

Week Four

Week 4

Congratulations on finishing your third week of the Blue Binder Project! Enclosed is Week 4 of the Project, but before you begin, please take a few minutes to reflect on what you've accomplished in the last three short weeks.

Parts of your accomplishments are tangible. Look back through your Blue Binder to see what you've accomplished through writing down your thoughts and efforts. Re-read your journal entries and your Week Two Self Evaluation, your takeaways from the reading and the meetings you've attended. Those things are your tangible accomplishments.

Next, take an inventory of your non-tangible accomplishments. You're thinking differently, more purposefully. You have less drift and more direction. You're feeling better about yourself because you're taking action. You're building your willpower, and that gnawing feeling of discontent inside you is starting to fade. Other people are starting to notice that there is something different about you. Maybe you're standing up straighter, or your eyes are clearer. You're more engaged and enjoying each day. When you're engaged and enjoying life more, people are drawn towards you because you help them feel good too. Some of your best and biggest accomplishments so far are the intangibles – what is changing inside you - and that's pretty fantastic.



You have made great strides in changing how you think and act, but you can't stop now! This isn't a 'one and done', but rather the beginning of a lifestyle of learning and growing. Think of this as working out your brain just like a muscle. If you stop working out, the muscle becomes smaller. It's the same with your mindset. You want to keep working on it and continue to move forward. If you don't continue to move forward, you stop growing. And if you stop growing, then you will ultimately start to slip backwards. And you do not want to slip - you want to keep growing and enjoying more and more of life.

Your work in Week 4 is separated into two main parts. In part one, you will explore the qualities and actions that are most important to you, your core principles that guide you to be your most authentic self. Clarity about these principles will help you make decisions and take actions that are the building blocks of a successful and satisfying life. Part two is about what steps you want to take to accomplish your goals. Now that you're a little wiser about where you want to go, it's time to figure out just what steps to take to get you there. In Week 4, you will begin to practice a new process of breaking big goals down into smaller and smaller pieces that feel more doable.

As with every portion of the Blue Binder Project, please work through Week 4 openly, sincerely, and honestly. Just as before, the more effort you put in, the greater your reward, not just now, but going forward as well. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email us at info@bluebinderproject.com.



Section 1 — Personal Alignment

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Core Principles

Section 2 – Building Your First Goal Matrix

Introduction
Goal Matrix
10 Year Goal Matrix

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Meeting Log

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Journal Pages

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There is a tremendous power that comes from understanding the 'rules' of a game, regardless of the game. To use a simple sports example, imagine you know nothing about baseball, and you've somehow found yourself as the pitcher on a baseball team, pitching the ball to a hitter. Sometimes you throw a pitch and the umpire behind the plate says 'Strike!' and your team cheers, and sometimes the umpire says 'Ball!' and your teammates groan. So, you know the difference between feeling good (a strike) and bad (a ball), but it seems random; you feel like you have no control. You don't know how to adjust your pitching to be successful. You feel like a victim to the whims of that heartless umpire.

But what if you add one 'rule' to what you understand about the game of baseball – that you get a strike when you throw the ball over home plate anywhere above the knees and below the chest of the hitter. All of a sudden, you realize this isn't random. You aren't victim to this heartless umpire – you understand how to succeed. You understand the rule, or, to say this a different way, you understand the cause and effect relationship of what you need to do to get the outcome you want - if you want a strike, you have to throw the ball into the strike zone!

Now let's shift 'games' from baseball to real life. In real life, I know there are 'rules' that, if I follow them, will improve my enjoyment of life. Some of these are pretty simple cause and effect relationships – for example, if I eat junk food, I feel bad. Some of these are much deeper though, and may be more difficult to see, and even more important to understand. One of these deep-seated, real-life rules has to do with uncovering and understanding your core principles and then making sure your life is aligned with those principles.

So, what are core principles?

