

1. Tools of the trade

The moment you stop what you're doing and start reviewing your life is the time you begin a process of change.

The Wheel of Life Tree is the perfect tool to find out how you're doing.

Before you get started here's something I want you to do: invest in a packet of colouring pencils or box of crayons. Parents of toddlers or young children hopefully won't have to look far. For everyone else a quick trip to Woolies (that's Woolworths for short), your local pound shop or W.H. Smith's will do the trick. I know you haven't done colouring in since you were a kid but, hey, it's good to bring a bit of play into serious matters.

You'll need a copy of a blank Wheel of Life Tree: feel free to photocopy the one in this book or download a copy from www.jackeeholder.com. Begin by deciding which areas of your life each of the eight wheels represents. This is not just about choosing areas that are all sorted but also about the areas you'd like to make better. Here are some ideas for areas you might include.

- Career and Life Purpose
- Finances and Money
- Home and Environment
- Health and Well-being
- Leisure and Social Time
- Relationships and Friendships

Here's an idea for you...

Pick an area of your life you'd like to improve and describe what it would look like, feel like, sound or smell like if it was operating at its best. Now assess that area by giving yourself a score on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing this area working at its best and 0 representing it at its worst. Focus on the gap between where you are and where you want to be and brainstorm a list of actions that will move you closer towards a 10. Take one action in the next 24 hours.

- Spirituality and Religion
- Creativity and Inspiration
- Travel and Adventure
- Personal Style and Fashion

These are just suggestions. You'll know better than anyone what areas to include on your list. Use the eight lines at the bottom of the tree to label each of the wheels so you know what areas of your life they relate to.

Now's your chance to consider just how well each area is actually working. Don't worry, this is not about emerging with a glowing assessment. Very few of us make it to that place of perfect balance. In fact, the more honest you are, the better. I remember being on a course with other coaches

and feeling under pressure to present a Wheel of Life that looked really balanced (talk about competition among your peers).

Each of the rings in each life wheel represents a sliding scale running from 1, which is the centre ring, to 5, which is the final ring at the edge of each wheel. If you rate an area of your life as a 1, it means that overall you're not happy with that area and recognise that there's room for lots of improvement. So shade in one ring only. Colouring or shading in three rings from the centre reflects the

parts of this area that are working well but you know with a bit more input it could be even better. Colouring in all five rings means you feel fulfilled and satisfied with this area of your life (in which case give yourself a pat on the back).

By the way, have you noticed how relaxing colouring is and how it actually slows you down? As you colour or shade in each life wheel, be honest. Remember this is for your eyes only. Your tree will quickly identify the areas not getting as much attention as you'd like and the areas that are working just fine. Right now you might want to ask yourself: 'What actions can I take to regain balance?'

Is your tree full of colour or lacking in a particular colour? Would you consider this a tree in the winter of its life? A tree in its autumn? Or a tree in full bloom? What does each wheel tell you about the overall health of that area of your life right now? Write a list of actions for each wheel that will help you improve the quality of each area. It's a good idea to focus on one area at a time so you don't get overwhelmed. As you make progress don't forget to colour in another ring. You can complete a new Wheel of Life Tree in three or six months' time to see how your tree may have changed.

*In the midst of winter, I finally learned
that there was in me an invincible summer.*

Albert Camus, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 1957

How did it go?

Q. There's hardly any colour on my tree and now I'm even more miserable than I was before I completed it. Any thoughts on what I could do to pep myself up?

A. I know it can feel disheartening but at least now you're fully aware and engaged with what isn't working and you're in a great position to do something about it. Concentrate on the action you're going to take over the coming weeks and months. It helps to focus on one area at a time. Small changes done over time add up and often have an impact on other areas, so learn to be patient; it will serve you well.

Q. I don't get it. Are we meant to be focusing on the areas of our lives that we want to improve or do we choose just any area to focus on?

A. It's really up to you. If there are eight areas you want to improve then go for it. However, it may be more rewarding to also include areas that are working well. Positive reinforcement is good. On days when you're not feeling great, just being reminded about what is working well in your life can be extremely motivating. It's not realistic to think you'll have everything sorted out in all areas of your life at the same time. That's an ideal, rarely a reality.