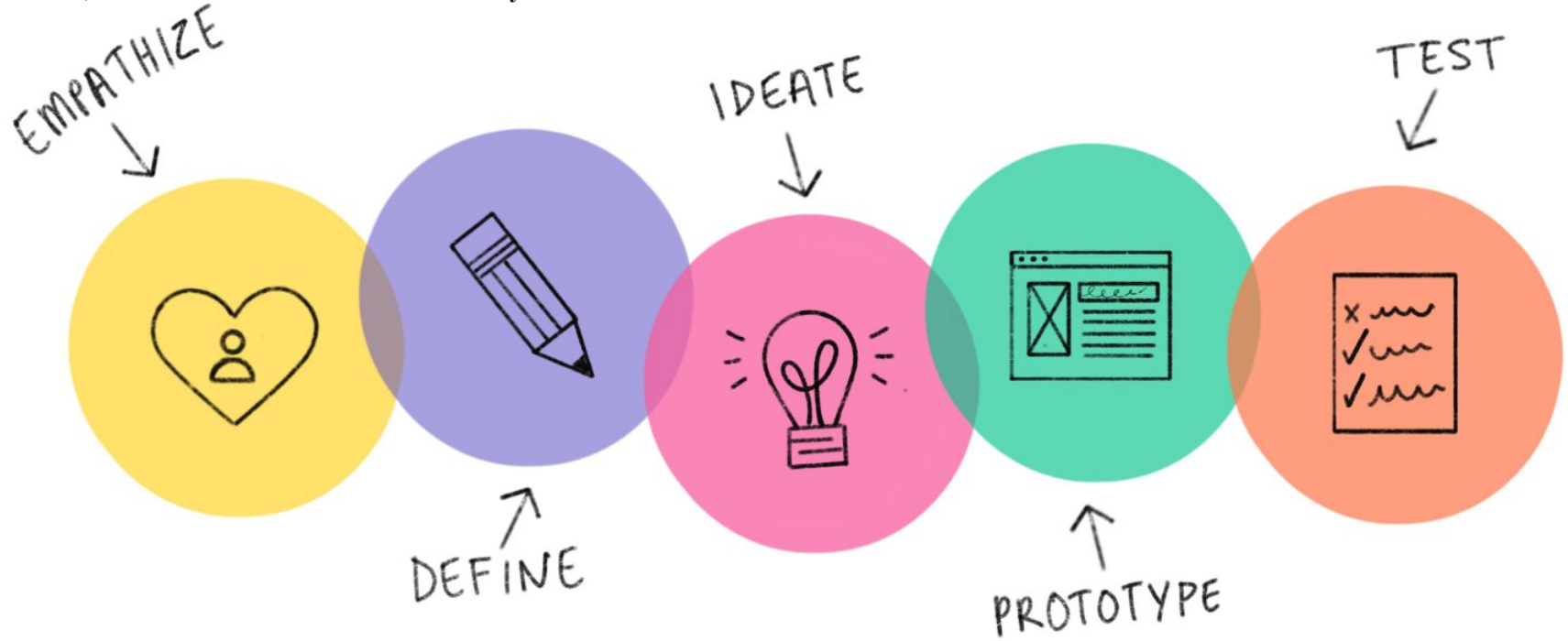


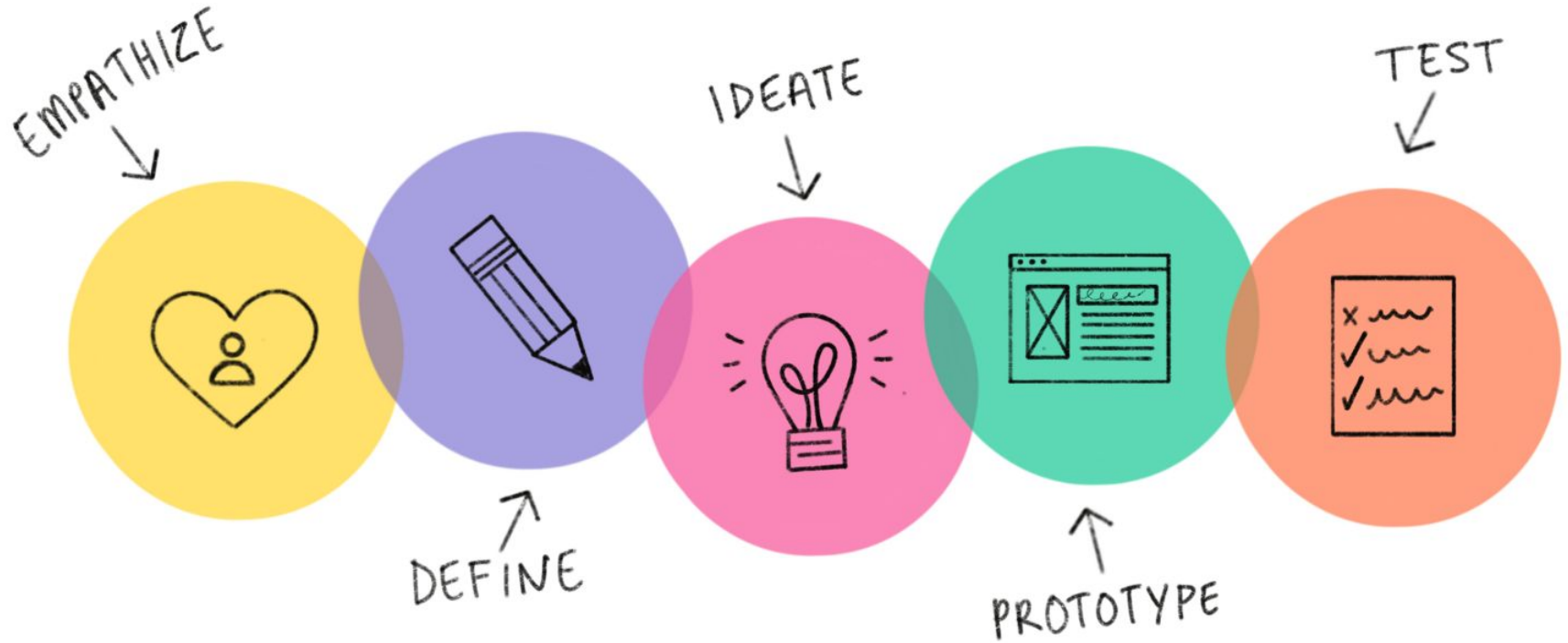
# Designing Your Life

**by Bill Burnett & Dave Evans**

# Introduction

We have all been asked, What do you want to be when you grow up? Whether you are fifteen or fifty, figuring out what you're going to do with your life remains a fundamental challenge. But there's more to it than just having that One True Plan; after all, life is all about growth and change. We can't expect things to always work out the way we think they will. What we need is a process – a design process – for figuring out where we are, what we want, and how we can build our way to a life we love.





*“A well designed life is a life that is generative – it is constantly creative, productive, changing, evolving, and there is always the possibility to surprise.”*

# Design Tools

To think like a designer, you can start by adopting five simple mind-sets. These are your design tools, and with them you can build anything, including a life you love.







## 2 - Try Stuff

When you have a bias to action, rather than sitting on the bench just thinking about what you are going to do, get in the game and commit to building your way forward. Designers are always trying things and testing them out. They create prototype after prototype, failing often but failing forward, until they find what works and what solves the problem.





## 3 - Reframe Problems

Thinking about something differently is how designers get unstuck. It also makes sure that we are working on the right problem. Key reframes help you step back, examine your biases, and open up new solution spaces.



## 4 - Know It's a Process

To think like a designer, you have to understand that life gets messy. For every step forward, it can sometimes seem you are moving two steps back. An important part of the process is letting go - of your first idea and of a good-but-not-great solution.



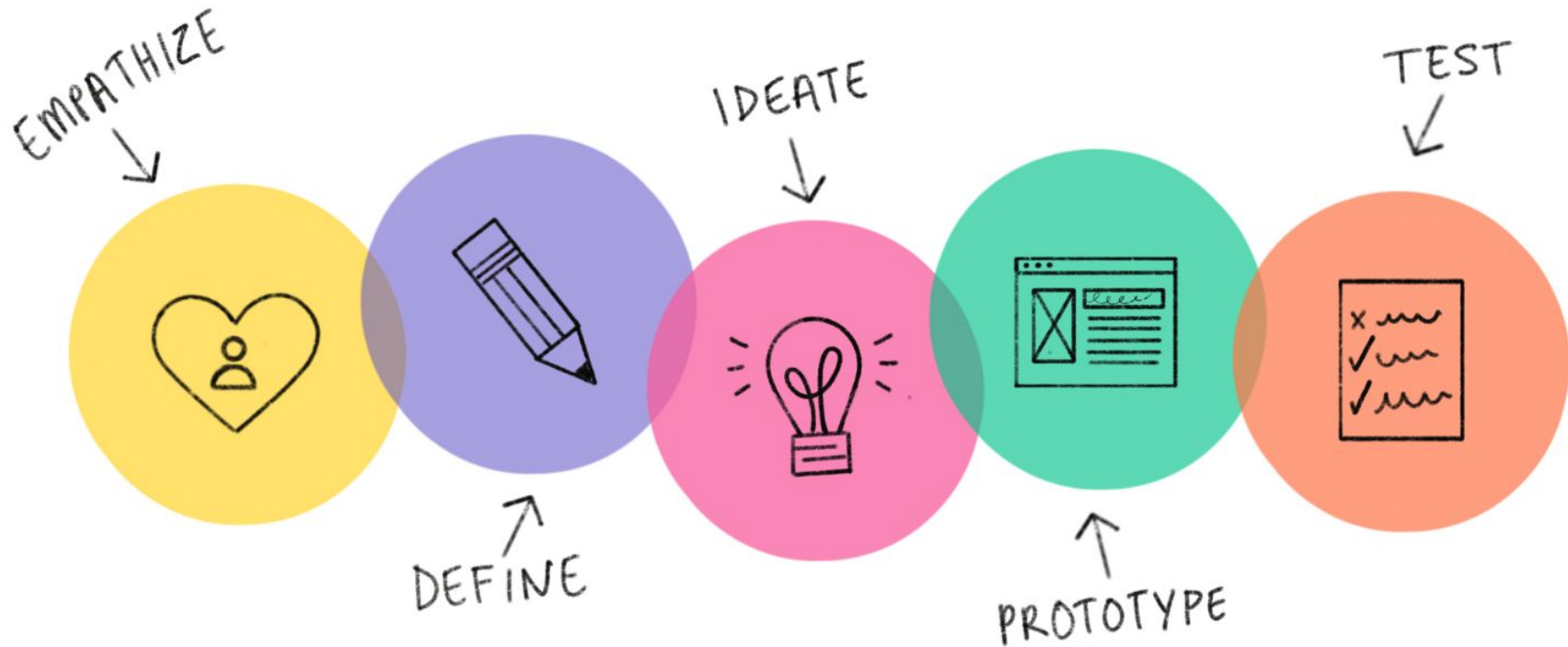
## 5 - Ask for Help

This last mind-set of design thinking is perhaps the most important. You are not alone; it takes a team.

The best designers know that great design requires radical collaboration.



# Empathize





**Let's start where you are.**

**Not where you wish you were or where you think you should be, but right where you are. To do so, we need to break down life into some discrete areas: work, play, love, and health - four things that provide energy and focus for your journey and keep your life running smoothly.**



# TRY IT

Shade in the gauges on this dashboard from zero to full, then describe what's going on. Is your play gauge at a quarter and your work at full or more? What about love? What about your mental health and spirit? You might ask what we mean by "full." It's up to you! You are the expert on your life; the dashboard gives you a chance to capture your own awareness of what parts of your life are full and less than full.



DASHBOARD

Work	0	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	FULL
Play	0	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	FULL
Love	0	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	FULL
Health	0	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	FULL

# Reflect on Where Your Are



Let's take a closer look at your dashboard. Write a few sentences about each of the four areas.

How do you feel about your dashboard gauges?

Do they look balanced or out of balance according to your definitions?

