

DESIGN YOUR WESTERN

A Digital Career Workbook

WELCOME TO WESTERN LIFE DESIGN



Chapter Overview

To navigate to a specific section, click on the chapter title below:

0

Welcome To Western Life Design

1

There's A Goose In Your Path

2

Flying North! Which Way Is North?

3

Choosing The Right Spoke Bagel

4

Clipped Wings?!

5

Design Your Western

6

Testing Out The Thames

7

Spoke Chats

8

Choosing Your Golden Egg

9

Getting Back In the Saddle

10

Your Mustang Gang

11

Time to Fly



Howdy Mustangs!

Welcome to the **Design Your Western Digital Career Workbook**. We've created this workbook to encourage and inspire you to go about the rest of your academic career following Western Life Design principles! What are Western Life Design principles? Be patient, we'll get there. As you go through the chapters of this workbook, you will learn about many different ways and tools to design your life in order for it to better fit the kind of future and life that you want to live.

"But what do the Western Life Design principles entail?" we hear you asking. Really couldn't wait a couple more paragraphs, huh? Well, if you must know, these principles are based on the idea of thinking like a designer. Thinking like a designer means approaching problem areas within your life with a specific frame of mind or "mindset". An example of a problem area within your life could be grappling with answering the big question "What do I want to do with the rest of my life?". Trying to answer such a question is daunting and requires a lot of thought and "doing" to try and figure out the answer. As you seek to answer such a big question it can be natural to get "stuck". Getting "unstuck" and learning about different tools and approaches to answering this type of question is what this Design Your Western Digital Career Workbook is all about! Let's get unstuck together and design the life that you want to live!

ACTIVITY

Design Your Life Mindset

The essence of a Design Your Life mindset can be illustrated through a quick activity. To complete the activity, we ask that you answer two questions:

- 1 What stresses you out in life?
- 2 What would you like to gain from life?

When this exercise is completed by university students, typically we find that what students want to gain from life is linked very closely to what brings them stress. For example, students may say that they would like to obtain a stable career however a significant stressor is school and developing the skills necessary for career stability.

Evidently, there is something going on here...why should something that is viewed positively in life also cause you such stress?? Throughout this workbook, we hope to teach you different ways of eliminating the stress that often accompanies activities for planning your future. But before we get into those, we need to foster (and have you embrace using) different “mindsets”.

Your Life Mindset



WHAT STRESSES YOU OUT?

Write a few examples below:

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO GAIN?

Write a few examples below:

We'd like for you to go into this workbook with these mindsets in mind [see what we did there?]. Don't worry there aren't that many mindsets we are going to ask you to embrace. The 5 mindsets are: **Curiosity**, **Bias to Action**, **Reframing**, **Awareness**, and **Radical Collaboration**.

CURIOSITY

Is your best friend (even if your pet might hate it). Throughout this workbook, you will be encouraged to be curious and ask questions to help you not only get “unstuck”, but also design your life to better fit you and your academic and professional paths. When you ask questions, you'll be able to get a better understanding of problems, and explore different solutions using life design principles that will be discussed in future chapters.

REFRAMING

Is changing the way you look at things. We'll be asking you to do this a lot during this workbook. Being open to seeing things in a new and different perspective is a key part of Western Life Design!

RADICAL COLLABORATION

Is quite a bit of fun. We want you to think of and involve others in your life design! Now, we're not telling you to go outside and ask strangers to read this book...although that would be fascinating to watch. We just want you to consider how other people play a part in your life design, and how you might possibly play a part in theirs! Friends, family, anyone!

BIAS TO ACTION

Is... doing stuff. Doing! Living! Breathing. It's not enough to just explore curiosity in your head, you have to get out there and try things! This will involve a super special word that we're going to use a million and one (maybe actually like 37) times during this workbook, but believe us when we say it's quite an important practice! “What word?? What are you talking about???” Well, glad you're curious but please, more patience. (Prototyping, the word is prototyping. You're welcome.)

AWARENESS

Is hopefully one of the easiest mindsets to grasp and one you probably have already! We just want you to be reflective and consistently thinking of your current situation. We'll ask you to think of what life could be like, and for that we need you to be aware of what life is like now!



TIP

Recognizing where you are within your academic, career and personal life is important to problem solving and therefore to designing your life. Remember it is **never** too late or too early to begin designing a life that works for you.

A Note of Recognition (and thanks)

The Careers & Experience office would like to take the opportunity to recognize and appreciate the creators of the foundational principles and frameworks upon which this Western Life Design career workbook has been crafted.

Life Design was originally introduced by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans at Stanford University's d.school (Design School) in Stanford, California, U.S.A. It became widespread with the publication of their book, 'Designing Your Life' in 2016.



You can use design thinking to create a life that is meaningful, joyful, and fulfilling. It doesn't matter who you are or were – you can use the same thinking that created the most amazing technology, products, and spaces to design your career and your life.”

From Bill Burnett & Dave Evans' book 'Designing Your Life'

Life Design harnesses design thinking methods to tackle key questions and major decisions surrounding key facets of a person's life including education, career, and overall life's ambitions and purpose.

Life Design serves as one of the foundational philosophies that informs the work and the approach Western's Careers & Experience department takes in supporting students in all Faculties and programs, both at Western and the Affiliate Colleges (Brescia, Huron & King's).

We would also like to express our tremendous appreciation to Stephanie Hayne Beatty (Director – Leadership & Learning, Western Student Experience), Nicole Campbell (Director – Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences and Associate Professor within the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry), and the Parr Centre for Thriving at Western for their vision and leadership in bringing this workbook to life. Stephanie & Nicole conceived of developing a practical, innovative 'Western' resource to provide all Mustangs with tangible strategies to navigate the big question every student finds themselves reflecting upon during their academic journey: "What do I want to do with my life?". The Parr Centre's funding and support of Stephanie & Nicole's proposal has allowed us to design, develop and raise awareness of the very workbook you have in front of you.

A VERY special thanks to Kaylee DeRooy, the designer of the Design Your Western Digital Career Workbook, and our amazing team of Western Life Design Resource Curators (Jenna Dart, Hayden Brennen, and Emmanuel Akanbi) who worked tirelessly to develop this workbook utilizing a truly (Western) student lens. We believe their ability to uniquely "Westernize" the Life Design information, tools, activities and examples for our purple and proud campus community has resulted in a workbook that we hope will not only educate and enlighten you, but engage and energize you as well (which you'll see, if you keep reading, will allow you to enter into a state of "flow", a valuable state to be in as you design the life you WANT to live.) We look forward to sharing more about Jenna, Hayden, and Emmanuel's experiences throughout the workbook – for now, it's time for you to start designing!

**THE WESTERN UNIVERSITY
LIFE DESIGN COLLECTIVE**



HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

How you use this workbook is completely up to you! Although it may be framed like a self-help book, we have designed it to be a starting point for ideas. Our goal is for you to have a less stressful time here at Western! Whether you're starting this workbook during your first year or your fifth, we want you to be able to incorporate Western Life Design into your future and help you figure out a life path that suits you.

This workbook is designed to be read in a linear format, meaning it's optimal to start at Chapter 1 and make your way through the workbook in sequential fashion. Feel free to take as much time as you need to work through each chapter of the book. In addition, we have included quite a few activities and some incentives for completing certain activities —keep an eye out for those!



CHAPTER 01

There's A Goose In Your Path

IN THIS CHAPTER:

Regardless of where you are “at” in life, using a life design approach can help you build your way forward. Before you begin to move forward, however, it’s important to know where you stand, how you currently feel about your life and, most importantly, what problem you are trying to solve.

- 1 Understanding the Problem:** Problems come in all shapes and sizes and are often multi-dimensional. To develop an effective solution to a problem, you must first understand each aspect of the problem.
- 2 Problem Types:** Some problems in life are able to be “actioned” and some are not. To be able to move forward and design the life you want to live, it is vital to understand the different types of problems that exist.
- 3 Assessing a Problem:** By looking at unique areas of your life, you can gain a greater understanding of issues you may want to work on as you build your future path.



PICTURE THIS:



You're on your way to your Tuesday morning class at North Campus Building (NCB) when, suddenly, you're stopped in your tracks. Why? Perhaps you saw President Alan Shepard riding on a Mustang? Or the Western Cheerleading team practicing at the bottom of UC hill? No, it's much, much worse. You're stopped because...there's a goose in your path!

You move to the left, but the goose waddles over and blocks you. So, you try to scurry to the right, but that doesn't work either! Rather, the goose taunts you with its honk as it hops over to the exact spot you need to get to in order to pass. You feel stuck. Why is it following you? What does it want? You start thinking to yourself, how did I get here?

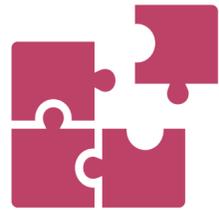
We all run into problems, and while sometimes we're able to maneuver around them, other times we feel stumped and unsure of how to progress. The key in these situations is to remember that you can't know where you're going before understanding where you are currently. Or, in less poetic terms, the key is to remember that when we run into issues, the first thing we need to do is identify what the issue is and why it exists.

