



Wheel of Life

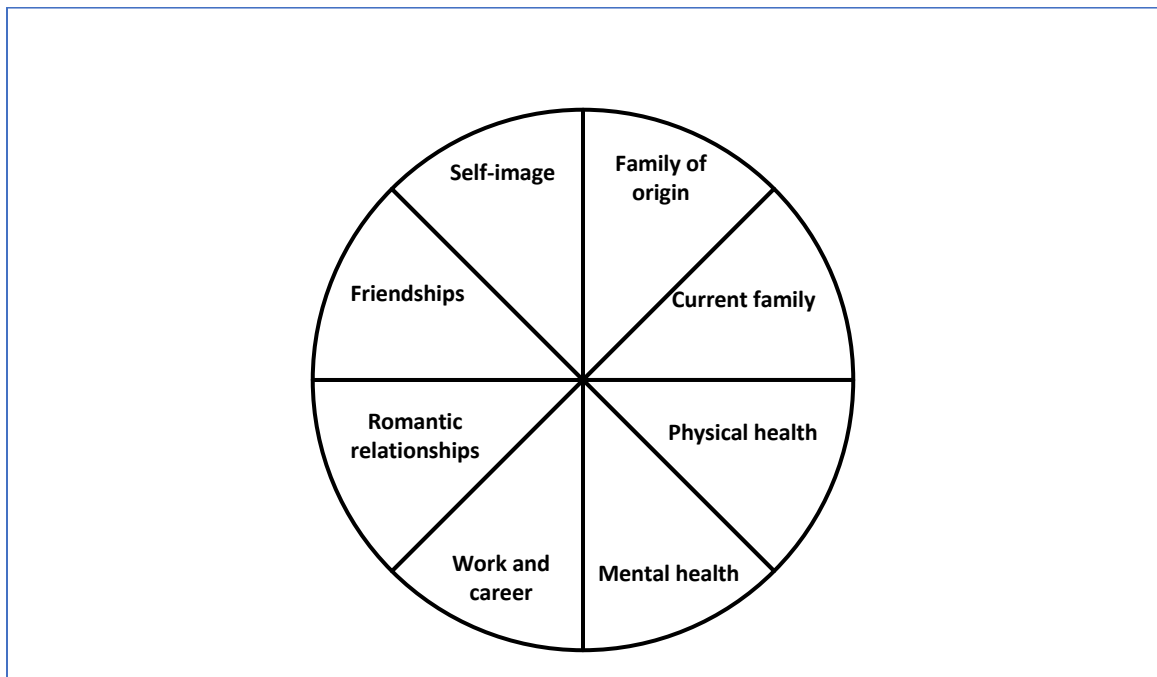
Now that you've explored your most prominent memories to date, let's take a look at your life in the present. This exercise gives you a bird's-eye view of how satisfied you are across various domains of your life. It pinpoints areas of strength, helps to identify areas that need attention, and provides the motivation for you to make changes to create a more fulfilling and meaningful life now.

The Wheel of Life concept is attributed to Paul J. Meyer, who founded the Success Motivation Institute in 1960. Over the years, many versions of this tool have emerged and are regularly used in therapy, business organizations, and motivational seminars. This is my version of the wheel, which I have shared with my clients. Many enjoy this exercise because it provides them with a great deal of insight into themselves and their lives and paves the way to make practical changes.

Open your journal and draw a circle. Divide the circle into eight equal parts and label each of the sections of the pie with the following categories:

1. Family of origin relationships
2. Current family relationships
3. Physical health

4. Mental health
5. Work and career
6. Romantic relationships
7. Friendships
8. Self-image and self-esteem



Now, by coloring in each piece of the pie, rank your current level of satisfaction, based on a scale of 0 to 10, where the outer boundary of the circle represents 10 and middle point of the circle where all lines intersect represents a 0. Try to use the entire spectrum of number ratings.

A 10 rating does not mean that area of life is perfect or that there is no room for improvement; it simply means that you feel great about how that area of your life is going, it lights you up and nourishes you, and you don't have a desire to change anything right now.

