

Time for a change?

A practical approach to redesigning
your life

Feeling stuck? Ready to move on and change your life but not sure how to do it? Don't know how to take the first step? Then this is for you.

Most of us are creatures of habit. Even the more adventurous souls amongst us have some set patterns that they follow. We can get a bit uncomfortable when those routines are disrupted. Change for a lot of us is not an easy or simple process.

We all face some changes from time to time that will mean our lives might be really different afterwards. A new job? Retirement? Leaving an old relationship? Starting a new one? Moving to a new area of the country or further away? These big life changes are sometimes hard to handle. This can mean we stay in the same, comfortable (maybe not always comfortable but at least well understood) place too long when we should have moved on.

This programme has been written from many years of experience of helping my coaching clients and colleagues at work to lift their heads and consider the possibilities that change could offer them. This approach has helped them to 'unstick' their lives or to handle changes that sometimes are forced upon us like redundancy or loss of a loved one.

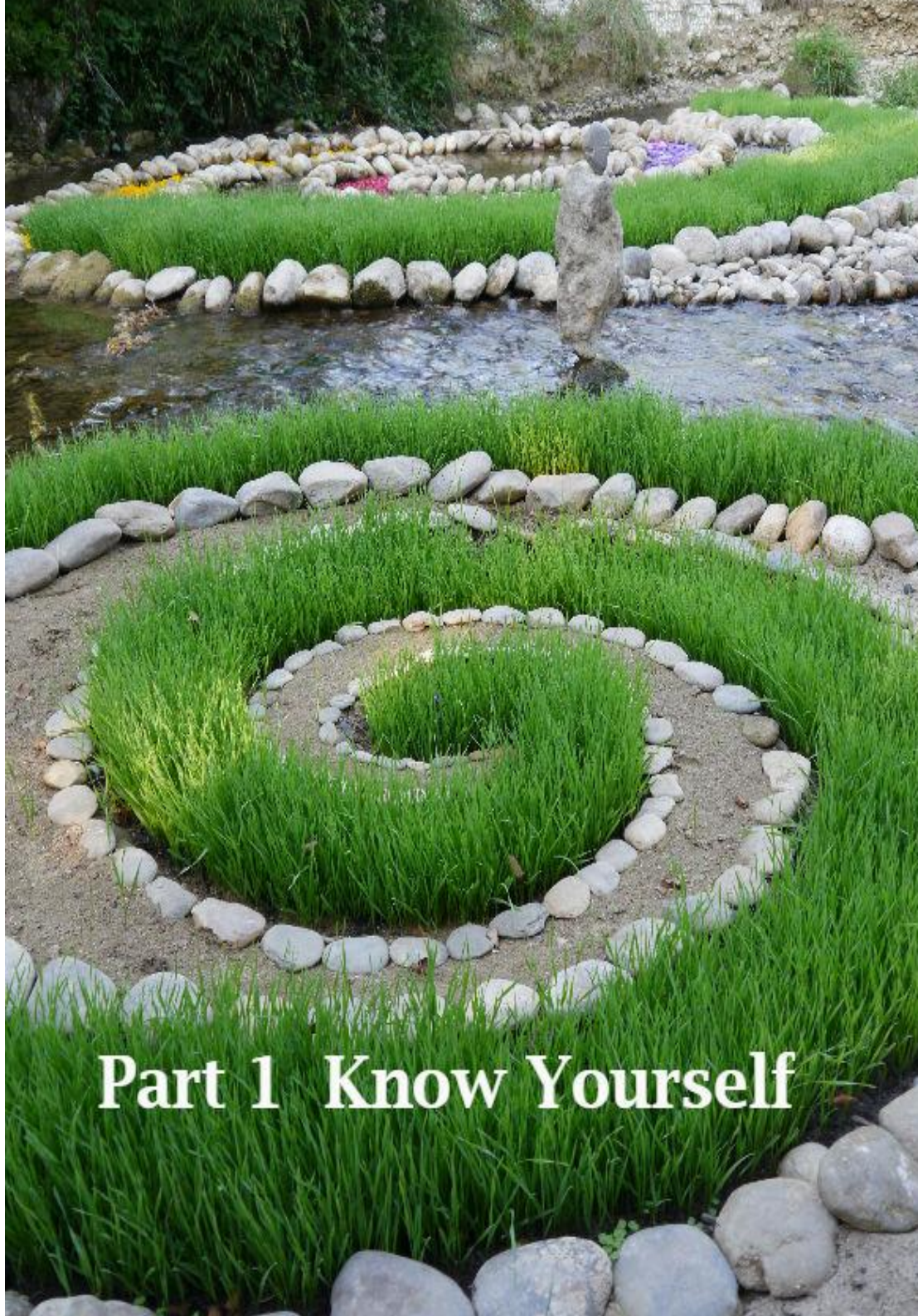
You will be offered a series of tasks to complete so that you get a clear picture of where you are and how you are currently thinking. Then you will work on the resources and skills that you already have that can help you move your life to where you want it to be.

