

- In fact, in the United States, only 27 percent of college grads end up in a career related to their majors.
- Designing your life doesn't involve a clear goal, like creating hinges that last five years, or building a giant bridge that will safely connect to landmasses; those are engineering problems, in which you can get hard data on your options and engineer the one best solution.
- A well-designed life is a life that is generative—it is constantly creative, productive, changing, evolving, and there is always the possibility of surprise.
- Bill knows how lucky he was to have discovered product design and a joyful and fulfilling career path so early. In our teaching careers, we've both come to see how rare that is, and just how often it doesn't work that way for students, even at Stanford.
- "We teach courses at Stanford that help any student to apply the innovation principles of design thinking to the wicked problem of designing your life at and after university."
- Reframing is one of the most important mind-sets of a designer. Many great innovations get started in a reframe.
- "Don't start with the problem, start with the people, start with empathy."
- Your life is not a thing, it's an experience; the fun comes from designing and enjoying the experience.
- we have always guaranteed our students "office hours for life." This means that if you take a class from us we are there for you, forever. Period.
- Radical collaboration works on the principle that people with very different backgrounds will bring their idiosyncratic technical and human experiences to the team. This increases the chance that the team will have empathy for those who will use what they are designing, and that the collision of different backgrounds will generate truly unique solutions.
- Designers don't think their way forward. Designers build their way forward.
- Want a career change? This book will help you make that change, but not by sitting around trying to decide what that change is going to be. We're going to help you think like a designer and build your future, prototype by prototype. We're going to help you approach your own life design challenges with the same kind of curiosity and the same kind of creativity that resulted in the invention of the printing press, the lightbulb, and the Internet.
- The five mind-sets you are going to learn in order to design your life are curiosity, bias to action, reframing, awareness, and radical collaboration.
- When you learn to think like a designer you learn to be aware of the process. Life design is a journey; let go of the end goal and focus on the process and see what happens next.
- Many people operate under the dysfunctional belief that they just need to find out what they are passionate about. Once they know their passion, everything else will somehow magically fall into place. We hate this idea for one very good reason: most people don't know their passion.

- Our colleague William Damon, director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence, found that only one in five young people between twelve and twenty-six have a clear vision of where they want to go, what they want to accomplish in life, and why.⁴ Our experience suggests, similarly, that 80 percent of people of all ages don't really know what they are passionate about.

- research shows that, for most people, passion comes after they try something, discover they like it, and develop mastery—not before. To put it more succinctly: passion is the result of a good life design, not the cause.

- We are serious about this: you don't need to know your passion in order to design a life you love. Once you know how to prototype your way forward, you are on the path to discovering the things you truly love, passion or not.

- What happens when you do these things? What happens when you engage in life design? Actually, something quite extraordinary happens. Things you want start to show up in your life. You start to hear of job openings you were dreaming about. People you were interested in meeting just happen to be in town. What is happening here? For starters, it's that "getting good at being lucky" thing we mentioned earlier, a result of curiosity and awareness, and a by-product of using the five mind-sets.

- These are all gravity problems—meaning they are not real problems. Why? Because in life design, if it's not actionable, it's not a problem. Let's repeat that. If it's not actionable, it's not a problem. It's a situation, a circumstance, a fact of life. It may be a drag (so to speak), but, like gravity, it's not a problem that can be solved. Here's a little tidbit that is going to save you a lot of time—months, years, decades even. It has to do with reality. People fight reality. They fight it tooth and nail, with everything they've got. And anytime you are arguing or fighting with reality, reality will win. You can't outsmart it. You can't trick it. You can't bend it to your will. Not now. Not ever.

- You can't change gravity. You'd have to relocate the earth's orbit to pull that off, and that's a pretty crazy goal. Skip it. Just accept it. When you accept it, you are free to work around that situation and find something that is actionable.

- The key is not to get stuck on something that you have effectively no chance of succeeding at. We are all for aggressive and world-changing goals. Please do fight City Hall. Oppose injustice. Work for women's rights. Pursue food justice. End homelessness. Combat global warming. But do it smart.

- The only response to a gravity problem is acceptance. And this is where all good designers begin. This is the "You Are Here" or "Accept" phase of design thinking. Acceptance. That's why you start where you are. Not where you wish you were. Not where you hope you are. Not where you think you should be. But right where you are.