In this case, the problem is simply a goose. But in other cases, the issue can involve a multitude of factors! As a student, these factors can look like figuring out what courses to pick, what program to specialize in, how to get the "right" experience, all in the name of one problem—figuring out what you would like to do with your life.

Basically, problems come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and are often multidimensional. Knowing what these problems really are helps us get to the next step — creating a plan to solve those problems. Maybe you should run around the goose? Try and do a goose call and see if it will fly away? Maybe it will leave you alone if you drop the delicious Spoke bagel you're holding?! Just like problems, solutions often aren't one dimensional. But, to develop an effective solution (and understand each aspect involved in a possible solution), we must first understand each aspect of a problem. In Western Life Design, we like to understand this as:



**UNDERSTANDING
A PROBLEM**



**PROBLEM
SOLVING**



**A WELL
DESIGNED LIFE**

You're probably thinking to yourself, "So what? How can I actually solve an issue using this equation? I hated math! And I have problems I would like to solve that are of greater importance than a goose on my way to class!" Well, the first tip is to take a step back and **assess the type of problem you have encountered.**

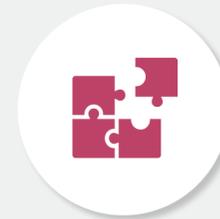


UNDERSTANDING A PROBLEM

One of the biggest mistakes people make in life design is trying to find a solution to a problem that isn't real—a solution to what we call, Gravity Problems. What distinguishes a real problem from a gravity problem? Whether or not the issue is actionable.

EXAMPLE

A fourth year student is not feeling confident in their program and wants to change it completely because they fear they do not have the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce (specifically leadership & project management skills). For most students, this is not a realistic option—it would require time and money, both resources which are limited and not readily accessible to most students. But, there is another option you can pursue that is related to the problem. By accepting that a complete-redo of your program is not realistic (i.e., accepting the situation as a fact as opposed to an actionable problem), you can allow your brain the capacity and time to work on actual life design. Taking such an approach allows yourself the ability to focus on the second aspect of the equation, problem solving —developing effective solutions to a problem by adopting different perspectives.



PROBLEM SOLVING

The actionable aspect of this fourth-year student's problem relates to building upon skills that are attractive in the workforce.

EXAMPLE

The fourth-year student may decide to complete a minor or supplementary course that focuses on developing leadership within students.



TIP

Want to learn about other academic streams or options for switching programs? Book an appointment with Academic Advising by clicking the link [here!](#)

TYPES OF PROBLEMS



▼ GRAVITY PROBLEMS

EXAMPLE

Wanting to completely re-do your four year undergraduate degree.

IS THIS ACTIONABLE? WHY?

No. This would require either a time machine or finding a magical pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Instead, accept it and free your mind to think of solutions to actionable problems/the actionable aspect of the problem.



TIP

Zoom out. Think of aspects of this problem which can actually result in change.



▲ ACTIONABLE PROBLEMS

EXAMPLE

Wanting to grow leadership skills.

IS THIS ACTIONABLE? WHY?

Yes. You can choose different courses or get involved in clubs which focus on the skills you would like to grow.



TIP

Dive in. What area of your life does this involve? What is the specific issue?



Overall, the key is to not get stuck or hung up on something—learning to recognize the difference between actionable and inactionable problems is your first step to engaging in true life design.

How can we develop a broad sense of what our problems are?

In Western Life Design, we like to conduct a life design assessment. The assessment focuses upon five aspects of our lives—**work, play, community, love, and health**—to better understand what area of our lives may be in need of some change (no shame in there being more than one!). The five aspects are defined as follows:



WORK

Work refers to your participation in any activity which is done for the purpose of gaining formalized experience (i.e. volunteering, paid work, school work, internships, and so on).



COMMUNITY

This aspect refers to the sense of connection you feel to the Western campus and student body; this can be in relation to feeling pride for attending the school, feeling like you belong on campus, or others.



HEALTH

By healthy, we mean being well emotionally, mentally, and physically. How important these three aspects are to your definition of health, and what you do to fulfill each of those dimensions is up to you. For example, one might work out at the Western Rec Center to promote physical health, but for others, exercise might be more related to mental health.



PLAY

By play we mean any activity that brings you joy when you do it. This might look like doing intramural sports with friends, going shopping at Masonville, or watching TV.



LOVE

Love refers to any form and amount of affection you feel for those around you; your community, partners, friends, family, anyone!

ACTIVITY

Your Battery Dashboard

It's time to put your Western Life Design knowledge to work!

The following exercise has been created to help you develop awareness of how you are currently feeling, and to figure out which area(s) you would like to work on to begin building your future path.

A couple things to remember before we start:

- 1** There is no judgement in this task – we have all needed to enhance the focus/pay more attention to some area within our lives
- 2** You can't map out a path to get where you want to go until you recognize where you are currently situated, so put some serious thought and reflection into this activity





How does this activity work?

We'd like you to think of the aspects of your life—**work, play, community, love, and health**—like batteries to a remote control. Just like any remote control, you need to think of whether the batteries are in good condition. Are they in good enough working condition to turn to the TV on? To provide you with the complete TV watching experience of sound, channel changing, and video? Are they even the right batteries to use to begin with?

This battery dashboard exercise is a way to reflect upon “where you are” currently as each aspect of your life (or ‘battery’) will tell you a little bit about how close you are to reaching your goals, and can help indicate what needs to change to make it to where you want to ultimately be.

To begin, we ask that you write a few sentences about how things are going in each of the five life aspects. From there (and after reading about Bev), indicate each aspect's “battery power” from empty (0) to full (4) to show the current level of charge or power in each life aspect. As you do so, try and decide if there is a design problem you would like to tackle in any of these areas. Ask yourself if your ‘problem’ is a gravity problem. Use the reflection questions next to your battery dashboard to help you delve deeper into understanding where your battery power levels currently stand.

Remember—there is no perfect balance between these five life aspects. You know what works for you—trust yourself and reflect on what makes sense for you! Let's take Bev for example.

START

Write a few sentences about how things are going in each of the five life aspects:



