

BRAINSTORM

Workbook

Master this creative essential
to discover your best life



with Yvonne Lines from www.SmartLife.tips

Use design-thinking to create the next stage of your life.

Thinking ahead 3-5 years is important. Design-thinking can help us expand possibilities. Designers brainstorm for a large quantity of diverse options because more ideas can produce better and more innovative results. The key is to not edit ourselves at the brainstorm stage, just write non-stop without blocking anything that seems too far fetched.

For those of us considering a shake up to our work life, here are some thoughts to get us started... What would we do if money were no issue? How could we make a positive social impact? What value can we add to the world? What countries/cities would we like to work in? What skills do we have that could make us lots of money? Are there any companies we'd like to work with? What if we started our own business? Is there an evolution to what we currently do? What jobs are stress-free? Can an interest or hobby bring us an income?

This brainstorm can continue over several days and it's a good idea to ask others for their ideas as well. Once we have a large quantity, consider what jumps out, brings us joy and energizes us. Now we can narrow it down and consider some details about how to make it possible. Be continually iterative. Every time you hit a roadblock on how to make it happen, tweak the direction and revise the path.

Take action: Test drive a few of your ideas. Figure out how to experiment and get some experience in your areas of interest, so you know what parts of it you like and don't like. You have to actually do it to know yourself well enough in that situation, and be able to understand the details and nuances.

Inspired by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans' book, *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*.

Notes



Our comfort zone is no longer safe.

Comfort zone and safety zone used to be interchangeable terms, or it was thought that our comfort zone was contained within our safety zone. Things that we do repetitively, without challenging ourselves to create something new, are comfortable to us. They feel safe because historically we've been fine doing them.

Maybe we go into work, do our 8 hours, collect a paycheck, and do it again. Or we're expecting to have a similar family life as we had growing up, assuming that if it worked for our parents, it will work for us. Or we think we're going to retire in our mid-60s and everything will magically be fine.

But this comfort is a false sense of security. We're now living in a world where we have global influence, artificial intelligence, less privacy, and robots that will replace jobs and disrupt industries. We need to be more than just competent, and do more than just follow the current norm. We need to have vision, and offer unique value.

If we've been stuck within our comfort zone, it's likely we've developed mental boundaries and limitations about what we can do, so stepping outside of that will make us feel vulnerable. As long as we find, and stay within our new safety zone, avoiding things that will actually physically, emotionally, and spiritually harm us, we'll be fine.

Take action: Create something, anything, and share it. Here are a few ideas: If you love to write, start a blog. Love cooking? Try catering a friend's event. Have a good voice? Sing in public. The point is to create something new, or put your spin on something existing, and put it out into the world. Remember, you're not contributing to others until you share it.

Inspired by Seth Godin's book, *The Icarus Deception: How High Will You Fly?*

Notes



Apply our strengths to more areas in our life.

Stellar at the office, but struggling at home? Disciplined with exercise, but inconsistent with nutrition? Our weaknesses easily show up in several areas of our life, so there's no reason our strengths can't do the same.

We can start by identifying what areas we're struggling with, for example; relationships, communication, dedication to a goal, or perhaps eating well. Then recognize what our strengths are, and in what areas we are getting desired results, and why. How are we achieving in the areas that are going well? If we are good at telling great stories to our kids at bedtime – we can dissect the key story elements and use those same skills to pitch a client. Maybe we are a supportive team member at work, chipping in when someone needs help, and contributing our skills with enthusiasm. Surely then, we can find a suitable way to be helpful at home and invest the time to help develop our family members. Ever done a survey online to help a company understand your needs better? We can also give surveys to our loved ones, asking them to rate us on important relationship needs and get feedback on how we can improve. And, if we can figure out what works well in our relationship with our best friend – maybe it's openness and trust – we can bring that to other relationships that are missing those characteristics.

Take action: To apply your strengths, you first need to know your strengths. Ask for opinions from people who both know you well in various areas of your life, and who you've barely met. Pay attention to compliments you get, they are likely unique to you. Grab a list of characteristics online and do a self evaluation. Recall situations that have energized you and figure out what charged you up. With these exercises, you should see some key personal strengths emerging. Now double down on them.