- THE HEALTH/WORK/PLAY/LOVE DASHBOARD

- However, the assessment helped him realize that he had gone too far, especially when it came to his health, which was a red light on his dashboard. "To be a successful, high-performance entrepreneur, particularly under the extreme stress of a start-up, I can't afford

to get sick. I need to manage my health, even more now that I'm in a start-up." Fred made some changes: he hired a personal trainer, started working out three times a week, and committed to listening to one audio book a week on a challenging intellectual or spiritual subject during his commute. He reported more efficiency at work and a much higher job and life satisfaction with this new mix.

- If you're beginning to think like a designer, you will recognize that life is never done. Work is never done. Play is never done. Love and health are never done.

- As you begin to think like a designer, remember one important thing: it's impossible to predict the future. And the corollary to that thought is: once you design something, it changes the future that is possible. Wrap your mind around that. Designing something changes the future that is possible.

- 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.

- Dave's answers to "Why am I here?" and "What am I doing?" and "Why does it matter?" are going to be different from Bill's answers, and our answers are going to be different from yours. But we are all asking the same questions. And we can all find answers for our own

- You need two things to build your compass—a Workview and a Lifeview. To start out, we need to discover what work means to you. What is work for? Why do you do it? What makes good work good?

- A Lifeview is simply your ideas about the world and how it works. What gives life meaning? What makes your life worthwhile or valuable? How does your life relate to others in your family, your community, and the world? What do money, fame, and personal accomplishment have to do with a satisfying life? How important are experience, growth, and fulfillment in your life?

- 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 three things: 1. Who you are 2. What you believe 3. What you are doing

- Living coherently doesn't mean everything is in perfect order all the time. It simply means you are living in alignment with your values and have not sacrificed your integrity along the way.

- 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?

- For this exercise, we're not interested in what work you want to do, but why you work.

- the positive psychologist Martin Seligman¹ found that the people who can make an explicit connection between their work and something socially meaningful to them are more likely to find satisfaction, and are better able to adapt to the inevitable stresses and compromises that come with working in the world.

- Your Lifeview 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?

- Read over your Workview and Lifeview, and write down a few thoughts on the following questions (please try to answer each of the questions): • Where do your views on work and life complement one another? • Where do they clash? • Does one drive the other? How?

- 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: – Where do your views on work and life complement one another? – Where do they clash? – Does one drive the other? How?

- Wayfinding is the ancient art of figuring out where you are going when you don’t actually know your destination. For wayfinding, you need a compass and you need a direction. Not a map—a direction.

- While wayfinding to the ocean, they mapped the route (140 maps, to be exact). Wayfinding your life is similar. Since there’s no one destination in life, you can’t put your goal into your GPS and get the turn-by-turn directions for how to get there. What you can do is pay attention to the clues in front of you, and make your best way forward with the tools you have at hand. We think the first clues are engagement and energy.

- simple logging assignment at the end of every workday. Michael wrote down when during the day he had been feeling bored, restless, or unhappy at his job, and what exactly he had been doing during those times (the times when he was disengaged). He also wrote down when he was excited, focused, and having a good time at work, and what exactly he was doing during those times (the times when he was engaged). Michael was working on what we call the Good Time Journal.

- Flow is engagement on steroids. Flow is that state of being in which time stands still, you’re totally engaged in an activity, and the challenge of that particular activity matches up with your skill—so you’re neither bored because

- People in flow report the experience as having these sorts of attributes: • Experiencing complete involvement in the activity • Feeling a sense of ecstasy or euphoria • Having great inner clarity—knowing just what to do and how to do it • Being totally calm and at peace • Feeling as if time were standing still—or disappearing in an instant

- Flow is play for grown-ups. In the life design dashboard, we assessed our health, work, play, and love.

- The end result was that, for the first time in his life, Michael was paying detailed attention to what really worked for him. The results were amazing. By simply discovering when he was enjoying himself at work and what caused his energies to rise and fall, Michael discovered that he actually enjoyed civil engineering. It was the people stuff, the proposal writing, and the fee negotiations that he hated. He just had to find a way to craft his job so that he was doing more of what he loved and less of what he hated. Instead of business school (which would probably have been a disaster, and an expensive one at that), Michael decided to double down on engineering. He ended up entering a Ph.D. program and is now a high-level civil and structural engineer, who spends his time, mostly alone, working on the kind of complex engineering problems that make him really happy. And he's become so technically valuable that

- Here's another key element when you're wayfinding in life: follow the joy; follow what engages and excites you, what brings you alive. Most people are taught that work is always

- It's your career, after all, and you are going to be spending a lot of time doing it—we calculate it at 90,000 to 125,000 hours during the course of your lifetime. If it's not fun, a lot of your life is going to suck.

