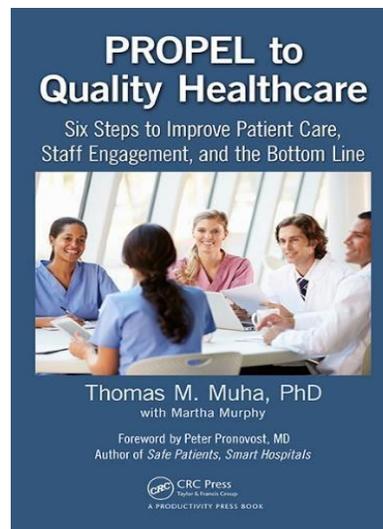




The PROPEL Toolkit[©]

Exercises to Elevate Your Level of Satisfaction and Success



From PROPEL to Quality Healthcare: Six Steps to Improve Patient Care, Staff Engagement and the Bottom Line by Dr. Tom Muha

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Introduction to PROPEL

Studies from the field of positive psychology have been synthesized into the PROPEL Principles[®]: six essential life-enhancing elements that produce high levels of personal satisfaction and success. Rather than focusing on dysfunction, positive psychology studies what works to enable individuals and teams to attain an optimal level of well-being and performance. The major themes of the PROPEL Principles are:

- ➔ Rekindling **P**assion for achieving positive outcomes v. dwelling on problems
- ➔ Enriching **R**elationships v. poor collaboration or outright conflict
- ➔ Developing **O**ptimistic thinking v. allowing discouragement to prevail
- ➔ Responding **P**roactively to challenges by using strengths v. disengaging
- ➔ Replenishing **E**nergy and building resilience v. stressing out (or burning out)
- ➔ Leaving a **L**egacy by empowering others to make meaningful difference

When fully embraced, the PROPEL principles have been shown to improve engagement, teamwork, and satisfaction. The assessment instruments contained in this toolkit are designed to help people understand how they can perform at their very best by integrating the positive practices into their personal and professional lives. Mastering these six principles enables individuals to empower themselves by optimizing their wellbeing, engaging effectively at work, and succeeding in achieving their goals.

Research has proven that using the PROPEL Principles leads to peak performance – but only when people commit to building the skills that enable them to become their best possible self. The PROPEL Toolkit follows a formula that has proven effective for facilitating change:

1. Increase awareness of your current level of functioning;
2. Develop a growth mindset by identifying new ways of thinking;
3. Identify desired behaviors that will improve your performance;
4. Engage in daily deliberate practice to become competent and comfortable.

A key point to remember: People who achieve satisfaction and success in life deliberately practice activities to improve their performance.

PASSION

Everything you do or say reveals something about what you value. What warms your heart? What angers you? What do you fantasize or daydream about? When do you feel a surge of energy? The more you understand your values, the better you are at making satisfying choices that lead to a deep feeling that you're living a fulfilling life.

Being aligned with your values generates harmonious Passion, which is the source of your inner motivation to make good things happen. Clarifying your values allows you to become more aware of the guiding principles that underlie your decisions and life choices.

The reason we're often not aware of our values is that we're constantly and subconsciously developing beliefs about how the world works (or is supposed to work) as we go through life. We acquire one set of standards from our parents. Our religion offers another. Experiences with friends and peer groups instill other values. We're constantly exposed to conflicting values put forth by opposing political groups, television shows, internet sites, commercial influences, etc.

Becoming more aware of our values enables us to consciously consider what we believe, what we stand for, and what we won't stand for. Without this clarity we give up our right to choose and allow others to direct our thinking and behavior.

The purpose of values clarification is not to tell you what your values should be, but to empower you to determine the basis for making decisions that will fuel your inner Passion so you more frequently generate the feeling that you're loving life.

By reflecting on your most profound past experiences, you can discover the life lessons that have coagulated into your value system. It is through this lens that you view your life in order to determine what's meaningful, relevant, fair, and fulfilling. Values are continually developing as you undergo different life experiences.

In the following exercises you'll create a values-based vision of you at your best, as well as identifying a first step you could take in your professional life toward that outcome. We all know what it's like to dream big, but to lose focus when life throws us too many obstacles. These exercises are designed to provide you with a source of sustained inspiration and motivation.

Passion for doing excellent work empowers you to perform at the highest level. Passion enables you to devote significant amounts of time and energy to what's most important. Sometimes people lose their passion, and with it goes their sense of satisfaction and success. Sustaining a healthy passion for your work, studies show, is a crucial factor affecting the trajectory of your career. Your professional identity becomes a defining aspect of your personality, which – for better or for worse – determines whether you end up loving many other aspects of your life or lapsing into disengagement.

Passion Exercise 1: Peaks and Valleys

Adapted from CultureSync www.culturesync.net/toolbox/mountains-and-valleys/

In this exercise you have the opportunity to identify your Key Personal Values by reflecting on the events that have been most significant in your life.

