

Finding Meaning and Purpose in an Uncertain World

Rachel Collis

Meaning in life....

‘The extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see **significance** in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a **purpose**, mission or overarching aim in life’ Michael Steger

‘Values are intentional qualities that join together a string of moments into a meaningful path’

Steve Hayes

Here are some suggested values, feel free to add values word of your own:

- Authenticity
- Adventure
- Acceptance
- Caring
- Compassion
- Conscientiousness
- Courage
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Cooperation
- Empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Fairness
- Forgiveness
- Generosity
- Grace
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Honesty
- Humour
- Integrity
- Justice
- Kindness
- Learning
- Loyalty
- Being loving
- Mindfulness
- Patience
- Persistence
- Respect
- Being supportive
- Being trustworthy
- Wisdom
- Other?

Questions to Assess Your Current Level of Meaning in Work & Life

(based on the WAMI and MLQ - Steger)

	Absolutely Untrue	Mostly Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Can't say True of False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Absolutely True
Positive Meaning in Work							
Presence of Meaning in Life							
Search for meaning							

Positive Meaning in Work

1. I have found a meaningful career
2. I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning
3. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose
4. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful

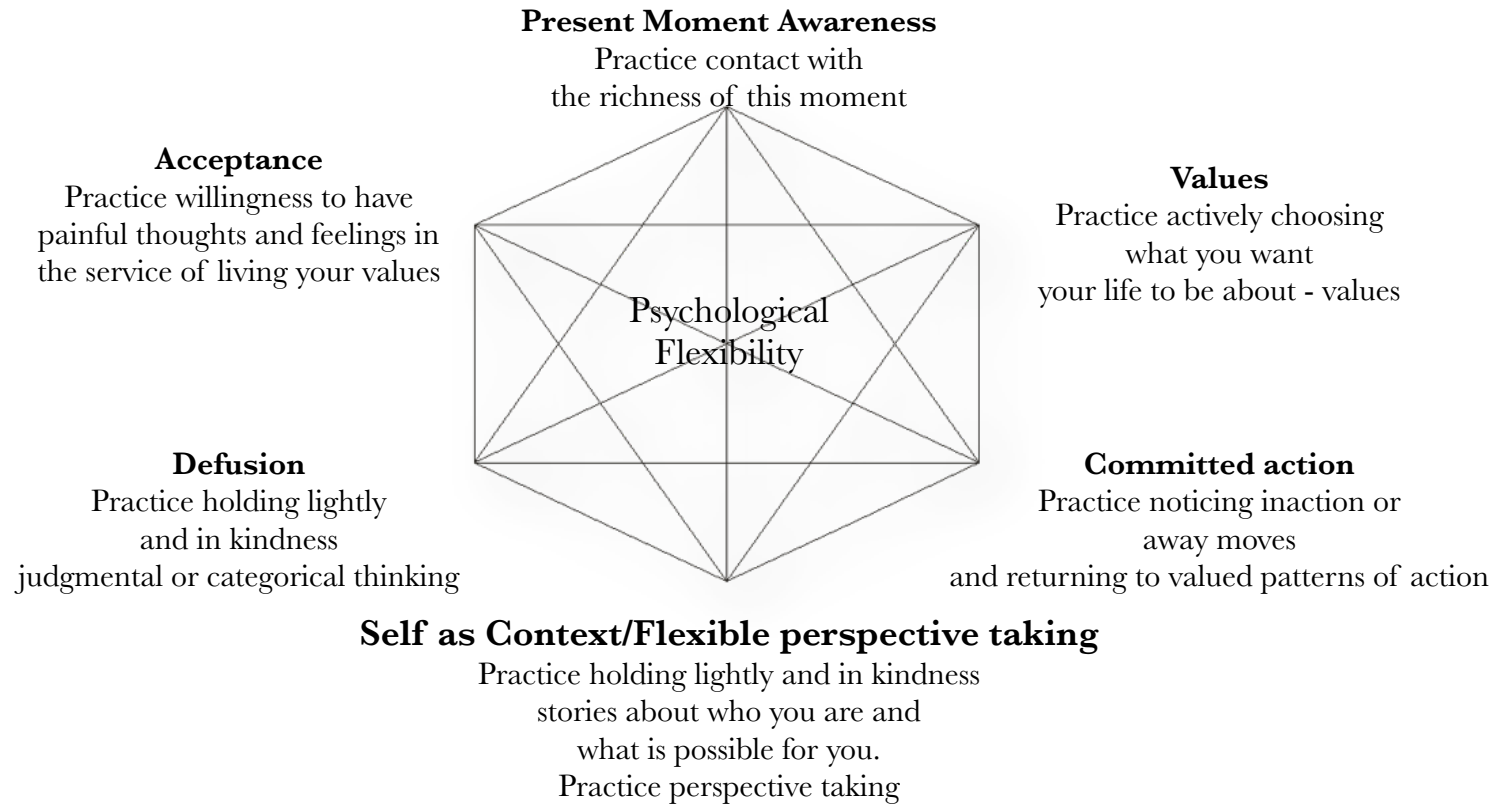
Presence of Meaning in Life

1. I understand my life's meaning
2. My life has a clear sense of purpose
3. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful
4. I have discovered a satisfying life's purpose

Searching for Meaning

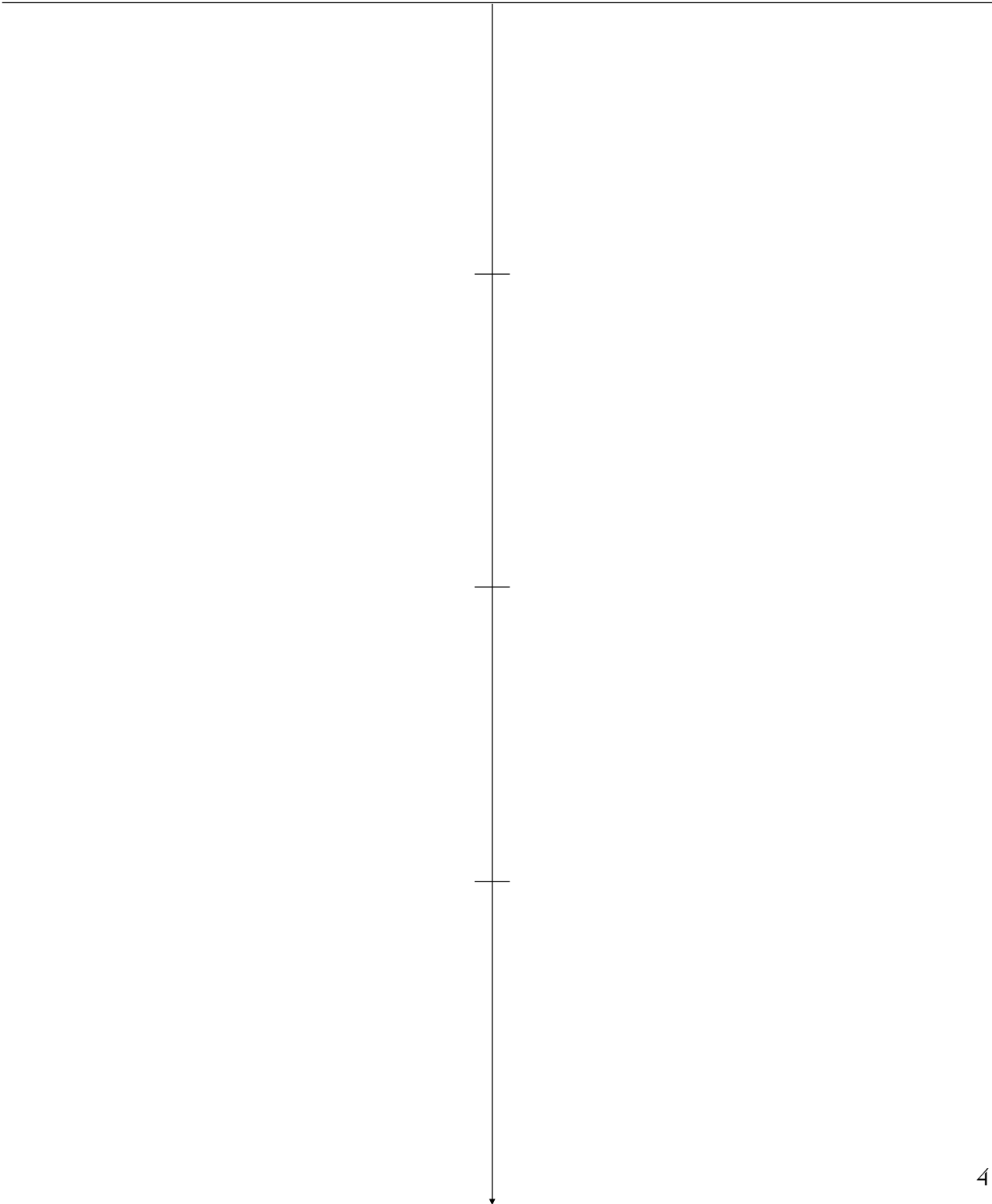
1. I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful
2. I am always looking to find my life's purpose
3. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant
4. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life

