

LEARNING JOURNEY: CREATING MY NEW GOOD LIFE

LAI 2: EXPLORING RESOURCES (ESTIMATED TIME 90-MINS + OPTIONAL DEEP DIVES)

Context

The *Creating My New Good Life Learning Journey* has been developed for anyone who would like to explore how to live their own version of a good life and make it more resilient to local or global threats.

This could include anyone who:

- feels that their life is somehow lacking (perhaps despite having everything they had hoped would bring happiness).
- is satisfied with their life but is concerned that “Shadows” on the horizon (climate change, political and financial instability, war etc.) could negatively affect their life.

“Look well into yourself; there is a source of strength that will always spring up if you look.”

Marcus Aurelius

This *Learning Journey* comprises four *Learning adventures* designed to support you:

- envision what your own “New Good Life” (NGL) could look like.
- explore the resources available to you on the journey toward your NGL.
- assess the potential threat to your NGL from global and local “shadows”.
- develop strategies to achieve your NGL in a way that is resilient to change.

We recommend completing the *Learning Adventure* in several sittings, perhaps skipping optional exercises to begin with. It can also be very helpful to have a thinking buddy to work with. A fictional case study that is intended to illustrate the process outlined in this *Learning Adventure* is included in Appendix 1. You may find it helpful to refer to it as you go along.

Objectives

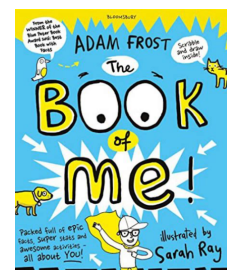
This *Learning Adventure* is the second in the series. In the first one you envisioned your NGL and in the next one you will examine the global shadows. For some people, confronting the global shadows can be challenging. So, in preparation, this *Learning Adventure* will help you to explore your existing internal and external resources (e.g. determination or important friendships) that are available to you now on the journey toward your NGL. In the fourth one, we will explore additional “Elements” that can help you achieve and protect your NGL. This *Learning Adventure* re-uses tool 2 – *Domains of Life*, that you have already seen. But before that, here is an exercise that invites you to reflect on your life to-date.

Exploring Resources

Tool 1 - Your Perfectly Written Novel

Everything that has happened in your life has prepared you for who you have become. This exercise is about looking at every element of your life until now to bring back what you need as resources for what will happen in the future on your NGL journey.

Imagine that your life is the perfectly written novel, written by the perfect novelist, where you are the hero / heroine and have been put through all these chapters, with not a single chapter wasted.



To determine the chapters of your book, divide your age by five so that you have five periods of your life. For example, if you are forty, forty divided by five is eight. So, you will have five chapters, each of eight years. You will take a few minutes to reflect on each chapter of your life. Don't worry about taking notes or trying to remember. You will recall everything that is worthy of remembering. It will be with you.

Chapter 1: Contemplate the first chapter of your life. If you are forty, this is from when you were born until you were eight years old. What were the main highlights? What were the big formative things that happened in the first chapter of your life, such as your parenting, your brothers or sisters or aspects of your upbringing? If you had any traumatic experiences, please do not visualize them, or go into depth, just notice.

Now begin to ask yourself: What were the gifts of that chapter that you can potentially bring into your NGL? These could include the knowledge, or strengths that you built during this chapter of your life that might help you move forward. What did you learn about yourself or others or life? What are the knowledge and skills, which this chapter helped to develop, that you can potentially bring into your NGL?

What name comes to mind for this first chapter in your perfectly written novel?

Chapters 2-5: Now move to the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters of your life and repeat the above questions. If your mind goes blank, that is fine. If you become distracted, going back and forth is alright too. Relax and do not judge yourself.

Looking back on your life:

- How do you feel now?
- What mental and physical resources have you acquired?
- In difficult moments, what resources helped you to get through?
- Did you notice any events in your life that you labelled as “bad” at the time, but which you know see as positive because they provided an important gift. For example, did a relationship fail, which helped you to learn something important about yourself? Or perhaps you lost a job, but ended up finding something better?