And at the end you will come up with a realistic plan that you can put into action to make it all happen.

It's a no-nonsense, practical, hands-on approach to change. The kind of change you can work through over a cup of tea with a friend (or a coach). But above all anyone can do it. It's your life. Isn't it time you chose how it is designed?

If you would like some coaching support, there is an optional weekly skype session so that you can subscribe to where we can talk one-to-one and you are very welcome to come and take part in one of the weekend workshops that I hold in my B&B/wellness centre in southern France. Just being here is an inspiration as we are in one of the most beautiful valleys with uninterrupted views of the Pyrenees.

But first, let's get started on the programme. I hope you find it useful!



Part 1 Know Yourself

Part 1

Know yourself

The first exercise will take a week to complete. It relies on you being detailed in recording what you do every day, who you interact with and what tasks you complete. Pick a week that is as 'normal' as possible rather than a holiday week or a week with a one-off significant event in it.

What you are looking for are *patterns of activity*. It may be that your life is too busy and you want to find a way to slow down. Or you may not have enough fulfilling work or leisure activities and you want to expand your horizons. The first step is to stand back and look at what you *actually do* so that you can consider how to plan to achieve what you want.

So every day, from waking up and brushing your teeth to brushing them again and going to bed, I'd like you to complete the Daily Log with everything that you do. And I mean *everything*. If you live with others, note what you do for them as well as what you do for yourself. If you work, note what you do for colleagues as a one-off request as well as daily routine tasks. How much time do you spend travelling around? Who do you spend that time with? What do you do for fun?

Against each activity, I'd like you to record a *Smile* or a *Frown* emoji to show if you were happy to complete the task or not. If you are genuinely indifferent you can record a blank, but please react to each activity if you can. For example, I absolutely hate filing paperwork but I know it has to be done to keep things in order and make my life run smoothly so I would be honest

with a Frown for paperwork tasks. But I absolutely love cooking, so for me that's a smile where for others it might be a chore. It all builds a picture of your habits and your feelings towards them.

If you've sneaked a peek at the later weeks, you'll see that we dive into the detail of the information that you have collected next week. The more activities you record, the better the result next week.

I think you'll be surprised when you get to the end of every day and see just how many things you've done. Focusing our attention on the detail actually helps us take a step back and see our life more holistically. We often don't acknowledge a lot of the routine tasks that take up large chunks of our time.

Daily Activity Log

To do this exercise you can either make a chart on a piece of paper, make your own spreadsheet or download a template at <http://www.lascoumeilles.com/time-for-a-change-bonus-activities/>.

On the sheet you will need:

Dates of the week

Start

Finish

Today's date

Then for each activity you undertake you need one column (for each number) to record:

1. The activity – what did you do?
2. Time start
3. Time end
4. Total time taken
5. Who else was involved?

Did it make you feel:

6. Happy
7. Indifferent
8. Not happy

It may feel like a pain to start off with to have to note everything down, but stick with it. Record even those things that only take a couple of minutes. A small interruption to a period of concentration can be really significant to your productivity, but spending too long on something can also be a problem if your interest wanes. Discovering your habits will take detailed recording.

Bonus Activities

Here are some other things for you to try if you have time this week. You can complete the programme without doing these activities but have a go if you can! Click through from the link to the resource on my website.

Who am I? Use the template to create a picture for yourself of the things that people say about you or you like about yourself. Positive ones please! If you have a lot of negative things to record, do two separate pages so that you can see the good separate from the not so good. Put the link from the Daily Activity Log page into your browser to download.

Three little words. The simplest (and hardest) task in this programme. Choose three words that define you. Only three. No other instructions. No downloads. You'll probably be working on this for a while.... When you've chosen them, reflect on what they mean to you. You might choose three descriptive words like I'm active, fit and confident or three things that you do like I think, I read, I meditate. Whatever your words are, they need to resonate strongly with you when you read them back and say them out loud. You're describing the very core of yourself and you need to look long and hard and be really honest. Don't choose what you think you should choose or try and choose someone else's words. If the final three words are things you decide you don't want to be any more, then this is your chance to change.



