



PERFORMANCE LAB  
performance re-wired

# HOW TO LIVE FOCUSED:

a blueprint for goals,  
self-reflection and intention

Email: [info@performancelab.com.au](mailto:info@performancelab.com.au)

[www.performancelab.com.au](http://www.performancelab.com.au)

## INTRODUCTION: THE BLUEPRINT

One of the greatest things we can do at least once a year is a deep dive into understanding ourselves and setting our goals. Over the years I have researched many different versions of these activities, so I decided to distil them into a comprehensive framework.

### **Why is this important?**

Understanding what makes us tick, where we need to grow, and our potential to sabotage ourselves is all part of living with intention and getting the most out of the time we have on this planet. Too many people meander through their days on autopilot, doing the same things over and over, and yet feeling unfulfilled about where they are and where they are going.

When we take the time to do deep self-reflection, we can start to be more deliberate about where we spend our time and attention, our direction, and what lessons we need to learn from our previous selves to guide our future selves.

As the saying goes: “if you want to understand why you’re here, look at your past behaviours. If you want to know where you’re going, look at your current behaviours.”

I would argue it’s not only our behaviours (although these have the most impact), but also the way we think and feel that drives those behaviours and puts us on the path to either personal growth or stagnating.

While you might tend to follow this framework to set up your goals for the year, there are different time frames for setting and reviewing the elements in this guide. However, each element can and should be reviewed at least annually.

### **The elements of this practice are:**

- Your personal VALUES
- Your MINDSET
- Your SOMEDAY GOALS
- Your ANNUAL THEMES and TOP TEN GOALS
- Your TRAP DOORS
- Your LESSONS

Some of these elements we have developed at Performance Lab, others I have borrowed or adapted from brilliant authors. Where I have borrowed from others, I will reference who they are.

I will also give examples of my own self-reflection to give you an idea of how each element looks and works in your journey of constant growth.

So, with no further preamble, let’s dive in.

## CHAPTER ONE: YOUR PERSONAL VALUES

Getting clear on your Personal Values is one of the most consequential things you can do. It helps you to make better decisions, as well as allocate your time, attention, and resources in the best way possible.

Your Personal Values are representative of the way you want to live your life.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to think deeply about your values and refine them into clear and concise beacons for how you want to live and what should be important to you.

**As a starting point to establish your Personal Values, here are some questions to reflect on:**

- What do you love?
- What do you hate?
- What do you resent?
- If money and time were no object, how would you spend your time?
- If you were dying and your grandchild asked you how they should live their life, what would be your advice?

My experience is that when people ponder these questions, their Personal Values start to uncover themselves. If you're still stuck after a few days or weeks of thinking deeply about these, then you can also look up a list of Values and start narrowing down the ones that are most important to you.

Your first draft of your Personal Values might take you days or weeks to come up with, but it is not uncommon for this list to be refined over years. Your Personal Values might change slightly, but will most likely represent your best self, for most of your life.

It is also important not to get hung up on the technicalities of what is and isn't a 'value' – don't look up the dictionary definition and stick to it unwaveringly. The basic measure is this: if you think it will inform how you want to live your life, then you can claim it as one of your personal Values.

Of course, there are basic values such as honesty and integrity, and you most likely want to live according to these, but if you do these without thinking, then don't add them to your Personal Values. Instead, pick values for which you feel you need a reminder to enact.

### **Examples:**

As I wrote earlier, I will use my own experience as an example. Not because it is the best example, but because it is an experience I can share with you that might (hopefully) help you to think about your own. I would rather do this than give you a hypothetical.

My own Personal Values have taken years to refine. The bulk of the development probably spanned a six-month period, but they have been tweaked a few times and have now been a staple for the last ten years of my life. They are:

- Constant Growth
- Health
- Family
- Adventure
- Simplicity
- Serving Others

Usually, I would suggest people have not more than four to five (because it makes them easier to remember), but for me, the element of 'Constant Growth' is really an overarching way of living that spans all my Values.

When I need to make a big decision (and sometimes even small ones), I consider how it fits with my Values. If I am worried about something, I check to see if it will have a big impact on my Values.

And generally, I check in with my Values to make sure I am still living according to their intent. Sometimes I will realise I have accumulated too much 'stuff' and cull things to get back to Simplicity. Or other times I will notice I haven't been out in nature for a hike or a surf for a while, which reminds me to enact my 'Adventure' value.

### **Values Timeline:**

Set these for the long term. Refine them over (possibly) years.