- Work is fun when you are actually leaning into your strengths and are deeply engaged and energized by what you're doing.

- it's crucial for you to assess how well your work fits your values and priorities—how coherent your work is with who you are and what you believe.

- There are two elements to the Good Time Journal: 1. Activity Log (where I record where I'm engaged and energized) 2. Reflections (where I discover what I am learning)

- After a week or two, when you've got a decent body of entries in your Good Time Journal and you're starting to notice some interesting things, it's time to zoom in and take the exercise to the next level. Typically, after you start to get the hang of paying more detailed attention to your days, you notice that some of your log entries could be more specific: you need to zoom in to see more clearly.

- "Was I more engaged by artfully rephrasing Jon's comment (getting the articulation dialed in just right) or by facilitating consensus among the staff (being the guy who made the group's 'Now we get it!' unifying moment happen)?" If you conclude that artful articulation was the real sweet spot of that staff meeting moment for you, that important insight can help you be on the lookout for content-creation opportunities over group-facilitation opportunities.

- It's the AEIOU method³ that provides 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?

- 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.

- Grant felt defeated because he thought that all he could do was what he'd always done—and because he wasn't thinking like a designer. Designers know that you never go with your first idea. Designers know that when you choose from lots of options you choose better. Many people are like Grant: they get stuck trying to make their first idea work. Grant needed to start thinking like a designer.

- But Sharon wasn't really out of options—she just hadn't come up with a lot of real options in the first place.

- Being stuck can be a launching pad for creativity. When you think like a designer, you know how to ideate—how to “flare”—to come up with lots of options for lots of possible futures. Look, it's simple. You can't know what you want until you know what you might want, so you are going to have to generate a lot of ideas and possibilities. Accept the problem. Get stuck. Get over it, and ideate, ideate, ideate!

- Those of us fortunate enough to live in the modern world with access to some degree of choice, freedom, mobility, education, and technology spend most of our time immersed in a world obsessed with optimization. There's always got to be a better idea, a better way—even a best way. That kind of thinking is pretty dangerous to life design. The truth is that all of us have more than one life in us. When we ask our students, “How many lifetimes' worth of living are there in you?,” the average answer is 3.4. And if you accept this idea—that there are multiple great designs for your life, though you'll still only get to live one—it is rather liberating. There is no one idea for your life. There are many lives you could live happily and productively

- As a life designer, you need to embrace two philosophies: 1. You choose better when you have lots of good ideas to choose from 2. You never choose your first solution to any problem

- The first ideation technique we're going to teach you is called mind mapping. It's 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.

- Melanie believed that her problem was getting fifteen million dollars to fund her social innovation institute. But that wasn't her problem; that was just her first idea of a solution to her problem, and she got so anchored to that idea that she was mired in stuckness and failure. Oh, and did we mention that she was getting depressed by all this rejection, and that her teaching was suffering from the fund-raising distraction, and that her colleagues, sick of the Melanie money lament, had begun avoiding her? You see, when you anchor yourself to a bad solution, it just gets worse and worse with time.

- Prototypes lower your anxiety, ask interesting questions, and get you data about the potential of the change that you are trying to accomplish. One of the principles of design thinking is that you want to "fail fast and fail forward," into your next step. When you're stuck with an anchor problem, try reframing the challenge as an exploration of possibilities (instead of trying to solve your huge problem in one miraculous leap), then decide to try a series of small, safe prototypes of the change you'd like to see happen. It should result in getting unstuck and finding a more creative approach to your problem.

- An anchor problem is a real problem, just a hard one. It's actionable—but we've been stuck on it so long or so often that it seems insurmountable (which is why such a problem has to be reframed, then opened up with new ideas, then knocked down to size by prototyping). Gravity problems aren't actually problems. They're circumstances that you can do nothing to change. There is no solution to a gravity problem—only acceptance and redirection. You can't defy the laws of nature, nor do we live in a world where poets reliably make a million dollars a year. Life designers know that if a problem isn't actionable, then it's not solvable. Designers may be artful at reframing and inventing, but they know better than to go up against

- MIND MAPPING WITH YOUR GOOD TIME JOURNAL

- The whole point was to defer judgment and quiet your internal problem-finding critic. If you never did, you probably found the exercise pretty silly. If that's you, welcome to the club of smart modern people trying to do the right thing (which is to get the right answer right away). Take another look at your work, and find out if you can see it in a new light, or come back and try again in a few days. Or you might be thinking, "Well, that was pretty fun and interesting, but I'm not really sure what I'm getting out of this yet." If that sounds like you, you're doing great. The point of this exercise isn't to generate a specific result; it's to get your mind going all over the place and ideating without judgment.

