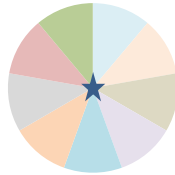




BetterBalance Coaching Archived Monthly Tips

Making your 'Hap Nav'



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Making your 'Hap Nav'

Today I want to offer you the opportunity to create your own practical Navigation Aid for Greater Happiness (HAPNAV for short!) – a powerful tool for making better decisions and to help with planning the kind of future you really want. This is also particularly valuable information if you or someone you know is currently facing change in their life or work. This tip involves 'making something' – your HAPNAV tool, consequently there are some detailed instructions so you may want to print this email for future reference or keep it somewhere safe.

Happiness has featured a lot in the media recently which is good to see however I am concerned that the subject is being dealt with a little superficially. True happiness comes from living our lives in keeping with our values, which in turn leads to a sense of real purpose and ultimately the deep feeling of fulfilment. Happiness is priceless and is this perhaps why many rich people still seem unhappy? As we navigate our way through life we make choices about which way to go, decisions about which path to take – shall I turn left, turn right or go straight on? Sometimes these will be decisions to some of life's bigger questions like "What career do I want?" "Where do I want to live?" "How do I want to spend my time?" "Who do I want to share my life with?" "How many children (if any) do I want?" Other decisions relate to more day to day questions like "What to eat tonight?" "Shall I watch TV or play sport?" "Do I continue this argument or make up?" "Work late or have more time at home?" "Shall I have a holiday or a new kitchen"? Whether big or small decisions the answers we select to life's questions will map out our pathway and with every twist and turn we are shaping the life we live. What's it like for you when you look back on where you have been and notice what you've done and what you've achieved? What's it like when you look forward to your next few years or contemplate the here and now? How well is your navigation working for you?

An indication that our navigation is working for us may be a sense that we feel on course. This sense of it 'working' mostly comes from living in a way that is honouring our values and as a result we feel happier and more fulfilled. On the other hand if the result of the choices we make is that we are navigating a pathway taking us further away from our values then we are unlikely to be truly happy. It may feel like something is wrong or missing from our lives, we can feel disconnected and not true to ourselves.

So by using your values to inform your choices and decision making as well as to guide your plans for the future you can pick the pathways that take you closer to true happiness and fulfilment – you can be on course to shape the kind of life you want to look back on as well as the life you want right now and in the future. Navigating by values instead of navigating by stars!

How to build your HAPNAV.

Start by being clear about your values, these represent the things that really matter to you, the things you really care about. You can begin to notice what these are by considering the following questions and as you do so create a list. Don't worry about getting it "right" and capturing all your values. Your list will be work in progress. Also, your values



don't have to be a single word -- they could be strings of words or sentences. Find the words that work for you.

(I will put some examples in italics to illustrate but remember your values are your own and are what makes you, YOU, while it can be interesting to borrow someone else's values it is most useful to discover more about your own).

Thinking about the following FOUR areas will help you to create your list of values.

- 1.) What is important to you? What do you care about? What do you want in your life?
- 2.) When do you feel happiest? Select a time from your personal history when you felt particularly fulfilled. It may have been a few minutes, or hours, or days. What was important about this experience? What values were you honouring?

Example. *Early in the coaching partnership I often assist people that I am working with to become clearer about their values and to write them down. I remember once how asking someone the question "When are you at your happiest?" led them to realise that for them a particular time was in the morning when their young children came into bed with 'mum and dad' and there were lots of cuddles, laughter and play. As he thought more about this he realised that a core value for him was this love and closeness of the family unit.*

- 3.) What do you react negatively to? What makes you angry or frustrated? Think about one of these things. What value is being violated? When are you not being true to yourself?
- 4.) What has been a peak experience, when you were at your best? What is important to you about this?

For each of us, there are usually values that are so much a part of us that we don't even think to put them on a list. These are often our most dearly held values. A teacher might fail to include learning, an artist might forget to write down creativity, a business owner might overlook financial success. Often these things are so much a part of who we are, that they become invisible to us. **Example.** *When I recently took stock of my own values I forgot to put down the importance of where I have chosen to live which is something that really matters to me!*

Once you have your list of values (as a rough guide often people seem to have a list of between 8 and 12) you now have your basic HAPNAV, the next step is to use it to check your current position. Notice which of your values you are honouring, which "get lost" or are neglected, and which you sometimes violate through behaviours or choices. Give each value a score out of ten, e.g. 10/10 is completely honouring! And 0/10 is completely neglecting. This will give you a sense of how 'on course' you are. Also pick out the three values that for you are real 'core' values. These core values often seem to stack on top of the others a bit like a pyramid.

