

# Designing Your Life

## How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life

**Bill Burnett and  
Dave Evans**

**SUPPLEMENTAL GRAPHICS**

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## Try Stuff

### Health/Work/Play/Love Dashboard

1. Write a few sentences about how it's going in each of the four areas.
2. Mark where you are (0 to Full) on each gauge.
3. Ask yourself if there's a design problem you'd like to tackle in any of these areas.
4. Now ask yourself if your "problem" is a gravity problem.

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DASHBOARD

Work	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL					
Play	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL					
Love	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL					
Health	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL					

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## Your Health Gauge

*Healthy to us means being well in more than just your body; you might want to take into account your mind and spirit, too. The relative importance of each area is entirely up to you. Make a quick assessment of your health and then fill in your gauge—are you a quarter full, or half, or three-quarters, or really full? (Bill has also filled in the gauges for his dashboard as an example to reference.)*

*How you rate your health will factor significantly into how you assess the quality of your life and what you might want to redesign going forward.*

### Health

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## Your Work Gauge

*Make a list of all the ways you “work,” and then “gauge” your working life as a whole. We are assuming that there are things on your list that you are getting paid to do. This will include your nine-to-five job, and your second job if the first isn’t enough, and any consulting or advising you do, etc. If you are a regular volunteer in any organization, figure that in, too. If you are a homemaker, like Debbie, make sure you remember that raising children, providing home-cooked meals for your family, taking care of aging parents, and doing housework are all forms of “work.”*

### Work

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## Your Play Gauge

*Play is about activity that brings joy just for the pure sake of the doing of it. It can include organized activity or productive endeavors, but only if they are done for fun and not merit. We contend that all lives need some play, and that making sure there is some play in our day is a critical life design step. Make a quick list of how you play and then fill in your gauge—are you a quarter full, or half, or three-quarters, or really full?*

### Play

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## Your Love Gauge

*We do think that love makes the world go around, and when we don't have any, our world isn't as bright and alive as it could be. We also know that we have to pay attention to love, and that it arrives in a wide range of forms. Our primary relationship is where we go first for love, children typically come next, and then it's a flood of people and pets and community and anything else that is an object of affection. And it is as critical to feel loved by others as it is to love—it has to go both ways. Where is the love flowing in your life, from you and from others? Make a list, and then fill in your gauge.*

### Love

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## Try Stuff

### Workview and Lifeview

- 1.** Write a short reflection about your Workview.  
This should take about thirty minutes. Shoot for about 250 words—less than a page of typed writing.
  - 2.** Write a short reflection about your Lifeview.  
This should also take no more than thirty minutes and be 250 words or so.
  - 3.** Read over your Lifeview and Workview, and answer each of these questions:
    - a.** Where do your views on work and life complement one another?
    - b.** Where do they clash?
    - c.** Does one drive the other? How?
-

# Workview Reflection

A Workview should address the critical issues related to what work is and what it means to you. It is not just a list of what you want from or out of work, but a general statement of your view of work. It's your definition for what good work deserves to be. A Workview may address such questions as:

- **Why work?**
- **What's work for?**
- **What does work mean?**
- **How does it relate to the individual, others, society?**
- **What defines good or worthwhile work?**
- **What does money have to do with it?**
- **What do experience, growth, and fulfillment have to do with it?**

## Liferview Reflection

Just as you did with the Workview, please write a reflection on your Liferview. This should also take no more than thirty minutes and be 250 words or so. Below are some questions often addressed in a Liferview, just to get you started. The key thing is to write down whatever critical defining values and perspectives provide the basis for your understanding of life. Your Liferview is what provides your definition of what have been called “matters of ultimate concern.” It’s what matters most to you.

- **Why are we here?**
- **What is the meaning or purpose of life?**
- **What is the relationship between the individual and others?**
- **Where do family, country, and the rest of the world fit in?**
- **What is good, and what is evil?**
- **Is there a higher power, God, or something transcendent, and if so, what impact does this have on your life?**
- **What is the role of joy, sorrow, justice, injustice, love, peace, and strife in life?**

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## Try Stuff

### Good Time Journal

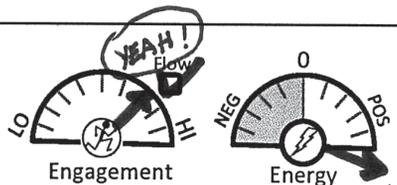
- 1. Complete a log of your daily activities, using the worksheet provided (or in your own notebook). Note when you are engaged and/or energized and what you are doing during those times. Try to do this daily, or at the very least every few days.**
- 2. Continue this daily logging for three weeks.**
- 3. At the end of each week, jot down your reflections—notice which activities are engaging and energizing, and which ones are not.**
- 4. Are there any surprises in your reflections?**
- 5. Zoom in and try to get even more specific about what does or does not engage and energize you.**
- 6. Use the AEIOU method as needed to help you in your reflections.**



