

A Little Guide to a Happy Life

Written by You

CARLOS GRIDER



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Many of us suffer from not understanding what we truly want in life, while many others know what they want but aren't sure how to make their desires reality.

Understanding what you want – what you truly want, that thing that if you finally got it would leave you satisfied and happy indefinitely and beyond measure – is tough to pin down.

With the constant growth we experience and the simultaneously influential yet changing environments we live in, it can be challenging to discern what we each genuinely need compared to what external influences push us to feel we need and desire in life.

Identifying deep-seated, unchanging desires and needs is a first, valuable step to satisfying those needs and sculpting the most satisfying life imaginable.

This life design exercise, performed over and over through the months and years, and the follow-on process of creating your guide to a happy life will clarify the things, people, and places that motivate and drive you – which ultimately are your most essential needs and desires.

This process will reveal insights into who you are, what you need and desire, and the state of your life as a whole at this moment. Getting this inside view of your life but from an outsider's perspective (thanks to our approach) will allow you to give yourself prudent advice and instructions for the future, packaged in a way you can reference back to when you feel lost, confused, or depleted.

At times in the future, when you're confused and in need of support or guidance, you'll be able to come back to this guide that you will have written – filled with answers, advice, and recommendations written for "future you."

You know more about yourself, your actions, emotions, and your needs than any other person on the planet. So who better to help you understand your ideal life and how to get there than you?

In this book, we will walk you through the intimate knowledge you have about yourself but may not realize and use that knowledge to guide you to the life that's right for you.

Welcome to the process of writing a little guide to your happy life.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Life Design: An Exercise in Creating Your Ideal Life



This book is designed to help you understand what you want in life, find your purpose, and create a plan to sculpt your current life into the ideal life you have been dreaming of. This process will guide you in building a life around the things that drive you, motivate you and leave you feeling fulfilled.

Welcome to the Life Design Exercise – A Process for Designing Your Ideal Life

Have you ever had a period in your life where you continually felt drained or lost as you asked yourself, “what am I doing here?” while you tried to figure out what exactly depleted you and where the fulfillment and joy in your life went?

Better yet, have you been in a position where you felt like you had everything you could think to ask for, but it just felt like something was missing? I guarantee you're not the only one who has experienced this.

Or are you at a pivotal time in your life, and feel like the tides of life are pushing you forward, but you're unsure if the direction of the waves is the best direction for you? If only a crystal ball existed, that could point out the perfect choice and path to walk down for your long-term happiness and fulfillment.

You may have a great life, a nearly perfect life, but it just might not be perfect for you (at this moment). So, what's the answer? You determine what drives and motivates you and re-design your life around those things. You build your ideal life around the relationships, activities, places, and anything else that leaves you feeling fulfilled, satisfied, motivated, eager for more, and driven. You design a life around whatever *moves you*.

But, how do you re-design a life? You already have so much to be thankful for, so, how do you figure out what is missing that (potentially) satisfies and motivates you?

You use the Life Design Exercise.

So, what is the "Life Design Exercise?" How does this help in creating your ideal life?

THE OBJECTIVES OF OUR LIFE DESIGN EXERCISE

The Life Design Exercise is a structured exercise with three objectives.

Objective 1: Guide you through understanding your passions, what drives you, what motivates you, and what you want and need from life in a timeless sense, regardless of which phase of life you're in

Objective 2: Craft a design of what *your ideal life* would look like

Objective 3: Create an achievable plan to start making your perfect life a reality

The key to achieving a fulfilling life is understanding what consistently motivates and drives you.

THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS LIFE DESIGN EXERCISE

Eleven years ago, I had just returned from a military deployment to the Middle East. It was my 4th combat tour to the Middle East in 4 years, and I planned it to be my last. Despite all I accomplished over the previous 4 years, the constant coming and going left me disconnected from the real world and confused about possibilities for my future. I was even more confused about what I wanted my future to be and became fixated on finding purpose in life that at least matched the purpose I felt during military service.

Then, a friend recommended a fantastic book: [The Passion Test](#). The book was a great exercise in defining and understanding what made me passionate, finding my purpose in life, and understanding what (based on who I was at that point) I wanted my life to be.

As we define our unchanging purposes, objectives, and desires, we become more grounded and consistent, creating a positive feedback loop of discovery, understanding, applying the knowledge to pursue our goals, and repeating.

The [Passion Test](#) was an excellent book to spark the process of understanding my desires and considering alternate options for my purpose in life, but something more is required to make an ideal life a reality. To make our ideal life a reality, we need action. Decisive action.

The small but significant problem with that book (for me) was that I had been in such “non-traditional environments,” the structured confines of the military, combat zones, and the homogenous company of 18 to 22 year old men for so long at a young age (19-23) that I couldn’t just think up a dream life and expect it to be fulfilling, healthy, and balanced in the long term. In addition, my breadth of experience (mostly life as a Marine) and knowledge (just what I'd studied in a few years at university and absorbed by osmosis from my military peers) made it tough to dream up the ideal life for the “timeless me” – driven and calm, young and old, fearless and afraid. Plus, I was in a state of active and rapid change – so my “ideal life” from my perspective at the time felt like a moving, evolving target.

Additionally, it felt less than optimal to design a view of the perfect life, a life of contentment and happiness, without a straightforward way to make it a reality. A plan. A guide.

So, I went back to the drawing board and created a process, an exercise, for myself that elicited my overlooked passions, that encouraged considering all the “categories of life” that we need to stay balanced but I was unaware of when I started, and that would create a viable plan with small steps for making this “ideal life” a reality.

The resulting process was exactly what I needed.

The resulting process was this Life Design Exercise.

For the last 15 years, I've done this exercise every 6 months in the same leather-bound journal, and I couldn't have paid for better results.

I've been to over 50 countries, speak a few languages, have been an advisor to Generals, Sheiks, and CEOs. I've gained a decent, worldly education. I currently live as a digital nomad with no ropes or restrictions (just as I've always wanted) and money is no longer an issue. I've hiked through everywhere from Patagonia to the Himalayas, ridden a motorcycle down the Ho-Chi Minh trail, cuddled up with penguins, and swam with sharks and wild sea lions. These dreams come true wouldn't necessarily be fulfilling or worthwhile experiences to most...but they absolutely were (and are) to me. Each experience started as a statement about my desires during my Life Design Exercise - in that old leather-bound notebook, about what drives me in life.

The only way I realized these desires and created a life that makes them possible was to be clear about what I wanted and needed in my life, then find a path to get to that new, ideal life.

I say this to express that it's a clear possibility to make your ideal life a reality no matter where you start. So if you don't know where to start, then start here.

Even further, the aggregate benefit of the results of all of the exercises was exponentially more beneficial as the results of each iteration of this exercise stacked on the last to accidentally become a personalized guide for living.

Each iteration of the Life Design Exercise accurately covered the ideas, desires, and feelings of purpose deep within me, while revealing the growth, learning, and maturity I had gained in the previous 6

months (since the last results). But the undeniable truth is I was constantly changing and growing – as were my desires, beliefs, and goals. So likewise, we, and our perceptions, are continually evolving. Because of this fact the results from each Life Design Exercise represented me and my experiences 100% for the preceding period and at that moment. But, no single iteration of this exercise 100% accurately represented my beliefs and desires throughout my life.

However, every one of those sets of results from doing this exercise still held a grain of truth to recognize, about who I was, about my deep unchanging beliefs, and about my deep, constant desires. After looking at the results from my Life Design Exercise over the years, it became clear which themes (for my passions and values) had been consistent over those years, and which were fleeting. It became clear which desires remained as I passed through phases of life. And it became clear which beliefs, around morals and purposes, remained as my social circle and life circumstances evolved.

As I saw recurring proof of my specific, deep-seated desires and beliefs, I received more and more confirmation of what I needed to focus on to be who, what, and where I wanted to be in life.

I had accidentally created a guide to my happiest life, 100% written by me.

I realized I wasn't just taking bi-annual tests to discover my passions. I was actively writing a manual for creating the life I wanted. I was writing a guide for identifying and making real the latent desires I had that remained unchanged for years. I was writing a guide for building a life that served my values, goals, and standards that didn't and likely wouldn't change. Having this level of clarity on the best direction to move toward, based on who I am, allowed me to step up my game.

From then on out, after completing every Life Design Exercise I reviewed the results for that iteration, covering the last 6 months. I then reviewed the results and notes, the summaries, and the "instructions and advice" I'd written for myself from every other time I'd gone through the exercise.

After reviewing the results of the exercise, covering the last 6 months, on all the tests before, I then again wrote clear instructions and advice for myself for the next 6 months. I wrote the pitfalls to be aware of that, based on the patterns I saw in my life, I knew I was vulnerable to as well as the tips on how to handle them when they come up. I wrote the reminders of rewards I should give myself and the coming milestones I should celebrate. And I wrote reminders of the things to stay focused on and fixate my vision on that I knew I would respond to, with the help of a subtle reminder.

Then, I actively used this "guide."

