

CHAPTER 2

SELECTING AND SETTING GOALS TO LIVE WELL

This chapter is about setting important life goals. If you decide to complete this chapter, you will go through a number of steps. You will:

- Look at different areas of your life.
- Decide on the areas that are important to you.
- Write a goal statement

Goals are essential to living well.

Long-term goals are those things you feel are important to achieve in your life. For instance, some people want to live in a nicer house or apartment. Some want a satisfying job. Some people set goals to help other people, like working in a homeless shelter. Most people want to be valued and respected. Working toward your important life goals usually is very meaningful.

We all have goals, even if we don't always think of them as goals. Suppose you want to go out to dinner this week with a friend or family member. That's a goal. You have set your sights on something you want to do in the future. You will need to check to see if the person you want to eat with is available. If necessary, you will arrange transportation to and from the restaurant. Without thinking much about it, you have set a goal and planned a path to reach it.

Eating out is a small goal — you probably can achieve it without spending too much time or preparation. Other goals are more complex and take longer to achieve.

Successful people, just like successful businesses, routinely review their goals and the progress they have made toward reaching them. Having a process to follow makes reaching your goal easier. You are most likely to reach your goal when:

- Your goal statement is detailed and clear.
- You set a deadline for reaching the goal.
- You can measure your progress toward reaching the goal.
- The goal is hard but not impossible to achieve.

SECTION 1 **Deciding on** **a Personal Goal**

This session on setting goals offers you a process you can use to select and define your goals. The first step in the goal-setting process is deciding which goal or goals to work on. Take a moment and think about your life. What do you want from it?

If you already know what your goals are, great! However, knowing what your goals are can be difficult. When people are limited by a health condition, they are often no longer sure about what they **can** do. They have stopped doing many of the things they used to enjoy and now don't know where to start.

Glancing Back for **the Kernels**

One approach to thinking about the activities and goals you might enjoy doing today is to think back on the things you used to enjoy doing. Even if those activities seem impossible for you today, focusing on them for a moment can help you think about activities that are possible. You will want to think about why you enjoyed those activities and find the kernels or parts of the activity that you enjoyed the most.

As an example of finding the kernels, imagine a woman who used to love dancing. She might identify the music and being with friends as the most important parts of dancing. These are the kernels of the activity that she can use in setting a goal for a new activity. She would begin to ask herself, "what kinds of things could I do today that involve music and friendship?" She might decide that regularly going to concerts with a few friends, while not the same thing as dancing, would be very enjoyable for her now. She used the kernels to identify activities she is able to do. By the way, if she finds ways to put together music and friendship, she may also find ways to get back to dancing as well.

The House of **Living Well**

Here's another approach to finding your goals. Look at the house on the next page in figure 1. This is the House of Living Well. It can help you determine what is most important to you. It may help you choose a goal you want to set for yourself during this workshop.