# Bill's Good Time Journal Activity Log

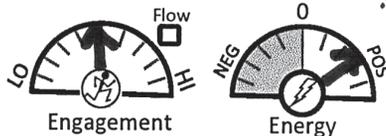
• ART CLASS

fun figure drawing



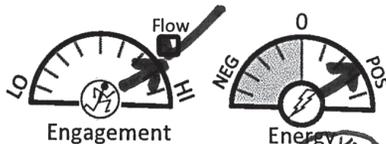
• BUDGETING

new fiscal year stuff



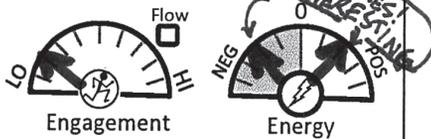
• OFFICE HOURS

lots of new ME-101 students



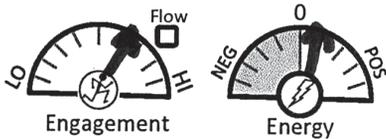
• FACULTY MEETING

hmm... depends on topic



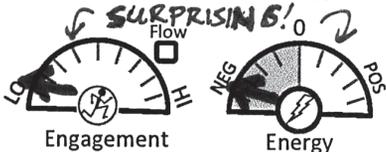
• TEACHING

really good class



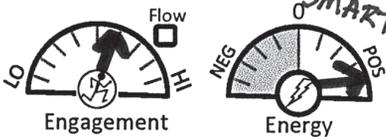
• MASTERS COACHING

lots of logistics hassles



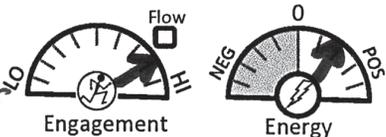
• WORKING OUT

2 miles today



• DATE NIGHT

left early to make dinner



# AEIOU

Getting great insights out of your Good Time Journal reflections isn't always easy, so here's a tool designers use to make detailed and accurate observations—part of getting good at the curiosity mind-set. It's the AEIOU method that provides you five sets of questions you can use when reflecting on your Activity Log.

**Activities.** What were you actually doing? Was this a structured or an unstructured activity? Did you have a specific role to play (team leader) or were you just a participant (at the meeting)?

**Environments.** Our environment has a profound effect on our emotional state. You feel one way at a football stadium, another in a cathedral. Notice where you were when you were involved in the activity. What kind of a place was it, and how did it make you feel?

**Interactions.** What were you interacting with—people or machines? Was it a new kind of interaction or one you are familiar with? Was it formal or informal?

**Objects.** Were you interacting with any objects or devices—iPads or smartphones, hockey sticks or sailboats? What were the objects that created or supported your feeling engaged?

**Users.** Who else was there, and what role did they play in making it either a positive or a negative experience?

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## Try Stuff

### Mind Mapping

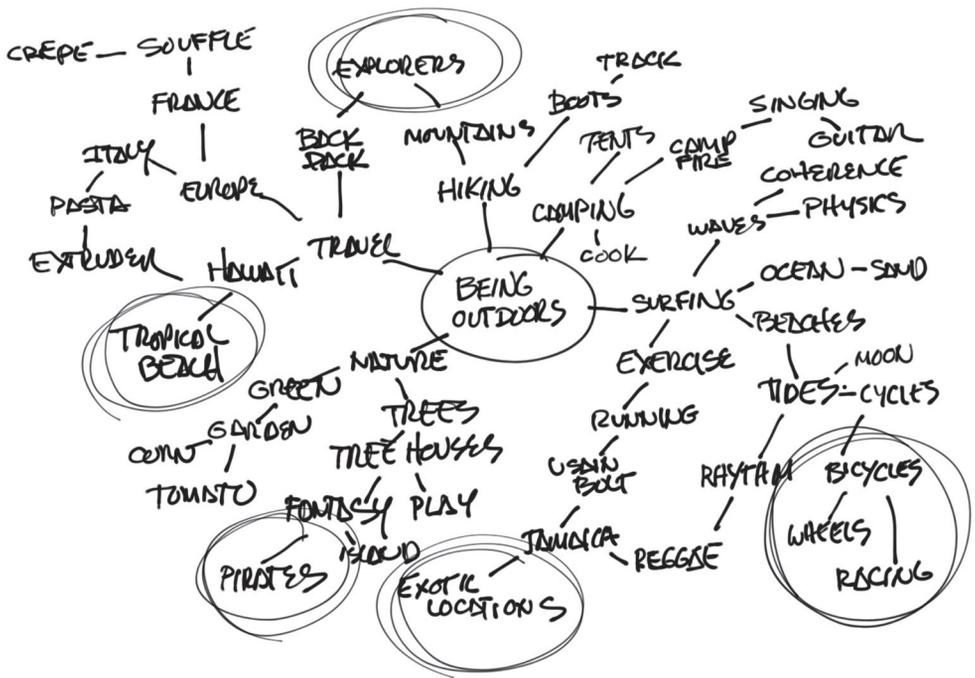
- 1.** Review your Good Time Journal and note activities in which you were engaged, energized, and in flow.
  - 2.** Choose an activity that you were engaged in, an activity that you felt highly energized from, and something you did that brought you into flow, and create three mind maps—one for each.
  - 3.** Look at the outer ring of each mind map, pick three things that jump out at you, and create a job description from them.
  - 4.** Create a role for each job description, and draw a napkin sketch.
-

# Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a great tool for ideating by yourself, and a great method for getting unstuck. Mind mapping works by using simple free association of words, one after another, to open up the idea space and come up with new solutions. The graphical nature of the method allows ideas and their associations to be captured automatically. This technique teaches you to generate lots of ideas, and because it is a visual method, it bypasses your inner logical/verbal censor.

The mind-mapping process has three steps:

- 1. Picking a topic**
- 2. Making the mind map**
- 3. Making secondary connections and creating concepts (mashing it all up)**



The image above is of Grant’s mind map, which he made while being stuck on the problem of how to find the “perfect” job. You’ll remember that when Grant looked over his Good Time Journal the only positive experiences he could find had something to do with hiking in the redwoods near his house. So he decided to mind-map around that.

You can see he put BEING OUTDOORS in the center of his mind map and drew a circle around it. This is step one.

Step two is making the mind map. For this, you take the original idea and write down five or six things related to that idea. Be rigorous in writing down the first words that come to mind. Now repeat this process with the words in the second ring. Draw three

or four lines from each word, and free-associate new words related to these prompts. The words that come up for you do not need to be associated to the words or question in the center, only the word in the second ring. Repeat this process until you have at least three or four rings of word associations.

The whole process of creating layers and word associations should take three to five minutes; you want to give yourself a time limit so you do this fast and bypass your inner censor. The next step is to take this random association of words and highlight a few things that might be interesting (or that jump out at you) and mash them together into a few concepts. You want to pick from the very outer layer or perimeter of the mind map, because that is the stuff that is two or three steps away from your conscious thinking.

# Mind Mapping with Your Good Time Journal

If you didn't do your Good Time Journal, please go back and do it now; you are going to need it for this exercise. We are going to do three different mind maps, each one extending out at least three or four layers, and with at least a dozen or more elements in the outermost ring.

## Mind Map 1—Engagement

From your Good Time Journal, pick one of the areas of greatest interest to you, or an activity during which you were really engaged (e.g., balancing the budget or pitching a new idea), and make it the center of your map. Then generate a bunch of connected words and concepts, using the mind-mapping technique.

## Mind Map 2—Energy

From your Good Time Journal, pick something you've identified as really energizing you in your work and life (e.g., art class, giving feedback to colleagues, health-care access, keeping things running right) and mind-map this out.

## Mind Map 3—Flow

From your Good Time Journal, pick one of the experiences when you were in a state of flow, put the experience itself at the center of a mind map, and complete your mapping of your experience with this state (e.g., speaking in front of a large audience or brainstorming creative ideas).

Now that you've done these three mind maps, we're going to invent an interesting, though not necessarily practical, life alternative from each.

- 1. Look at the outer ring of one of your maps and pick three disparate items that catch your eye. You'll know which ones they are intuitively—they should literally “jump out” at you.**
- 2. Now try to combine those three items into a possible job description that would be fun and interesting to you and would be helpful to someone else (again, it need not be practical or appeal to lots of people or employers).**
- 3. Name your role and draw a napkin sketch of it (a quick visual drawing of what it is), like the one shown here. For example, when Grant (who was languishing away at the car-rental agency) did this exercise based on when he was engaged in his life (hiking in redwoods, playing pickup basketball,**

helping his niece and nephew), he ended up drawing a sketch of himself leading a Pirate Surf Camp for children.



4. Do this exercise three times—once for each of your mind maps—making sure that the three versions are different from one another.