WORK



PLAY



COMMUNITY



LOVE



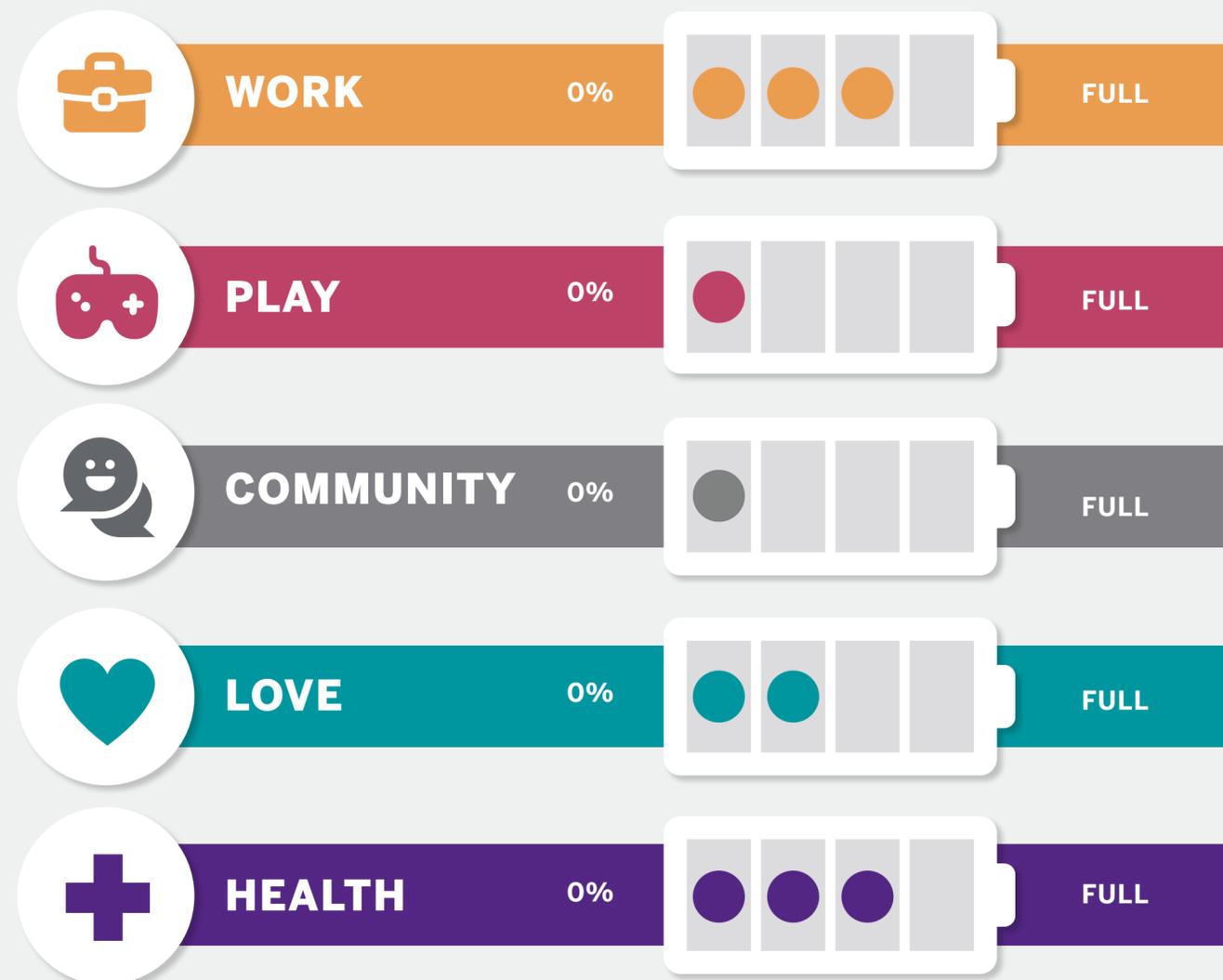
HEALTH



Bev
3RD YEAR

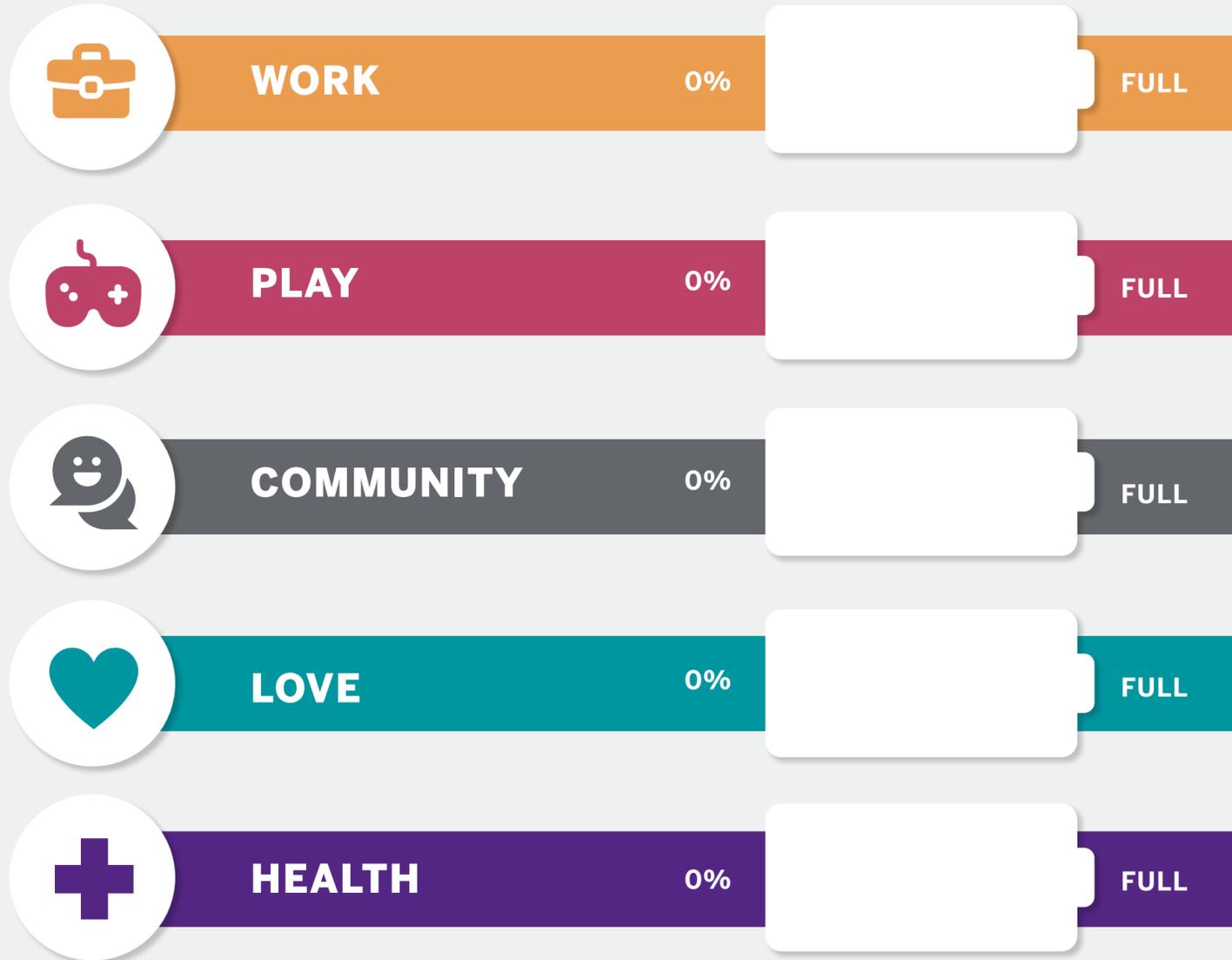
Bev is a third-year Western university student studying Psychology. As a Black student starting at Western in 2019, Bev didn't know what kind of support she needed or where to find it. As a result, she had a hard time connecting with the Western community and campus, and felt her Community battery was only a quarter full. Noticing that her battery had little power, she decided to sort through campus resources to find different clubs and groups which would help her work towards a more fulfilling community experience. In doing so, she came across the Social Science Soph Team—a team of students which help support first-year student transition to University. Passionate about helping people find their place in the community, as she worked to do herself, Bev excelled in her experience on the team, and came to recognize Western's community as a second home. She has been able to create a support system and be surrounded by people who make her feel heard and understood. Bev is now the Head Soph of the team, and continues to form strong connections within her faculty and the London community. Needless to say, her community battery is now fully powered!

Bev's Battery Dashboard



You may note that Bev's battery levels are different than your own and the aspects that she feels are most "powered" don't match yours. This is okay! While some people want a fully powered Community battery to feel fulfilled, others may value their Love battery to be at the highest level. Don't let the battery levels of others influence the way you feel about your own!

Your Battery Dashboard



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do you feel about your battery levels?

Are there any batteries that are fully powered up or close to being so? Does that feel good or bad?

Do your different battery levels look balanced or out of balance according to your definitions?

Are any batteries empty or have little power? How do you feel about that?

Which batteries could use action, improvement or innovation?

What obstacles might stand in your way to altering your battery power levels?

What small incremental change can you try out, easily implement, or iterate to adjust the level of one (or more) of your batteries?

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

Bev used her answers to the reflection questions shown here to jump start her search for ways to feel more connect to the Western community. As you answer these questions, note your responses—they are a great way of helping you understand where you “are” currently and how you can move closer to where you want to be (if you are not already there!).

CHAPTER 01 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we learned that stepping back to gain a better understanding of a problem is the first step in solving it. Recognizing the difference between actionable and inactionable problems in your life is key to engaging in life design.

Now that we know where you are, it's time to get you pointed in the right direction. For that, you'll need to find out which way is north.

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 2 



CHAPTER 02

Flying North! Which Way Is North?

IN THIS CHAPTER:

A great deal of our lives are spent trying to “figure out” life – often times as much as ACTUALLY living it. Worrying, analyzing, and speculating about our lives are common activities but they aren't tremendously effective in clearly moving us in the direction we want to head. Before we start moving, it is important to determine the direction that will serve us best.

- 1 Workviews and Lifeviews:** Your own individual definitions regarding what “work” and “life” mean are needed for you to build your “compass” so you can continually orient yourself and ensure you’re heading in the direction you want to go.
- 2 Our True North:** Appreciating how your views on work and life integrate, as well as where they differ, allows you to understand how to create harmony amongst your views. Such understanding increases your ability to orient yourself and live a consciously coherent and meaningful life.





Upon making it to this chapter, you have successfully moved past the goose in your path (i.e. you have thought about how you are feeling about things right now and where you are “at” in life at the present moment). However doing so leads to another question. In much the same manner as you were required to properly orient yourself to make it to your morning class at North Campus Building (NCB), in order to move forward designing your life you have to figure out which way is North.

If you’re like most students, this will be difficult—geography isn’t everyone’s strong suit! You may get lost along the way or start to worry excessively about the small details, like what might happen if you get to class late,

causing you to lose focus and end up more lost than you were before! Similarly, when we think about where we would like our life to head, we sometimes get caught up in over-analyzing life’s possibilities, and worrying that the decisions we make aren’t the right ones. But overanalyzing and seeking “perfection” aren’t components of **Western Life Design**.

In Western Life Design, we seek direction, not “perfect” decisions. In other words, we attempt to understand the direction in which we would like to go (what we call, our **True North**) and from there, begin to think of how we might start moving in that direction. So how do we start to make our way North?

To figure this out, we borrow some advice from fellow members of the Western community, the geese, who also periodically make their way North. Geese use a compass (in their minds) which allows them to navigate based on experience. So, we too will develop a compass! As displayed in the equation below, our compass will be composed of two elements, our **Workview** and our **Lifeview**—together, these elements will help us find our **True North**. But, what do these terms mean?



Defining One's "Workview" and "Lifeview"



WORKVIEW

A workview is your personal belief and definition of the purpose and value of work. A workview incorporates your belief as to what work is for, why one "works" and what defines "good work". As a student, this would look like asking yourself what your view is on the academic work you do, what you like about the work, and what makes work at school good or bad.