- 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.

- We're going to ask you to imagine and write up three different versions of the next five years of your life. We call these Odyssey Plans. Whether or not three interesting variations of your next five years immediately leap onto the screens in the multiplex movie theater in your head or not, we know you've got at least three viable and substantially different possibilities in you. We all do. Every single one of the thousands of people we've worked with has proved us correct in this. We all have lots of lives within us. We certainly have three at any particular moment.

- The best way to interact with your alternatives is to share them aloud with a group of friends—ideally, with your Life Design Team (see chapter 11 for more on team and community) or the group you are reading this book with, as we suggested in the introduction. The most fun and effective way to go through the life design process is to do it in a group of three to six people, including yourself, who meet as a team.

- You want to invite people who will ask good questions but not offer critiques or unwanted advice. The ground rules for listening are these: Tell your listeners not to critique, review, or advise. You want them to receive, reflect, and amplify. Find two to five people who are “there for you” and will show up for an evening dedicated to helping you design your life (or who are willing to read this chapter, at the very least). When it's time for questions, “Tell me more about ...” is a great approach that keeps the inquiry supportive. If you really don't want to or can't find a group to share with, then video yourself presenting your Odyssey Plans and watch and listen to yourself as though you weren't the author; then see what you have to say to yourself and jot down your ideas.

- 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.

- Clara needed to redesign her life. After thirty-five years of building a successful career as a sales executive in the hi-tech world, she was done. All Clara knew was that she wanted a life that didn't involve meeting a sales quota every quarter. In fact, she didn't even want to hear the words “sales quota” ever again.

- didn't. So where to begin? Clara made a great decision. She recognized that it was good advice to “do something,” but it was bad advice to “jump in and just commit to something” because she could easily find herself overcommitted to the wrong thing.

- Clara didn't start out with a plan to work for the homeless. Knowing that she hadn't found a specific mission to direct her steps, she carefully and thoughtfully crafted a series of small but illustrative experiences and involvements to design her way forward. Her path to “homeless champion” (which, by the way, has become her passion) was not a straight line, by any means.

- She took a class on mediation. She took the job in the juvenile justice system. She joined the women's foundation. She learned about the world of nonprofits. She got involved in the board for the homeless center. By doing the work, meeting the people, and choosing to explore her

options through hands-on experience, and not just spending her time reading, thinking, or reflecting in her journal about what she should or could do next, Clara found her encore career.

- Prototyping is such an integral part of design thinking that it might be worthwhile to step back a little and make sure that the “why” of prototyping is as well understood as the “how.” When you are trying to solve a problem, any problem, you typically start with what you know about the problem: you start with the data. You need enough data so that you can understand what causes what, and what is likely to happen when something else happens. Unfortunately, when you are designing your life, you don’t have a lot of data available, especially reliable data about your future. You have to accept that this is the kind of messy problem in which traditional cause-and-effect thinking won’t work. Luckily, designers have come up with a way of sneaking up

- (designers make lots of prototypes—never just a prototype). Prototyping the life design way is all about asking good questions, outing our hidden biases and assumptions, iterating rapidly, and creating momentum for a path we’d like to try out. Prototypes should be designed to ask a question and get some data about something that you’re interested in. Good prototypes isolate one aspect of a problem and design an experience that allows you to “try out” some version of a potentially interesting future. Prototypes help you visualize alternatives in a very experiential way. That allows you to imagine your future as if you are already living it. Creating new experiences through prototyping will give you an opportunity to understand what a new career path might feel like, even if only for an hour or a day.

- “Gosh, if only I’d taken the slow path of prototyping first, I’d have saved myself so much time!”

- You want to hear what the person who does what you might someday want to do loves and hates about his job. You want to know what her days look like, and then you want to see if you can imagine yourself doing that job—and loving it—for months and years on end. In addition to asking people about their work and life, you will also be able to find out how they got there—their career path. Most people fail not for lack of talent but for lack of imagination. You can get a lot of this information by sitting down with someone and getting his or her story. That’s Life Design Interviewing.