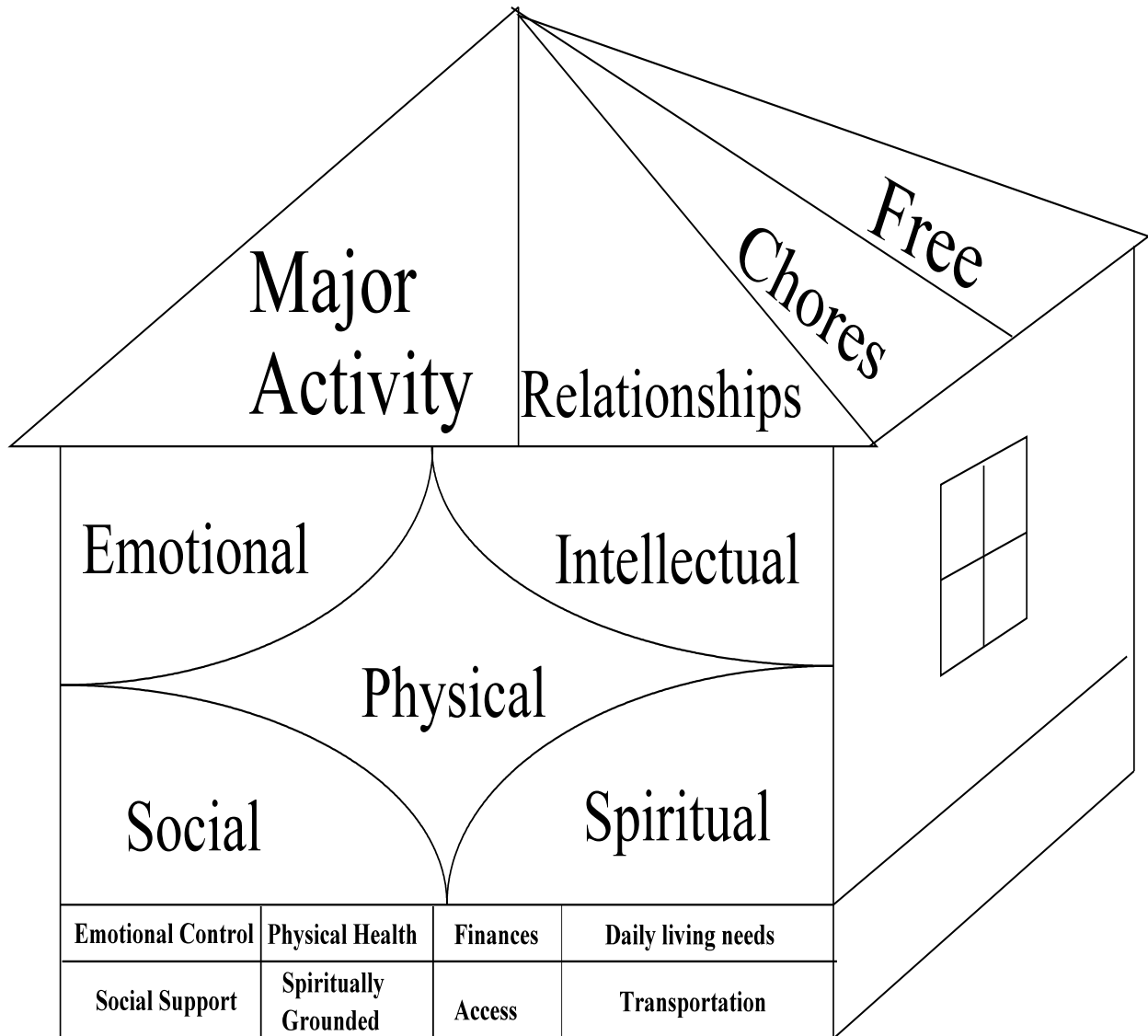


Figure 1: The House of Living Well

At the bottom of the house is the foundation. The foundation includes those life areas we need to address before we consider building the life we want. For example, some people struggle with depression. It is important to work on one's depression as part of learning to live well. You may find foundational issues you want to address with a goal.

The living space is in the center of the house. This space is divided into five different life areas. In the picture, the different

areas in the house are about the same size. In reality, we each choose to balance our lives by emphasizing one or more of these life areas over the others. Some people are very social and physical. These people are happiest when the social and physical areas of their lives are large compared to the other areas. The size of each of these life areas comes from the way we spend our time. If we spend a lot of our time with people we like, then our social area tends to be larger. Some people really enjoy reading and learning new things which makes the intellectual area larger. We can change the size of a life area by changing how we spend our time.

Finally, we have divided the roof of the house into four parts. These parts show the kinds of activities that take up most people's time. For example, many people spend a lot of time doing major activities like employment and volunteer work. Additionally, they also probably spend time building and maintaining relationships, like writing emails or talking on the phone. Most people must spend some of their time doing chores like grocery shopping and cleaning. The left over time is our free-time, the time we spend doing recreational activities.

How you spend your time determines the size of the life areas in the center of your house. If you often feel lonely and isolated, spending more time developing and building relationships will eventually lead to a larger social area in your "house."

Sometimes, people with on-going health problems and physical limitations find that how they spend their time has gradually changed over the years. Take a look at the house of Living Well below in figure 2.

