



When We Realize we are Small, Big Transformation Happens – *A Perspective on Goal Setting*

Opening Exercise – "Things We Make a Big Deal About"

Introduction: Life is full of moments that test our patience and perspective. Sometimes, we overreact to small frustrations that, in hindsight, aren't worth the energy we give them. This exercise is an opportunity to recognize these moments, and think about how we can better focus on what really matters:

List of Everyday "Small Things" We Sometimes May Overreact To

Waiting in Traffic – How often do we forget that we will eventually get there, even if it's slow?

Unexpected Weather Changes – When do we let minor inconveniences cloud our outlook for the day?

Waiting on Hold for Customer Service – Can we use the wait as a moment to breathe, reflect, or even walk or stretch?

Plans Changing at the Last Minute – How do we react when life doesn't go as planned?

The Wrong "Brand" or Flavor of Food or Drink – Could this be a moment to embrace flexibility instead of being picky and rigid in our taste?

Technology Glitches (Frozen Screens, Crashes, etc.) – Do these moments remind us how much we rely on technology - Are we prioritizing patience, or letting frustration take over our day?

Losing a Sock in the Laundry – A small annoyance or a symbol of embracing life's little mysteries?

Interrupted While Watching a Movie or Show – How often do we forget the value of real-life connections?

Misplacing Small Items (Keys, Glasses, Wallet, etc.) – Can we take a deep breath and calmly search instead of letting stress and anger build?

Forgetting an Important Date or Appointment – How do we recover gracefully without harsh self-criticism?

Not Finding a Close Parking Spot – Do we see it as an inconvenience, or an unexpected chance for exercise?

When a Store is Out of a Favorite Item – Does this frustration teach us patience or adaptability?

Small Delays (Elevators, Lines, etc.) – What can we learn about our own ability to slow down and be present in the moment?

Accidentally Dropping Something – Lose control or use this as a chance to practice calm recovery?

Stuck Listening to Music We Don't Like – Emotional torture or do we embrace the opportunity for something different?

What Else? *Can anyone else think about other things we may, as humans, over-complain about? – DISCUSS*



Finding Strength in Perspective: Embracing the Big Picture – Next, we'll embark on a journey to explore the vastness of the universe and the immense power of perspective. By reflecting on the big picture, we can gain a fresh understanding of our place and how our seemingly significant problems can shrink in comparison to the grandeur of nature and the universe. The overall goal of looking at the “Big Picture” is to foster humility and promote personal growth by seeing things through a wider “lens” and then taking a more flexible and adaptable approach to life's many challenges, both expected and unexpected.

Let us start by opening our minds and perspectives by watching the following video. (*Counselor may opt to select another video of a similar focus instead*)

Stunning New Universe Fly-Through Really Puts Things into Perspective

[Watch the Video](#)

The video begins from a planetarium in Germany and zooms out to the “end of the Universe



Discuss: Fascinating facts that highlight the immense size, age, and vastness of the universe

Age of the Universe: The universe is estimated to be about 13.8 billion years old, based on observations of the cosmic microwave background radiation. (That is over 13,000 million years)

Galaxies:

- There are an estimated 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe, each containing billions of stars.
- Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is about 100,000 light-years in diameter and contains 100-400 billion stars.
- Andromeda Galaxy: The nearest spiral galaxy to the Milky Way is the Andromeda Galaxy, which is about 2.537 million light-years away. (Keep in mind a light year is the distance light can travel in 1 year)

Cosmic Structures: The largest known structures in the universe are the Hercules-Corona Borealis Great Wall and the Sloan Great Wall, which are superclusters of galaxies stretching over billions of light-years.

Supermassive Black Holes: Most large galaxies, including the Milky Way, have supermassive black holes at their centers. The one in the Milky Way, Sagittarius A, has a mass of about 4 million times that of the Sun.

Light Speed: Light from the Sun takes about 8 minutes and 20 seconds to reach Earth, while light from the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, takes about 4.24 years to get here.

