

Self Discovery Assignment: Your Personal Balance Sheet

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*Today you are You
that is truer than true.
There is no one alive
that is Youer than You.
~Dr. Suess*

OVERVIEW

We *all* need to know that we matter.

Each of us is as unique as a snowflake. No one has ever been, nor ever will be, just like you. No one has your nature, your blend of skills, your experiences, your relationships, or your dreams. No one will shape the world and others like you. Your value is priceless and immeasurable, whether you realize it or not!

Each of us has a unique destiny, too. We journey through life offering ourselves to others (family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances), to organizations (employers, service, recreation, faith), and to all the situations we face. Our lives are defined by what we *have* to offer, what we *choose* to offer, and *how* we offer it. We leave indelible impressions wherever we go. Some are immediately visible, some appear down the road, and others we may never even know. No one captures this better than Frank Capra in his film, “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

So, how do you know what you *have* to offer? One way is to think of yourself as a treasure trove—a storehouse of all that is good and valuable about you. Like a minefield, some of your treasure is visible while some resides beneath the surface waiting to be revealed. The better you understand the treasure in you, the greater the chance you will reach your full potential and positively impact the world.

This concept is especially important during the adolescent years when we experience our greatest period of self discovery. Whether we realize it or not, we are considering three fundamental questions at this stage of life:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I have to offer?
3. What are my opportunities?

All of those questions like, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” are now coming home to roost. But, at this time of life, exploring our identity is much broader than choosing our career or major. After all, we are building a leadership

foundation for life, preparing us for *all* the key decisions and opportunities to use our treasure.

Because our answers to these three questions guide our future, they deserve our best thinking. *Guesses*, so common at this time, will only build a rudderless ship that meanders the waters of life. *Clarity*, on the other hand, will foster purpose, direction, and a legacy of impact—where our talents and treasure can be used in areas we’re passionate about. It’s an essential ingredient to a successful life.

TAKING A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Unfortunately, when it comes to our sense of **identity** and value, our perspectives are narrow and biased. We view ourselves through our own lens, which contains distortions and inaccuracies and doesn’t reveal the total picture. Meanwhile, others who know us well and have our best interests at heart see us through a different lens. Together, they can reveal assets we either don’t realize or fully appreciate—our treasure that lies beneath the surface. Because some of our most valuable qualities come so naturally to us, it’s easy to discount or “undervalue” them.

Our sense of self worth is not only *incomplete*... it also is *inaccurate*. Each of us holds “baggage” and burdens that distort our sense of value and diminish our self confidence. For example, if our confidence is down, we become more critical of the person we see in the mirror. Similarly, we may be facing challenges that constrain us from being our best. A good example of this is fear of failure. We may have all the skills in the world, but if we fear failure, we will limit their use and not reach our potential. It’s like having treasure that lies dormant beneath the surface.

Therefore, it pays to be as comprehensive and accurate as possible when we explore who we are and what we have to offer. That means taking a holistic perspective of ourselves through self examination and the valuable input from others. It means learning how to mine our treasure so it is ready to be used along our life journey for maximum impact.

BALANCE SHEET APPROACH

It may seem strange, but people share some similarities with businesses. We’re both created for a purpose. We both serve others. We both have “assets” (things of value we can offer). And, we both have “liabilities” that hold us back (at a personal level, we’ll term them “constraints”). In fact, businesses even file reports called a “Balance Sheet,” which details their assets, liabilities, and net worth. Analysts use this report to help determine a company’s *value* or *worth*.

Can you see the parallels? We can borrow a page from the business world to help mine our treasure and more fully understand our value!

What follows is a brief overview of assets (i.e., treasure) and constraints at a *personal* level. This will set the stage for the assignment that follows.

Assets

Assets are positive attributes we have available to offer in life. They are unique and valuable to each individual and especially to those who receive them. Their *value*, unlike dollars and cents for a business, is a function of: 1) how *well* they are used and 2) how *much* they are used. In other words, the impact of our assets is determined by the quality and quantity of their use. Here, motivation plays a key role, for assets that are not used have only *potential value*.

