, interact with and deal with the attitudes and behaviours of others if we are ignorant of our own attitudes, values, beliefs, behavioural norms and how we affect other people? In the same way how can we build the life we want and be how we want to be if we are clueless about what makes us unique. A clear understanding of self is at the heart of personal and interpersonal growth.

Why it matters how you are perceived.

No doubt there are times when we are justified in thinking that it does not matter what other people think or say about us. An altercation with a stranger, for example, can leave us annoyed with ourselves about how we reacted to them but does not usually cause a loss of sleep as we are not likely to see this person again. When it comes to differences and disappointments with people we do care about or ought to care about, then the stakes are much higher. Here's the thing, it follows that we should be concerned about how we are perceived by these others because the relationship we have with them is continuous. Typically these relationships are characterised by the other person having some degree of influence or control of at least one important area of our life.

Unless you live and work completely alone, which is almost impossible, how others see you matters insofar as your behaviours have sway, influence and affect, even if only minimally, on the behavioural choices other people make when dealing with you. If you experience behaviours towards you which you deem negative the onus is on you to cultivate the ability to examine your own behaviours and attitudes so as to determine what aspects of your behaviour could be generating negativity. Being able to see yourself as you perhaps

appear to others will, more often than not, allow you to redeem a situation that is turning sour, or at the very least not exacerbate the situation.

Critically, greater self-awareness will enable you to feel at ease about your own behaviour in spite of the unpleasantness or discomfort of the situation. Feeling more in control of yourself will see you less vulnerable to and less intimidated by the unattractive and inappropriate behaviours of others.

How other people see you is likely to be the driving force behind their choice of the behaviours they exhibit towards you. If how they speak to you and treat you is not congruent with how you think you deserve to be treated, there needs to be some clear thinking on your part if you are to have any influence over how other people behave towards you. This is not to say that you will necessarily change their behaviour but rather by virtue of your heightened self understanding, you will make informed decisions about how you want to behave in this situation and feel about the person(s) involved.

Why it matters to have authentic and realistic goals.

The notion that having goals to aim for is the exclusive preserve of sports men and women is a thing of the past. Unfortunately, in the crossover from the sports to the personal development field, too many people are stuck in the zone of limiting their goals to things like weight loss and stopping smoking. Whilst these are laudable they do little to enlighten the individual about themselves.

This level of goal-setting does not typically address what it is that makes them not only overeat or smoke, but importantly fails to identify what the individual can do to sustain a healthier lifestyle when their goal is achieved, and thereafter have lasting control of such issues.

- If you want to improve your life it is the setting of challenging yet achievable goals rooted in your value set and belief system that will facilitate personal growth.
- Such goals are directed at changing some value or belief that is no longer serving you well. Achievement will in turn lead to a feeling of greater satisfaction with the person you are. By feeling in tune with yourself you are likely to be much more capable of handling setbacks and disappointments.
- Being conscious of and actively working on both your strengths and weaknesses will equip you to better respond to the demands of your environment.

Why it matters what you think and say to yourself.

One of the best tests for gauging how well you know and manage yourself is the alertness test. It's about being alert to the things you say to yourself when in adverse situations, such as when things get stressful or when you begin to feel overwhelmed by a situation or issue. This is the "would you talk to your best friend like that" bit. What you say to yourself when you are feeling, for example, sad, slighted, disappointed, or frustrated is a reflection of what you believe about yourself. Such beliefs will manifest themselves in your outward behaviour and in your inner thought processes and resulting moods.

Try the 'Friend' Technique exercise now which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#).

Unlike the strong emotions of anger and elation that by their very nature cannot be sustained for long periods, moods require less energy to hold them and, as such, can last longer.

- If, therefore, what you say to yourself is profoundly limiting and negative then your mood will likely be low and self-perpetuating. Hence it matters very much what you say to yourself.
- If you want to feel good about yourself and manage the balance between what you feel on the inside and how you behave on the outside, then you have to maintain a healthy inner dialogue.
- Rather than holding the view that we become what we think about the most (in which case some guys would be Kylie Minogue and some gals would be Brad Pitt), perhaps it would serve us better to believe that our lives go in the direction of our most prevalent thoughts.

Take a preview look at the Dialogue Log which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#).

Why it matters what values you live by.

Your values can be likened to the foundation stone of a building for they form the basis of your entire construction of thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and resulting behaviours. If, for example, you hold fairness as one of your personal values, you will not find it easy to be overlooked for special recognition or promotion when you feel you deserve either or both. That underlying value will then drive what you do about the perceived injustice. How you behave in the process of righting such a wrong will not only be instrumental to the outcome, your behaviour will contribute to how you are perceived thereafter.

If on the other hand you hold the value that it's a dog-eat-dog world then you'll gladly take credit even though it's not deserved and by doing so boost your reputation as a go-getter whatever the cost. The latter may be the cultural norm for your place of work in which case a similar personal value set will enable you to feel comfortable and possibly thrive in such an environment. If on the other hand the personal values you hold are not the same as those of the organisation you work for or the people you associate with, the resultant incongruence will be anything but comfortable.

- Knowing what your values are and how you show that you live by them are crucial to finding people with whom you have an affinity, in both personal and professional settings.
- Similarly identifying the values an organisation conducts itself by and judging whether or not your values are in alignment, will enable you to make smart choices about where to work.

Why it matters what you say and do.

At work and at home we are the same person. It is the numerous personas we have which make us appear as different to people. Sometimes how we behave in situations and interact with those involved is spot-on. At other times how we behave does not fit with the situation or the group of people. We are being ourselves it's just that in different situations different parts of our personality and behavioural characteristics are being revealed.

Some of our behaviours will appear fairly frequently whereas others will require a different stage as it were, in order for them to be played out on.

- For example, in a group of close friends gathered together for a private social event it would be perfectly acceptable to speak freely about issues such as race and immigration. It would be much less appropriate to articulate a view on sensitive issues such as these at your place of work if say you are relatively new to the organisation.

How we are brought up and allowed to behave, how we respond to rules and guidance, how we act and react during our childhood and formative years hopefully equip us for a responsible adult life.

The true quality of that life is arguably based upon our ever increasing ability to discern which parts of our personality and behaviours are appropriate to the situation we are experiencing in the here and now. It is simply too easy to excuse current behaviour with phrases like, 'Given time she'll get better at

explaining herself' or 'Take no notice he didn't mean it', focusing on some imagined better future without also investing in the present and changing behaviours now which will bring about that Xanadu.

The more we are connected with our beliefs and values and the more we strive to behave in tune with the demands of the present situation, the more we are likely to be shaping ourselves to be the person we see in our future.

