

80th Birthday Exercise for Values Exploration

Rationale

This is an exercise that's about getting a sense for what you want to be about in your life. It's a way of exploring what you would like to treat as important and how you want to be with yourself or with others. Write down your responses to the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise – it's all about learning from the questions.

Exercise

Imagine moving forward through time. Imagine yourself aging and growing older as you move through life. Imagine now that you are turning 80 years old, and your friends, family, and coworkers have gathered to celebrate your 80th birthday.

Imagine what you will look like on your 80th birthday. And, I invite you to imagine not who you think would likely be there, but imagine who you would most want to be at your 80th birthday party – even if that means they would be very old. There could even be people you haven't met yet. Try to really picture who would be there.

Now the time has come in the party where people are starting to give speeches. They are taking turns standing up and speaking about what you have meant to them. They are speaking about what you have stood for as a person, and the impact you have had.

Again, I'm not asking you to imagine what they would likely say. I'm inviting you to imagine, if you were to be bold in this moment, what you would most want them to say. Imagine that they can say what is deep down in their heart about you – speaking about what you've meant to them – what difference you've made.

Imagine the first person standing up to speak. Imagine it's someone very close to you. Take a moment now and imagine what you would most want them to say about the impact you've had. Let yourself hear them saying that.

Now, imagine the next person standing up to speak. This could be someone from a different part of your life – perhaps a coworker or neighbor. And for them too, imagine what you would most want for them to say about what you have stood for in your life.

Now thank your mind for this experience, and gently bring your attention back to the present moment. Take a moment to get centered here then start writing:

- What you heard people say
- What it means about you
- How it affected you
- How you have affected them.

Questions:

What came up for you?

Who did you imagine speaking?

What did you most want them to say about you?

What other thoughts/feelings did you notice?