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## **Try Stuff**

### **Odyssey Plan**

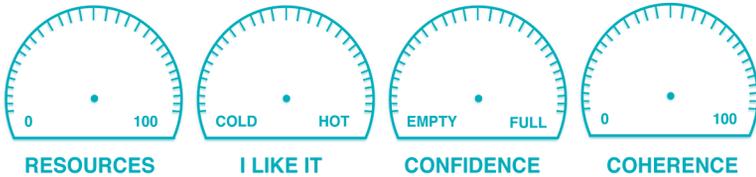
- 1. Create three alternative five-year plans, using the worksheet provided.**
  - 2. Give each alternative a descriptive six-word title, and write down three questions that arise out of each version of you.**
  - 3. Complete each gauge on the dashboard— ranking each alternative for resources, likability, confidence, and coherence.**
  - 4. Present your plan to another person, a group, or your Life Design Team. Note how each alternative energizes you.**
-

# Odyssey Planning 101

Create three alternative versions of the next five years of your life. Each one must include:

- 1. A visual/graphical timeline. Include personal and noncareer events as well—do you want to be married, train to win the CrossFit Games, or learn how to bend spoons with your mind?**
- 2. A title for each option in the form of a six-word headline describing the essence of this alternative.**
- 3. Questions that this alternative is asking—preferably two or three. A good designer asks questions to test assumptions and reveal new insights. In each potential timeline, you will investigate different possibilities and learn different things about yourself and the world. What kinds of things will you want to test and explore in each alternative version of your life?**
- 4. A dashboard where you can gauge**
  - a. Resources (Do you have the objective resources—time, money, skill, contacts—you need to pull off your plan?)**
  - b. Likability (Are you hot or cold or warm about your plan?)**
  - c. Confidence (Are you feeling full of confidence, or pretty uncertain about pulling this off?)**
  - d. Coherence (Does the plan make sense within**

itself? And is it consistent with you, your  
Workview, and your Lifeview?)



- **Possible considerations**
  - **Geography—where will you live?**
  - **What experience/learning will you gain?**
  - **What are the impacts/results of choosing this alternative?**
  - **What will life look like? What particular role, industry, or company do you see yourself in?**
- **Other ideas**
  - **Do keep in mind things other than career and money. Even though those things are important, if not central, to the decisive direction of your next few years, there are other critical elements that you want to pay attention to.**
  - **Any of the considerations listed above can be a springboard for forming your alternative lives for the next five years. If you find yourself stuck, try making a mind map out of any of the design considerations listed above. Don't overthink this exercise, and don't skip it.**

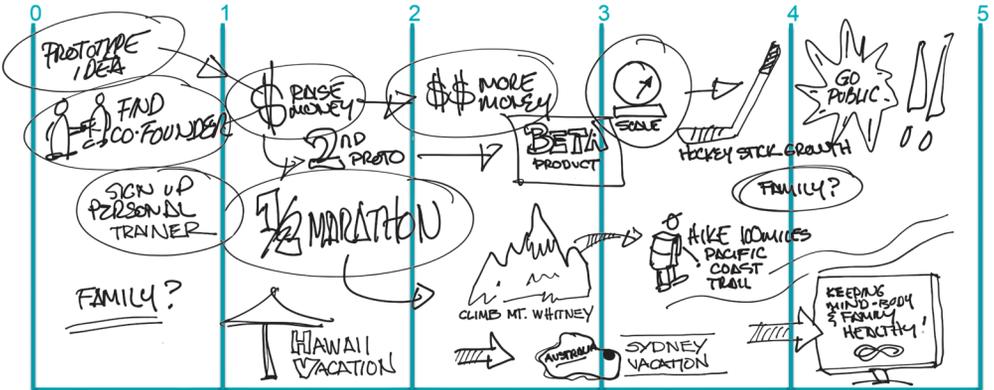
## Martha's Many Lives

What follows is an example of three five-year Odyssey Plans from a participant in one of our Mid-Career Workshops. Martha is a technology executive who was looking to try something more meaningful for the latter half of her life. She came up with three very different plans for her future, each a little more risky and innovative, but all involving some kind of community building.

Her three plans were: doing her first Silicon Valley-style start-up, becoming the CEO of a nonprofit working with at-risk kids, and opening a fun and friendly neighborhood bar in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, where she lived. Note that each example has a six-word headline describing the plan, a four-gauge dashboard (we really like dashboards), and the three questions that this particular alternative plan is asking.

# Example 1

## Title: "All In—The Silicon Valley Story"



Alternative Plan # 1



6-word title:

ALL IN - THE SILICON VALLEY STORY

Questions this plan addresses:

1. DO I HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?
2. IS MY IDEA GOOD ENOUGH?
3. WILL I ATTRACT VC \$

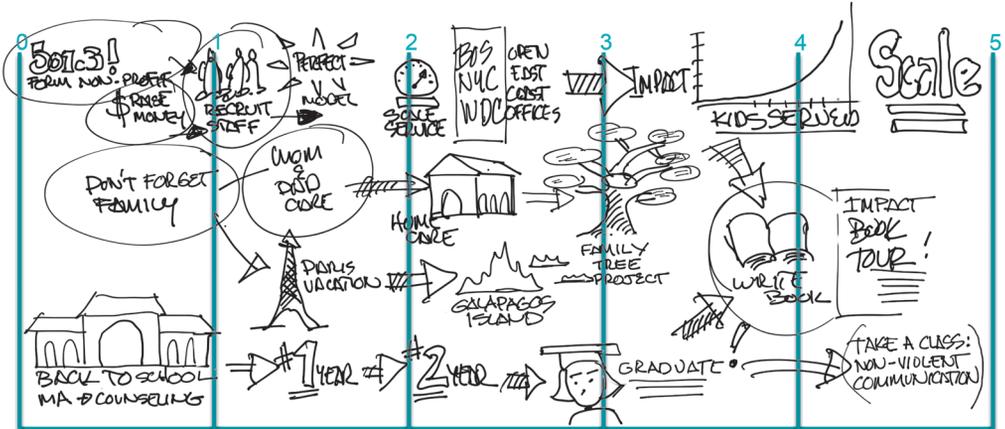


### Questions:

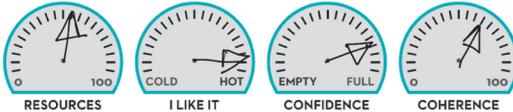
1. "Do I have what it takes to be an entrepreneur?"
2. "Is my idea good enough?"
3. "Will I be able to raise venture capital money?"

## Example 2

### Title: "Using What I Know—Helping Kids!"



#### Alternative Plan # 2



#### 6-word title: USING WHAT I KNOW - HELPING KIDS!

Questions this plan addresses:

1. WILL SKILLS TRANSLATE?
2. CAN I REALLY HELP KIDS?
3. WILL THIS BE MEANINGFUL?

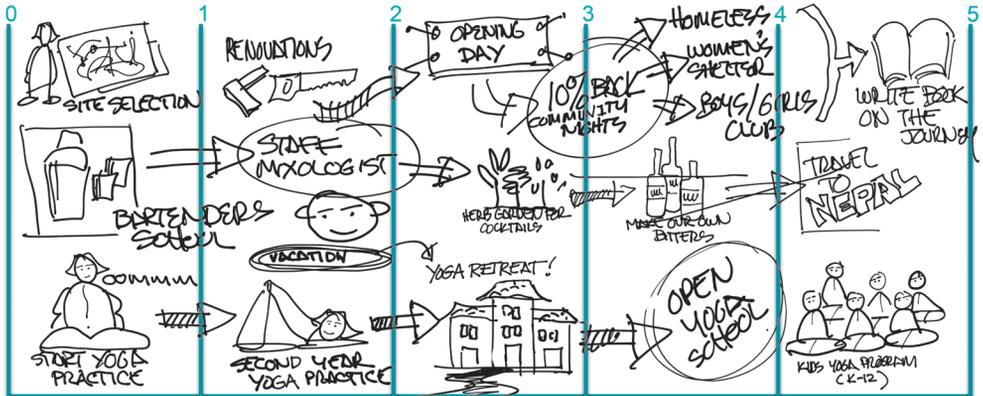


#### Questions:

1. "Will my skills translate to the nonprofit world?"
2. "Can I really help at-risk kids with a nonprofit?"
3. "Will this be meaningful?"

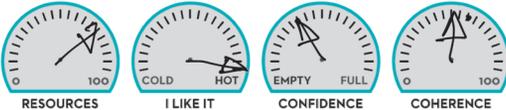
## Example 3

### Title: "Creating Community—One Drink at a Time!"



Alternative Plan # 5

6-word title:  
**CREATING COMMUNITY-1 DRINK AT A TIME!**  
 Questions this plan addresses:  
 1. IS THIS TOO RISKY?  
 2. CAN I CREATE REAL COMMUNITY?  
 3. WILL THIS BE PROFITABLE?



### Questions:

1. "Am I ready to take this much risk?"
2. "Can I really create true community with a bar?"
3. "Will this be profitable?"

# Odyssey Plan Exercise

Now complete three alternative five-year plans of your own, one on each of the three worksheets here or downloadable at [www.designingyour.life](http://www.designingyour.life).

0	1	2	3	4	5
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Alternative Plan # \_\_\_\_\_

6-word title: \_\_\_\_\_

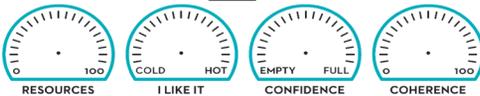


Questions this plan addresses: \_\_\_\_\_

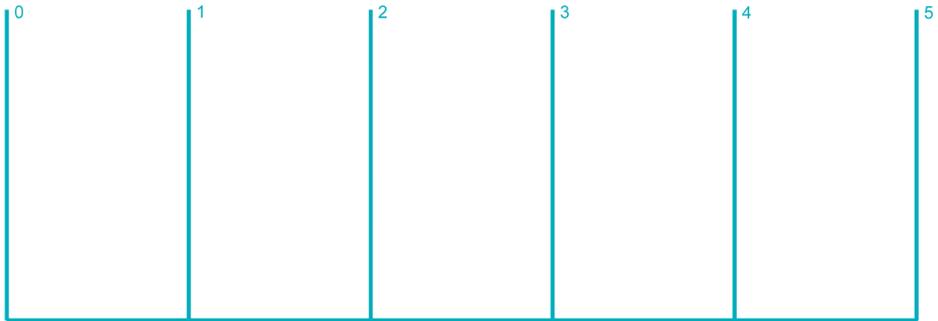
0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