Part 2 Understand Yourself

Part 2

Understand yourself

With all the information from seven days of logging your activities, it's time to take a close look at what you did and how you felt about it.

If you managed to pick a typical week, then you should be going through some of the experiences again this week, and you can use those experiences to test your reactions if you're not sure.

This week's activities are split into three strands: first - for those of you who want to do less and slow down a bit (or a lot), second - for those of you who want to find more to do that makes you happy and third – a combination for those of you that want to make room for something new in your life. Let's call them Subtract, Add and Change.

Subtractors

What I'd like you to do is mark alongside each activity whether it was *really necessary*. Tick for yes, Cross for no. Some things will stay, even if you don't like them (we're back to me and my filing) but there are some things that you might be able to find a way not to do, or to reduce in size.

Ask yourself some questions about each activity:

Who would miss this if I didn't do it? If the answer is nobody, then think about just not doing it. At work, it could be not attending a meeting that you think you don't add any value to, or at home investing in clothes and bed linen that don't need ironing.

If you can't cross it off the list, can you reduce the time it takes? Maybe at work finding a less time-consuming way to do a routine task or at home preparing ideas for meals for the week in advance so your shopping is more efficient.

If it has to stay on there exactly as it is, can you find someone else to do it? Is there a team member or family member who could take this on instead? Could you employ someone to help you? Could it be outsourced? Use a separate piece of paper to list those alternatives.

Be really honest. There may be some things that you are worried to give up because they reduce your status at work or socially. Or you may enjoy some of the things that you do that actually are less necessary. There will be some tough decisions to make here.

That should have slimmed down your list a bit. Take note of what time you now have available and when it is free. Think about how you could move other activities around so that you have time in blocks that you can free up for rest and relaxation or to fit in the things you really want to do.

This week, take time to think about what you might be able to change – if you repeat the activities, reflect on each one using the

questions above and see if you can winkle out a few more tasks that you can remove, reduce or reassign.

A thought for the subtractors:

Some super-famous people do this every day – they make a list of everything that they have to do then they prioritise each of those tasks from A to F. Then they take all the A's and do the exercise again so they only choose to do the A's from the second list.

Others group tasks into related activities and only do the thing that is the 'top line' of all of those and find other ways to get the sub-headings done by others. Their time is precious and expensive and its worth them using some of that time to be really focused on what THEY do best in their life and work. Your time is just as precious so take a leaf out of their very successful book and develop a routine that works for you.

Adders

Sit down with a cup of tea. Take a look across the whole week of activities. Which ones made you *Smile* the most?

Think about how you could find more opportunities to repeat those experiences or extend them. What were you doing when you were most contented? Examine why you were feeling good – was it because you were in good company, doing something you like, feeling satisfied that you had done something well?

Understanding what brings you pleasure will help you to think of other activities that might give you similar levels of satisfaction.

Now have a look at the talents and attributes that you have to do things differently. What are you really good at doing? Which activities come most naturally to you? Which take a bit more effort and courage?

Look at each of the activities. Try to break each one down into what you do and how you feel about doing it. For example, if you're happy at work but want more in your social life to give you a better balance, what activities do you do in work time that might transfer as ideas for you to pursue in your leisure time? You may be able to offer your services as a volunteer to meet new people or to join an activity group that aligns with your interests. What are the barriers holding you back from doing things in your leisure time? Are there any lessons in how you are at work that could help you outside work time?

If you're looking for work that is more interesting or meaningful to you, take a look at the things you do best in your leisure time and see how those might form a CV that could take you into a new role at work. Are you a good organiser? List the skills it takes to run a home and look after children (a long list!). What

communication and interpersonal skills have you displayed this week talking to others or maybe helping relatives and friends? If communication is a challenge for you, what groups could you join that might help you to develop those skills?

Separate a piece of paper into two columns. Use column 1 to record the skills and aptitudes or challenges you see in each activity (for example I enjoy team work, I don't like public speaking, I am a great cook, I look after others' needs well) and use column 2 to suggest ways in which you could repeat those experiences in a work/leisure environment whichever it is you want to build.

A thought for the Adders:

Remember – you need to be *really positive* about yourself and what you can do to make this exercise work well. If you find that difficult, try and do this exercise with a friend or family member who can help you see the best in what you do.