Recent human resource research pointed out that poor management at work can be bad for our physical as well as mental health. Aside from the fact that any employer of choice will be very worried about this probability, as with all risks it is about minimising the potential for harm to ensue. Enhanced self-management can provide an effective control measure against the adverse effects of a poor work or home environment.

Whilst many employers do as much as is reasonably practicable to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees, it is incumbent on all of us to do the utmost to help ourselves, particularly where the work environment is poor or where there is discord at home. A heightened ability to manage our self will result in our being less susceptible to the shortcomings and adverse behaviours of the people in our life. We are then more likely to be able to generate a healthy regard between ourselves and those we interact with on a regular basis.

- Notice that it's 'healthy regard' as distinct from striving to get along with, agree with, like or be liked by everyone all or most of the time. The more insightful we are the more likely we are to have control of our life and what we do both personally and professionally. The more we know about our self then it is likely that we will be better able to handle the pressures and pleasures that come our way.

It may seem strange to some people that a person could have difficulty coping with good experiences. To those who are of a negative persuasion, however, the belief would be that good experiences are not only short-lived they are seldom repeated. Knowing how you are wired, as it were, will help identify strategies for replacing such negative attitudes with approaches and strategies more likely to secure better outcomes for your well-being...providing of course that you actually want to be able to manage yourself better.

Why it matters to trust and be trusted.

One definition of trust, from the Oxford Dictionary, is that it is a...

"firm belief in the reliability, truth, or strength etc. of a person or thing."

Given that you are a person who is trusted by others ...

Using the Trust Exercise to capture your thinking, which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#), now write down what you think makes these people trust you according to this definition.

Recall some specific examples from the past couple of years to support their belief. Take special note of the behaviours you have displayed in these examples and match them to your values and beliefs.

What does their trust in you do for you?

Try to identify examples of when you have been consciously aware of a person trusting you. Tease out the feelings you experience as a result of this trust. How do these emotions affect your view of the world? Could you in fact reach out to more people to build trusting relationships with and so experience these good feelings more often?

Who do you trust and why?

Identify now who in your world it is that you trust. Think of and write down what sorts of things they do and say which impart this feeling of trust you feel in them. In your mind just travel back to a particular time when you felt absolute trust in a person. Temporarily re-live what was going on and, from your memory of it, pull out why you felt the way you did.

Is this person still in your life?

If they are, how do you rate your level of trust in them today say on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being absolute)? If they are no longer a part of your life rate the contribution your experience with them made to your ability to trust and be trusted since, again using a scale of 1 to 10.

What do these scores tell you?

Do you really need more compelling reasons for taking control and developing yourself to the max?

Get to work

- Before you move on to the next chapter decide to begin a two week log of how you are speaking to yourself. Use the **Dialogue Log** which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#). The idea

of the log is to provide you with a real time report of how you are speaking to yourself.

- It is vital that you commit to keeping this record as soon after the incident occurs that caused you to have an internal dialogue. Later reflection that is done without the benefit of a written record of what the circumstances were and the actual words you used in talking to yourself, will be skewed by the rationalisation process that follows an experience.

The headings, in the Dialogue Log, are suggestions. Please make any adjustments to suit how you prefer to capture the necessary information. At the very least you are advised to concentrate on recording the circumstances of the incident, the people involved and the actual words you used to say things to yourself. Be sure to note if you spoke these words during the incident or relatively soon afterwards. You may also find it beneficial to record your emotions by simply making a list of your feelings.

Before you move on to the next chapter ask and answer this question ...

Why do I want to be better at self management?

While you are answering the question you might want to consider some of the benefits of good self management ...

- Create an inner self confidence which equips you to learn and grow as a person.
- Face life's difficulties and setbacks with an attitude which focuses more on solutions than excuses.
- Create a sense of self which facilitates the development of effective interpersonal skills.
- Cultivate meaningful relationships.
- Get along with other people in spite of differences and difficulties.
- Experience more satisfying interactions with other people from the cashier in the supermarket to the big boss at work.

Chapter Two - Check out your reality

In this chapter you can expect to ...

- Explore how your values translate into action and how your beliefs are demonstrated through your everyday behaviours.
- Have the opportunity to complete exercises and inventories to help you see yourself as others around you see you.
- Visit the latest thinking on motivation and conduct your own personal audit as to what it is that drives you to get up in the morning.
- Identify the people who are important to you and those to whom you are very important.

Chances are that how you see the world matches in the most part with that of those with whom you spend most of your social time. That's not to say that you never differ and disagree with your friends, it just seems easier to deal with differences where there is a strong personal affinity. In families things are rather more complicated with magical and mysterious phenomena to account for how siblings grow to have such different values and beliefs given they were part of the same nuclear unit throughout their childhood.

The Family and Friend's Feedback System can be used to ask family members and friends for feedback. You can use this feedback to learn more about yourself and understand the impact you have on other people. The system is best used with people who know you well. You can access the system at ...

<http://www.pansophix.com/resources/family-and-friends-feedback-service.html>

Whatever values you hold now, the nub of self management is to not only know what your values are but importantly to be very aware of how you are living by them.

Accepting that we all have different personas to reveal the various behavioural, spiritual, emotional, rational, and intellectual parts of ourselves in the situations we experience, the issue is a matter of **value congruence**. Whilst we may react automatically in some situations only to wish afterwards that we had behaved differently, as a first step let us look at the part our values play in determining our behavioural choices.

First and foremost please accept the notion that we do have a choice as to how to behave however limiting the circumstances. If you hold being loyal as a value, find evidence for how you show this value in action. For example, when

faced with the deceit of a loved one and in spite of the shock and pain, many innocent parties do not abandon their core value of loyalty. Whilst undergoing this experience no doubt many people can attest to having their values of loyalty, trust and honesty severely tested. For some the evidence presented through such an experience may be enough to create a shift in their own value set.

Others will uphold their values for the consequences of abandoning them are unacceptable. Check out now how your life experiences have and are shaping your view of reality. Match them using the **Reality Grid**, which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#), to the values you identified earlier.

Do the same for the other values you hold.

For example ...

- You are concerned about the planet but you habitually drop litter, leave the free newspaper on the train, bus or tube floor, or ignore the re-cycling facilities at the supermarket.
- You are concerned about health but never clean up your dog's fouling.

Identify examples in your life and be honest about whether or not your behaviours mirror your values or they contradict one another.

Settle down to some serious thinking about your values.

- Determine an order of priority.
- Decide from the evidence of how you enact each of your values whether or not you are living them.
- Decide from the evidence if you need to adjust your value set to better reflect the person you are and the person you aspire to becoming.

The gain from this is, at the very least, a reminder of the quintessential you. Over and above there is true awareness to be gained of the value congruence you are living by, that is, the synchronicity between your values and how you behave.