Revisit your Values any time you feel you need a reminder. I tend to write them out once a quarter to check in with how I am living my life.

Assess your actions once a quarter, to see how you are enacting your Values and maybe what you are doing that undermines them. Think about how you can better live these through daily or weekly behaviours.

### **Bonus Question: What is Wealth?**

Answering this question is a great anchor for understanding what is important to us and where we should invest our time and resources.

## CHAPTER TWO: YOUR MINDSET

If Values are how you live your life, your Mindset is how you see the world. This is another long-term self-reflection that I came across in Steven Peters' book 'The Chimp Paradox,' which is one of the best books I have ever read explaining our emotional brain and how it hijacks our thoughts and actions.

### **Your Mindset covers three important aspects of your perception:**

- How I see myself
- How I see others
- How I see the world

The impact of clarifying these cannot be underestimated. For me, it is one of the most profound reflections I have done, and it constantly serves me to get back on track when I am overwhelmed, anxious or stressed. It is also a reminder for how I can control my perception of the world daily – instead of just being a passenger.

### **Let's break these down a little:**

#### *How I see myself:*

This is about all the ways that you view yourself and the stories that you tell yourself. You may write some positive things, like 'I am capable,' or you may write some negative things like 'I am lazy.' On balance, I encourage you to write more positive than negative.

Read your negative stories and challenge them. I once had a friend write 'I am uninteresting.' When I challenged them to think of their life and all the things they had done, they realised this wasn't true, but a story they were telling themselves. Rather, they had not worked out how to tell the right story about themselves.

The process of challenging our negative stories may take a while, and you may need help. But it is important that you challenge these and finish with the top positive stories about yourself.

(And don't worry – there is a place to reflect on your 'negative' attributes in the 'Your Trapdoors' section).

#### *How I see others:*

Answer this element specifically in how other people affect you. When you have conflict, what do you think of others? How do you explain it? What do you think people's general intentions are? Are you wary, or trusting?

#### *How I see the world:*

The world is a big place. But thinking about how you see the world starts to open more intentional ways of looking at it every day. You might see the world as hostile and threatening or you might see it as full of opportunity. In reality – you shape your own perception, so you



can see the world any way you want. Maybe you should approach this question as ‘if you could see the world any way, what would that be?’

I have given you some clues and framework here – especially in the ‘How I see myself’ section – but I don’t want to guide you too much. Instead, these are great questions to ponder. The answers you give are amazing anchors to come back to when you are doubtful about yourself or life in general. They remind you how you should think, instead of your emotional brain telling you alternate, unhelpful stories.

### **Examples:**

Here is my Mindset reflection. Sharing this one is difficult for me because I have high self-esteem, so they can come across as over-confident, but here goes:

How I see myself:

- I can be good at anything by doing the work
- People generally like me, and I have a positive effect on people
- All the pieces of me are necessary to make the ‘whole’ me – even the ‘ugly’ parts

How I see others:

- Everyone is on their own journey
- Hurt people, hurt people. If people are mean, it is usually because they are suffering in their own way
- If people act poorly towards me, it is a reflection of their own path, not a reflection of me

How I see the world:

- The world is full of beauty and opportunity
- This beauty is in the small things, not the big gestures – you often must look for it
- There are only a handful for things that truly matter
- Impermanence – no person or situation stays the same. Good or bad, things will change

You can see how these would be incredibly helpful for me to revisit when things are going wrong, when I am anxious, angry or doubtful, or when I feel I have been unfairly treated.

### **Mindset Timeline:**

Set these for the long term. Refine them over (possibly) years.

Revisit your Mindset any time you feel you need a reminder. As I wrote above, whenever you feel a way that you don’t want to feel – read these and remember how you truly think and not how your emotional brain wants you to think.

I tend to write these out at the start of every year and a couple times throughout the year I might add to them if something profound strikes me.

## CHAPTER THREE: YOUR 'SOMEDAY' GOALS

Next in our reflection deep-dive are our 'Someday Goals'. As you might have guessed, these are goals we want to achieve 'someday' – way off in the future. I know goals are supposed to be bound by time, and you may want to do that for some of these goals, but don't get too structured. Some goals are hard to quantify but are no less important. For example, goals about how you want to enrich relationships are obviously hard to put a number on, but just because they aren't technically measurable, doesn't mean we shouldn't have them.

There are generally four Goal Areas I use – you may want to add more to this list.