Are any areas full or approaching full? Does that feel good or bad?

Are any areas empty? How do you feel about that?

# Reflect on Where You Are



Which areas could use action, improvement, or innovation?

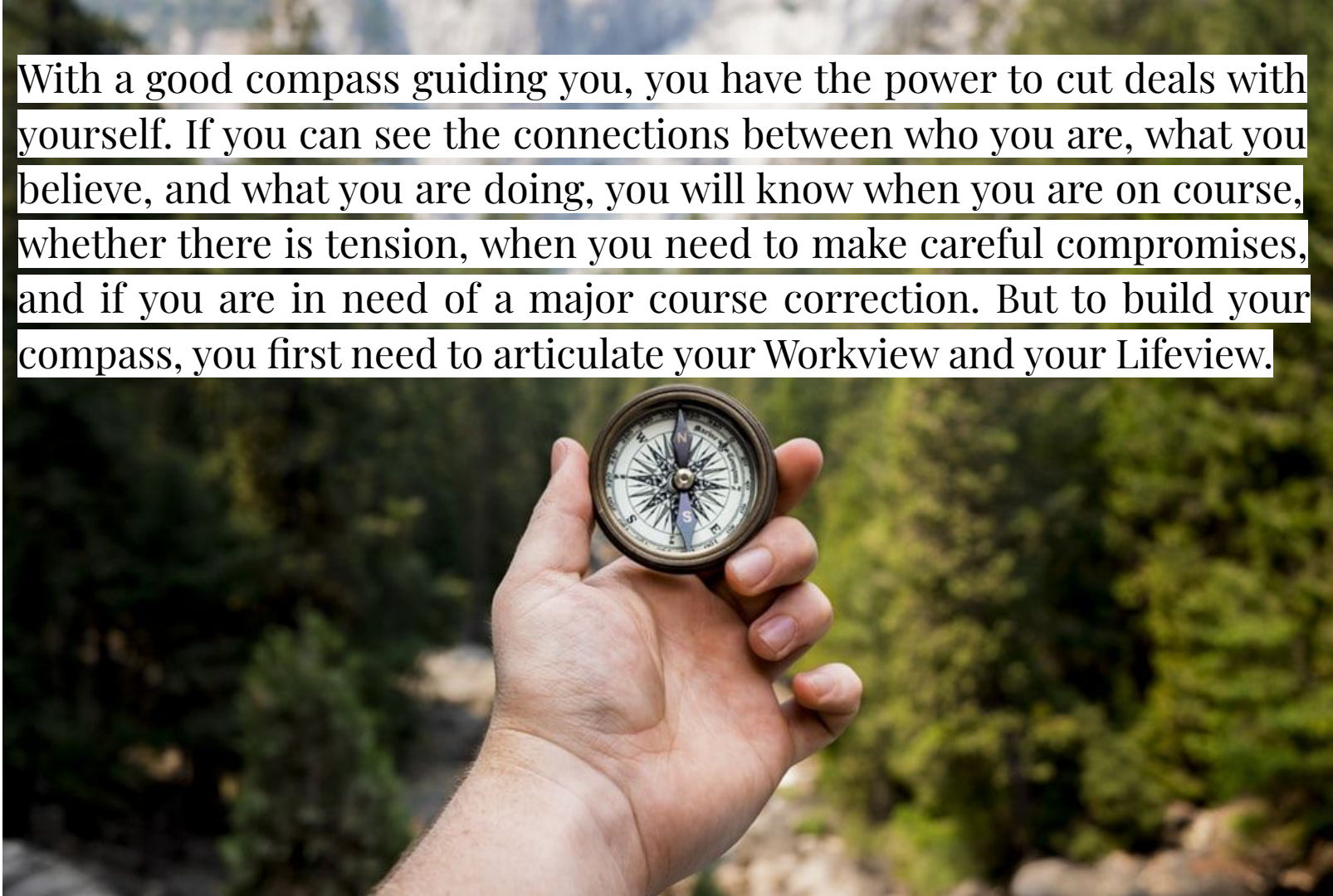
What obstacles might stand in your way?

What small incremental changes can you try out, easily implement, and iterate?

Are there any specific problems you would like to tackle? If so, what are they?

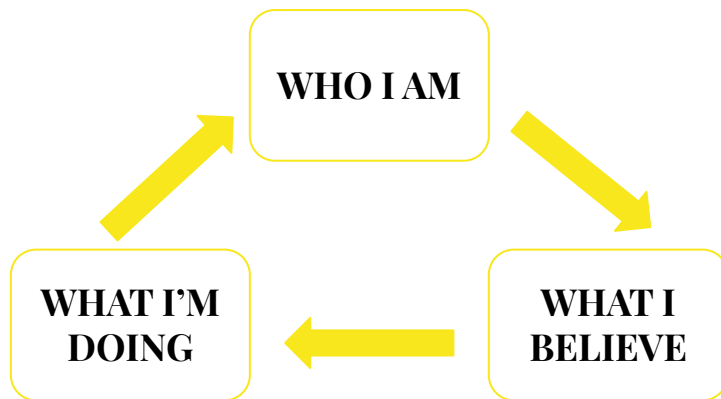
## Building Your Compass

With a good compass guiding you, you have the power to cut deals with yourself. If you can see the connections between who you are, what you believe, and what you are doing, you will know when you are on course, whether there is tension, when you need to make careful compromises, and if you are in need of a major course correction. But to build your compass, you first need to articulate your Workview and your Lifeview.

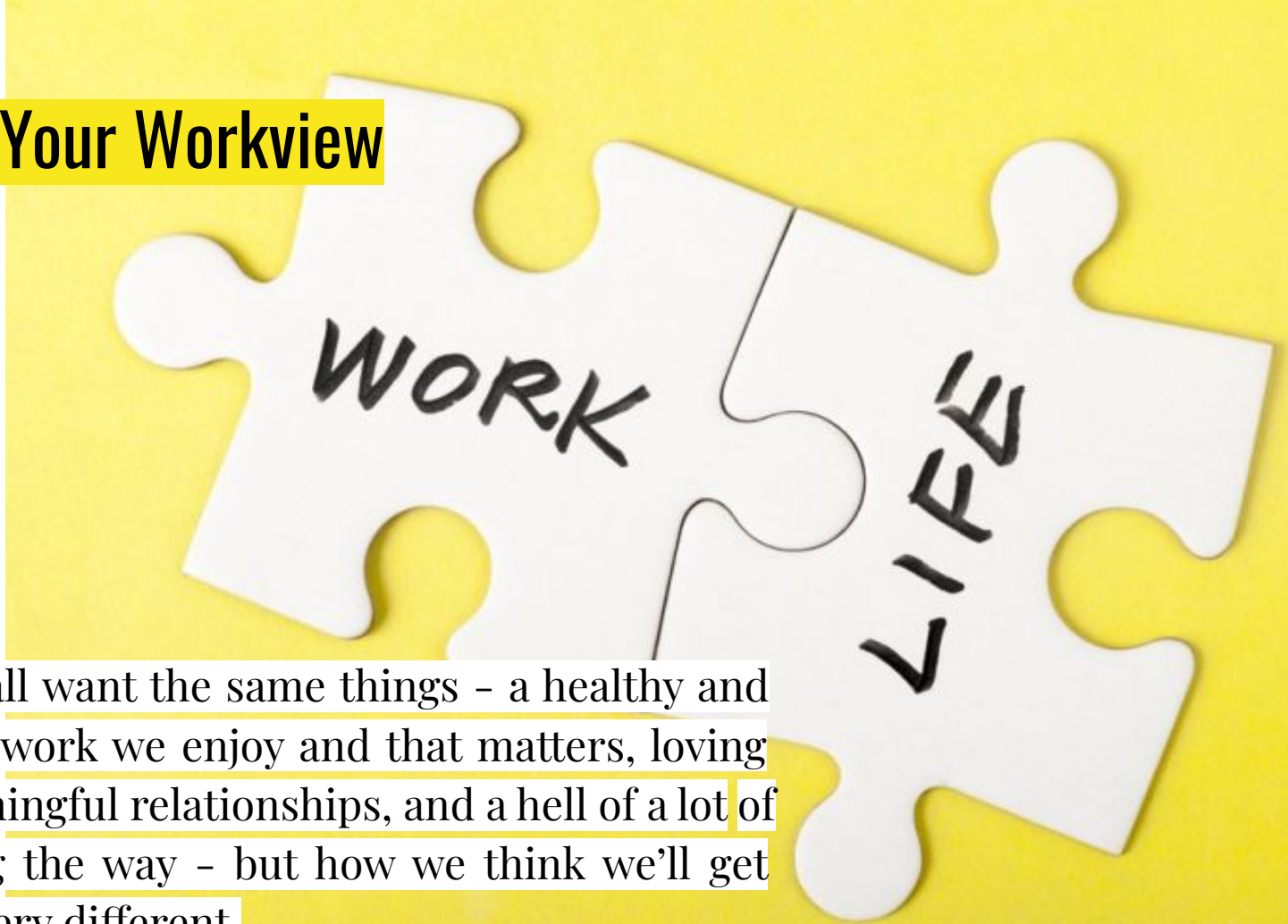


# Our goal for your life is rather simple: *coherency*.

A coherent life is one lived in such a way that you can clearly connect the dots between the three points illustrated below. As a result, you'll increase your sense of self, create more meaning in your life and have greater satisfaction. If you can't connect them the way you'd like, there are two ways to address that: (1) you may need to accept a compromise for a while if outside constraints are unmovable presently, or (2) you may be able to identify a few problems that need solving.



# Define Your Workview



We may all want the same things - a healthy and long life, work we enjoy and that matters, loving and meaningful relationships, and a hell of a lot of fun along the way - but how we think we'll get them is very different.

# Define Your Workview

A white puzzle piece is centered on a yellow background. The word 'WORKVIEW' is written in black, uppercase letters across the piece. The 'W' and 'K' are on the left, 'O' and 'V' are in the middle, and 'I' and 'E' are on the right. The puzzle piece has a tab on its top edge and a blank on its bottom edge.

Why do you work?

How does work relate to the individual, others, and 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?

# Define Your Lifeview

A white puzzle piece is centered on a yellow background. The puzzle piece has a human silhouette in the center. The word 'WORK' is written in black capital letters across the upper part of the silhouette, and the word 'LIFE' is written in black capital letters across the lower part. The puzzle piece is slightly offset to the right and top.

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?

Is there a higher power, and if so, what impact does this have on your life?

What are the roles of joy, sorrow, justice, injustice, love, peace, and strife in life?

# Your True North

When your Workview and your Lifeview are in harmony with each other, you create a compass that will always lead you to your “true north.” With an accurate compass, you’ll never stray off course for long. Anytime you’re considering a change, pursuing a new role, or wondering what you’re doing at a particular job – first stop, check your compass, and orient yourself.



## TRY IT

Integrate your Workview and Lifeview by reflecting on the following questions.