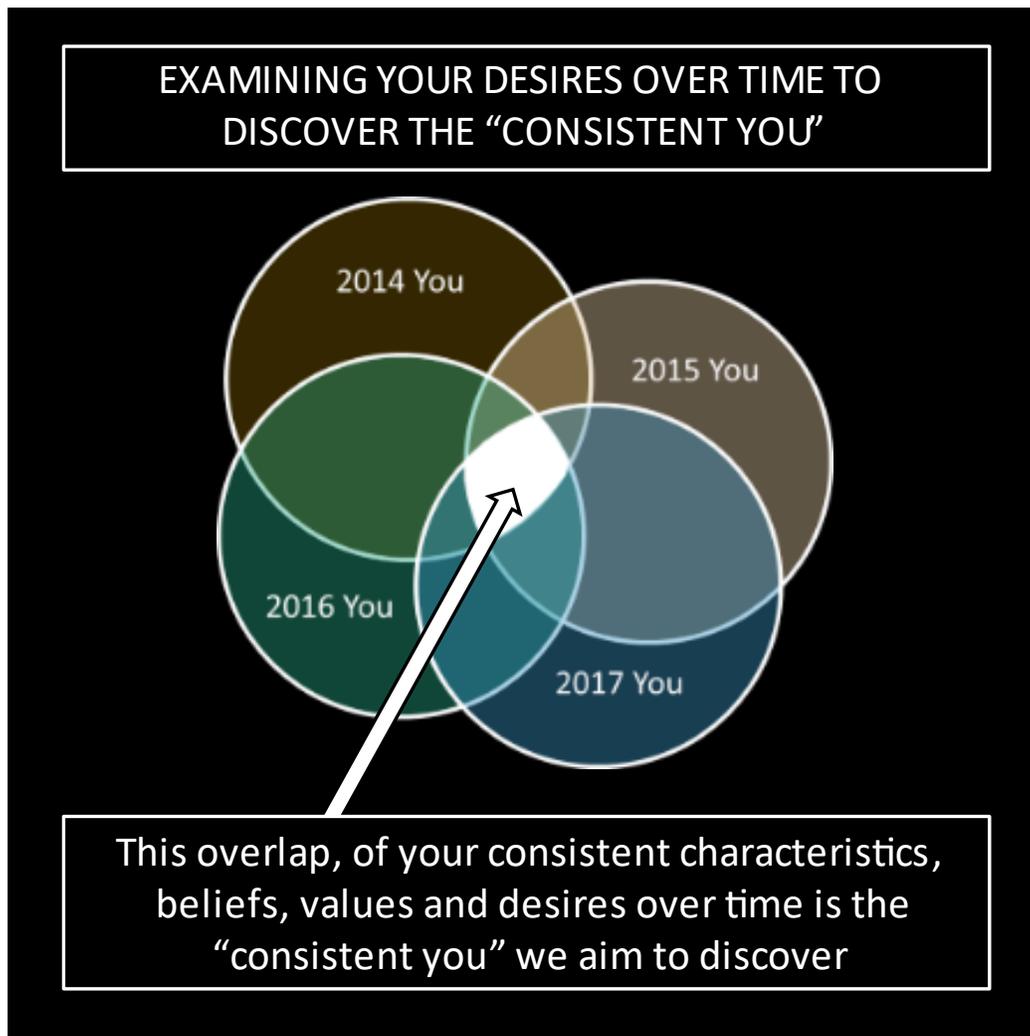
Anytime I stumbled in life or questioned myself, I looked back at this guide for direction and to get back in touch with the "timeless version of me."

Anytime I questioned why I was doing what I was doing, I looked back at this guide to check that my actions were aligned with my unchanging desires, purpose, and vision.

Anytime anyone tried to discourage me, by forcing their perception of me and their perception of what my purpose should be on me, I returned to this guide...

...written by me.

The timeless version of me, recorded in that guide encouragingly, became my biggest supporter and source of motivation between those 6-month periods.



By examining your recorded thoughts, desires, ideas, and values over years, you can get a clearer view of the most consistent aspects of you

The Life Design Exercise and the tiny, living guide it created, have done wonders for me, from the self-knowledge I’ve gained to the resulting outcomes I’ve made in my life. I love that you are giving this exercise a try, because I’m just an average Joe. I know your results will be just as great as mine, if not greater.

Chapter 2: Uncovering the Desires, Needs, and Values of the Unchanging Version of You

Desires and needs can be fleeting, triggered, and influenced by the changing circumstances and shifting social circles around us. As a result, it can be risky to invest valuable time, energy, and resources in something as a priority when that thing could be a very temporary element of your life. Building a system to support that potentially fleeting desire in your life indefinitely is arguably a waste of resources when you have other deep-seated needs. Instead, it is better to prioritize the wants that come from the core of *you*, connected to the needs of the relatively slow-changing parts of you.

These deep-seated desires and needs will (likely) be with you for life. Because of this, these constant needs and wants are worth building your life around, as this approach is more likely to lead to lifelong satisfaction, instead of fleeting and temporary pleasure.

But how do you discern which needs and desires are deep-seated and as close to permanent as possible compared to those temporary urges that relate more to your current phase of life, temporary environments, and temporary circumstances instead of the core of you?

The answer: You look for the needs and desires that come up consistently, over and over through time creating observable patterns.

The only way to identify (and easiest way to satisfy) the unchanging you, and your stable needs and desires is to watch and observe. Take note of that which *does not* change. This idea, defining and understanding the unchanging you and your constant wants and needs.

That clear, genuine view of you and your needs is what we will use to create your personalized "Little Guide" to building a happy, contentment-filled life.

First, we perform the Life Design Exercise once to take a strategic approach to helping you identify what your needs and desires are right now. Then, we rank the resulting statements about your ideal life, statements that declare the things you need and desire that motivate and fuel you filling you with drive and happiness. Those statements will identify the most critical needs and desires in your life, to give you a snapshot of your needs and wants in your ideal life, prioritized by importance to you.

Then, we take the test every 3 to 6 months to identify your prioritized "drivers" in life and note potential advice and instructions for future you over the coming 6 months, based on what you've learned in the last 6 months and beyond

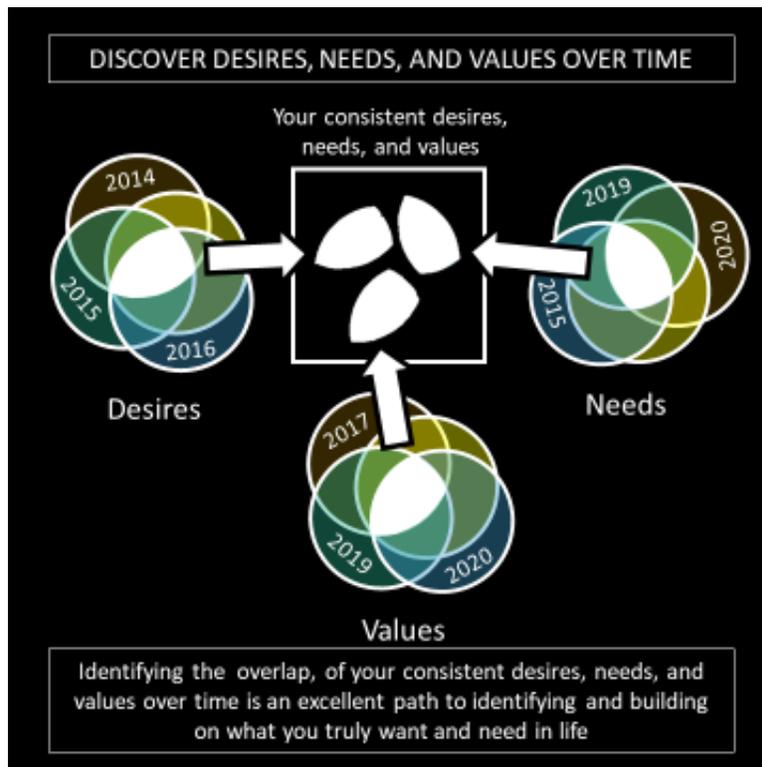
After taking doing the Life Design Exercise a few times, we'll be able to note the drivers – motivations, needs, and desires – that are constantly present and constantly a priority in your life. We then have the first and foundational needs and desires to build your life around – needs and desires that are so constant that creating a system to satisfy them would lead to satisfaction indefinitely and an ideal life built around the consistent part of you.

For example, a deep-seated desire to experience foreign cultures, exquisite foods, art, and culture may be satisfied by a long-term objective of moving to a hipster neighborhood in Lisbon, Portugal, for food, music, and Portuguese culture.

A deep-seated desire to spend your days expressing yourself through paint and art may be satisfied by a long-term objective to establish passive income streams that support that lifestyle.

This exercise will look at your desires over time to understand your changing and constant needs and wishes. Then, we'll piece those bits together to form a picture of your ideal life and identify small, practical, possible actions to guide you from your current life to the ideal one – designed by you.

The result will be a little *living* guide to a happy life, written by you.



Chapter 3: An Overview of the Life Design Exercise

This Life Design Exercise is a simple process divided into 5 steps that we'll walk through together.

Step 1: Define your passions and what drives you (aka "drivers), finding your purpose in life, and checking for balance across your life

Step 2: Check for balance in your list of drivers and how they cover the essential areas of life.

Step 3: Prioritize your drivers, passions, and motivations

Step 4: Create a plan for making your ideal life a reality and building your life around what drives you

Step 5: Record your results in an easy to reference way, checking back routinely, and redoing the Life Design Exercise twice each year

You should redo the exercise every 6 months, then record the results, notes, and instructions to yourself to reference back to between iterations.

Let's review the steps of the Life Design Exercise in a little more detail...

