

THE **MEANING MAP**

STAGE TWO OF THE IMPACT MODEL: M FOR MEANING

AIMS:

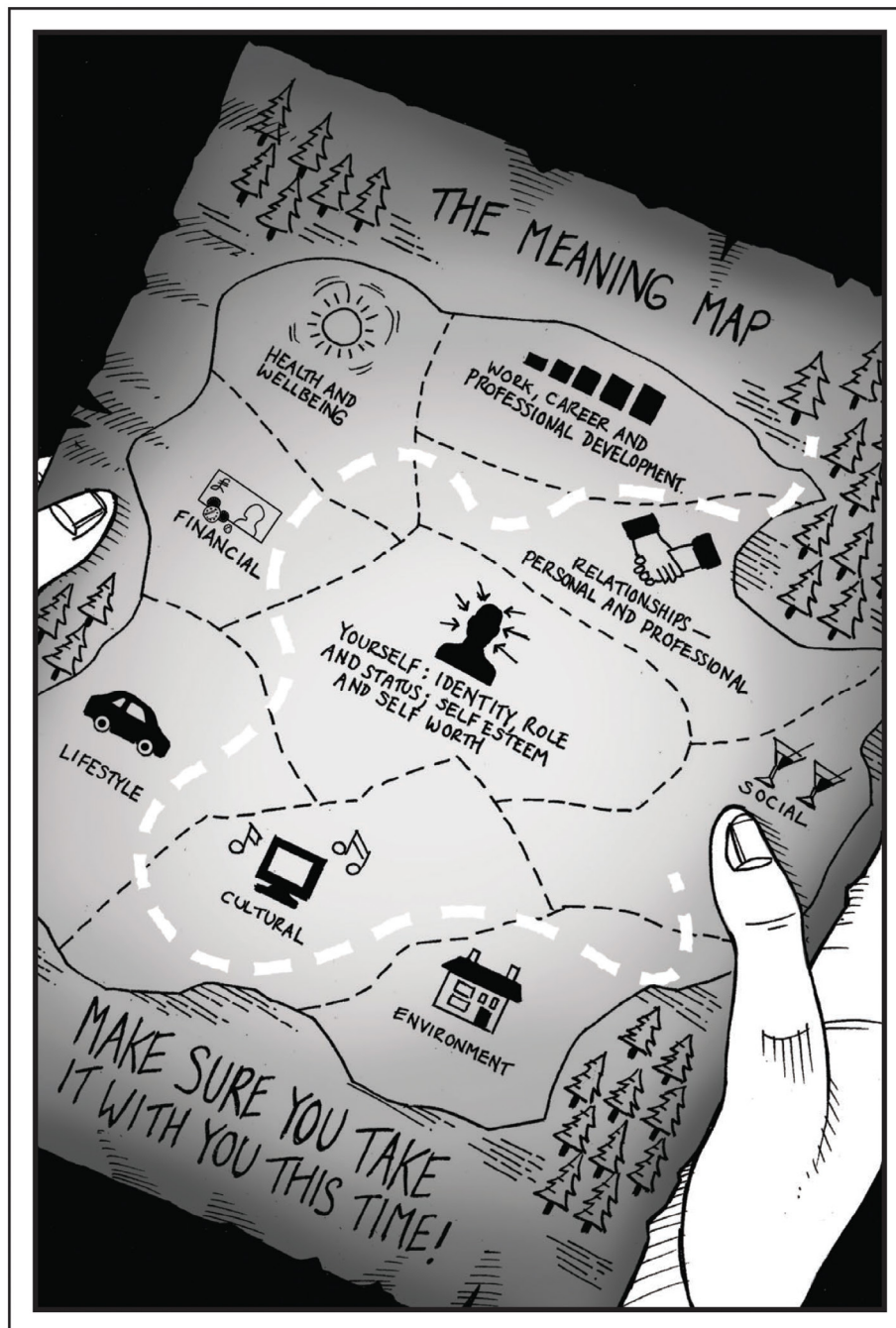
- Find meaning by making sense of why things are as they are in your life
- Assess the key areas of your life to identify where the causes of any difficulties exist
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your responses to any areas that are not in good shape
- Connect your emotions to your causes and responses so you can understand why you feel the way you do.