Inspired by *The Art of Charm's* podcast interview with Olaniyi Sobomehin.

Notes



Mindset tip

Practice how we want to feel in the future, now.

We get good at activities that we practice and that's true of our feelings as well. In the same way that we can learn a physical skill until we can perform it easily, we can practice an emotion to the point that it becomes an effortless state of being.

Many of us don't think of an emotion, such as happiness, as something we need to practice, instead we think it's just a byproduct of environmental factors. For instance, we think we will be happy if we can just get through the week and make it to the weekend. Or we'll feel more balanced once we finish our current project and have more time. But here's the problem with those thoughts: if we practice, 'overwhelm and misery' more often than we enjoy 'happiness and balance', then we get really good at 'overwhelm and misery'. When we get to the weekend or the end of a project, it's very hard to switch gears and suddenly enjoy the good stuff.

If we want to get better at 'happiness and balance', we need to start mastering them now, not once we get through something, but now. This way we'll be able to enjoy those emotions as a present state of being, rather than a future goal.

Take action: Trying to get through some tough stuff and putting off being happy till you're done? Try finding small victories along the way that you can be proud of, and enjoy them. Interject moments of balance, even as small as taking a walk. Keep everything in perspective and appreciate what is good. Find joy there.

Inspired by T. Harv Eker's book, *SpeedWealth: How to Stop Earning a Living and Start Creating Wealth*.

Notes



Thought starters

BRAINSTORM EXPERIMENTS

To keep ideas flowing, try the following techniques...

Experiment #1: Bring in some resources. The internet is fantastic. Try searching for terms such as bucket list, career change, charitable ideas, etc. Or, ask a friend who knows you well and ask them for ideas.

Experiment #2: Here's a game... Give yourself one minute to write as many ideas as possible. Keep your pen moving the whole time. See if you can get 10 in a minute.

Experiment #3: Talk it out. Grab any recording device, such as your smartphone, and say your ideas instead of writing them. If putting your thoughts on paper feels like too much of a commitment, then just talk about them and record it.

BRAINSTORM TOPICS

Sometimes focusing on different topics can trigger new thoughts. Use the worksheet on the next page, and try brainstorming ideas based around various topics, such as...

- Something wild, ex: space travel
- Adventurous, ex: climb a mountain
- Quiet, ex: slow cup of coffee every morning
- Techy, ex: virtual reality
- Travel, ex: cities, countries, events
- Wellness, ex: learn to meditate
- Charitable, what causes are important to you?
- Animal, ex: get a dog
- Activity or Sports, ex: hit a home-run
- Food, ex: start a pie business
- Hobby, ex: photography or painting
- Our four areas of focus:
 - Health
 - Relationships
 - Spirituality
 - Work and Finance



LIFESTYLE BRAINSTORM

Keep your values in mind as you come up with 100 things you'd like to do in the next 10 years. Anything from making ice cream, to climbing Mount Everest, or learning to swim, or starting a business. Don't edit yourself – boring ideas are great and so are the crazy ones. Use the internet or other people to help inspire you. Once you reach 100, highlight about 10 that you'd like to make happen in some capacity, and write them on the next page.

1. _____	26. _____	51. _____	76. _____
2. _____	27. _____	52. _____	77. _____
3. _____	28. _____	53. _____	78. _____
4. _____	29. _____	54. _____	79. _____
5. _____	30. _____	55. _____	80. _____
6. _____	31. _____	56. _____	81. _____
7. _____	32. _____	57. _____	82. _____
8. _____	33. _____	58. _____	83. _____
9. _____	34. _____	59. _____	84. _____
10. _____	35. _____	60. _____	85. _____
11. _____	36. _____	61. _____	86. _____
12. _____	37. _____	62. _____	87. _____
13. _____	38. _____	63. _____	88. _____
14. _____	39. _____	64. _____	89. _____
15. _____	40. _____	65. _____	90. _____
16. _____	41. _____	66. _____	91. _____
17. _____	42. _____	67. _____	92. _____
18. _____	43. _____	68. _____	93. _____
19. _____	44. _____	69. _____	94. _____
20. _____	45. _____	70. _____	95. _____
21. _____	46. _____	71. _____	96. _____
22. _____	47. _____	72. _____	97. _____
23. _____	48. _____	73. _____	98. _____
24. _____	49. _____	74. _____	99. _____
25. _____	50. _____	75. _____	100. _____



LIFESTYLE BRAINSTORM REFINE

List about 10 ideas that stood out to you as something you'd really like to do. Did a theme reveal itself? A life of adventure? Simple pleasures? An extension of what you're already doing? Or maybe some meaningful work? Next, refine the thoughts. Ensure all the ideas are in line with your values and then try combining them, further narrowing them down, or adding to the list. Don't worry yet about how to make it happen, this is your dream life. Next, highlight a few favorite ideas.