Step 1: Define your desires and what drives you

First, you'll sit down and spend some time brainstorming statements that describe your ideal life and the needs and desires fulfilled in it. This book and the Life Design process will guide you through examining what relationships, activities, places, and things leave you feeling the most fulfilled and rejuvenated in your life. Sifting through ideas of what motivates, drives, and inspires you to move forward is the first step to finding what is truly worth pursuing and building your life around.

Once your list of statements describing fulfillment of your needs and desires in your ideal life is as complete as we can get by writing your thoughts "off the cuff," you'll go back over the list to ensure you've accounted for all of your desires and needs in life in the following step.

In the next step, we'll check that you have statements that describe your ideal life in all essential categories of life. From there we'll *add* more statements about our ideal life to the essential categories of life missing a statement to ensure your plan, and life guide, covers *every* essential area of your ideal life.



By defining your passion and drivers finding your purpose in life, you can focus on "running your own race", and focus more on the races that truly matter to you

Step 2: Check for balance in your list of drivers and how they cover the important areas of life

In step 2, we'll review for wants and needs in career, finances, family, love, hobbies, and a few other essential categories of life to ensure you're building a balanced life. Sometimes, it is human nature to focus on what we want at this moment or what we see lacking right now without accounting for the needs across all areas of our lives and needs in the long term.

We'll do this by taking your list of statements that describe your ideal life and placing each of them into the 10 essential categories when envisioning an ideal life. This process will allow us to see in which areas of life you are consciously working toward building a fulfilling, satisfying situation, and which aspects of life might be going unconsciously neglected.

Once we have a complete list, accounting for all areas of a healthy life, we will move to the next step to discover which of these statements (and the underlying elements in your life) are more important to you and worth your time, energy, and resources, and which elements can be consciously de-prioritized in the process of building your ideal life.

Step 3: Prioritize your desires and the elements of your ideal life

Last, we'll ask a few questions about the statements about your ideal life on your list so you can get the clearest possible picture of what your ideal life would be. We'll also ask the dreaded "why" to ensure you're designing a life suited to your desires and needs and not one built on unquestioned dogma or the pressures of a system you're trying to break free of.

In [Gary Keller's book "The ONE Thing"](#), he makes an excellent point that we are most likely to succeed when we focus on the one, most important thing in front of us at any moment. In defining and building our ideal life, the same applies.

To make the objective (making our ideal life our reality) achievable, we need to focus on making your most important passions and drivers a reality first. Still, we can only do this if we know your most important passions.

In step 3, we will prioritize your desires and the elements of your ideal life according to what makes you feel the most fulfilled and what is most important to you. Then we will take that ranked list of drivers and passions to create a realistic plan in step 4.

Step 4: Create a short-term plan and guide to achieve your desires, by identifying specific tasks and deciding your first 3 action of focus

Steps 1, 2, and 3 gave us a very clear, structured look into what makes you feel fulfilled, passionate, motivated, and driven in life and provides excellent personal insight, but we can't stop there. We need to use these personal insights to create an actionable plan to change your life and craft it around those needs and desires we've identified.

If you can build a life filled with the things that motivate you the most and make you excited to jump out of bed each morning, each day you'll invest everything you've got and get back twice as much of the fulfillment you need...but creating that kind of situation is a huge task. An old friend always repeated the perfect saying for tackling this kind of project...

How do you eat an elephant?

One bite at a time.

We're going to tackle the task of making your ideal life (on paper) a reality, one bite at a time. Step 4 will guide you through creating tiny, easily achievable tasks for your most important drivers and passions. The achievement of these tiny tasks will give you a boost of motivation, push you closer towards your ideal life, and also help you double-check whether or not you're as passionate about each driver as you thought.



If you don't know where you're going in life, any road will take you there. If you have an ideal life to make real, a defined path and viable plan are critical to truly changing your life into a fulfilling life that motivates and drives you

"No man ever steps into the same river twice. For it is not the same river, and he is not the same man."

- Heraclitus

Step 5: Record your results in an easy to reference way, checking back monthly, re-doing the exercise semi- annually

Finally, in Step 5, we'll record your insights, drivers, and priority tasks in an organized way that you can come back to and reference whenever you need a reminder of what should matter to you and what you need to focus on in life.

Essentially, you will have your guide. Routinely, you'll come back and give your list a look to cross off tasks as you achieve them, pick your new tasks to focus on, and also ponder whether the drivers you listed before are still important to you

Last, every 6 months after you've done the exercise, you'll pull out your old Life Design Exercise results and redo the exercise again from scratch. Why? Because just as we grow and change, your needs and preferences will too. Redoing this exercise will keep you on track for fulfilling the needs of the the ever-changing you.

A Review: Why are we doing the Life Design Exercise?

1. To help you understand what elements of your life are potentially best to focus your time and energy on for a more fulfilling life.
2. To guide you through envisioning your ideal life around your needs, your desires, and who you are truly meant to be.
3. Guide you through creating a doable, actionable plan with small, clear steps for how to make your ideal life a reality.
4. To get you started making your ideal life a reality.
5. To achieve all of this by using *your* knowledge of *you*.

What Next?

What's the next step? Start Step 1 of the Life Design Exercise.

Chapter 4: Tips for Getting the Most from the Life Design Process

As we move forward in the exercise, consider these suggestions

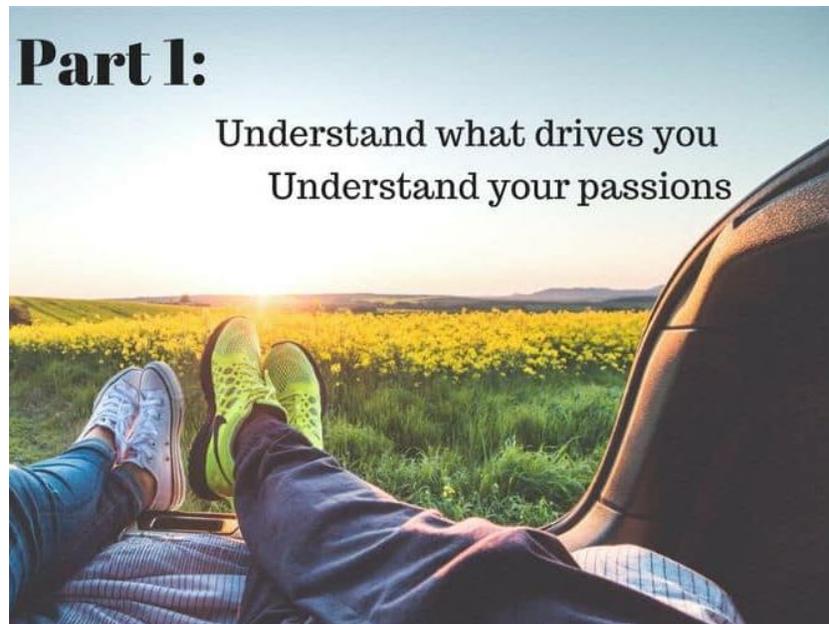
1. Do this exercise alone: Quite often, what we want or need gets overshadowed in our lives or overly influenced by external pressures from work, family, society, and perceived obligations in a way that is less than beneficial. Doing this exercise alone ensures you'll be able to get to the core of what drives *you*, and no one else.
2. Encourage your partner to do this exercise (alone as well) and share the results upon completion: You'll likely realize things about yourself that you forgot, or possibly never realized...and your partner likely didn't either. Giving your partner a glimpse into this newly rediscovered "you" can be invaluable for mutual understanding in your relationship. The process in this exercise will deliver insight on who each of you are, as individuals, as well as what you each want and need from life.
3. Keep a scratch work notebook: Along the way, you'll have epiphanies, "aha!" moments, and even questions that won't be answered at the point you realize them. But this info will be great to refer back to. Keep an extra notebook to jot down all of the questions, random thoughts, and insights that arise to sift through and analyze them later.
4. Take note of "AHA!" moments and realizations: These are the realizations that people pay thousands of dollars to therapists and head shrinkers for and are potent indicators of how best to change your life. So, take advantage of learning these valuable pieces of information for free.
5. Plan on keeping a permanent notebook: At the end of this exercise you'll have clear statements about your desires, instructions to yourself for the coming months, and your plan in this notebook, as well as the same information from future tests you'll take. Having all of these notes in one place will give you an interesting view of yourself over time and a unique perspective you won't get anywhere - all easily accessible in an organized little book.
6. Don't edit yourself, and don't rule out potentially drastic changes: The point of this exercise is to get to your core and build a life on that. You're lying to yourself if you edit how you express your needs and your desires. Finding your *true* purpose in life will be impossible if you downplay it or hide. Giving yourself the chance to let things flow out naturally is a major reason for doing this exercise alone.
7. Note interesting realizations: This may sound repetitive but it is valuable and important. For any "negative" things that come up, such as realizing that something is important to you but neglected in life, or realizing that something in your life is not important to you but still heavily consumes your time, energy, and resources take these as important warnings. Take note of them in your notebook to think on later. You don't have to solve these issues or root problems now, or even soon.

However, we want to highlight these misalignments of priority and flow of effort, as these imbalances are possibly the greatest hindrances to you building your ideal life, and also possibly

the greatest "waste" of resources in your life. But, that is a question to analyze for another day. For now, make a special note of these realizations that arise.

Now that we have set the ground rules, let's start our Life Design Exercise.

Chapter 5: Step 1 - List 20 to 40 Statements that Describe Your Ideal Life



PART 1: Defining your needs and desire to envision your ideal life and define your purpose in life.