EXAMPLE

You may think positively about school work as you believe it is a great way to grow your skills, or because you think it is important to the process of developing a theoretical understanding of practical everyday tasks.



LIFEVIEW

Similarly, a lifeview is your collective thoughts and ideas about the world and how it works. It is your perspective or opinion on questions such as "What gives life meaning?" and "What makes life worthwhile or valuable?". Using your involvement in different clubs and classes is a great starting point to understanding this view.

EXAMPLE

You may consider what the classes you have taken and/or the clubs you have chosen to be a part of taught you about the world and whether you agree with those teachings.



TIP

Want to figure out what types of clubs exist on campus? Click [here](#)

If you're unsure of what you might be interested in, use [Mustang Maps](#) — a resource to learn about interests common among individuals in similar programs!



NOTE

Your workviews and lifeviews are likely to change, and that's okay! As I'm sure you can imagine, what you thought of the workforce or the "world of work" when you were a toddler, is not the exact same as what you think of it today. The goal is to create a compass for what you believe work and life are about right now!



TRUE NORTH

Through your workview and your lifeview, we want you to find your True North—a balance between who you are, what you believe in, and what you are doing. In doing so, you are more likely to live a satisfied life!

Take Jordan for example ►



Jordan
2ND YEAR

Jordan is a second year student who feels very strongly about climate change and who doesn't believe the company they currently work part-time for is doing great things for the environment. As you can see, there is a lack of alignment in what Jordan believes in, and what they are actually doing—resulting in some feelings of dissonance.

After much deliberation, Jordan used their two views (work and life) to redesign their life in an effort to orient themselves towards their (current) True North more strongly—continuing to work for their current company, but actively engaging with and participating in various environment-focused clubs on campus. This may not seem perfectly aligned with their lifeview, but the reality is that along one's journey to finding one's True North, you may be forced to make some trade-offs along the way. For Jordan, the trade-off resulted in them working at the company because the organization pays well, they have built up experience and skills to do the work that they do well and they are in need of funds to support their education, but they are now able to do so while further orienting their life towards their beliefs through participating in environmentally conscious activities. Despite the tradeoffs they are making, Jordan is extremely happy with the direction their life is heading. This points to a major belief within Life Design—there is no, one, best answer or solution to most of life's challenges. By considering possibilities and defining your True North, you can be confident in the direction your compass is taking you, make necessary trade-offs and remain at peace with yourself!

My Workview

Type your workview below (using your answers to the questions on the left-hand side of this page to help guide you):



WORKVIEW

When thinking of your workview, don't just enter a job description. This is about your philosophy of work. In crafting your workview, take into account your beliefs in respect to the following:

- 1 Why do you work?
- 2 What is work for?
- 3 What does work mean?
- 4 What defines good or worthwhile work?
- 5 What do experience, growth, and fulfillment have to do with it?
- 6 How does work relate to the individual, others, and society?
- 7 What does money have to do with it?

My Lifeview

Type your lifeview below (using your answers to the questions on the left-hand side of this page to help guide you)::



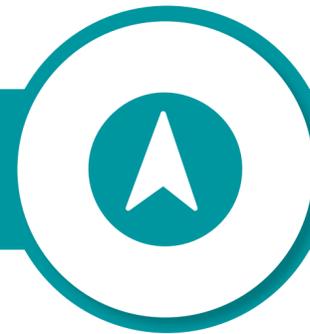
LIFEVIEW

Although these questions can seem very broad, try to focus in on the concrete ideas/things that mean the most to you. Similar to defining your workview, develop your lifeview considering the questions posed below:

- 1 What is the meaning or purpose of life?
- 2 Where do family, country, and the rest of the world fit in?
- 3 What are the roles of joy, sorrow, justice, injustice, love, peace, and strife in life?
- 4 What is the relationship between the individual and others?
- 5 Is there a higher power, and if so, what impact does this have on your life?
- 6 Why are we here?
- 7 What is good, what is evil?

My True North

Type your response to the true north questions below:



TRUE NORTH

Now for the part that really matters. It is time to reflect on the level of coherence found within your views. In most cases, the alignment between one's views is not exact – trade-offs may need to be made and some “tension” between views often exists. You may find yourself feeling as though you may need to make some changes to more closely follow your True North. You may find yourself bargaining with, well, yourself. Don't think of this as losing out on something you would like, but rather, as an opportunity to move closer to your end goal.

- 1** Where do your views on work and life complement one another?
- 2** Where do they clash?
- 3** Does one drive the other? How?

CHAPTER 02 CONCLUSION

Our True North is like the lines in colouring books. Although we may not always colour within them, they help keep us from straying too far from the path to our ultimate goal. Having defined our “True North”, it’s time to figure out our way to that goal.



PRIZE!

Share your True North description and what resources on campus you think could be beneficial to helping you follow it by emailing the information to careereducation@uwo.ca to be entered into a draw for 1 of 50 Spoke gift cards! Draws will occur throughout each semester. Winners will be emailed!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 3 



CHAPTER 03

Choosing The Right Spoke Bagel

IN THIS CHAPTER:

Finding one's "way" in life is not a straight-forward process. Since there is not one, single destination we are all attempting to arrive at, you can't simply obtain step-by-step directions for how to get "there". What you can do is pay attention to clues that are already in front of you and begin to make your way toward where you want to go using such clues.

- 1 Engagement and Energy:** Your level of excitement, focus and enjoyment when you are doing something speaks to your engagement with the activity. Activities which give you energy naturally bring you to life, uplift you and feel effortless vs. exhausting, boring or consuming you. These factors can each provide us a strong sense of what we find fulfilling in our lives.
- 2 A state of "Flow":** Whenever someone is simultaneously engaged and energized a sense of euphoria often results. Those experiencing such moments may say they are "in the zone", "have complete clarity" or feel "at absolute peace". Such feelings define being in a state of "flow" and can provide us with a strong sense of how to best move forward.



We've all been there before. After an hour of waiting in line at the Spoke for a delicious post-class treat, you make it to the front of the line, and you...blank. What bagel should you choose? Which will satisfy your hunger? Which will fill you up enough to last through your upcoming three-hour lecture?

While you don't have the means to buy a variety of bagels, you come up with a plan. This week, you will buy the bagel that your friend suggests to you. Next week, you will try the one that the person in front of you orders. And the following, you will ask the Spoke staff member who takes your order to choose for you (a Spoke bagel a week hopefully won't make a huge dent in your flex dollars!) Point is, eventually you will have tried so many options that you will be able to assess which bagel works best for you!



This line of thinking is similar to what we call, **Wayfinding**. Wayfinding is the art of using the clues you have around you to figure out where you are going when you don't actually know your destination. The two clues we use in life design are displayed in the equation below—**engagement** and **energy**.



ENGAGEMENT



ENERGY



FLOW
(i.e., a guide for where to head next)

What is the Difference Between Engagement and Energy?



ENGAGEMENT

Engagement refers to a mental or emotional connection to a task at hand.



ENERGY

Energy refers to an internal force which motivates individuals to keep moving forward.

Sometimes engagement and energy will coincide, but other times they won't at all!

EXAMPLE

A student may feel mentally engaged by politics, but not feel energized by reading about the topic in the news!



TIP

In need of some advice on how to stay engaged or maintain energy in class? Visit the **Learning Development & Success office** (Room 4100 in the Western Student Services Building (WSSB), the building attached to the University Community Centre) or click [here](#) for some tips and resources!

To better understand what is meant by engagement and energy, let's look at the story of a recent Western Alumni, Linkin. ►



Linkin BEd CANDIDATE

Linkin started at Western in 2015 with a Major in Chemistry. Upon graduation, he entered the workforce as a researcher in a laboratory.

Unfortunately, he dreaded doing so—the repetitive nature of research and the need for extreme attention to detail wasn't his style! He noticed one thing he did enjoy, however, which was the ability to teach others about how the lab worked—whenever he got to share and explain concepts to others, he felt energized by his work and extremely engaged!

In recognizing this, he decided to return to Western to complete an Education degree and focus on becoming a teacher. And ever since, he's been having an amazing time at work! He realized that he was able to achieve the state of flow—of high energy and engagement—when he followed a career path that aligned well with his natural talents. And, in spite of not completely loving his lab days, he's only where he is now because of the Chemistry path he took during his undergrad and masters!

As exemplified in Linkin's story, taking time to assess which activities reliably engage and energize you is extremely important to life design. It helps you to recognize what you are currently doing that you love and identify specifically what it is about what you are doing that makes you love it.



FLOW

Flow is the feeling of being completely “in the zone”. It is typically achieved when what brings you energy and what engages you come together as you are doing something that relates to or aligns with your True North.

EXAMPLE

Flow is the feeling of doing something that falls perfectly within your strengths, like Linkin felt when his natural talent for instructing others led him to pursue teaching!