Formula for a Rich and Meaningful Life



Purpose and Meaning in Life

Thinking about your life to date, what have been some of the key turning points?



Building a Sense of Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness (Weinstein, Ryan and Deci, 2012)

Competence - feeling effective. You can bring about the outcomes that matter to you. You can master challenges. You acquire skills when needed. You seek out positive and constructive feedback. You work to make sure that what you do is at the right level of challenge for your level of skill. You are good at focussing your energy on what is important.

Autonomy - You see your behaviour as due to your own choice. You are able to act in line with your values. You seek out environments where you are encouraged to act in accord with your true self

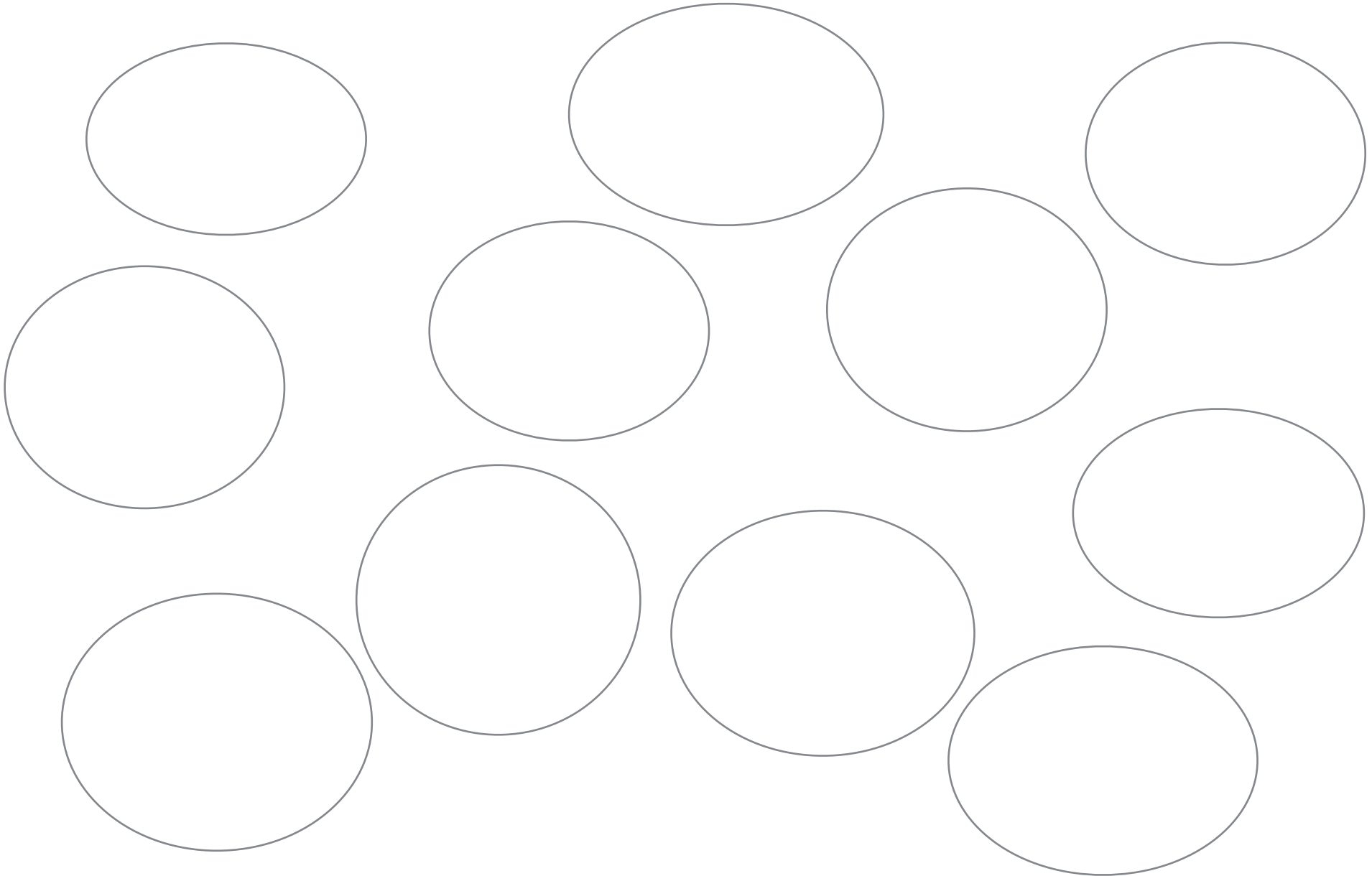
Relatedness - You feel close and connected to others. You feel people care about you and you are caring towards others. You have trusting relationships with significant others. You are part of a community where you feel a sense of belonging. You relate openly and authentically to significant people in your life.