1. Place hash marks on the dotted line in 5 -10 year increments (depending on how old you are). The idea is to begin from childhood on the left and continue to the present day on the right.
2. On the line below identify 6-8 events in life (personal and/or professional) that were milestone events for you. Milestone events are significant or life changing experiences. These are likely to be both highly positive as well as negative events.
3. For each positive milestone, draw a circle above the line at a height representative of how highly satisfying or important the event was for you. Write 1-2 words inside the circle, e.g. graduated college.
4. For each negative milestone, draw a circle with a word or 2 in it below the line indicating a unsatisfying or significantly negative event for you, e.g. divorced.

PEAKS AND VALLEYS EXERCISE

My Most Satisfying Experiences

Past

Today

My Worst Experiences

Passion Exercise 2: Identifying Key Values

Adapted from CultureSync www.culturesync.net/toolbox/mountains-and-valleys/

Reflect on each of your 4-6 milestone events and complete the grid below.

- Review each circle above the line, and ask yourself: “What values made this experience so meaningful, significant or satisfying?”
- For each circle below the line, ask: “What values were missing, violated or threatened that made the event dissatisfying or unsettling for me?”
- Use the list of words on page 6 to help you identify Key Personal Values.

<i>Briefly Describe Each Event</i>	<i>Emotions You Experienced</i>	<i>What Stands Out as Most Meaningful & Significant About the Experience</i>	<i>Key Personal Value(s)</i>
Sample Event: Living in Spain as an exchange student during high school	Fear, Apprehension, Excitement, Frustration, Sadness, Loneliness, Love, Gratitude	I traveled to a foreign country by myself without knowing anyone. I found I was stronger than I imagined. I learned that people are largely the same. I returned home understanding what true acceptance was and with greater appreciation of my abilities.	Learning Self-Growth Courage Love Acceptance Gratitude

<i>Briefly Describe Each Event</i>	<i>Emotions You Experienced</i>	<i>What Stands Out as Most Meaningful & Significant About the Experience</i>	<i>Key Personal Value(s)</i>
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The list below is intended to serve as a resource to help you identify *possible* value labels. Please add any values that you hold that might be missing.

Adapted from the Positive Psychology Toolkit <https://positivepsychologytoolkit.com>

Acceptance	Fame	Peace
Accountability	Family	Personal Development
Achievement	Fast Pace	Personal Expression
Advancement & Promotion	Freedom	Planning
Adventure	Friendship	Play
Affection	Fun	Pleasure
Altruism Arts	Grace	Power
Awareness	Growth	Privacy
Beauty	Happiness	Quality
Challenge	Health	Recognition
Change	Helping Others	Relationships
Community	Honesty	Religion
Compassion	Humor	Reputation
Competence Competition	Inspiration	Respect
Completion	Integrity	Responsibility
Connectedness	Intellect	Risk
Cooperation	Involvement	Safety & Security
Collaboration	Imagination	Sensibility
Country	Improvement	Sensuality
Courage	Independence	Serenity
Creativity	Influencing	Service
Decisiveness	Inner	Sophistication
Democracy	Harmony	Spark
Design Discovery	Knowledge	Speculation
Diversity	Leadership	Spirituality
Environmental Awareness	Learning	Stability
Economic Security	Love	Status
Education	Loyalty	Success
Effectiveness	Magnificence	Teaching
Efficiency	Making a Difference	Tenderness
Elegance	Mastery	Thrill
Entertainment	Meaningful Work	Trust
Enlightenment	Ministering	Unity
Equality	Money	Variety
Ethics	Morality	Wealth
Excellence	Mystery	Winning
Excitement	Nature	Wisdom
Experiment	Openness	Other:
Expertise	Originality	_____
Exhilaration	Order	_____
Fairness	Passion	_____

Passion Exercise 3: Clarification

Please list 3-5 core values you believe are most significant to you from your “Peaks and Valleys” activity. Define what each means to you, personally.

<i>Core Value</i>	<i>My definition of the meaning of this value in my life now</i>

Passion Exercise 4: Degree of Consistency

Certain circumstances can make it hard for us to always live by our values. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is every day, draw a line indicating the degree to which you feel you’re able to live your values consistently?

1. _____ 1-----10
2. _____ 1-----10
3. _____ 1-----10
4. _____ 1-----10
5. _____ 1-----10

Passion Exercise 5: The Impact of Not Fully Living by My Values

Write a short paragraph describing in what way these inconsistencies are impacting your current level of satisfaction and success in life?

Passion Exercise 6: “WWILL” Power – How To Be Your Best Possible Self

Asking “What Will It Look Like?” enables you to envision you at your best, which strengthens pathways to the parts of your brain that support achieving your vision. Write out a specific picture of the best possible version of yourself in the future.