TIP

Don't know your strengths yet? Check out our resources section on CliftonStrengths to learn more or click [here!](#)

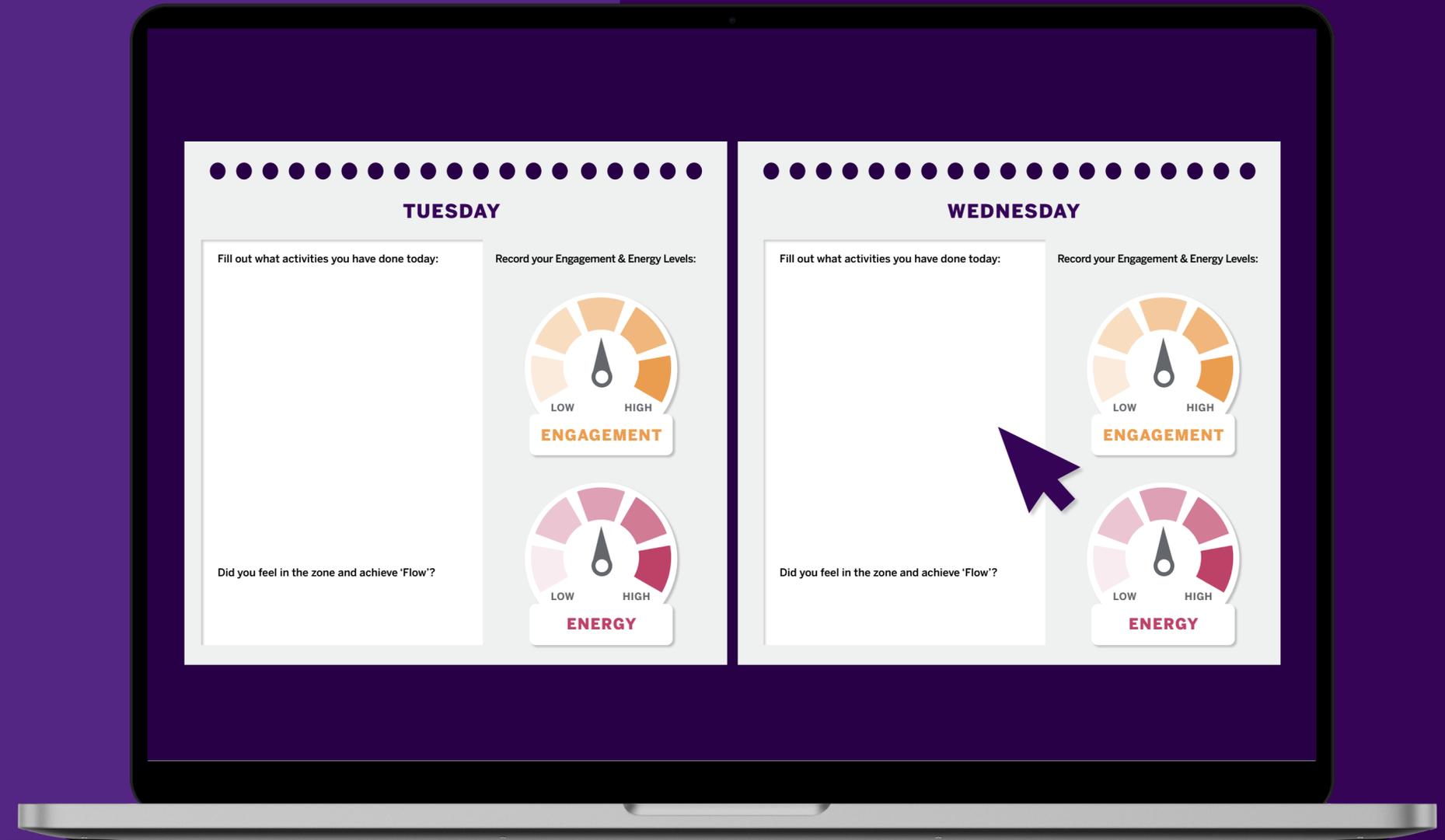
Flow represents our ultimate goal—our perfect Spoke bagel that is equal parts delicious and nutritious! It is when work becomes fun and becomes something you feel you can do over and over tirelessly. And remember, the perfect Spoke bagel is different for everybody...we all have different engagement and energy needs!

ACTIVITY

Mustang Journal

To help you begin recognizing what engages and excites you, we invite you to participate in this Mustang Journal.

To begin the journal, fill out activities that you have done that day and indicate how engaged and energized you were by them. If every day is too much, try and do it every three days!



HOW DOES THIS JOURNAL WORK?

PART 1

Try and be specific about what engaged/energized you.

For example, instead of saying “English class was really tiring”, think of what made it tiring. Perhaps it was because you had to work in groups, and you don’t have the social battery for that. Or maybe you had to read a lot.

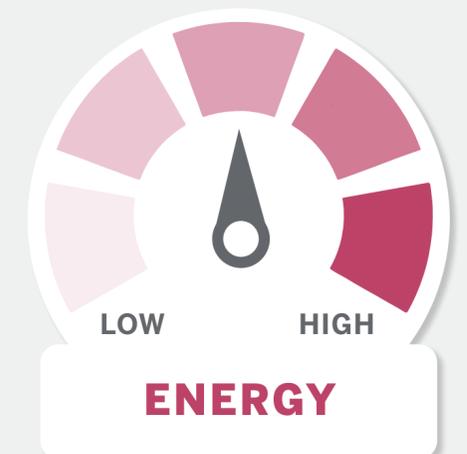
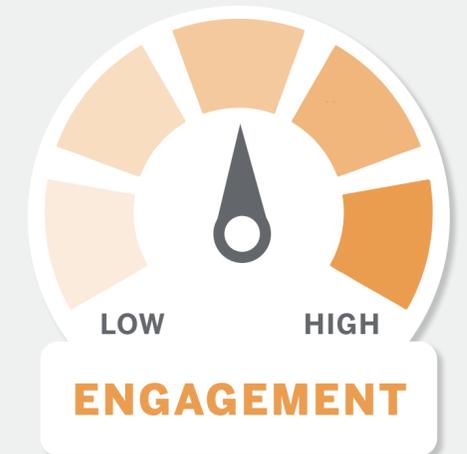
Do this activity for the next three weeks to gather a well of information. Try to vary the activities you undertake so that you aren’t doing the same things each and every day which will allow you to gather even more helpful information. Finally, be sure to indicate whenever you feel like the activity/activities you engaged in completely put you into the “zone” and you achieved “Flow”!



MONDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel “in the zone” and achieve “Flow”
If so, when specifically?



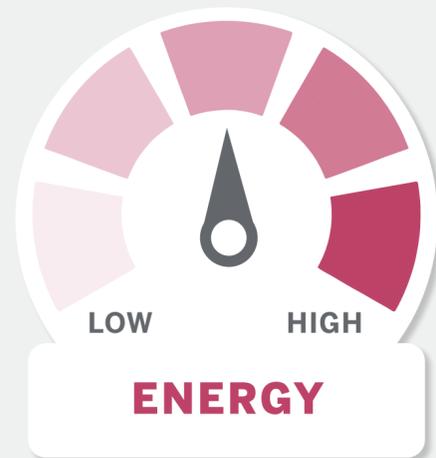
TUESDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel "in the zone" and achieve "Flow"
If so, when specifically?



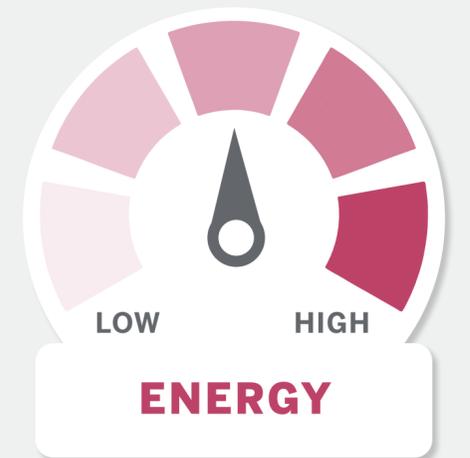
WEDNESDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel "in the zone" and achieve "Flow"
If so, when specifically?





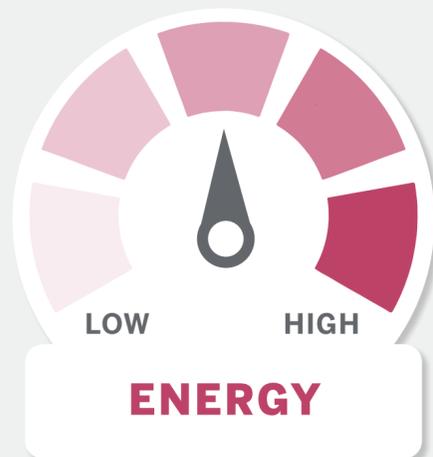
THURSDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel "in the zone" and achieve "Flow"
If so, when specifically?



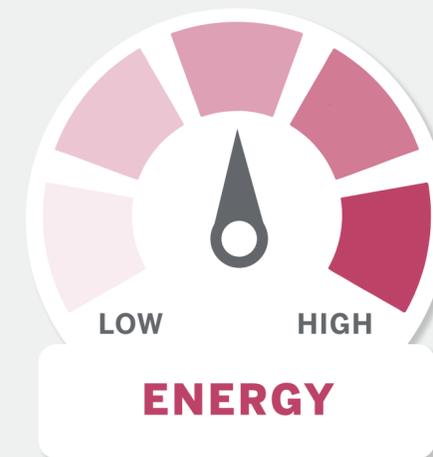
FRIDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel "in the zone" and achieve "Flow"
If so, when specifically?