The Vastness of Space and Time: When we observe distant stars and galaxies, we are essentially looking back in time. The farther away an object is, the older the light we are seeing. This principle allows astronomers to study the history of the universe, including the formation of stars, galaxies, and cosmic events. Consider the fact that by looking into space, you are viewing things now that happened billions of years ago.



Defining the Big Picture:

Reflect on and discuss what the term "big picture" means to you. Consider how looking at life from a broader perspective can impact our daily experiences. In other words:

- *Can you think of how focusing on the big picture can help you handle difficult situations?*

The Vastness of the Universe:

Understanding Our Place - Think about the vastness of the universe on a starry night sky. These natural wonders can help us see our own lives in a different light.

Visualization Exercise:

- Close your eyes.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Now and imagine yourself standing at the edge of a mountain peak
- The weather is cool and comfortable, the mood is quiet and serene, and the sky is wide open; cloudless and clear
- Now imagine looking up at a night sky completely filled with stars.
- Take a few seconds to immerse yourself in that feeling of awe and wonder.

Discuss your thoughts as a group:

- What emotions do you feel when you imagine this scene?
- How does thinking about these vast entities affect your perception of your own problems and challenges?





Humility and Personal Growth:

The Role of Humility: Humility is about recognizing our limitations and understanding that we are part of something much larger than ourselves. It can be a powerful tool for personal growth.

Humility is the quality of being open to growth, learning, and self-awareness by accepting one's strengths and limitations without arrogance or self-deprecation. In mental health and substance use recovery, humility involves acknowledging the need for support, embracing constructive feedback, and recognizing the value of the journey over perfection. It also means putting things in perspective, understanding that positive change is a long-term process with ups and downs along the way in our search for meaning and purpose.

Reflect:

- How can embracing humility help you grow as a person?
- Why is humility necessary in the process of making positive life changes for recovery from substance use and mental health issues?
- Think of and discuss a situation where being humble improved your relationships or decision-making.

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less."

— C.S. Lewis

Not Taking Oneself Too Seriously:

The Power of Lightness: Not taking oneself too seriously can reduce stress and increase resilience. It allows us to laugh at our mistakes and learn from them rather than letting the "small stuff" weigh us down. It helps us to "let go" and move forward in spite of setbacks and unexpected obstacles

Reflect:

- Describe a time when you were able to laugh at yourself or a situation. How did it make you feel?
- How can adopting a lighter attitude help you with your current challenges?

"If you can't laugh at yourself once in a while, you may be missing the best joke of all."

— Unknown



Closing Section: Goal Setting with the Big Picture in Mind

Introduction to Goal Setting: Let's shift our focus to the future. Keeping in mind the vastness and interconnectedness of the universe, as well as our reflections on humility and not taking ourselves too seriously, let's think about how we can set meaningful goals for the upcoming year.

Goals are like stars on the horizon—they guide us forward. When we set goals with the "big picture" in mind, we can better prioritize what truly matters and navigate challenges with perspective and purpose.

Setting Big Picture Goals:

1: Focus on What Matters Most

Take a moment to reflect on areas of your life where you want to grow or make progress in the next year. These can include (but not limited to) -

- Personal Growth
- Relationships
- Health and Well-being
- Career or Education
- Spiritual or Emotional Fulfillment
- Giving Back to Others

2: Identify and Define Your Goals

- As a group, discuss **2-3 moderate to long-term goals** you want to work toward this year. (Write them down if possible)
- For each identified goal think about and be prepared to explain why it is important to you in the context of the "big picture." How does this goal align with your values and aspirations? (Again, consider writing this down)

3: Visualize the Outcome - What will it feel like when you achieve these goals? Picture the positive impact on your life and the lives of others especially regarding "the big picture" What thoughts inspirations, and emotions come up as you visualize achieving these goals?

Takeaway Quote:

"When we see ourselves as part of something greater, our goals become more than tasks—they become steppingstones toward a meaningful and connected life."