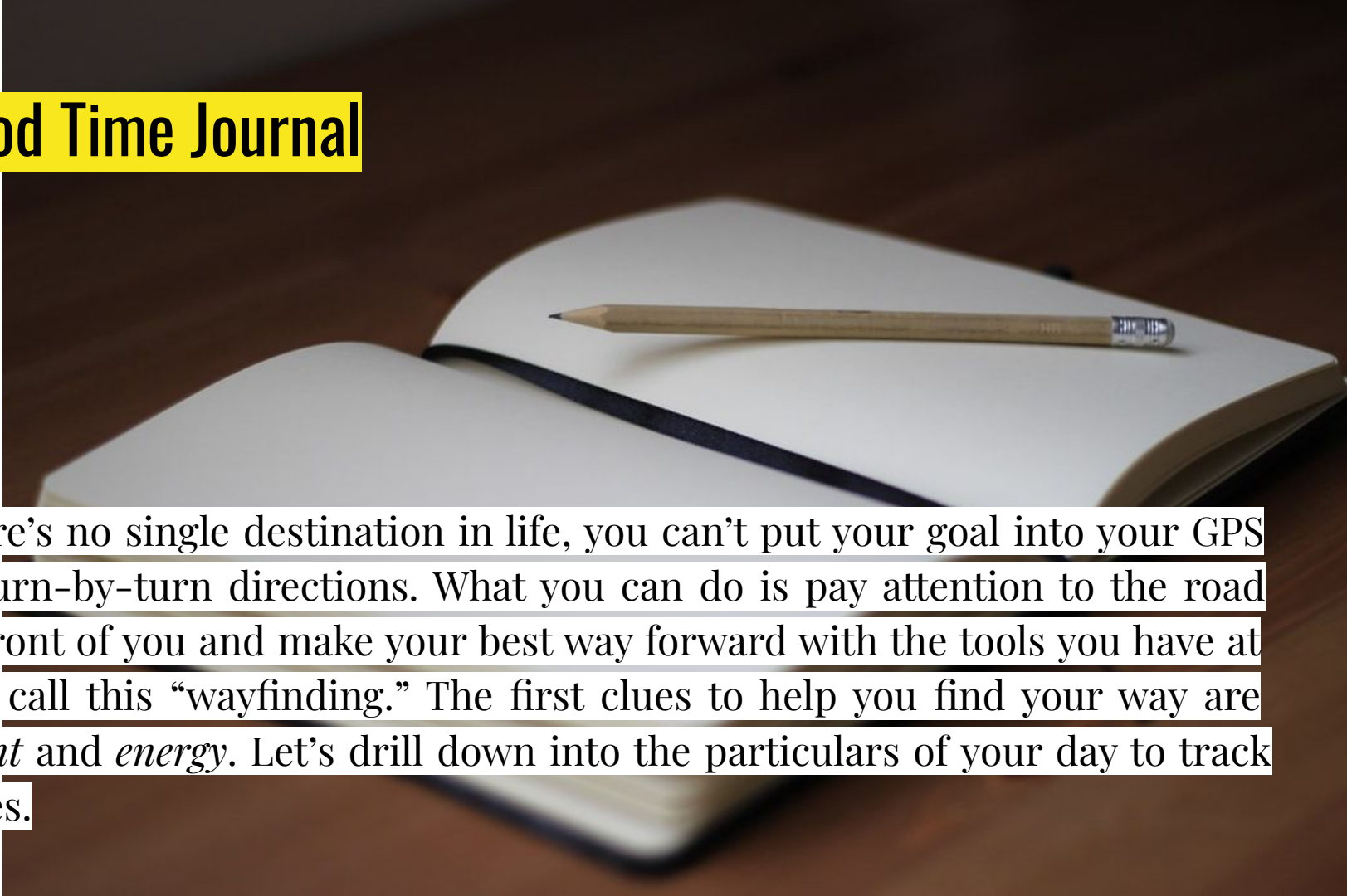
Where do your views on work and life complement one another?

Where do they clash?

Does one drive the other? How?

*Now that you have your compass, it's time to find your way.*

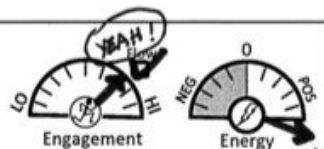
# The Good Time Journal



Since there's no single destination in life, you can't put your goal into your GPS and get turn-by-turn directions. What you can do is pay attention to the road signs in front of you and make your best way forward with the tools you have at hand. We call this "wayfinding." The first clues to help you find your way are *engagement* and *energy*. Let's drill down into the particulars of your day to track those clues.

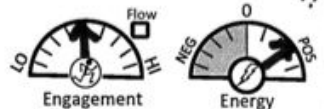
## • ART CLASS

fun figure drawing



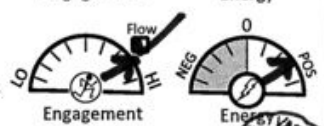
## • BUDGETING

new fiscal year stuff



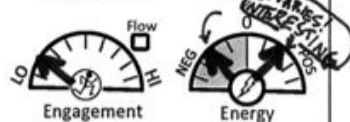
## • OFFICE HOURS

lots of new ME-101 students



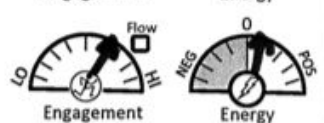
## • FACULTY MEETING

hmm... depends on topic



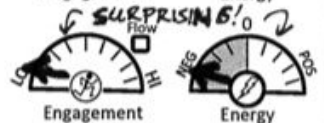
## • TEACHING

really good class



## • MASTERS COACHING

lots of logistics hassles



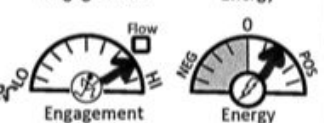
## • WORKING OUT

2 miles today



## • DATE NIGHT

left early to make dinner



# TRY IT

Complete a log of your daily activities. Note when you are engaged or in flow, energized, or bored and what you are doing during those times. Do this daily, or at the very least every few days, for a total of three weeks.

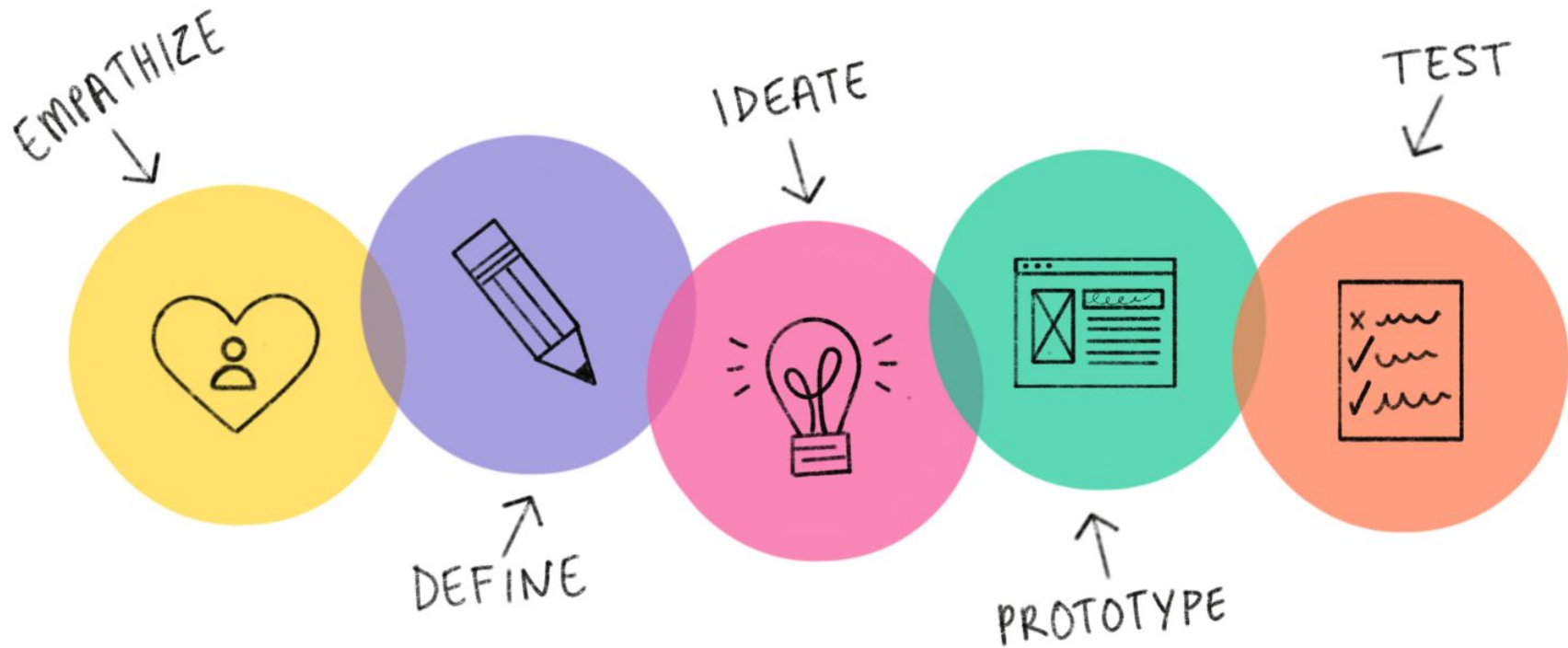
# End-of-Week Reflections

Which activities flowed effortlessly for you?

Which activities left you with more energy than you had at the start?

Which activities drained energy from you?

# Define

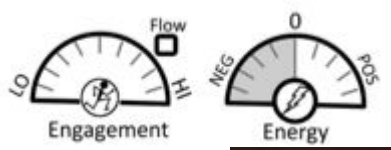


# Annotating Your Good Time Journal



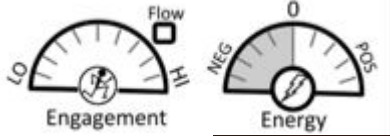
Now let's go back through your journal pages to find the high and low points of your days - then we can dig deeper from there. Note where you experience activities that engage you, produce flow, generate positive energy, or create negative energy.

# Engaged



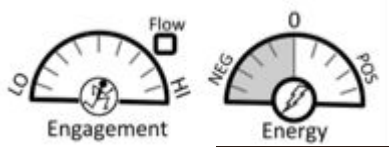
When were you engaged - excited, focused, and having a good time? Find them in your Good Time Journal and list them:

# Flow

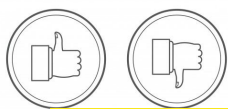


People in flow report experiencing complete involvement in the activity, a sense of ecstasy or euphoria, great inner clarity, total calmness, or the notion that time is standing still. A really satisfying career involves a lot of flow states. Look at the places you checked off and list them:

# Positive and Negative Energy



Some activities sustain our energy, while others suck the life right out of us and leave us drained for whatever comes next. Note that energy and engagement are not the same thing. There may be activities that engage but also exhaust you. List them all:



# AEIOU: Focusing on the Good Stuff

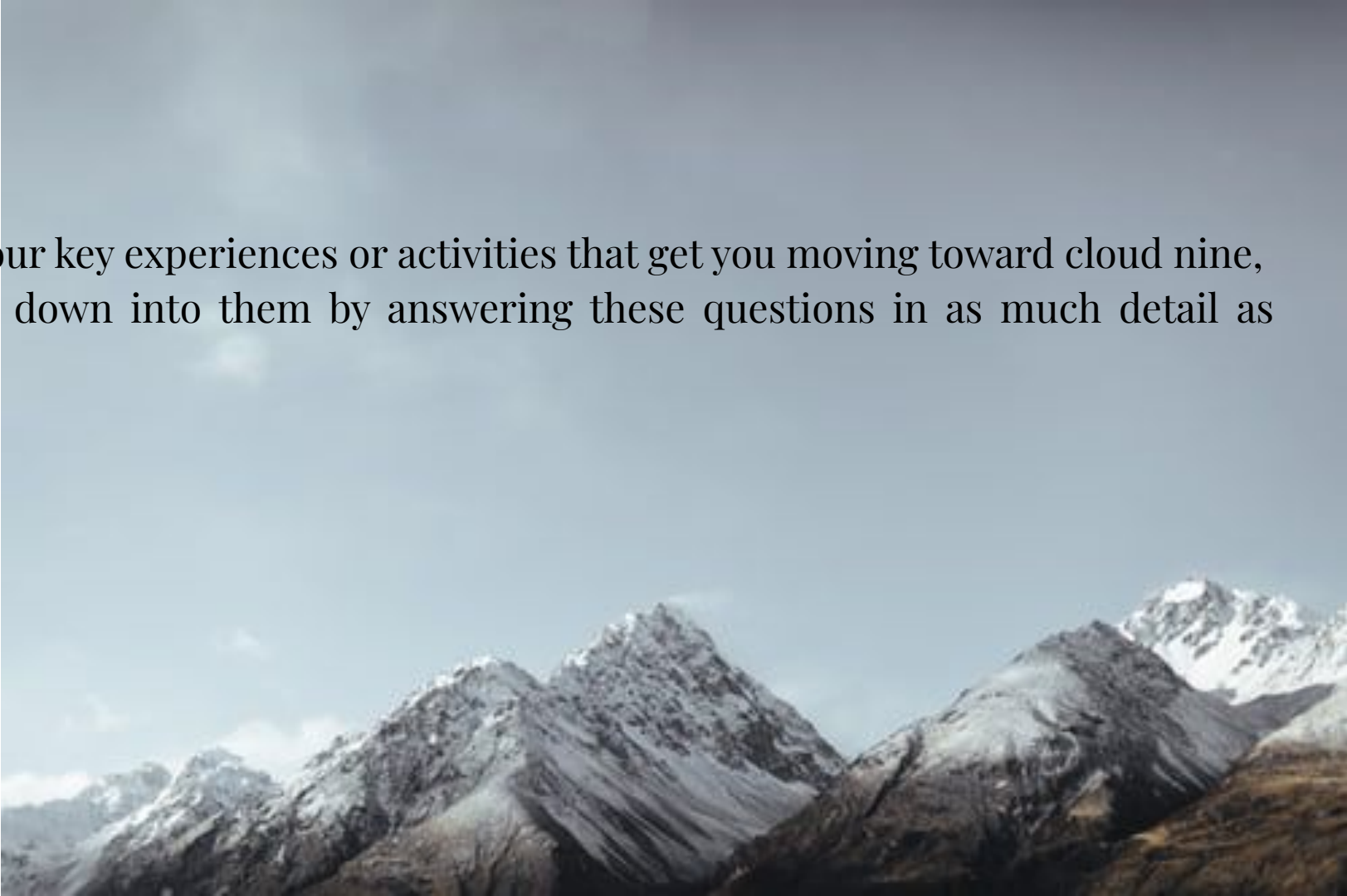
In order to better set your wayfinding direction, you want to be as precise as possible about what's working and what's not on any given day. Look back at your journal annotations and find the activities where you were highly engaged or experiencing a flow state. Let's get even more specific about what was working during those times with the AEIOU Method.