- The values that underlie your passion for attaining this goal.
- The activities you’ll actually be doing once the goal is attained. Be specific, what will you see, hear, and feel that’s different from today?
- How you and others will benefit once you’ve realized your goal.

Passion Exercise 7: WOOP – Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan

Adapted From: *Rethinking Positive Thinking: Inside the New Science of Motivation* (2014) by Gabriele Oettingen

Write down your ‘**W**’ – What’s your *Wish*? What’s the challenging but feasible professional goal you would like to attain in the next 6 months using PROPEL?

Then, for the first ‘**O**’ – Imagine the positive *Outcomes* – including the positive results and emotions – you will experience when you’ve fulfilled your wish.

Next, consider the second ‘**O**’ – It’s often obstacles within us that hold us back, including our feelings, thoughts, or actions. Identify the *Obstacle* within you that might hold you back from taking action to attain your Wish.

Finally, reflect on the ‘**P**’ – The WOOP model uses if/then *Plans* to help us overcome our obstacles. Define your if/then plan using the formula: “if [obstacle] occurs, then I will [effective action].”

PROPEL GOAL

W - Wish	O – Outcome
O – Obstacle	P - Plans

Deliberate Practice:

- **Write down the best time each day to reflect and follow through on your personal and professional WOOP goals to create an action plan.**
- **Leave enough time to take action to make 1% progress toward your ‘Wish’.**

RELATIONSHIPS

It's nearly impossible to achieve our goals without support. We depend on our relationships for nourishment as much as we do food and water. Human beings possess a deep desire to be loved, supported and respected. In fact, our happiness depends on the quality of our relationships. Being positively engaged with our families and coworkers substantially increases our physical health and psychological wellbeing.

Gallup employee engagement surveys have found that more than 50% of American workers are disengaged (doing the minimum to get by on the job). Around 17% of employees admit to actively sabotaging their work environment. The reason people usually give for being dissatisfied at work – and the best predictor of someone leaving their job – is an unsatisfactory relationship with their boss. The biggest source of satisfaction and motivation for the 30% of people who are engaged (working with passion, making the extra effort, and feeling committed to the organization's values and goals) is having a good relationship with a coworker. [Adkins, A., Gallup Employee Engagement post, January 28, 2015, *Majority of U.S. Employees Not Engaged Despite Gains in 2014*]

People with the highest levels of success and satisfaction continually work on generating high quality connections. In spite of the ups and downs of relationships, they remain committed to creating caring connections as the core component of their well-being. Their relationships have at least 3 positive interactions for every negative exchange.

Relationship Exercise 1: Assessing Your Current Positive/Negative Ratio

POSITIVITY SELF TEST

From: *Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the Upward Spiral That Will Change Your Life*, 2009, B. Fredrickson
 What feelings have you had over the past 24 hours? Look back over the last day and, using the 0 – 4 scale below, indicate the greatest amount of each emotion that you experienced on the following 20 questions.

0 = not at all 1 = a little bit 2 = moderate 3 = quite a bit 4 = extreme

Question	Score
1. What is the most amused, fun-loving or silly you felt?	
2. What is the most angry, irritated or annoyed you felt?	
3. What is the most ashamed, humiliated or disgraced you felt?	
4. What is the most wonder, awe or amazement you felt?	
5. What is the most contemptuous, scornful or disdainful you felt?	
6. What is the most disgust, distaste or revulsion you felt?	
7. What is the most embarrassed, blushing or self-conscious you felt?	

8. What is the most grateful, appreciative or thankful you felt?	
9. What is the most guilty, repentant or blameworthy you felt?	
10. What is the most hate, distrust or suspicion you felt?	
11. What is the most hopeful, optimistic or encouraged you felt?	
12. What is the most inspired, uplifted or elevated you felt?	
13. What is the most interested, alert or curious you felt?	
14. What is the most joyful, glad or happy you felt?	
15. What is the most love, closeness or trust you felt?	
16. What is the most proud, confident or self-assured you felt?	
17. What is the most sad, down-hearted or unhappy you felt?	
18. What is the most scared, fearful or afraid you felt?	
19. What is the most serene, content or peaceful you felt?	
20. What is the most stressed, nervous or overwhelmed you felt?	

Scoring

1. Go back and circle the 10 items that reflect positivity: 1, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19
2. Count the number of circled positivity items that you scored 2 or higher and write that number below.
3. Go back and put a check by the 10 items that reflect negativity: 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 17, 18, 20
4. Count the number of check marked negativity items that you endorsed as 1 or higher and write that number below.
5. Calculate the ratio by dividing your positivity tally by your negativity tally. If your negativity is zero for today, consider it instead to be a 1 to side-step the can't-divide-by-zero problem.

My Positivity – Negativity Score for today

Number of positive feelings scored 2 or higher _____

Number of negative feelings scored 1 or higher _____

Positive to Negative (P/N) Ratio = _____ :

Relationship Exercise 2: WWILL Power for Increasing Your P/N Ratio

The best relationships are built around being good friends. Great relationships involve:

- ✓ a positive to negative ratio greater than 3:1
- ✓ standing up for people when they're not present
- ✓ keeping your promises and other's confidence
- ✓ expressing gratitude for what's good rather than criticizing what isn't
- ✓ always recognizing kindness and returning favors
- ✓ responding with heartfelt enthusiasm to other's good news

What actions could you take to keep your P/N ratio high in those relationships that could support your achieving your 6 month PROPEL Goal from Passion Exercise 6? Use this list of ideas as a springboard for identifying specific behaviors that would enhance your relationships with those people. What could you do to generate more positivity with your:

Loved ones?

Best friend?

Coworkers?

Boss?

Self?

Relationship Exercise 3: WOOP Your Ability to Succeed

Adapted From: *Rethinking Positive Thinking: Inside the New Science of Motivation* (2014) by Gabriele Oettingen

Write down your ‘**W**’ – What’s a *Wish* you have in support of maintaining a stronger P:N ratio in order to receive the support you’ll need to accomplish your 6 month PROPEL goal?

Then, for the first ‘**O**’ – Imagine the positive *Outcomes* (your WWILL) you will experience when you fulfill your wish.

Next, consider the second ‘**O**’ – It’s often obstacles within us that hold us back, including our feelings, thoughts, or actions. Identify the *Obstacle* within you that might hold you back from taking action.

Finally, reflect on the ‘**P**’ – The WOOP model uses if/then *Plans* to help us overcome our obstacles. Define your if/then plan using the formula: if [obstacle] occurs, then I will [effective action].

PROPEL GOAL

W - Wish	O – Outcome
O – Obstacle	P - Plans

Deliberate Practice:

- **What’s the best way to remind yourself that it’s time to practice? (e.g., set 3 reminders to yourself on your phone or find a buddy to check in with during the day)**

OPTIMISM

So far you've set goals and selected people to support you in achieving them. But that won't prevent you from suffering setbacks as you're working toward positive outcomes. And when you do, your brain is hardwired to shift into fight, flight or freeze reactions. Actually, scanning for threats and looking at what went wrong is helpful – for a little while. But staying in this negative mindset severely restricts your brain's ability to find solutions, garner support and identify the resources you need to be resilient.

Optimistic thinking helps generate new behaviors during the trial and error learning process. Rather than allowing feelings of frustration to keep you stuck in primitive negative reactions, optimistic thinking activates higher level human brain activity. This shift up to the cerebral cortex allows you to engage your 'executive functioning' capabilities in an effort to respond positively to a problem situation. This mindset shift enables you to stop catastrophic thinking and control distressing emotions.

Optimism enables hope – not the Pollyanna kind of hope that, maybe and magically, tomorrow will be better – but the gritty brand of hope that tells us there are actions we could take to try make progress once again. When you continue searching for solutions to improve your situation, there is a good chance you'll find one. When you stop searching, you guarantee you won't.

Pessimistic thinking, on the other hand, leads to suffering. People who feel they have no control over their situation routinely develop symptoms of learned helplessness including sleep problems, poor concentration, sadness, irritability, changes in appetite and physical activity, and feelings of lethargy.

Optimism and pessimism are both learned ways of thinking. By learning to challenge pessimistic attributions of negative events and instead explain them in optimistic terms, we can improve our ability to sustain hope, commitment, and perseverance.

In addition, because optimists learn to handle problems without taking them personally, they are far better equipped to contend with critics, naysayers, and bullies. This means you can increase the probability of being successful by first managing the way you think, because that will determine how you feel and what you do.

Optimism Exercise 1: Describe a Current Challenge

Describe a current work challenge standing in the way of achieving your 6 month goal:

Write down all of the reasons why you think that it's been such a struggle to resolve this issue:

Optimism Exercise 2: Are You a Positive or Negative Thinker?

Adapted version used with permission of Mind Tools https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm

Instructions: For each statement, check the column that best describes your thinking as it relates to your PROPEL goal. Please answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be), and don't worry if some questions seem to score in the 'wrong direction'.

1 = not at all 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = often 5 = very often

1 2 3 4 5 1. When my boss, a coworker or a patient asks to speak with me, I instinctively assume that he or she wants to discuss a problem or give me negative feedback.

1 2 3 4 5 2. When I experience real difficulty at work/home, I also feel negative about other parts of my life.

1 2 3 4 5 3. When I experience a setback, I tend to believe the obstacle will endure for the long-term, e.g. "I didn't get promoted. It doesn't seem like things will work out for me in this organization."

1 2 3 4 5 4. When a team I am on is functioning poorly, I believe that the cause is short-term and has a straightforward solution. For example, "We're not working well at the moment. But if we can fix this problem, then we'll do much better!"

1 2 3 4 5 5. When I'm not chosen for an assignment I really want, I tend to believe that I just don't have the specific skills they are looking for right now, as opposed to thinking I am generally unskilled.

1 2 3 4 5 6. When something happens that I don't like or appreciate, I tend to conclude that the cause is widespread in nature and will continue to plague me. For example, "I didn't get the email. The poor communication around here will never change."

1 2 3 4 5 7. When I perform very well on an assignment, I believe that it's because I'm generally talented and smart, as opposed to thinking I am good in just that one specific area.

1 2 3 4 5 8. When I receive a reward or recognition, I tend to think that my talent and hard work played more of a role than luck or fate. For example, "They asked me to present at a conference next year. I guess they see how good I am."

1 2 3 4 5 9. When I come up with a really good idea, I am surprised by my creativity. I figure it is my lucky day, and caution myself not to get used to the feeling.

1 2 3 4 5 10. When something bad happens at work, I see the contributions that everyone made to the mistake, as opposed to thinking that I am incompetent and to blame.

1 2 3 4 5 11. After getting recognition, I believe it's because I am better at doing certain things than the competition. For example, "I won that big award against two strong competitors. I simply have better skills in that area than they do."

1 2 3 4 5 12. When I'm in a leadership position and my team completes a project, I tend to attribute the success strictly to the hard work and dedication of the team members, while downplaying my leadership role.

1 2 3 4 5 13. When I make a decision that proves to be successful, it's because I have expertise on the subject and analyzed that particular problem really well, as opposed to being generally a strong decision maker.

1 2 3 4 5 14. When I achieve a long-term and personally challenging goal, I congratulate myself, and think about all the skills that I used in order to be successful.

Calculating Your Overall Assessment Score

Write your response to each of the questions in the grid below. Where a question is listed as a "Reverse Score" (noted by an asterisk), please use the following key to calculate your score:

5 = 1 4 = 2 3 = 3 2 = 4 1 = 5

In other words, if your answer to number 1 above was "4," please record a "2" in the grid below for your score for that question.

Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score
1*		4		7		10		13*	
2*		5		8		11		14	
3*		6*		9*		12*			

REVERSE SCORE (5 = 1, 4 = 2, 2 = 4, 1 = 5) QUESTIONS 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 12, 13.

Overall Score (add individual scores for questions 1 through 14): _____

Score Interpretation

14 - 31 You have gotten yourself into the habit of seeing things as your fault and you've learned to give up your control in many situations. Taking this quiz is the first step toward turning your pessimism around.

32- 50 You try to be optimistic and positive however some situations get the better of you. Identify your triggers for negative thinking and use rational thinking exercises to become naturally more optimistic.

51 – 70 You have a generally positive and optimistic outlook on life. You don't take things personally and you are able to see that setbacks won't ruin the rest of your life.

The first step in changing negative thinking is to become aware of it. For many of us, negative thinking is a bad habit – and we may not even know we're doing it! Research reveals that our success is influenced by how we explain events using three basic dimensions of Permanence, Pervasiveness and Personalization, with optimistic people on one end of the scale and pessimistic people on the other. Most people believe that they're very optimistic, and are surprised to learn that their level of optimism can almost always be improved with increased awareness and practice. [Seligman, M., *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Vintage Books, 2006]

In general, Optimists believe:

- Positive events are personal, permanent and pervasive.
- Negative events are specific, temporary and situational. Pessimists, on the other hand, believe:
 - Positive events are specific, temporary and situational.
 - Negative events are personal, permanent and pervasive.

Optimism Exercise 3: Identify the 3 Dimensions of Optimistic/Pessimistic Thinking

Adapted version used with permission of Mind Tools www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm

With this basic understanding of the dimensions of optimistic thinking, review your scores in Optimism Exercise 2 and total your score for all 3 of the following dimensions:

Permanence (Questions 3, 4, 9, 11) Reverse Score # 3, 9

My score: _____ *out of 20*

This part of your 'explanatory style' determines the degree to which you think an experience will become either permanent or temporary. A low score implies that you think bad times will carry on for a long time. A high score indicates confidence things will get back on course quickly.

Pessimist: *I didn't get the job. I'll never find one as good again. No point even looking!*

Optimist: *I didn't get the job. Thank goodness there are other opportunities I can explore!*

Pervasiveness (Questions 2, 5, 6, 7, 13) Reverse Score # 2, 6, 13

My score: _____ *out of 25*

This aspect of your thought filters assesses whether specific situational factors determined an outcome or whether it was due to recurring issues. A low score suggests a tendency for you to believe that if you've experienced a problem in one context, you're likely to see that problem occur in other places.