Beliefs

The good news about beliefs is that they are not set in stone but rather develop and alter over time depending on the evidence available to us. Take by way of an example the belief in the tooth fairy. As a very young child your parents may have used this fictional figure to help you cope with the loss of your baby teeth. The coin under your pillow the morning after putting your tooth there was evidence that the tooth fairy they told you would come had done so. Over the years, however, something happened to change that belief for as an adult it's difficult to think you have held on to it. What is likely to have happened is that you found evidence to refute this belief. Perhaps an older sibling put you wise, childhood friends talked of their experiences or you began to question how this person could know to go to all children.

In whatever way it came about the belief was dismantled because you questioned the evidence that supported it, and thus you changed your belief.

As an adult you have the free will to decide what to believe and what to discard. How adept you are at gathering evidence, examining it and making your own decision depends on how aware you are of your freedom to make up your own mind. If, for example, you have not been encouraged in your life to think for yourself or you have shied away from forming your own judgements, then you will likely not perceive that you have very much freedom to decide for yourself.

Equally if other people have proposed their beliefs and you have followed suit you must want to now change this pattern. It is one thing to agree with the beliefs of other people and simultaneously be able to disagree healthily, but quite another to be unfamiliar with the habit of actually forming a view for oneself.

Arguably the ability to digest information and form a belief comes from an inner strength derived from an acute awareness of self.

Try the Beliefs and Assumptions exercise now which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#).

Perceptions

One outcome of good self management is the ability to manage how you give and receive information about yourself and others in ways which present you as the person you wish to be. Perfection is not the aim of enhanced self management for learning can create discomfort, and personal growth can be painful. NO PAIN NO GAIN comes to mind.

The aim of self management is the development of the capability to handle the processes of modern life. These include the experience of being wrong, making a mistake, the experience of being right and handling those times when we perform brilliantly, acting with the finesse and good grace of a decent person.

Sometimes the difference really is a matter of not what you do but the way that you do it, not what you say but the way that you say it. So if you know that you have a poor vocabulary which limits your ability to express yourself appropriately, then step up to the plate and do something about it. Similarly, if you feel that the beliefs you hold about a key person or people in your life are tainted in some way see about checking them out for validity.

- Having the wrong idea about a person could be getting in the way of a great relationship.

Time now to examine how you think others see you. You will have an accurate idea about how some people see you because they will have told you. Your perception of what some other people think will be formed from how they behave with you including how they speak to you. Some of your perceptions are likely to be on target and sadly some off the board. This can be attributed to a number of things but has a lot to do with the words and gestures people use to communicate, the communication method and ostensibly whether or not the message is received in the way the sender intended for it to be understood.

The best way to know what someone thinks of you is to ask them but for one reason or another, this is not always possible or wise. Similarly the best way to have one's intentions understood by others is for the others to know a good deal about you and, therefore, have an appreciation of your intentions and the meaning of your behaviours.

Again this is neither possible nor practicable given the many situations we experience and the sheer number of people we encounter in any given day. Begin by focusing on the key relationships in your life. Seek opportunities to

transfer some of your enhanced self management techniques to the more incidental, peripheral relationships as a subsidiary exercise.

- The task now is to establish the source of the information that we have used to form our beliefs about how other people see us.
- We need to consider the reliability of the source then examine the evidence for quality and accuracy.
- We need to make decisions as to what information to disregard.
- Then we have to decide what we are going to do with the information we are retaining.

Thinking only of the people in your life whom you deem as important for whatever reason, we are going to look at how you think they see you and where your evidence for this comes from.

Feedback

One way of checking out your assumptions about others and for them to check their view of you is **through the process of feedback**. Whilst the word and the concept are not new they are sadly both under-used and abused. Feedback proper is not about venting stored up angst and frustration. Nor is it about the boss telling the subordinate off and demanding some sort of acquiescence. These belong to other kinds of conversations and will be covered in Chapter 3. Here we are going to use a clinically developed model for feedback proper, apply our evidence to it and test for accuracy.

Although developed for clinical purposes for working with groups of patients by Harry Ingham and Joseph Luft, their 'Johari Window' has become a well known tool in the business world, representing a process for giving and receiving feedback. It can be looked upon as a communication window through which you give and receive information about yourself and others.

A spattering of clarity before we use the Johari Window model ...

- Through feedback we can see ourselves as others see us and similarly, they can learn how we see them.
- Feedback can be verbal or non-verbal, given to an individual or a group, and is typically concerned with offering information as to how their behaviour is affecting us, or the state of our feelings and perceptions.

- This process allows us and others to know the feelings, perceptions and opinions generated by our respective behaviours.

The model can be presented as illustrated below. The two columns represent self and the two rows relate to group.

ARENA	BLIND SPOT
FAÇADE (Hidden area)	UNKNOWN

- **In the left hand column** are the things I know about myself
- **In the right hand column** are the things I do not know about myself.
- **In the top row** are the things others know about me.
- **In the bottom row** are the things others don't know about me.

The 'window panes' change size as the information in them increases. For example, the more I get to know and understand about myself and the more I reveal to others the larger the **Arena** pane becomes. The behaviour here is public, available to everyone and increases in size as the level of trust increases. As trust increases more personally relevant information is shared.

The **Blind Spot** pane contains information I do not know but is known by the group or others. As we interact with others we communicate all kinds of information in the form of language, mannerisms, the way we speak and our style of participation much of which we are not aware of but which is being picked up by other people. The extent to which we can be insensitive to a good deal of our own behaviour can be quite surprising and disconcerting. For example, a group member once told me that I was aloof and superior because I always made smart summation statements after a group discussion.

The **Façade or Hidden** pane contains the information I know and choose to keep to myself, for whatever reason. For example, my reasons for doing so may be for safety where I judge it wise to keep my thoughts, feelings and opinions to myself. The thing here, however, is that unless I take a risk and begin to disclose some of this information I will never check out my assumptions as to how people will react to my thoughts, feelings and opinions. Equally if my motives for non-disclosure are to control or manipulate others then I may keep certain kinds of information to myself by design.

The last pane, the **Unknown**, contains the things neither I nor others are aware of and can be understood as an area that can be reduced through an exchange of feedback. For example, if I have never been in a war zone I, and others, will not know how I will react when the bullets are flying and the bombs are dropping. Will I be the coward or the hero? Nobody knows.

Feedback may reveal those things that lie just below the surface such as interpersonal dynamics and so take information from here to the arena; but as we cannot know all about our self there will likely be information which remains hidden.

In their work with the Johari Window Harry Ingham and Joseph Luft discovered that the larger people can make the Arena pane the better their relationships with other people.

Have a look at the Feedback Hints and Tips, which are in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#), and use them to help you increase the size of your **Arena** pane and decrease the size of your **Blind Spot** pane.