Alternative Plan # \_\_\_\_\_

6-word title: \_\_\_\_\_



Questions this plan addresses: \_\_\_\_\_



Alternative Plan # \_\_\_\_\_

6-word title: \_\_\_\_\_



RESOURCES



I LIKE IT



CONFIDENCE



COHERENCE

Questions this plan addresses: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## **Try Stuff**

### **Prototyping**

- 1. Review your three Odyssey Plans and the questions you wrote down for each.**
  - 2. Make a list of prototype conversations that might help you answer these questions.**
  - 3. Make a list of prototype experiences that might help you answer these questions.**
  - 4. If you are stuck, and if you have gathered a good group, have a brainstorming session to come up with possibilities. (Don't have a team? Try mind mapping.)**
  - 5. Build your prototypes by actively seeking out Life Design Interviews and experiences.**
-

## Prototype Conversations— Life Design Interview

Once you've committed yourself to life design prototyping, how do you do it? The simplest and easiest form of prototyping is a conversation. We're going to describe a specific form of prototype conversation that we call a Life Design Interview.

A Life Design Interview is incredibly simple. It just means getting someone's story. Not just anyone and not just any story, of course. You want to talk to someone who is either doing and living what you're contemplating, or has real experience and expertise in an area about which you have questions. And the story you're after is the personal story of how that person got to be doing that thing he or she does, or got the expertise he has and what it's really like to do what she does.

A Life Design Interview isn't an "interview" at all—it's really just a conversation. So, when trying to get a meeting with someone, you don't use the term "interview," because that person will assume you mean a job interview (unless you're a journalist, and that will make him even more nervous, for other reasons). All you're doing here is identifying people who are currently doing things that you're interested in and whose stories you want to get. This is way easier than you think. As soon as you've determined that Anna is a cool person doing really interesting work, you and Anna have something in common—you both think that she and what she's doing are two of your favorite topics! The essence of the request for a meeting to have this conversation is: "Hello, Anna, I'm so glad to connect with you. John said you were just the person I needed to speak with. I'm very impressed with what

I know of your work, and I'd love to hear some of your story. Might you have thirty minutes to spare, at a time and place convenient to you, when I can buy you a cup of coffee and hear more about your experience?" That's about it—really. (And, yes, it's important to mention Anna's respected friend or colleague John if at all possible. John is the guy whose *referral* made all the difference in your finding Anna, and in her being more inclined to accept your request for coffee. There are lots of Annas in the world who will have coffee with you even if you weren't referred by John, but it works a lot better if you can get that referral.

## Prototype Experiences

Prototype experiences allow us to learn through a direct encounter with a possible future version of us. This experiential version could involve spending a day shadowing a professional you'd like to be (Take a Friend to Work Day), or a one-week unpaid exploratory project that you create, or a three-month internship (obviously, a three-month internship requires more investment and a larger commitment). If you've conducted a good number of prototype conversations using Life Design Interviewing, then you will have met people along the way who you may be interested in observing or shadowing. So that variety of prototype should be pretty accessible for you. You just have to ask—and remember, people enjoy being helpful. Most people we work with are surprised how well their Life Design Interviews go. The people they meet with really seem to enjoy it. Asking to shadow someone at

work is a much bigger favor than a thirty-minute cup of coffee, but after a dozen or so prototype conversations, you'll be ready to make a bigger request. Try it—even if you have to try a few times. You'll learn a great deal.

## **Brainstorming Prototype Experiences**

Just about everyone has done something called “brainstorming” before.

The most common form is group brainstorming. A group of individuals, typically four to six, get together, select a focal question or problem on which to brainstorm, and then spend a period of twenty minutes to an hour generating as many ideas as possible to solve the problem posed in the focal question. The goal is to come up with ideas that can be prototyped and tried in the real world.

Brainstorming requires a group of people who want to be helpful and who have some practice with the technique. It isn't easy to find good brainstormers, but once you have a good group, you can make a lot of progress generating life design ideas that you want to prototype.

