

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 intentional 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, exploring our identity is 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 guide 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 talents can be used in areas we’re passionate about. Simply put, it gives us a better chance at a fulfilling life.

TAKING A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Unfortunately, when it comes to our sense of **identity**, our perspectives tend to be 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 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 to others who lack these assets, they truly are prized possessions!

Our sense of personal worth is not only *incomplete*; it also is *inaccurate*. Each of us holds “baggage” and burdens that distort our view of ourselves and impact our self confidence. 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 fail to reach our potential.

Therefore, it pays to be as comprehensive and accurate as possible when we consider who we are and what we have to offer. That means taking a holistic perspective of our qualities and seeking constructive input from other sources.

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"). In fact, businesses even file reports called a "Balance Sheet," which details their assets, liabilities, and net worth. Analysts use this report to help determine a company's *value* or *worth*.

Can you see the parallels? We can borrow a page from the business world to help discover our own value and worth!

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

Assets

Assets are positive attributes we have available to offer in life. They are unique and valuable to each individual. Their *value*, unlike dollars and cents for a business, will be a function of: 1) how *well* they are used and 2) how *much* they are used. In other words, the impact of our assets is determined by the quality and quantity of their use. Motivation plays a key role. Assets that are not used have only *potential value*.

Now, let's review the nine categories of personal assets (yes, nine!) that are fully described later. Each of us has assets we might not have realized or fully appreciated, but they exist and are ready for use!

- Physical
- Mental
- Behavioral/Psychological
- Support System
- Experiential

- Network
- Spiritual
- Interests
- Passions and Dreams

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 common constraints include 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. Despite possessing many assets, our constraints can impede our ability to see them or use them. Addressing our constraints through personal reflection, information, and mentoring/counseling can have a huge impact on our productivity and value. This is especially true when today's constraint can be transformed into tomorrow's *inspirational asset*, allowing us to use our adversity to help others.

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to develop your 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. 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 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 <http://www.123test.com> and others). This “phase one” Personal Balance Sheet form is simply from your own perspective. Appendix C contains a sample *abbreviated* Personal Balance Sheet to assist you.

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, as well as constraints, 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) Hand out the asset category descriptions and interview questions in Appendix A and give them a blank sheet of paper to record their answers. You can also conduct this via a personal interview and record their answers if this is more convenient. It would be especially helpful for you to receive their comments in person so there is an opportunity for discussion and clarification. *Remember not to be defensive when it comes to their assessments of constraints and any constructive suggestions they may offer.*

Fourth, for each asset and constraint category, create a consolidated list that combines your self assessment with those of the other contributors (highlighting those receiving the most responses). 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 about yourself and the impact of receiving input from others. Were there any surprises or assets you previously didn't realize or appreciate?
3. Action steps for personal growth that arose from this assignment? Are there assets to be more fully utilized or constraints to be addressed?

Appendix A

Personal Balance Sheet Description and Questionnaire

Assets

Physical

Summary

These assets involve our physicality and body and are used in our careers, volunteer opportunities (e.g., coaching), and recreation.

Examples:

- Strength
- Speed
- Endurance
- Coordination
- Flexibility
- Dexterity
- Gracefulness
- Artistry—vocal, instrumental, visual, dance
- Appearance
- Sport-specific skills

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above stand out as assets you have to offer? Be specific.
2. How do you currently or plan to use these unique assets in life?

Mental

Summary

These assets involve our mind and are used both professionally and personally in our education, career, relationships, decision-making, finances, communication, knowledge and leisure pursuits, moment-to-moment thinking, interpretation, analysis, and reflection.

Examples:

- Intelligence/intellect
- Aptitudes (specific skills/talents)
- Analytical ability
- Creativity and ingenuity
- Conceptual thinking
- Decision-making/problem solving (applied reasoning)

Concentration

- Memory
- Language/communication skill
- Comprehension (understanding)
- Intuition
- Subject matter-specific (e.g., math)

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above stand out as assets you have to offer? Be specific.
2. How do you currently or plan to use these unique assets in life? Which career areas play to your mental strengths?

Spiritual

Summary

These assets involve our unique spirit. They include our moral and emotional nature, character and disposition, intrinsic worth, values, faith, and sources of inspiration and encouragement we can offer others through knowledge and personal experiences. Spiritual assets are reflected in our behavior, thoughts, relationships with God (for believers) and others, and daily decisions.

Examples:

- *Spirituality*
- *Values:* (see P. 12)
- *Inspiration*

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above stand out as assets you have to offer? Be specific.
2. Which values most characterize you, especially in the eyes of others?
3. In what ways can you be used to inspire others?
4. How can you envision using these unique assets in life?

