

Integrated Life Strategies Exercise

Introduction

“The Wheel of Life as a coaching tool is used in life and management coaching to assess coaching priorities. But more than just an assessment, the coaching wheel helps clients become more self-aware *and* more motivated to make changes and create a fulfilling life. Through self-knowledge, it empowers and gives clients focus and direction”. Wikipedia

The original concept of [The Wheel of Life](#) is attributed to the late Paul J. Meyer who founded the Success Motivation® Institute in 1960. According to ‘The Coaching Tools Company’, Paul J. Meyer, was a thought leader and coaching industry pioneer. The objective of this exercise is to set a vision and increase satisfaction in each area of your life. Using a road trip analogy, assessing where you are now and where you want to go creates a general direction to move forward with priority and intention.

Many people have created their own version of the Wheel of Life and I am no exception. Depending on which version of the model you use, and the format – it can be a wheel, a spider web, a ladder, etc. – a person’s life can be divided into 5-11 strategies. The first model to which I was introduced called it ‘Balanced Life Strategies’. I’ve come to learn over decades that ‘balance’ is difficult and impractical to attain in the volatile world we all have experienced -- especially since the global pandemic of 2020! And, young adults have told me that creating a life plan can be daunting! So consider this exercise and your resulting plan a ‘work in progress’ for **as far as you can imagine in the future**. It isn’t the only way nor cast in stone. It’s simply a direction for you to follow now until something changes in your life, like your North Star. The exercises allow you to rank order priorities in your life -- which strategy is most important to your happiness and thus primary focus – and set an intention for the first step.

Please refer to the template provided as you read my descriptions for the ZST4LVG Integrated Life Strategies that follow.

ZST4LVG Integrated Life Strategies – Defined

This section describes how I modified the original Wheel of Life strategies to fit the definition of ZST4LVG. After that, I describe an exercise for you to define those strategies (categories) for yourself.

Know your Authentic Self and your Purpose: Other versions call this ‘Personal Growth Category’, Spiritual, Religion, Self-Development, Legacy and Purpose

To me this strategy is to know yourself, who you are – what makes you ‘tick’, your values, your beliefs, your motivation, strengths/improvement areas, etc. which then helps to inform your ‘why’ or reason for being...who or what you aspire to be, have or do as far as you can imagine into the future. If you died tomorrow, how would you like to be remembered? Think of all the adjectives people would use to describe you in your eulogy at a memorial service. This vision makes you feel joy about your future path forward and knowing your ‘authentic self’ helps you to make choices that move you in that direction.

Depending on your age, your initial purpose may be to just be financially independent for the next year and not have to move home with your parents! Or on the other end of the age spectrum, your goal might be to raise independent, loving children (and grandchildren) and never have to be cared for in a nursing home!

The goal of this strategy is that you can live intentionally, aka, you feel you are the pilot of your life. According to the World Health Association, “having a life based on strong purpose can add 7 years to your life!” Is that motivation or what?!?!? For some that causes stress. Getting to know your authentic self – who you are, what you believe, and value are the first steps. This strategy is the most fundamental of all and for some people to whom introspection is difficult, the hardest. There are a lot of resources, podcasts and mobile apps that can help when you search the internet. However, a professional coach can help you get a jump start on this strategy.

Excel – Do your best – in your Vocation/Livelihood: I have split ‘Career’ of other Wheel of Life versions into two strategies – Purpose/Legacy and Vocation/Livelihood This is the second piece of the original Wheel of Life category called ‘Career’, or in some other models, ‘parenthood, volunteering, etc’. In the ZST4LVG Framework, this strategy includes your day-to-day activities paid or not paid that you do on a continual basis. “Livelihood” is what you choose to do, define, or support your existence. “Vocation” is livelihood that is in support of your purpose in life. Ideally, your livelihood is your vocation and you enjoy getting up and living for the day-to-day. First steps to focus on this strategy include acquiring the basic knowledge and ability that your livelihood demands.