This house shows how the loss of employment and relationships can change the life areas in the house. A disability or health condition often changes a person's major activities. Sometimes, people find they have no major activities at all, for example, when they lose a job. At the same time, a disability can change a person's relationships. Often times people end up spending much more time alone. They also often spend more time taking care of chores. With all of these changes, sometimes they find that they have too much free time. Sometimes, these folks become very focused on trying to be happy again. As you can see, the life areas in the center of the house can become very unbalanced.

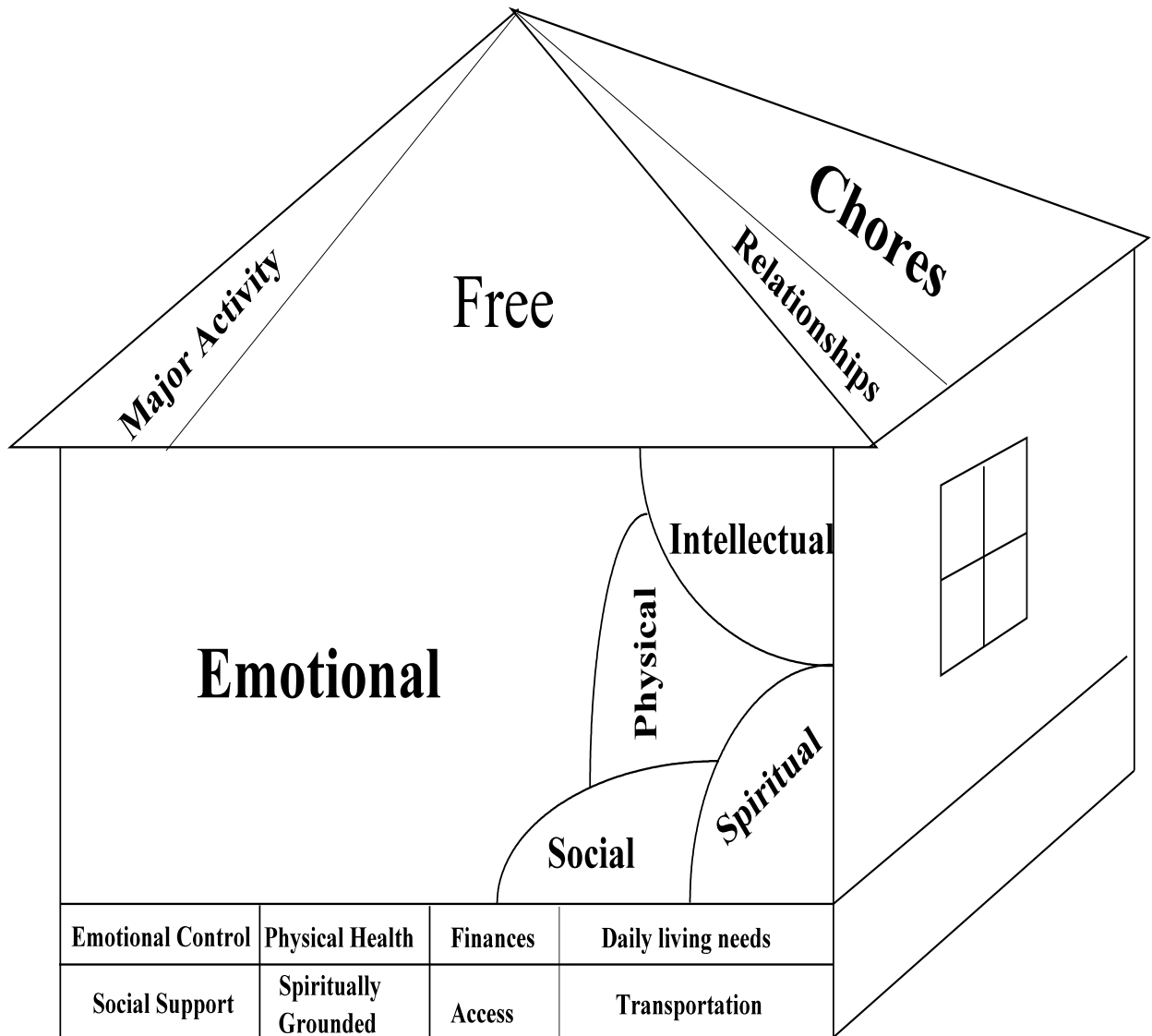


Figure 2: The Unbalanced House

The size of each life area in the center of your house is related to how you spend your time.

