

Self Discovery Assignment

LifeSmart Publishing, LLC

OVERVIEW

We *all* need to know we matter.

This is especially true during the teen and young adult years when we experience the greatest period of self discovery in our lifetime. Whether intentionally or not, we are considering three fundamental questions at this stage of life:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I have to offer?
3. What are my opportunities?

All of those questions like, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” are now coming home to roost. But, at this time of life it’s a much bigger proposition than choosing our career or major. After all, we are building a leadership foundation for a lifetime, preparing us for all the key decisions we’ll be making in the future.

Because our answers to these questions frame our future, they deserve our best thinking. *Guesses*, so common at this time, will only build a rudderless ship that meanders the waters of life. *Clarity*, on the other hand, will foster purpose, direction, and a legacy of impact—where our unique nature, passions, and talents are used in arenas that are important to us. It gives us a better chance at a fulfilling life.

A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Unfortunately, when it comes to our **identity**, our perspective is both narrow and biased. We view ourselves through our own lens, which contains distortions and inaccuracies and doesn’t reveal the total picture. Meanwhile, others (who know us well and have our best interests at heart) see us differently through their lenses and can reveal assets we either don’t realize or fully appreciate. Some of our most valuable qualities come so naturally to us that we often discount or “undervalue” them. But, through the eyes of others who lack these assets, they truly are prized possessions!

Our self-perspective is not only *incomplete*, it also is *inaccurate*. Each of us holds “baggage” and burdens that distort our view of ourselves. For example, if our confidence is down, we become more critical of the person we see in the mirror. Similarly, we may be facing challenges that constrain us from being our best. A good example of this is fear of failure. We may have all the skills and qualities in the world, but if we fear failure, we *will* limit their use and not reach our full potential.

Therefore, it pays to be as comprehensive and accurate as possible when we consider ourselves and what we have to offer. That means having a holistic perspective of our qualities and receiving input from other sources that will reveal and affirm our unique attributes, gifts, and talents.

BALANCE SHEET APPROACH

It may seem strange, but people share some similarities with businesses. We're both created for a purpose. We both serve others. We both have "assets" (things of value we can offer). And, we both have "liabilities" that hold us back (at a personal level, we'll term them "constraints"). Interestingly, one financial report that businesses must file is called a "Balance Sheet," which details its assets, liabilities, and net worth. Analysts use this report to help determine a company's *value* or *worth*.

Now, can you see the parallels? Can we borrow a page from the business world to help us discover ourselves and our value? The answer is unequivocally, "Yes!"

What follows is a brief description of assets and constraints at a personal level. This will set the stage for the assignment that follows.

Assets

Assets are essentially positive qualities/capabilities we can offer to ourselves and others in life. The *value* of these assets, unlike dollars and cents for a business, will be a function of: 1) how *well* they are used (honorably and wisely) and 2) how *much* they are used. In other words, the impact of our assets will be influenced by quality and quantity of their use. Assets that are not used have only theoretical value. A motivated person actively uses his/her assets, while an unmotivated person does not. This is a key determinant of whether a person reaches his/her full potential.

Now, let's describe the nine categories of assets. Yes, nine! Each of us have assets we might never have realized, but they exist and are ready for use!

Physical: These assets involve our physicality and body and are often used in careers, volunteer opportunities (e.g., coaching), and recreation. They include strength, speed, endurance, coordination, agility, flexibility, dexterity, and gracefulness.

Mental/Intelligence: These assets involve our mind and are used throughout daily life in our careers, decisions, communications, and knowledge pursuits. They include: intelligence, aptitudes, analytical/technical thinking, creativity, conceptual perspective, reasoning, problem solving, attention, verbal acuity, comprehension, and subject matter expertise.

Behavioral/Psychological/Personality/Emotional: This is the most diverse of the asset categories. It has the greatest influence on how we *deliver our assets* and relate

to ourselves and others. They include: disposition, personality traits, social/relational behaviors, communication, self discipline, attitude, self confidence, motivation, productivity, decision style, judgment, intuition, and emotional intelligence.

Support System: This represents the people in our lives who care about us and have our best interests at heart (e.g., family, friends, mentors, affinity groups). We can rely on them for love, support, security, guidance, modeling, fellowship, and encouragement.

Experiential: These represent the skills and enrichment we have gained by offering ourselves and our talents. They are of significant benefit to future employers and include: work, community service, life skills, leadership opportunities, global perspective, credentials, accomplishments, roles, awards, and important lessons gained.

Network: Each of us has a network of people, both personally and professionally, that we can draw upon for assistance, advocacy, or introductions. It is particularly helpful in our careers (e.g., job searches), but is broadly applicable as well.

Spiritual/Inspirational/Values: These represent the collective aspects of our spirit, including our intrinsic worth, moral compass/values, faith, and sources of inspiration we can offer others (often through overcoming adversity).

Interests: Through knowledge and experience, we're drawn toward certain subjects and activities that stimulate us intellectually, physically, or emotionally. They are used in the following arenas: activities, intellectual pursuits, hobbies, and recreation/leisure/entertainment. Think of them as the "spice of life!"

Passions and Dreams: Our passions and dreams offer vision, direction, motivation, and a sense of purpose. They are usually based on our skills, interests, or causes we care about and bring us fulfillment. They are also manifested in several life arenas including career, service, and family and shape our legacy.

Clearly, each of us has many unique qualities to offer—probably more than we ever realized. That's the point!