Changers

You need to do both sets of exercises so take a photocopy of your list so you can fill the columns out twice, or add columns in if you're doing it as a spreadsheet. First you need to make room for change, then work on how you're going to fill the time you've released with new activities. If you just add new things, you'll end up too busy and that's the long road to stress. Make a commitment to slim down your current life and build up the new one gradually.

Bonus activities

If you have time this week, try these activities as well. Put the link from the Daily Activity Log page into your browser to download the guides.

Personal Drivers – want to know what makes you tick? Give this one a go. You may be surprised how what drives your thoughts also drives your behaviours.

Value Square – someone once said you can only have two from three of good, fast and cheap. This is our little version of that saying. Use it to work out what's going to be easy or hard to achieve and what's most worth doing.

Part 3 Challenge Yourself



Part 3

Challenge yourself

Week three is about challenging yourself and tackling some of the barriers to change.

By now, you will have a good idea of what your life looks like at present, some thoughts on ways in which you could make some changes and some doors you can now think about opening.

For this, we're going to move out from the detail and look at your overall goals. The model I like to use is to look for a state of **GRACE** – where everything flows easily and elegantly.

Take a piece of paper for each letter, and, using the work you've done in weeks 1 and 2, start to map out a picture of what you're trying to do.

G – is for you overall GOAL. What is it you're trying to achieve? This is your dream. You will have followed either the Subtract, Add or Change pathway, but within that broad heading what exactly is it that you are trying to do? Be as clear as you can on your goal.

Some examples might be:

I want to retire early

I want to change my job for something less stressful

I want to go back to work in a job that I find fulfilling

I want to earn enough to be financially independent

I want to find a new and fulfilling relationship

I want to do something more exciting in my leisure time

You get the idea – its big picture stuff.

R – is for REALITY. There are some practicalities that get in the way of even the most strongly held dream. It's important you know what they are so that you can plan around them if they can't be changed. These barriers will be in your subconscious and will influence your behaviour so it's really important to acknowledge them and lay them out at the start so you know what you're dealing with.

Some examples might be:

I feel responsible at work and am worried about the consequences if I leave

I have kids I need to support

I don't have enough money at the moment to do x y or z

I have tried x in the past and it didn't work for me

Many of the things you list here may look like negatives – they're not. They are just realities and in that respect neutral. Be honest with yourself also about your own character. Not everyone is a high-achieving go-getter. Most of us are much more reticent about asking for things or diving into new things. Be realistic about where you are on that scale and how difficult you are likely to find this change to start with.

Remember that what is your reality now will change as time goes on. Things will look different as you experience that change.

A – is for adaptability. This is where you come up with the ideas that are going to help you move ahead. A is also for other abilities that you have and where you list all the good stuff.

So if your grand plan was to quit your job and become an actor, your realities list would note any family commitments you have, what your current financial position is to support yourself through the change, and any issues that might make this dream more of a challenge for you than others.

Now list how you might move yourself from where you are to where you want to be. You could, for example:

- * Apply to drama school or take private acting lessons
- * Audition at local amateur dramatic groups to get experience
- * Volunteer to help in local theatres in other capacities to be part of the environment
- * Join public speaking groups to build your performing confidence
- * Develop your own material and start with street performances
- * Look for work that has an element of 'performance'

The list will go on and on. What is important is to come at the issue from every possible angle to see how you might be able to make this happen for you.

Go back to your Daily Activities Log and note in the Week 3 column what you already have in place that you can build from.

C is for commitment. This part is about challenging yourself on whether you will really follow this through.

Close your eyes. Imagine that you have achieved what you set out to achieve. How does it feel? What is different from how it was before? What are you most proud of in yourself?

Now look back at all the things that you had to do to get here. Think about the things you had to change or give up to get here. Consider the relationships that have changed since you started.

Was it all worth doing? Are you **really** ready to commit to doing all the things that will need to be done to make this happen?

There will be some barriers that you may find you just can't get over. I would like to be able to tap dance, but I know I'm just not going to commit the time it takes to master the steps – at the moment. I may choose to prioritise it in the future, but right now I'm not ready to give up other things to make it happen. So I'll park it as an aspiration and come back to it when things change.

There are some things that are time-critical that may be harder to achieve (note I didn't say impossible....). For example if you want to be a professional dancer, it's much easier to start that career as a younger person. Not impossible with the right drive and talent to do it later in life. But if you're not committed to doing everything it takes to get there, try modifying the goal to have loads of dancing in your life, but not giving up everything to try to make it your career.