You can also try using the **People and View Template**, which is in the Appendix and your Toolkit which can be downloaded from [here](#), to structure how you ask for feedback.

Self Motivation

Not something you can grab a hold of, trap in a bottle and then dispense a dose when the need arises, motivation is a concept rather than a thing. A definition:

“The psychological forces within each person that drive their behaviour toward the pursuit of their implicit or explicit goals, and how hard and how long they work to attain those goals.” - Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis.

The subject used to be about how people can achieve optimal psychological well-being but nowadays it is more commonly used in connection with organisational management, in particular how managers can ensure that people do their jobs efficiently and effectively. For the purposes of this Useful Guide you are asked to think about your motivations on both personal and work related levels.

That being the case what we need to do is find out what motivates us to do the things we do, including the many weird and wonderful things we do to avoid doing something!

Perhaps the biggest favour we can do for ourselves is acknowledge that motivation is a fluid, flexible thing in that it does not stay the same over time. What motivates us as a young person, for example, the lure of money may not have the same potency when we are older and our finances are more secure.

Conversely, if we were sheltered from financial stress early in life and the need for money becomes profound as an adult, the acquisition of money will probably be a primary motivator. Such differences illustrate a fundamental aspect of motivation which is that we seek to gain something that we do not have but feel we need. As Stephen Covey says in his book, **The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People ...**

“Satisfied needs do not motivate. It’s only the unsatisfied need that motivates.”

There are different theories of motivation with perhaps the ones dealing with expectations and rewards providing particular relevance in our search for what motivates us, for example ...

- **Porter and Lawler** developed an expectancy model linking motivation and performance. They drew attention to a host of variables such as our view of work, our abilities and the rewards available, equating them with our perception of what our effort entitles us to. This model follows the work of ...

- **Edward Chance Tolman** in the 1930s. It was Tolman who offered that behaviour is directed by the expectations we have as to what the behaviour in question will get for us. For example, Tolman suggested that if productive work is seen as a way to achieve a valued goal then a person needing more money would work hard. If the person still needs more money and expects that hard work will only get them happy smiles from the boss, then predictably, unless they place a higher value on happy smiles, they will not work hard.

Another theory argues that we seek what we believe to be a just or equitable return for our efforts. In practice this means that we act on the basis of what we perceive is fair treatment.

- **Stacy Adams** in the 1960s argued that we are motivated to act in situations we believe to be either inequitable or unfair, the inequity occurring when we get more or less than we believe we deserve. In action this would explain a high motivation to do something about the perceived inequity rather than doing nothing by way of redress. Of especial interest here is the difference Adams pointed out in our response to over-reward as compared to under-reward. The former tends to generate a response of good-luck, no action necessary whilst even a modest under-reward is not so readily tolerated.
- **Edwin A Locke** in the late 1960s advocated goal-setting as a motivational technique. As the technique relies on a series of propositions which allow for work behaviour to be predicted and explained, it is entitled to be classed as a theory. Well supported by research the propositions of goal theory are ...
 - **Challenging goals** – lead to high levels of performance as compared to weak, simplistic goals. Also called stretch goals because they encourage us to try harder but not to be confused with goals which are beyond our level of ability.
 - **Specific goals** – lead to high levels of performance as compared to vague, generalist goals such as 'try harder'. It is easier to adjust our behaviour when we know exactly what is required of us.
 - **Participation in goal setting** – key if our participation is expected, such as an outcome from an appraisal.

- **Knowledge of results** of past performance – feedback is necessary for effective goal achievement because it contains information, thus serving as a motivator in itself.

Think now of your answer to the question posed at the end of the first chapter, **“Why do I want to be better at Self Management?”**

In your answer you will hopefully have expressed at least one need for seeking to improve your self management. **Did the word ‘want’ appear anywhere in your answer?** Hopefully it did because without the driver of actually wanting to be better at self management much of what appears in this Useful Guide will be rendered useless.

Sorry but the want has to come from you in order for the help, support and efforts of other people to be of effect. Think of the person at an appraisal interview for example, who reluctantly agrees to the objective of improving his or her presentation skills. The problem here is that the appraisal process is poor with the objective really belonging to the manager not the appraised.

Sure enough the individual attends the prescribed Presentation Skills course but may only go through the motions, never connecting the dots as it were. Why? Because he or she didn’t **want** to do this course, didn’t **want** to improve his or her presentation skills and doesn’t **want** to rock the boat by saying so. It’s the line of least resistance and all of that. *What a waste of everyone’s time not to mention the depletion of some department’s training budget!*

Think of the person ordered to attend an anger management programme compared to the person who decides to undergo such a programme voluntarily.

Generally is it more likely that the latter person will want to change their behaviour whereas the former may not be conscious of needing to change?

Dangerous to over-generalise but nevertheless these examples do serve to illustrate that, without even a minimal desire to do something, the task, objective or goal will be harder to achieve or could actually be unachievable.

Back to you and what it is that you want to get, to do and to achieve. Using the headings below as a guide begin to list what it is that gets you up every day, gets you through the day and importantly, puts a fire in your belly.

My current motivators (needs/desires) for getting up in the morning are:

1

2

3

My current motivators (needs/desires) for getting through the day are:

1

2

3

The motivators (needs/desires) that put a fire in my belly are:

1

2

3

Completion of this exercise ought to tell you where you are at, currently, in terms of satisfied and unsatisfied needs. The satisfied needs may appear for example, as a desire to maintain your current standard of living, so what motivates you to get up in the morning is the need for a regular income.

Look for needs and desires that are not satisfied, see if there is a match to any of the values and beliefs you identified earlier. Where you can see a connection examine how you are behaving in order to address the need/desire in question.

Is there congruence between how you are behaving in order to satisfy the need and the behaviours that go with the particular value? For example, you have identified the desire to get promoted within the next twelve months, a goal you set three months ago. First of all we have the 'want' factor which is good. The behaviours which match our value set, however, don't appear to have gotten us very far during the past three months; or so we think and feel. Our personal value set leads us to believe that it is good quality of work, diligence and a certain amount of subservience that will see us recognised and rewarded. Whilst

there is no disputing that these are admirable traits could it be that we are holding onto a belief that is either wholly or in part unsuitable to our current situation? How did we know that quality of work, diligence and subservience would be our ticket to promotion? Did those behaviours serve us well some place else, are they our normative behaviours, did we listen to what someone else told us to do?

The difference in this example could be as simple as re-framing your perceptions about how to achieve your goals. Something you could do by initiating a feedback dialogue with an appropriate person.

Unless we develop an ability to reflect on our behaviour, face up to transgressions against the moral and legal codes our society lives by, and be responsible for how we conduct ourselves, self-management is a non-starter.

Consider this...