Behavioral/Psychological

Summary

This highly diverse asset category reflects our personal nature and has the greatest influence on how we deliver our assets and relate to ourselves and to others. These assets encompass our personality, psychological attributes, attitudes, and emotions and are used constantly in our personal and professional lives. (Ref: 123test.com)

Examples:

- Personality traits:
 - Fast-paced vs. slower paced
 - People-oriented vs. task oriented
 - Volatile vs. stable temperament
 - Introverted vs. extroverted
 - Optimistic vs. pessimistic
 - Serious vs. light-hearted
 - Driven vs. supportive
 - Creative vs. analytical
 - Adventurous vs. cautious
- Emotional traits:
 - Self disciplined vs. uncontrolled
 - Self confident vs. insecure
 - Self aware vs. unaware
 - Self controlled vs. impulsive
 - Motivated vs. apathetic
 - Socially aware vs. oblivious
 - Stress tolerant—high vs. low
 - Self vs. other centered
 - Independent vs. dependent
- Social attributes:
 - Habits
 - Manners
 - Communication skill (verbal and non-verbal)
- Productivity:
 - Goal orientation (strategic/planner vs. tactical/opportunistic)
 - Time management skill (I control time vs. time controls me)
 - Decision-making ability (objective vs. subjective)

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above best characterize you and stand out as assets you have to offer? How would you rate yourself on the above dimensions? Which stand out as strengths or areas for growth? Be specific.
2. What five words would others use to describe your personality and nature?
3. How do you currently or plan to use these unique assets in life?

Support System

Summary

These assets are foundational to healthy living—representing the people (family, friends, and mentors) who provide for our basic, emotional, and relational needs. They care about us, nurture us, guide us, and have our best interests at heart.

Examples:

- Love
- Security
- Support
- Affirmation
- Encouragement
- Guidance/wisdom
- Modeling
- Friendship

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above stand out as assets that support you in life? Which key people provide which forms of support for you? Be specific.
2. Which areas could use additional support?
3. To whom do you serve as part of their support system? How so?

Network

Summary

These assets represent the network of people who offer assistance, advocacy, references, and connections. In a real sense, they are our own sales force of ambassadors who vouch for us. They are especially helpful in our professional lives but come into play personally as well. This asset category is becoming increasingly important, given the reality that *who* you know can matter as much as *what* you know.

Examples:

- Your team of ambassadors can be found among:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Co-workers (past and present)
 - Educators (teachers/professors/counselors/coaches)
 - Faith community
 - Mentors
 - Organizations and clubs (professional, service, social, recreational)
 - Clients (past and present)

Reflective Questions:

1. Review the various spheres of contacts mentioned above. Who comprises your professional network of ambassadors? Your personal network?
2. Where might be gaps in your network? What plans can you develop to strengthen it?

Experiential

Summary

These represent the skills, credentials, and enrichment gained through our personal and professional development, activities, and efforts. They are especially important in the educational and employment arenas as “proof statements” of our capabilities and examples of our leadership, growth, and skills.

Examples:

- *Academic:* GPA, clubs/organizations, activities, awards, leadership examples, and college entrance exams
- *Career:* positions/responsibilities, leadership examples/key accomplishments, awards, associations, designations, references
- *Service:* (same as career)
- *Skills:* leadership, standards of excellence, resilience, teamwork, relational, global perspective, character growth, attitudinal, and job-specific

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above stand out as assets you have to offer? Be specific in each category. What sets you apart from the crowd that would inspire confidence in your capabilities?
2. Which credential areas could stand some strengthening? What action steps can you pursue?

Interests

Summary

Through knowledge and experience, we’re drawn to certain subjects and activities that stimulate us intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and recreationally. We use them both professionally and personally in our free time. Think of them as the “spice of life!” Our interests make us interesting and more valuable!

Examples:

- Knowledge pursuits
- Career
- Activities
- Service
- Faith

- Recreation and leisure
- Entertainment
- Hobbies
- Nature
- Travel
- Social
- Creative

Reflective Questions:

1. Review the above and identify your interests in each category? Be specific.
2. How can you further develop and use these unique assets in life?

Passions and Dreams

Summary

Our passions and dreams offer vision, direction, motivation, and a sense of purpose. They are generally driven by causes/people we want to help, as well as by our interests and skills. By applying our talents to our passion areas, we find true fulfillment and significance.

