

CHAPTER ONE

Getting Down to Business with the Inspiration Inventory

What do you want from life? What really matters to you? Where do you want to be five years from now?

Imagine that, having worked through this book, you emerge feeling that something important has changed – and changed for the better. How will you know? What would be a ‘big win’ for you?

Knowing your answers to these questions is absolutely essential to the journey you are about to undertake. If you are going to coach yourself to success you need to know where your priorities lie and what you hope to get out of the process. You have to know not only what you want but why it matters to you and how it will make a difference to your life when you achieve it. In other words, you need to know your agenda for buying this book in order to make it work for you.

Right now, there may be several areas of your life on which you want to coach yourself. These might include enhancing your self-esteem, achieving a better work–life balance, improving your motivation to follow through on a particular goal or embarking on a new career. Your coaching journey may involve a major rethink of your lifestyle or just a little tweaking at the edges.

To help you think about this, I want to introduce you to a tool called the Inspiration Inventory. The purpose of the Inspiration Inventory is to help you review the core domains of your life. It will help you become clearer about what is working really well, which areas need a little refining, and which need some major attention.

I suggest that you take a photocopy of the inventory, and make it the first page of your learning log. Take your time to think about the core domains listed below and then rate each one from 0–10

according to how satisfied and fulfilled you feel (0 = a total lack of satisfaction and fulfilment; 10 = totally fulfilled and satisfied).

Exercise 1. The Inspiration Inventory

1 Overall happiness and emotional well-being:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you enjoy your life? Are you glad just to be alive? Does your life inspire you or are you often anxious, disillusioned, or unhappy?

2 Relationship to self:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you respect the person that you are? Are you at peace with yourself, confident in your abilities or do you worry about coming up to scratch?

3 Intimate relationships:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you feel loved, appreciated and supported by those that matter to you? Can you express emotional and physical intimacy easily? Can you give and receive love freely?

4 Friendships and social life:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you have good friendships based on mutual respect and trust? Can you be yourself in your friendships or do you feel pressured to be someone you are not?

5 Health:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you have abundant energy? Do you respect and nurture your body? Do you nourish yourself with healthy foods, sufficient sleep, and time to relax and unwind?

6 Lifestyle and work–life balance:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Does your lifestyle reflect and honour your priorities? Do you have a good work–life balance or often feel exhausted or 'burnt out'?

7 Career and work:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you enjoy your work? Does it inspire you and enrich your life? Does it allow you to express your talents and abilities? Does your work sustain or undermine you?

8 Money and finances:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you have sufficient money to meet your needs? Are you satisfied with your income? Do you have a system for organizing your finances, including outgoings, savings, and pension?

9 Hobbies and leisure interests:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Do you have fulfilling hobbies and interests separate from your work? Do you have sufficient time for this part of your life or is it often eroded by work or other pressures?

10 Values and principles:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Are you clear about what you stand for? Are you living life according to your core values? Are there any areas of your life in which you compromise your values?

11 Community and contribution:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you feel you make a difference to the world, even in a small way? Do others benefit from your talents and gifts?

12 Spiritual life:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: Is there space in your life to develop your potential, your expanded self, and your spiritual self? Do you feel the need to belong to a religious or spiritual community? If so, is this need being met?

13 Any other areas important to you (name them in the space below).

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Prompt questions: What other areas of your life really matter to you that are not included in the above?

Helpful hint. As you go through the Inspiration Inventory, think about where you are now in each of these areas compared with five years ago. Are the results favourable or not? This will help you interpret your scores in the light of your recent life history.

Interpreting your results

Any areas where you scored between 8 and 10 are core domains that are working very well for you and from which you are drawing a sense of fulfilment and inspiration. Write four column headings in your learning log: Fulfilled; Might Need Attention; Need Some Attention; Need Attention Urgently. Then check your responses in the Inventory, and write down each area and your score in the appropriate column, identifying these from the list below.

- 8–10 = a core domain in which you are fulfilled and that probably does not need attention right now.
- 4–7 = a core domain that needs some attention at some point, although it might not be your immediate priority.
- 0–3 = a core domain that requires some urgent attention, so you will probably want to prioritize this. Check back over your responses. In how many areas of your life did you score 0–3?

So how did you do? In which areas did you score the highest? Which were the areas on which you scored the lowest? What do your scores tell you about the quality of your life and what needs to change?

What's working well

Let's start by looking at those areas of your life that are going well – those areas where you gave yourself a rating of 8 or more. These areas give you a clue about the strengths, talents, and resources you already have available to you, the same strengths and resources you will need to bring to those areas you want to change. So, think about the role you have played in creating these results. What skills, talents, attitudes, and outlooks have helped you create these effects for yourself? Record your thoughts in your learning log, under the heading 'The reason my life is working well in these areas is because . . .'.

What might need some attention (at some stage)

Now look at those areas where you scored between 4 and 7. You are experiencing some degree of satisfaction, but not as much as

you would like. The chances are that you feel these areas of your life will need attention at some point in the future. See if you can identify what is getting in the way here. What attitudes or beliefs are holding you back? Which of your skills and talents are not being used to their full potential? How are you currently organizing your life that prevents you from giving yourself a rating from 8-10? Write your thoughts in your learning log, under the heading ‘The reason why these areas of my life are not working as well as I would like are . . .’.

What definitely needs to change

Consider those areas where you are dissatisfied, unfulfilled, or seriously uninspired (any area where you gave yourself a score between 0 and 3). Just like your strengths, the core areas you have identified contain some important clues about you, your values, and how you have chosen to organize your life. So, see if you can work out why you have struggled in these areas. It may be that you are currently missing some important skills or knowledge, or that old habits of thinking, feeling, and behaving are undermining your attempts to succeed. Make a note of anything that seems relevant in your workbook, taking as your heading ‘The reason I am struggling in these areas is because . . .’.

Selecting your core domains for self-coaching

Once you have a clearer picture of the core areas that are working well and those that are not, you are in a stronger position to coach yourself to success. Based on the results of your Inspiration Inventory, what do you think are the most important domains to work on right now? Make a list of these in your learning log.

Helpful hint. You can select as many areas as you like, but, depending on how many core themes you think need attention, you may find it beneficial to select just one or two to begin with.

Once you have identified the core domains for your coaching journey, double-check them against the following questions:

- Six months from now, what would you *most* like to be different?
- What would you like more of in your life?
- What, if anything, would you like less of?
- How will you know when you've achieved the results you are looking for?
 - How will you feel?
 - How will you think about yourself, others and life in general?
 - How will you organize your life differently?

Now pull it all together. If you review all your answers, what is the area (or areas) you are going to focus on right now? Write these in your learning log, beginning with 'The core area/s in which I most want to coach myself is/are . . .'.

If you have worked through the previous exercises, you will now have a clear idea of the key area or areas that are going to be the focus of your self-coaching. In the next chapter, I will show you how you can coach yourself to success, using a model called 'MAP'.

CHAPTER TWO

Developing Your Coaching ‘MAP’

Before we look at the principles that make up the art of inspired living, I want to introduce you to a simple but powerful coaching model, called ‘MAP’ (MAP is based on original work by David Lane and colleagues. For a more detailed overview see Lane and Corrie [2006].) ‘MAP’ stands for:

- Mission: Your sense of purpose, the vision you have for your life, what you are aiming for and why it matters to you.
- Attitude: The attitudes, beliefs and perspectives that you bring to your coaching journey, as well as the attitudes and perspectives you need to succeed.
- Process: The methods, tools, procedures and techniques you need to get from where you are now, to where you want to be.

Once you know the specifics, you can use the MAP model any time you want to make changes to any area of your life. So let’s look at MAP in more detail.

Your Mission: where are you going and why?

If you are going to coach yourself effectively, you need to be clear about where you are headed and why this is important to you. Your Mission is not about what you do – it’s about your reason for doing it. Having a vision of your life – who you are and what you stand for – helps you develop your potential by keeping you focused on what really matters. It allows you to distinguish

between those things you really want, and those things that are just the stuff of envy or fanciful day-dreams. Being clear about your Mission also helps you stay committed to your goals when the going gets tough. So, if you have a tendency to start things but not follow them through, lose heart easily, or find that your successes have a hollow ring to them, take note! Your mission probably needs some clarification.

In Principles 1–4 we'll explore some powerful methods for discovering your mission so that you can use it as a source of inspiration and make it the basis for your life goals.

Your Attitude: perspectives that will guide you to success

Your Attitude refers to the attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives you hold about yourself, other people and the world around you. It also includes your ideas about success, such as whether or not you believe you are capable of achieving your goals.

The Attitude you bring with you to your coaching journey has been shaped over many years by the knowledge and life experience you have accumulated as well as the beliefs of your family, community, work environment, and society. Many of these beliefs will have served you well, but others may be holding you back. If you want a destination that is truly of your own choosing, you need to disentangle yourself from the web of values in which you are immersed, to identify those that still matter to you, and those you have outgrown. You also need to learn how to cultivate an Attitude that will support you in achieving your mission.

In Principles 5–8 you will discover which type of Attitude you need to coach yourself in for the art of inspired living – one that will enhance your quality of life and that will fast-track you on the route to success and fulfilment.

The Process for success: shaping up your tool kit

Once you are clear about your Mission and Attitude, you can design an action plan that will help you get the results you want. Your Process involves drawing upon all the resources you have

available to you – your knowledge, your skills, your relationships and networks; in fact, anything that supports you in translating your cherished dreams into a reality. Your Process is essentially a tool-kit, derived from psychological theory, from which you can select different methods according to the task in hand.

In Principles 9–12 you will discover four essential Processes that will help you decide how to turn your Mission into your reality. We will draw on your existing resources and then expand them by introducing you to some new methods and techniques for fine-tuning your goals and designing your own learning journey.

So now you know the core areas you are going to prioritize, and the template you will be using to design your journey. In the next section, we will look at where you are heading and why – the first stage in your self-coaching, which is understanding your Mission.

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