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Tool 2 – Domains of Life

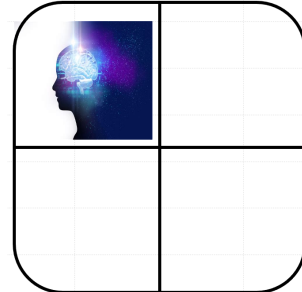
We will now build on this exercise by returning to the Domains of Life, introduced in the first *Learning Adventure*.

Human dimension

1. Mental Resources

You may remember that the upper-left part of the 4-quadrant model is the individual-interior perspective.

This includes thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, memories etc. What mental resources can you call upon on your journey towards your NGL?



For example, you may have:

- natural capacities, such as specific intelligences (see below)
- valuable qualities or character traits, such as being naturally optimistic or courageous.
- specific values, such as that you can call upon such as discipline, achievement, authenticity, personal growth and compassion.
- acquired important knowledge or wisdom, such as self-awareness.
- useful skills, such as the ability to manage your emotions and influence others.

Natural capacities:

Make a note of any specific capacities that may help you along your NGL journey. What are you particularly grateful for? This could include specific [intelligences](#) that might support you on your NGL journey?

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:



Qualities, Character Traits and / or Values:

Make a note of any specific Qualities, Character Traits and Values that may help you along your NGL journey. What are you particularly grateful for?

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Optional: If you would like to explore this further, here is a [link](#) to a website that offers a range of free assessments.

Knowledge and Skills:

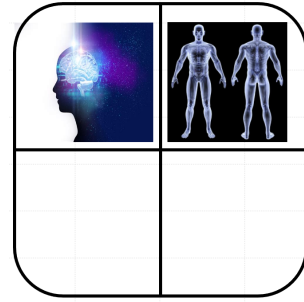
What practices do you have that can help you stay grounded and present amidst uncertainty? What habits do you have that can nourish your mental well-being? Make a note of any specific knowledge and / or skills that may help you along your NGL journey. What are you grateful for?

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

2. Physical Resources

Again, from LAi1 you may remember that the upper-right part of the 4-quadrant model is the individual-exterior perspective. It includes all the things you can measure about a person including their physical health and other external resources such as wealth.

For example, is your health good? Are you reasonably strong and flexible? Do you sleep well and have sufficient energy throughout the day? Do you have enough money? What else are you grateful for?

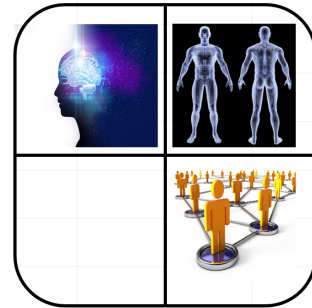


Make a note of anything that may help you along your NGL journey.

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

3. Supportive Systems and Structures

Again, the lower-right part of the 4-quadrant model addresses the collective exterior perspective. This includes the networks of people whom you relate to in your private and professional life. It also includes other systems or technologies that you use to meet your physical and mental needs.



For example, who are the people that you can go to for support you in your NGL journey? This could include family, friends and work colleagues. Other systems include systems that provide food and water, waste management, energy, law and order, information access and exchange and the generation and storage of wealth. In some parts of the world, we take many of these systems for granted. What systems and structures are you grateful for?

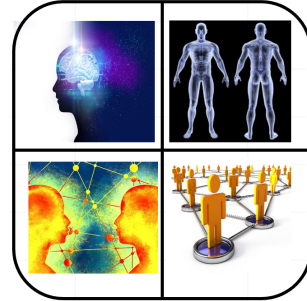
Make a note of any human and other networks that can support you along your NGL journey.

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

4. Cultural Resources.

The lower-left part of the 4-quadrant model is the collective-interior perspective.

This includes the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, memories, etc. of the groups (e.g. family and friends) or organisations that you are part of. How might the culture of the private and professional groups of which you are a part support you?



Make a note of any cultural aspects of your family and professional groups and communities that can support you along your NGL journey.

What specific actions could you take to leverage this dimension?

