

Explore



Decide



Cantril Ladder

A Self-help Tool



Introduction

The Cantril Ladder (or Scale) is a widely-used tool in coaching that enables you to see how happy you are with your life, and set targets for improving your situation. You are asked to picture yourself on a ladder stretching from 1 at the bottom (the worst possible situation) to 10 at the top (the best possible situation). It puts you in control and is easy to use.

It is based on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale created by the Psychologist Hadely Cantril in 1965, and is used extensively in research, including the World Happiness Report (Wikipedia, 2023) and Gallup's daily poll of America's wellbeing (Gallup, 2023).

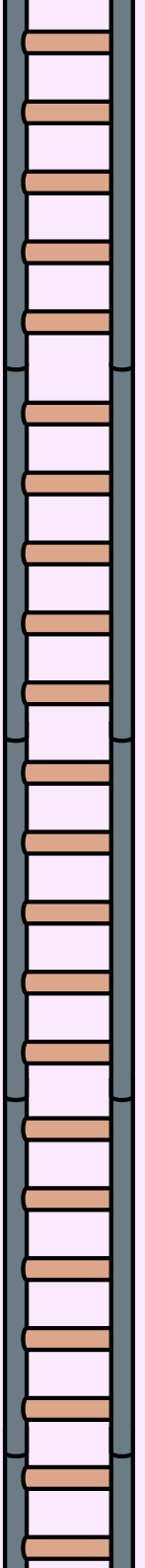
It also useful for reflection, assessment ('How well am I doing?') and goal-setting in general.

This tool is designed to...

- Enable you to reflect on how you feel about your life situation (or an aspect of it).
- Enable you to consider how far you are struggling or flourishing.
- Enable you to set achievable targets for improvement.

Consider using this tool if you...

- Want to stand back and consider if you are where you want to be with your life.
- Want to set goals for improving your life situation.
- Want to picture your situation by using a visual tool.

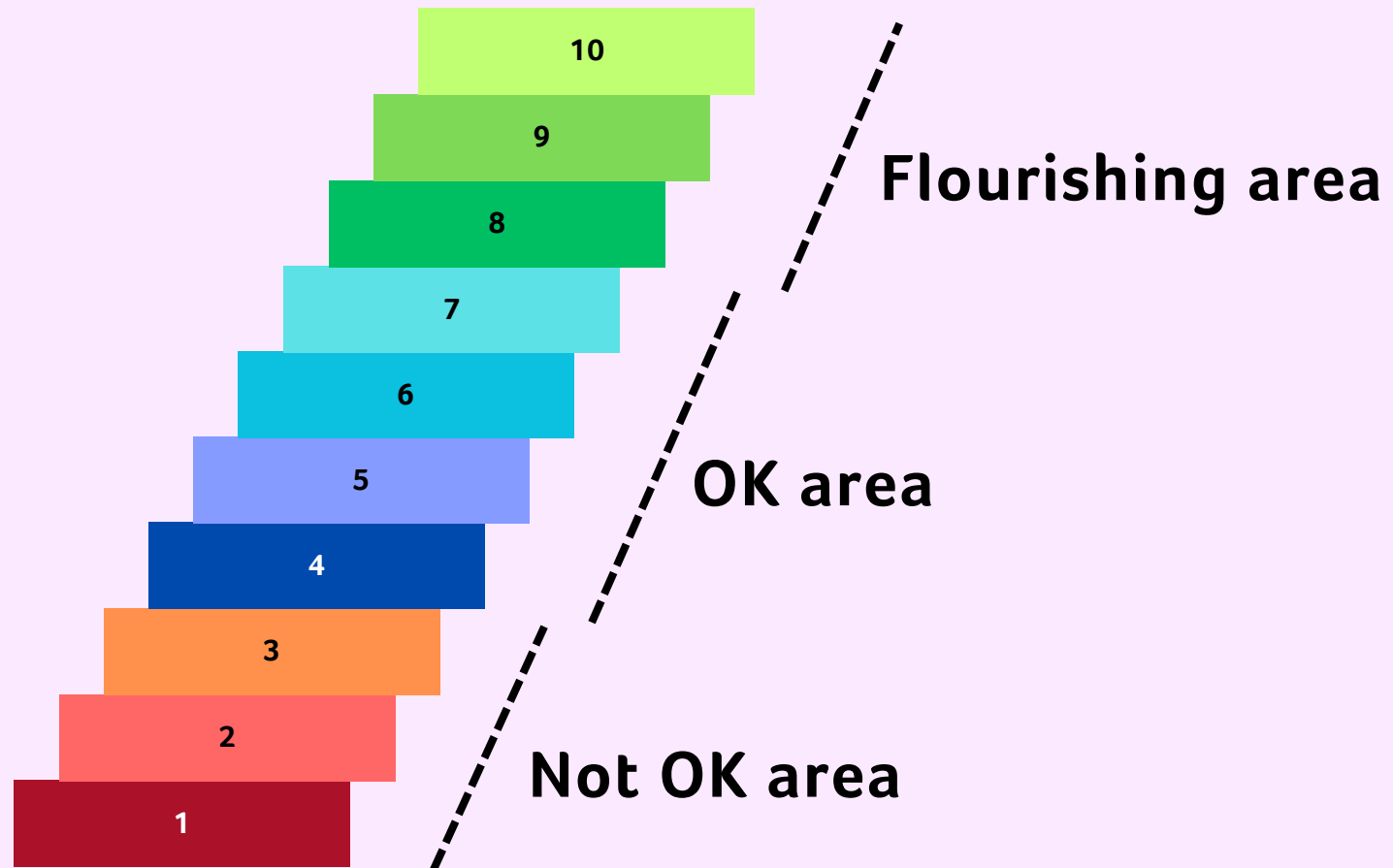


How to use this tool:



First, picture a ladder with 1 at the bottom and 10 at the top.

