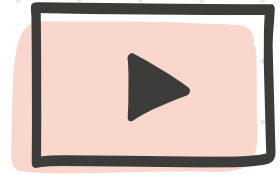


# ACT 4

## Living Wisely, Living Well

It's best if, rather than just 'going with the flow', you know where you want your life to go – where you want to take it. It's a bit like being a bus driver.

Some people are a bit lost. If you have a clear direction in life, that will stop you going round and round in circles.



### Identifying and choosing your values

It can be very difficult for us to answer general questions such as:

*“What do I want my life to be about?” “What do I stand for?”*

But you can identify your values by using your feelings as a guide. When something feels just right, that indicates one of your values. And when something feels wrong, that also indicates one of your values. The stronger your values, the more deeply you care about things. So think about these questions...

*“What gives me a warm feeling – and why?”*

*“What really irritates me – and why?”*

*“What makes me feel proud – and why?”*

Having identified your values, you can then work out how to live in line with those values – and making a commitment to do this is the pathway to 'Living Wisely, Living Well'.

### Direction of travel – and values

The best direction for your journey is in line with your personal values.

The things you really care about

The things that matter to you

The things you value in life

But remember, your journey may not be trouble-free.



### They're Talking About Me

If you overheard people talking about you, what would you like to hear them say about you?

### Living by your values

Spending more time doing things that really matter to you and less time doing things that you don't really care about will feel right. Time spent doing things that matter is 'quality time', but actions in line with your values often take courage and a good deal of effort. They may be outside your comfort zone and may involve you going the extra mile or doing something out of character.

However, such actions will often feel uplifting because you will recognise that what you are doing is 'The Right Thing To Do'.

### Values, commitment, action

When you decide the best thing to do, you need to make a commitment to 'do the best thing' – even if it's very difficult and even if it hurts.

Recognising our values often helps us to identify changes we can make in our lifestyle so that what we do is in line with what we value – we can then make a commitment to ACT in ways that best reflect our values.

### Example - quitting smoking

Suppose that one of Mark's important values is 'healthiness'. To respect his own values, Mark needs to lead a healthy life. But what if he smokes? For his actions to reflect his values, Mark will need to stop smoking.

#### What is needed here?

Acceptance

of the craving  
sensations

and

Commitment

to give up  
smoking

When a smoker accepts the craving sensations and remains fully committed to quitting (and doesn't smoke!) the craving will gradually subside – and, after not smoking for several days or weeks, the discomfort will end. Maintaining a commitment to carry on with something that is distressing or uncomfortable may be very difficult at first. But if you persist (and accept the discomfort, distress, etc.), the negative feelings will invariably decrease.



### Key values

Awareness of your key values will allow you to live wisely, but only if you make a commitment to act in accordance with your values.

This will probably mean taking more conscious control of your actions. This is likely to involve responding more Mindfully – thinking about the best thing to do – and then GOING FOR IT – in other words, taking more strategic control of what you do and how you live your life.

### Greater flexibility

To take control of your life, you need to overcome certain things that may be holding you back. Unnecessary fears and worries, avoidance of embarrassment, being over-cautious, and wanting to stay well within your comfort zone, may all be holding you back from having a better life. What you need is greater flexibility – and you can achieve this through deliberately doing things that are 'different', 'challenging' and 'out of character'. Increased flexibility will mean that you are less constrained and able to do more of the things that really matter to you.

### This is my life

When you live more in the present moment, your Mind will have less influence over you. When you take conscious control of your actions, you will be able to live wisely – and this will enable you to have a better life, with less suffering.

What you choose to do plays a major part in shaping who you are. E.g. If you want to be a vegan... don't consume or use animal products – If you don't want to be a thief... don't steal! – If you want to be a kind person... act in a kindly way.

### Commitment patterns

Having made a commitment, you may break it. If this happens, make the same commitment again. It may take several attempts before you are successful. If you give up, you're sure to lose out – but renewing a commitment can lead to eventual success.

### Responding to a setback

Things don't always go to plan – there will be disappointments and lapses. Although you can't control the feeling of disappointment or of failure, you CAN control the actions that follow. Some people give up – but others know that it makes sense to carry on and try again. There are likely to be several temporary setbacks as life goes on – it's inevitable – 'part of the deal'!

### Be wise to your Mind

**Appreciate that...**

you don't have to  
believe your Mind

**and...**

you don't have to  
obey your Mind

This is a good time to tell your Mind: "enough is enough; thanks, but I'll be taking over from now on".

That's your 'Declaration of Independence' – take over the reins, move into the driving seat, pull your own strings!

### Live wisely

Change what you can change,  
accept what you cannot change,  
and have the wisdom to  
know the difference.