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

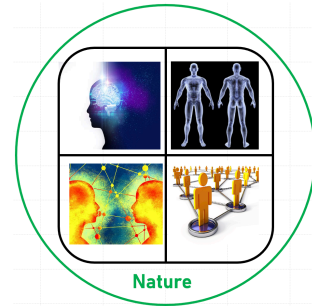
Dimension of Nature

What might support you on your NGL journey from the natural world?

For example, do you have a pet? Or do you have a garden or park close by that might enable you to better connect to nature? Or can you access the countryside or a forest relatively quickly and easily?

Make a note of anything from the natural world that can support you along your NGL journey.

What specific actions could you take to leverage this dimension?



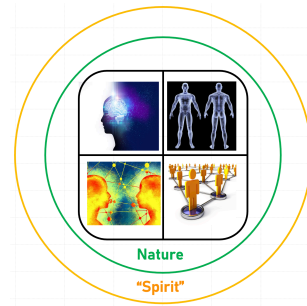
Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Dimension of Spirit

What might support you on your NGL journey from the spiritual dimension, if this is relevant to you?

For example, do you have religious or spiritual practices that you can draw on for support?

Make a note of anything from the spiritual world that can support you along your NGL journey. What specific actions could you take to leverage this dimension?



Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Consolidating Your Resources

Tool 3 - Creating a Resources Board

Again, to make this exercise more concrete, you might find it helpful to create some kind of visual representation of your resources. This will be very personal. Some people prefer just pictures, while others like to include some words or a mind map. You can use the same approach as in LAi1 or try something different. The choice is yours.



Make a note of important elements of your resources board here:

Resilience

Introduction

In this *Learning Adventure*, you have started to explore the resources that you already have available to support you on your NGL journey. Inevitably, along the journey, you will face challenges and setbacks. In this section we will explore how you can continue to develop your resilience. The word resilience derives from a Latin term, *resiliens*, meaning “to spring forward”. Resilience is used to refer to the ability to cope with or recover from stress or adversity. There are four main challenges that are typically seen as calling for resilience:

- Overcoming childhood problems e.g. childhood neglect or abuse.
- Living with daily hassles e.g. relationship conflicts or difficulties at work.
- Recovery from major setbacks e.g. redundancy, divorce, bereavement or chronic illness.
- Reaching out for greater meaning and purpose – breaking out of comfort zones.

Key to increasing resilience are:

- **External factors**, especially social support from e.g. family, friends or religious groups
- **Internal factors**:
 - Attitudes:
 - Self-esteem, self-worth or self-acceptance
 - Self-confidence i.e. belief in your own ability
 - Skills:
 - Emotional regulation
 - Social skills
 - Problem solving

Assessing Your Resilience

Rate yourself for each of these factors:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I have a good social support network					
I have a high level of self-esteem					
I have confidence in my own ability					
I am able to regulate my emotions					
I have strong social skills					
I have strong problem-solving skills					

Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Developing Resilience

Dr. Lucy Hone is a resilience expert who thought she found her calling supporting people to recover following the Christchurch earthquake.

She had no idea that her personal journey was about to take her to a far darker place. In this [video](#) she presents three strategies for building resilience. They are:

1. Understand that suffering is part of life
2. Tune in to the good
3. Ask yourself 'Is this helping or harming me?'



Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Gratitude

The second strategy presented by Dr. Lucy Hone is “Tune in to the good”. There is growing scientific evidence that gratitude practice can contribute to both physical and mental resilience. However, some of the most used gratitude practices, such as gratitude lists, may not be particularly effective.

Optional: In this [video](#), Dr. Andrew Huberman describes the key elements of an effective gratitude practice, including the importance of a story (narrative), receiving or perceiving gratitude, rather than giving it and the role that theory of mind plays in this context.

Dr. Huberman uses the science of gratitude to design a “brief but highly effective” protocol (1:18:50).



