

Active Living

Dr. Steve Wooding

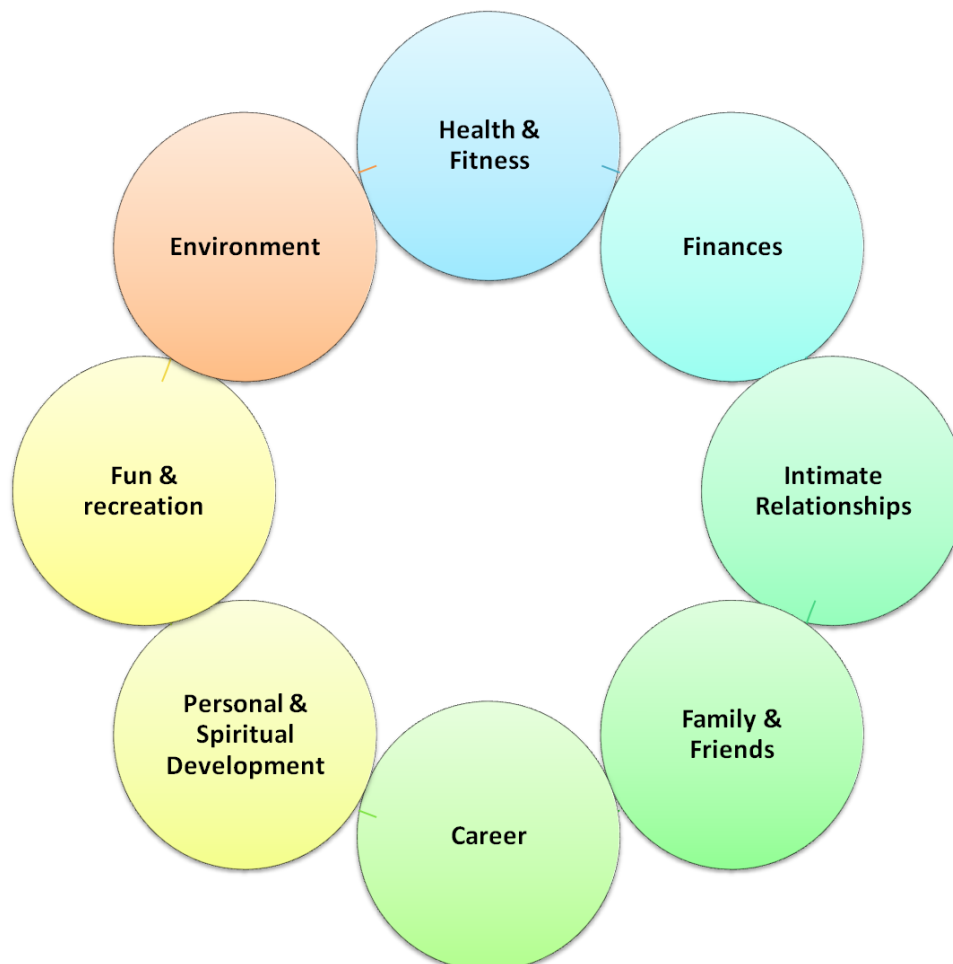
Introduction

This is a simple questionnaire, followed by some suggestions, that is designed to go hand in hand with April 2008's 'Slice of Lemon' on Active Living. If you've managed to get a copy of this without reading that article, I suggest you read it first as the rest of this document won't make a lot of sense without it! You can find it at:

www.iceandlemon.com/newsletters/ASliceOfLemonApr08.htm

Areas of Life

Most coaching or personal development models divide our lives into a number of distinct but nonetheless interdependent areas. We're going to divide ours into eight, like this:



We're going to go through these areas in two steps.

Firstly I'd like you to read through the **SATISFACTION SURVEY** on the next page, where you'll find descriptions of each area, and you'll need to decide how **satisfied** you feel with each one, giving yourself a **satisfaction score** from 1 to 10, with 1 being very unhappy and dissatisfied and 10 being totally and completely content and happy.

Then I invite you to read through the **ACTIVITY SURVEY** that follows, where you'll find some simple questions to prompt your thinking about how active you are, i.e. how much time and attention you give, in that area of life. You'll need to award yourself an **activity score**, between 1 and 10 where 1 is **total passivity**, i.e. you're not giving it your attention or taking proper action at all, or deliberately choosing to ignore what's happening until there's a serious issue or problem, and 10 being **very active**, i.e. where you're definitely in control and deliberately organising your time and setting aside the required resources to plan, monitor and take proper action to ensure things aren't just static but are continually improving and moving forward.