In part 1 of this exercise, we'll create a list of statements that clearly define your needs and desires for each area of life. In doing this, we'll examine what relationships, activities, places, and other elements of life you are passionate about, motivate you, and leave you feeling fulfilled when you invest in them.

By clearly understanding what drives you in life, you'll be better equipped (with knowledge of yourself and your desires) to make decisions in a way that creates more of what drives you and fuels you in life. Additionally, you'll be able to consciously eliminate what doesn't return your investment of time and energy. Ultimately, you'll be able to create more of what you desire in a natural, organic way.

Start by listing 20 to 40 statements beginning with the phrase "In my ideal life..." that describe what your ideal life would be like. As you do this, do not limit yourself or edit yourself. Don't think about how these "states" will be achieved or where the resources will come from. For now, just aim to capture your major desires and needs.

As you aim to capture your strongest desires and needs, consider the people and relationships, activities, possessions, and places that could positively influence or increase your happiness.

The resulting statements will be your "drivers" as these statements describe what drives and motivates you in life, or potentially could drive and motivate you, to live your life fully. Ultimately, these

statements describe what is happening in your ideal life. From now on we will refer to these statements as your ideal life statements. These statements will be the first step to finding purpose in life and identifying and defining your genuine desires.

The mark of a true drive or passion is that you can invest your time, energy, and resources into it and ultimately feel rejuvenated along the way and at completion. You may be tired at the end, but the passion you have for that particular driver or situation motivates you to continue to act and repeat the process of investing your time, energy, and resources into that passion.

Example Ideal life statements:

1. I live in a modern condo on the beach with all of the luxuries I need to be satisfied in my home.
2. I travel internationally for pleasure and fulfilling purposes 3 to 6 months each year.
3. Money is not an issue in my life. I have the resources to do the things I enjoy.
4. I work in a job that genuinely interests me, supporting outcomes that I believe in with a flexible schedule and the ability to work from anywhere – I earn enough to fund a comfortable life, but my purpose and what I achieve motivate me to continue despite the salary.

Tips for getting started

If you feel stuck and unable to write down what your ideal life is like, consider these tips...

1. Think about things that you enjoy and the times you have felt most alive. Build your statements from there.
2. Consider starting with verbs, such as "I live...", "I think...", "I work...", "I go...." and describe something ideal in your life from the start point of what you are doing in the situation you are describing.

Now...Go ahead! List 10 to 20 of your Drivers

Your Drivers

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
- ... _____

10. _____

Consider referring to the workbook, downloadable at ABrotherAbroad.com/little-guide-to-a-happy-life-workbook for free, or order a paperback version available on Amazon.com

Chapter 6: Step 2 - Categorize Your Ideal Life Statements by Category, then Check for Balance

An ideal life is balanced and diversified

In a *balanced life*, we invest in and feel fulfilled in all areas of life that are important to us as individuals.

In a *diversified life*, we invest in and receive fulfillment from many different areas of life, interests, fields of study, fields of practice, personal drivers, and personal passions. The resulting benefit is that even if we experience the discouragement of life's downs and hiccups in one facet of life, we average out to sustained fulfillment and progress across the collection of experiences that comprise our life.

In a diversified life, we are driven and motivated by so many varied activities and outcomes that we are passionate about in our lives that a dip in one area is a blip overall. In a diversified life, ultimately we have enough realized passions and fulfilled needs that drive us forward in a positive, fulfilling way that the momentum counters whatever life throws our way.

To ensure we design this balanced, diversified life that stays healthy and fulfilling in the short and long term, we need to ensure each major area of life is covered (or at least reviewed) in our life design. Not all of these areas may be important to you right now, but, it is worth reviewing each area to account for long-term needs and desires. As you grow, the significance of specific areas to your overall health and happiness may increase or decrease, so reviewing all areas each time you do this exercise will help you recognize the gradual shifts in your slow changing needs.

So, what exactly falls into each category that comprises a balanced life?

Categories In Life (for the Purpose of Our Life Design Process)

Purpose and Money

1. Financial: Anything related to money, finances, debt, or income.
2. Career, Profession, and Purpose: Anything that relates to what you do to earn a living, give back, or produce to make your compensable contribution to the world.

Personal

3. Physical (fitness and health): Anything related to your body, the capabilities of your body, your health, disease, and how capable and resilient your body is.
4. Emotional and spiritual: Anything related to emotions, religion, spiritual, and the metaphysical
5. Interests & hobbies: Anything you do for pleasure or fulfillment that does not pay the bills but makes you happy

People

6. Social (friends): Anything related to your social life, social circle, and the people you interact with by choice, who aren't family.

7. Family (immediate family: children, siblings, parents): Anything related to your parents, spouse, siblings, and children
8. Family (extended family): Anything related to family beyond immediate family
9. Love life and romance: Anything related to love, sex, and romantic relationships and interactions
10. Community, community involvement, and giving back: Anything related to how you participate in, enjoy, contribute to and receive from your neighborhood and community on a neighborhood, city, state, and national level

Possessions and Material

11. Possessions: Anything in your life that you can "own," such as a house, car, clothes, "toys," etc.
12. Geography and Location: Anything related to location and what that location delivers in return. This could be a location (e.g., California, France, Europe), a type of landscape (e.g., forest, beach), or location or geography related preference.

To take your understanding of the elements in your life, and categorize them a bit further, here is a list of examples of how the elements of your life fall into the categories we'll use to check for balance and diversity in your life.

Example Ideal life statements and Category

| Category | Driver |
|---------------------|---|
| Financial | - Money is not an issue in my life. I have the resources to do the things I enjoy. - I make \$50,000 per year of semi-passive income |
| Career | - My passion for (writing) is my full-time career |
| Physical | - I weigh 160lbs and have 10% body fat - I feel good, specifically in my joints and lower back, and am fit enough to enjoy my passions of hiking, rugby, and surfing |
| Emotional | - I am content and happy on most days, and on the days I am not I feel confident that I will "get through" quickly - I am emotionally resilient, dealing with daily trials without excessive impact on my contentment, happiness, and mood |
| Interests & Hobbies | - I travel internationally for pleasure and fulfilling purposes 3 to 6 months each year - I take time to paint regularly |
| Social | - I have a core group of close friends I count on for mutual support, shared interests, and just plain good feelings - I have a larger tribe of like-minded yet diverse people with whom I share interests and practice passions and hobbies in a way that makes for a happier, healthier life |
| Immediate Family | - I talk with one of my parents or siblings daily - I am part of my parents' and siblings' lives and am aware of and support them in their struggles and growth. |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Extended Family | - I arrange a small family reunion once a year to connect with extended family |
| Love Life | - I have a loving partner with whom I share great sex, interests, and a passion for travel while existing as two separate and unique individuals who love each other, support each other, and express so through actions. Ultimately, we want the best for each other and express so through how we live and treat each other. - I have amazing sex five times a week - I am comfortable and happy being alone and loving myself |
| Possessions | - I live in a modern condo on the beach with all of the luxuries I need to be satisfied in my home - I have a reliable and fun little SUV that gets me to the mountains to snowboard and into the backcountry to camp - I have a minimalist wardrobe that has everything I need for every occasion and packs completely into two duffel bags |
| Community | - I volunteer reading to children once per week - My neighborhood has community holiday festivals that I organize and participate in |
| Interests and Hobbies | - I play pickup basketball three times a week for fun - I paint daily - I surf or exercise to support my surfing, three times a week |
| Geography and Location | - I live in a walkable neighborhood with plenty of coffee shops, friendly bars, and live music events - I live in a quiet mountain town with plenty of forests and skiing - I split my year between two homes – one in an urban, walkable, and cultured city, and one in the mountains - I split my year between a tropical island and an urban, Latin American city |

An Explanation of the Life Categories in Designing Your Life

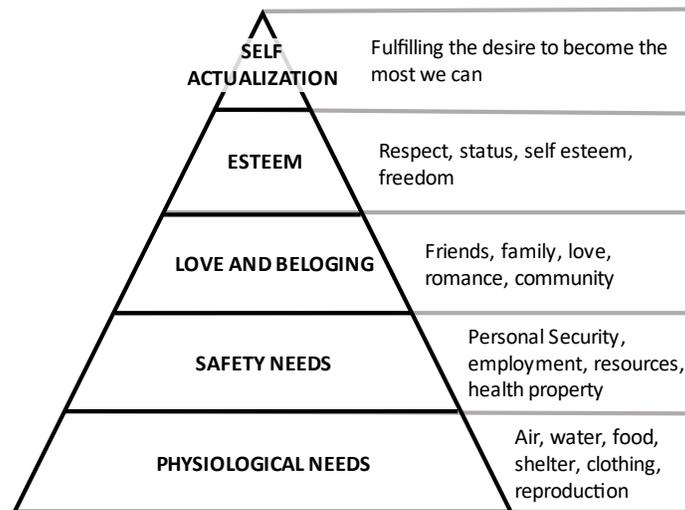
Why are categories necessary when designing your life? Better yet, why these categories?

These categories are necessary to ensure we account for every area of healthy living. Unfortunately, when stress is highest and our ability to focus is at a low, we as human beings tend to get tunnel vision and focus on what we *think* is important *at that moment*. In this case, the human tendency is to attempt to change your life in the ways that come to mind first. In the meantime, we unintentionally neglect so many other important areas in life that appear less important at the moment but are essential, overlooked pillars for a healthy life in the long term. Whether the neglected elements may be loved ones, our interests, our health, or anything else, ultimately the unintended neglect damages our lives in the long term.