Secure Financial Capacity and Wellbeing: The definition for this category is that you can fund all of your ZST4LVG integrated life strategies. Other versions of the Wheel of Life Strategies are about the same, calling this ‘Money’ or ‘Financial Security’. The goal for this strategy is that you can sleep easy with no worries because you have the means and/or plans to achieve your legacy, address unforeseen risks, as well as help those who are less fortunate than you. Helping others has dual benefit of making the world a better place for all as well as providing a sense of wellbeing for you. One of the first steps for this strategy is being able to identify all sources of income as well as tracking expenses.

Invest in Love Relationships: ‘All you need is love’...the Beatles said it so it must be true. Everyone needs love in their life whether it be family or a significant other. Various versions of the Wheel of Life have called this ‘romance’ or intimacy, spouse, etc. In this ZST4LVG model, love is a two-way street; you have at least one person with whom you share a mutual respect, trust, and support for each other’s purpose, goals and/or life legacy. If that coincides with the fairy tale romance definition of love then you have a bonus! The goal is that you feel content with every personal relationship that is close to you in your life and enjoy being in their company. In my ZST4LVG definition, I include family or friends you choose as family. A pre-requisite to this strategy is that you know and love yourself as reflected in some of the other life strategies.

Build a Social System: In my ZST4LVG model, I have combined the categories of the Wheel of Life Strategies ‘Friends, Fun & Leisure, Home Environment’. The goal of this strategy is that you feel a sense of ‘belonging’ to something or somewhere and have an outlet for support, release, and rejuvenation when you need it. This includes friends of all levels, mentors, teachers and experiences that bring you joy like sports and travel. AND you support others when they need it as well. A first step for

this strategy can be categorizing your social system to identify those outlets that provide positivity and support.

Maximize Personal Health & Wellness: Included with this strategy are mental, emotional, and physical health. The goal is that you feel mentally and physically strong with the energy to realize your all your ZST4LVG Integrated Strategies. External beauty may be one of your goals, but only if it is to feel strong and confident, a positive energy. If the approval of others is what you seek then external beauty can be a negative energy, detracting from ZST4LVG. Being strong mentally and physically means you are able to deal with and bounce back after detours, set-backs and barriers that life hands you. A first step in this strategy is to have a baseline professional opinion of your current medical and dental health.

Exercise

1. Do whatever you need to bring your mind to a state of possibility and positivity. Is it deep breathing, grounding and centering, or Positive Intelligence (PQ) reps? A Mindfulness exercise? Some form of movement? Perhaps a shot of bourbon?!
2. On the template provided, for each strategy in the column beginning 'YOUR Dream', include notes or words describing first thoughts you have for that aspect of your life when you read my words. What do you really really want for yourself 5-10 years in the future or for as long as you can imagine? Keep asking yourself 'And what else?' to think bigger. Don't question or edit it, just write. It is for you alone unless you care to share it.
3. Do this for each strategy on the sheet, read what you wrote, and then take a break or a pause to clear your mind. Taking a break at this point or when it makes sense before you finalize is important. You might need to work on increasing your positivity!
4. After your break, with a positive, possibility mindset, read through what you wrote for all the strategies. When you 'connect the dots' what is an overarching learning or vision you have for who you will be should all those dreams come true? What will you look like, who will be with you, where will you be, how will you be feeling? Capture your thoughts at the bottom in the box 'Summary' – or sketch a picture on a separate page. Remember, this is for your eyes only unless you choose to share.
5. The duration for completing these steps can be minutes or several days! I encourage you to just jot down the first things that come to mind and if you must edit after your pause, do it only to enhance what you've written. Don't let the negative thoughts we all have hijack your positivity and dreams. (I have a different exercise for addressing those barriers!)
6. Next, as quickly as you can, a) rate your level of satisfaction with where you are now for each strategy as you've dreamed. If you are happy with where you are and on target to what you described, give yourself a 5. If you feel unsatisfied or unhappy with where you are now, give yourself a 1. Any number in between including decimals works for this exercise. As you give yourself the score, capture comments describing why you gave yourself the score in the column 'Why? Comments'. b) because our brain naturally turns to negativity putting up obstacles to what we want, jot down barriers that come to mind.

