

ACTIVITY: Your Personal Commandments

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to:

- create your own list of personal commandments that reflect how you want to live your life.

ESTIMATED TIME

15 minutes

MATERIALS

Required:

A. Pen/ Paper

Background

Knowing what is important to us – what we value and what gives our lives meaning – is essential to resiliency. Many activities that guide us to clarify our values have participants choose their “top” values from a long list that includes things like honesty, loyalty, patience, respect, etc. While this can be beneficial, it can be very difficult to choose just a few core values from a long list of things we believe. Sometimes it feels like different values resonate with us in different areas of our lives – for example, I might consider teamwork and reliability to be very important in my work life, but at home these values are trumped by care, love, and friendship.

Creating a list of personal commandments can be an easier, creative way to clarify our values and identify the guiding principles for how we want to live our lives. Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project*, recommends thinking about phrases that have stuck with you when you are creating your own list. For her, these included “Enjoy the process” and “Be polite and be fair.” Other commandments people have shared with her include “Less is more,” “Do one thing at a time,” and “Talk to strangers.” Before facilitating this activity with your team, you may want to read the post on Rubin’s website for more ideas (see link on next page).



Activity

- 1) Explain the concept of “personal commandments” to the group based on the background information provided (see first page). Tell the group that personal commandments shouldn’t be a to-do list, but should be a reminder of what is important to you and how you want to live your life.
- 2) There is no right or wrong way to create your list. Some people may have very short commandments, some may have very long, detailed commandments.
- 3) Provide some examples of personal commandments.
 - Go outside everyday
 - Take responsibility for my own happiness
 - Smile at strangers
 - Confront my fears
 - Finish what you start
 - Put it into perspective
 - Remember that everyone is fighting a hard battle
 - There is no time like the present
- 4) Ask participants to think about and write down one or two things they would put on their lists. Give them a few minutes to come up with these.
- 5) Have the group share what they have written.

Let’s Try This!

This activity works best if participants are initially introduced to the idea but have more time on their own to actually work on, revise, and complete their full lists.

Ask the group if they would like to take the next month to write their own personal commandments. Set a number of commandments and a time frame when you will meet again to share.

Follow-up

At the designated follow-up meeting, have everyone share their personal commandments.

Keep your commandments posted somewhere you can see them daily.

To Be Happier, Write Your Own Set of Personal Commandments. Gretchen Rubin.

http://gretchenrubin.com/happiness_project/2012/02/every-wednesday-is-tip-day-this-wednesday-four-tips-for-writing-your-personal-commandments-im-doing-a-happiness-pro/

The Happiness Project. (2009). Gretchen Rubin.