1. _____

Refine: _____

2. _____

Refine: _____

3. _____

Refine: _____

4. _____

Refine: _____

5. _____

Refine: _____

6. _____

Refine: _____

7. _____

Refine: _____

8. _____

Refine: _____

9. _____

Refine: _____

10. _____

Refine: _____



Innovate by asking: why, why not, what if, and how.

Five year olds ask a lot of questions, but as we grow up, we generally skip this step and jump to finding answers or solutions immediately. However, that child-like inquiry is important. Asking the right questions can be far more useful when looking to go beyond the norm and be innovative. Asking questions is the way deep thinkers tackle problems and it works well for daily life as well. If we ask the right questions, it leads to an extensive analysis and a better understanding of an issue, then sets up a challenge for us, a puzzle to solve.

So what are the right questions to ask? The ones that stir up interest and inspire us to think differently. "Why" questions are a good start and something we're familiar with from preschoolers. First, start questioning the seemingly obvious, and then question the answers that come from that process. Repeat this "why" questioning, going deeper each time, until you get to something interesting. Then move to "why not" questions to start exploring options and possibilities. Next, "what if" questions can stimulate thinking in combinations, mixing ideas together to get the best of each. Lastly, draw on the exploration already done with the previous three questions, and start action by going into "how can we do things better" inquiries. This four-part method can be used for simple daily issues, or complex problems that take years to solve.

Take action: For your next problem to solve, make a game of it and jot down as many questions as you possibly can. Don't edit, just let it flow fast and see if you can get to 20. That's about five for each of the questions.

Inspired by Warren Berger's book, *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*.

Notes



Mindset tip

Make meaning, as well as money.

Money is very important in our society. In fact, a significant way to avoid increasing the poor population, is by making sure we can support ourself, and our family.

We're here to enrich this world and since most people spend such a high percentage of their lives working, we should be spending that time creating value and meaning. Can we shift our work lives towards *being* more, rather than *having* more? Can we find a purpose greater than ourselves in what we do? When we leave our work, will we be leaving a legacy that we'll be proud of?

Good companies and good workers focus on profit. Great companies and workers give a valuable service to their customers, and profit by enriching lives. Happiness and financial success is a byproduct of building value in this world. This servitude approach can be applied to an enormous range of jobs – from cleaning city streets, to having meaningful conversations with colleagues, or creating a product that helps villages get clean water. It's particularly important for people in positions of great influence to ensure that they are building a legacy of leaving the world a better place. If it's a privilege to work with you, the financial success will come too.

Take action: What value are you creating for people through your work? Try focusing on how you can increase that value until you feel a greater pride in your worth and others are noticing too. Once you're giving more and enriching people's lives, then ensure the financial reward is on par with your work's value. Be generous with your giving, and be sure to receive freely as well.

Inspired by Robin Sharma's book, *The Saint, the Surfer, and the CEO: A Remarkable Story about Living your Heart's Desires.*

Notes



Planner

Why we do something, is the core of what we do. Choices and actions should connect with what's meaningful to you and build on each other to create a journey that you love.

MONTH:

Schedule time to:

1. Try something new that excites you.
2. Adapt a strength to a new skill.
3. Solve a problem by asking great questions.
4. Increase the value you put into this world.
5. Make time for an activity that will bring joy.

MONDAY <i>day:</i>	THURSDAY <i>day:</i>
TUESDAY <i>day:</i>	FRIDAY <i>day:</i>
WEDNESDAY <i>day:</i>	SATURDAY <i>day:</i>
WEDNESDAY <i>day:</i>	SUNDAY <i>day:</i>