### **The Four Goal Areas:**

- Career
- Financial
- Relationships
- Wellness

As you can see, some are easily quantified. You might want to achieve a certain level in your profession, or you might want to build an amount in your investment portfolio by retirement. These career and financial goals can be concrete. But others are not as simple to make objective. Thinking about your important relationships when you are older, or about your physical, mental and emotional wellness as you get into your later years, are necessarily a bit more subjective.

Your Someday Goals should project into the future as far as you are comfortable: retirement, when your kids have left, the legacy you want to leave – these are all good time spans for Someday Goals. These long-term visions will help guide your behaviours at a more day-to-day level, when you start to think about the things that might prevent them from becoming reality. They will also be considerations when you start to think about the smaller stepping stones of your annual goals.

### **Examples:**

Again, sharing my own long-term goals makes me incredibly uncomfortable. Likewise, you shouldn't feel like you have to share yours with others, unless you need those people to help you achieve them. I am going to make one amendment: I am not going to include all the actual targets in certain goal areas – instead, I will represent these with an x.

#### *Career Someday Goals*

- Positively affect 10,000 people per year through my work.
- Command \$x dollars per engagement
- Sell x products per month to get to more people

### *Financial Someday Goals*

- Accumulate \$x net worth
- Donate \$x per year to charity
- Set up future generations for wealth management

### *Relationship Someday Goals*

- Have a strong family unit for all generations
- Have the type of relationship with my kids where they will always come to me for advice or to just talk
- Be an exceptional role model as a husband, father and son
- Have a strong social network

### *Wellness Someday Goals*

- Elite physical, mental and emotional wellness at every age bracket
- Top 5% in age categories for VO2 and body fat percentage
- Challenge and grow mentally and emotionally until I am physically or mentally unable
- Prolong my healthspan\* as far as possible

\*Healthspan is the duration of your life for which you are healthy and functioning, as opposed to lifespan, which measure how long you are alive.

### **Someday Goals Timelines**

Generally, you set your Someday Goals once. But these will absolutely iterate over the years. Some things may become more important as your life evolves, you might get more information, or you might just need to adjust.

The timeline for these iterations is variable. For instance, my wellness goal of being top 5% in VO2 and body fat for my age category is only recent, as I came across some research indicating that these two parameters are massive indicators for healthspan. And ten years ago, wellness goals were more about physical fitness rather than mental and emotional wellness – as you can see there is now a balance.

Review these Someday Goals once a year – especially when you set your annual goals, so you know they are aligned - and add to them or amend them whenever you feel necessary.



## CHAPTER FOUR: YOUR ANNUAL THEMES AND TOP TEN

Finally! The section on annual goal-setting. I know some of you will be reading this just to get to this point and you've agonised through exercises on Personal Values and Mindset. But I hope you realise that the clearer you are on the bigger picture, the more effective your goals will be and the more likely you are to stay on track to achieving them.

The Annual Top Ten is heavily influenced by the work of Gordo Byrn – endurance guru, athlete, and all-round fountain of wisdom on thinking about and executing the most effective plan to get where you want to go.

Until adopting this method I would set 12-month goals at the start of every year, assess these periodically against some well-spaced milestones, and celebrate the wins at the end of the year. After all, this seems logical. But the thing is, I often wouldn't have the wins to celebrate. For whatever reason, this method failed to keep me motivated, focussed and on track.

Today I treat my annual goal setting differently. And it goes like this:

- 1) Reflect on my Someday Goals
- 2) Set one or two 'themes' for achievement in each of the four goal areas (Career, Financial, Relationships and Wellness)
- 3) Set 10 smaller goals to achieve throughout the year, that will contribute to the 'themes'

What I found was, this gave me more opportunity to make progress. More opportunity to cross off another achievement and therefore more opportunity for the dopamine hit that comes with it. These smaller achievements were far more satisfying and motivating than hitting the milestones on the way to the bigger goals.

### **There are a few things you should keep in mind, though:**

- Your 'Theme' for each goal area should be something you want to work on over the full year. I have learned that anything worthwhile achieving will take you at least a year, often more. Sometimes we think we can achieve something in a few weeks or a couple of months, but too often we take shortcuts to make this happen, and the change becomes unsustainable. If you truly can do a big push towards something for a month or two and it's worthwhile, it probably falls into the Top Ten goals
- The Top Ten goals should all contribute to your Someday Goals
- Make sure you have at least one Top Ten goal for each of the four goal areas – you need to be balanced

### **Examples:**

To break this down, I will first recap my Someday Goal and then show you the Theme for each and why I chose it. I will then lay out my Top Ten Goals below. Again, in doing this, I hope I present you with some meaningful examples to write your own. My recent Themes and Top Ten Goals look like this:

*Career:*

Someday Goals – positively affect 10,000 people per year; command \$x per engagement; sell x products per month

Annual Theme – Increase Profile

Why I chose this theme: I haven't been as disciplined with marketing over the last year or two. And if I want to achieve my Someday Goals, this is one driver that will help move all my goals.