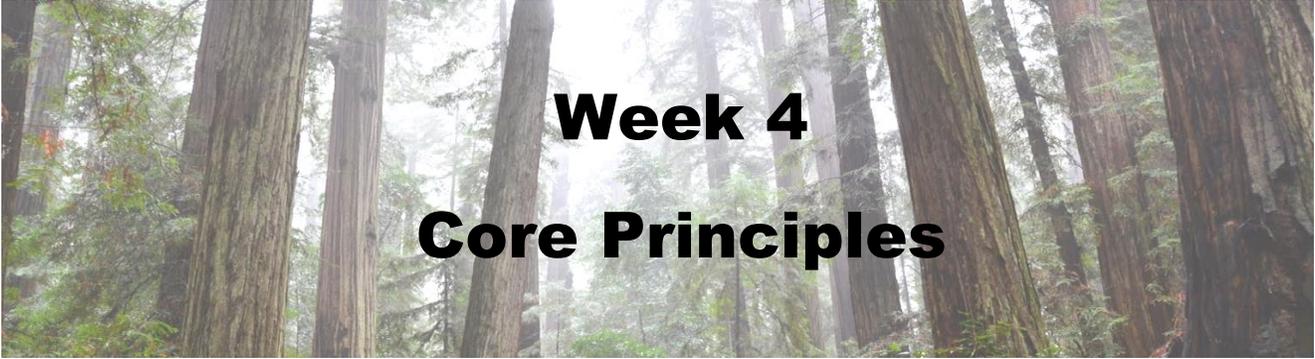
Core principles are the foundation of who you truly are, once you scrape away all the clutter of what everyone else (your family, your social network, heck, our society as a whole) wants you to think is important. Your core principles are so integral to who you are as a unique person, that it can sometimes be challenging to 'pull them out' to see and identify what they are. And, once you are able to do so, you have gained an incredible power. You will have figured out one of the ground rules to living an extraordinary life (a ground rule that, sadly, the vast majority of folks don't realize) - that living the life you want is all about living your life in ways that are in alignment with who you truly are.

We all know that life is all about making decisions and choices, and understanding your core principles will offer guidance as you make decisions in the future. When you are living in alignment with these beliefs, you increase your confidence and your self-esteem. Your choices become stronger, more effective. Life becomes clearer, decisions simpler. You lose that guilty feeling that you should be doing things differently. You see yourself acting in integrity, satisfied with who you are being in this moment. On the other hand, you also have likely experienced moments when your actions weren't consistent with what is most important to you. Perhaps a time when you just felt "off" about what you were doing. That "off" feeling meant what you were doing was probably going against

what you believed to be important. When life is frustrating and you don't know why, chances are that part of the issue is that you're not living in alignment with your principles.

As you move forward in this week, you will be clarifying what your core principles are. You will look at what you believe is important in yourself, in your actions and in your relationships, and then distill those things down into a few core principles to focus on. No two people will have the exact same set of principles - these are part of what makes you unique - and your happiness and success won't look exactly like anyone else's. The clearer you are about what is important to you, the more likely you are to make choices that create the fulfilling life you want to be living.





Week 4

Core Principles

In this exercise, you will be clarifying what your core principles are so your choices and actions can be better in alignment with what is most important to you. You will look at various experiences, choices and relationships in your life and distill what you find into three core principles that guide your life and best represent who you are. This is not about adopting new ideas. It's about discovering what is already most important to you. There are clues to what these are in your life as it is now.

You will first fill out the questions below about significant moments, people and personal qualities in your life. These answers will start to show you what the common themes and elements are that point you toward your core principles and define who you are.

Step One

Answer the following questions to begin to explore what is most important to you.

Personal Qualities

What three qualities do you admire most in others? In yourself? _____

What three qualities do you criticize most in others? In yourself? _____

What three qualities did your family praise most in others when you were growing up? _____

What five qualities do you want to be remembered for? _____

Relationships

Think about the most meaningful relationships you've had in your life. What do/did you appreciate about them? (Hint: look back at the Week 2 section about relationships to get started) _____

Think about the toughest relationships you've had in your life. Why were they difficult? _____

What are you proud of regarding how you contribute to your relationships? _____

Actions

What are three accomplishments you are most proud of in your life? Why? _____

What are three of the most meaningful experiences you've had? What makes them stand out as important? _____

What was the best job you've had in your life? What did you love about it? _____

What was your least favorite job you've had in your life? What was difficult about it? _____

Step Two

Go back over your answers and identify the values that show you what is important to you. Are there common behaviors or qualities that keep showing up? For example, in your answers about relationships, do your most meaningful relationships often show the value of loyalty? Do your accomplishments show that you are most proud of yourself when you are ambitious and move up the company ladder? You're looking for what is important to you in how to be as a good person, how to relate to others well and how you choose the best actions in your life. Remember, this isn't about what others think, it's about what you believe is important. From your answers, list the values you see in each category below. If a value doesn't quite fit in one of the first three categories, list it in the "Other" category for now.

Personal Values: Qualities present when I feel like my best self.	Relationship Values: Qualities present in my most satisfying relationships.	Action Values: Qualities present in my most successful choices and actions.	Other Values:

Step Three

Now it's time to test these values and determine the ones that fit you best. As you go through life, it is easy to adopt the values of the people around you - your parents, your friends, your colleagues. Many of these values will work well for you, but sometimes you can absorb a value that doesn't really fit who you are. It seems to work for someone else so you take it on, but, at your core, it's not what you believe in. It feels hollow or like something that "should" be important to you but just isn't. This is the moment to be deeply honest with yourself. It doesn't matter what someone else values; it matters what you value. To truly live in alignment with your core principles and find that strike zone of effectiveness in your life, those principles must be absolutely true for you.