- The first thing to know about a Life Design Interview is what it’s not—a job interview. If you find yourself in the middle of a Life Design Interview and you’re answering questions or talking about yourself rather than getting the story of the person you’re with, stop and flip it around. This is critical. If the person you’re in conversation with misperceives that your meeting is a job interview, then it’s a disaster, and your Life Design Interview has failed or will fail. It’s all about mind-sets. Think about it: When someone thinks you’re looking for a job, the first thing on his or her mind actually has nothing to do with you at all. He is thinking, “Do we have a job opening to discuss?” The answer to that is usually no. So most of the time you’re trying to get a meeting and the other person thinks you’re looking for a job, you don’t get the appointment. You just get “No.”

- 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.

- 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.

- You wouldn’t buy a car without a test drive, would you? But we do this all the time with jobs and life changes.

- Brainstorming, a technique for generating lots of creative and out-of-the-box ideas, was first described by Alex Osborn in a book published in 1953 called *Applied Imagination*. He described a method of generating ideas that relied on two rules: generating a large quantity of ideas without concern for quality, and deferring judgment so that participants would not censor ideas.

- 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.

- 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?”

- 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

- 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 ...

- 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 ...”

- A great way to do this would be to combine your Odyssey Plan presentation gathering (discussed in chapter 5) with a prototype experience brainstorm session. Your collaborators will have a much better time if they are able not only to give you feedback but also to contribute directly to your life design with ideas and actionable prototype possibilities.

- 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.

- the standard American model that 90 percent of job seekers use to go about looking for a job—a technique that some say has a success rate of less than 5 percent. That’s right, 90 percent of us are using a method that might work only 5 percent of the time.

- Kurt’s first approach is what most people do—what we call the standard model of job seeking. You look for a job listing on the Internet or a corporate website, read the job description, decide whether that’s the “perfect” job for you, submit your résumé and cover letter, and wait around for a hiring manager to call you for an interview. And you keep waiting.

- Tip 1: Rewrite your résumé using the same words used in the job posting.

- Tip 2: If you have a specific skill that is posted as required, put it in your résumé exactly the way it is written in the Internet posting.

- Tip 3: Focus your résumé on the job as described.

- Tip 4: Always bring a fresh, nicely printed copy of your résumé to an interview.

- A bad hire is incredibly expensive and painful. It’s tough to fire people these days (employment litigation is at an all-time high), and after you do, you still have to go through the whole search process again, and the important work you hired them for isn’t getting done, and schedules are slipping, and money is being lost, and ... The list goes on and on. Companies will do anything they can to avoid false positives in hiring. This includes being quite tolerant of false negatives—misperceiving that someone’s a bad candidate when the person is actually a great candidate. Mistakenly letting a great candidate go doesn’t cost a cool company a thing: they have plenty of spare great candidates, so letting a few spill on the ground is a much better mistake to make than hiring a bad candidate.

- off. If you want to work at a cool company, you really do want to get connected to people inside that company, using the prototyping conversations we’ve discussed. A personal connection can help you greatly. You’ll still have to go through the hiring process, but you’ll have some help. We’re not saying you shouldn’t try—many employees at cool companies love

their work, so it may be worth the effort. But be brutally honest with yourself about your chances, and caveat emptor.

- Remember, life designers do not work on gravity problems. We are not going to “fix” Internet job postings. But don’t worry. Even though the job descriptions posted on the Internet are pretty much useless, they still represent a potential starting point in your conversation with the institution they represent.

- So, if your dream job isn’t on the front doorstep waiting for you when you come home, where do you find it? First of all, let’s clarify that there is no dream job.

- There are good jobs in good places with good co-workers, and there are at least a couple of those good jobs that you can make close enough to perfect so you can really love them. Those are the “dream jobs” we can help you find, but almost all of them are invisible to you now, because they’re part of the hidden job market.

- In fact, in the United States only 20 percent of all the jobs available are posted on the Internet—or posted anywhere,

- How can you break into this hidden job market? Well, you can’t. No one can. There is no such thing as breaking into the hidden job market. The hidden job market is the job market that’s only open to people who are already connected into the web of professional relationships in which that job resides.