So far you have used your HAPNAV to take stock and chart your current position. Now you



can go on to use your HAPNAV as a decision making tool and a future planner.

HAPNAV as a decision making tool.

Often when making decisions we only switch on one side of our brain, for example we may get too logical or rational and can ignore what is in our hearts and override our gut reaction (or vice versa). Other times we may choose pathways that make seeking approval from others a higher priority than supporting our own values and fulfilment. Using your HAPNAV will help you to achieve more balanced decisions that take better account of your own needs and desires.

When you come to a junction (a decision making point) take some time to consider how the different pathways may honour or violate your values. Choose the pathway that best fits and keeps you most closely connected with things that are most important to you.

I like tools that are visual and can be used 'hands on' because they can help us to engage all of our brain and discover different perspectives. Here is one way of creating a visual and 'hands on' tool with your HAPNAV.

1. Draw a circle on A4 card and divide it into segments (you may need 8 to 12 spaces) one for each of your values.
2. In each segment write in one of your values and write in the score out of ten you gave in your initial stock check. Place your three core values next to each other in the three segments closest to the top of the circle.
3. Cut out the circle and put a pin in the middle. Using another piece of A4 card next draw the various options like different forks of a path going off in different directions (there may be a number of pathways each one representing a possible decision or choice). To make this work best you need to get the spacing about right and I will leave that to your imagination.
4. Pin your circle to the beginning of each path and turn it slowly through each value. As each segment (and value) lines up with the path in question consider how well choosing that path will honour (or not!) that particular value and assign a new score out of ten. Jot down the scores by the pathway concerned. Pay particular attention to your three core values at the top of the circle, it is useful to find a way to 'weight' the scores for your core values – perhaps double them.
5. Once you have done this then you can finally weigh up the best possible option and choose the pathway (the decision) most in line with most values (depending on how you like to do things you could add up the scores written by each path to help with the weighing up!).

Sometimes you may notice values that appear to collide, for example if you make a decision that honours one value it may violate or neglect another, like taking time to do things for recreation or personal development which may conflict with taking time for the family. When this happens it may suggest that the existing map of pathways is not



yet offering enough choices and it could be time to 'go off road' and create a new pathway that could better satisfy all or most values.

HAPNAV as a future planner.

Notice which values you most often neglect or violate, these probably are the ones that you have given lower scores out of ten and that you feel less than satisfied with. Ask yourself what would you have to do to be able to increase these scores? – often small changes that support your core values have large positive impacts on your happiness and fulfilment.

Example. *I remember coaching someone a while ago who used to be a county squash player. Late teens and early twenties he played squash everyday of the week. Ten years on with a demanding a job and young family he wasn't playing squash at all! For him squash really mattered because it expressed being skilful at high speed under physical and mental pressure, this was something he particularly valued in himself. He realised that the course he had navigated had taken him away from this value and he was now neglecting it and feeling that something was missing from his life. He decided to start playing squash again but just once a week and it worked! He realised he no longer needed the county level competition and full on training because his life had moved on – but he did still want to play once a week and that small change made all the difference to his sense of self and happiness because it was in line with a core value.*

Also notice which values you are honouring well already but still have some room for improvement, again ask yourself what could you want to do that would further strengthen these. For all your values start noticing the things you want to do more of or start doing, also notice the things you want to stop doing or do less of. Begin to spread these out to represent short, medium and long term. Again here is a good visual way to represent this using your HAPNAV circle.

1. Place your circle on a larger piece of card and draw a bigger circle around it (so there is one circle inside the other).
2. Next draw mirror images of each segment so they extend into the outer circle like points of a star or petals on a flower. You now have new segments (in reverse) that correspond to each of your original value segments in your first circle. (if you cannot see this then please email me and I will send you one to download!)
3. In the new empty segment that sits on top of your value segments jot down the actions/goals that represent what you want in the future because they honour that value. Short term closer to the centre and long term towards the tips.
4. In the gaps between each point of the star you can jot down the things that you may want to stop doing or do less of or alternatively begin noting how you will achieve some of the actions/goals you have chosen to commit to.

Ultimately you can use this tool to help create a well balanced plan that encompasses all aspects of your life and if you navigate to stay on course (or close to it) you can achieve greater happiness. People have found this a particularly powerful tool at



times of significant change when their thoughts are not as clear as they would like them to be. For example when making a career change, buying or selling a business, considering retirement, buying a new house, contemplating ending a relationship. Being clear about your values is often the key to making your thoughts less chaotic and gaining the clarity to move on.

If you've enjoyed this tip and found it useful then you can receive regular monthly tips and ideas for free by entering your name and email into the monthly tips box on this web site.

Best wishes

Jeff Gill PCC