Ask yourself the following questions about each value that you have identified. Mark an X next to any values you answer yes to on these questions.

1. Is this something that I may have adopted because I believe others see it as valuable, but it's not truly important to me?
2. Is this something I grew up believing is important, but it isn't as meaningful to me now?
3. Is this something that I can imagine steering me wrong somehow, taking me away from the life I want to create?

When you've worked through these questions and eliminated the values that are not a good fit for you, circle the remaining values. These will make up your core principles. These are the qualities and actions that you value most.

Step Four

Fill in the following sentences with the concepts you have identified above. If you feel you have too many ideas in one area, narrow them down to the top three for each area. If you have one or two ideas in an area, that's fine too. Below each sentence, write a short explanation of how you see these concepts working to help you be your truest, most authentic self.

Personal Core Principles:

I am happiest with myself when I am _____, _____, and _____.

Because _____

Relationship Core Principles:

My most satisfying relationships demonstrate _____, _____, and _____.

Because _____

Action Core Principles:

I am most successful when I _____, _____, and _____.

Because _____

These statements make up your personal code. This is your individualized formula for success. When facing a tough decision or struggling with a difficult life event, staying true to your core principles will mean you are more likely to choose a path through it that serves you well. You can use these Core Principle Statements as a check that you are being authentic, thoughtful, and focused in your decisions. You are more likely to feel you have made a good decision and have been true to who you are. It doesn't mean all those decisions and choices will succeed. It does mean you will be able to trust that you brought your best self to the table. You are living in personal alignment.



Deciding where you want to go

In this section of Week 4, you're going to focus on how to get where you want to go. Having specific goals keeps you focused and energized. Being able to track your progress helps you feel a sense of accomplishment, even if the ultimate result is years away. It's too easy to lose momentum and just ride along in life. Knowing where you want to go keeps you at the steering wheel and your life moving forward.

In Week 3, you developed the life you want to be living in ten years. Ten years is a long time from now, and getting from here to there can be daunting without figuring out the steps in between. That is why you will develop a Goal Matrix this week. A Goal Matrix breaks down your big goals into smaller, more specific steps. In this way, you can begin to see how even the biggest goals become more manageable.

As you go through this exercise, relax. There isn't a right answer here. Your Goal Matrix will not be a precise, finely-tuned instrument. It can't be, because these parts of your life will never be precise and finely-tuned! The multiple aspects of your life move at different paces and sometimes even in different directions. Nobody's life is linear. You probably won't be half way to your ten year goals in five years. Some things start slow and then accelerate. Others start with you flying out of the gate but then slow down with time.

Then why do this at all? Because you have to start someplace, and this gives you a rough outline of the logical steps you need to take to get you from here to your ten year life. Rest assured this outline will change, perhaps many times. Even so, remember how important it is to take action today. You have to first take action towards something to gain the knowledge and life experiences to know how to adjust your aim. The sooner you can make the next set of adjustments, the sooner you will gain that next level of knowledge and experience so you can adjust again to dial yourself in that much closer to your goals.



In your 10 Year Goal Matrix you will be breaking your 10 year goals down into the steps that will happen in 1, 3, 5, and 7 year blocks. Don't worry about being exact or perfect. As we've said, a lot can change in 10 years, just get the main ideas down of how this process might go. These goal-setting skills are skills you will use over and over. They will help you take what seems like a lofty goal and break it down to make it manageable and feel possible. If it feels possible, you're more likely to start. And if you start, you're more likely to succeed.

First, look back at your 10 year goal statements from the Week 3 categories (*People/Relationships, Enjoying Life, Job and The Details*). There are four categories in Week 3, and we want you to choose the two statements that are most exciting to you, the goals you feel energy about and want to change first. Write these two goal statements at the top of your Goal Matrix.

Now, whittle each of your two goal statements down to one or two core elements. A core element is how this goal will show up in your life in a tangible way. What new job do you want? Where do you want to live? What relationships will be different and how? Be specific! Pick the core element that speaks to you the most, the one you'd want to see happen the most. Write this core element in the 10 Year Block on the Goal Matrix grid on the next page. This is your end point. This is where you want to be in 10 years.

Next, fill in the year blocks below this core element of your goal. These are the steps you need to do to accomplish that core element. These are still pretty big steps. They're usually the five or six most significant events, activities, or things that need to happen to get you from where your life is today to where you will be with that core element in ten years. Put only one or two big steps in each year block so you allow yourself reasonable time to get these done. I suggest you use a pencil and have an eraser handy, but when you are done, you will have a rough outline of what events, activities, or things need to happen next year and over the next three, five, and seven years, to get you to the life you want to live in ten years.

