

The Ultimate Goal Setting Exercise

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A supplement to making the **Certainty Choice**

From **The Five Simple Choices** program in **Self Leadership**

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In the Five Simple Choices program in Self Leadership, as a part of illustrating the 3rd of the simple choices (Certainty) we discuss that the people who achieve the most are not necessarily the hardest working people. The hardest working people are often laboring under "The Big Lie" (page 92) and achieving very little. (A trip to a roofing crew or a coal mine will quickly illustrate that the hardest working people are not necessarily the most successful people.)

No, the most successful people in the history of the world are, almost without exception, the people who have the clearest understanding of what they want to achieve – before they try to achieve it. The most successful among us are almost always those with the clearest and most passionately held goals.

If you are unclear as to what your specific goals are, this can be frustrating. You can easily fall back into believing that unfocused work efforts will someday surprise you with vaguely defined, yet "good" results. (Something that is commonly believed but almost never actually true.)

In many cases – achieving goals is actually easier than identifying them. "How" can often become obvious and intuitive if the what and why are strong and specific enough. To achieve the highest possible level of results – you have to clearly and specifically decide what those results should be – before you begin to work toward achieving them.

This exercise can help you define your objectives – so that you can begin to go to work achieving them.



Instructions:

This exercise works best if you print it and complete it with a pen/pencil by hand. This exercise contains three lists. Please complete the exercise in order. Don't jump ahead.

To complete the first list, you will simply answer the question **"What do you want?"** as many times as possible. Our target is to create 50 answers to this question. This first list should be a stream of consciousness exercise. Don't prioritize, don't analyze. Decide in advance that no one else will get to see this first list. Don't write for the benefit of anyone else. Do not write down what you think you are supposed to want. Be completely honest with yourself. Be as shallow and petty or as sweeping and grandiose as you want. Be both if you choose. Don't try to be "reasonable." Don't try to be organized. Don't limit yourself in any way. Write things down as they come to you – as fast as they come to you. Want a new car? Write it down – type color etc. Would you like a good cup of coffee, a steak, the new shoes you saw your coworker wearing? Maybe you want a new job, a new house, a new computer or a trip to Europe. Just start writing down what you want, as it comes to you.

There are only a few of rules to creating this first list:

- ✓ Don't write down things that represent undefined "wealth." Don't write down that you would like 85 billion dollars or a room full of gold bars or a bucket full of diamonds – because you really don't want those things. You want other things that wealth would represent. Don't write down vague definitions of wealth, write down specific things you would buy with that wealth. Write down things that you want that would inspire you to earn or create the wealth necessary to obtain those things.
- ✓ While you should not limit yourself in any way when producing this list, you should not pull random things out of the air for the sake of the list. If you have seen a 100 foot long yacht that got you excited – feel free to write it down. Don't write down things like a gold plated limousine or a diamond encrusted toilet paper holder just to fill the list. If you actually want it – include it on the list. If you don't actually want it – do not include it on the list.
- ✓ Don't write down sweeping global things that you have no way to influence and no way to directly observe. Don't include things like "world peace" or "no more endangered animals". Wanting your favorite team to win the championship or your favorite actor to win the Oscar falls in this category as well. Rule of thumb: if something isn't (and wouldn't) be a part of your direct personal experience – don't include it on the list. If you would have to watch the news to even know if something is true – it should not be included in this exercise.
- ✓ Don't include lists of similar items just to fill the list. Don't list every city you would like to visit – just indicate that you would like to travel extensively (only if, of course, travel would be on your personal list). Don't list every album you wish you had – indicate you want a music collection. If you have list of things that you want (shoes, clothes, jewelry or baseball cards) they count as a single item.

Within this simple set of rules, start writing down what you want on Worksheet #1 – "What do you want? - Stream of Consciousness" on pages 3 & 4. After you get 15 or 20 completed – or if you have trouble coming up with 15 or 20, jump forward to page 5 for some more hints.

Worksheet One ~ What do you want? ~ Stream Of Consciousness

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Hints and help for Worksheet One:

If you are like many people, you may discover that this is more difficult than you imagined. Most people begin with simple material things that they want, but quickly they begin to run out of “things” they genuinely want to own. Having run out of “things” – people often then turn to life situations. Some people want to be in a relationship – or they want to improve an existing relationship. Some people want a specific job, some people would like to live in a specific place. Perhaps you would like to go down that path to help fill in your list. What do you want your life experience to be?



Perhaps after listing a few situations you would want to experience or create, you might remember a material thing or two that you had not remembered earlier. Maybe that video game you haven't picked up yet comes to mind. Keep going with your list. Come back here again when you run out of ideas.

things you want to be. Perhaps you want to be in better shape. Perhaps you would like to be better educated. Maybe you would like to be less angry, more loving. Maybe you would like a work skill to be improved. Perhaps you would just like a different hair color. Write it down.