However, if you really do want to get the most out of this then there are a few things you must promise yourself, and me, that you'll do:

- » **Before you start, make sure you've set aside enough time to do it properly.**
Half an hour will give you time to do it quickly, and an hour or more will mean you can do it much more meaningfully, especially if you'd like to go through it and then talk it through with someone you trust – a friend or family member, a colleague, or me!
- » **Be totally honest with yourself.**
There are some people who might try to use this as a devious way of giving themselves a pat on the back with the false assurance that “everything's OK, really...” However, those of us who prefer the truth will choose to do things properly so we really can find out what we need to focus on to change and improve our lives.
- » **Take positive and definite action based on your results.**
Again, there may be a few who'd somehow assume that just going through this might somehow change things. Unfortunately that's not the case – in order for change to happen you have to DO something.

Remember, the SATISFACTION survey is to do with how you FEEL about each area of your life, and the ACTIVITY survey is to do with HOW MUCH TIME AND ATTENTION you put into that area of your life.

Ready?

Then read on!

SATISFACTION SURVEY

AREA	SCORE, 1 - 10 (1=very unsatisfied, 10=very satisfied)
<p>Health & Fitness</p> <p>How satisfied are you with your general health and fitness, including your diet, exercise, current weight etc? It also includes an element of your mental and emotional health too .</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Finances</p> <p>How satisfied are you with your current financial position, i.e. your current debts and your plans to pay them, your income and expenditure, your future financial plans and your protection of your income and assets?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Intimate Relationships</p> <p>How happy and content are you with your current significant, intimate, romantic or sexual relationship, if you have one and, if not, how happy and content are you that you don't?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Friends & Family</p> <p>How satisfied and content are you with the friends you have and the amount of contact and time you spend with them, how supportive they are etc.? What about your family?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Career</p> <p>How satisfied are you with your current job or career, including your hours, pay, future prospects, colleagues, and whether what you earn a living doing is just passing the time or fulfilling a dream?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Personal & Spiritual Development</p> <p>How satisfied are you with your current personal growth and 'spiritual' (in the broadest sense of the term) life, including your appreciation of yourself, your place in the world, your self-worth and self-image, and your willingness (or otherwise) to help others too?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Fun & Recreation</p> <p>How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend outside work relaxing or engaging in hobbies, activities or other interests, social or otherwise?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Environment</p> <p>How comfortable are you with your surroundings where you work and where you live, especially your home and your space at work, and your ability to affect your surroundings and make changes?</p>	<input type="text"/>