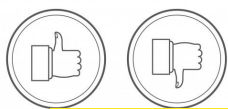




## TRY IT

Identify four key experiences or activities that get you moving toward cloud nine, then drill down into them by answering these questions in as much detail as possible.





# High Points

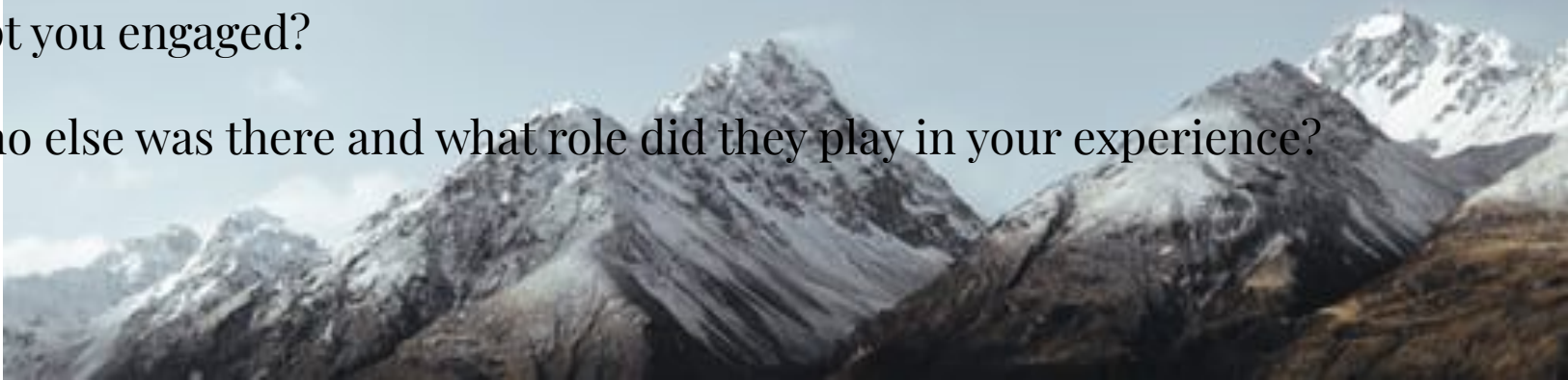
**Activities:** What were you actually doing? Was it a structured or unstructured activity? Were you a leader or a participant?

**Environment:** What kind of place were you in? How did it make you feel?

**Interactions:** Were others involved? Was your interaction formal or informal?

**Objects:** Were you using any objects or devices during this activity? Which ones, if any, kept you engaged?

**Users:** Who else was there and what role did they play in your experience?



# Mining the Mountaintop

Your previous experiences are also waiting to be mined for insights – we call these mountain top moments, or “peak experiences,” the times when you truly enjoyed yourself. Whether it’s a specific initiative you led at your job, a school project you created, a summer program you joined, or a volunteer activity you loved, write a few paragraphs about these good memories that have stuck with you. Note the activities from that experience that most engaged and energized you.



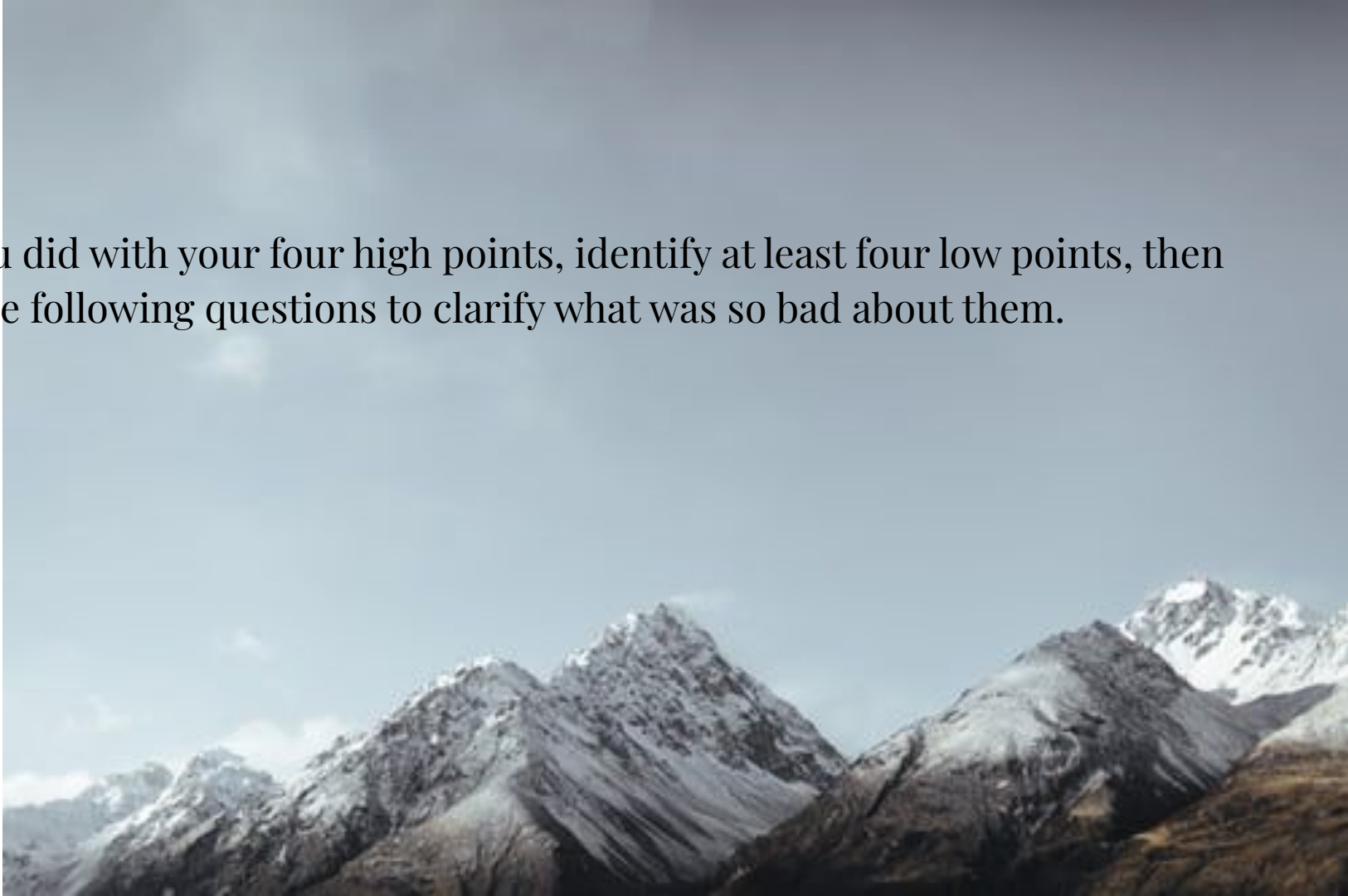
# AEIOU: Zooming In on the Bad Stuff

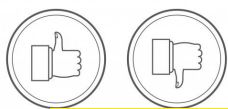
Find areas in your Good Time Journal where you experienced low engagement and negative energy. Try to get a sense of what specifically you did not enjoy. Your focus might be nurtured or frustrated by other people, depending on the form of collaboration. For instance, perhaps you thought you didn't like working with others, but the AEIOU Method might reveal that in fact you prefer to work in small groups that focus on creative tasks, rather than attending big meetings about business strategy.



## TRY IT

Just as you did with your four high points, identify at least four low points, then answer the following questions to clarify what was so bad about them.





# Low Points

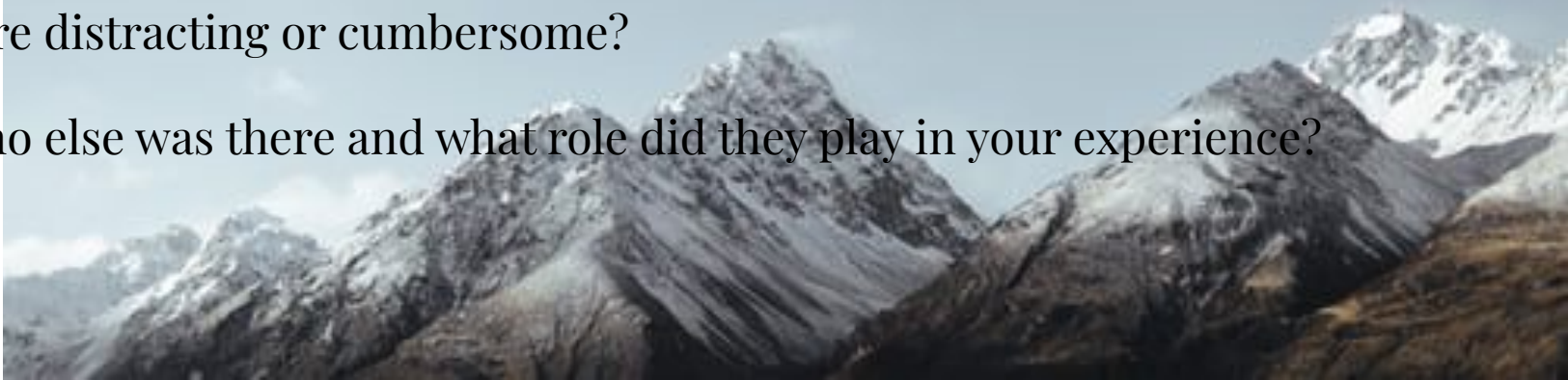
**Activities:** What were you actually doing? Was it a structured or unstructured activity? Were you a leader or a participant?

