

# Instructions for The Happiness Trap ‘Values, Goals & Barriers’ Cards

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## How To ‘Play A Card’

In many of the steps that follow, you will see the instruction to ‘play’ a particular card. These are not the forty basic values cards, but rather the additional cards to create goals and overcome barriers. There are at least three different ways to ‘play a card’.

1. Place it on the table top, and both you and the client look at it/read it/discuss it together.
2. You keep hold of the card, and read out the questions or sentences one at a time
3. Give the card to the client and ask him to read it – silently or aloud – and ask for his responses.

## Writing Down Responses

It’s a good idea for you or your client to write down the responses, otherwise they are easily forgotten. At the end of these instructions, on page 6, you’ll find a form especially designed for this purpose.

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## Step One: Pick A Life Domain

Values, or at least their relative importance, will vary across different life domains. The Life Domains card lists ten common domains of life – work, education, parenting, health etc. Give it to your client and ask him to pick one domain, to focus on for today’s session. (You can of course pick other life domains that aren’t listed, e.g. sports.)

## Step Two: Sort Values Into Three Piles: Very Important, Quite Important, Not So Important

Next ask your client to go through the forty values cards, and without thinking too hard about it, sort them into three piles - very important, quite important, and not so important – for this chosen life domain. (The ‘Other Values’ card is to capture any client values that are not mentioned in the forty.) Most clients are likely to put most of the cards into the first two categories; typically there will be very few in the ‘not so important’ pile.

## Step Three: Remove The ‘Not So Important’ Pile, And Sort The Remaining Two Again

Remove the ‘Not So Important’ pile – usually there will only be a few cards in it. Then sort the remaining two piles again. Ask your client to see if they can reduce the ‘Very Important’ pile down to eight cards, moving all the others into ‘Quite Important’. If your client says she can’t do this, that’s okay; just ask her to get the pile as small as possible.

## Step Four: Remove The ‘Quite Important’ Pile, Then Pick 2 or 3 Cards From The ‘Very Important’ Pile

Remove the ‘Quite Important’ pile. Hopefully you now have only eight left in the Very Important pile – but if you have more or less than this number, it’s okay. (If your client has a smart phone, you can invite him to take a photo or two of this pile, as a memory aid.)

Now ask your client to pick no more than 2 or 3 cards from the very important pile: ‘Pick two or three values that you really want to focus on; that you really want to bring more into play in this domain.’ If your client says he can’t do this, gently encourage him: ‘Just select two or three to focus on for this week; next week you can change the selection if you like.’

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## Step Five: Living Your Values & Encouraging Values

At this point, it's often useful to pull out the Living Your Values card and explore some or all of those questions. This step elaborates values into patterns of action.

With some clients, it may also be useful to pull out the Encouraging Values card and explore those questions too. This is especially the case if your client says things like, 'I want my kids to have these values.'

## Step Six: Goal Setting

Hand your client the Goals card. This invites her to think about short, medium and long term goals. Depending on the client, and the session, you may just set one short term goal, or you may set several goals, including medium and long term. Write these down as you set them. As a general rule, for new clients, early in therapy, you are best just to set one very quick, simple, easy short-term goal. However for high-functioning clients, especially in a coaching setting, you may set quite a range of goals. Certainly, as therapy progresses, you do want to start setting medium and long term goals.

## Step Seven: On A Scale of 0-10, How Likely Are You To Do This?

Ask your client: 'On a scale of zero to ten, where ten means "I will definitely do this, no matter what" and zero means "There's no way I'm ever going to do this" and 5 means "It's fifty-fifty whether I will do this or not", how likely is it that you will actually do this?'

If your client scores 7 or above, that's ideal. If your client scores under 7, that doesn't bode well for success, so ask her to come up with a smaller, simpler, easier goal. Keep scaling the goal down, making it ever smaller and easier, until she can score at least a 7.

## Step 8: Identify Values-Twists

Explain to your client: 'Often our mind twists our values into unhelpful stories. Before we go any further, can we just make sure this isn't happening for you.' Then play the Twisting Values card and ask, 'Is your mind twisting your values in any of these ways?'

If he says no, reply 'Great. Keep a look out for them, though. They are likely to pop up.'

If he says yes, reply, 'That's normal. So see if you can unhook yourself from that story, and come back to the actual values. There is no right/wrong/good/bad/should/shouldn't in your values. Values are simply words that describe your heart's deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. You don't "have to" act on these values. Acting on them won't make you a 'good person', and neglecting them won't make you a 'bad person'. The question is simply, deep in your heart, do you want to behave in this way?'

Note: If preferred, you can play this card a step earlier, just before goal-setting, or a step later, after action-planning.

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## Step 9: Action Planning

Now that you have checked this is a values-congruent goal, and the client believes it's fairly realistic (at least 7 out of 10), play the Action Planning card. Talk through the actual steps required to achieve the goal in question.

## Step 10: Skills

Play the Skills card, and identify existing skills that can help with the actions above.

In some sessions, you may also use this card to identify skills that need to be developed in order to progress to more challenging goals.

## Step 11: Obstacles

Now play the Obstacles card, to anticipate any potential obstacles that may get in the way of the action plan. For each obstacle identified, create another action plan to deal with it.

## Step 12: Unhelpful Stories

Now explain, 'The mind is like a reason-giving machine. As soon as we even think about stepping out of our comfort zone, it starts cranking out all sorts of reasons why we can't do it, shouldn't do it, or shouldn't even have to do it.' Then play the Unhelpful Stories card and ask her to identify:

- a) any of these stories her mind is telling her right now,
- b) any of these stories that her mind might tell her later, and
- c) any other unhelpful stories not listed on the card.