Constraints

Unfortunately, each of us carries burdens and baggage that hold us back, distorting our view of ourselves and our assets. They can damage our self confidence and sense of worth. They can be overwhelming and lead us to behaviors and decisions that are contrary to our well being and compromise our future.

Some of the more common constraints include a fear of failure, guilt or shame, abuse and neglect, inability to forgive ourselves or others, difficult family circumstances

(financial/relational), a lacking support structure, poor health, and low self confidence. We may have many assets to offer, but if our constraints are severe, they can impede our ability to see them or use them. By addressing our constraints through personal reflection, information, and mentoring/counseling we can have an even bigger impact on our worth than growing the value of our assets. Perhaps we can even reach a place where yesterday's constraints can be transformed into today's inspirational assets, allowing us to use our adversity to help others.

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to develop your very own personal balance sheet—a holistic vision of who you are and what you have to offer. Ideally, this comes from three sources: 1) self reflection, 2) other people, and 3) independent assessments where available (e.g., DISC, aptitude tests). By having inputs from multiple sources, you will have a much more comprehensive and accurate appraisal of yourself.

First, conduct your own assessment of your assets and constraints by first reviewing Appendix A and using the blank form in Appendix B. Your school may facilitate some independent assessments to assist you in areas such as personality and aptitudes (e.g., free DISC personality tests are available on www.123test.com and others). This “phase one” Personal Balance Sheet form is simply from your own perspective. Appendix C contains an *abbreviated* sample Personal Balance Sheet.

Second, think of people in your life who know you well and have your best interests at heart. These may include family members, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, youth leaders, and the like. Priority should be given to adults who can offer perspectives with the benefit of maturity and wisdom.

Third, seek their input by asking them to describe your special qualities and strengths in each of the nine asset categories. (Note: most will have greater perspective in certain areas than others so they may not answer for all segments) You may wish to hand out the asset category descriptions in the Appendix and give them a blank sheet of paper to record their answers. Also invite them to share anything they think may be holding you back or constraining you (*note: you need to be open to receiving their feedback rather than defensive!*). You can also conduct this via a personal interview and record their answers if this is more convenient. It would be especially beneficial for you to receive their comments in person so there is an opportunity for discussion and clarification.

Fourth, for each asset and constraint category, create a consolidated list that combines your self assessment with those of the other contributors. This is your **Personal Balance Sheet**. Notice the difference between your initial draft and this new, wider ranging list! Others see your value in ways that are not always obvious to you. You are much more valuable than you can possibly realize, and this assignment helps reveal exactly that!

Finally, write a summary report that contains the following:

1. A consolidated list of your key assets and constraints (your Personal Balance Sheet)
2. Discussion of the insights you gained from yourself and others
3. Personal reflection of how this assignment changed the way you view yourself and what you have to offer. Were there any surprises or assets you previously didn't realize or appreciate?
4. Are there any action steps that arose from this assignment in terms of your assets or constraints? Which actions would have the greatest impact?

Appendix A

Personal Asset Category Descriptions

Physical: These assets involve your physicality and body and are often used in careers, volunteer opportunities (e.g., coaching), and recreation. They include strength, speed, endurance, coordination, agility, flexibility, dexterity, and gracefulness.

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Appendix B

Personal Balance Sheet—Blank Form

ASSETS:

CONSTRAINTS:

Physical:

Physical:

Mental/Intelligence:

Mental/Intelligence:

**Behavioral/Psychological/
Personality/Emotional**

**Behavioral/Psychological/
Personality/Emotional:**

Support System:

Support System:

Experiential:

Experiential:

Network:

Network:

Spiritual/Inspirational/Values:

Spiritual/Inspirational/Values:

Interests:

Interests:

Passions and Dreams:

Passions and Dreams:

Appendix C

Sample Abbreviated Personal Balance Sheet

ASSETS:**Physical:**

Speed, strength, agility, football

Mental/Intelligence:

Analytical, problem solving, math, science, comprehension, 3.7 GPA

**Behavioral/Psychological/
Personality/Emotional**

Leader, decisive, goal-oriented, mature, approachable, confident, even tempered, outgoing, persuasive, risk taker, enterprising

Support System:

Married and loving parents, five role model adults/mentors, core group of four close friends

Experiential:

Three part-time jobs, public speaking, two mission trips, youth mentor, Rotary leadership award winner, FBLA, football team captain, ASB

Network:

Current/past supervisors, FBLA advisor, Rotary president, football coaches, ASB advisor, science/math teachers

Spiritual/Inspirational/Values:

Strong faith, kind, integrity, generous, loyal, service-minded, encouraging, genuine, overcame asthma adversity

Interests:

Football, skiing, hiking, water sports, youth mentoring/coaching, electronics

Passions and Dreams:

Start an electronics business, Master's, married with a few kids, to serve on mission-related overseas trips to help people/businesses in developing nations, volunteer football coach, climb Mt. Rainier

CONSTRAINTS:**Physical:**

Asthma

Mental/Intelligence:

Prone to excessive detail

**Behavioral/Psychological/
Personality/Emotional:**

Perfectionist, demanding

Support System:

Weak family finances, mom's health, likely far away from everyone at college

Experiential:

Small town living/somewhat sheltered

Network:

All ambassadors are local

Spiritual/Inspirational/Values:

Too hard on self when make mistakes

Interests:

Disinterested in the arts/world affairs

Passions and Dreams: