



Values exploration: 80th birthday party



Rationale

This is an exercise that's designed to help you picture what you want your life to be about, what is important and meaningful to you? 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. If you're willing to give it a try, read the following text and just notice what comes up for you. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise – it's all about noticing what comes up.

Exercise

Take a moment to get centered by noticing your breath and noticing how your body feels. If you find yourself getting distracted or notice your mind wandering, that's OK. Just notice that and gently bring your attention back to this exercise. Now, 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 co-workers have gathered to celebrate your 80th birthday. Imagine what you will look like on your 80th birthday (or whatever age you want). 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. Deep down in your heart, imagine what you would most want others to say about what you've meant.

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. Try to really 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 co-worker or neighbour. 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, noticing your breath and how your body feels. And when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

Ask yourself

- 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?

- What values did you choose as opposed to one you 'should' do?
- Can you consider your values as on-going direction or agenda in life (in contrast to specific goals)

Keep a journal of thoughts and come back to these exercises.