Life design brainstorming has four steps, and a very structured approach to coming up with lots of prototypable ideas. Typically, if you are the facilitator who brings the group together, you might have already framed the brainstorming topic. You want a team of no fewer than three and rarely more than six people who have all volunteered to help. Once the group is convened, the session proceeds as follows.

## 1. Framing a Good Question

It is important to frame a good question for a brainstorming session. The facilitator uses the process of coming up with the question as a way to create a focus for the group's energy. When coming up with the question, the facilitator needs to be aware of some guidelines.

If the question isn't open-ended, you won't get very interesting results and not much volume. We tend to start all of our life design brainstorms with the phrase "How many ways can we think of to . . ." to make sure that we haven't limited our potential output.

You also want to be careful not to include your solution accidentally in your question. This happens all the time with some of Bill's clients. They want to brainstorm "ten new ways to make a ladder for a stockroom." This isn't a very good framing question, because a ladder is a solution (and they only want ten ideas). A better framing would be to focus on what a ladder does: "How many ways can we think of to . . . give a person access to inventory in high places?" or "How many ways can we think of to . . . give a stockperson three-dimensional mobility in a warehouse?" These questions do not assume that ladders are the only way to solve the problem, and they open up the solution space for more creative answers (user-controlled stockroom drones, anyone?).

Also, be careful that you don't frame a question so broadly that it is meaningless. We sometimes sit in on life design brainstorms where the question is "How many ways can we think of to . . . make Bob happy?" This vague question fails for a couple of reasons: First of all, "happiness" means too many different things to

different people. And positive psychology tells us that happiness is context-dependent, so, without a context—such as “my work” or “my social life”—no one knows where to start.

## **2. Warming Up**

People need a transition from their hectic, event-driven workday to a state of relaxed, creative attention if they are going to do a good job brainstorming. People need some support and a transitional activity to move from their analytical/critical brain to a synthesizing/nonjudgmental brain. It’s a mind-body problem and it takes some practice to get good at making such a transition. A good facilitator takes the lead and makes sure everyone is warmed up and feeling creative. This is essential if the brainstorm is going to be high-energy and generate a lot of ideas.

You can visit our website, [www.designingyour.life](http://www.designingyour.life), for a list of exercises and improvisational games that we use all the time with our students. Here’s one quick idea that always works: give everyone in your brainstorming group a can of Play-Doh. Bill’s been in love with Play-Doh since his days at the toy company Kenner Products; it is a magic material that turns adults into children again. If you just let your brainstormers play with the Play-Doh while they are brainstorming, we guarantee you will get more and better ideas.

### **3. The Brainstorm Itself**

As we mentioned at the start, brainstorming sessions need to be facilitated. The facilitator sets up the room and makes sure there are pens and sticky notes or paper for every participant, and that the space is quiet and comfortable. The facilitator also helps frame the question, manages the warm-up, makes sure everything that is said is recorded, and manages the rules.

We recommend that all participants have their own pens and notepads and write down their ideas. That way, the group isn't constrained by how fast the facilitator can record ideas, and there is less chance of losing a potentially great idea.

#### **The Rules of Brainstorming**

- 1. Go for quantity, not quality.**
- 2. Defer judgment and do not censor ideas.**
- 3. Build off the ideas of others.**
- 4. Encourage wild ideas.**

### **4. Naming and Framing the Outcomes**

This is perhaps the most important part of a brainstorm, and the one activity that we notice most groups leave out. They might take a cell-phone picture of their wall full of sticky notes, high-five all around, and then leave. The problem with this is that the information on the wall is pretty fragile, and if it isn't processed

right away, the freshness of the ideas and their interconnections get lost. Later, participants often feel that nothing happened, and they can't remember what the brainstorm accomplished.

Ideas should be counted—you want to be able to say, “We had 141 ideas.” Group similar ideas together by subject or category, name those categories, and frame the results with reference to the original focal question. Every unique category is given a descriptive and often funny name that captures the essence of that group of ideas. Then vote. Voting is important, and should be done silently, so that people aren't influencing one another. We like to use colored dots to cast votes, and we also like to use categories such as:

- **Most exciting**
- **The one we wish we could do if money were no object**
- **The dark horse—probably won't work, but if it did . . .**
- **Most likely to lead to a great life**
- **If we could ignore the laws of physics . . .**

Once the voting is complete, the selections are discussed, and potentially regrouped and framed again; then decisions are made on what to prototype first.

At the end of our four-step process, the goal is to say something like “We had 141 ideas, we grouped those into six categories, and, based on our focal question, we selected eight killer ideas to prototype; then we prioritized the list, and our first prototype is . . .”