**Environment:** What kind of place were you in? How did it make you feel?

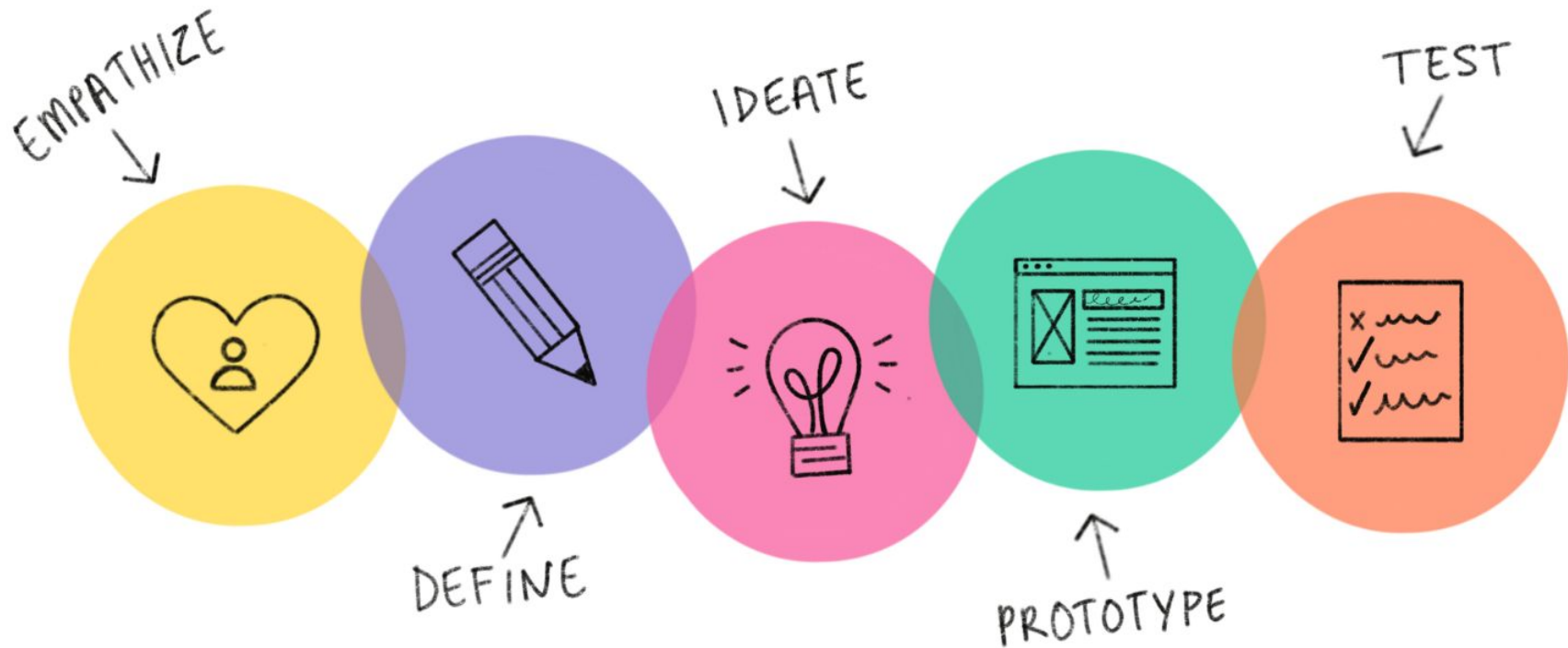
**Interactions:** Were others involved? Was your interaction formal or informal?

**Objects:** Were you using any objects or devices during this activity? Which ones, if any, were distracting or cumbersome?

**Users:** Who else was there and what role did they play in your experience?



# Ideate

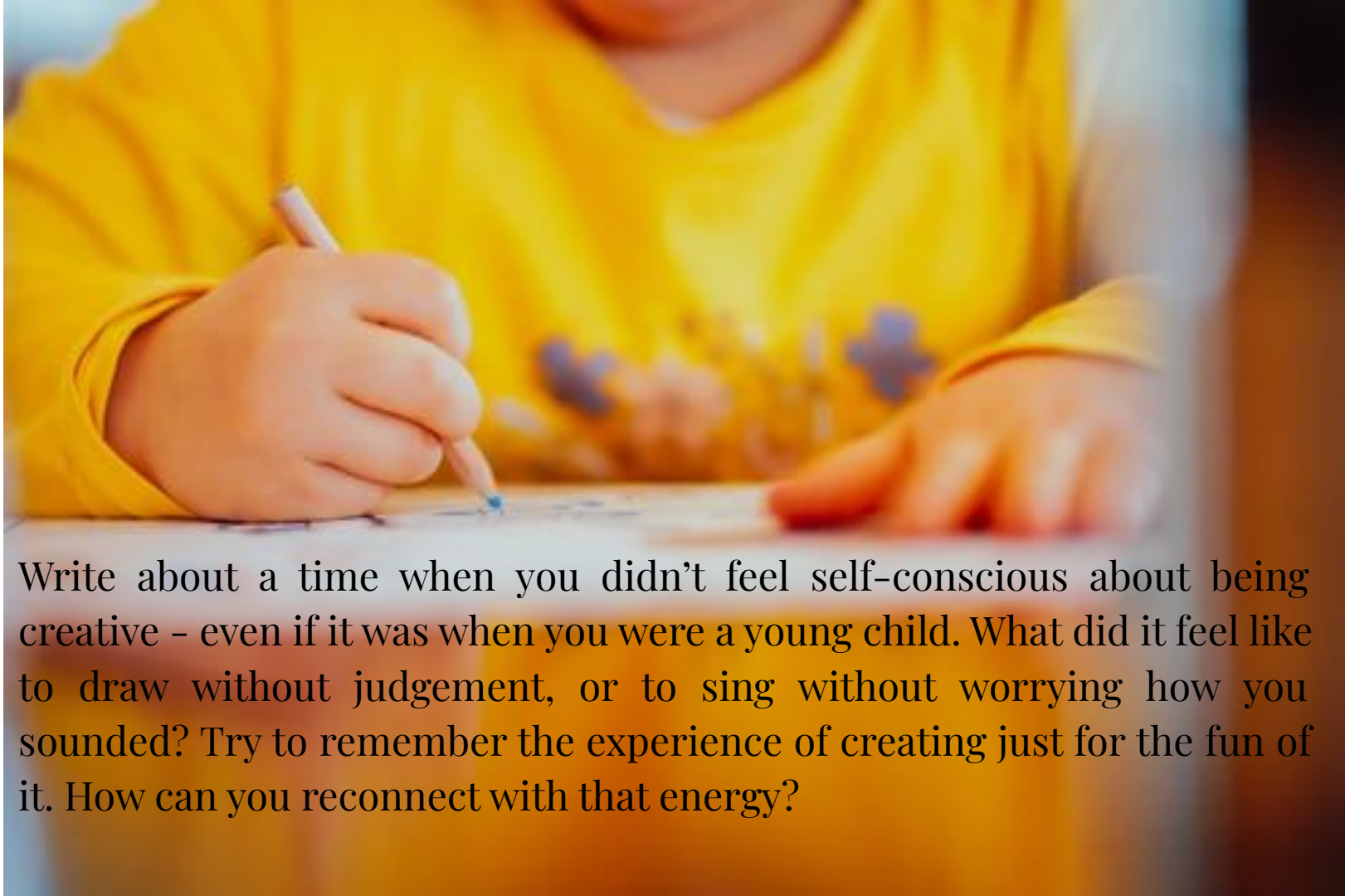




## Getting Unstuck

We are all stuck in some areas of our lives. That's where ideation comes into play, which is just a fancy word for coming up with lots of ideas. To move past obstacles, you need to generate more ideas and options than you ever thought possible, keeping in mind that you choose better when you have lots of ideas to consider. You should never choose your first solution to any problem.

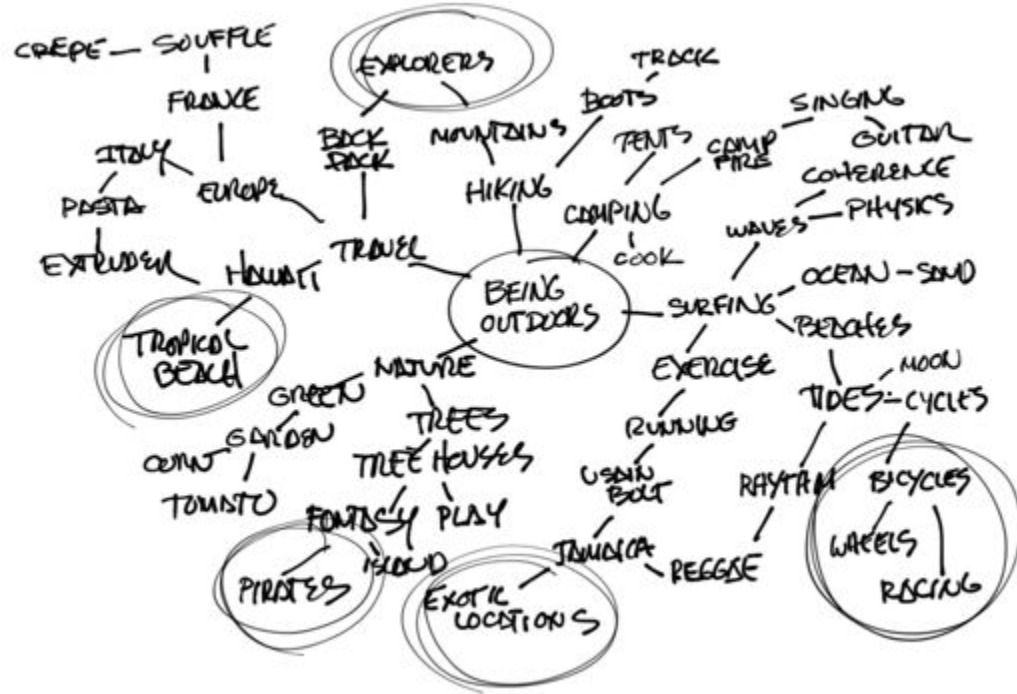
## TRY IT



Write about a time when you didn't feel self-conscious about being creative - even if it was when you were a young child. What did it feel like to draw without judgement, or to sing without worrying how you sounded? Try to remember the experience of creating just for the fun of it. How can you reconnect with that energy?

# Mind Mapping

In order to get your intuition flowing and generate ideas that you can start testing out, use this ideation technique. The activity of mind mapping combines simple free association of words (which uses one side of your brain) with drawing on paper (which uses another side of your brain). The result: dozens of concepts you never thought possible. Because this technique is a visual method and meant to be done rapidly, it bypasses your inner logical/verbal censor.



# Three Steps to Creating a Mind Map

## 1 - Pick a Topic

Look back at your Good Time Journal and choose an activity that engages you, generated positive energy, or created a flow state. Try to articulate the essence of the activity in one or two words to create your mind map topic. Write it in the center of a large piece of paper and circle it.



# Three Steps to Creating a Mind Map

## 2 – Make a mind map

Take three to five minutes to write down five or six things related to your topic, jotting down the *first* things that come to mind, then circling them. Don't overthink it and don't judge. Repeat step two by writing down words in a second ring that are related to the first. Do this again by drawing three or four lines from each peripheral word and jotting down even more related ideas (they do not have to be related to your central topic or your first ring). Keep going until you have at least three or four rings of word associations.

# Three Steps to Creating a Mind Map

## 3 - Create Mash-Ups

Choosing from the outer ring of your random associations, highlight ideas that are interesting or jump out at you. They do not have to be related. Try combining these individual components into a couple of possible scenarios that you might want to test out.



# Mind Map 1 - Engagement

Choose an activity in your Good Time Journal that kept you fully engaged. Express the essence of this activity in one or two words, add it to the center of the page, and create a mind map around that topic in three to five minutes.



nd Map 2 - Energy

ate a mind map around that topic in three to five minutes.

The image displays a collection of historical maps. The primary map is a detailed street map of Ventnor and Bonchurch, showing the coastline, various streets, and landmarks such as the 'Royal Victoria Pier' and 'Ventnor Park'. Overlaid on this is a map of 'THE ISLE OF WIGHT' with a scale bar. Another map fragment shows a coastal area with 'Lewtherville' and 'St. Catherine's Church'. The maps are printed in black ink on aged, light-colored paper.



# Mind Map 3 - Flow

Choose a time from your Good Time Journal when you experienced flow. Express the essence of this activity in one or two words, add it to the center of the page, and create a mind map around that topic in three to five minutes.