By placing the ideal life statements (and the respective elements of our lives) into separate categories, we force ourselves to put every area of our lives on the examination table. In the process, we have the chance to see our errors when we realize where we've invested heavily in areas that *really* don't mean much in the long term or under-invested in areas that mean the world to us.

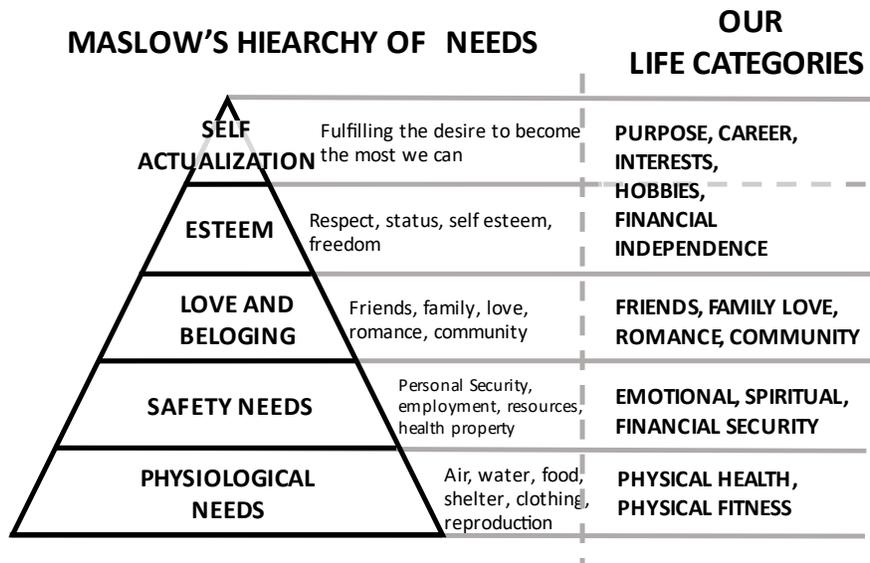
Now, why these categories? Whether you are reviewing Maslow's ideas on human needs, having a conversation with a psychiatrist, reading some of the most beneficial self-help books, or thinking back on your own experiences, you'll realize that the categories we've shared cover areas that, when invested in properly with time, energy, and resources, lead to a healthier life. Also, when we neglect any of these areas, the degradation can lead to stress and dissatisfaction that permeates all areas of life.

MASLOW'S HIEARCHY OF NEEDS



In addition to placing each of our statements of desire that we are currently working on into one of our life areas (described as our “categories” in this exercise), or will be working on in the future, we can also look at Maslow’s hierarchy of needs – which is a rough indicator of how essential something is to human existence – and judge whether we are sufficiently investing in the foundational elements of a healthy life – health, relationships, and financial security – and overly investing, or investing too much too soon in less essential areas – such as luxury, leisure, and advanced career related goals that relate more to esteem, respect, and self-actualization than survival and subsistence.

MASLOW'S HIEARCHY OFNEEDS vs. OUR LIFE CATEGORIES



As a result, looking at our desires by category, and later prioritized, we can confirm that we're on track and prioritizing the most essential elements of a healthy life, or we can identify warning signs that the foundational elements of our lives need bolstering and large share of invested time, energy, and resources.

For example...

Love, relationships, and the social support of a community are lower on Maslow's pyramid of needs, signifying that they are more foundational to life, than the esteem that comes from a high-ranking role within a company, an excessively large paycheck, or a new luxury car. However, in many Western, especially American, lives, pursuit of the esteem is mistakenly prioritized of pursuit of healthy familial relationships, family relationships, and love life.

Financial security, encompassing living without "bad debt" and being able to survive for an extended period on savings, is more foundational and essential in Maslow's hierarchy of needs than esteem related activities such as new flashy purchases or luxury purchases that garner respect. However, in practice, most Westerner's live paycheck to paycheck and spend to keep up appearances instead of saving to improve their financial security position.

Physical health, and the fitness to live a fulfilling life, fall under safety needs and physiological needs, at the very base of the pyramid of needs, showing that health and fitness are foundational pillars for a

healthy life. However, in Western societies (especially the US), health and fitness are commonly deprioritized, in terms of time, energy and resources invested, compared to time and energy invested in jobs and luxury activities. If someone wants a happy, fulfilling life in the long term, it is impossible to expect to achieve that while making investment in physical health a low priority.

The past three examples highlight commonly overlooked issues related to how we prioritize our desires and needs in a way that doesn't align with the steps we would need to take to build a healthy life and especially for building our ideal life.

A NOTE ON HOW TO EXPOSE YOURSELF TO IDEAS OF ALTERNATE APPROACHES TO LIVING

Many of these categories are *familiar* to most people, however most people have not put enough concerted thought and research into understanding these areas to be aware of the best practices for each area. Given that humans have been around for thousands of years living, feeling, socializing, working, and spending, there are absolutely best practices out there – that deliver the best results with the least amount of effort – and we would be remised to plan our lives without considering that advice.

In my early 20's and unable to *design* a truly ideal because I simply didn't know the options of what a life could be simply due to lack of exposure. However, a decade later, after formal and informal education and exposure to a whole world of ideas, people, beliefs, approaches, and options, I was able to more accurately envision and subsequently work towards my ideal life because I more consciously knew what I was then able to choose the elements and options that uniquely suited me.

This recommended reading list for designing your life will expose you to essential, base level ideas (that you can accept or refute) that will help you understand what is available, what you want and need, and what you don't want and need, and you will then be able to act accordingly.

RECOMMENDED READING FOR UNDERSTANDING OPTIONS AND APPROACHES FOR YOUR IDEAL LIFE

Purpose and Money

1. [The Richest Man in Babylon](#) by George S. Classon or the "[Wikipedia Summary of The Richest Man in Babylon](#)"
2. [What Color is Your Parachute: A Guide to a Lifetime of Meaningful Work and Career](#) by Richard N Bolles
3. [Your Money or Your Life: 9 Steps to Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence](#) by Vicki Robbin
4. "[An Introduction to the "Financial Independence and Retiring Early" Movement](#)" by Carlos Grider (<https://abrotherabroad.com/financial-independence-retire-early-fire-movement>)

Personal

5. [Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn
6. [Top 5 Regrets of the Dying: A Life Transformed by the Dearly Departed](#) by Bronnie Ware
7. [The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living](#) by Dalai Lama

People and Social

8. [Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging](#) by Sebastian Junger

Possessions and Locations

9. *The Richest Man in Babylon*
10. [“Is Geoarbitrage for You? The Ultimate Guide to Living a Better Life at a Cheaper Price”](#) (Article) (<https://abrotherabroad.com/geoarbitrage/>)

[Sebastien Junger’s book Tribe](#) makes an excellent case that isolation is the root of a significant number of mental health issues and illnesses in general. This implies that prioritizing family, friends, meaningful social activities, and community is imperative to a healthy, balanced and fulfilling life.

[Vicki Robin’s book Your Money or Your Life](#) does a great job demonstrating how our relationships with money, earning it, and what we purchase drastically affect our quality of life. The book ultimately communicates how financial health, financial position, and financial habits can significantly affect our general satisfaction in life.

[Jon Kabat-Zinn's book Full Catastrophe Living](#) takes a scientific approach to proving how emotional health impacts our happiness and satisfaction and how our physical health and how our lives play out. Thus, we can take away the lesson that emotional health can ruin physical health and prevent you from leading a full, fulfilling life. Alternatively, maintaining good emotional health can enhance your physical health and enable you to lead a fuller, richer life without changing anything beyond your mindset and emotional hygiene-related habits.

And the list of books goes on and on with examples of how each of the “categories” we’ve identified in our lives impacts how fulfilled we feel by the products of investing time, energy, and effort in them.

To maintain health, fulfillment, and satisfaction across our lives, we can't neglect any of the individual areas of our lives. Instead, we must invest time, energy, and resources appropriately into every area, consciously designing and building each area of our ideal lives through our intentional efforts.

During this exercise, keep an eye out for any realizations about overinvesting in areas of life and neglecting others, despite how important (or unimportant) they are to you.

Now...let’s get after it...

EXERCISE: CATEGORIZE YOUR DRIVERS, AND CHECK FOR A BALANCE IN LIFE

Step 2: Place each of your ideal life statements in a category, and ensure every category has at least one ideal life statement

A LITTLE GUIDE TO A HAPPY LIFE

1. Place each of your ideal life statements and passions from step one into one of the categories (financial, social, community, etc.)
2. Check to ensure each category has at least one driver, passion, or need
3. For any categories without a driver, brainstorm and add *at least* one new driver to that category

Now...Go Ahead!!

| Category | Drivers |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Financial | |
| Career & Purpose | |
| Physical Fitness & Health | |
| Spiritual & Emotional | |
| Social | |
| Family | |
| Love & Romance | |
| Community & Giving Back | |
| Possessions | |
| Hobbies & Interests | |

Consider using to the accompanying workbook, downloadable at ABrotherAbroad.com/Little-Guide-to-a-Happy-Life-Workbook/ for free, or order the paperback version ABrotherAbroad.com/A-Little-Guide-to-a-Happy-Life-Workbook-Paperback/

Post-exercise food for thought

For the categories/areas of life that you didn't initially list anything for, consider if this could be a sign that you have been underinvesting time and energy in some areas of your life that are very important to you? How would you like to change this in the future and your ideal life? Or, would you like to maintain this?