Self-management is wrapped round our level of emotional intelligence. It embraces how we perceive, understand and regulate our emotions and therefore, manage ourselves. The more adroit we are regarding control of ourselves then the more politically aware we are likely to be both in the workplace and socially. We probably have well developed interpersonal expertise, are self-motivated and able to sense and seize opportunities.

Like they say on the lottery adverts, is this you or **could it be you?**

Chapter Three – How to realise and exercise choice

In this chapter you can expect to ...

- Take a dip in the waters of Free Will. What it is and why you should contemplate it without causing your head to burst.
- Explore assertion as a behavioural option and think about how and in which situations it could work for you.
- Get to grips with saying what you mean so that it does not create conflict or bring about disappointment.

Free Will

The idea prevalent in the western world that we all have the free will to do whatever we wish, when you come to consider it further, has its flaws and limitations. It's no wonder there is such fuss amongst philosophers about what constitutes 'Free Will' with debates extending over two millennia.

For the purposes of this Useful Guide it may be helpful to take a minimalist view where free will is the ...

"... ability to select a course of action as a means of fulfilling some desire."

Developing this idea further Plato and others distinguish between the 'animal' and 'rational' parts of our nature. The implication is that the rational part is psychologically complex and includes our ability to judge some ends as 'good' or worth pursuing. Additionally it may well be that in seeking to satisfy something which is of a high value to us we may in fact cause ourselves some suffering. Think of the personal struggle to get fit, train hard for an athletics goal or pass a programme of study.

Not wishing to stray into the rugged terrain of philosophy, the minimalist idea is perhaps more useful if we add the thought that freedom enters the scene when we consider various means to the ends we seek to achieve.

"There is, then, free choice of means to our ends, along with a more basic freedom not to consider something, free choice is an activity that involves both our intellectual and volitional capacities, as it consists in both judgement and active commitment." - Thomas Aquinas.

The question to consider at this stage is whether will (desire) or intellect is the ultimate determinant of free choices. Look at your situation and identify those times when it seems clear you have exercised choice over a course of action.

Identify a time when you felt much less free in making a choice about what to do. Why was this, what constrained you, who had the power?

Looking back do you think you could have done something differently? If so what would you now do in a similar situation?

Wrestle with the concept of Free Will at least for a little while. It will make you think about the desires, goals, things you could do, should do, the power, control, and external influences at play in your life. Unpick some things in order to put them back together in a shape and form you are happier with.

The other side of Assertion

The art of communication is learned over time and through having experiences. The ability to learn from experiences and thus develop and grow as a person, relies on being able to be objective and subjective about self. This can be likened to travelling down a road where some of what you see is familiar, some is unfamiliar, some sights are delightful whilst others depressing, some of the signposts are visible, some hidden, some are readable whilst others are illegible.

The subjective side of us tends to focus on the familiar and what we like, whereas the objective side at times struggles with the unfamiliar and less appealing aspects of our nature and behaviour.

If we have experiences but fail to learn from them then it follows that we are perpetuating behaviours which bring about a certain result. **If we want a different outcome then we need to face the fact that some of what we do and say may be having an adverse effect.** To correct this requires development of the ability to be objective about our self yet simultaneously maintain a healthy regard for our own well-being.

One of the best resources available is a good friend, work colleague, boss or anyone with whom you can share aspects of your behaviour in a type of critique. The next vital ingredient is the ability to listen. Reflect on the last few occasions when you have talked with someone about an incident regarding your behaviour, such as your refusal to apologise for keeping a family member waiting on a cold station platform for two hours. In that conversation did you use all the airtime or did the other person do most of the talking? **Chances are if you did all the talking then the scope for you to listen and learn something new about yourself was limited.**

Here's the thing ...

- If you habitually fail to listen to the views of others you are likely to be running on your own resources, never topping up what you know with inputs from other people.
- If you habitually refuse to take in the views of others then it is likely that there will come a time when you are under-resourced to deal with some interactions.

Using the example of the waiting relative and no apology, the consequence could be that the relationship deteriorates and possibly escalates to not speaking again, ever. Fine if that is what you want to happen but what about the ripple effect amongst the rest of the family? It begs the question as to how self-aware you are and how capable you are of managing yourself in the more complicated interpersonal transactions life presents us.

A tool frequently advocated as part of a well equipped communication toolkit is the skill of assertion. Not many of us seek to be an excessively dominant person. To counteract any possibility of morphing into such an ogre much ado is made of assertive behaviour. Being assertive is very often marketed by trainers, counsellors, human resource professionals, managers and supervisors as the behavioural option of choice because it works.

If only it were that simple! This is because the key fact about assertion that is often omitted by trainers and others is that assertiveness has 7 categories (see next page) and three of these are labelled 'negative' or 'conflict'. This is because they require either a behavioural change in the other person or demand that they listen to something that is either unpopular or is a view very different from their own.

To reiterate, *for the assertive option to work it has to secure a behavioural change in the other person. Either that or they have to listen to something they don't particularly want to hear.*

SEVEN CATEGORIES OF ASSERTIVENESS

4 POSITIVE classes

- Admitting personal shortcomings.
- Giving and receiving compliments.
- Initiating and maintaining interactions.
- Expressing positive feelings.

3 NEGATIVE or CONFLICT response classes

- Requesting behaviour changes by other people.
- Expressing unpopular or different options.
- Refusing unreasonable requests.

Better to think of assertion as one of the tools in your communication skills toolkit that you will use if you think it fits the situation. Given that you are trying to manage your emotions, rather than seeing assertiveness as the panacea in all situations, instead see it as a situation-specific behavioural option.

In simple terms you need to weigh up the risk involved in the specific situation if you take an assertive stance. Just because you can be assertive does not mean that you should. Part of your self-management portfolio is your ability to judge the appropriate behaviour and disclosures in specific situations and contexts. You have to be able to discriminate when risks are worth taking, when to say or do something and when to withhold.

Often represented as the mid-point behaviourally between passive and aggressive behaviours, assertion is frequently sold as the answer to everything. It is not and its effectiveness should not be exaggerated. **The critical component in all modern definitions of assertive behaviour is the appropriate expression of emotion.** To manage yourself well you need to be aware of this feature of assertion, judging wisely what to say and do in order to present yourself to others as you wish to be perceived.

[A Useful Guide to Assertiveness](#) gives more information on being assertive.

Saying 'Yes' and 'No' when you mean to

The need to please others, satisfy customers and clients or gain a more quiet life by taking the line of least resistance, can all leave us saying one thing but meaning another. This is particularly true where the words 'Yes' and 'No' are concerned.

Nowadays the temptation to say 'Yes' is strong. We are surrounded by messages telling us everything is possible and there is a solution to each and every problem. One of the less desirable consequences of this kind of can-do philosophy is that we can be lured into habitually saying 'Yes' to things before we figure out how.