Examples:

- Causes or people we care about
- Problems we'd like to solve
- Sources of joy and fulfillment
- Interests
- Special skills we have to offer
- Goals in diverse areas such as:
 - Education
 - Career
 - Personal growth
 - Experiences
 - Travel
 - Finances
 - Family
 - Service
 - Spiritual

Reflective Questions:

1. Review the first four areas above and identify what you are most passionate about? Be specific.
2. What goals can you set on a one-, five-, and 10-year basis in the above categories? Can you see how recording them is motivational?

Constraints

Summary

Each of us has constraints that impede our willingness or ability to fully utilize our assets. They often represent burdens we carry that attack our self-confidence and sense of worth and hope by introducing insecurity and doubt. Some are tangible, but most are intangible and affect us personally and professionally. By addressing our constraints through mentoring, counseling, our spiritual life, perseverance, and knowledge, we can reduce their impact and free ourselves to use our full suite of assets.

Examples:

- “Contra Assets:”
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Spiritual
 - Behavioral/Psychological
 - Support system
 - Network
 - Experiential
 - Interests
 - Passions and dreams
- Fear of failure or criticism
- Low self esteem
- Guilt or shame
- Inability to forgive self or others
- Abuse or neglect
- Addiction
- Generational poverty
- Lack of faith

Reflective Questions:

1. Which of the above constraint areas are interfering you in utilizing your assets? Be specific.
2. Which action steps can you develop to help reduce or eliminate the impact of these constraints?
3. Which assets are being impacted the most from your constraints?

Values

**Kindness
Sincerity
Compassion
Friendliness
Helpfulness
Affability
Generosity
Courteous/mannered
Empathetic
Patience
Other-centeredness
Unselfishness
Reliability
High Standards
Purposeful
Productive
Disciplined
Resourceful
Ambitious/motivated**

**Honesty
Integrity
Honor
Respectful
Loyalty
Humility
Tactful
Obedient
Courageous
Self discipline
Authenticity
Cooperative
Faith
Gratefulness
Resilience
Contentment
Grace
Purity
Dignity
Modesty**

Interview Questionnaire

1. Describe the student's **physical** assets. 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.
2. Describe the student's **mental** assets. 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, language/communications, comprehension, decision-making, and subject matter expertise.
3. Describe the student's **spiritual** assets. They include our moral and emotional nature, character and disposition, intrinsic worth, values, faith, and sources of inspiration and encouragement we can offer others.
4. Describe the student's **behavioral/psychological** assets. 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.
5. Describe the student's **support system** assets. 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.
6. Describe the student's **network** assets. 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 and references), but is broadly applicable as well.
7. Describe the student's **experiential** assets/credentials (e.g., academic, career, service, and life skills). These represent the skills and enrichment we have gained by offering ourselves and our talents and illustrate our accomplishments and impact. They are of significant benefit to future employers and include: work, community service, life skills, leadership attributes, global perspective, credentials, accomplishments, roles, awards, and important lessons gained.
8. Describe the student's **interests** that stand out. Through personal experience, we're drawn toward certain subjects and activities that stimulate us intellectually, physically, or emotionally. They are used in the following arenas: activities, knowledge pursuits, faith, hobbies, community service, and recreation/travel/leisure/entertainment. Think of them as the "spice of life!"
9. Describe the **passions and dreams** you can envision for the student (e.g., cause-, interest-, and skill-related). 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.

10. Describe the student's **constraints** (things restraining the use of the above assets, interfere with reaching their full potential, or which could adversely affect their self worth, self confidence, and personal effectiveness).

Appendix B

Personal Balance Sheet—Blank Form

ASSETS:

Physical:

Mental:

Behavioral/Psychological:

Support System:

Experiential:

Network:

Spiritual:

Interests:

Passions and Dreams:

CONSTRAINTS:

Physical:

Mental:

Behavioral/Psychological:

Support System:

Experiential:

Network:

Spiritual:

Interests:

Passions and Dreams:

Appendix C

Sample Abbreviated Personal Balance Sheet

ASSETS:**Physical:**

Speed, strength, agility, football

Mental:

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

Behavioral/Psychological:

Leader, decisive, goal-oriented, mature, 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:

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:

Prone to excessive detail

Behavioral/Psychological:

Perfectionist, demanding, highly opinionated

Support System:

Weak family finances, mom's health, friends and family distant at college

Experiential:

Somewhat sheltered

Network:

All ambassadors are local

Spiritual:

Highly self critical when make mistakes

Interests:

Disinterested in world affairs

Passions and Dreams:

Family finances may threaten college friends