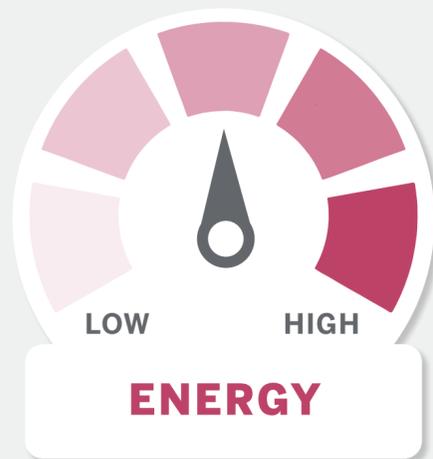
SATURDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel "in the zone" and achieve "Flow"
If so, when specifically?



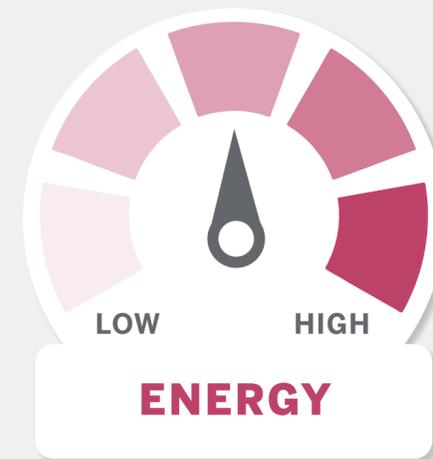
SUNDAY

List the activities you have done today, noting your engagement and energy levels for each activity:

Indicate your overall engagement & energy level for the day:



Did you feel "in the zone" and achieve "Flow"
If so, when specifically?



HOW DOES THIS JOURNAL WORK?

PART 2

The next part of this activity involves reflection. We use the AEIOU method to zoom in on what specifically exists within the situations of great engagement and energy (or little engagement and energy) that we experienced, to give us a better understanding of what works and/or doesn't work. What's AEIOU? Well...vowels. The AEIOU method stands for:



ACTIVITIES

What were you actually doing? Was this a structured activity or an unstructured activity? Did you have a specific role to play or were you just a participant?



ENVIRONMENT

What kind of place were you in when you completed the activity and how did it make you feel? Was it Weldon? In the newly renovated Thames Hall common area? What did you like or not like about that space?



INTERACTIONS

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



OBJECTS

Were you interacting with any objects or devices? What were the objects that created or supported your feeling engaged/energized?



USERS

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



TIP

Track and take into account of all the extreme 'high points and low points' of your Mustang Journal. Use these to inform you on which activities sustain your energy and make you feel the most engaged!

PART 2 CONTINUED

WEEKLY ENERGY & ENGAGEMENT REFLECTION LOG

Answer the AEIOU questions on the previous page in reflecting on your activities over the week to help provide you further insight as to what provides you engagement and energy.



REFLECTION OF MY WEEK

Type your response below:

A large, empty white rectangular area intended for the user to type their reflection response.

CHAPTER 03 CONCLUSION

Now that you have a better understanding of your True North as well as an equation (and process) to help you appreciate the signs that can guide you as to where to head next, it is time to take flight and get unstuck!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 4 



CHAPTER 04

Clipped Wings?!

IN THIS CHAPTER:

Many times in life you may find yourself feeling “stuck” or uncertain as to where you want to go or what you want to do next. That’s ok. The world’s most famous designers have been stuck numerous times. Being stuck isn’t the issue – it’s knowing what to do when you are feeling stuck that is important.

- 1 Ideas:** You can’t know what you want until you consider what you might want and to consider what you might want, you have to ideate – generate a lot of ideas and possibilities.
- 2 Judgement and Comparison:** Worrying about what others may say about the ideas you generate or whether others are doing the things you are contemplating can keep you from generating the wild ideas, the unconventional ideas, the greatest volume of ideas. In Life Design, more ideas are better and judgement and comparison are the arch nemeses of ideation.
- 3 How to become "Unstuck":** When you feel really stuck, getting "unstuck" can feel near impossible. It’s not. The secret to becoming unstuck is to suspend judgement and ideate broadly and wildly. The wild ideas often aren’t the ones we end up picking but by broadening our minds and thinking in a wild and free manner we can see new and innovative possibilities that can work (and allow us to continue moving in the direction we want to go).



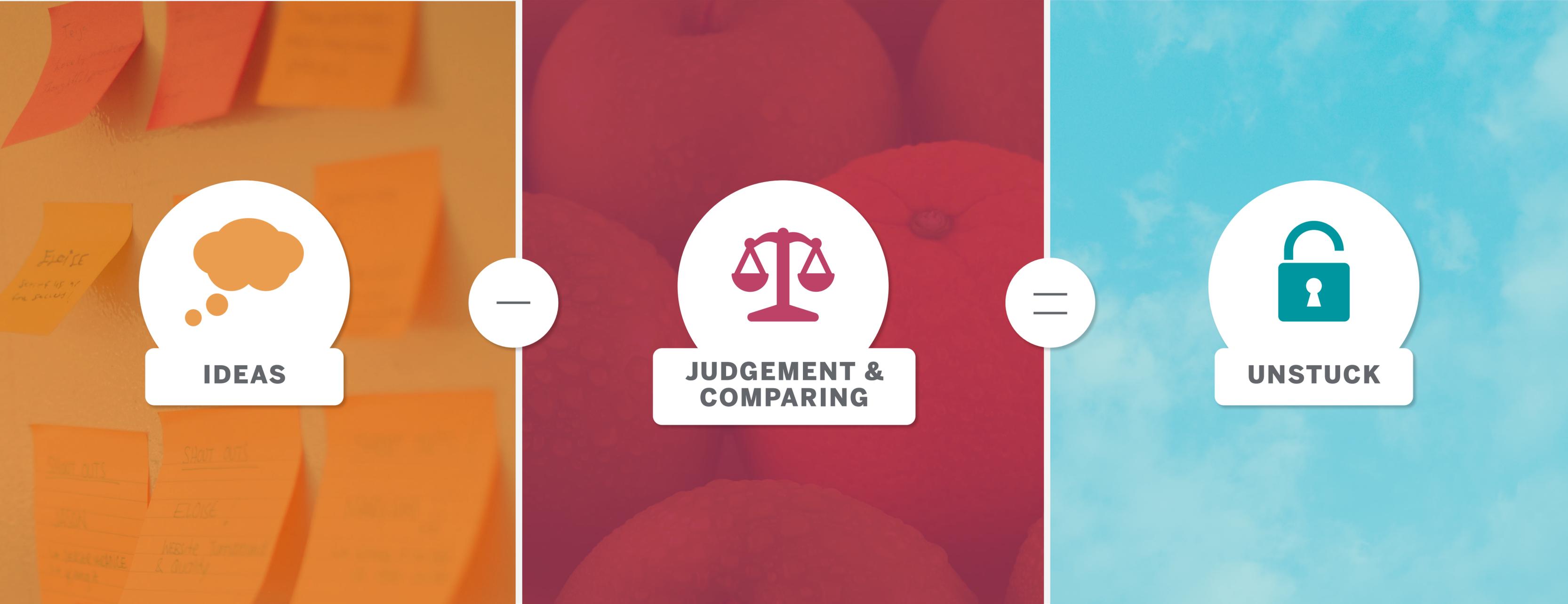
PICTURE THIS:

You've finally finished your evening class at NCB and you start rushing over to Alumni Hall so you don't miss one of the oh-so-reliable London Transit (LTC) buses. But, right as you get to the roundabout, you see the bus drive past you. The next bus doesn't come for another 40 minutes, and whether or not you had plans for later this evening, you aren't exactly jazzed about hanging back for the next little while. You are stranded. Like a goose with clipped wings during migration season, it seems like everyone else has an idea of what direction to fly but you're stuck on the ground.



Even after all we've done so far—passing the goose in our path, figuring out which way is North, and choosing our Spoke bagel—it is still easy to feel stuck. But, in Western Life Design, **there is no such thing as truly being stuck**. By following the equation below there is always a next move we can make.

The equation is as follows:



Let's Start With The First Step



IDEATION

Often when we feel stuck, we immediately give up. We think that there is only one way to do something, and since the solution we have thought of has an obstacle, we can no longer achieve our desired end-state or goal.

To move past obstacles, however, you need to remember that there is always more than one way to solve a problem. For example, maybe as opposed to feeling like you have to wait 40 minutes for the next bus, you can walk down to Richmond Street and catch a different bus! Perhaps that solution would have actually been better to start with because that bus route stops closer to your home!

This points to the second thing you should always remember—you should never immediately go with your first idea. Doing so can be detrimental...how can you know what you want if you don't first know what you might want?