*Financial:*

Someday Goals - Accumulate \$x net worth; Donate \$x per year to charity; Set up future generations for wealth management

Annual Theme – Grow Portfolio

Why I chose this theme – During Covid, revenue for my business was compromised. Consequently, we have not done much investing, so I want to get back into the habit of this.

*Relationships:*

Someday Goals - Have a strong family unit for all generations; Have the type of relationship with my kids where they will always come to me for advice or to just talk; Be an exceptional role model as a husband, father and son; Have a strong social network

Annual Theme – Consolidate my relationships with my sons

Why I chose this theme – I have three boys who are all at an age where they are going to be more focussed on external relationships – either with friends or partners. To achieve a lot of my goals, I want to focus on keeping great relationships with them through this period.

*Wellness:*

Someday Goals - Elite physical, mental and emotional wellness at every age bracket; Top 5% in age categories for VO2 and body fat percentage measures; Challenge and grow mentally and emotionally until I am physically or mentally unable; Prolong my healthspan as far as possible.

Annual Theme – Get Leaner

Why I chose this theme – Firstly, more and more research shows this is a driver of longevity and healthspan. Further, with this as my focus, I know that I will execute on both my nutrition and training goals, and it is something I have not been as focussed on in the last year or so. Interestingly, this is one of those goals that, in the past, I would try to achieve over 2-3 months. This would result in choosing unsustainable behaviours which required enormous amounts of willpower and sacrifice. By engaging with this theme over 12 months, I take a lot of that pressure off and build more sustainable habits.

I hope those themes are helpful for planning your own journey of growth and development.

With that context, here are my Annual Top Ten Goals:

- Start a podcast
- Publish 10 marketing videos
- Get away for two days camping solo
- Ride twice in different cities
- Take my sons on an adventure
- Take an overseas holiday with the family
- 65 alcohol free days per quarter
- 85 hours of training per quarter
- Start blood panel tracking
- Invest \$x per month in our share portfolio

As you can see there are a mix of different goals here. Some are big (start a podcast), some are one-off (take an overseas holiday), others require a commitment daily to achieve a target. But they all move me toward my Annual Themes and Someday Goals. They also give me a steady stream of things I can focus on to achieve throughout the year.

The targets I set are completely doable. For example, the \$x per month investment, the 85 hours of training per quarter, are all very achievable numbers for me. I would rather set these, achieve them, and feel good about it, than set higher stretch targets then feel bad about missing them. The good feeling is what keeps me engaged and executing the habit over and over. Consistently good beats occasionally great.

Having said that, I know from experience that I will probably achieve 7-8 of these goals, which I feel is a sweet spot for stretch and achievement. From Steve Magness' great book, 'Do Hard Things' I learned that the best goals we can set are 'just-manageable challenges.' Magness says, if you feel in full control make the challenge a little harder. If you feel anxious dial things back.

Finally, I often start this process with about 15 goals, and then narrow them down. My rule is that I can only have 10 and if I feel during the year that things change and I want to add a goal, then I also need to remove another one.

### **Annual Theme and Top Ten Timeline:**

This is obviously set annually but can be reviewed any time throughout the year. I like to look at my Top Ten at least weekly to work out what I can move forward in that immediate week.

## CHAPTER FIVE: YOUR TRAPDOORS

This is all great. But what usually gets in the way? Are you aware of the ways that you might sabotage yourself?

I told you earlier that there would be a chance to think about your weaknesses, and that moment has arrived. This is an important part of the process, because acknowledging your weaknesses brings them into the light. Often, we have weaknesses that we are unaware of and therefore they blindside us constantly. When we reflect and acknowledge our unproductive behaviours, we can be aware of how to manage them.

Everyone has these Trapdoors. I call them trapdoors because you can be travelling along just fine and all of a sudden, these behaviours, feelings or reactions 'just happen' and down you go – you fall in a hole and get completely derailed.

Our Trapdoors come in the form of reactionary behaviours, patterns of thinking, stories we tell ourselves that constantly sabotage our good intentions.