- But it’s quite possible to crack into the network as a sincerely interested inquirer—someone just looking for the story (not looking for the job). That’s how this works. It is a wonderfully happy accident that the very best technique you can use to learn what kind of work you might want to pursue (prototyping with Life Design Interviews, as discussed in chapter 6) is exactly the best, if not only, way to get into the hidden job market in your field of interest, once you know what you want.

- Kurt—the one with master’s degrees from Yale and Stanford, and thirty-eight carefully crafted applications with zero offers—was disheartened by his lack of success with traditional job-finding methods. Realizing it was time to apply design thinking to his job search, Kurt stopped applying for jobs and began conducting Life Design Interviews. He conducted fifty-six authentic prototype conversations with people he was genuinely interested in meeting. Those fifty-six conversations resulted in seven different high-quality job offers, and one dream job (the real kind, not the fantasy kind)—which he got.

- And he got access to the opportunities that produced those seven offers not by asking for a job but by asking for people’s life stories—fifty-six times.

- Most of the time, the person talking to you does it for you. “Kurt, you seem very interested in what we do here, and from what you’ve said so far, it sounds like you have talents we could use. Have you ever thought of working someplace like this?”

- PEOPLE: THE OTHER WORLD WIDE WEB

- Bella, one of our students who graduated a few years ago, just called to tell us how happy she was, and how well this approach had worked for her. She had successfully figured out what she wanted to do (impact investing in the developing world) and designed her way to three great offers in that field including the one she accepted with a boutique firm she'd never heard of before—and it only took two hundred conversations to do it. Two hundred. In just six months. Really.

- Every year, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), a nonprofit established in 1956, compiles data on new college graduates and employment, such as the average salary of recent graduates, top skills employers are looking for, and also what graduates report as the top things they are looking for when it comes to a job. Guess what the first consideration was of the graduating class of 2014 when looking for a job.¹ Nature of the Work.

- People don't hire résumés; they hire people. People they like. People who are interesting. And you know what types of people each of us is most interested in (whether it's as a potential date or a potential employee)—the ones who are most interested in us.

- Professor Sheena Iyengar from the Columbia Business School is a psycho-economist who specializes in decision making. Her famous "jam study" was done using specialty jams in a grocery store. One week, the researchers set up a table in the store showing off six different specialty jams (with snazzy flavors like kiwi-orange, strawberry-lavender ... you get the idea). Then they watched how the shoppers behaved—who stopped to look and, of those who stopped, who actually bought some jam. The first week, with six jams on display, 40 percent of the shoppers stopped to check out the six jams and about a third of them bought one—about 13 percent of the shoppers. A few weeks later, in the same store, with the same time frame, the researchers came back with twenty-four jams. This time, 60 percent of the shoppers in the store stopped by—a 50 percent increase over the six-jam display! But with twenty-four jams on display, only 3 percent of the shoppers bought one.

- It turns out that the part of the brain that is working to help us make our best choices is in the basal ganglia. It's part of the ancient base brain, and as such does not have connections to our verbal centers, so it does not communicate in words. It communicates in feelings and via connections to the intestines—those good old gut feelings.

- Simple enough—except it's impossible. You can't make "the best choice," because you can't know what that best choice was until all the consequences have played out. You can work on making the best choice you can, given what's knowable at the moment, but if your goal is "make the best choice," you won't be able to know if you've done it. Your inability to know that keeps you focused on whether or not you did the right thing, and keeps you rehearsing the alternatives not chosen: this is called agonizing.

- In the Internet-powered, globalized world, there are always a gazillion options, so we are now more capable of being unhappy with our choices than any generation in history has been.

- So the key to letting go is to move on and grab something else. Put your attention on something—not off something.

- Fortunately, if you're designing your life, you can't be a failure. You may experience some prototypes and engagements that don't attain their goals (that "fail"), but remember, those were designed so you could learn some things. Once you become a life designing person and are living the ongoing creative process of life design, you can't fail; you can only be making progress and learning from the different kinds of experiences that failure and success both have to offer.

- He did some prototype conversations with businesspeople before he made his decision, because he wanted to learn how future hiring managers might look at that decision, and concluded that he could afford the risk, and that the kind of people he'd want to work with would view his post-cancer ski adventure as a demonstration of boldness rather than irresponsibility.

- that, the thing after that—would. Reed is now completely failure-immune. He's not protected from the personal pain and loss of failure, but he's immune from being misinformed by failure—he doesn't ever believe that he is a failure or that failure defines him, or, in fact, that his failures were failures. His failures educate him in just the same way that his successes do.