Now, let's review the nine categories of personal assets (yes, nine!) that are fully described later. Each of you has assets you might not have realized or fully appreciated, but they exist and are ready for use!

Foundational Assets:

- Physical
- Mental
- Behavioral
- Spiritual

Relational Assets:

- Network
- Support System

Expectational Assets:

- Experiential
- Interests
- Passions and Dreams

Constraints

Unfortunately, each of us carries burdens or constraints that hold us back, distorting our view of ourselves and our assets. They can damage our self confidence and sense of worth. They can be overwhelming and lead us to unhealthy behaviors and decisions that may compromise our present and our future.

Some common constraints include fear of failure, guilt or shame, abuse and neglect, inability to forgive, difficult family circumstances, a lacking support structure, poor health, and low self confidence. Despite possessing many assets, our constraints can impede our ability to see them or use them. This is why addressing our constraints through personal reflection, knowledge, mentoring, and counseling can have a huge impact on our spirit, productivity, and value.

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to “mine your treasure” by developing your own Personal Balance Sheet—a holistic vision of who you are and what you have to offer. Ideally, this comes from three sources: 1) self reflection, 2) other people, and 3)

independent assessments where available. By having inputs from multiple sources, you will have a much more comprehensive and accurate appraisal of yourself.

First, conduct your own assessment of your assets and constraints by reviewing Appendix A and completing the blank form in Appendix B. Your school may facilitate some independent assessments to assist you in areas such as personality and aptitudes (e.g., free DISC personality tests are available on www.123test.com and others). This “phase one” Personal Balance Sheet form is simply from your own perspective. Appendix C contains a sample *abbreviated* Personal Balance Sheet to assist you.

Second, make a list of people in your life who know you well and have your best interests at heart. These may include family members, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, youth leaders, and the like. Priority should be given to adults who can offer perspectives with the benefit of maturity and wisdom.

Third, seek their input by asking them to describe your special qualities and strengths, as well as constraints, in each of the nine asset categories. (Note: most will have greater perspective in certain areas than others so they may not answer for all segments) Hand out the asset category descriptions and interview questions in Appendix A and give them a blank sheet of paper to record their answers. You can also conduct this via a personal interview and record their answers if this is more convenient. It would be especially helpful for you to receive their comments in person so there is an opportunity for discussion and clarification. *Remember not to be defensive when it comes to their assessments of your constraints.* Their constructive suggestions can be especially helpful to you.

Fourth, for each asset and constraint category, create a consolidated list that combines your self assessment with those of the other contributors (highlighting those receiving the most responses). This report is your **Personal Balance Sheet**.

Notice the difference between your initial draft and this new, wider ranging list. Others see your value in ways that are not always obvious to you. You are much more valuable than you can possibly realize, and this “mining your treasure assignment” helps reveal exactly that!

Finally, write a summary report that contains the following:

1. A consolidated list of your key assets and constraints (your Personal Balance Sheet)
2. Discussion of the insights you gained about yourself and the impact of receiving input from others. Were there any surprises or assets you previously didn't realize or appreciate?
3. Action steps for personal growth that arose from this assignment? Are there assets to be more fully utilized or constraints to be addressed?

Spiritual

Summary

These assets involve our unique spirit. They include our moral and emotional nature, character and disposition, intrinsic worth, values, faith, and sources of inspiration and encouragement we can offer others. Spiritual assets are reflected in our behavior, thoughts, relationships with God (for believers) and others, and daily decisions.

Examples:

- *Spirituality*
- *Values and Traits:* (see P. 15)
- *Inspiration (encouragement to others)*

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the values and traits listed on P. 15 most characterize you?