It is not always laudable to say 'Yes' to something you are incapable of doing and this is nowhere more so than in the area of self-management. Ambition at work for example, is admirable but it has to be matched with ability, capability, potential and opportunity. Taking on challenges that stretch any of these to breaking point is harmful in the long term. Satisfying the boss, the child, your friend or your partner in the here and now is a hefty price to pay for disappointment and deceit in the longer term. Make no mistake, if you say, "Yes you will do something" or "Yes you can do something" only to fail to deliver, the only person you end up fooling is yourself.

By saying 'Yes' when you ought to say 'No' you are in fact cheating people because you are giving them a false expectation. Better to develop the art of saying 'Yes' when that is what you mean and likewise 'No' when you mean it. People will think more of you for being authentic and realistic with any disappointment they feel likely to be short lived.

Chapter Four – Managing Relationships

In this chapter you can expect to ...

- Learn about ways you could use assertiveness to help you manage some of your key relationships.
- Look at how to deal with difficult people and situations.
- Look at how to handle your boss.
- Look at some of the things to consider regarding managing family relationships and friendships.
- Try some exercises to sharpen your interpersonal skills tools.

How to develop healthy relationships.

Rather than feel daunted by the prospect of being right with everyone all of the time, which you know in your heart is impossible to do, take the time now to examine some of your key relationships and figure out how to ...

- Keep them healthy and true.
- Rejuvenate tired or exhausting relationships.
- Repair a badly damaged relationship.
- Build better relationship.
- Ditch the relationships which are not doing you any good.

Managing relationships with your work colleagues.

Whilst much ado is made of team working let's not forget that not all jobs and roles in this life are conducive to it. Think of the personal performance job in an organisation where the onus and responsibility to deliver is on the individual. Sure they do not work in isolation of others but, as their goals and objectives differ from those of other workers, the relationship has more to do with collaboration and networking than team working.

Think also in social circles of say a neighbourhood watch group. Such a gathering is characterised by people who periodically come together to report and discuss certain specifics. Indeed, in this day and age such groups are quite likely to be 'virtual' with members possibly unable to put a face to a name.

To be able to manage our work relationships therefore, we first of all need to ...

- get some clarity as to the type of relationship it is, followed by
- how important the relationship is, followed by
- considering different ways to help this relationship, followed by
- deciding how to move forward, and critically
- fixing a date for the first action we are going to take.

Yes folks, it's crunch time ...

- You have to get off your butt and do something.
- Self-management is action oriented.

Picture yourself as a gymnast. The foundation stone of your values and beliefs that we dealt with earlier is really a trampoline. You bounce as high or as low as you feel able but on no account do you stand still - you have to move, if only to keep your balance.

Let's deal with the 'difficult' ones first.

Perhaps you have read or heard it said that it is not the person who is difficult, it is the situation. Whilst we can find ourselves in situations where we react inappropriately, perform poorly or feel that somehow we have let ourselves down, to say it is the situation and not people is possibly a step too far. No matter what, there are some individuals out there who quite frankly are difficult to work with, live with or sadly, both.

What you could do is ...

- **Look back over your work experience** of the past two years and see who jumps out and for what reason or reasons. Make a note of them, their relationship to you (peer, subordinate, supervisor etc.,) and recall as much detail as possible about how they behaved. Check whether old patterns of behaviour are being projected on to new people and situations.

You may discover that you are in fact attaching thoughts and feelings to a current relationship which belong to a difficult past experience. Whilst we learn from experiences sometimes we drag thoughts and feelings along without questioning their validity or appropriateness. One way to sort out what's worth keeping from a relationship and what to ditch, is the baggage and luggage check.

Simply look at the thought, feeling, action and determine its category based on ...

- **Baggage** – the stuff you take on holiday that you know you won't need/ don't need but you load it anyway because it's a habit.
- **Luggage** – having the things with you that enable you to do what you both need and want to do. No unnecessary weight in your suitcases.

In practical terms this means developing the ability to learn from life's experiences without punishing oneself for any mistakes by hanging on to the regret or disappointment, so that other relationships are tainted. In the film, 'The Last Castle' the actor Robert Redford plays a senior military officer who pleads guilty to an erroneous charge and, in consequence, is sent to a military prison. In an exchange with another inmate of much lesser rank where the latter is bemoaning the virtue of challenging the prison governor's regime, Redford's character tells the soldier to stop

letting his disappointments of the past get in the way of what needs to be done here and now. Part of what he says includes the very appropriate response of "...get past it".

- **Enhance your self awareness.** Work hard on your self-awareness. It may be that how we are generates certain responses from others. (Hopefully you can see now the relevance of the information and work of the previous chapters.) What we do and say, how we act and react may be triggers that elicit responses in others which can be avoided through greater awareness.

"As a result of a person's socialization, he has already acquired some interpersonal skills. However, ones' level of functioning in terms of these skills can be raised. Everyone has a vast capacity for being more understanding, respectful, warm, genuine, open, direct and concrete in his human relationships" - George Gazda, educator, cited in People Skills. R Bolton.

- **Engage in proper feedback.** The sort which helps both sides grow and develop. Find a place suitable to share information. Open plan offices and stairwells are not the best venues so don't be afraid to suggest you wait until you can arrange for something better.
- **Consider your 'state'.** Make sure you know what's going on within yourself before you either wade in or make a very obvious withdrawal from a person and/or a situation. Your true feelings can have a subliminally powerful effect in spite of the finesse you use to masquerade what you really feel. Be honest with yourself and if necessary put off dealing with the person until you feel in charge of your emotional state. You can still show emotion but it will be based on a more rational judgement of which emotions are appropriate and to what degree.
- **Consider whether you have been procrastinating.** Have you been avoiding doing something about this difficult relationship? If you have, chances are that your lack of positive action is in fact contributing to the poor quality of the relationship. Ask and answer these two questions ...
 - What will the situation look like in 3 months time if I continue to do nothing?
 - What could it be like for me and them in 3 months time if I were to try something now?

Visualising the situation from these two different perspectives ought to help you see how much better you and this other person could feel about your relationship or alternatively, how a deterioration could look and feel. If the relationship is incidental to you then perhaps you will decide it's not worth taking action over, but if it is a significant relationship, further procrastination will only make matters worse.

- Do the Difficult Conversation exercise now.
- Take a look at the 'Working with difficult people' slideshow which is in the Toolkit and can be downloaded from [here](#).

Managing your relationship with your boss.

Now it could well be that your boss is a difficult person, in which case you could try some of the strategies already described.