Write down the notes from this thought exercise somewhere you can come back to for reference years down the road. If you notice a pattern of a category or an essential need is overlooked, this may be a significant insight for finding balance, contentment, and happiness.

You should have a list of 20-40 statements that describe something about your "ideal life". In part 2 of the exercise for designing your life, we'll take a structured approach to prioritizing your list of drivers and find out what is most important to you in your life. We'll also add some details to your drivers so that we can get a clearer picture of your ideal life.

WHAT IF YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE IDENTIFYING YOUR PASSIONS, DESIRES, AND DRIVERS?

Many people, especially those at the burned-out and discouraging points in their lives, have trouble even thinking about what they're passionate about.

If this is you – if you can't identify a long list of desires and passions right now – don't worry.

Expressing a passion takes energy. The energy you may not have right now, or at least not enough to create a long list of passions and desires.

This doesn't mean you don't have desires and passions. It does mean you will need to be patient to give your passions and desires time to slowly "bubble to the surface," while you listen closely. It means you will need more time to complete this process than you would if you were recharged and energized.

Essentially, if you don't know what you want or what you're passionate about right now, be patient, give it time, and don't worry. Do the same process listed above for the Life Design Exercise, but do it over a few days or weeks.

Keep a notebook or designate a notes app on your phone to continually brainstorm your needs and desires. Anytime an idea, urge or desire surfaces that could describe your ideal life, write it down. When a passion or idea of what you want your life to become comes up, write it down and continue moving. Repeat this until you have a full list of desires.

Actionable Tips for Identifying Your Passions and Desires When You're Drained and Confused

1. Take more time, and be patient while you allow the Life Design Exercise to extend over days and weeks.
2. Keep an eye out for anything in your environment that excites you. Look for inspiration or things that excite you in tv shows, documentaries, books, blogs, and podcasts.
3. Set aside quiet time for mindfulness and reflection. Taking this time to quiet external noise will help you "hear" better what is happening on the inside you and (ideally) make it easier to hear the faint inkling of your needs and desires.

Chapter 7: Step 3 - Rank Your Ideal Life Statements to Understand Your Most Important Needs and Desires



In this chapter, we'll rank your list of passions and drivers created and checked in parts 1 and 2 of our Life Design Exercise to gain a clearer view of your “ideal life” than you’ve ever had before.

By prioritizing your passions, you'll be better able to create a plan for making each of the statements about your ideal life a reality.

Step 3: Rank the drivers and passions from your list

Let's start with your list of Drivers and Passions from the past 2 steps of the exercise and rank them.

1. Start with the entire list of ideal life statements on a single list. Then, write each ideal life statement on a separate slip of paper. Last, line up the slips of paper, with ideal life statements, in order like a list.
2. Compare the ideal life statement at the bottom of your list to the statement above it and ask yourself which is more important in your ideal life? If the statement below is more important to you than the statement above, move that statement up. Repeat this process by comparing the “winner statement” to the next one above it to identify the statement that is more important to you. Continue comparing the preferred statement to the one above until you reach the top of

the list with one statement. Through this process we've discovered that this statement, now at the top, is your highest priority and most desired situation in your envisioned, ideal life. Write that statement in the #1 position in your list below (or on your new sheet) and cross it off on your old sheet. We've successfully identified your #1 priority, and we will continue the process to rank your other priorities.

3. Return to the bottom of the list and compare whichever statement is now on the bottom of the list with the statement above it. Repeat the comparison process from the step above until you have the second most important statement. Write this down on your list as your #2 priority and continue.
4. Once you've taken the bottom statement and compared it all of the statements, from the bottom to the top of the list, repeat the process, transferring the new "top item to the next position down on your new list as your #3 priority.
5. Repeat this process until your list of drivers and passions is ranked from most to least important in your ideal life.

You should then have a list of your passions and drivers in life, prioritized by importance to you – a very powerful list for planning around your needs and desires in life.

Now, go ahead and start the comparison and ranking process

Ranked List of Passions and Drivers

1. _____
2. _____
- ...
20. _____

The most valuable outcome of this exercise is seeing and recognizing the patterns of consistent priorities revealed after doing the process multiple times, in addition to patterns of desires, beliefs, values, and priorities. For example, the strongest desires – in my experience – repeatedly occur in the top 10, over multiple iterations of the exercise and multiple years. Yes, the remainder of your statements have value and should be written down and recorded, but the major insights will be discovered by identifying your top 10 priorities. However, we'll embrace those and simplify the process of understanding your ideal life by focusing on your "top 5."

In the next chapter, we'll take your "top 5" ideal life statements and add more clarity to them, defining the who, what, where, when, and how, so you can more clearly visualize, and more efficiently build, the realized version of these desires, motivations, and drivers into your everyday life.

Chapter 8: (Bonus Exercise) Compare Your Ideal Priorities to Where Your Time, Energy, And Resources Are *Actually* Going

Understanding what your true, ideal priorities (needs and desires) are can be useful, but what about uncovering if your current actions – how you’re actively dedicating your life, and which areas your time and energy and resources are being invested – line up with your needs and desires?

In this exercise, we’ll arrange your list of ideal life statements according to which is receiving the most time, energy, and resources to clearly highlight opportunities for positive change.

Perform the same ranking exercise for the statements we’ve created about your life, but instead of ranking the statements by desire, rank them again by how much of your time, energy, and money is going to that area at this moment.

For example, comparing one statement to the one above it, do you spend more hours per day, money, or mental energy on the things in that statement (such as job, relationship with your spouse, or travel) than the situation and elements in the statement above it? If so, move that statement, which has a situation that currently consumes more of your time or energy, up on the list.

Repeat this process with each statement, ranking by the amount of time, energy, and money a situation in your life consumes, for all of the statements on your list.

When you complete the re-ranking, you should have a list of statements ordered by which statement describes the situation that consumes the most of your time, energy, and money, arranged from most to least (top to bottom).

Also ask yourself if there are other elements (job, relationships, habits like drinking or shopping) that consume more time, energy, and money than any existing item on each of your lists, and note that item in its appropriate position.

Additionally, ask yourself if there is anything else that didn’t make your list of ideal life statements but is still consistently consuming more time, energy, and money than most things on your list of statements. If so, add that to this side list, for the sake of the comparison exercise we are about to do.

Now, compare where your time, energy, and money are going now vs. where they would *ideally* go

Compare your prioritized list of drivers (that we did before) to the list of statements about your life arranged by how much effort, time, energy, and resources they currently consume in your life(that we just completed).

Look at your list of 10 ideal life statements and think about whether your efforts and conscious priorities over the last year (or 5 years) matched up with your priorities, according to your ideal life statements that you prioritized higher on your list.

Additionally, why do they consume that much for the statements describing what consumes the most time, energy, and money in your life? Are these consuming elements of your life-giving back to you in a satisfactory way, and sustainable in your ideal life? If the answer is yes, you have confirmation to keep

doing what you're doing – write that down. If not, you have highlighted something you need to question and can improve – write that down.

What other insights can you glean about imbalances in your life, from comparing the two lists?

For example, is your relationship #1 on your ideal drivers list (prioritized) but your job consumes more time and energy than anything? Is that a situation you are satisfied with?

Or, even worse, does your job consume more time and energy than anything else in your life, but doesn't even make your list of ideal priorities? Is that a situation you are satisfied with and if not, what would the ideal situation be?

There may be justification for the mismatch between ideal priority rankings and where your effort goes. For example, perhaps your job pays extremely well without detracting from your quality of life and empowers the other 10 priorities and gives you enough time to enjoy them as well. Or perhaps, there could be an investment vs. return imbalance with your job, which is the perfect time to reassess.

So, consider doing this bonus exercise to examine how you have prioritized the components of your life in practice (where you've invested your time, energy, and money) compared to how you would ideally prioritize and value them in your real life, based on what you've learned in the exercises we've done?

If there is a mismatch between the priorities of your ideal life and your current life, why do you believe this is? From what you've realized in this part of the exercise, if you could change just one thing now...what would it be? And what advice would you give "future you" a year from now?

As always, write down any great epiphanies in your notebook to reflect on later.

Chapter 9: Step 4 - Add Clarity to Your Top Statements About Your Ideal Life

In this chapter, we'll review each of your top 10 ideal life statements to gain a deeper understanding of each and get a clearer view of what each idea could look like in reality. Then, we'll define who the ideas involve, what exists and is happening in the situation, the time elements involved, and describe the essential logistical elements for making each a reality. Finally, we'll complete this step with a check into why you believe so deeply in and desire the underlying elements in the statement in such a strong way.

By adding a few additional layers of detail to each statement, we will more effectively describe the situation that you will build into your life. This way it will be easier to visualize, plan for, and work towards.

The Process of Adding Clarity to Your Top 10 Drivers

Review each of the top 10 drivers and passion statements on your prioritized list to ensure they each have enough detail to design your life based on them.