2. In what ways can you encourage and inspire others?

3. How can you envision using these unique assets in life?

Behavioral

Summary

This highly diverse asset category reflects our personal nature and has the greatest influence on how we deliver our assets and relate to ourselves and to others. These assets encompass our personality, psychological attributes, attitudes, and emotions and are used constantly in our personal and professional lives. The Positive Values and Traits exhibit on P. 15 presents a variety of behavioral assets. The following offers an overview:

- Personality traits:
 - Fast-paced vs. slower paced
 - People-oriented vs. task oriented
 - Volatile vs. stable temperament
 - Introverted vs. extroverted
 - Optimistic vs. pessimistic
 - Serious vs. light-hearted
 - Driven vs. supportive
 - Creative vs. analytical
 - Adventurous vs. cautious
- Social attributes:
 - Habits
 - Manners
 - Communication
- Productivity:
 - Goal orientation (strategic/planner vs. tactical/opportunistic)
 - Time management skill (I control time vs. time controls me)
 - Decision-making ability (objective vs. subjective)

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above personality and productivity traits best characterize you and stand out as assets you have to offer? Which stand out as strengths or areas for growth?

2. What five words best describe your personality and nature (see P. 15 for a list of ideas)?

3. How do you currently or plan to use these unique assets in life?

Support System

Summary

These assets are foundational to healthy living—representing the people (family, friends, and mentors) who provide for our basic, emotional, and relational needs. They care about us, nurture us, guide us, and have our best interests at heart. The people and organizations who represent our support system are our “go to” places for friendship, advice, and encouragement and provide for our security and basic needs.

Examples:

- Basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, etc.)
- Security
- Support
- Affirmation
- Encouragement
- Guidance/wisdom
- Modeling
- Friendship

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above stand out as assets that support you in life? Which key people and organizations provide which forms of support for you? Be specific.

2. How would you characterize the strength of your support system?

3. Which areas could use additional support?

4. To whom do you serve as part of their support system? How so?

Constraints

Summary

Each of us has constraints that interfere with our willingness to our assets. They often are burdens or worries we carry that damage our self-confidence and sense of worth and hope. By addressing our constraints through mentoring, counseling, spiritual life, perseverance, and knowledge, we can reduce their impact and more fully offer our suite of assets.

Examples:

- “Contra Assets:” (offsetting constraints to our assets)
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Spiritual
 - Behavioral
 - Support system
 - Network
 - Experiential
 - Interests
 - Passions and dreams
- Fear of failure or criticism
- Low self esteem
- Guilt or shame
- Inability to forgive self or others
- Abuse or neglect
- Addiction
- Generational poverty
- Lack of faith
- Unappealing personal habits

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above constraint areas are interfering you in utilizing your assets? Be specific.

2. Which action steps can you develop to help reduce or eliminate the impact of these constraints?

3. Which assets are being impacted the most from your constraints?

Positive Values and Traits

HEART TRAITS:

Kindness
 Sincerity
 Compassion
 Friendliness
 Helpfulness
 Generosity
 Empathy
 Patience
 Unselfishness

PRODUCTIVITY TRAITS:

Reliability
 High standards
 Purposeful
 Productive
 Disciplined
 Resourceful
 Ambitious/motivated
 Decisive
 Conscientious
 Responsible
 Curious
 Objective

NATURE TRAITS:

Cheerfulness
 Self confidence
 Positivity
 Enthusiasm
 Active
 Sociable
 Good humored
 Stable
 Expressive
 Politeness
 Cooperative

INTEGRITY TRAITS:

Honesty
 Integrity
 Honor
 Respect
 Loyalty
 Humility
 Courtesy
 Tact
 Obedience
 Courage
 Self discipline
 Authenticity

SPIRITUAL VALUES:

Faith
 Gratefulness
 Perseverance
 Resilience
 Contentment
 Grace
 Purity
 Dignity
 Modesty
 Forgiveness