Pessimist: *I didn't get the job. People are all the same; they play favorites. I don't know why I bother putting in any effort at all.*

Optimist: *I didn't get the job. It's too bad our company is downsizing to stay competitive. Thankfully I learned some great transferable skills!*

Personalization (Questions 1, 8, 10, 12, 14) Reverse Score 1, 12

My score: _____ *out of 25*

This cognitive screening assesses whether you influenced the outcome or whether someone else or something external caused it. A low score indicates a tendency to blame yourself if something bad happens, rather than primarily attributing the cause to external situational factors.

Pessimist: *I didn't get the job. If I had been a top notch employee they would have promoted me.*

Optimist: *I didn't get the job. I gave it my all; however, that position wasn't a good match for my skill set.*

Optimism Exercise 4: Turn Negative Thinking into Optimistic Thinking

Based on what you've learned about optimistic thinking, rewrite your explanation from Exercise 1 regarding your current challenge:

Optimism Exercise 5: WOOP Your Ability to Remain Optimistic

Write down your ‘**W**’ – What’s your Wish for remaining Optimistic when you’re struggling to achieve the goals you established in Passion Exercise 1.

Then, for the first ‘**O**’ – imagine the positive outcomes/feelings (WWILL) you’ll experience when you’ve reached your Outcome.

Next, consider the second ‘**O**’ – identify the *Obstacle* within you that might hold you back from taking action.

Finally, reflect on the ‘**P**’ – your “if-then” *Plans* for taking action in spite of your hesitations.

PROPEL GOAL

W - Wish	O – Outcome
O – Obstacle	P - Plans

Deliberate Practice: You deal with problems almost every day. Use the Optimism filter to determine how you’re explaining them if you find yourself struggling:

- **Are you making the problem permanent versus temporary?**
- **Are you focusing on the specific issue or speculating the problem will adversely affect everything else?**
- **Are you making the problem personal rather than changing the situation?**
- **Pick a time (e.g. driving home) that you could routinely review the day’s events.**

PROACTIVITY

You've learned to change your thinking when you're facing a challenge so that you can see possibilities for turning the situation around. Next, you're going to learn how to change your behavior in order to bring your best qualities into play once you have a plan.

High performers have learned to rise to a challenge even though they feel pressure. Like all human beings, their brain initially floods with stress chemicals and they feel the same wave of fear that drives fight – fight – freeze reactions in all of us. The difference is they have trained themselves use their strengths to overcome those base instincts. In fact, through deliberate practice they've actually rewired their brains so they're able to routinely respond effectively. Athletes call it being in the zone.

Strengths are on display when you're doing things you're good at and enjoy. Almost everyone has had times when they were looking forward to engaging in an activity, and found themselves completely absorbed when doing it. When it was over they felt an increased sense of confidence, energy and satisfaction. Using strengths to fully engage in a task seems like second nature because after years of practice your brain has become hardwired to automatically use certain patterns of behavior. Just like when you write – you don't have to consciously tell your dominate hand how to sign your name, but it takes some conscious thought if you try signing something with your other hand.

Unfortunately, most people find it difficult to tap into their strengths in order to intentionally create intense engagement and peak performance on a daily basis. Renowned strengths researcher Marcus Buckingham found that 61% of the general population mistakenly believe that focusing on weaknesses is the best way for people for people to grow. [Buckingham, M. (2007) *Go Put Your Strengths to Work: 6 powerful steps to achieve outstanding performance*. New York: Free Press]

Numerous fMRI studies have shown that it's much easier for your brain to expand the use of existing neural pathways than it is to forge altogether new ones. And your motivation remains much higher when you're doing what you enjoy rather than trying to force yourself to act outside of your comfort zone.

Riding the wave of positive emotions that are generated when you're using your strengths empowers you to remain optimistic and resilient when facing challenges. While you will have to develop some basic competency in your weaker areas in order to function in life, you'll never be at your best if that's where you devote the majority of your time and attention. Your weaknesses limit you while your strengths amplify you.

Studies show that if you practice using your strengths for just 11 minutes a day you will become a more Proactive person – responding to challenges with your best qualities. Read more about the 11 minute challenge at www.michellemcquaid.com/strengths-habit/

Proactivity Exercise 1: Identify Your Strengths

Go to the website at www.viacharacter.org and take the *free* Character Strengths Survey. Or discover your business-related strengths by paying for the StrengthFinder Survey at the Gallup website: <https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com>.

When you have your results, write your top five strengths here:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____

Proactivity Exercise 2: Strengths Spotting

Recall a time that you felt you were functioning at your best, enjoying the activity, feeling confident and energized. Describe the experience:

Reflect on how you used some or all of your 5 strengths to attain peak performance:

Proactivity Exercise 3: Learning to Use Your Strengths More Consistently While you use some of your strengths some of the time, you have some strengths that you underplay. Sometimes you're probably engaging in behaviors that involve your weaknesses, resulting in poor performance. Even worse, you may be good at an activity, but are exhausting yourself every time you have to do it. "To use strengths optimally, we need to do so according to the golden mean: the right strength, to the right amount, in the right way and at the right time." Linley, A. (2008) *Average to A+: Realizing Strengths in Yourself and Others*. Warwick: CAPP Press.