It could also be that whilst not a 'difficult person' your boss is difficult to relate to and cope with at times. But then aren't we all like that? Perhaps one of the most valuable things we can do when it comes to handling our boss is appreciate that he/she is a person. As such he/she can think, feel and behave in the same ways we see in others, the difference being that at work, he/she has a status we must acknowledge.

Granted there are those people in the position of boss, supervisor and manager who defy the definitions of what these roles encompass in terms of abilities, knowledge and personal attributes. Nevertheless it is incumbent on us to do whatever is reasonable and practicable to facilitate as harmonious a relationship as we can muster.

Here are some simple, tried and tested steps for handling one's boss ...

- **Find out their preferred way of communicating.** If you have an idea or an important issue to discuss with your boss approach them in the manner they prefer.
 - If they like to have things written down and in detail you would be well served to put your thoughts, feelings, findings in writing and either give it to them or put in their in-tray.
 - If they like things short and snappy send them a memo. Equally if they like things short, snappy and electronic, send them an email.

- If they prefer the auditory approach then arrange a meeting but make it clear what it is for; otherwise you may find that you talk about other things and not what you need to talk about.
- If they are the sort of person who likes to do things on the hoof, as it were, have a short form of words you could use to quickly tell them you'd like more time with them to talk over something you are concerned about. You may need to 'catch' such a person as they dash from one meeting to another or between tele-conferences.
- **Learn to shut up.** This may sound strange but actually it is something that can work wonders for the boss/subordinate relationship. The thing is, and you probably already know this, but the ego of a boss is often delicate. Wrapped around the status stuff that goes with being a boss is the sensitive matter of being right and being seen to be in charge, even when not. As a subordinate you can fulfil this need by at times choosing to be passive rather than making a point of what you know and think. This is not to suggest in any way that you are a lesser person but rather that you use your judgement and decide not to correct, challenge or annoy your boss over things that are not worth the risk.
- **Know what your job is.** An organisation worthy of its salt will leave its employees in no doubt as to what their role and purpose is. If you are not fortunate enough to have such clarity then perhaps the first thing to do would be find out what is expected of you. If you know what is expected of you at work then you can do what is required of you. If you do not have the knowledge and skills to do the job but have been placed in the job, then it is for your employer to provide you with opportunities to learn and develop in to the role. An issue such as this can put a strain on your relationship with your boss. It is likely that both of you could feel frustrated by the situation. In this scenario you could decide that using the organisation's Discipline and Grievance procedure is the best course of action. Conversely you could meet with your boss to discuss and agree a training schedule that both of you would periodically monitor and evaluate. This would help keep frustrations at bay whilst allowing you to grow in to the role.

- **Accept the person for how they are** and, metaphorically speaking, put your armour on. There are some bosses whom we will never like and possibly not respect. If you have tried to build a better relationship yet feel nothing has made a difference then do yourself a favour and accept that this is how it is. Remember that they are just one person so do not allow the negatives you experience with them to seep into some of your other relationships. Stay on top of your job and when your boss is harsh imagine their remarks and actions are wooden arrows with no chance of piercing your metallic shield. Imagine you have a resilient coating like a swan or a duck where harshness is the water that cannot permeate your skin. Use whatever form of visualisation works for you to stop the negative behaviour of such a boss harming your confidence and well-being. The following quote from Idries Shah (1924-1996) sums it up rather nicely,

“A certain person may have, as you say, a wonderful presence: I do not know. What I do know is that he has a perfectly delightful absence.”

Managing relationships within the family

The sea of family relationships can perhaps be navigated best using the tool of the Three Ps, namely ...

Patience

Persistence

Perseverance

Whilst the same principles apply to family relationships as to work relationships the application differs on account of the heightened emotional ties at play in close and extended family relations. Surviving within a family may mean choosing not to see or speak with some members for a time, or even forever. If this is the case it is hoped that it is a decision you have reached through a combination of rational and emotionally led thought and dialogue.

For those instances where the relationship is experiencing a bout of turbulence or a degree of strain, application of one or more of the Three Ps could be all that is needed to get back on track.

An area of concern within a family can sometimes be the natural tension which comes about when individual needs collide. Where there is a situation in which one person feels they have to suppress or deny what they want in favour of giving in to fulfilling the needs of another, resentment and disagreement may ensue.

For example, even though it is your turn to collect your child from nursery you insist your partner steps in because there is something you either want to or must do instead. Equally they may feel the same about their stuff in which case, how do you resolve it? You manage it better by acknowledging at least internally how you are feeling and then maintaining control of yourself whilst talking the situation through with your partner. Having an emotionally controlled discussion is more likely to result in discovering a solution that works for you both on this occasion, without it generating resentments to be flung back at one another the next time you have an issue to resolve.

Something else you may find helpful with managing family relationships is developing the habit of stepping outside of yourself. What this means is getting in the habit of thinking about how your behaviour is affecting another member of the family. Try to see yourself through their eyes and try to feel what it must be like on the receiving end of you being you. If you don't already do so start to ask others in your family unit to tell you of the effect some of what you do and say has on them. Having gained this insight consider how you could make amends for any misunderstanding or hurt, and how you could prevent this happening in the future.

At those times when emotions are high and much appears to be at stake perhaps the golden rule is to consider carefully what to say before you say it. Once it's out there it cannot be taken back.

Top 10 gems for Self Management

1. Check things out for there is more than one way to look at a situation and behaviour.
2. Develop the art of healthy reflection on your own behaviour.
3. Persevere – just because a strategy does not work immediately does not mean it's the wrong strategy.
4. Maintain a healthy inner dialogue.
5. Smile more – the physical action has a calming, restorative effect.
6. Define your values and live by them.
7. See the past as a reference point and not a map determining your life journey.
8. Listen to the people who matter in your life.
9. Embrace the idea that you can change your behaviour if you want to.
10. Learn to accept the situations you can neither change nor influence no matter what you think, feel, say and do.

As we are always trying to improve our Useful Guides we would appreciate any feedback you can give us on **A Useful Guide to Self Management**. Please click on the link below to access our online feedback form ...

<http://www.pansophix.com/useful-guide-feedback.html>

If we use your feedback to improve **A Useful Guide to Self Management** we will email you a copy of the updated version.

You can register to access our free online Learning Support Centre which contains a growing range of mental exercises, tips and tools at ...

<http://www.pansophix.com/learning-support-centre/index.php>

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<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freewill/>

Further reading

People Skills. Robert Bolton Ph. D
ISBN 0-7318-0031-1

Frogs into Princes. Richard Bandler and John Grinder
ISBN 1-870845-03-x

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. Stephen R Covey
ISBN 0-671-711117-2

[A Useful Guide to Create a New You](#). Pansophix
ISBN 978-1-906460-04-4

[A Useful Guide to Goal Setting](#). Pansophix
ISBN 978-1-906460-03-7

Appendix

Toolkit contents

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10. Slideshow – a PowerPoint slide show which is included in your downloadable toolkit and gives you a refresher and rapid reminder if you like to have a summary and a way of revisiting the content without having to read the whole Useful Guide again.	