- It's a simple three-step exercise: 1. Log your failures 2. Categorize your failures 3. Identify growth insights

- TRY STUFF REFRAMING FAILURE 1. Using the worksheet below (or downloading it from 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.

- Counsel and Advice. We make a clear distinction between counsel and advice. "Counsel" is when someone is trying to help you figure out what you think. "Advice" is when someone is telling you what he or she thinks. Fortunately, there's a very easy way to tell when you're getting advice rather than counsel.

- helpful. You can never be too clear on your own thinking. You can never get too good a grasp of your own best wisdom and insights. Finding someone who can give you good counsel and who regularly leaves you in a clearer and more settled state of mind is a great asset. This is where good mentors shine. We would say that all legitimate mentoring is centered on giving counsel. Counsel invariably begins with lots of questions aimed at accurately understanding you, what you're saying, and what you're going through. Good counselors will often seem to ask the same question a couple of times from different points of view, to be sure they're getting it. They will often try to summarize or restate something you've said and ask, "Did I get that right?" This approach tells you that they're focused on you—not on themselves.

- Let us tell you a little secret. There is no perfect pie. It is virtually impossible on any given day to devote yourself equally to all the areas of your life that are important to you. Balance happens over time. Life design happens over time. Bill Gates, the world's richest man (as of 2015), did not get that way by having work/love balance on any given day. When he launched

Microsoft Windows in 1985 and took the company public in 1986, no one would have called him a philanthropist doing good in the world. And it's also probably safe to say that back in 1998 he wasn't spending an equal part of his day nurturing relationships and an equal part defending government charges against him for abusing monopoly power. Balance is a myth, and it causes a lot of grief and heartache for most of us. As we said earlier, we don't fight reality, and living in reality means looking at and accepting where you are right now. Life design is really about being able to answer the question "How's it going?" It is possible to design your life in such a way that when those closest to you are giving your eulogy they will say, "Overall, he had a pretty evenly sliced pie."

- And you only understand that in retrospect, because a well-designed life isn't a noun—it's a verb (technically it is a noun phrase but you know what we mean).

- Tim's design is working, and he's one of the most balanced guys we know. He is a great dad and the center of a vibrant social life, has lots of friends, plays music almost every week, has his own cocktail blog, on which he promotes his cocktail inventions, reads a lot, and is one of the happiest people you'll ever meet. His health/work/play/love dashboard is full of green lights, and he plans to keep it that way. And he's a great example of a well-thought-out life design strategy in which work isn't the most important thing.

- We run an exercise in our classes called Designing Your Way Forward, in which we have our students identify two or three things in their life design project that they are stuck on, things that are going nowhere fast. We then ask them to ideate for four minutes on that stuck problem with two other students, who will help them apply any one of the five mind-sets as a way to get unstuck. How can "be curious" help you overcome the fear of talking to the Nobel Prize-winning professor who teaches your class? Well ... you could: Ask three other students who met with her what they talked about and how it went. See if she talks about her own college experience anywhere in some article or interview, and if her twenty-year-old self shares anything with yours. Find out if she's ever failed miserably at some projects (and what they were if so), to make her seem more human and less scary. And so on. When we do this, it turns out that applying any of the mind-sets can help you get unstuck and take some progressive next steps. The same is true for the well-lived life you're now trying to engage. Here are some reminders for each of the mind-sets.

- Be Curious. There's something interesting about everything. Endless curiosity is key to a well-designed life. Nothing is boring to everyone (even doing taxes or washing the dishes). • What would someone who's interested in this want to know? • How does it work? • Why do they do it that way? • How did they used to do it? • What do experts in this field argue about and why? • What's the most interesting thing going on here? • What don't I get about what's happening here? • How could I find out?

- Try Stuff. With a bias to action, there is no more being stuck—no more worrying, analyzing, pondering, or solving your way through life. Just do it. • How can we try this before the day is out? • What would we like to know more about? • What can I do that will answer that? • What sorts of things are actionable, and if we tried them, what might we learn?

- Reframe Problems. Reframing is a change in perspective, and almost any design problem can use a perspective switch. • What perspective do I actually have? • Where am I now coming from? • What other perspectives could other people have? Name them, and then describe the problem from their perspective, not yours

- Know It's a Process. Awareness of the process means you don't get frustrated or lost, and you don't ever give up.

- Ask for Help.