PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE MEANING

**Assessing Your Daily Finances: A Self-Reflection Exercise**

*In this exercise, you’ll look at your daily finances and what you spend.*

1) For a week, write down how you spend your money each day.

2) Think about the amount of money you spent on various things (activities, food, clothing, entertainment, etc.), if it was a need or a want, and how much pleasure you derived from each.

3) Then rate those items on the meaning/pleasure you derived from them. Use a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “a great deal of meaning or pleasure” and 1 being “no meaning or pleasure.”

4) To the right of the Meaning/Pleasure columns, indicate if you would like to spend more or less money on that item. If you want to spend more money, put one or two pluses (+ +). Use the minus sign if you want to spend less money, and a double minus if you want to spend a lot less money (- -). If you are satisfied with the amount of money you spent on an item, write in a zero (0).

5) Feel free to make notes—such as what might work better, or why you don’t find meaning or pleasure in a particular item —in the Comments column.

6) Add spaces to list more spending items as needed.

7) A few examples are shown at the top of the chart.

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| **Activity** | **Need/**  **Want?** | **Meaning (rank 1-5)** | **Pleasure**  **(rank 1-5)** | **More, less, or about the same amount of money** (+, -, 0) | **Comments** |
| **EXAMPLE: DAY I** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coffee w/ friends $4.00 | N | 5 | 5 | 0 | Chance to catch up |
| New winter boots $90.00 | W | 3 | 4 | - | Would my last year’s boots be o.k.? |
| Online DVD purchase $10.00 | W | 3 | 4 | - | Not a real need; maybe look first and return to buy? |
| Friday night out $20 | W | 3 | 5 | - | It was o.k. but cost a lot |
| Groceries $50 | N | 5 | 5 | 0 | Food & household supplies |
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**What did you learn from your week of tracking your finances? What would you like to do differently?**

**References:** Ben-Shahar, Tal, Ph.D, Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment, New York: McGraw Hill, 2007.

Robinson, Jo and Jean Coppock Staeheli, Unplug the Christmas Machine, New York: William Morrow, 1991.

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