Also, ensure they are each based on *your* genuine needs, passions, desires, and motivations (and no one else's). You can add useful detail by asking yourself the following questions about each driver:

1. **What:** What is happening in the scenario in your statement? What are you doing? What are the people around you doing?
2. **Where:** Where is the situation taking place? Is anything about this passion location-dependent? If so, is it in a certain geography (e.g., mountain, beach), living environment (e.g., urban, rural), or specific location (Hollywood, French wine country, Tokyo)? Does a particular location provide certain requirements (e.g., museums, markets, hipsters, conservatives, intellectuals, yuppies, etc.) that uniquely satisfy the desire you aim to satisfy?
3. **Who:** Who else is involved? Specific people? A type of people? How are they connected to you? How do they interact with you?
4. **When:** When does desire occur in the statement, if the underlying desire is time-dependent. At an event or a specific time of year (e.g., comedy festival, Oktoberfest, holidays with family)? At a time of your life (after college, between jobs, et retirement)? What frequency do you experience this passion or driver (daily, weekly, monthly, annually)? How long does it last?

BONUS: ASK WHY...

Why: Why will this driver or passion lead to fulfillment and desire? Is it because the driver fulfills your genuine desires, needs, and beliefs? Or, are you accidentally incorporating societal pressures and unquestioned dogma, or someone else's expectations into your "ideal life?"

Asking why isn't so important to your guide and results as it is important to ensure you create a guide that is true to your core needs. Additionally, you can learn more about yourself and neglected needs and desires by asking "why?" If the "why" behind a driver relates to your contentment and happiness, keep it and work to understand it. If there is an external motivation (e.g., expectations from someone else)

question heavily whether it should be on *your* list and, consequently, whether that driver and the underlying goal is worth dedicating your life to.

If you realize that something is on your list because “it should be”, I recommend scrapping it immediately. Write it down in your notebook, annotate it in your final notes, but do not prioritize it in your life.

Our ultimate goal is to build an ideal life for the unchanging part of *you* – not build a life to satisfy the wants, needs, desires, and beliefs of others.

Without a doubt, the question of "why" is the most important question to ask for each statement about your ideal life. Strive to achieve an end simply to please someone else and you won't be nearly as happy or fulfilled as you would be if you had dedicated the expended time, energy, and resources to a passion that *genuinely* drives and fuels you.

Examples of adding clarity to an ideal life statement by asking “What? Where? Who? When?”

Let's walk through adding clarity to one of my Ideal life statements by asking these questions and adding clarity.

My Ideal Life Statement: I travel internationally for pleasure and fulfilling purposes a few months each year.

- What (What am I doing): Traveling to countries to explore the architecture, enjoy food and wine, learn from the museums, and meet new, interesting, and likeminded people
- Where (Where are the actions taking place): Throughout countries in Europe, South America, and Southeast Asia,
- Who (Who is involved?): My partner (girlfriend or wife) traveling with me, and backpackers and other travelers I meet and share experiences with along the way
- When (When does this take place and for how long): Each trip is 3 to 6 months long and takes place in the spring, summer, or fall season of each region, with ~1 month of travel per country visited

Bonus Check: Why?

- Why? (Why do you want this thing?): I want to travel because I've always been excited about and enjoyed the experience of wandering a new place, exploring new foods and drink, meeting other travelers, as well as learning about other places and cultures firsthand.

Note: The answer to the "why" question likely will not make it into your ideal life statement, but is simply a check to make sure this desire is rooted in your desires and no one else's. If the answer relates directly to your desires, that is a great sign, keep going with this idea. If the answer appears to relate to something you want to be or pursue for someone else, reconsider if it is truly worth the effort and if that aim should truly be a priority in your life

My Old Ideal Life Statement

I travel internationally for pleasure and fulfilling purposes 3 to 6 months each year.

My Ideal Life Statement with Added Clarity:

Every year, I travel for 3 to 6 months with my partner through Europe, South America, or Southeast Asia spending at least a month in each country to enjoy the Spring, Summer, or Fall, while I explore architecture, museums, food, wine, and beer experiences and festivals, and meet likeminded people and travelers along the way.

Boom!

This ideal life statement with details effectively captures and details my desire (and need) for travel as a part of my life and details exactly what I will build around and work towards.

Now, it's your turn!

Step 2: List the full statements on your passions and drivers, questioning *what, where, who, and why* along the way

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
- _____
10. _____

Chapter 10: Step 5 – Create Actionable Steps for Each Statement and Create a Plan Based on Your Passions to Make Your Ideal Life a Reality



In step 5, we'll take your top 5 passions and drivers and identify small, achievable actions we can start on to make the bigger goals in your life a reality.

We have a great, detailed list of statements about your ideal life that tells us what your ideal life looks like, but it doesn't do much good just sitting on paper.

So, now let's start making it a reality by figuring out what small steps to do first and how to do them.

We've listed your ideal life statements, discovered how you would ideally prioritize them, and added essential clarity. Now, we're going to create manageable, actionable tasks that we can use to develop guidelines and instructions for the future. Our goal is to create a guide, a plan, and somewhat of a map toward the ideal life *for you*.

Any good guideline or plan directs your actions toward a specific outcome, so we'll take that into account by moving one step closer to making *your* guide to a happy life.

Step 1: List achievable tasks for your top 5 drivers and passions

For each ideal life statement in your “Top 5”, list 3, achievable tasks you can accomplish or at least start accomplishing in the next 6 months that will put you one step closer to fully realizing that driver in your life, putting you one step closer to your ideal life.

For each statement about your ideal life, at a minimum identify one task in each of the following areas that can contribute to making your statement about your ideal life a reality

- Short term task, achievable in a day or a single activity
- Habit, an activity that can be done routinely or repetitively to push you towards your goal
- Long term task, that will take multiple steps and a longer period to complete, but we can start in the coming 6 months

Think small at first - keep the chosen tasks achievable and manageable. Focusing on small tasks makes completing them more likely, and the low effort required allows you to diversify the tasks and goals on your plate at any given time

Aim for tasks wherein the act of completing the task delivers a boost of motivation

Ideas to consider when deciding your tasks

Research tasks: What information can you gather and analyze to support a decision moving towards your ideal?

Habits to develop: What habit can you cultivate that each time performed pushes you closer to the state described in your ideal life statement?

Relationships to develop and improve: What relationships can you cultivate (and how) that will help make your statement about your ideal life a reality?

EXAMPLE OF DESCRIBING ACTIONABLE STEPS

Here is the example ideal life statement we created together and added detail to:

Every year, I travel for 3 to 6 months with my partner through Europe, South America, or Southeast Asia spending at least a month in each country to enjoy their Spring, Summer, or Fall, while I explore architecture, museums, food, wine, and beer experiences and festivals, and meet likeminded people and travelers along the way.

Now, here are some examples of short-term tasks, long term tasks, and habits I could list as steps to complete to make my ideal statement a potential reality

- Example Short Term Task: Make a list of countries and an itinerary for the first 2 years of my seasonal trips
- Example Short Term Task: Make a draft budget of how much money I will need for the travel periods of my first two years.
- Example Short Term Task: Make a plan for saving that specifies an amount to save each year or month, listing sacrifices I could make to save, and other potential steps to save the money.

- Example Habit: Setup an auto savings plan to put a specific monthly amount so that I am automatically saving my target amount
- Example Habit: Make coffee daily at home, instead of going to a café, to save money
- Example Habit: Go out one less night a week, eating and drinking, and do so at home to save money
- Example Long Term Task: Learn a new marketable skill that I could potentially do while traveling to earn money

IF YOU CAN'T THINK OF TASKS TO REACH A GOAL, CONSIDER CONTACTING AN EXPERT.

With the many areas of life that can cause issues, some times our routines might have gotten us into a hole that its rather difficult to escape on our own. This can be particularly true in the areas of finances, love, emotional health. The first step, in identifying prudent, actionable steps when they don't come to mind first, is education. Look for a good book on the topic, written by a formally educated and certified professional that is well reviewed for the results its readers achieved.

If books and self-education aren't enough, no worries. Go for *professional* help, aiming for someone with extensive education in the field *and* a current, respected certification. For instance, a licensed personal financial planner, a licensed clinical therapist (for emotional health, love, and relationship issues), a certified dietician or nutritionist, or a certified personal trainer.

Please *do not* settle for a "coach," do not settle for an unlicensed "expert," and do not take advice from anyone that does not have years of experience delivering results, no matter how strong their hype is.

WHY DO WE NEED TO DEFINE THE ACTIONABLE STEPS

Identifying and defining what we can do that will lead to the desired outcome is the first step to creating our guide of what to do to reach our ideal life.

Note that we can always change our guide and target actions later, as we grow, learn, and our desired needs change.

Just like on a road trip to reach a defined destination – we start with a plan based on our destination, where we're starting from, and what we know about the path in between. However, once we start the journey, learn more about the ease of the path, the unexpected traffic, the environment we're driving through, unforeseen obstacles, and everything else about our "planned" path, we adapt.

But in our process, and the analogy, the first step is to come to begin our journey by creating our ideal route, based on what we know at the time, with planned turns actions necessary to maintain a specific path (analogous to the actions we'll define now).

Additionally, clearly defining potential tasks becoming aware of their importance puts them squarely in our vision, so that when we see an opportunity to do something low effort and convenient which will ultimately lead to our long-term goal, we do it.

You may ask, "why do we want this?"

In this, we are leveraging the common occurrence known as the “Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon” or the “Frequency Illusion.”

Allow me to explain...