ACTIVITY SURVEY

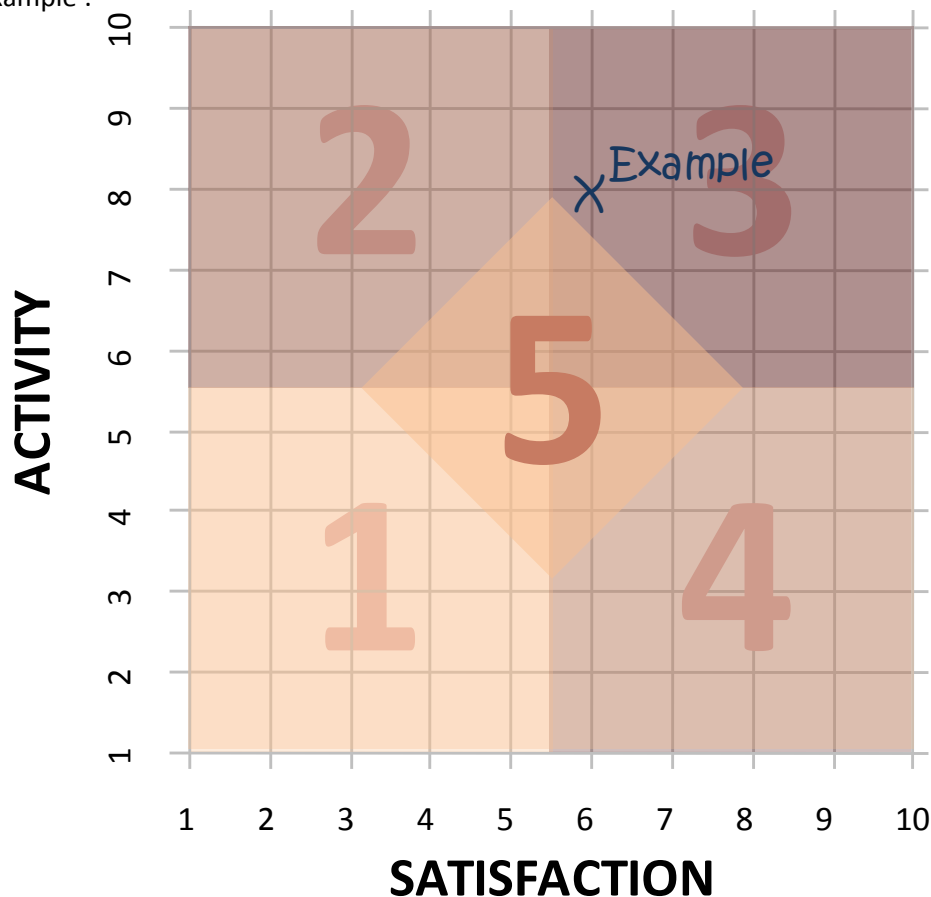
AREA	SCORE, 1 - 10 (1=very PASSIVE, 10=very ACTIVE)
<p>Health & Fitness</p> <p>How conscious are you in choosing to eat a healthy and balanced diet? How much effort do you make to get regular exercise or put active periods into your day? How much action do you take to maintain and improve your health, rather than wait to become ill before doing something? Are there bad habits, like smoking, that you've already quit or are taking definite steps to get rid of, or do you always seem to find excuses to carry on?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Finances</p> <p>How in control of your money are you? Do you regularly check your finances and manage them? Do you spend based primarily on want first or need first? Do you have loans or credit cards that you're not paying off regularly or money owing to friends or family? Do you still have money left before each pay day or are you more overdrawn each month? Are you saving and planning for the future or just concentrating on enjoying now?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Intimate Relationships</p> <p>Are you in a relationship with someone that you both like and love, or just with someone because it's better than being without? If you're not in a relationship and you want one, are you looking or just waiting? When you go out, do you approach others or wait for them to approach you? And when things go wrong, do you give up and walk away, or take time to work the issues through and sort things out?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Friends & Family</p> <p>Do you have close friends and/or family that you can count on? Do you wait for them to ask how you are or come to see you, or do you ask when you can see them and arrange time together? Do you only contact them when you have a problem or issue, or are you in regular casual contact?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Career</p> <p>Have you chosen a job that you mostly enjoy, or are you just doing whatever job you have to fund your life at the evenings and weekends? Do you have career goals that you're working towards with training, experience etc, or are you just 'drifting'? Do you wait for things to come along, or do you actively seek the next move, even being willing to move companies to take the next step?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Personal & Spiritual Development</p> <p>Are you content with who you are and your place in the world, or are you wishing you were like someone else, or could do things that you currently can't? Are you static in terms of what you know about yourself and any faith or other beliefs you have, or do you take time to learn, explore and grow?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Fun & Recreation</p> <p>Do you have some hobbies or interests that you enjoy, or are you so busy with other stuff that you don't take time out? Do you wait until there's a break or a gap in your work or home life to have fun, or do you actively plan times and occasions when you set aside work or home to have fun, relax, unwind and enjoy life?</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Environment</p> <p>How comfortable are you with your surroundings where you work and where you live? Do you accept that things are the way you were given them, e.g. your desk, room, home etc, or do you make changes to your surroundings so that they are useful, pleasing, functional and enjoyable too? Do you keep things organised and sorted so that you can use your places and spaces when you need them, or do you often need to tidy up before you can use your desk, table, sofa, or when friends come to visit?</p>	<input type="text"/>

What it all Means

Now you need to do a little bit of organising with the scores you've given yourself. First of all, fill in the table below for each area, copying the scores you gave yourself from the SATISFACTION and ACTIVITY tables before into the correct boxes.

AREA	SATISFACTION SCORE	ACTIVITY SCORE
Health & Fitness		
Finances		
Intimate Relationships		
Friends & Family		
Career		
Personal & Spiritual Development		
Fun & Recreation		
Environment		

The next step is a bit of a flashy one and will help you put all this into perspective. What you need to do is plot each area on the chart below using the SATISFACTION and ACTIVITY scores as coordinates; simply put an 'X' on the chart for each area, making sure you write a label next to each one for what that area is. For example, if you had a SATISFACTION score of 6 and an ACTIVITY score of 8 for one area, you'd put a cross as shown below, marked 'example'.



Let's stop for a moment and check we've done everything properly so far. The chart on the previous page should now have eight crosses on it, one for each of the eight areas of life we've been investigating. Just double-check that they're in the correct places before we move on.

Checked? Good! We can move on to digging a little deeper now by looking at each of the five regions on the chart.

Region 1: Low Satisfaction, Low Activity

If you have any crosses in this region of the chart, this is indicative of a potentially serious issue. Any areas of life where you're not satisfied but aren't doing anything about it can point to deeper mental and emotional issues, especially if you've put the cross for that area near the bottom left-hand corner.

Being passive when you're dissatisfied may be pointing to low self-esteem, depression, a generally pessimistic approach to life, or more serious problems, as most people when they aren't happy about something will at least try a few things to make a change for the better.