THE
IMPACT
MODEL



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THE MEANING MAP



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FINDING MEANING

Finding meaning is the active process by which we seek to make sense of why things are as they are in our lives. When you think about it, this is an activity we do constantly by ourselves when we are alone with our thoughts, and with others when we put heads together and problem-solve. And although we will have our own unique approach to finding meaning, we all have access to the same potential range of information, knowledge and resources, such as other people, libraries, magazines, books, podcasts, films, television programmes, apps and websites.

One thing is certain, though. To thrive and survive well we must be successful finding meaning most or all of the time. An inability to make sense of our situation means we become a mystery to ourselves, resulting in misdiagnosis of the causes of our difficulties and development of ineffective responses. Finding meaning, on the other hand, enables us to thrive and survive well because it leads to the accurate diagnosis of causes and generation of effective responses – the *raison d'être* of The Meaning Map.

THE MEANING MAP ACTIVITY

To get the most out of the activity, here are some suggestions for how to go about it:

- Look at Jonathon's completed Meaning Map for guidance, then complete your Meaning Map underneath
- Do the activity more than once, with gaps in between, as it can take time to find helpful levels of meaning.
- Do the activity by yourself and, if possible, with at least one trusted other.
- Appreciate your findings regardless of what you discover.



STAGE ONE: CAUSES

The first stage of The Meaning Map is identifying the causes of your difficulties by pinpointing the areas of your life you are struggling in. Using a 0-10 scale (0=an area in great shape, 10=an area in very poor shape), choose numbers that 'map out' how you currently feel about each area. As a general rule:

- Scores of 7 or more indicate areas in very poor shape that will be causing severe stress, anxiety, depression or anger
- Scores of 5 or 6 indicate areas in relatively poor shape that will be causing moderate stress, anxiety, depression or anger
- Scores of 4 or below indicate areas in good to very good shape that will be causing little or no stress, anxiety, depression or anger

JONATHON'S MEANING MAP: CAUSES

AREA	SCORE	ASSESSMENT: VERY CONCERNED, MODERATELY CONCERNED, NOT CONCERNED
Yourself: identity, role and status; self-esteem and self-worth	5	Usually, I feel good about myself. Never struggled with self-esteem issues. My score is lower than usual because of the impact of my work situation.
Home and family life	1	Couldn't be better. Very supportive partner. Great kids.
Relationships – personal and professional	5	Outside of work, I have great friends, but not at work. Recent changes have placed me in a team of very unpleasant people.
Work, career and professional development	8	Not great. The amount of aggression from within my team and inability of leadership to tackle it is making working life very stressful.

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STAGE ONE: CAUSES

JONATHON'S MEANING MAP: CAUSES

AREA	SCORE	ASSESSMENT: VERY CONCERNED, MODERATELY CONCERNED, NOT CONCERNED
Health and wellbeing	7	Not great. Very stressed. Sleep is poor and finding it hard to do the things I like, especially exercise.
Financial	2	No issues. I have savings should I need to leave my current job to fall back on, plus my wife has her own income.
Lifestyle	5	Usually no issues, but work stress means I am not exercising at all.
Social	2	No issues. Good circle of friends who I am getting great support from.
Cultural	2	This is a good area for me. I belong to my Parish Council and am an active volunteer in my village and am maintaining my commitments despite work issues.
Environment	7	No issues at home, but work is a very unpleasant place to be.
Past, present & future	7	No past issues aside from the average stresses, but my present work issues are undeniably challenging and causing me concern about my future.

