

SOME QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOU AS YOU COLLECT A LIFETIME OF PERSONAL STRENGTHS AND POSITIVE ACTIONS

Peak Living Network

Begin building an inventory of what has been good about you as a person, and of what you have done well, over the course of your life. This is a great way to spend several co-counseling sessions, especially when you're just starting to co-counsel, and then continue adding to the list from time to time for good. Here are areas you can explore to help you do this:

1) You have survived incredibly painful experiences, both as a child and as an adult.

How did you get through? Think of all the survival strategies you used, and take pride in having come up with those as a way to survive. (Do this even for strategies that aren't healthful for you anymore. Back when you developed them you needed them, and it was a triumph to come up with them at the time even if their impact on your current life is no longer positive.)

2) You have loved people.

Loving people takes courage, and it takes a live heart. Work gradually through your life history and bring to light all the people whom you have loved, and work to get in touch what your love felt like in each case, beginning in your earliest childhood.

Also, notice in each case whether there were obstacles you had to overcome to be able to love each person: Was the person much older or younger than you? Was it someone that other people thought badly of, or that you were told to stay away from? (For example, did you make any friendships across discrimination lines?) Was it someone who was rejecting toward you, but you loved them anyhow? Was it someone who lived far away so you mostly had to love them from a distance?

Did you experience painful losses yet continue to love people? Notice how much strength and courage it took you to do that.

3) You have fought for what is right.

Try to remember times – again, beginning in very young childhood – when you yelled out against injustice, both in your own defense and in defense of other people. Remember also times

when you objected to injustice *even if you didn't say anything*; silent resistance matters too and should not be forgotten.

4) You've been smart.

Collect in your inventory all the smart decisions you've made, choices that had positive outcomes, problems that you've solved. Have you built things (anything from castles made of blocks up to real houses)? Have you worked well in any groups? Have you explained something to someone that they were having a hard time understanding? Have you influenced someone else's thinking on any issue? Have you developed insight into your emotions and into other people's? Have you been a good communicator?

With all these questions, the point isn't whether you've done these things all the time; we're trying to collect each time, because each one matters.

5) You've been brave.

What risks have you taken? What fears have you pushed through? (Being brave has nothing to do with being unafraid; being brave is about being scared and doing things anyhow.) In what ways have you been yourself even though your society did not approve of, or did not value, those characteristics or ways of living? What bad relationships (with friends, with relatives, with intimate partners) have you broken away from?

6) You've contributed to the world.

How have you helped build connections among other people, or helped them resolve differences? How have you come through for people during hard times or during major events in their lives (weddings, child birth, sicknesses, funerals)? How have you fought for justice or environmental health in the world? How have you given to the world through your work, whether paid or unpaid?

You can find a detailed guide to doing this work in Chapter Five of *The Joyous Recovery*, "What is Right With You?"