Write your ideas for how could you use the right strength, to the right amount, in the right way, and at the right time as you pursue your 6 month PROPEL Goal:

Proactivity Exercise 4: WOOP Your Ability to Use Your Strengths Consistently

Write down your ‘**W**’ – What’s the Wish you hold for using your Strengths consistently when striving to achieve the 6 month PROPEL goal you established.

Then, for the first ‘**O**’ – imagine the positive outcomes/feelings (WWILL) you’ll experience when you’ve reached your Outcome.

Next, consider the second ‘**O**’ – identify the *Obstacle* within you that might hold you back from taking action.

Finally, create the ‘**P**’ – your “if-then” *Plans* for taking action in spite of your hesitations.

PROPEL GOAL

W - Wish	O – Outcome
O – Obstacle	P - Plans

Deliberate Practice: Schedule 11 minutes a day to practice using your strengths to achieve your personal and professional goals. What time will work best?

ENERGY

Pursuing your personal and professional goals takes energy, which must be replenished. If you don't take time to take care of yourself you'll run out of energy. When you become so consumed by your work that you fail to replenish your energy, you pay a price. You become physically exhausted, mentally drained, emotionally spent and spiritually depleted. You burn out. The signs that your energy is out of balance include:

Lack of energy	Mistrusting people
Feeling defensive	Trouble making decisions
Impatience	Negative attitude
Difficulty listening	Criticizing others
Overreactions	Not asking for what you need
Feeling unfocused	Over-controlling
Irritability	Compassion fatigue
Poor teamwork	Over-anxious
Workaholic	Inflexibility
Insecurity	Disengagement

Because energy capacity diminishes with both overuse and underuse, you must learn to balance energy expenditure with intermittent energy renewal. Developing highly specific routines for replenishing your energy will enable you to remain fully engaged and performing at your best.

Energy Exercise 1: Energy Management Self-Assessment

From: T. Schwartz, *"Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time"*, Harvard Business Review, 10/07

Please check the statements that are true for you.

Body

- I don't regularly get at least 7-8 hours of sleep. I often wake up feeling tired.
- I frequently skip breakfast, or I settle for something that isn't nutritious.
- I don't work out enough (meaning cardiovascular training at least 3 times/week and strength training at least once/week).
- I don't take regular breaks during the day to truly renew and recharge, or I often eat lunch at my desk if I eat at all.

Emotions

- I frequently find myself feeling irritable, impatient, or anxious at work, especially when work is demanding.

- I don't have enough time with my family and loved ones, and when I'm with them I'm not always really with them.
- I have too little time for the activities that I most deeply enjoy.
- I don't stop frequently enough to express my appreciation to others or to savor my accomplishments and blessings.

Mind

- I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time, and I am easily distracted during the day, especially by e-mail.
- I spend much of my day reacting to immediate crises and demands rather than focusing on activities with longer-term value and high leverage.
- I don't take enough time for reflection, strategizing, and creative thinking.
- I work in the evenings or weekends. I rarely take an e-mail-free vacation.

Spirit

- I don't spend enough time at work doing what I do best and enjoy most.
- There are significant gaps between what I say is most important to me in my life and how I actually allocate my time and energy.
- My decisions at work are more often influenced by external demands rather than a strong, clear sense of my own purpose.
- I don't put enough time or energy making a positive difference to others or the world.

Scoring

<u>How is your overall energy?</u> Total number of statements checked _____	<u>Guide to total score</u> 0-3 : Excellent energy management skills 4-6: Reasonable energy management skills 7-10: Significant energy management deficits 11-16: Full-fledged energy management crisis
<u>Number of checks in each area:</u> Body _____ Emotions _____ Mind _____ Spirit _____	<u>Guide to domain scores</u> 0: Excellent energy management skills 1: Strong energy management skills 2: Deficits 3: Poor energy management skills 4: A full-fledged energy crisis

Energy Exercise 2: WOOP

Write down your ‘**W**’ – What’s the Wish you hold for replenishing your energy?

Then, for the first ‘**O**’ – imagine the positive outcomes/feelings you’ll experience when you’ve reached your Outcome.

Next, consider the second ‘**O**’ – identify the *Obstacle* within you that might hold you back from taking action.

Finally, create the ‘**P**’ – your “if-then” *Plans* for taking action in spite of your hesitations.

PROPEL GOAL

W - Wish	O – Outcome
O – Obstacle	P - Plans

Deliberate Practice: When can you make time in your schedule to implement your plan for establishing one or more daily ritual(s) that will be necessary to maintain your energy while you’re working toward your 6 month PROPEL goal?

