

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

ASSESSING
SELF-DETERMINATION
IN YOUR LIFE

Determine Your Destiny

UIC NRTC Self-Determination Series

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SELF-DETERMINATION
IN YOUR LIFE

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Determine Your Destiny

What is Self-Determination?

Self-determination means having the freedom to be in charge of your own life, choosing where you live, who you spend time with, and what you do. It means having the resources you need to create a good life and to make responsible decisions. It also means choosing where, when, and how you get help for any problems you might have.

This self-assessment is designed to help you discover how much self-determination you have in your life. You are the person in charge of this assessment. To complete it, you'll read a series of statements and think about whether they describe your life. This will help you identify life areas (such as money or relationships) where you'd like to increase your level of self-determination and other areas where you're already satisfied. The simple act of thinking about these things will increase your awareness of the presence of self-determination in your life.

Read each statement and think about whether it describes *your* life. If it does, skip it and go on to the next one. Keep going until you get to a statement that *isn't* true for you. Put a check mark next to that statement and go on until you've read and thought about each one.

___ I decide whether to live alone or with someone else.

___ I control who can and can't come into my home.

___ I can choose where I live.

___ I choose my own friends.

___ I decide whether or not to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

___ I have people in my life who respect my values and choices.

___ I decide how to be part of my community.

___ If I want to go somewhere, transportation isn't a problem.

- ___ I'm able to stand up for myself to get what I need.
- ___ I can deal with abuse, whether it's verbal, sexual or physical.
- ___ My basic human rights are respected.
- ___ I'm free to choose the kinds of goals I want to pursue.
- ___ I'm able to choose my medical doctor.
- ___ I freely choose what kinds of medical treatment I get.
- ___ I decide how involved I want to be in my medical treatment.
- ___ I have the money I need to live the kind of life I want.
- ___ I have the final say over how I spend my money.
- ___ I'm able to control my finances in a way that enhances my life.
- ___ I feel responsible for my financial future.
- ___ I decide whether or not to work.
- ___ I choose what kind of work I do.
- ___ I choose where I work.
- ___ I know how to deal with prejudice and discrimination.
- ___ I'm able to avoid people who show prejudice toward me.
- ___ I have people in my life who accept me for me.
- ___ I choose whether to receive treatment for mental health problems.
- ___ I choose the type of help I want for mental health problems.

- ____ If I need one, I'm able to choose my psychiatrist.
- ____ I decide how to manage my mental health problems.
- ____ I decide whether or not to take psychiatric medication.
- ____ I set the goals for my mental health treatment.
- ____ I decide what steps to take to recover from mental health problems.
- ____ I am able to exercise and do other activities that improve my health.
- ____ I decide what food I want to eat in order to be healthy.

What's Next?

Congratulations for getting this far! It's not easy to think about all these life areas and what they mean to you. Even if you stop here, you've learned a lot about yourself, which is an important part of self-determination.

The next step is to look at the statements you checked and decide which of them really matter to you. Not everything you checked will be important. For example, some people don't want a boyfriend or girlfriend. Also, depending on your circumstances, not everything can be under your control. If you live in a town with only one doctor, choosing your doctor may not be possible. But, if the area *is important* to you, *put a second checkmark* next to that item. If it's not important, you can ignore it.

In some cultures, people make decisions together as families or larger groups. This may be true for you. Maybe your family decides that everyone should live under one roof. Perhaps you come from a culture where women don't work outside the home. As long as this is OK with you, just skip that item. But if it's not OK, then you should put a second check mark next to the item. The important thing to decide is whether the area is *important to you*.

How to Make an Action Plan to Increase Your Self-Determination

Now that you've decided what's important, you might want to take the next step. Maybe you'd like to spend some time thinking about what you've learned. You might want to tell others about the assessment, especially those life areas you checked twice. Or, you might be ready to start making plans in the areas that matter to you.

We've created an action-planning guide that helps you choose, set, and achieve life goals. It's called "This is Your Life!" It takes you through a simple, step-by-step process of how to determine and direct your life goals. If you're ready to do this, click on the link below to go to "This is Your Life!" Once you get there, start by reading the Introduction. If you don't have access to the Internet, call or write to us and we'll send you a copy.

<http://www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/nrtc/tools.asp>

Some people like to look for information on the Internet. In the next section, we've listed all the items you read earlier, along with related web sites. You can visit these websites to get information about the life areas you checked twice. If you are reading this on-line, simply click on the link under the item. Or, copy and paste the link in your Internet browser. If you're not online, you'll need to type the link into your browser. It may take some time for the website to load, so be patient.