The watchword here is **honesty**. Be totally open about your realities and your commitment to see this through.

At this point, you can modify your starting goal and go through the process again if you find that this isn't going to work for you right now. Keep going through the process until you settle on something that you are prepared to throw your full weight behind.

Or in some cases, having looked at things from all angles, you may decide that now is not the right time for action at all. No one is going to criticise you for deciding that the status quo is what you want. If the opportunity does come up in the future, you've done the leg-work on how you'd like things to change and you can be ready to take that chance.

Just make sure you're acting from a place of contented acceptance and not from a place of fear of change. The latter can be addressed if you're ready to make the commitment. If you find yourself in this situation, talk to someone. To me, to a counsellor, a therapist or whoever you trust. If you're in a place you don't want to be in and you can't see a way out of it on your own, then it's important to get help.

E – is for enjoyment. This is the bit where you get to enjoy the fruits of your labours. Its where it happens.

On this sheet of paper, write down the path that you are going to take to achieve your dream. Map out in detail the steps you are going to take to get to your end goal. Visualise how all the things in A come together to take you, step by step, to the new reality.

You can do this as a list, a mind map, a flow diagram, a set of instructions, a business model canvas – any way that suits you. If you're a visual person why not put together a board of pictures that represent the steps along the way and the end goal? If you're a listener, is there a soundtrack that goes with it?

Use whatever methods work for you to bring your goal to life and give you something to inspire you on your journey.

Identify the starting point and commit to a date when you're going to do it. It might be a first conversation with an employer or a loved one to share what you're thinking. Don't forget that other people are amazing resources to help you on your journey. Once they see you have a clear and well thought through plan, they can see what their role might be in making it happen too.

There's a trick our brain plays on us that can be really useful. Once you've drawn your mind's attention to something, it will find more things like it. The classic example is to tell you not to think of an elephant. I know what you're imagining right now.... Try it yourself when you're next out and about. Think of red cars and surprise yourself how many more red cars are on the road than normal.

It's synchronicity, coincidence, luck – many other words to describe how the things you need can suddenly be there in your life once you've decided to start looking for them. Have the courage to say yes to opportunities that look as though they will lead you (even if by a less direct route than you thought) to your end goal. There are many ways of getting there. Few of us take a straight path. But the journey is part of the fun – the E of enjoyment – and each step is to be celebrated.

There are no bonus activities this week as you're going to be busy enough!



Part 4 Reward Yourself

Part 4

Reward yourself

This is it. In week 4 you need to start to make changes. You have committed to change and you're going to follow it through.

Tick off **one thing** from the list. More if you can, but at least one thing.

If you find you can't, you may need to repeat week 3 until you have a GRACE plan that works for you. It might need a new goal or more detailed planning of things you can try to get it moving.