Have you tried a gratitude practice? What works for you? Capture any important insights or possible actions here:

Optional: Gratitude Game

It’s easy for negativity to creep into our daily lives, whether it’s due to things that happen at work, home, or the stories we hear on the news. And it’s not just adults that can be affected either – children can bring a bad day at school home with them. So, it’s always good to make a point of shifting focus onto the positive things when at home, and to do so as a family. Sitting around the dinner table, we each have to answer the following five questions:

- What have you done today to make yourself happy?
- What have you done today to make someone else happy?
- What has someone else done today to make you happy?
- How did you feel when you made someone else happy?
- What have you learned today?

Reflection

In this *Learning Adventure* we have started to explore the different resources that you have available to you as you continue on your NGL journey. Just like a ship's anchor in a storm, these resources can provide stability as you confront any future challenges.

Before moving on, reflect on the following questions:

- How do you feel after completing this *Learning Adventure*?
- What are your top 3-4 take-aways?
- What actions do you plan to take?
- Has this *Learning Adventure* had any impact on your driving questions?

Capture your ideas here:

Again, give yourself some time to absorb this *Learning Adventure* before moving on to assess potential future threats to your NGL in the next *Learning Adventure*.

References

Websites:

Verywellmind:

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences-2795161>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-emotional-intelligence-2795423>

Values Institute:

- <https://values.institute/a-guide-to-free-values-assessments/>

Wilber 4-Quadrant Model:

- <https://www.thelivingphilosophy.com/the-four-quadrants-ken-wilber/>

Top Mindfulness apps: <https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-apps/>

Appendix 1 – Karin’s Case Study (Part 2)

The following is part 2 of a fictional case study intended to illustrate the process outlined in this *Learning Adventure*. It follows on from part 1 included in the first *Learning Adventure*.

Feeling happy with her NGL Vision Board, created in the first *Learning Adventure*, Karin decided to take some time to let her thoughts sink in. For a week, she carved out a few minutes every day from her busy schedule to reflect in more detail on how her NGL would be. She felt mixed emotions. On the one hand she found her NGL vision inspiring, but it seemed remote and the journey to reach it somehow daunting. How and where should she start? After a week, she felt ready to move on to *Learning Adventure 2*. Perhaps it would help clarify things for her.

Karin opened the *Learning Adventure* and was intrigued to see the exercise *Your Perfectly Written Novel*. Being almost fifty years old, Karin divided her life into five chapters, each of ten years:

- **Chapter 1: Firm Foundations.** Karin named the first chapter (0-10 years) of her novel “Firm Foundations” to reflect her happy early childhood years. She grew up in a large, close-knit family of her parents, her elder sister, two brothers and a succession of dogs. Their house had a large garden, with an orchard where they could play safely. This period of her of her life had given Karin a deep sense of security and the ability to stand up for herself.
- **Chapter 2: Growing Up.** The next chapter of her novel Karin named “Growing up” as life became more demanding. Despite some health problems, which necessitated surgery and some extended hospital stays, she did well at school, eventually going on to study law at university. At university Karin blossomed, enjoying a wide circle of friends and good social life. As well as her academic knowledge, Karin could see that this period of her life developed her academic and social skills.
- **Chapter 3: Academic Achievements and Adventures.** The third chapter covered a period where Karin completed her Belgian master’s degree in law and then went off to complete further post-graduate studies in the UK, supported by the Erasmus programme. Here she enjoyed meeting students from all over the world, planting a seed for future adventures. When Karin returned to Belgium it coincided with a downturn in the economy, so it took Karin some time to find employment. When she did get her first job, it was not what she really wanted. She did not hide her lack of enthusiasm and was eventually made redundant. Although this came as a shock, she decided to take advantage of the situation and set off to travel the world for a year. This period of her life considerably broadened Karin’s perspective, developed her language skills and deepened a strong sense of self-reliance. She also learnt that often events that seem “bad” can turn out to be “good”.
- **Chapter 4: Settling Down.** Shortly after returning from her worldwide adventures, Karin found a job at a pharmaceutical company in Brussels and met her future husband, Chris. In a very short period, her life changed from backpacking around Africa and Asia to full-time employment, marriage, house ownership and the arrival of Lisa and Steven. This was a hectic period of her life which combined raising a young family and developing her career as a pharmaceutical studies coordinator. She learnt about juggling multiple roles, how to collaborate with others in multinational teams and how to succeed in a corporate world.