Now think about your own life. Are your life areas balanced in ways that make you happy? Keeping balance across the five life areas in the center of the house is an ongoing challenge for everyone. Each of us can think of times when these life areas were very unbalanced for one reason or another. When these life areas get unbalanced, the only solution is changing how we spend our time.

The next set of exercises will help you consider; 1) your basic foundations for living well, 2) the balance of the five basic life areas, and 3) how you spend your time. By doing so, you will be able to develop or refine a goal you can pursue in this workshop.

You can use the house of living well to help you decide on a goal. To use the house of living well, follow these three steps.

- Step 1:** In exercise one, you will consider the foundations of your life and decide which areas might need work as you consider your goals.
- Step 2:** With exercise two, you will consider the importance of each of the five life areas.
- Step 3:** Finally, in exercise three, you will consider how you can use your time to increase the size of the life areas that are important to you.

Exercise 1 ➔
Consider your foundations

Look back at the House of Living Well. Think about each of the foundational areas using the following questions:

Emotional Control

- Do you get depressed often and for long periods of time?
- Do you get angry with people and situations often?
- Do you have a lot of anxiety or panic attacks?

Physical Health

- Do you have ongoing, nagging health problems?
- Do you spend too much time in medical appointments?
- Do you have regular, ongoing pain and fatigue that interrupts your daily activities?

Social Support

- Is there anyone you can talk to when times get tough?
- Do you feel like there are people in your life that care about you?

Spiritually Grounded

- Do you feel a connection to anything spiritual?
- Are there times or places that you consider sacred?

Finances

- Do you have enough money for the necessities of life like food, shelter, etc.?
- Are you receiving all of the social benefits for which you are eligible?

Access/transportation

- Are you able to independently access your home?
- Do you have reliable transportation you can use independently?

Daily living needs

- Do you have problems with daily self-care like bathing and grooming that are not being addressed?
- Are you able to cook, clean and shop as you need to?

After you have read through each of the foundational area questions on the last page, go back and put a check mark next to any areas that you think might need work right now. We'll come back to these areas when we get to setting goals at the end of this chapter.

Meet Gary

Gary is the first fictitious character providing us with examples for this workshop. Gary has a spinal cord injury and lives alone. After looking over the foundational areas in his life, Gary decides that he needs to get better emotional control and transportation.

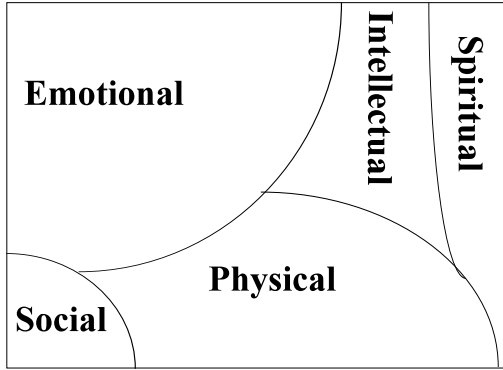
Exercise 2: Making room for what's important

Having considered your foundations, we turn now to the five basic life areas. Everyone values each of the five life areas differently. That's part of what makes each of us unique. In this exercise, you will draw the life areas for your own "house" showing the importance of each area by amount of space it takes up in your house.

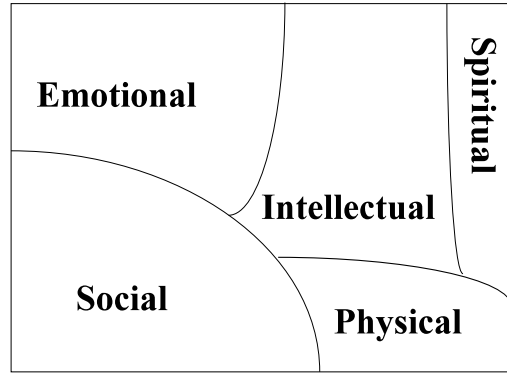
Below are two boxes you can use to draw the size of each area. Use the first box to show how your life as it is today and use the second box to show how you would like it to be in the future.