# Mind Map Mash-Ups

Now that you've done these mind maps, you're going to select a few random ideas and combine them in ways you'd never expect. Then try imagining an interesting – though not necessarily practical – life alternative from each. Defer judgment and quiet your internal critic while you ideate.



# Engagement Mash-Up

Look at the outer ring of your Engagement Mind Map and pick three disparate items that catch your eye. (You'll know which ones they are intuitively. Look for the ones that start to “jump out” at you)

Try to combine these three items into a possible job that would be fun for you and helpful for someone else. (Again, it need not be practical.) Give the **position a title**, a **job description**, and then draw a quick **napkin sketch** of what this new job looks like.)

Accept the problem. Get stuck. Get over it and ideate!



# Creating Odyssey Plans

There are lots of true, coherent, interesting, and different versions of each person, so rather than designing one *life*, we invite you to design many *lives* and imagine multiple ways you could launch the next chapter of your life's quest. We call these Odyssey Plans: sketches of viable and substantially different possibilities that animate your imagination and allow you to make better choices. Even if you're not looking to make a change from your One True Plan, you still need to develop parallel options so you don't get stuck trying to refine the same plan over and over again.

0	1	2	3	4	5

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



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

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

0	1	2	3	4	5

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

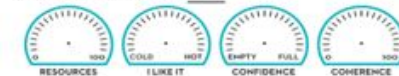


6-word title: \_\_\_\_\_

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

0	1	2	3	4	5

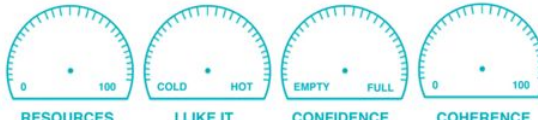
Alternative Plan # \_\_\_\_\_



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

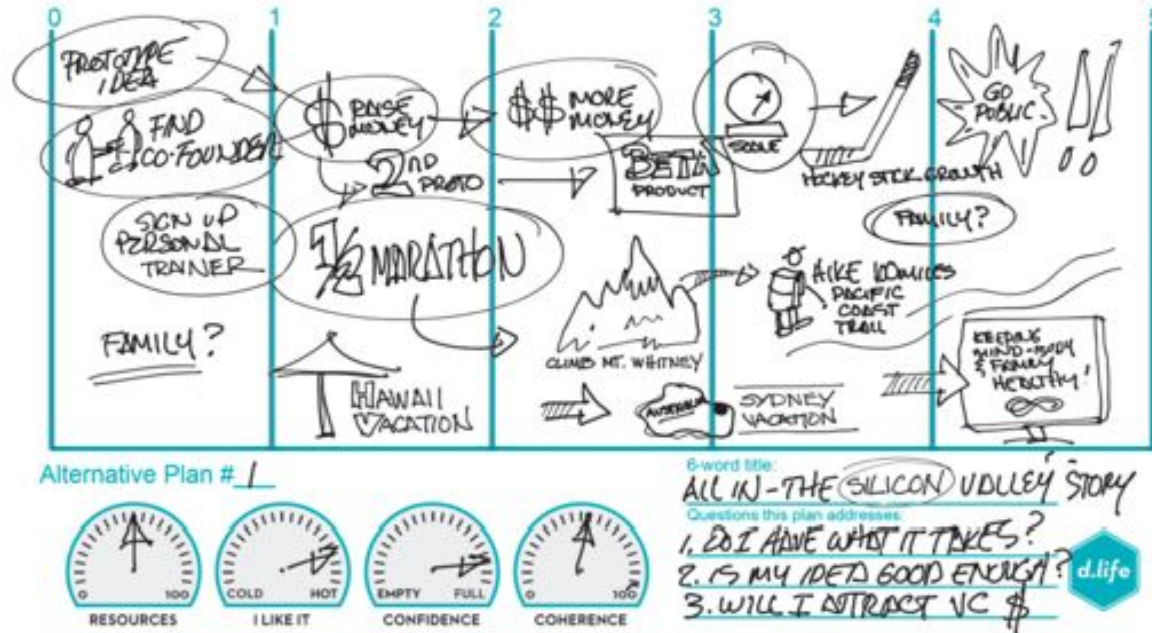
Questions this plan addresses: \_\_\_\_\_

# An Odyssey Plan Should Include the Following Elements:

1. A visual/graphic timeline of a five-year career plan that includes non-career bucket list events as well (year one below includes bartending school and a personal yoga practice)
2. A short headline describing the Odyssey Plan
3. Two or three questions the life alternative addresses. These are not questions about the plan but curiosities that might be satisfied by living this way for five years.
4. A dashboard that gauges:
  - a. Resources (Do you have the time, money, skill, and contacts you need to pull off this plan?)
  - b. Likeability (How do you feel about this plan?)
  - c. Confidence (How confident are you about pulling this off?)
  - d. Coherence (Is the plan consistent with your Workview and Lifeview?)

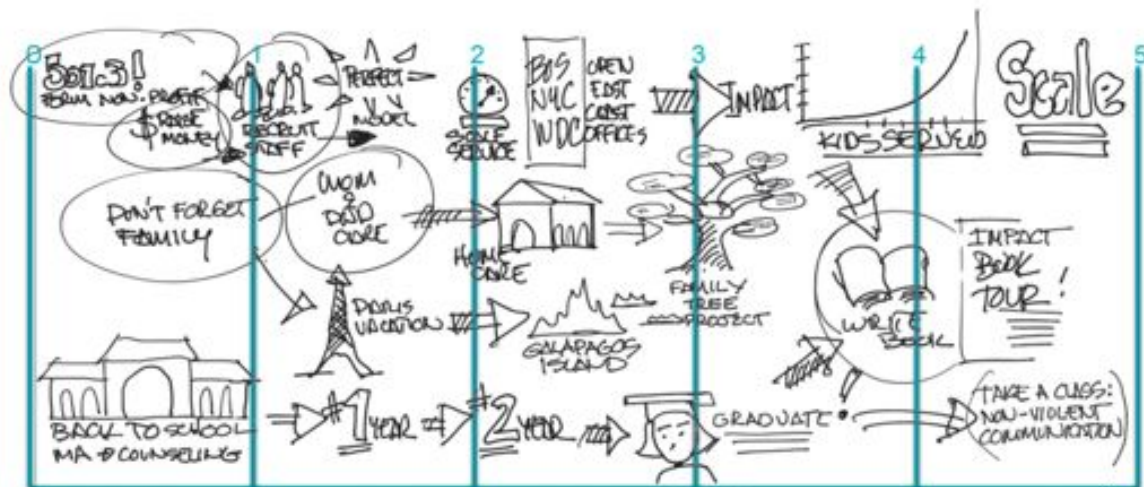
# Life One

*Your current life or the idea you've been nursing for some time.*



# Life Two

*That thing you'd do if thing one were suddenly gone.*



Alternative Plan #2

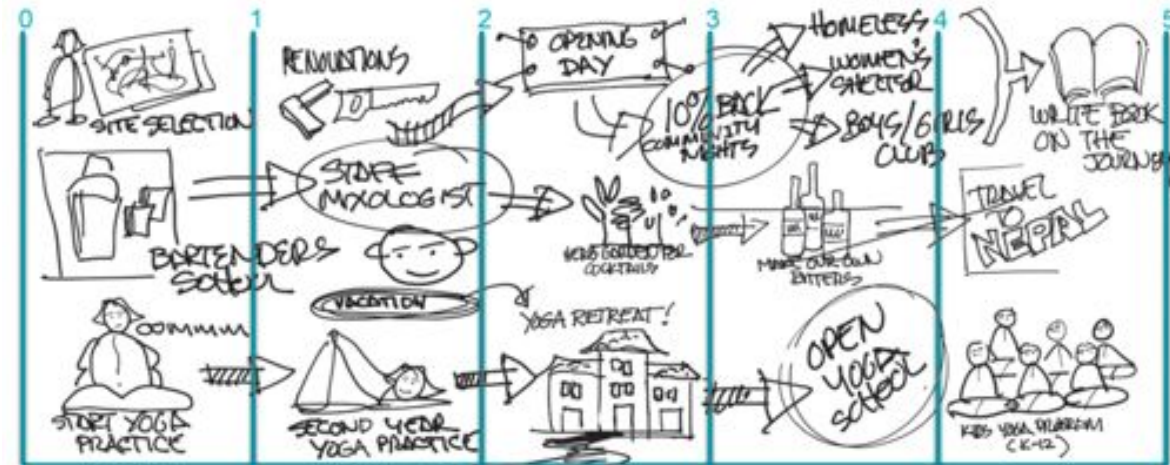


6-word title:  
**USING WHAT I KNOW - HELPING KIDS!**  
Questions this plan addresses:  
1. WILL SKILLS TRANSLATE?  
2. CAN I REALLY HELP KIDS?  
3. WILL THIS BE MEANINGFUL?



# Life Three

*The thing you'd do or life you'd live if money were no object.*



Alternative Plan #3



RESOURCES



I LIKE IT



CONFIDENCE



COHERENCE

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?



# Reflect on Your Plans



The best way to interact with your alternatives is to share them aloud with a group of friends. You want to choose people who will ask good questions but not offer critique or unwanted advice. Keep track of notes and questions that come up when you present your three Odyssey Plans. Here are some questions to reflect on:

# Reflect on Your Plans

Which plan excites you the most?

Which plan feels draining?

Which plan plays it safe? Which is risky?

What do you notice as you reflect on and compare your dashboards? Are any preference criteria becoming clear to you?

What questions do you have about taking any of these paths?

How might you prototype or test out one of these experiences to understand it better?

# Framing a Good Question

Free-associating with others will generate energy and momentum toward exploring your Odyssey Plans and other goals. Convene at least three to six people who are willing to bounce ideas around. Give everyone an open-ended question about one of your Odyssey Plans to focus your brainstorm. You might ask the group, “What are the functions of this potential path or career?” Or, “How many ways can I take action to learn more about this path before I make the leap?” Capture the results.



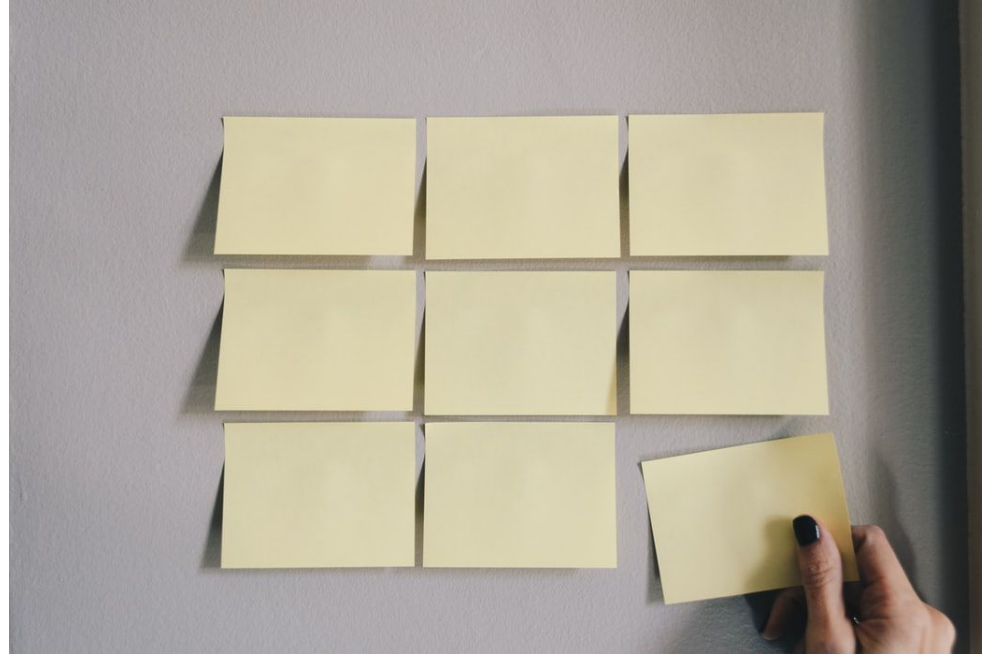
# Rules of Brainstorming

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.