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# Try Stuff

## Reframing Failure

- 1. Using the worksheet below (or downloading it from [www.designingyour.life](http://www.designingyour.life)), look back over the last week (or month or year), and log your failures.**
- 2. Categorize them as screwups, weaknesses, or growth opportunities.**
- 3. Identify your growth insights.**
- 4. Build a habit of converting failures to growth by doing this once or twice a month.**

Failure	Screwup	Weakness	Growth Opportunity	Insight

## Failure Reframe Exercise

It's easy for us to describe the lofty goal of attaining failure immunity, but getting there is another matter. Here's an exercise to help you do just that—the failure reframe. Failure is the raw material of success, and the failure reframe is a process of converting that raw material into real growth. It's a simple three-step exercise:

- 1. Log your failures.**
- 2. Categorize your failures.**
- 3. Identify growth insights.**

### Log Your Failures

Just write down when you've messed up. You can do this by looking back over the last week, the last month, the last year, or make it your All-Time Failure Hits List. Any time frame can work. If you want to build the habit of converting failures to growth, then we suggest you do this once or twice a month until you've established a new way of thinking. Failure reframe is a healthy habit that leads to failure immunity.

## Categorize Your Failures

It's useful to categorize failures into three types so you can more easily identify where the growth potential lies.

*Screwups* are just that—simple mistakes about things that you normally get right. It's not that you can't do better. You normally do these things right, so you don't really need to learn anything from this—you just screwed up. The best response here is to acknowledge you screwed up, apologize as needed, and move on.

*Weaknesses* are failures that happen because of one of your abiding failings. These are the mistakes that you make over and over. You know the source of these failures well. They are old friends. You've probably worked at correcting them already, and have improved as far as you think you're going to. You try to avoid getting caught by these weaknesses, but they happen. We're not suggesting you cave in prematurely and accept mediocre performance, but we are suggesting that there isn't much upside in trying to change your stripes. It's a judgment call, of course, but some failures are just part of your makeup, and your best strategy is avoidance of the situations that prompt them instead of improvement.

*Growth opportunities* are the failures that didn't have to happen, or at least don't have to happen the next time. The cause of these failures is identifiable, and a fix is available. We want to direct our attention here, rather than get distracted by the low return on spending too much time on the other failure types.

## Identify Growth Insights

Do any of the growth opportunity failures offer an invitation for a real improvement? What is there to learn here? What went wrong (the critical failure factor)? What could be done differently next time (the critical success factor)? Look for an insight to capture that could change things next time. Jot it down and put it to work. That's it—a simple reframe.

Here are some examples from Dave's almost endlessly long failure log.

Failure	Screwup	Weakness	Growth Opportunity	Insight
LISA'S BDAY 1 WK. LATE!	X (same)			
LAST MINUTE BUDGET		X		
PHONE SURPRISE			X	START THE CALL WITH NEWS & AGENDA
TERMINATE THIEVES	X $\Delta$ 10 min			

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## **Try Stuff**

### **Building a Team**

- 1. Make a list of three to five people who might be a part of your Life Design Team. Think of your supporters, your intimates, your mentors or possible mentors. Ideally, these will be three to five people also actively engaged in designing their lives.**
  - 2. Make sure everyone has a copy of the book (or buy books for everyone), so all the members of your team understand how life design works and have reviewed the team roles and rules.**
  - 3. Agree to meet regularly and actively to co-create a well-designed life as a community.**
-

## Identifying Your Team

**Supporters.** Supporters come in all flavors, ages, proximities, and sizes. Supporters are just those go-to people you can count on to care about your life—people close enough to you that their encouragement helps keep you going and their feedback is of real use. Most of your supporters are people you think of as your friends, but not all friends are supporters, and some supporters are not friends (they are there for you in your life design, but you don't hang out with them).

**Players.** Players are the active participants in your life design projects—especially your ongoing work-related and avocational projects and prototypes. These are the people you actually do things with, your co-workers in the classic sense.

**Intimates.** Intimates include your immediate and close extended family members and your closest friends. These are likely the people most directly affected by your life design, and, whether or not they are actively involved with your life design project, they are the most influential people in it. We encourage you at least to keep your intimates informed, if not directly involved, in your life design work. These people are a big part of your life, so don't leave them out.

**The Team.** These are the people with whom you're sharing the specifics of your life design project and who will track with you on that project over time at regular intervals. The most likely candidates for your team are among the people you invited to your feedback session to present and discuss your three alternative five-year Odyssey Plans.

## Team Roles and Rules

First of all, keep it simple. The team's focus is on supporting an effective life design—no more and no less. The team members are not your therapist, your financial adviser, or your spiritual guru. They are your co-creators in your life design. The only role that really needs to be defined is that of the team facilitator—the person who organizes when you get together and what you do when you meet. Usually, that's you.

As far as rules go, we use just four in our Stanford teams (which we call sections).

Keep it:

- 1. Respectful**
- 2. Confidential**
- 3. Participative (no holding back)**
- 4. Generative (constructive, not skeptical or judging)**