Similarly, a rating of 0 doesn't mean that this area of your life is a catastrophe; rather, it means that you don't feel content in this area. Perhaps you have a strong motivation to change something in this aspect of your life to make it more meaningful or fulfilling for you.

A 5 rating might mean that you feel some satisfaction, but it is easy to see where there is room for improvement—perhaps you even have an idea of exactly how you might make this a 7 or 8, but you haven't had the time or energy to put a plan into action yet.

As you look at your Wheel of Life, how do you generally feel about what you see there? Ask yourself some questions to home in on your ratings in specific areas and make a note of your answers in your journal. Here are some to get you started:

- Which of these areas of life would you most like to improve?
- How are you currently spending time in each of these areas?
- Which area do you feel the best about?
- How might you emulate what's going well in one area to foster improvement in another area?
- Why do you think a particular area was low in satisfaction for you?
- Has one specific area been lower in satisfaction for a long time?
- If an area that has been consistently low was transformed to a 10, what would your daily life look like?
- What do you need from others in order to improve this specific area?

The goal of your Wheel of Life is not to achieve a 10 in all areas. In fact, that is likely impossible! There are only so many hours in the day, and our energy is not infinite. Prioritizing one area typically means that you have to make sacrifices in another. The point of this activity is to give you a good understanding of the strengths in your life right now (and areas you can look

to when you're going through challenging times, areas that will help you to be resilient and weather the storm). It also helps to identify what areas might need to be prioritized a bit more so that you can feel better about your quality of life and how you are spending each day.

As you review your Wheel of Life, you may notice that some of the patterns that emerge are a result of your earlier attachment experiences. Pay close attention to areas of dissatisfaction that are likely to signal an earlier need that wasn't consistently met (for example, feelings of not being loved, because your parents didn't show unconditional caring toward you as a child) or suggest specific areas of low self-esteem (for example, challenges in taking charge of your own health when early experiences made you feel out of control with your own well-being).

Below is a brief overview of how attachment can impact each of these areas denoted on your wheel. The specific details about how your attachment style influences these domains—and what you can do to make changes—are fully explained in my book.

The Impact of Insecure Attachment

Knowing how your early belief systems influence what you've come to believe about how the world works and where you fit into it at your current juncture in life can offer important clues as to why you:

- **Struggle with intimacy as an adult**—An anxiously attached person may feel insecure in relationships; an avoidantly attached person may invest very little in intimate relationships; and an individual with disorganized attachment might oscillate between extreme trust and feeling disillusioned in their romantic relationships.
- **Have trouble connecting with others**—An anxiously attached person may feel that they are always setting aside their needs to cater to others; an avoidantly attached person might have many acquaintances but very few, if any, close confidants; and an individual with disorganized attachment might have an internal sense of emptiness even when they are around loved ones.
- **Stumble into the same patterns in your friendships and collegial relationships**—An anxiously attached person might find themselves second-guessing whether people truly like

them; an avoidantly attached person might be accused of being overly focused on their own wishes at the expense of others; and an individual with disorganized attachment might find that their friendships and collegial relationship are chaotic and drama-filled.

- **Have trouble setting and achieving goals**—An anxiously attached person may have trouble initiating new projects or making decisions without reassurance from others; an avoidantly attached person might overemphasize the importance of work goals and bucket list-type items over other goals that might balance their life; and an individual with disorganized attachment might find that they often sabotage their own efforts right before they're about to make a major breakthrough.
- **Can't seem to resolve the differences you have with certain family members**—An anxiously attached person might find themselves still seeking approval from their parents as an adult; an avoidantly attached person might choose to spend their spare time with others outside the family or by themselves; and an individual with disorganized attachment might find themselves under significant stress or even re-traumatized when they come into contact with their family of origin.
- **Behave in contradictory or self-sabotaging ways in close relationships**—An anxiously attached person might oscillate between being jealous and ingratiating; an avoidantly attached person might be very attentive in the early phases of dating but experience ambivalence as the relationship becomes more serious; and an individual with disorganized attachment might switch between idealizing their partner to being suspicious of them and setting up "tests" for them to prove their love.