# Brainstorm 1

1. Date:
2. Question:
3. Notes:



# Naming and Framing the Outcome

How many ideas did you come up with?

Which two were the most exciting?

Which one would you do if money were no object?

Which one probably won't work, but if it did you'd be thrilled?

Which ideas made the final cut?

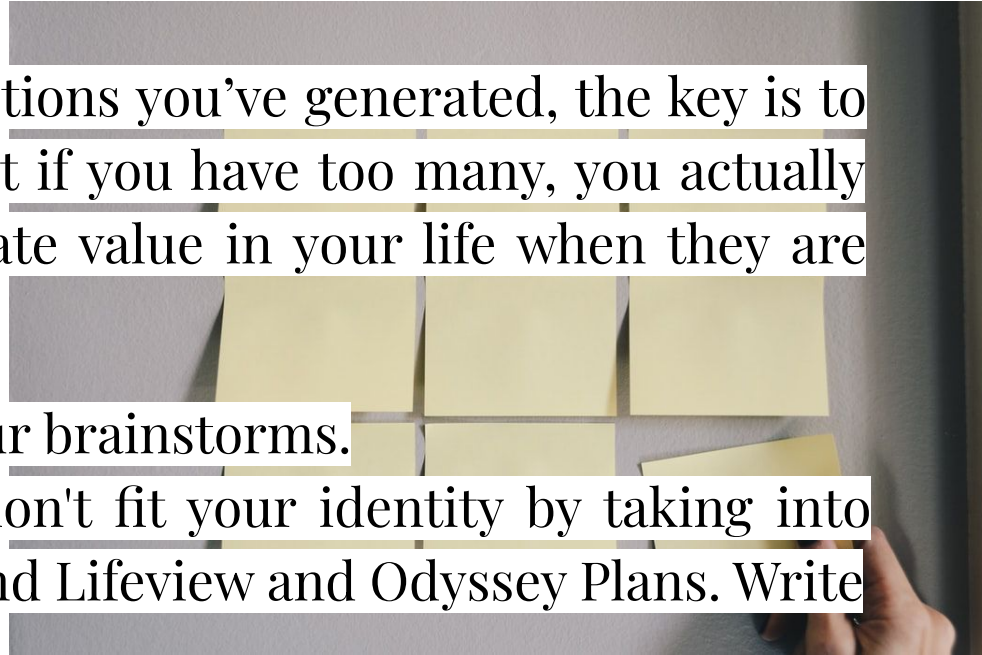
What's the one idea you want to tackle first?  
Second?



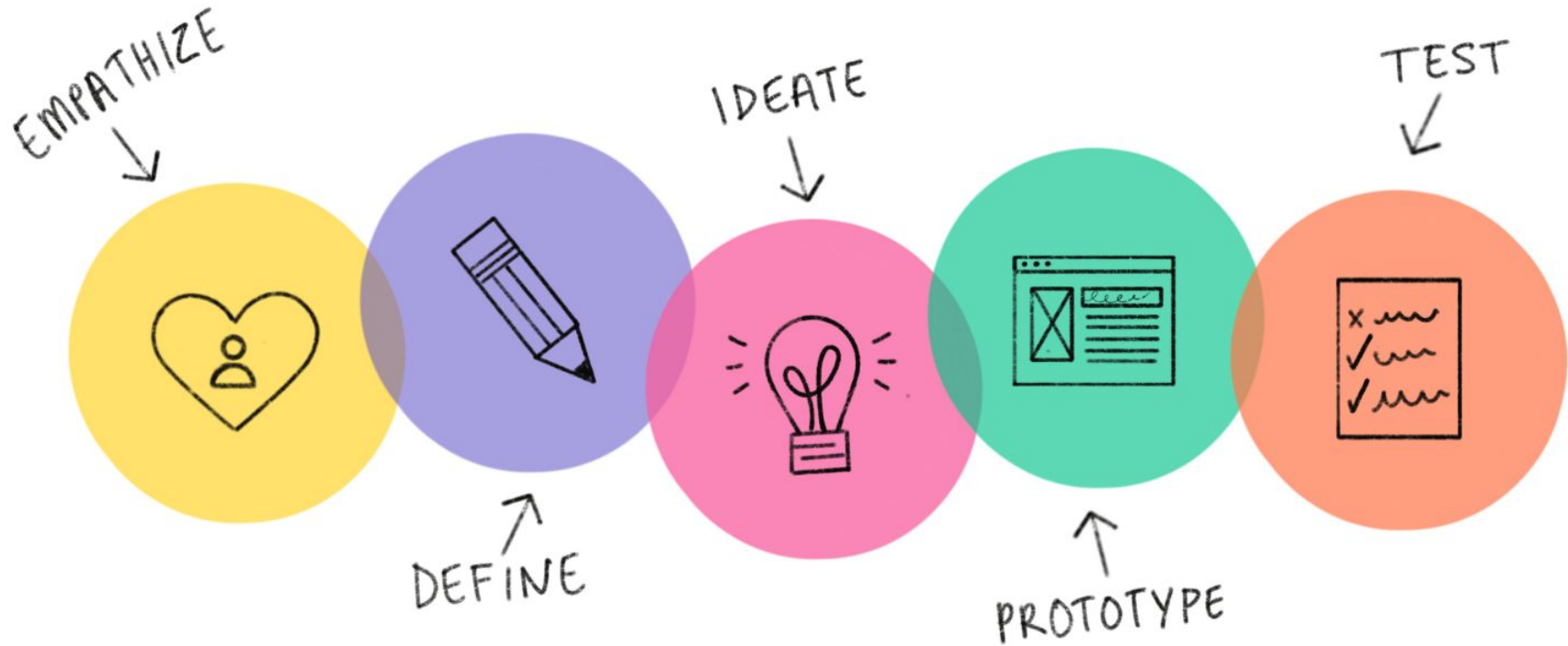
# Narrow Down the List

If you're overwhelmed by all the options you've generated, the key is to reframe your ideas by realizing that if you have too many, you actually have none at all. Options only create value in your life when they are chosen and realized.

1. Choose twelve options from your brainstorm.
2. Eliminate seven options that don't fit your identity by taking into consideration your Workview and Lifeview and Odyssey Plans. Write down the remaining five.



# Prototype



# Prototyping Your Plans



Designers have a bias to action. By doing small experiments, meeting people, and exploring your options through hands-on experience you'll get a lot further than by only reading, thinking, and reflecting. We call this physical experience in the world "prototyping."



## Examples of Prototyping Include:

1. Conversations with people doing something you might like to do (a Life Design Interview)
2. Shadowing professionals you'd like to emulate
3. One-week unpaid exploratory project that you create
4. A three-month internship
5. A scaled-down version of the career you envision (for example, catering instead of opening a restaurant)

What other experiences might help you? Add them to the list:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

A background image showing a group of people sitting around a wooden table in a casual setting, possibly a cafe or meeting space. One person in the foreground is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and has their arm resting on the table. Another person in the background is wearing a black shirt and has their hands clasped. The scene is softly lit, suggesting an indoor environment with large windows.

# Life Design Conversation Tracker

Find someone doing or living one or more of the plans you're contemplating, and ask them to have a conversation. Keep track of all of your Life Design conversations.

# Conversation 1

A person wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt is seated at a dark wooden table, writing on a white notepad with a black pen. They are wearing a black watch with a light-colored face on their left wrist. In the background, another person in a black shirt is partially visible, gesturing with their hands. The setting appears to be an indoor meeting space with large windows in the background.

Contact name:

Company:

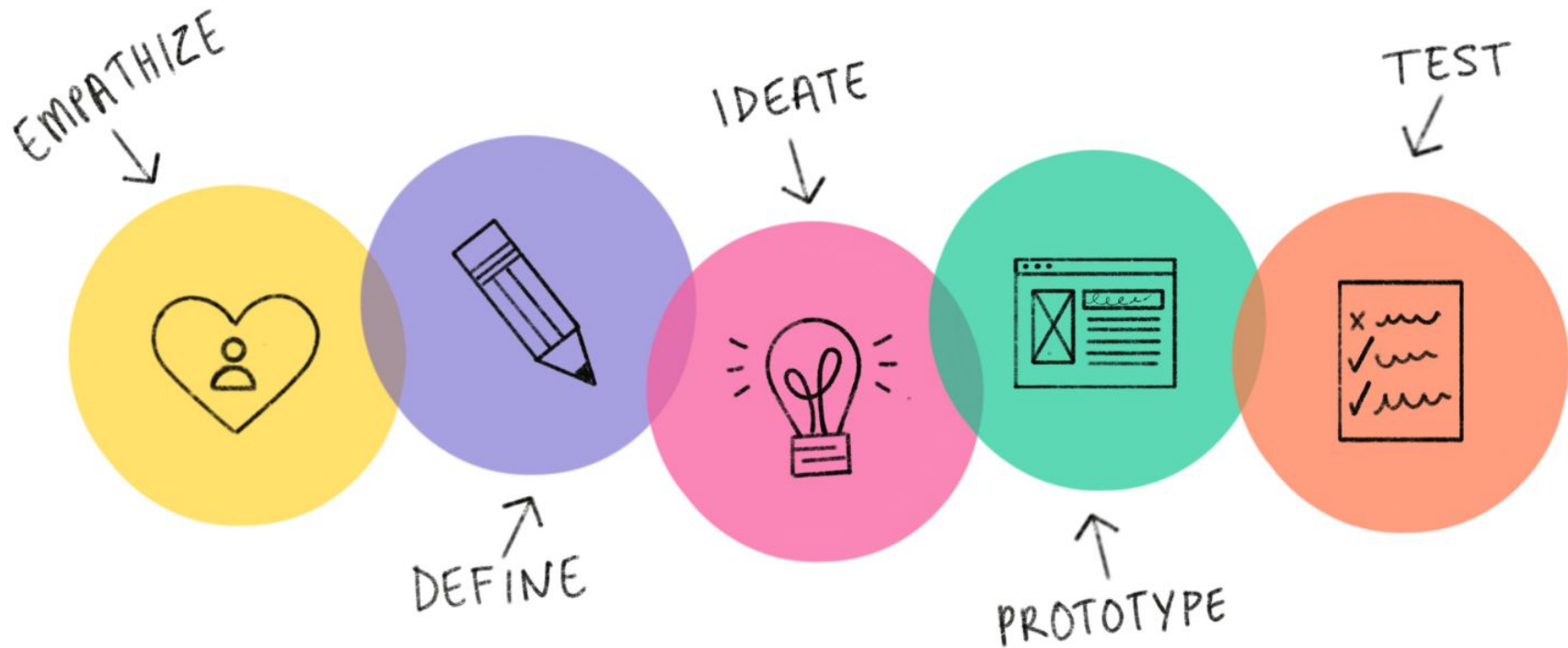
Date contacted:

Response:

Meeting date:

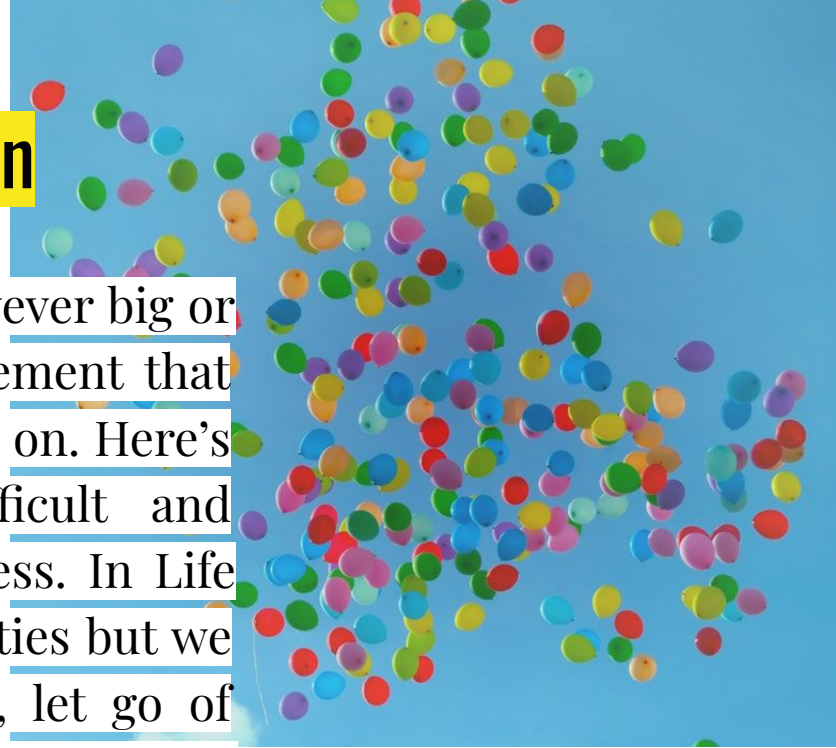
Conversation notes:

# Test



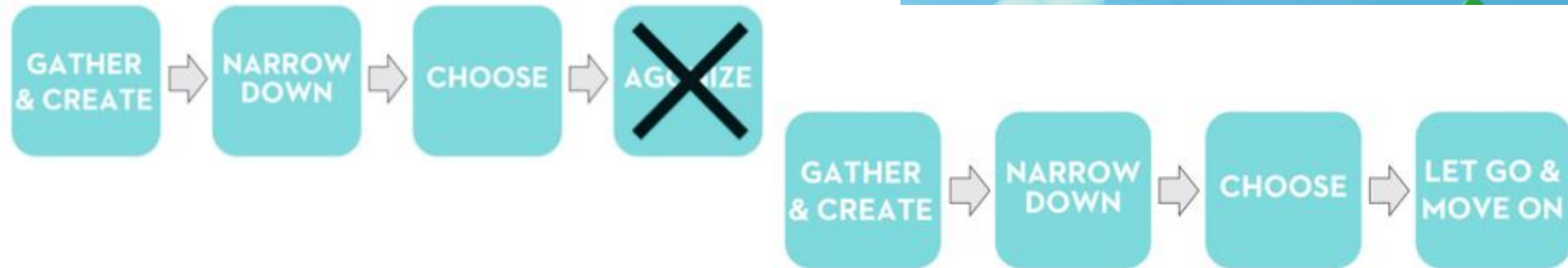
# Good Choosing: Let Go and Move On

Once you've made an important decision, however big or small, you will want to make sure you implement that decision successfully by letting go and moving on. Here's an exercise to help with that very difficult and all-important last step of the choosing process. In Life Design, we know there are countless possibilities but we aren't stymied by that fact. When in doubt, let go of unnecessary options and move on, embracing your choice fully so that you can get the most from it.



# Embracing Your Choice

You often hear people unhappily say, “Well it seemed like a good idea at the time,” but of course they mean just the opposite. Often it’s actually true, i.e., it was a good idea – it just didn’t work out for reasons that could not have been foreseen. Too many people experience unnecessary regret for lack of clear decision awareness. By doing the reflection below, you are documenting now why this is a good decision at this time. Knowing this is valuable today and tomorrow. Set yourself up to win by reflecting and remembering!



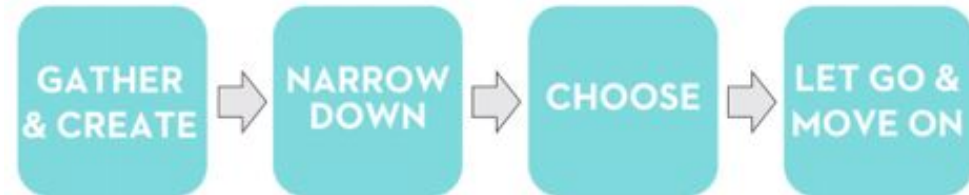
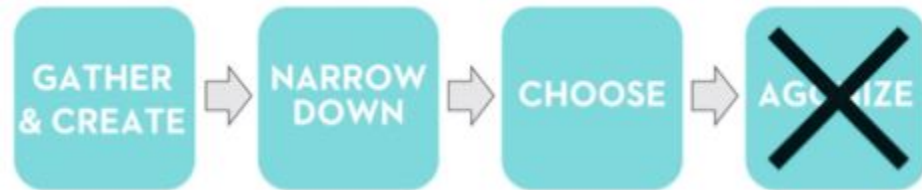
# Embracing Your Choice

Why did you make this particular choice?

What engaging activities drew you to this path?

What difficulties did you anticipate experiencing?

How can you direct energy into enjoying the decisions you've made?



# No More Hamster Wheel



Designers don't spin their wheels dreaming about what could have been. They don't waste their futures by hoping for a better past. What are three ways you can commit to getting off the hamster wheel and choosing happiness instead?

# Fail Forward

You're going to experience missteps, so it's important to understand what it means in the Life Design process: You can't fail; you can only progress and learn. Here is a simple exercise to help you reframe your flops on the way to gaining what we call "failure immunity."

Failure	Screwup	Weakness	Growth Opportunity	Insight
LISA'S BDAY 1 WK. LATE!	X (10 min)			
LAST MINUTE BUDGET		X		
PHONE SURPRISE			X	START THE CALL WITH NEWS & AGENDA
TERMITE THIEVES	X (big o time)			

# Not All Failures Are Alike

**Screwups** = Simple mistakes you made that you normally get right. You don't need to learn anything here; just apologize as needed and move on.

**Weaknesses** = Mistakes you make over and over again because of one of your abiding shortcomings. Your best strategy is to avoid situations that prompt them.

**Growth Opportunities** = Failures that have an identifiable cause and an available solution. We want to direct our attention to this type of failure.


**Insights** = Lessons you learn for real improvement. What went wrong (the critical failure factor), and what could be done differently next time (the critical success factor)?

## TRY IT

Look back over the past two weeks. Where did you mess up? List your “failures” (F) in a log, then sort them by checking off one of the three types: screwups (S), weaknesses (W), and growth opportunities (GO). Finally, capture any insights (I) to help change things next time.


[illegible]

# Building Your Team

A group of people are silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky, standing on a dark, rocky outcrop. One person on the left is crouching and operating a camera on a tripod. Another person stands nearby holding a flag. The rest of the group is gathered together, some looking at the horizon, others talking or gesturing. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top, with wispy clouds catching the low light. The overall mood is one of accomplishment and shared achievement.

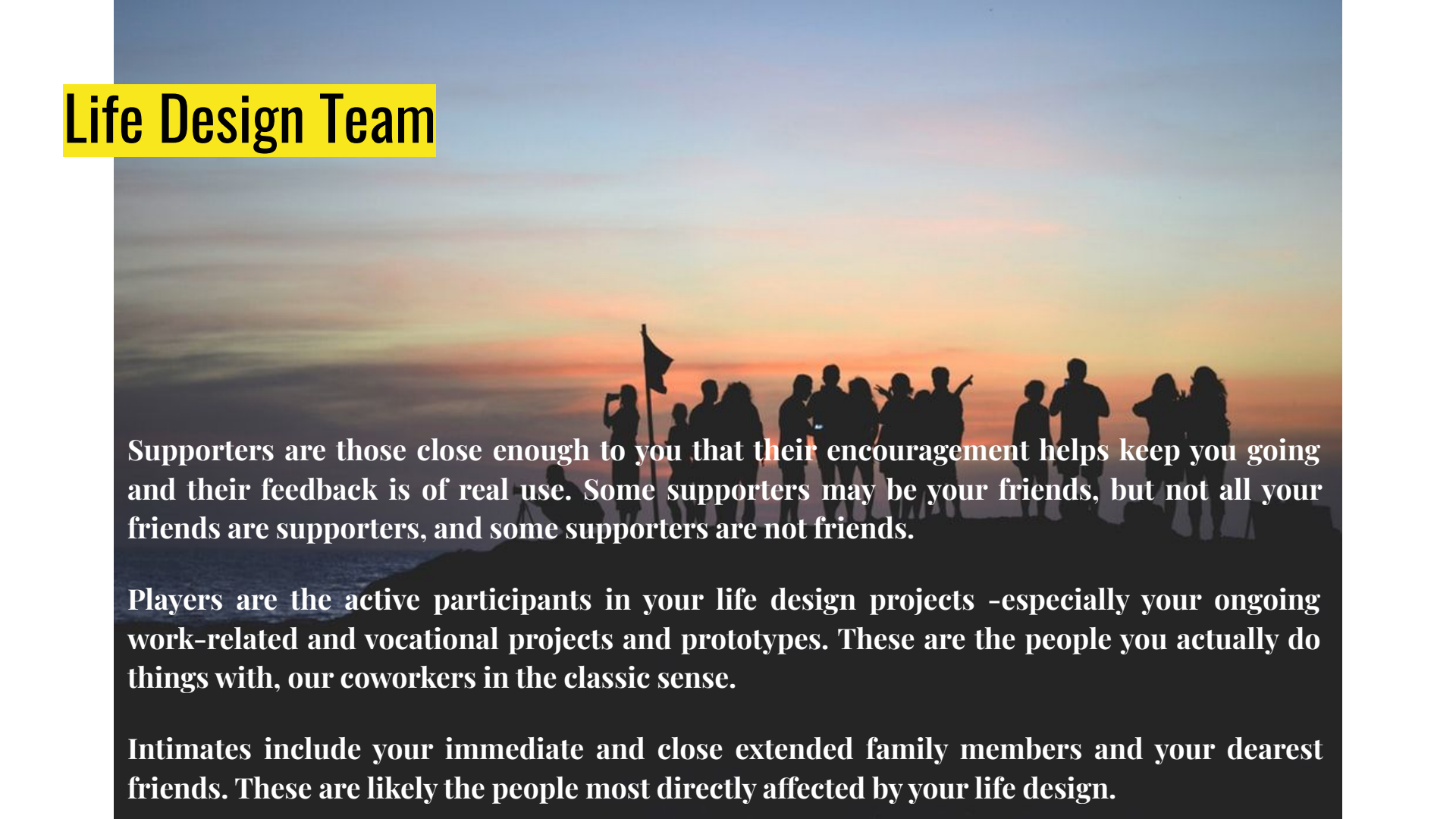
All great design results from great collaboration; thinking that you alone are responsible for your life design is a misconception. Once you join a community of participants – interested friends, colleagues, or family members – you'll find more success with your life design. After all, this isn't just about you; your life design will touch many different people.

# TRY IT

A group of people are silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. They are standing on a dark, rocky cliff edge. One person on the left is crouching and taking a photo with a camera on a tripod. Another person stands next to them holding a flag. The rest of the group is standing together, some looking towards the camera, others looking out at the ocean. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with the sun just below the horizon. The ocean is visible in the background on the left.

Think about the people you interacted with when discussing your Lifeview and Workview or those you identified in your Good Time Journal who are involved in your energy-positive activities. Categorize them into Supporters, Players, and Intimates.

# Life Design Team

A group of people are silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. They are standing on a dark, rocky outcrop. One person on the left is holding a flag on a pole. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top. The overall mood is one of accomplishment and shared achievement.

Supporters are those close enough to you that their encouragement helps keep you going and their feedback is of real use. Some supporters may be your friends, but not all your friends are supporters, and some supporters are not friends.

Players are the active participants in your life design projects -especially your ongoing work-related and vocational projects and prototypes. These are the people you actually do things with, our coworkers in the classic sense.

Intimates include your immediate and close extended family members and your dearest friends. These are likely the people most directly affected by your life design.

# Trusting Your Inner Voice



We don't always need more information to make a good decision; we also need access to that wisdom center where our well-informed emotional knowing can help us discern the better choices for us.

How has your perspective changed since you began designing your life?

What would you like to know more about and who can help you?

What personal practices (such as creative or spiritual ones) can you adopt to educate your emotions and mature your discernment?

What are your next steps?

And, finally, how's it going?

# Sources

Burnett, William, and David Evans. *Designing Your Life: Build a Life That Works for You*. Vintage Books, 2018.

Burnett, William, and David Evans. *The Designing Your Life Workbook: a Framework for Building a Life You Can Thrive In*. Crown Publishing Group, 2018.