If you decide to work on a new goal, remember that this is a learning process for you and those around you. People may be surprised at this "new you." If so, talk to them about how you'd like to have more choice and control over what happens in your life. Give them time to get comfortable with your new attitude. In addition, be patient with yourself. If taking control of life decisions is a little scary, remember that learning how to make good life choices doesn't happen overnight. Give yourself time to learn and use your new skills.

Whatever you decide, completing this assessment has probably taught you some new things about yourself. Plus, you now know more about self-determination and what it means. Remember that you deserve to make decisions and be in control of your life. That's a basic human right for everybody!

Web Sites with Helpful Information

____ I decide whether to live alone or with someone else.

<http://www.apartmentguide.com/blog/should-you-live-alone-or-with-a-roommate/>

____ I control who can and can't come into my home.

<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/free-books/renters-rights-book/chapter8-2.html>

____ I can choose where I live.

<http://www.schizophrenia.com/housing.html#find>

____ I decide whether or not to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

<http://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/survivingmentalhealthstigma/2014/08/mental-health-stigma-and-intimate-relationships/>

<http://www.nolongerlonely.com/>

____ I have people in my life who respect my values and choices.

<http://www.choicesinrecovery.com/newsletter>

____ I decide how to be part of my community.

http://tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits_Monographs_Guidebooks/civic_activity_voting/Civic_engagement.pdf

____ If I want to go somewhere, transportation isn't a problem.

<http://www.ctaa.org/>

____ I'm able to stand up for myself to get what I need.

<http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/assertiveness-techniques.html>

____ I can deal with abuse, whether it's verbal, sexual or physical.

<https://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/dealing-with-the-effects-of-trauma/>

____ My basic human rights are respected.

<http://www.narpa.org/>

____ I'm free to choose the kinds of goals I want to pursue.

<http://www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/download/sdlifeplan.pdf>

____ I'm able to choose my medical doctor.

<http://patients.about.com/od/yourdiagnosis/a/doctorrigh.htm>

____ I freely choose what kinds of medical treatment I get.

<http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/navigate-healthcare-system/how-do-i-make-treatment-decisions>

____ I decide how involved I want to be in my medical treatment.

<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/treatment/patients-are-important-members-of-the-healthcare-team/>

____ I have the money I need to live the kind of life I want.

<http://www.stretcher.com/>

____ I have the final say over how I spend my money.

<http://www.expertlaw.com/forums/showthread.php?t=137042>

____ I'm able to control my finances in a way that enhances my life.

<https://secure.budgettracker.com/login.php?sp=nouser>

____ I feel responsible for my financial future.

<https://www.credit.com/personal-finance/5-easy-steps-to-get-control-of-your-finances/>

____ I decide whether or not to work.

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/meaningful-work-and-recovery>

____ I choose what kind of work I do.

<http://www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/download/seekingemployment.pdf>

<http://lifehacker.com/how-to-find-out-if-a-company-is-a-cultural-fit-for-you-510587663>

____ I choose where I work.

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/meaningful-work-and-recovery>

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/do-what-you-love-how-to-identify-pursue-your-passions>

____ I know how to deal with prejudice and discrimination.

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/07/16/5-reliable-ways-to-deal-with-mental-health-stigma-prejudice/>

<http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/rights-mental-illness>

____ I'm able to avoid people who show prejudice toward me.

<http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-In-Our-Own-Voice>

____ I have people in my life who accept me for me.

<http://www.facingus.org/>

____ I choose whether to receive treatment for mental health problems.

<http://www.mindfreedom.org/campaign/choice/welcome-to-choice-in-mental-health-care-campaign/>

____ I choose the type of help I want for my mental health problems.

<http://www.mentalhealth.com/>

____ If I need one, I'm able to choose my psychiatrist.

<http://www.kevinmd.com/blog/2010/12/tips-find-good-psychiatrist.html>

____ I decide how to manage my mental health problems.

<http://www.mentalhealthrecovery.com/>

____ I decide whether or not to take psychiatric medication.

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/should-i-start-taking-psychiatric-medication>

____ I set the goals for my mental health treatment.

<http://www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/download/raisingissues.pdf>

____ I decide what steps to take to recover from mental health problems.

<http://www.mhrecovery.org/>

____ I know how to exercise and do other activities that improve my physical and emotional health.

<http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/fitness-beginners-guide>

____ I decide what food I want to eat in order to be healthy.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-on-budget.html>

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