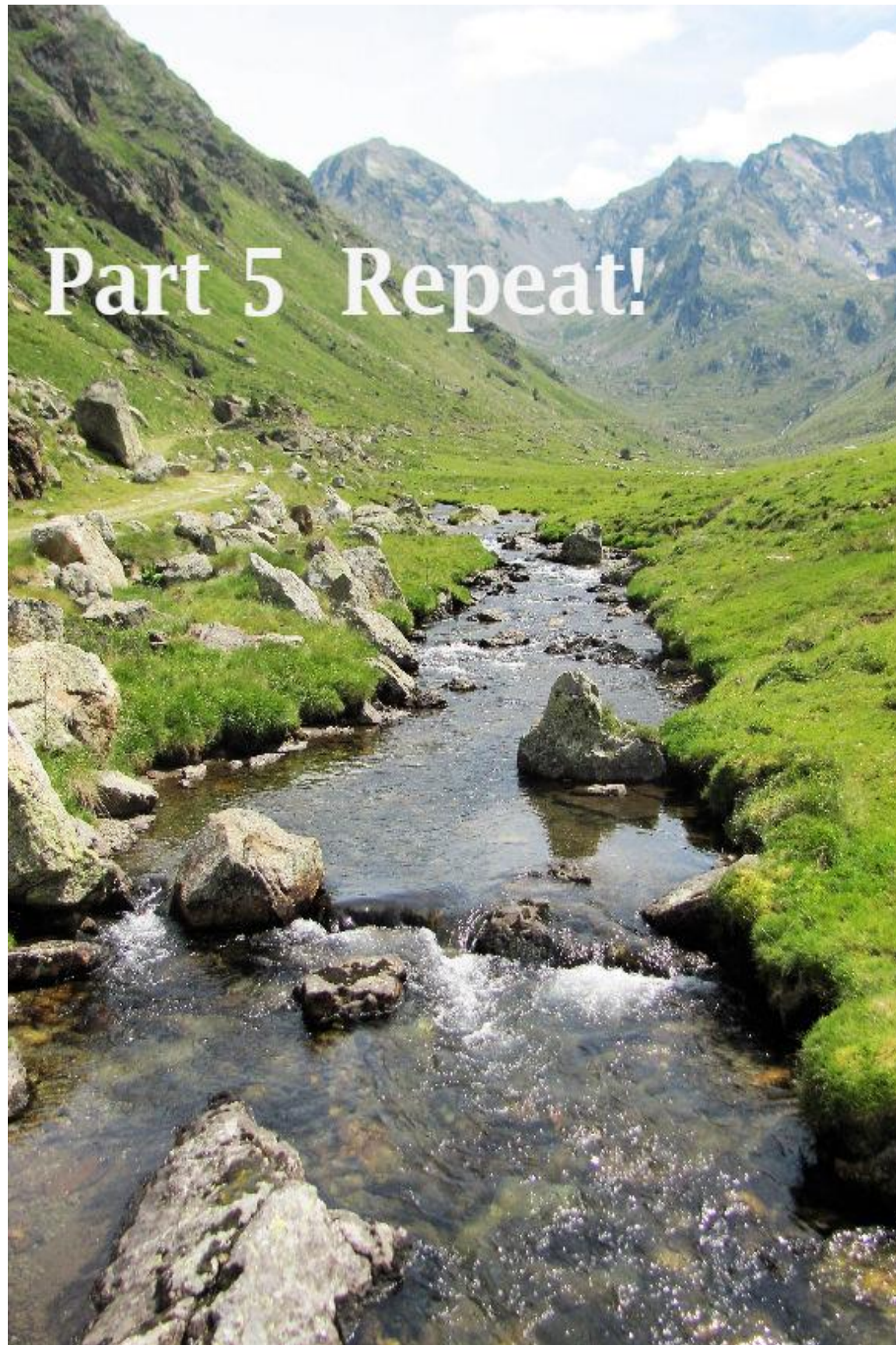
Then when you've done your first thing, reward yourself! Make a habit of recognising your successes and saying well done. That will strengthen your resolve to keep going.

Make your rewards something that will motivate you to try harder. You saw my weakness in the picture that starts this section.... But try not to make it food based all the time or you'll be coming back for a weight loss coaching session!

Bonus activity

What do I believe? If things are taking some time to get moving, try this exercise to help you identify any limiting beliefs that may be getting in the way of you taking the plunge. Break down your big goal into some of the steps it is going to take to get there or some of the things you're going to have to do on the way. React to each of them honestly (it's that word again). Sit with your eyes closed and picture each step – record where on the belief line you are with each one right now. Put the link from the Daily Activity Log page into your browser to download the template.

Part 5 Repeat!



Part 5

Repeat!

Week 5. The sequel to Week 4. Unless you're one of the really lucky ones, or you have a fairy godmother tucked up your sleeve, things are going to take some time to change. Mountains don't raise in a day. Every day they are a little bit higher.

Keep a diary of what you've tried, what worked, what didn't. Don't let the things that don't work put you off. It just means you need to try it another way.

At this stage, resilience is your most important asset. Engage friends and family to support you. Tell people what you're working on. It all helps to solidify the plan and help you to believe it too.

Remember that the path to your goal may be a winding one. It is very rare that we decide to do something big and then just do it. We need to use every ounce of our creativity to respond to the opportunities for change that come along.

Some actions may lead to a dead end. Don't be disheartened. Pick up your suitcase, retrace your steps as far as you need to, and take another path. Just don't stop moving.

And let me know what you've achieved! This process has worked for many people and I hope it has helped you too.

Need more support?

If you would like 1-2-1 coaching through the steps, get in touch and we can set up a time to talk about what you might need. A series of 5 weekly skype sessions (1 hour each) is available for €200 to accompany the programme. Or just book a one-off session if you're stuck on a particular aspect of the course for €50 an hour.

Or book in to stay with us and we can work through it together over a long weekend or a week. Out of season we can offer some really great packages for B&B, evening meals and coaching sessions in the day.

www.lascoumeilles.com

