

The lifeline exercise

This exercise will help you to identify the high points in your life: times when you have felt energised and in 'flow', as well as some of the low points, when things have been difficult and you have perhaps felt a little 'lost'.

Think of your life as a line from the day you were born right up until today, a line that goes up at times when you were feeling good about life, and down at times when you were feeling less good. Take a look at the lifeline diagram below. On the vertical axis, there is a scale from high (+5) to low (-5), with zero representing 'chugging along just fine'. Along the horizontal axis, the years of your life are broken up into five-year chunks. The purpose of this exercise is to remember as many 'high points' in your life as you can up to the present time. High points are those times you remember with some satisfaction, pride or gratitude that you were there. They are times when there was something special in terms of what you were doing and how you were involved. Include all your high points, both inside and outside work.

Concentrate on the high points rather than low points, because they tell us where our energy lies. When we look back at high points, they often occur at times when more than one or two things were going well in our lives. The reason for including low points at all is so that you can look at them in relation to the high points. The key when looking at them is to help you reflect on how you worked through them, and to think about what events triggered more positive feelings.

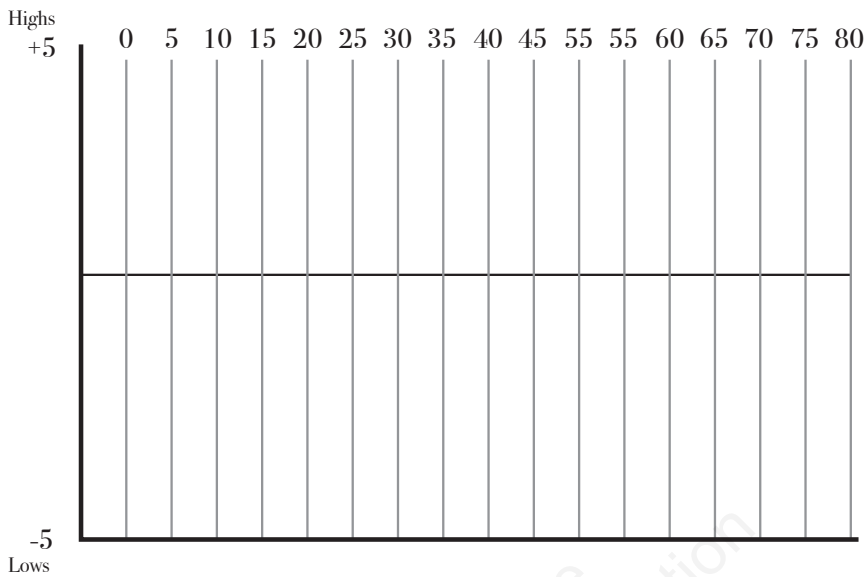


Figure 5: Lifeline

Looking at your lifeline, you can often see reoccurring positive themes in your life, and you can also see the sorts of negative events you want to avoid.

Once you have done the exercise, look at the high points and low points and ask yourself:

- What was the situation?
- Who else was there?
- How was I feeling?
- What was I doing?
- What talents was I using?
- What role was I taking?

Looking across all the high points, do any common themes emerge? Similarly, looking across all the low points, what are the themes there? What does this say about the situations you

find satisfying? Were they situations or events that enabled you to use your talents or gave you a sense of flourishing? Again, think about what you were doing, who you were with, and what roles you were taking. Does this give you some clues about the sorts of people you would like to spend more or less time with?

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