EXAMPLE

Think of a student who was always told they would be a great banker. They spend hours in various courses trying to enjoy finance-focused courses, but realize they are actually very interested in marketing and just hadn't thought about it being a possible life path before. Not thinking about all options can harm our ability to pursue our true interests!



TIP

Unsure of the kind of work you may be interested in doing? Use [Western Connect](#) to review various job descriptions and get a better idea of what you may like!

When we instantly select our first idea, we often create a lot of pressure for ourselves trying to make that solution fit. In contrast, taking the time to think of many ideas eases the tension of selecting a next step because you help yourself to see there is always another route to take. The key here is to remember that **we choose solutions better when we have lots of ideas to consider.**



JUDGEMENT AND COMPARING

The second part of this equation asks that you forget about what others may say AND ignore what others are doing! The biggest deterrents of ideation are judgement and comparison. Have you ever not done something because you thought others would make fun of you? Or because you compared yourself to others and felt pressured to do the same things as them? After graduating, a lot of students get caught up in these mindsets, fearing what others may think about their future plans and changing their ideas based on what others are doing.

These two mindsets result in you ignoring your True North—ignoring what makes you happy and what might be the best direction for your current state. If we judge prematurely, we will never be able to see what actual possibilities can come through a life path. Remind yourself to stop being biased towards the opinions of others, and instead, use your creativity to design a life that fits you!



UNSTUCK

By coming up with as many ideas as possible (even if they initially seem unlikely, unrealistic or completely out of reach), you allow yourself the opportunity to contemplate and explore multiple options and operate in a space free of judgement, comparison, and limited or reactionary thinking. Doing so also increases the possibility you can identify multiple possibilities you may actually like...and find a backup idea if your original one doesn't work out (**remember life design is about identifying and travelling in a direction, not to one certain destination**). Through this process, you can continue to try out ideas as many times as necessary until you finally become unstuck!



CAUTION

While we encourage coming up with options, it is also important to remember that your options should be real. What?! You just said we could think of solutions that are completely out of reach! Well, yes, we encourage you to think of creative ideas, but the purpose of doing so is to move your mind into a creative space which allows you to develop innovative life possibilities that can really work. Altogether, it is important that your ideas be actionable.

Remember a couple of chapters ago when we talked about Gravity Problems?

Well, there's another type of problem we tend to encounter, **Anchor Problems**.



ANCHOR PROBLEMS

Anchor Problems, unlike Gravity Problems, are problems which are actionable but ones which we've "anchored" or mentally bound ourselves to so greatly a solution to the problem starts to seem inactionable. Basically, they prevent us from making ground on the real issue at hand.

EXAMPLE

Let's take a look at Lauren ►





Lauren ALUMNI

Lauren is a singer-songwriter, and has always dreamed of making her own music video to help promote her music. To do so, she needed at least \$5000—this would cover the cost of a videographer, audio mixer, and some ad hoc design features. Without the funds to make a video herself, Lauren was left with the option of finding a sponsor, of which she found none. Lauren is anchored... or at least she thinks she is.

In fact, Lauren is only anchored to this problem because she is anchored to the one solution she thought of—getting a music sponsor. This isn't an inactionable gravity problem—there are steps Lauren can take to resolve this issue. The first thing she must do is rid herself of the mindset that only one "perfect" solution exists to solve the issue she is facing.

After opening her mind up to other possibilities, Lauren decided to follow three life design steps:

- 1 Changing Beliefs.** Lauren focused on the real problem—which was that she really wanted to share her music with others. Opening up the problem to look at her ultimate goal, as opposed to a minor one (e.g., a music video), allowed her to broaden the variety of solutions which could help her situation!
- 2 Reframe Problem.** Next, Lauren used a Life Design mindset to rethink the problem. For example, she thought of applying for music awards and using those funds to help broadcast her music. Another solution she thought of was coffee chatting with different music professionals and learning a bit more from them about how to spread awareness of her artistry!
- 3 Prototype it.** Finally, Lauren had to put some of these ideas into action. She decided to try the above two solutions out, and to her surprise, they worked! She applied for a music award of \$500, and got it! Even though it's not the final fee she will need, it definitely helps to lessen the burden! Lauren also got in contact with a promotion manager at a major music company. In that meeting, Lauren learnt a variety of tips and tricks to increase streams and interactions with her advertisements!

► As seen through Lauren's experience, the key is to not make an actionable problem an anchor problem by getting hung up on a single solution. As we say in Life Design, "Fail fast, and fail forward!"

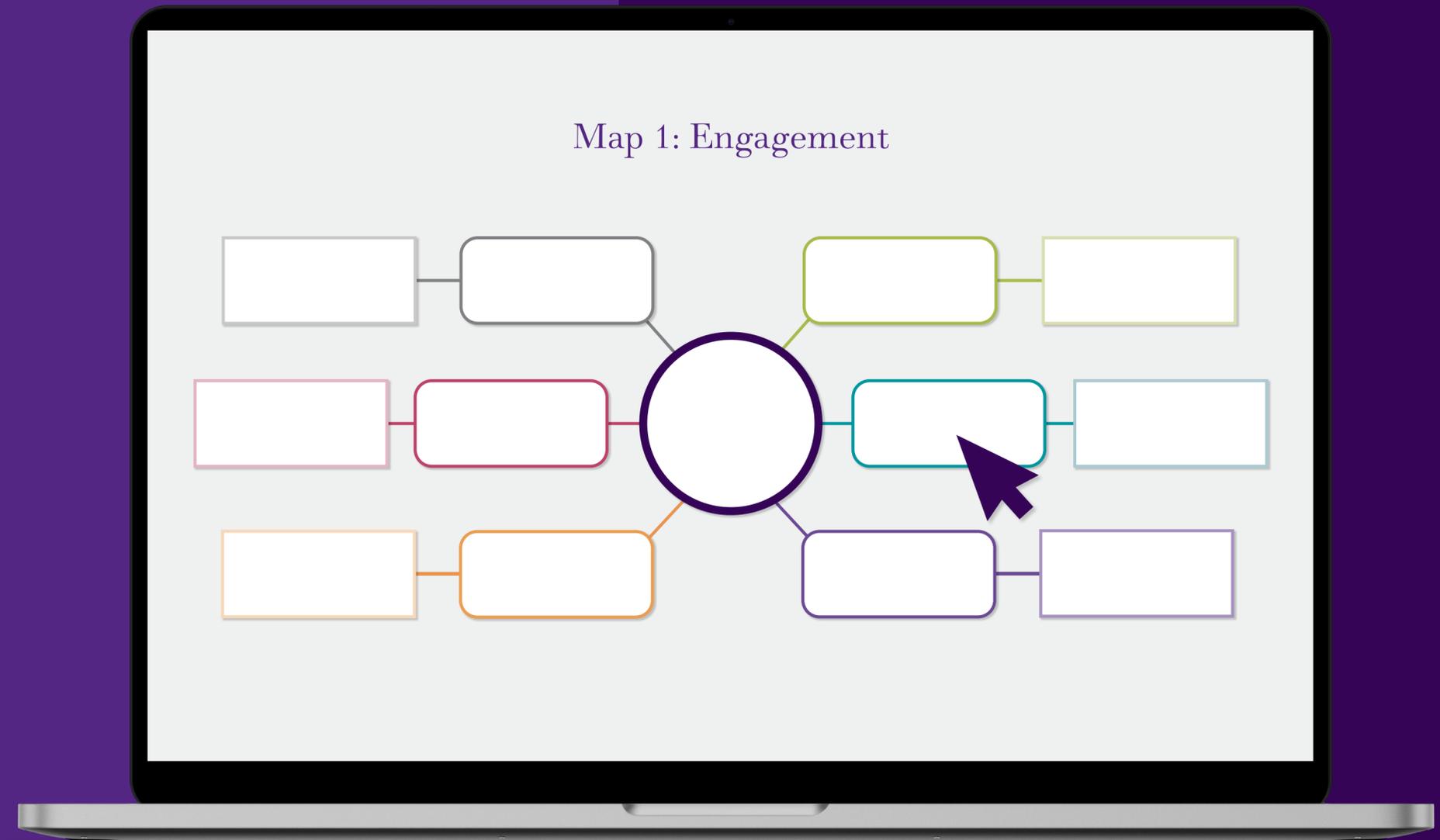
PS – If you are interested in helping Lauren achieve her goal, check out her music at [remie on spotify!](#)

ACTIVITY

Mind Mapping

To get in the mindset of coming up with many ideas, we will be using an ideation technique called **mind mapping**. Mind mapping is composed of three steps which helps individuals visually represent associated ideas/concepts. The three steps are as follows:

- 1** Pick a topic
- 2** Draw out a Mind Map by writing five or six concepts related to the topic and creating lines which connect the new concepts to the original topic
- 3** Make secondary connections (i.e., add more lines which connect to the first set of concepts)



PART 1

To ensure that we are truly creating ideas that fit our True North, it is important to do this process quickly. In doing so, we rid ourselves of some of the judgement and/or censoring which limits us from being creative in our plans.

