

# The SAGA Framework - ikario.com

This is a reference guide to accompany the framework laid out here:  
[ikario.com/saga](http://ikario.com/saga)

SAGA is an acronym that stands for the 4 components to focus on if you want to turn your life around:

1. Skills
2. Acceptance
3. Gratitude
4. Ambition

Answer the following questions in writing to gain a clearer picture of how you can apply this framework to your own life.

## Part 1: Skills

Focus on developing skills that help you achieve your goals. This puts you in the driver's seat.

The following questions can help you connect the dots between your current situation, your goals and the skills needed to make a change.

- What are important goals that you want to achieve in life?
- What are some problems that you want to eliminate from your life?
- What skills - if you had them at a high level - would make it easy for you to achieve your goals and solve your problems?

- Who can you think of who has achieved your goals? What skills do you think helped them most in getting there?

Once you know what skills to focus on, reaching your goals becomes a matter of process. It becomes a matter of showing up and putting in the time to level up your skills – the real world results (success, money, social life, etc.) will follow eventually.

## **Part 2: Acceptance**

Your journey can only start from one place, which is where you are right now. Many of us spend a lot of time and mental energy on negativity and futile resistance. From self-loathing and self-critical thoughts to attempts to deny the reality of our situation.

Unfortunately, none of this helps us solve any problems or gets us any closer to our goals. Self acceptance can unwind a lot of the negativity and tension in your mind. And accepting your current situation helps you take the first step to betterment.

### **Self Acceptance Exercise 1:**

- Get a pen and paper and write the sentence: “I accept myself, just the way I am.”
- Notice how you respond to writing this. Do you feel resistance to this statement? Does your mind immediately suggest things that are unacceptable about yourself? Observe these reactions without judging them or trying to suppress them.
- Continue writing the sentence “I accept myself, just the way I am.” and watch your internal reaction.

- If the reaction softens, you can escalate the intensity of what you write. For example: “I love and accept myself, just the way I am.”
- Continue doing this writing and mindfulness exercise until your judgemental inner voice quiets down.

### **Self Acceptance Exercise 2:**

- Think of something you dislike about yourself and/or your current situation.
- Write down a sentence that starts with “The truth is...” – for example: “*The truth is, I have been spending too much time playing video games and I’m neglecting my health, my work and my creative projects.*”
- Make sure that the statement is objectively true, without exaggerations or excuses. Simply state the facts.
- Then, read it repeatedly and note your reaction. Practice sitting with this, accepting it without judgement, without starting a train of thought.

Acceptance is simple, but not easy. It is about letting go of judgements, self-flagellation, mental chatter. The better you are at accepting yourself and accepting where you are, without resistance, the more capable you are of moving forward.

## **Part 3: Gratitude**

Gratitude is probably the simplest and most effective thing you can do for your mental health and happiness, that is completely free.

There are many ways to practice gratitude. A good way to start is to answer these writing prompts:

- Write down a list of things you are grateful for, regarding your health and wellbeing.
- Look around the room you are in right now. List things you see, that you are grateful for.
- Think about your friends, family, social connections. Write down people in your life that you are grateful for - include details about what exactly you are grateful for in these people.
- Think about the last 24 hours. Write down things that happened in this time period, that you are grateful for.

## Part 4: Ambition

Ambitious goals are useful tools for personal growth. In this exercise, let's define a clear goal that you are motivated to strive towards.

- In Part 1, we already wrote down several goals. Pick one that feels most important to you or that resonates with you the most.
- Formulate this goal in a way that is specific and measurable (e.g. "My goal is to exercise 3 times a week and have clearly visible abs" is better than "I want to be fit and healthy").
- To find the sweet spot that makes this goal push you out of your comfort zone, define a range.
  - Write down a version of this goal that would be too ambitious, too far out of reach (e.g. "I want to look like Arnie at his peak").
  - Write down a version of the goal that's too easy (e.g. "I want to be able to do 5 push ups.")
- Now that you have an outer and inner range, try to find a mid point that:

- Is ambitious enough to feel exciting.
- Is possible for you to accomplish, but only if you really go after it.
- Is clearly defined, so you'll know when you've reached this goal.

Approach this like a calibration process. There are many different ways to formulate any goal. Try to tweak it until you feel yourself responding to it. A good, ambitious goal should spark some excitement, like an adventure that makes you slightly nervous but that you can't wait to go on.

In my life, unlocking a skill focus, self acceptance and gratitude practice to support my ambitious goals was a game changer.

I hope this framework will serve you as well as it did me.

Shane