This exercise is probably requiring a depth of examination that you were not expecting. The question “What do I want?” is easy to answer for the first 20 or so on your list. The question “What else do I want?” becomes increasingly difficult. It also becomes increasingly important. It requires you to examine your deepest priorities. Do not give up. Keep working until you get to 50. Even if it take a couple of days to get to this point it will be worth it.

Note: *On very rare occasions, some people find this activity extremely easy. They come up with 50 things in five minutes. In almost every one of these occasions – they have violated the “rules.” They are listing random examples of undefined wealth or lists of similar items: (1. A box of Hundreds, 2. A box of Fifties, 3. A different colored box of Hundreds). If creating this list doesn't require significant thought by about half way through, review the rules and begin again.*

Instructions for Worksheet Two:

Suggestion: If you have just completed your list of fifty things you want – give this exercise a rest. Walk away for a few moments. You may even want to come back and work on worksheet number two tomorrow.

At this point you should have come up with a list of 50 things that you want. There should be things and situations and conditions and improvements. You have probably already learned some important things about yourself on the way. You probably had to stretch to come up with 50 things. The next step is just as important. Let's now take the things you want and begin to prioritize them:

Take a fresh look at the list you labored to produce on pages 3 and 4. What is the single most important thing on that list? What do you want the most? Again, please don't consider what you are supposed to want. Please be completely honest. Which one is the most important to you? Do you have one? Please draw a line through that item on page three or four – and re write it as item number one on page 7. (Leave the last three blocks on each line alone for the time being. They will be explained later).



Continue with this process until you have identified the top ten most important items from your master list. Don't attempt to do this all at once. Don't just quickly write down items 2 through 10. Look at your master list. What is the most important one that has not been lined through? Select one – line through it – then copy it to the next line on the list on page 7. Please do it one at a time.

NOTE: Many people ask why we didn't start at this point. Why not just write down the top ten list as step one? There is a very important reason the exercise is structured in this way. It is important to write down the superficial and/or top of mind items first so as to get them out of the way. The first things that come to mind are often not the most important – they are just the loudest. For almost everyone who completes this exercise – the top ten most important list turns out to be very different from the first ten that came to mind. Some of the most important items are often things that it took work to identify. For many people, there are things that make their top ten "most important" list that didn't come up until number 30 or 40 on the master list.

Worksheet #2

Prioritized Top 10 List

#	What do you want (from master list of 50)	I	# + I = Score	Final
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
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9				
10				

Again: Please make entries one at a time. Please ignore the final three columns until the next step. Take as long as you need to select the ten most important items from your master list of 50.

Final Steps

Influence

Once you have completed your top ten list of most important things that you want, there is one final thing to consider. Which of these top ten items is most under your direct influence? Which of these items can be most directly affected by a set of action steps that would be under your direct and immediate control? To be clear, we are not concerned with which is the “easiest.” We are looking for the one that is or would be most under the direct influence of the person making the list (and that would be you). When you have identified the item most under your direct influence, go to the column marked “I” (for influence) and write a one in the block after the item. Continue by selecting the item that is the next most directly under your control and ranking that number 2. Continue with this exercise, ranking the items based on your influence over the items until you have given a 10 to the item that is the least under your influence.



Score

Finish your list by adding the two numbers associated with each item on your list and enter the total in the final column. For example: if the 1st item on your priority list was the 4th most directly under your influence – then that item would get a final score of 5. If the 2nd item on your priority list was the 7th most directly under your influence then that item would get a score of 9. Continue to total the score of all ten items on your top ten list.

Final Ranking

Please take the item with the lowest score and assign it the final ranking of 1. The item with the next lowest score should be given a rank of 2. Continue assigning each item a final rank until the item with the highest score has been given a rank of 10. (In the case of a tie – give the item that is above the item with which it is tied the lower number).

Final List

Please rewrite your list one final time on page 9 in the order of the final ranking.

Master Top Ten Goal List

Final Ranking	Goals
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This may be the best list of personal objectives you have ever assembled. Rather than simply attempting to list a few important things you want – you attempted to list everything you want. You didn't list things you are supposed to want. You did not list what others want you to want. You assembled a master list of things that you personally desire. From that list you selected the 10 most important to you – in order of importance. And finally – your reordered that list giving 50% weight to your ability to impact the individual items.

If you have not created a list that inspires you to action – then frankly either you did it wrong – or nothing will inspire you to action. Let me make a prediction: if you do what is necessary to achieve these 10 items – they will help you achieve the other 40 items that didn't make the top ten.

It is now time to get to work making these things happen.

You may want to return to page 115 of Five Simple Choices and use the goal achieving strategies given there. In any event – now that you know what you want – you can begin to do something about it!