If your client already has defusion skills, then ask her a) to use them right now to unhook from these stories and b) how might she use them in future when these stories recur

If your client does NOT have defusion skills, ask if you can now spend some time learning these skills, so she can unhook herself from these unhelpful stories, in order to live her values

## Step 13: Expansion

'Expansion' is a term I use in *The Happiness Trap* in place of 'acceptance'. Play the Expansion card to explore what private experiences – i.e. thoughts, images, feelings, emotions, sensations, urges, cravings, or memories - the client will need to open up and make room for, in order to follow the action plan.

If your client already has acceptance skills, then ask him a) to use them right now to make room for these private experiences and b) how he might use them in future to make room for private experiences that show up as he implements his action plan

If your client does NOT have acceptance skills, ask if you can now spend some time learning these skills, so he can make room for these thoughts and feelings, in order to live by his values

## Step 14: Once Again, On A Scale of 0-10, How Likely Are You To Do This?

Repeat step 7. Ask the same scaling question, and if your client still scores 7 or above, great! But if he now scores under 7, go back and come up with a smaller, simpler, easier goal. Keep scaling the goal down, making it ever smaller and easier, until he can score at least a 7.

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## How To Use The Values Conflicts Card

Most supposed ‘values conflicts’ are not truly a conflict of values, but rather an issue of time management. The ‘values conflicts’ card quickly reveals this. For example, suppose your client says, ‘I have a conflict between family life and career.’ What he’s identified here are not conflicting values, but two different domains of life that compete for his time and energy.

So you would play the ‘Values Conflicts’ card and say something like, ‘Well you’ve identified two important domains of life - work and family – and we can’t effectively look at them both simultaneously, so let’s pick one to look at first.’ (You’ll see this is the first instruction on the Values Conflicts card; note that it specifies: *Only pick one domain at a time.*)

Suppose the client chooses Work. You then move to the second instruction: *which two values seem to be in conflict?* If the client says something like, ‘I really want to be productive at work and accomplish a lot, but I also want to be available for my kids.’ You then reply, ‘Okay, I get you want to be available for your kids. However, that’s a different life domain; that’s family, not work. I promise we’ll look at family next. Right now, we’re looking at work. While you’re actually at work, are there any work values that conflict with each other?’

If your client now says, ‘Well, no not really’ then you reply, ‘Okay, so we’re not really talking about a values-conflict here. We’re talking about a time management issue; how many hours do you spend at work, and how many hours do you spend with family. Presumably, your values in the work situation are not going to change whether you spend one hour per week at work or fifty hours at work. And your values towards your family are not going to change whether you spend one hour per week with your family or fifty hours per week with your family. So how about we try to figure out how you are going to divide your time up between these domains?’ The rest of the Values Conflict card is now no longer relevant, as it’s not a values conflict

Sometimes however, there is a genuine values conflict. Most commonly this is in a relationship domain. Suppose your client identifies, ‘Intimate Partner’ as the domain in question. The next instruction is identify two values – *and never more than two at a time* – that seem to conflict.

Suppose your client says, ‘Well I think it’s a conflict between these two – Fitness and Supportiveness. I definitely want more freedom for myself. I want more time to ride my bike and play footy and go to the gym, but Sue doesn’t like any of those things. But I also want to be supportive to Sue.’

Then you move to parts 1) and 2) the next question on the card:

*What are small, simple, easy things you can do within this life domain, to:*

- 1) *live value A*
- 2) *live value B*

In the example above, the client might choose, after some discussion, ‘Well for fitness, I can go for a bike ride by myself on Saturday morning. And for supportiveness, I can go to a movie of Sue’s choice on Saturday night, or a restaurant she really likes.’

Then you would move on to part 3) of the question:

*What are small, simple, easy things you can do within this life domain, to:*

- 3) *live both values, A and B, at once*

Hopefully the client can come up with something, but if not, you can make suggestions. E.g. in the scenario above, you might say, ‘Are there any ways you can be supportive to Sue, while also doing

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something for fitness? Maybe go for a walk before the movie, or dinner; or afterwards? Or maybe help her to cook a healthy meal that you’d both enjoy?’

Finally, the last question explores the issue in more depth: *Are there more challenging things you can do to live value A, value B, or both?*

### WHAT IF THERE’S NO WAY TO ACT ON BOTH VALUES SIMULTANEOUSLY?

There may not always be a way to act on both values simultaneously. If not, it’s about choosing when and where and how to act on value A, and when and where and how to act on value B, and accepting that is the way reality is right now. However, you can still link these values together using the one card that ‘overarches’ or ‘encapsulate’ all other values: the **Caring & Self Care** values card.

The description on the **Caring & Self Care** card reads: *To take care of, or act caringly toward myself, others, the environment and all living things.* (Note: You will need to explain that ‘environment’ means anything and everything you come into contact with outside your own body.) You can pull this card out and play it on top of the other two conflicting-values, and have the client see that whatever values they have chosen, they are ultimately about *caring for* or *caring about* someone or something.

Thus, in the example above, whatever actions are chosen in the service of A and B, they are always actions of caring. Once this is addressed, the issue then becomes once again one of time management: ‘How much time in this relationship do I allocate to caring for myself, and how much time do I allocate to caring for my partner, and how much time do I allocate to caring for us both simultaneously?’

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Life Domain:	
2 or 3 of my Very Important Values to work with today:	
Goal(s):	Key Steps of Action Plan(s):
What skills can I use and/or develop?	
Unhelpful Stories and/or Values Twists to unhook from:	
EXPANSION: Thoughts, Feelings, Sensations, Urges, Memories to open up and make room for:	
Obstacles: What might get in the way? How will I deal with this if it happens?	