For most of us, these needs are fundamental to a deep sense of meaning, fulfilment and vitality.

‘Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom’- Viktor E. Frankl

Bubbles in the Road

Imagine yourself taking a significant action. A bold action that moves you towards your life purpose. An action that takes you out of your comfort zone. An action that is an expression of your values. What internal stuff is likely to show up for you as you take that action?



‘Meaning is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of ...your affections and loyalties...out of the things you believe in, out of the things and people you love, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something. The ingredients are there. You are the only one who can put them together into that unique pattern that will be your life. Let it be a life that has dignity and meaning for you. If it does, then the particular balance of success or failure is of less account’ – John Gardner

‘Find something more important than you are, and dedicate your life to it’ Dan Dennett

A process for choosing purpose (based on Appreciative inquiry):

- a. Discover - Identify the best of what is.
Who are you when you are at your best? What are your strengths? What values do you want to express in your life? What situations bring out the best in you?
 - b. Dream - Explore what could be. If you could author a purpose for yourself, what might it be? What really matters to you? Epitaph activity?
 - c. Design - What values and purpose will you try out for size? Make a plan.
 - d. Destiny/Deliver - Take some action, notice what happens and repeat the cycle.
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Purpose in Life

Life purpose is the central aim that provides direction, the overarching intention of our actions.

‘This is the true joy of life, the being used up for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one’

George Bernard Shaw

Life purpose often involves the following aspects:

What are the values I want to express in this area of my life? (You will likely have a different sense of purpose in different valued domains)

What do I do? (Consider what interests you; what is aligned with your values; what your strengths are; what work brings out the best in you.)

Where do I do it? (Consider what situations bring out the best in you)

Who do I do it for?

How do they benefit from what I do?

Why is that important to me?

Resources

Rob Archer's Career psychology blog - www.thecareerpsychologist.com

Rachel, Rob and Paul's Blog - www.workingwithact.com

Books

Career Planning:

How to Find Fulfilling Work - Roman Krznaric

ACT:

ACT Made Simple - Russ Harris

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, The Process and Practice of Mindful Change (2012) Steven Hayes, Kirk Strosahl, & Kelly Wilson

Meaning:

The Human Quest for Meaning, Theories, Research and Applications (2012) Edited by Paul Wong

Promoting Meaning and Purpose in Life (2014) Joo Yeon Shin & Michael Steger, Chapter 5 in The Wiley Handbook of Positive Psychology Interventions

Using the Science of Meaning to Invigorate Values-Congruent, Purpose-Driven Action (2013) Michael Steger, Kelly Sheline, Leslie Merriman & Todd Kashdan. Chapter 11 in Mindfulness, Acceptance and Positive psychology Edited by Todd Kashdan and Joseph Cirrochi

In this very moment

Will you accept the sad and the sweet

Hold lightly stories about what is possible

and be the author of a life that has meaning and purpose for you.

Turning in kindness back to that life when you find yourself moving away from it?

Kelly Wilson