Your table on next page

STAGE ONE: CAUSES

YOUR MEANING MAP: CAUSES		
AREA	SCORE	ASSESSMENT: VERY CONCERNED, MODERATELY CONCERNED, NOT CONCERNED
Yourself: identity, role and status; self-esteem and self-worth		
Home and family life		
Relationships – personal and professional		
Work, career and professional development		
Health and wellbeing		
Financial		
Lifestyle		
Social		
Cultural		
Environment		
Past, present & future		

What did you discover? Hopefully, like Jonathon, you now have a better understanding of the causes of your difficulties and why you feel the way that you do.

STAGE TWO: RESPONSES

The second stage The Meaning Map is assessing the effectiveness or otherwise of your responses in your areas. Using a 0-10 scale again (0=highly effective, 10=highly ineffective), choose numbers that reflect the current state of your responses to the causes of your difficulties. As a general rule:

- Scores of 7 or more indicate areas your responses are wholly inadequate for and that will be causing severe stress, anxiety, depression or anger
- Scores of 5 or 6 indicate areas your responses will neither improve nor worsen, and that will be causing moderate stress, anxiety, depression or anger
- Scores of 4 or below indicate areas your responses will improve to a significant degree, causing feelings of calmness, confidence and control.

JONATHON'S MEANING MAP: RESPONSES

AREA	SCORE	ASSESSMENT: VERY CONCERNED, MODERATELY CONCERNED, NOT CONCERNED
Yourself: identity, role and status; self-esteem and self-worth	6	I have taken a few knocks of late that's for sure. My self-talk is too self-critical to be helpful. I am giving myself a hard time for not handling work better and that needs to change.
Home and family life	1	I'd be in a much worse place if it weren't for my partner. I am being very open with her and she is stepping up.
Relationships – personal and professional	7	Not great. By nature, I am not an aggressive person and can't match the aggression of my co-called colleagues. I am getting support from colleagues elsewhere in the business, but that is limited in its effect. I need a new approach.

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STAGE TWO: RESPONSES

JONATHON'S MEANING MAP: RESPONSES

AREA	SCORE	ASSESSMENT: VERY CONCERNED, MODERATELY CONCERNED, NOT CONCERNED
Work, career and professional development	8	Feel trapped and have no plan. I have always been able to respond to adversity before, but at present I am unable to. Again, this needs to change quickly.
Health and wellbeing	7	I feel stressed all of the time pretty much. Other than talking to my partner, I can't find the motivation to do anything else.
Financial	2	Nothing needed in this area. I have finance if necessary.
Lifestyle	5	Probably drinking a few more glasses of wine than usual.
Social	2	I am reaching out to my friends and making good use of their support.
Cultural	2	I am maintaining my village and council commitments, which does make me feel good about myself, especially because of the people we help.
Environment	7	I am not handling my working environment well and that needs to change. I do try to make the most of home. I sit in my garden and go for walks with my partner. Occasionally I meet friends at the pub.
Past, present & future	7	I need a plan to address work, but I'm too stressed. I know I need to come up with one soon. I do talk to my partner and friends about speaking to Recruiters, which is something, but I've yet to pick up the phone.

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STAGE TWO: RESPONSES

YOUR MEANING MAP: RESPONSES

AREA	SCORE	ASSESSMENT: VERY CONCERNED, MODERATELY CONCERNED, NOT CONCERNED
Yourself: identity, role and status; self-esteem and self-worth		
Home and family life		
Relationships – personal and professional		
Work, career and professional development		
Health and wellbeing		
Financial		
Lifestyle		
Social		
Cultural		
Environment		
Past, present & future		

STAGE TWO: RESPONSES

What did you discover?

Are your responses making the difference you are after in important areas, not making any difference, or making them worse? Thinking about the emotions you are experiencing on a regular or even permanent basis, can you now make better sense of why you are experiencing them?

Regularly completing The Meaning Map can get you into the habit of making sense of the current state of your life so you know where to focus your efforts and target your resources.

The Meaning Map: next steps

Use the space below to outline some possible next steps. For example, can you take action by yourself and with your existing support network? Or do you need to find someone new to talk to, someone with the knowledge and experience you need?