It would be a good idea to answer the following questions, honestly, for yourself, for each area that you have in this region of the chart:

- » Why is it that, despite being unhappy in this area of my life, I'm paying it so little attention and just let things happen?
- » What is it that I believe about this area of my life that, if I didn't believe it, I'd want to make some definite changes?
- » What is it that I believe about me that means I don't make enough effort in this area of my life?
- » What is it that I'm avoiding by being so passive in that area of my life that, if I were to become more active, I'd have to face up to or acknowledge and deal with?

When you start to work on areas of life in this region, they often first move to the next one along – region 2.

Region 2: Low Satisfaction, High Activity

If you have any crosses here, particularly near the top of the chart, this means that you're working hard, spending a lot of time and effort, in those areas of life but for some reason not getting the results you want. There are usually two main reasons for this:

- » It's an area you have noticed in the past that you're not happy with but you've made some definite plans and are now working towards success, making progress. If this is the case then you should check how satisfied you are with your progress; if satisfied, then you're doing well. If you're not satisfied with your progress then it may be because...
- » It's an area of your life where you're making efforts but you're not doing the RIGHT things to make progress. Perhaps you've decided to try your own ideas first but they aren't working – in which case, seek professional or experienced help. Or perhaps there are some things you are doing, but there's something key you've not done yet or are deliberately avoiding doing, in which case you should also seek experienced or professional help to find out why you're not doing what you need to.

Once you are working well here and achieving some results, you should find that your satisfaction begins to increase, moving you to...

Region 3: High Satisfaction, High Activity

This region of the chart covers those areas of life that you are satisfied and happy with and know that to keep them that way requires some effort, time and attention. However, you probably find that putting in the time and effort here brings a sense of satisfaction in itself, for example redecorating a room or finally organising your personal finances.

Depending on which areas of your life you have in this region, you should remember that sometimes you need to keep up that effort to stop problems from occurring. In most areas of life, a little attention given frequently is all that's required to keep things in excellent order.

If an area of life you've been working on has remained in this region for a long time and the habits, behaviours and other patterns are still a chore, perhaps there's some belief or value you have around something in that area of life, e.g. money management, that needs dealing with.

Answering the following questions might also help you to understand why you are so active in the areas of life that you've marked in this region:

- » What is it about that aspect of my life that I consider so important, so worth taking the time and making the effort for?
- » What do I get from that aspect of my life that, if I were to stop being so active, I might lose?
- » What am I preventing from happening or avoiding in that aspect of my life that, if I weren't so active, might happen?

Once good habits begin to form and the brunt of any change-work is over, things tend to shift to region 4.

Region 4: High Satisfaction, Low Activity

If you have any crosses in this region, these are the areas of your life where you are contented and happy but don't seem to be putting in much effort at all. This may simply be because you're so satisfied that any effort you do put into those areas doesn't really feel like effort or hard work.

It could also be the results of working on a specific area of life that, a few months or years back, might've been in region 1, 2 or 3 but now you've got established, found a good routine or pattern of working and created good habits that no longer require as much attention for you to engage with and carry out.

Region 5: Moderate Satisfaction, Moderate Activity

This central region of the chart is for those areas of life which are more about maintaining a good, healthy foundation for the aspects of your life that you really enjoy. If you have any crosses in the region, those should be areas that you are OK with and comfortable with the amount of effort required to maintain them.

However, my recommendation is that this region should really only be a 'parking space' for aspects of your life that you either can't prioritise right now or don't have the resources to work on more effectively at the moment. This should be because there's some other area you've chosen to act on now with the resources you have available, knowing that when it's sorted out you will return to pick up another aspect from the 'parking lot'.

Taking Action

The most difficult area to take action in is often the area we're most passive in, usually because there's a negative belief or issue there that we need to deal with in order to become active enough even to maintain the status quo, otherwise we tend to 'yo-yo'.

By that I mean we get things OK and then because there's not a problem anymore, we lose motivation, become passive and let things drift until we have to pay attention again, and then get just active enough to get things back to stability, where we let go again and the cycle repeats.

However, there's no simple cure for these issues or problems; each one needs specific and individual attention.

There are some steps that can be taken though, requiring a bit of bravery and honesty, if you do want to begin your journey from passivity to activity in those areas of life:

1. Is there someone in your circle of friends, family or other contacts you can ask for help or advice, and who you trust to be truly supportive and not just soothing or tell you to 'pull yourself together'?
2. Is there an organisation or professional person whose purpose is to help people with issues in that area, e.g. financial advisor, Citizen's Advice, pastor, personal or life coach, doctor, local gym, etc. that you can approach?
3. Is there an interest or support group or club where people with similar issues meet to share experiences and advice, and support one another?
4. Are there courses or other programmes you can attend, possibly even partially or completely funded depending on your circumstances, where you can get the skills and other training you need?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'yes', then get in touch with the people you need to, or if you'd prefer, or you have any other questions, queries or positive suggestions, then get in touch with me via email – steve@iceandlemon.com – or call **0845 111 0360**.

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