

36. Vision Activity: Now vs. Most

There's a famous quote, sometimes attributed to US president Abraham Lincoln, that goes like this: 'Discipline is choosing between what you want now, and what you want most.' It's a useful idea to think about because in many circumstances what we want now (to buy a pair of trainers, say) probably damages what we want most (to have enough money to go on holiday).

Many of us will find ourselves choosing what we want now over what we want most; it's human to sometimes make these choices. In fact, in some circumstances the 'now' choice (taking a break and forgetting our troubles for an evening) doesn't really damage the 'most' goal (getting great GCSE grades), so it's OK if we choose it. The problem comes if we *continually* prioritise 'now' over 'most' – if we do, we never end up reaching the goal we've set ourselves.

This exercise is an opportunity to look at the temptations you face now, to analyse how damaging they might be and take stock of how often you choose them. It can help you to keep a check on your tendency to prioritise 'now' over 'most', not by denying yourself everything you want but by reaching a healthy balance.

Step 1

Begin in the right-hand column of the table below. Make a note here of *what you want most* out of your final GCSE year. It should include the grades you would be delighted to get but also the consequences of those grades: the pride and happiness others will feel, your sense of success and confidence, the courses you can go on to study as a result, the school or college you hope to attend, the friends you hope to be with and the personal qualities you want to have developed by the time you finish your courses.

Step 2

Now the left-hand column. Here, list everything you're tempted by on a daily basis: to skip homework, binge watch TV, avoid revision, spend time on social media – anything that pulls you away from your long-term goals on a daily or weekly basis.

What you want now	Scores	What you want most	Scores
.....		.....	
.....		.....	
.....		.....	
.....		.....	
.....		.....	
.....		.....	

Step 3

Now we're going to make a check of which 'now' activities are the most damaging. For each 'now' activity, give it two scores:

1. Give it a *regularity* score: 0 = you almost never do it, 1 = you sometimes do it, 2 = you often do it, 3 = you pretty much always end up doing it.

2. Give it a *damage score*: 0 = it does almost no damage to what you want most, 1 = it does a small amount of damage to what you want most, 2 = it does some damage to what you want most, 3 = it does a lot of damage to what you want most.

Now, times the two numbers together for each 'now' activity. Once you've done that, every activity in that column should have a score between 0 and 9.

Activities that score 4 or more present a challenge for you. You do them reasonably regularly and they have a negative effect. These are the ones you need to take a longer look at. Make a list of them here:

.....

.....

.....

.....

If your list is huge, don't worry – that's pretty normal. *Choose one or two as your priorities.* If you can begin by making a change to just one or two behaviours, you can work from there. If you feel your motivation dip, return to your lists and look at the right-hand column – remind yourself of what it is you really want.

Two behaviours to concentrate on eradicating:

.....

.....

Final Thoughts

One way to deal with problems you know will occur, is to make an if-then plan. Take the two behaviours above. You know for sure that these are the things you want now that will significantly damage the things you want most.

An if-then plan allows you to make a good decision about what to do when you're next tempted. Have a look at the table below, and see if you can make an if-then plan for your damaging behaviours:

If....	Then I will...
I end up chatting with mates at the bus station and they suggest staying out all afternoon...	Tell them I have to get home because there's a family thing I can't miss, and catch the next bus. Plus I'll sit away from others so I can do some work.
If...	Then...
.....	.....
.....	.....
If...	Then...
.....	.....
.....	.....