The toolkit can be downloaded from [here](#) and contains MS Word versions of the tools so you can use them on your computer.

The “Friend” Technique

The purpose behind this exercise is to discover that the way you talk to yourself will have exactly the same effect as if someone else was speaking to you.

- Would you say this to a good friend?
- Imagine the effect of someone else saying this to you or of saying it to a friend whom you like and respect.
- Try changing your “internal” voice tone to one which is kinder and more understanding.
- Practise being more tolerant, gentle and supportive with yourself.
- Try changing an “internal bully” into an “internal helper”.

Adapted from Gilbert P. (1992) “Counselling for Depression”. Sage Publications

Dialogue Log

Date	Time	Incident Include details like who was involved, where it took place, how it arose.	Inner Dialogue Include the actual words you spoke to yourself, at which stage you used them. Make a simple list of the emotions you experienced at the time and immediately afterwards.

Trust Exercise

How I know these people trust me.

'Firm belief in the reliability, truth or strength of a person...'

Example	Reliability	Truth	Strength	Corresponds with the Values ...
I know my son trusts me because when he had a serious accident.	I went with him to all his hospital appointments no matter how inconvenient.	I talked candidly through the circumstances, helping him come to terms with what had happened.	By being there, listening attentively and coaching, I gave comfort and gave unconditional support.	Love for one's child. Sense of purpose. Honesty. Integrity. Regard for others.

Family and Friends Questionnaire

To help you learn more about how other people perceive you and you the impact you have on them I have designed an online questionnaire which family members and friends can complete to give you feedback.

This link ...

<http://www.pansophix.com/resources/family-and-friends-feedback-service.html>

... will take you to the Family and Friend's Feedback Service where you be given information on how to use the system.

Reality Grid

Originally held belief	Changes in belief	Due to the following event(s)
My Father does not like all this modern technology.	He now has a personal Apple iPod Shuffle.	He listened to mine through headphones and thought it was a marvellous invention.

Beliefs and Assumptions

This is a short exercise to help you identify then challenge some of your beliefs. The idea is to see where you would benefit from a change of belief. Complete the following sentences.

- 1) I hold the belief that

- 2) This is understandable given that

- 3) However, holding this belief is unreasonable because

- 4) It is also unhelpful because

- 5) A more helpful belief would be

- 6) Because I have held the old belief for a long time it may take time and effort to change it. What I need to do is

Feedback Hints and Tips

Asking for feedback

- Seek feedback from a person in a position to give it and not someone you feel will merely tell you what you'd like to hear!
- Be specific about what it is you want feedback on
- Approach the person at a time suitable to them – don't ask your manager as they are about to go into an important meeting!
- Give the person time to consider their feedback
- Ask the person how they would prefer to provide the feedback, such as a 1-2-1 conversation, written down or by telephone
- If you would value their advice or guidance ask them if they are prepared to offer it
- Don't blame them for their feedback. Choose to accept it or bin it in private, after you have listened to or read their feedback
- Thank the person for their time and contribution

Giving feedback

- Focus only on behaviour that you have seen
- Focus only on things you have first hand account of
- Describe what you saw happening
- Describe how this affected you
- Share ideas with the person concerned
- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes, be sensitive to the words you use, your tone of voice and your overall demeanour as you give feedback
- Ask for permission to offer the person advice or guidance on an issue
- Make what you say relevant and useful.

People and View Template

Use this template as guidance. Select individuals from an area of your life whose view of you would be of help as you improve your self management capability.

Simply say that you would value their opinion.

In the context through which they know you, for example work, immediate family, social group, club and so on, ask them for their feedback.

You must be specific, for example, if it is a work person you could ask,

When we were in the team meeting last week and I spoke about....what 3 things could you say about how I was behaving?

Whoever you are asking feedback from you must invite them to comment on a specific instance, or about a prescribed period of time they have known you and observed you.

Difficult Conversations Exercise

Difficult Conversations - some information to help you sort out why it is difficult for you and how you can manage this type of conversation.

Whenever you are faced with initiating a difficult conversation **think with the end in mind**. Why am I going to have this conversation? What do I want the result to be for me? What view might the other person have? How do I want to seek to influence them so that I get what I want but don't create undesirable consequences for myself?

Lack of clarity in any conversation will inevitably lead to ambiguity, doubt and misinterpretation. When the subject of the conversation is perceived by either party as awkward or sensitive and is accompanied by a lack of clarity, this can be why some conversations are difficult.

Try this simple exercise.

On a sheet of paper make two columns. Head one up as 'Feelings' and the other as 'Causes' then answer this question,

How do I feel when I know I am going to have this difficult conversation and what is the cause of that feeling?

Use your answers to sort out exactly how you feel regarding a conversation you think is going to be difficult. Match your feelings against causes. See if there is any scope to reframe your feeling if you could see this up-and-coming conversation differently. Doing this may get rid of some negative feelings such as anxiety, nervousness.

For example, I had to attend a court hearing last year to try to recover money a big client owed me. I felt very much the David v Goliath until I examined what was going on for me and what this whole episode was doing to me. Instead of being overwhelmed by the court process I realised that, hey I "do" meetings and this is just another kind of meeting. It worked a treat. I was nervous but not so that it stopped me doing what I had to do...I got my money too. Most of all I was proud of how I'd behaved both externally and within myself.

Next look at what goes on in difficult conversations, imagine yourself with the other person and picture how you might both be. Anything you'd like not to be seen doing?

A strategy for minimising the 'difficulty' with this type of conversation.

Clarity- let the words do the talking so think beforehand what you will say. Tell people clearly what you mean.

Neutrality- think of the non-verbal part of your delivery and be aware of your facial expressions, body stance, tone of voice and the pace at which you speak.

Temperance – there are lots of different ways of saying what you want to say just remember to temper how you say it. The goal is to advance the conversation and get to where you want to be. Keeping emotions under control will help you to be heard and understood.

Take ownership of the issue/topic – don't allow your agenda/purpose to be hijacked and taken to a place you do not want to be.

Listen- to what the other person is saying with the intention of understanding their perspective and point of view.

Go back to the beginning and remind yourself of what your purpose is in having this conversation. What do you intend to achieve? How do you intend to be? Can you live with the consequences if you don't get all that you want.

Have a plan, have a backup and open your mind to being surprised. It could be that what was perceived as a difficult conversation turns out to be the best thing you could have done for yourself and the other person...may not be immediately apparent but it feels the right way to have gone about it.