### **To uncover your Trapdoors, here are some questions to ask:**

- What things do I wish I could change about the way I react, think or feel?
- What do I do that gets in the way of achieving my goals?
- When things go wrong, what do I often regret?

Another way to discover your Trapdoors is to look back at your goals (either your Someday or Annual Top Ten) and think about the things you might need to look out for in your own patterns of behaviour. You might also want to classify them into the four Goal Areas: Career, Finance, Relationships, Wellness.

### **Examples:**

Here are my Trapdoors. I will list them in the Goal Area categories:

#### *Career:*

- Fear of raising my profile because I think I will look like a wanker
- Under investing in 'important, non-urgent' tasks because of relationship guilt (see below)
- Researching too much without distilling down to application

#### *Finance:*

- Buying things I 'think' I'll need instead of what I actually need. Then I buy them and don't use them
- Setting goals that are too ambitious instead of just 'next step' goals and then getting discouraged

#### *Relationships:*

- Over-investing in relationships out of guilt, instead of being more objective
- Having to be right



- Not seeing my parents enough, but expecting my kids to have a good relationship with their parents (me)

#### *Wellness:*

- If I get too hungry, I habitually eat crap between getting home and dinner
- I eat bad food as a 'reward.' I feel like I 'deserve it' if I have had a difficult day or on days with really hard workouts
- I prioritise cycling and running over strength training because I can 'compete' in those things and strength training requires travel time to the gym

Now, it's one thing to know these Trapdoors, but you also need a plan for when they start to swallow you up. For each of these Trapdoors, decide on an alternative behaviour or thought pattern that you can start to execute instead. Take my example of 'eating crap between getting home and dinner' – my alternate behaviour is to drink two glasses of water or have a piece of fruit. Knowing the alternative action is a key ingredient in changing the behaviour and avoiding the Trapdoor.

#### **Trapdoor Timeline:**

This is a long-term process. You'll do an initial thinking session to reflect on your Trapdoors and write them down, but you will find that you will add to the list as you think about, or experience, others.

Review these any time you are planning, to make sure that you know the things that can sabotage your best intentions.

## CHAPTER SIX: YOUR LESSONS

Have you ever read a quote or a piece of advice and thought, 'wow, that is so true!' And then you forget about it, make a mistake only to be reminded of the piece of wisdom down the track and think, 'why didn't I remember that?'

In this final section of your self-reflection, it is time to recall all the lessons you've learnt along your life's journey, that have proved true for you in various situations. We have all learnt valuable lessons – whether from personal experience, reading, or observing others. The problem is, we forget these lessons and end up making similar mistakes over and over.

The objective of Your Lessons is to capture advice, ways of living, processes for making decisions or reminders about how you should think, feel or act. This is a list you can reflect on repeatedly, thus embedding these lessons and also reminding yourself of their impact.

### Examples:

My lessons are from coaches, advisors, authors, Zen Buddhism and many other sources. Some of them are directly related to the four Goal Areas, while others are general life lessons. Here are my Lessons, and the types of things you are looking for:

- Consistently good beats occasionally great
- Anything worthwhile takes years, not weeks or months
- Any single training session is not more important than the next
- Always save/invest something – especially when you think you can't
- If you use it every day and it supports your values, it is worth the money
- Spend money on experiences, or things that give you experiences
- Buy the cheapest version you are happy with OR the most expensive you can afford – in between is usually not worth it
- The relationship matters more than anything else
- Everything is true and nothing is true – what is true for me may not be for you
- Impermanence – everything changes, everything is a phase
- No person or situation is truly good or bad – it just 'is'
- Progress towards anything worthwhile is never linear, the ups and downs are part of the process



## WRAP UP

So, what's next?

Whatever stage of life you're in, all these exercises are valuable pieces of reflection and planning. Not all of these will resonate with everyone, so feel free to choose the sections that you feel are most worthwhile and start thinking, pondering, brainstorming, and writing.

However, I urge you, at some point, to also return to this paper and think about those sections that don't resonate or for which you feel some discomfort. My experience is that the things we avoid are the things we most need.

### **Next Steps:**

- Buy a dedicated journal for this exercise
- Find a pen or pencil you enjoy writing with (writing is infinitely more effective than typing, for processing and recalling information)
- Pick any starting point from the six chapters
- Give yourself time and space to think – this means get away from distractions
- Write a little. Go about your days and keep thinking. Write a little more
- Keep the finished product somewhere you can easily access it
- Review periodically

Good luck!