

## Polishing The Diamond

(based on an exercise originally created by psychologist Hank Robb)

In this exercise, the aim is to clarify your values: what sort of person do you really want to be? 'Deep in your heart' how you would ideally like to behave as you go through life? What personal qualities would you most like to develop, or apply more?

To help you do this, we will use the metaphor of a 'rough diamond'. What turns a 'rough diamond' into a beautiful polished gem? Two processes: cutting and polishing. Cutting means cutting small chunks off the diamond; polishing means taking thin layers off it.

In this exercise, I invite you think about ways of behaving - patterns of behaviour, types of behaviour, or qualities of behaviour - that are inconsistent with or out of keeping with the sort of person you really want to be. And think about which of these behaviours you have 'cut' and which you have 'polished'.

To 'cut' a behaviour means you completely eliminate it – you never do it in any way, shape or form. For example, suppose that at some point in your life you used to physically hit people at times, or occasionally steal things; if these types of behaviour are inconsistent with who you really want to be, and if you can honestly say that you *never* do these things now, then you have 'cut' them.

To 'polish' a behaviour means you still do it at times, but you tone it down; you do it less often, and less intensely; and you are faster to catch yourself and stop it. For example, suppose at times you 'badmouth' or slander or harshly judge other people; or you blame others instead of taking responsibility; or you hold on tightly to grudges and resentment; if this type of behaviour is inconsistent with who you really want to be, *and* if you do this less often or less intensely today than you used to do in the past, then you have 'polished' it.

Now although none of us will ever be a perfect gem, we all have all done plenty of cutting and polishing. However, we rarely stop to reflect on it. So the first part of this exercise is a retrospective: when you look back over your life, what have you cut and what have you polished in the following domains of life: a) relationships b) work & education, c) leisure & recreation, and d) health.

*NB: as you do this, you are likely to find there is very little that you have 'cut', but there is quite a lot that you have 'polished'.*

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Next, look to the future. As you move forwards in your life, what would you like to cut, and what would you like to polish - (*keep in mind, most of these behaviours only ever get polished; very few of them ever get cut, i.e. 100% eliminated*) - in the following domains of life: a) relationships b) work & education, c) leisure & recreation, and d) health.

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Finally, consider this. You have already spent a lot of time, effort and energy in cutting and polishing these behaviours that are inconsistent with who you want to be 'deep inside'. And you want to spend even more time, effort and energy polishing these behaviours in the future! So what does this reveal to you about the sort of person you really want to be? See if you can come up with at least five or six words to describe the personal qualities you would like to develop or apply more, as revealed by this exercise.