Interview Questionnaire

1. Describe the student's **physical** assets. These assets involve our physicality and body and are often used in careers, volunteer opportunities (e.g., coaching), and recreation. They include strength, speed, endurance, coordination, agility, flexibility, dexterity, and gracefulness.
2. Describe the student's **mental** assets. These assets involve our mind and are used throughout daily life in our careers, decisions, communications, and knowledge pursuits. They include: intelligence, aptitudes, analytical/technical thinking, creativity, conceptual perspective, reasoning, problem solving, attention, language/communications, comprehension, decision-making, and subject matter expertise.
3. Describe the student's **spiritual** assets. They include our moral and emotional nature, character and disposition, intrinsic worth, values, faith, and sources of inspiration and encouragement we can offer others. Reference P. 17.
4. Describe the student's **behavioral** assets. This is the most diverse of the asset categories. It has the greatest influence on how we *deliver our assets* and relate to ourselves and others. They include: disposition, personality traits, social/relational behaviors, communication, self discipline, attitude, self confidence, motivation, productivity, decision style, judgment, intuition, and emotional intelligence. Reference P. 17.
5. Describe the student's **support system** assets. This represents the people in our lives who care about us and have our best interests at heart (e.g., family, friends, mentors, affinity groups). We can rely on them for love, support, security, guidance, modeling, friendship, and encouragement.
6. Describe the student's **network** assets. Each of us has a network of people, both personally and professionally, that we can draw upon for assistance, advocacy, or introductions. It is particularly helpful in our careers (e.g., job searches and references), but is broadly applicable as well.
7. Describe the student's **experiential** assets/credentials (e.g., academic, career, service, and life skills). These represent the skills and enrichment we have gained by offering ourselves and our talents and illustrate our accomplishments and impact. They are of significant benefit to future employers and include: work, community service, life skills, leadership attributes, global perspective, credentials, accomplishments, roles, awards, and important lessons gained.
8. Describe the student's **interests** that stand out. Through personal experience, we're drawn toward certain subjects and activities that stimulate us intellectually, physically, or emotionally. They are used in the following arenas: activities, knowledge pursuits, faith, hobbies, community service, and recreation/travel/leisure/entertainment. Think of them as the "spice of life!"

9. Describe the **passions and dreams** you can envision for the student (e.g., cause-, interest-, and skill-related). Our passions and dreams offer vision, direction, motivation, and a sense of purpose. They are usually based on our skills, interests, or causes we care about and bring us fulfillment. They are also manifested in several life arenas including career, service, and family and shape our legacy.

10. Describe the student's **constraints** (things restraining the use of the above assets, interfere with reaching their full potential, or which could adversely affect their self worth, self confidence, and personal effectiveness).

Appendix B

Personal Balance Sheet—Blank Form

ASSETS:

CONSTRAINTS:

Physical:

Physical:

Mental:

Mental:

Spiritual:

Spiritual:

Behavioral:

Behavioral:

Support System:

Support System:

Network:

Network:

Experiential:

Experiential:

Interests:

Interests:

Passions and Dreams:

Passions and Dreams:

Appendix C

Sample Abbreviated Personal Balance Sheet

ASSETS:

Physical:

Speed, strength, agility, football

Mental:

Analytical, problem solving, math, science, comprehension, 3.7 GPA

Behavioral:

Leader, decisive, goal-oriented, mature, confident, even tempered, outgoing, persuasive, risk taker, enterprising

Support System:

Married and loving parents, five role model adults/mentors, core group of four close friends

Experiential:

Three part-time jobs, public speaking, youth mentor, Rotary leadership award winner, FBLA, football team captain, ASB

Network:

Current/past supervisors, FBLA advisor, Rotary president, football coaches, ASB advisor, science/math teachers

Spiritual:

Strong faith, kind, integrity, generous, loyal, service-minded, encouraging, genuine, overcame asthma adversity

Interests:

Football, skiing, hiking, water sports, youth mentoring/coaching, electronics

Passions and Dreams:

Start an electronics business, Master's, married with a few kids, to serve on mission-related overseas trips to help people/businesses in developing nations, climb Mt. Rainier

CONSTRAINTS:

Physical:

Asthma

Mental:

Prone to excessive detail

Behavioral:

Perfectionist, demanding, highly opinionated

Support System:

Weak family finances, mom's health, best friend is moving

Experiential:

Limited travel/global perspective

Network:

None significant

Spiritual:

Highly self critical when make mistakes, struggle with forgiveness

Interests:

Disinterested in world affairs

Passions and Dreams:

Family finances may threaten college