Right now, you likely pass yellow cars constantly and may not be aware of how many cars you pass are *actually* yellow. You may not know. You may just not care. However, suppose I told you there is a yellow car in your town carrying one million dollars that could be yours. In that case, you'd suddenly seem to see yellow cars everywhere, noticing every potential opportunity to snag that one million dollar jackpot.

This all takes place because of the phenomenon known as the “frequency illusion.”

According to the “Frequency Illusion,” once you become aware of or learn a new word, phrase, or idea you are likely to notice it again within 24 hours. You may *feel* that the newly learned element is everywhere, but you are just experiencing increased awareness.

This phenomenon is exactly what we will ultimately leverage for our aims because identifying actionable, worthwhile tasks works the same way.

Once you know the specific types of opportunities that could lead you to your \$1 million yellow cars (or your \$1 million life), you'll notice those opportunities everywhere. This new awareness will make you more apt to seize those opportunities and act in a way that pushes you closer to your ideal life and to do what will lead you more efficiently to that ideal life. Knowing what to do and being alert for opportunities to do it, you will make the process of action – in line with your plan – easier.

We are defining actionable steps to 1) put the opportunities more squarely in your vision and 2) make it more likely that you will do each task.

That’s it.

So, let’s start.

Aim for one task for each driver or passion to be an easily accomplishable task, one to be a habit to develop, and one to be a long term project

Now...get after it!

Top 5 Drivers with 3 tasks

| Driver #1 | <i>Short Term, Long Term, or Habit?</i> | |
|-----------|---|--|
| Task 1 | | |
| Task 2 | | |
| Task 3 | | |
| Task 4 | | |
| Task 5 | | |

Repeat this process for all of your top 5 Drivers.

Once you've completed defining your tasks, we will start piecing together these insights to create the actionable steps in your guide. In order not to overwhelm you, we'll still make our plan to eat this "elephant" (the elephant being the process of making your ideal life a reality) in small strategic bites, with only a few "bites" (steps) on our plate at any given time. Once each step is completed, we'll return to our guide and add a new step to our plan.

NEXT, DECIDE WHICH THREE TASKS YOU WILL FOCUS ON TO START WITH, INCLUDING 1 SHORT-TERM TASK, 1 LONG-TERM TASK, AND 1 HABIT.

Now that you have a very clear list of options for things you can do to make your ideal life (based on your statements) a reality, let's pick which three actions you will focus on first – which three bites of the elephant you will eat.

Pick one short-term task, one long-term task, and one habit to start from any of your top 5 ideal life statements tasks we created above.

“COMPLETION CRITERIA FOR EACH TASK”

Consider a task completed in each of our time domains when you've done the following:

- Short-term task: The task is completed.
- Long term task: The task is completed, or the activity of working towards progress has become a habit
- Habit: You have been executing the habit daily for at least 21 days, the habit feels comfortable, and you can consistently continue the habit with minimal effort, and while developing additional habits

AS YOU COMPLETE YOUR TASKS OF FOCUS, REPLACE THEM WITH NEW ONES

Once a short-term or long-term task is completed, or a habit is ingrained, mark that task off in your notes (your guide) as completed. Then, select a new task in the same time domain (short term, long term, habit) to focus on as a replacement task.

WHAT IF YOU RUN OUT OF SHORT-TERM TASKS, LONG-TERM TASKS, OR HABITS? EITHER REDO THE LIFE DESIGN EXERCISE OR ADD ADDITIONAL SHORT TERM, LONG TERM, OR TASKS FOR YOUR NEXT 5 IDEAL LIFE STATEMENTS,

Because any plan requires both short-burst activities, larger activities, and ingrained changes (habits) to improve efficiency, we constantly want to be in the process of working on or completing at least one short-term task, one long-term task, and ingraining one habit at all times. If you ever reach a point where you've completed all of your tasks in a time category (short term, long term, or habit), then first off congratulations! Second, reassess to find another “next step” that will move you closer to your ideal life.

Reflect On What You've Learned During the Exercise, Record the Insights and Worthwhile Points to Remember

You've put in a lot of work and uncovered lots of insights, but you might not be aware of those insights and latent realizations, yet. To maximize the benefits of this exercise (this round of the Life Design Exercise), let's take a moment to reflect on what you've discovered. We want to glean as much advice as possible for you over the next six months – between now and your next Life Design Exercise iteration.

Sit down with a loose piece of paper and ask yourself the following questions, noting any epiphanies, insights, or “aha!” moments

- What insights did you uncover about your fulfilled and unfulfilled needs in this exercise?
- What insights did you uncover about your fulfilled and unfulfilled desires in this exercise?
- What insights did you uncover about where your resources are going – time, energy, and money – relative to where you want and need your time, energy, and money to go to make your ideal life a reality?
- What key points from this exercise do you want to make *sure* you remember over the next 6 months?
- What risks and pitfalls did you realize you are and will be vulnerable to in the next 6 months? What advice do you want to give your future self in handling those issues *if* they arise?
- What compliments or encouraging words do you need to hear, to stay on *your* course over the next 6 months, that you are not likely to hear anywhere else?
- What did you think you needed in life but realized you actually didn't in this exercise?
- What did you believe you were passionate about but actually weren't?
- What did you forget to account for?
- What things are you doing that have you more excited than you anticipated?

All of these notes and answers will be gold the next time you do this exercise - because just like you, your idea of your ideal life will change over time, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly. Having this sheet will help you see your changes and incorporate them into the future

1. Keep these pages as a reference to look back on and remind you what in life is truly worth focusing on

Chapter 11: Step 6 – Save Your Results in an Organized Way to Create Your “Little Guide to A Happy Life, Written By You” For Your Next 6 Months



You've put a lot of effort into doing this exercise, uncovering insights about your needs and desires and what steps to take next. Now we will walk through recording this information in an organized, easily accessible way.

For this part, I highly recommend keeping a high quality, leather-bound journal that will age well and be nice to open years down the road.

Once you have your journal of choice, let's get started.

Step 1: Record your results in a way that makes them easy to refer back to

1. On the first page, list your top 5 statements about your ideal life in order of priority from 1 to 5, with details for clarity, and write the actionable steps you've decided to take underneath each statement.
2. On the second page, list the other 15 to 35 statements about your ideal life, in order of priority as you ranked them before.
3. On the third page, list the first three "tasks" you will be focusing on at the start of the 6 months. Note that this will be a living list as you check tasks as marked, and return to add your next task. Ultimately, this list will serve as a testament to your efforts and progress.
4. On the fourth page, write advice to yourself and key points to remember over the next 6 months based on your insights and realizations during this exercise. For example, list any insights you want to keep top of mind, compliments for yourself, warnings of pitfalls and risks to be aware of, or statements, compliments, and ideas that will serve you well to remember in rough times.

A LITTLE GUIDE TO A HAPPY LIFE

On the fifth page, keep it blank for now. Over the next six months, as you refer back to this lifestyle design and your drivers, note your insights and realizations on this sheet.

Chapter 12: What Next?

Review your “Little Guide” once a month, continue your tasks, record insights as they come.

You now have completed the Life Design Exercise and, more importantly, have a little guide to *your* version of a happy life, written 100% by you. So, what is next?

With the steps you've decided, executing your plan will lead you closer to your happy life. Along the way, refer back to your guide to remind yourself of your path, and read your guide and advice to yourself as inspiration and support.

Let's summarize how we'll proceed...

1. Review your “Little Guide to a Happy Life” and your guide once monthly (at least), especially whenever you're feeling a little lost in the world.
2. Whenever you complete a task, follow up with your plan to check it off and choose a new task to work on next.
3. Once a month, review your plan to keep what you want to focus on the top of mind.
4. Revisit the progress you've made in the last month whenever you review your past results. Ask yourself, what achievements motivate, enliven, and inspire you most? What accomplishments were anti-climactic on the list? Whatever you realize, note your insights and adjust your plan accordingly to consistently invest in whatever drives you.
5. When reviewing your guide, once per month, think about what you've learned and how you're feeling, and note those *additional* insights on the blank page in your life guide.

Redo the Life Design Exercise once every 6 months

Every 6 months, redo the Life Design Exercise from scratch – being sure not to look at your past results for at least one month before redoing this exercise.

We want to start the Life Design Exercise fresh to see if we can uncover as many new insights as possible and see to your core with as little influence (from the past, temporary version of you) as possible. The ideal life and lifestyle for you will change as you grow, so re-examining your drivers from scratch will keep you on track for your ideal life

As you follow your plan, which is comprised of your tasks and reviewing your notes regularly, you will naturally focus more on things that have deep meaning for you and have more outcomes related to your ideal life. As a result, your priorities will change. You will need to adjust your plan (and consciously adjust your priorities) accordingly – this is one more reason why we redo the Life Design Exercise to continually adapt your plan for how you are growing.

Additionally, routinely revisiting your results and your “Little Guide to a Happy Life” will keep you aware of whether you are investing in a balanced way across your life and in a diversified way to hedge against life's unavoidable pitfalls.

Additionally, by referring back to your guide, filled with your Life Design results revealing your values and principles, you will be more easily able to pinpoint depleting responsibilities, relationships, and objects in your life that you come across so that you can intentionally decrease investment and instead reinvest in areas that have proven to fulfill you.

You now have a living guide to your version of a happy life, that embodies the relationships, activities, places, and things that drive, motivate, and satisfy you, along with a plan to make them a reality in your life, and a plan to follow up and keep the progress going.

Congrats!

Welcome to the start of your ideal life.