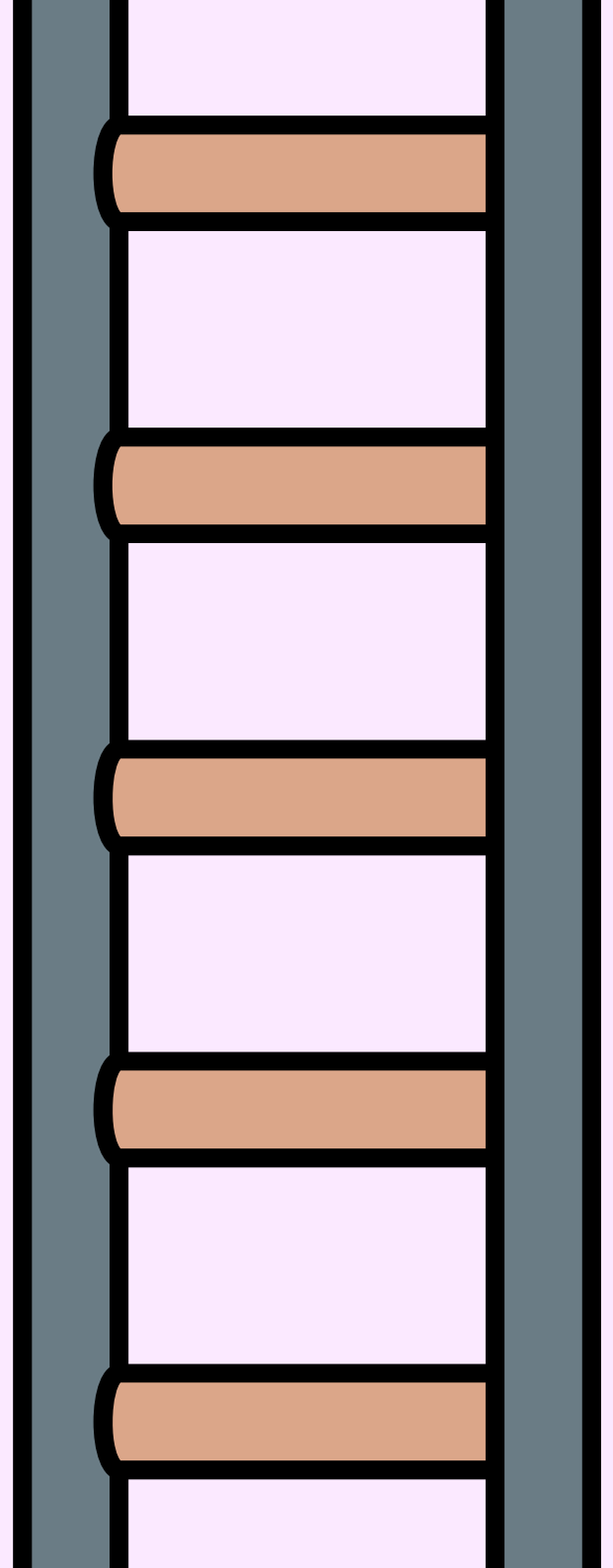
Which step are you standing on right now? Mark the relevant number.





Second, think realistically where you would like to be in 5 years' time.

Mark this on the ladder. This shows the life situation you want to move towards. It might be a little bit better, or it might be a lot better. It's up to you to decide how much (and what) change you want to make.



Third, create a plan to take you there.

Identify which aspects of your life situation you want to change, and the specific steps to making this happen.

You may find the following Self-help Tools useful:

The Wheel of Life – helps you see which parts of your life situation you want to change.

The Bridge of Reasons – being motivated by the benefits.

SCALED-UP action plans – a practical way to drive change and achieve results.

Rule of Three – very simple approach to ‘chipping away’ at a challenge.

Level Playing Field – how to mobilise all the resource and support available to you to overcome obstacles.

Helpful Habits – simple tricks for getting things done.



Pause, Reflect, Act.

- Were you surprised to see where you are right now on the ladder?
- How did that make you feel?
- What do you want to do about it?
- How much do you want to do something about it?
- What do you want to do now practically to take forward the insights from this exercise?
- Who could help you with this?
- Which other Self-help Tools would you like to look at next?

NB: Because everyone is different, this tool may not work for you, so please look at our other Self-help Tools as well.



References and Resources

- Gallup. (2023). Understanding How Gallup Uses the Cantril Scale. Gallup. Accessed 15/04/2023: https://news.gallup.com/poll/122453/understanding_gallup_uses_cantril_scale.aspx
- Innobatics. (2023). Improve the quality of your life with the Cantril Ladder. Innobatics. Accessed 16/04/2023: <https://innobatics.gr/en/cantril-ladder/>
- Wikipedia. (14.04.2023). Happiness. Wikipedia. Accessed 16/04/2023: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happiness>



If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our Self-help Tools with your students, we would love to hear from you and share good practice. We would ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy and acknowledge the other sources we have used. Thank you.