- **Chapter 5: Family and Career.** The last ten years of her life had gone by in a blur. Lisa and Steven had grown up in a flash. The challenges of being a parent of young children had morphed into the different challenges of teenage years. Her parents had grown old and needed more of her support. At work, she had gone back to studies, completed project management examinations and had moved into senior programme management roles. The pressure at work continued to grow, with regular company reorganisations to contend with. She had definitely learnt to handle greater complexity and pressure.

Karin reflected on the questions at the end of the exercise. She had faced some difficult moments, but a combination of her natural determination and the support of her family and friends had enabled her to come through them. She had grown as a person and felt proud of her achievements.

Moving on, Karin was pleasantly surprised to see the **Domains of Life** tool from the first *Learning Adventure*. Rather than being something to help her think about the future, she could now use it to explore her resources. Like any good explorer, she had a clear sense of her destination. Now she had to prepare herself for the journey.

Starting with the Human dimension of **Mental Fitness**. She clicked on the link to explore the different intelligences. There were clearly some areas, such as Nature Smart, that were relatively weak, but she loved music and felt that she had a good insight into people. She noted “Music Smart” and “People Smart” as strengths. Karin then found the link and dived into the VIA Character Strengths Survey. She had done these sorts of assessments over the course of her career and wasn’t surprised to see strengths such as achievement, curiosity and perseverance highlighted. Finally, Karin reflected on the knowledge and skills that she had acquired. She understood the pharmaceutical industry well and was one of the more experienced programme managers in her company. Less experienced managers regularly came to her for advice and support, which had given her the opportunity to develop her coaching and mentoring skills. Karin had also recently completed a mindfulness training offered by her company, downloaded a mindfulness “app” and had started a daily practice. Karin felt reassured that she had many mental strengths to build on.

Turning her attention to the dimension **Physical Resources**, the situation was more mixed. The heavy workload that she had experienced meant that she was not particularly fit, but otherwise she was still reasonably healthy. Financially, Karin and Chris felt secure. Their mortgage was almost paid off, she had a good pension scheme, and her company provided the usual range of benefits of a large corporation. Karin was grateful that this provided her with the opportunity to create space in her life to take more time for herself and for her family. She understood that this was a “luxury” that many did not have.

Reflecting on the area of **Supportive Systems and Structures**, Karin felt sad that the relationships with many of her old friends had weakened over time. However, she could rely on Chris and was lucky to still have a close relationship with her sister Els. With Chris and Els, Karin had two strong sources of support on her NGL journey. Karin was also grateful for the social support systems that were available to her living in Belgium, particularly healthcare.

Next, in the human dimension of **Supportive Culture**, although her work culture did not always feel completely safe, her family culture was open, and she knew that she could always speak frankly with Chris and other members of her family. She felt accepted for who she was. They would provide her with a sense of stability on her NGL journey.

Moving beyond the human world and into the [Dimension of Nature](#), Karin thought of Maggie, the family dog. Although she wasn't really a "dog person" – the demand for a dog had come from her daughter Lisa, she had to admit that Maggie had brought something to the family. Responsibility for walking Maggie rested mostly with Chris and Lisa, but she did occasionally get out into the local countryside with Maggie, and she always returned feeling more peaceful afterwards. Karin realised that the natural world could be an even more important source of solace for her.

Then, Karin turned to the [Dimension of Spirit](#). Although she didn't consider herself to be religious, she did have a vague sense of being "spiritual". She felt a connection to something greater than herself, which did provide some comfort when life felt challenging. She made a commitment to herself that this was an area where she would time to reflect on and explore further.

In the final section – [Building Resilience](#), Karin completed the resilience questionnaire. She scored herself highly on social support and social and problem-solving skills. However, she had to admit that her level of self-esteem and confidence in her own ability had been damaged by the constant criticism from her boss and the lack of psychological safety in her team. Also, her ability to regulate her emotions was not as strong as she would like. Clearly, there was some work to do in these areas.