Gary's life is shown in the boxes below. For his life today, Gary drew the area lines to show that the social area of his life is very small and the emotional and physical area very large. Then, to show how he would like his life to look, he drew the lines in the other box to show a larger social area and a smaller physical area. For Gary, this means he wants to spend less time going to medical appointments and spend more time doing social activities.

Gary Today



Gary Future



Now it's your turn. Use the boxes below to draw your life areas using the size of each area to show how much of your life it is focuses on that area.

Today



Future

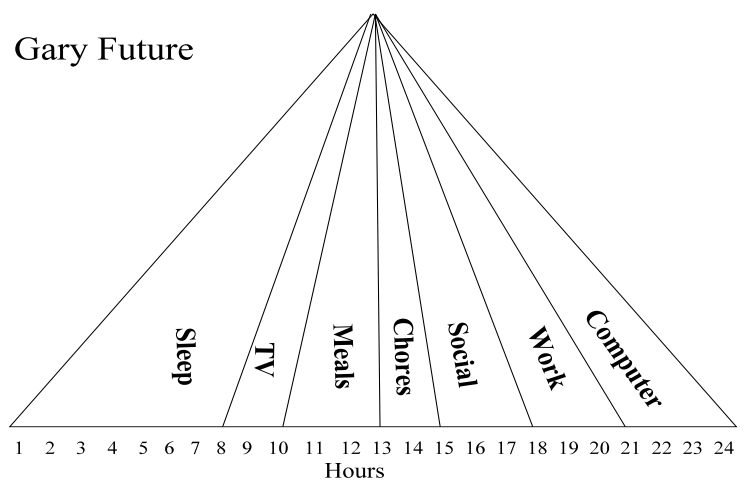
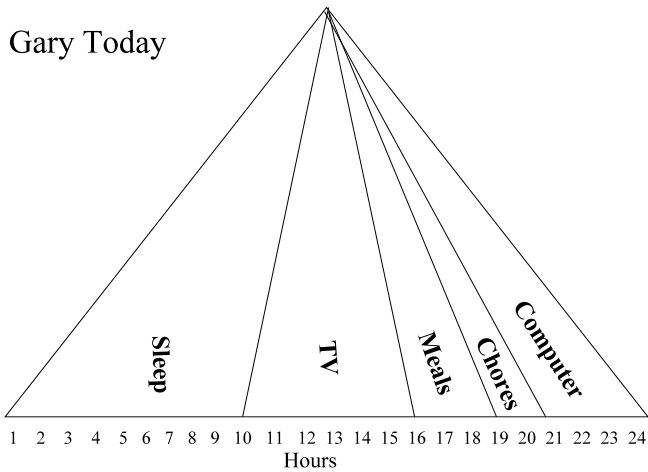


Living Well with a Disability

Exercise 3: Where does my time go?

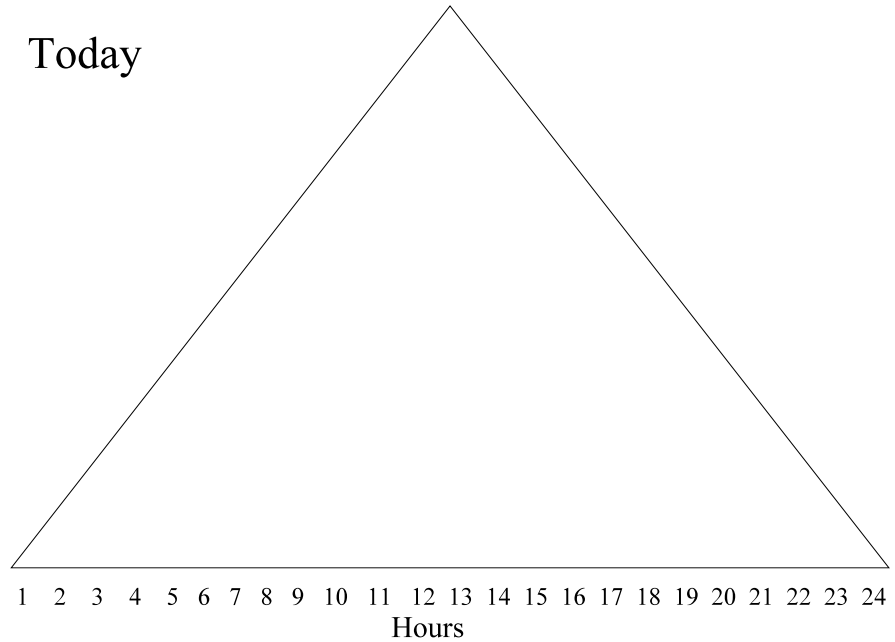
To this point, you have considered your foundations and the five life areas of your house of Living Well. In this exercise, you will work with the last part of the house, the roof. Recall the roof represents how you spend your time. Where does your time go? In this exercise, you will use a triangle to represent the time in one day. You can use the triangle to show how you use one of your most valuable resources, your time.

Turning again to Gary, below are his time triangles; the first for today and the second for the future. Notice that he would like to spend less time watching TV and more time being with people and perhaps even getting a part-time job.

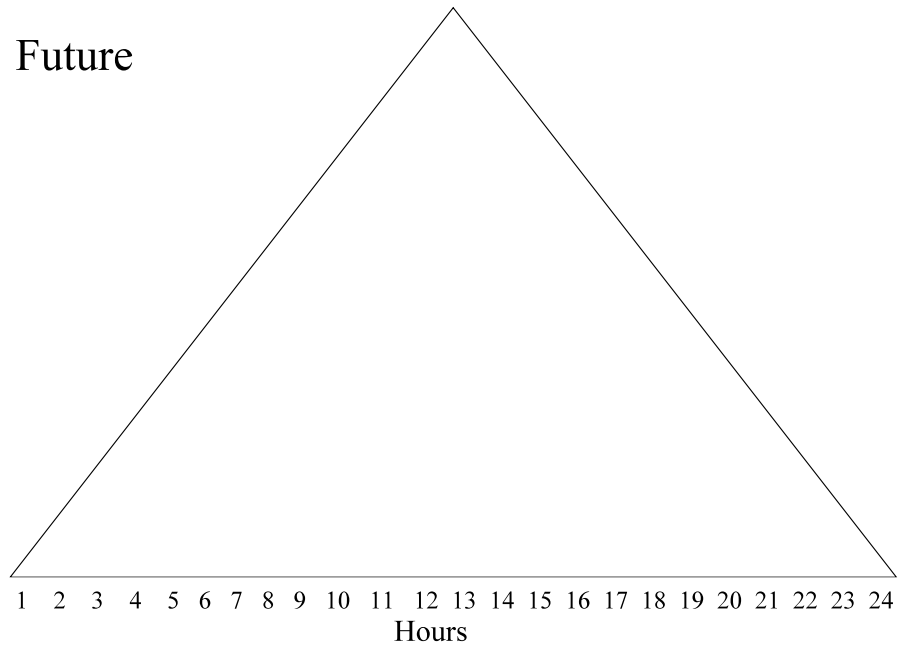


Before completing your own time triangle, consider this. Some people have more time than energy. If you find you are limited by fatigue, you might think about where your energy goes, in addition to considering where your time goes. Use the blank

Today



Future



triangles below to show how you spend your time and or energy. If you need rest periods, show how much time you rest.

SECTION 2 **Setting Goals is easier said than done**

We realize that pursuing goals is easier said than done, but without goals, nothing gets done.

Before moving on, take a look at your daily activities. Does the way you spend your time reflect the priorities you have for the five life areas? For example, if you drew a large social area in your life, do you spend enough time with friends and family? If you value friendship, but feel isolated, you may set a goal to improve your social life during this workshop. We realize that it is easier said than done, but without goals, nothing gets done. So, tell yourself that identifying goals is only a starting place in the Living Well process. The rest of the workbook is focused on solving problems to reach your goals.

When we set goals, we are making a commitment to ourselves to use some of our time to work toward the goal. Meeting our goals often changes how we spend a lot of our time.

Now that you have looked at your life areas, your foundations and your daily activities, you might be getting some ideas about what you might do to make your life more satisfying. However, for these ideas to be most useful to you, they need to be developed into a goal statement that will guide you in this workshop. That's the final step in this chapter.

Still feeling hopeless about goals?

If you are still unsure about what you can accomplish given your current condition, join the club. Most people feel unsure at this point. However, some people feel so hopeless, they are unable to set a goal for themselves. If that is how you are feeling, don't try to use this workbook to work on your most important goals. Instead, use it to work on a smaller goal to learn how the goal-setting and problem-solving approach works. Then, when you are feeling more confident about your abilities, you can choose to work on a more difficult goal. Some people need to go through the entire workbook before they feel ready to work on a tough goal. Give yourself permission to do just that. Then, when you are ready, you can use the techniques of this workbook to work toward your most important goals.

SECTION 3
Developing
a Goal Statement

Developing a goal statement is kind of like taking aim at a target. You don't know exactly how things will go, but you use your imagination and write down how you would like things to be in the future.

There are three steps in this process.

- Step 1:** Use your imagination to describe a situation in the future using either the kernels you identified or the house of living well from Section One.
- Step 2:** Set a deadline for reaching the goal.
- Step 3:** Begin to decide whether your goal is possible or impossible.

Selecting a realistic goal is a bit tricky. If you set goals that are too easy, you reach them quickly, but are often bored with the result. Meaningful goals often take quite a lot of work and time to be reached. However, setting goals that are too difficult can be very frustrating, leading you to give up on the goal long before you reach it.

You may gauge the difficulty of your goal based on your confidence that you can reach it. Aim for goals that you "think" you can reach, but that will take a lot of effort to be successful. These goals will inspire you to work hard and celebrate the steps you make toward the goal along the way.

Let's check in on Gary. He has been feeling isolated and wants to develop the social part of his life. For his goal statement, Gary wrote:

During the next six months, I am going to meet 10 new people, and I will plan two social activities each month with one or more of these people.

Notice three important things about Gary's goal. First, it has a deadline. Second, the goal is stated in specific terms that will allow Gary to measure his progress. Third, the goal is challenging, but possible.


Table 1 has examples of goals that work well along with goals that tend to work less well. Notice that the goals on the right are very specific and that each one has a deadline.

Living Well with a Disability

Less Effective Goals	More Effective Goals
Get out more often	In the next 3 months, I'll be going out at least 5 times a week
Get a job	By the end of this year, I will have applied for 10 jobs I would like to do
Get rid of my pain	By Christmas, I will have at least 4 days per week with less pain than I have now
Make friends	By the end of this workshop, I will have met 5 new people
Decrease depression	Before the end of Summer, I will have fewer than 2 days per week that I feel depressed all day.
Help the kids	Before next year, I will save 5 dollars a week to pay for her house to be cleaned

So, when writing your own goal statement consider:

1. How long should I work toward the goal?
2. How can I measure my progress toward meeting the goal?
3. Is the goal difficult, but possible for me to achieve?

Exercise 4: 
Write a goal statement.

Now, write a challenging, measurable goal statement that you believe you can achieve in a realistic amount of time.

Now that you have been through the entire goal-setting process, let's briefly review the steps.

- Step1:** Choose an area of your life for developing a goal.
- Step2:** Imagine how you would like your life to be in that area.
- Step 3:** Write a goal-statement for this area of your life

There are many advantages to developing goals using this process. First, the goal is clearly stated. Second, you will be able to see progress you make toward meeting the goal. Third, the process gives you a number of different choices. It also helps you consider a broad range of life areas for goal-setting. Next week's session will focus on using problem-solving techniques to determine the steps needed to achieve your goals.