

## **Exercise 7.4. Make a List or Two**

### **Purpose**

We often underestimate the power of making a simple list. This exercise is a productive way to help generate and/or make explicit a huge range of issues, from steps for completing a project to interests, wishes, or desires. We use it in two ways: first, to generate one list; and second, to write side-by-side lists that compare and contrast two or occasionally more viewpoints on the same issue.

### **When to Use**

- To make explicit thoughts, feelings, ideas, interests, and wishes
- To uncover unexpressed ideas and desires
- To begin evaluating ideas
- To take a first step toward sequencing or planning an activity
- To compare and contrast two or more aspects of an issue or idea

### **Time Frame**

15 to 30 minutes

### **Materials**

Pen and paper

### **Instructions**

**Step 1:** Clarify with your client the topic about which she is going to make a list.

It should link to a need to make ideas, thoughts, feelings, interests, or activities explicit. Some of the lists clients found useful for single lists include:

- List your wishes for . . . (your future career, your life, your project).
- List all the ways you could accomplish . . . (your project, your goal, getting information on a topic).
- List all the interests that are important to meet in making your choice.
- List what you are afraid of about. . . .
- List five characteristics in yourself you are proud of.
- List all the activities that would be part of your ideal day.

Some of the lists clients found useful for side-by-side comparisons include:

- List the good things about this idea; then list the challenges that need to be overcome.
- List the resources you already have to help you do (x); then list the resources you need to obtain.
- Make three lists: (1) What you want to start doing to support your new direction; (2) What you want to stop doing that gets in your way or does not support you in achieving your purpose; and (3) What you want to continue—practices you already engage in that will support you going forward.

**Step 2:** Guide your client to “Sit quietly for a few moments. Take a few deep breaths. Then put pen to paper and begin your list. Keep going for at least ten minutes, even when you think you have run out of ideas.”

**Step 3:** Review the list or lists with your client. Encourage him to add to or combine any items.

**Step 4:** Discuss what new awareness or learning your client has gained from the list.

**Step 5:** Plan a next step or steps to clarify what the client will do with or about the items listed.

### **Tips**

- Listing “Prouds” and “Sorries,” a technique adapted from the large group intervention FutureSearch,<sup>3</sup> is a helpful way for individuals to tap into their gifts and notice areas of regret where they want to make changes or address personal obstacles.
- Be careful with the common tendency to have people list “Pros and Cons.” This can set up either/or thinking that leads to thinking “cons” cannot be overcome. We prefer to use the comparison of “Good Parts of the Idea” and “Challenges (or Obstacles or Weaknesses) to Overcome. Comparing “Interests Met” with “Interests Not Met” can also be a useful comparison that leaves open the possibility of addressing unmet needs.

<sup>3</sup>See [www.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net) for a description of the Future Search methodology.