LEGACY

You've learned a lot about how to optimize your own performance and wellbeing. Leaving a Legacy is about learning how you can bring out the best in other individuals. Making a meaningful difference in the lives of others, studies show, is actually what brings us the highest level of life satisfaction.

Legacy Exercise 1: Lessons from People Who Brought Out the Best in You

Think of those individuals who have had a positive impact on your life. Write a description about what you learned from those people. What qualities did they possess? How did they encourage and empower your success? How did their mentoring bring out the best in you?

Legacy Exercise 2: Describe what it would look like if you were applying the lessons you learned to someone you started to coach:

Legacy Exercise 3: Establishing a Coaching Relationship

Think of someone you know who has unrealized potential. How could you explore the idea of helping them learn about what optimal functioning could look like in their life?

Consider asking questions such as:

- *What are the positive outcomes you're passionate about achieving?*
- *Which of your relationships could be most supportive?*
- *How do you persevere when you get discouraged?*
- *Can you bring your best qualities to bear when facing big challenges?*
- *How well do you convert stress into constructive energy?*
- *Do you know how to empower others to be at their best?*

Legacy Exercise 4: First Steps for Building a Coaching Relationship

If the following elements are established early, then the coaching has a high probability of success. Here's some suggestions about how to get started in the first few sessions:

- Learn about the core values forged in their past experiences.
- Establish their 'at my best vision' to work on together.
- Discuss great mentors the person has had in the past.
- Uncover thoughts that have derailed 'at my best' behaviors
- Identify person's best traits with tests and strengths spotting activities.
- Agree on what new behaviors will need to be deliberately practiced.
- Uncover the person's inner obstacles using WOOP.
- Use 4 of the 6 Sources of Influence to create external motivation.
- Agree to 'countability' regarding deliberate practice homework.
- Set up a regular time to do progress checks.
- As their coach, ask for feedback on what you can do to improve.

Based on these criteria, what practices could you add to your coaching to become a more effective mentor?

POWERFUL COACHING QUESTIONS

From *Conversational Intelligence – How great leaders build trust and get extraordinary results*

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Assumptions

- What assumptions do you hold about the team?
- What would the situation be like if your assumptions were not true?
- What assumptions do you hold about the project's success?
- Given the current situation, what assumptions might develop that would get in the way of success?

Situations

- What is the situation?
- Who is impacted by this situation?
- Who is not impacted by this situation?
- What is important in this situation?
- What are the challenges that exist because of this situation?
- You are not sure you understand?

Sharing Feelings & Implications

- What issues concern you?
- What can we do to build trust in this situation?
- What are you afraid might happen?
- What are your other feared implications?
- How does that make you feel?
- How is that impacting you?
- What feeling can you share that will help us understand your perspective?

Sharing Facts & Experiences

- What is your experience with this?
- What are the facts as you see them?
- What were the circumstances that took you down that path?
- What situation influenced your thinking?
- Have you had any other experiences that differ?
- What led you to this belief?

Idea Explorations

- What is your idea?
- What's your thinking behind this idea?
- What is the problem this idea addresses?
- How important is this idea to you?
- What led you to this idea?
- How attached are you to this idea?

Desire Explorations

- How would you describe success in this situation?
- How can we guide this situation to a new or positive outcome?
- In the best of all possible worlds, what is our desired outcome?
- What is our greatest desire?
- What would give us the feeling we were successful?

INNOVATION QUESTIONS

Insight Building

- What can we do to combine the best of our thinking?
- What can we do to arrive at the best outcome?
- What can we do to merge our ideas?
- What can we do to build common ground in this situation?
- What can we do to get the best result?
- What can we do to build on other's ideas?

Possibilities

- What if we could wish for the impossible, what would we want?
- What if we had unlimited resources, what would we do?
- What if the opposite were true?
- If money were no problem, what would we do?
- What if we had everyone supporting us, what would we do?
- What if we could implement any solution, what would we go for?
- What if we were to have no limitations, what would we do?

Perspective shifting

- What would a significant breakthrough look like?
- If we were someone else, what would we do?
- If we started backwards, what would we do?
- How would our customers see this?
- What if our assumptions were not true?
- What if the opposite were true?
- What other alternatives would work?
- If we had no vested interest in this, how would you look at it?

Thought Provoking

- Who can you ask a question to move this situation along?
- What questions would guide this situation to a positive outcome?
- In the best of all possible worlds, what do you want to happen?
- What is your desired outcome?
- What do we want to create?
- What ideas could we merge to move the situation along?

Idea Development

- What don't we know?
- Where is this idea taking us?
- What will activate this opportunity?
- What intrigues us about this idea?
- How can we broaden our perspective?
- How can we build on this?
- What's another side we haven't yet considered?

THE 6 SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

From *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything* by Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, and Switzler