Don't overthink this process. You can talk yourself in circles wondering, "Is that what I really want? What if I change my mind?" Remember - you can always change course. The point is to get moving toward a likely target. Even if you don't end up exactly there, you will be closer to something better and you'll learn more about what you do want. So make your best choices based on what you know today.

On the following page are two examples that will help give you an idea of how this might look:

Examples

If my ten year goal is to be more successful in my career, my core element might be to have the job of a senior manager at an accounting firm, and I have one year of college already complete. My goal steps could be outlined as follows:		If my ten year goal is to be closer to my family, my core element might be to have a good balance of family time in my life. My goal steps could be outlined as follows:	
	Job		People/Relationships
10 years	Core Element: Senior Manager at an accounting firm.	10 years	Core Element: Have a good balance of family time and work
7 years	Second job – managing a team at an accounting firm	7 years	Have yearly family vacations. Once a month do a 1:1 activity with each kiddo and one date night every two weeks with my spouse.
5 years	Take CPA test or get MBA	5 years	Commit to participating in kids' sports as they're old enough. Coaching?
3 years	Graduate college First Job – pursue promotion opportunities	3 years	Find new job closer to home so less commute and less travel.
1 year	Get into college – accounting major and business minor Find opportunities for real world experience	1 year	Have more family time during the week to feel more connected to family.
Where you are now	One year college, working as admin assistant at CPA firm	Where you are now	No time for family, never make it to the kids' events.

Now it's your turn! Take your 10 year goals and practice finding your core elements and then breaking them into steps in the Matrix that follows.

Remember - just break them into the main events, activities, or things that need to happen. You don't need to know how those steps will occur. This is still big-picture thinking. Too often we want a perfectly laid out plan before we start moving. And that's exactly what keeps most people stuck exactly where they are. Great goals are not accomplished just because you have a perfect plan. Great goals are accomplished by taking steps, sometimes small ones, one by one, with just enough vision to see the next step or two and the courage to move into the unknown of what's next. You will handle what's next. You will see more clearly the next step after you've taken the first one.

10 Year Goal Matrix

	Goal Statement: _____.	Goal Statement: _____.
10 years	Core element:	Core element:
7 years		
5 years		
3 years		
1 year		
Where you are now		



Week 4 Meeting Reflections

Name of Group:	Date:	Time:
	Location:	

What had the biggest impact on me today, and why?

What did I do to reward myself today?

Name of Group:	Date:	Time:
	Location:	

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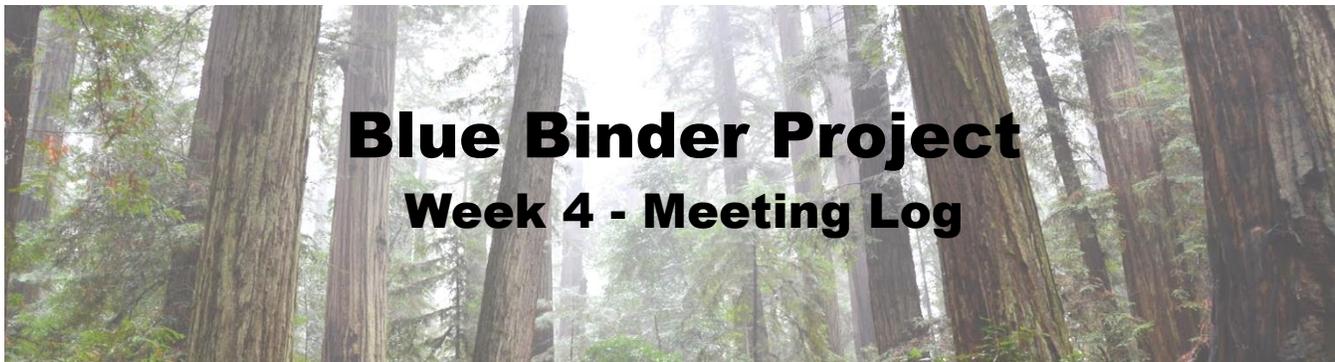
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Name of Group:	Date:	Time:
	Location:	

What had the biggest impact on me today, and why?

What did I do to reward myself today?



Date	Name of Group	Location	Signature

Journal

Date: _____

How do I feel today?

<i>Mentally</i> - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
<i>Physically</i> - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
<i>(circle one)</i>

Thoughts of the day:

Exercise I did today...

What I'm grateful for today...

What am I looking forward to tomorrow?

Journal

Date: _____

How do I feel today?

Mentally - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +

Physically - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +

(circle one)

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Week 4 Summary

In general, how do you feel about this week? What were the highlights?

A month from now, what do you want to remember most about this week (perhaps a realization you had or something you learned)?

Is there something you want to do differently or improve this next week?

How much have you read this week? Page: _____ through page: _____

What are the two most thought-provoking concepts from this week's reading? Why? _____

How can you implement these concepts in your life? _____