7. Once you have the satisfaction rating and the comments and the barriers, complete the column ‘Brainstorm: 1-2 Intentions’ to move satisfaction higher for each strategy. It is OK to put the word ‘Nothing’. This is not yet a commitment, just brainstorming with yourself. However, a long list will not serve you positively. Force yourself to choose just 1 or 2 first steps to move the ‘needle’ of satisfaction.

8. Looking at the ‘big picture’ and your Summary thoughts described in Step #4, complete the column ‘Priority’. Number them 1-6 with 1 being most important to you currently. Is your first priority the one with the biggest gap? The one with the easiest intentions you brainstormed? Or one that provides the most passion and excitement to work on? Do this as fast as you can without thinking too much. Trust your gut.

9. At the bottom of the form, referring to your #1 Priority strategy and the intentions you brainstormed, create a S.M.A.R.T goal for one action to which you can commit NOW. Some people who take on more than one action can get overwhelmed and do nothing. Pick one intended action to focus on now, and when that is done, come back to perhaps choose another.

10. At the top right of the form, add a ‘Date for Next Milestone’ Review to hold yourself accountable and measure progress. Referring to the Road Trip analogy I used in the introduction, I call this a Milestone Marker. What date in the future do you want to check your progress? AND, how will you save and later be able to retrieve this completed template? What tool will you use to remind yourself?

Options:

- Enlist the help of an accountability partner or a coach.
- Use a Digital devices reminder option, e.g. iPhone Reminders -- be sure to add the file name or where you store it in the reminder.
- Or how about this – use a free service like ‘FutureMe.com’ to send a message to yourself.
<https://www.futureme.org/letters/new>

TEMPLATE

SANDRA HUGHES
STRATEGIES

Date _____

Date for NEXT

Milestone Review _____

MILESTONE FULL REVIEW: ZST4LVG INTEGRATED LIFE STRATEGIES - WORKSHEET

ZST4LVG Ultimate Description Life Strategy	YOUR Dream for this Strategy	TODAY’s Satisfaction 1 (low)-5 (hi)	Why? Comments? Or Learning (s) Since Last Review	Potential Barrier	1-2 Intentions to Progress Strategy & mitigate barrier(s):	Priorities 1-6
<u>Know your Authentic Self and your Purpose</u>						

<p>You live intentionally; you are the pilot of your life, with a growth mindset. You consciously make choices that are consistent with who you are to live a life worthy of having lived</p>						
<p><u>Excel in your Vocation</u> You enjoy getting up and living for the day-to-day as you work continuously toward your purpose/goals</p>						
<p><u>Secure Financial Capacity</u> You rest/sleep easy because you have the means and/or plans to achieve your purpose, goals and/or legacy, address risks, as well as help those less fortunate</p>						
<p><u>Invest in Love</u> You have at least 1 relationship or life partner who respects & applauds your purpose, goals and/or life legacy ... and vice versa</p>						
<p><u>Build a Social System</u></p>						

You feel a sense of 'belonging' to something or somewhere and have an outlet for support and release when you need it...and you give to others when they need you						
<u>Maximize Personal Health</u> You feel strong and have the physical and mental energy to realize your purpose, goals, and/or life legacy						

SUMMARY: Putting it all together – What learning or vision do you have TODAY about how would you describe your ZST4LVG Dream? _____

SMART Goal for Next Milestone Review Session to be held: _____

- S) Set Intention: looking at all brainstormed steps and the priorities: What intention will you set?
- M) Measure: What will result from you having taken this step? How will you know?
- A) Attainability: What will make this truly something you can and will do?
- R) Resources: What help, or resources do you need?
- T) Timing: By when will you do this?

1. _____
- 2.(optional) _____