Now that we know how Mind Mapping works, it's time to put these steps into action. We will follow these three steps in three different maps—taking note of ideas from our Mustang Journal. The three mindmaps will be:

MAP 1: ENGAGEMENT

MAP 2: ENERGY

MAP 3: FLOW

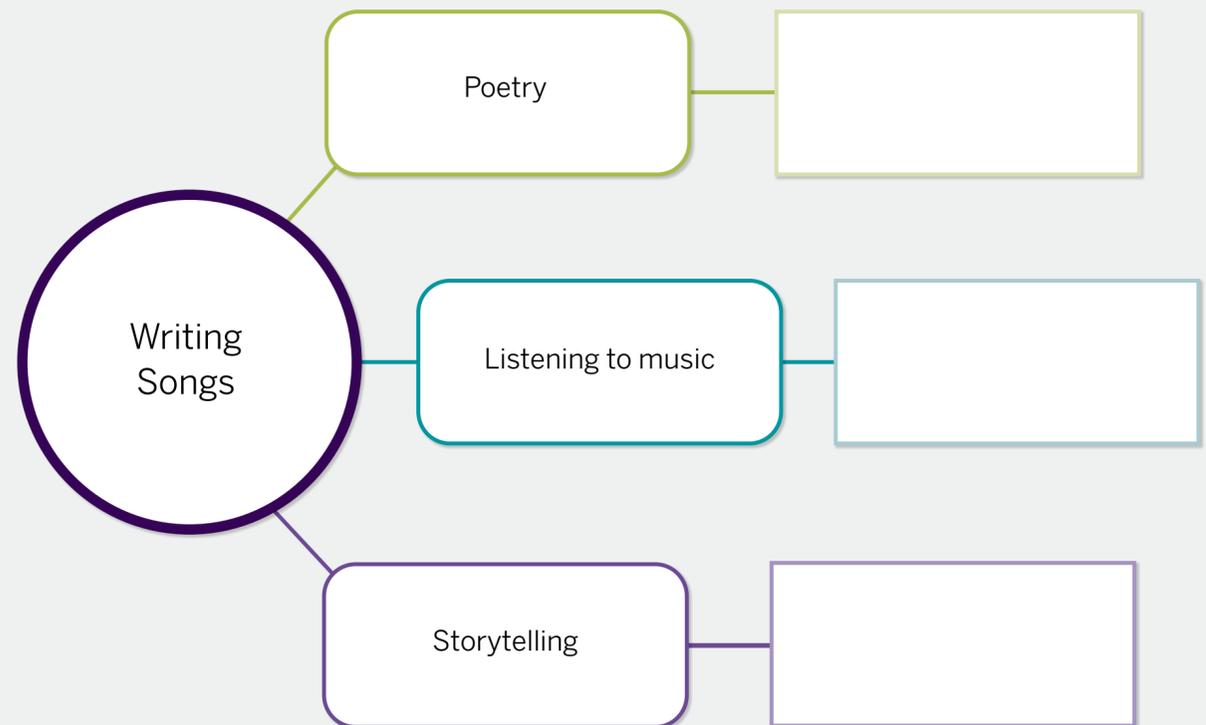
To create these maps, pick one experience/activity which completely made you engaged (for Map 1), energized (Map 2), or in “flow” (remembering that “flow” is when you feel the combination of engagement AND energy) (Map 3), and put it as the center topic/item/experience of each map.

Continue on and develop each map by following steps two and three for each mind map to complete each of your maps!



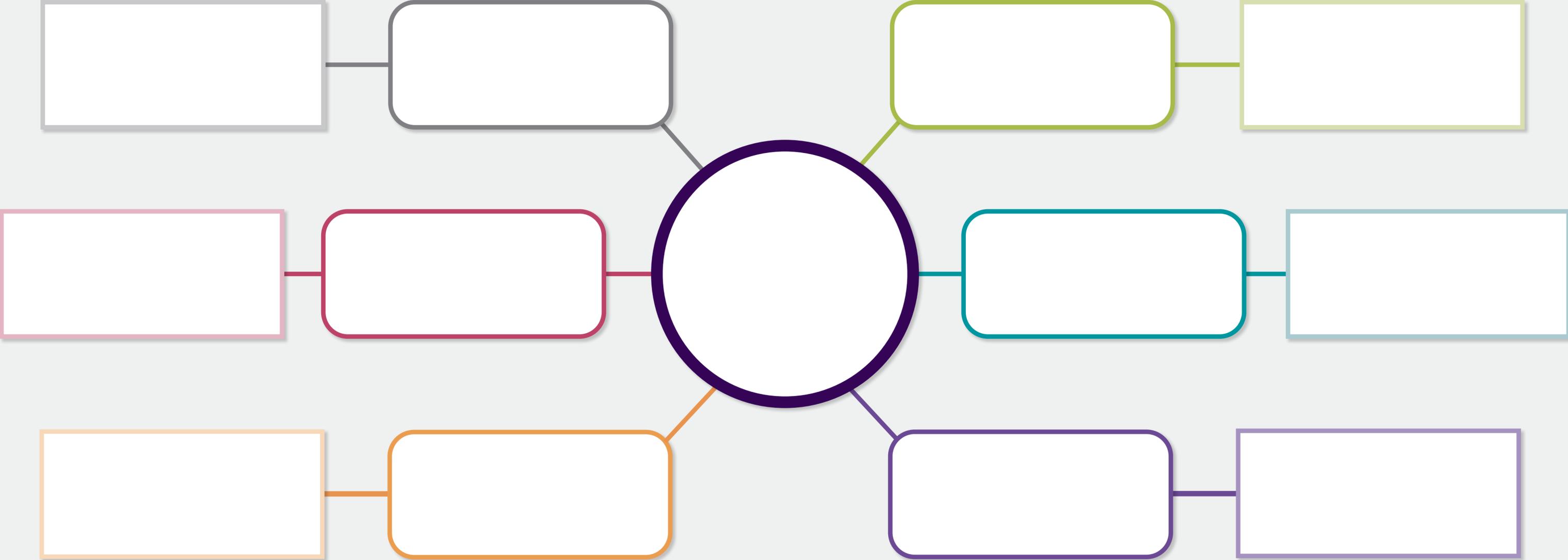
LAUREN'S MIND MAP

Map 3: Flow



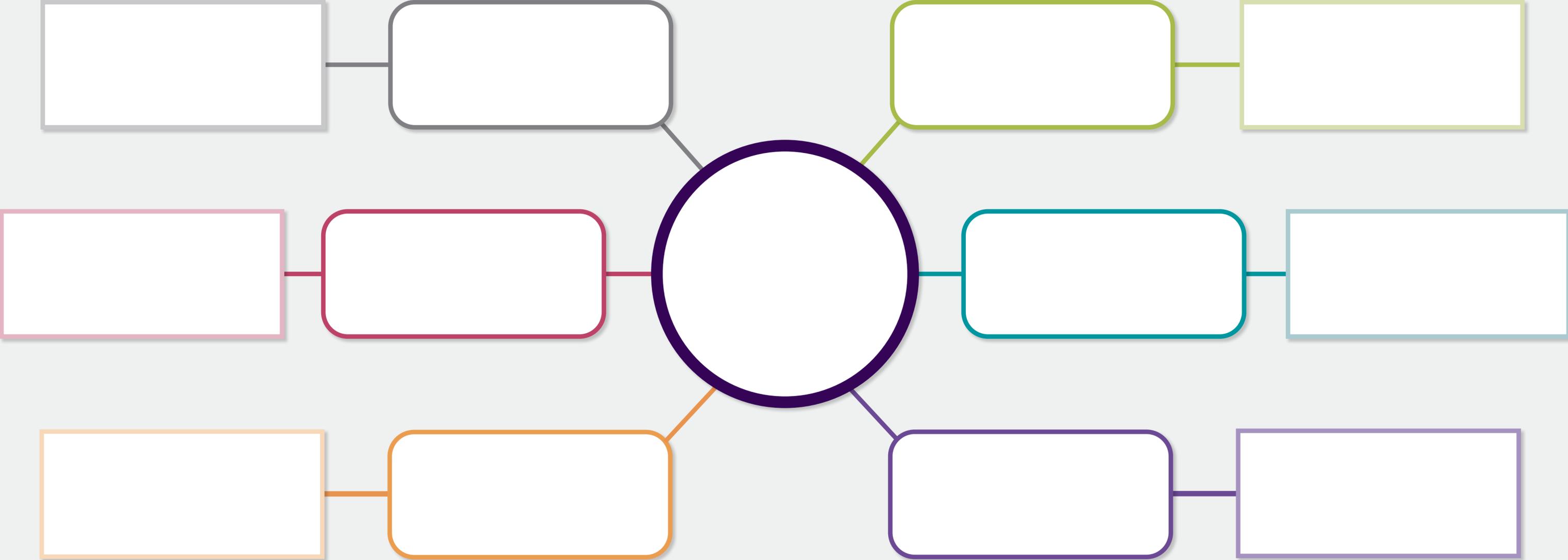
Map 1: Engagement

Pick one experience or activity which completely made you feel **engaged**.
Write five or six concepts around your topic and then make secondary connections.



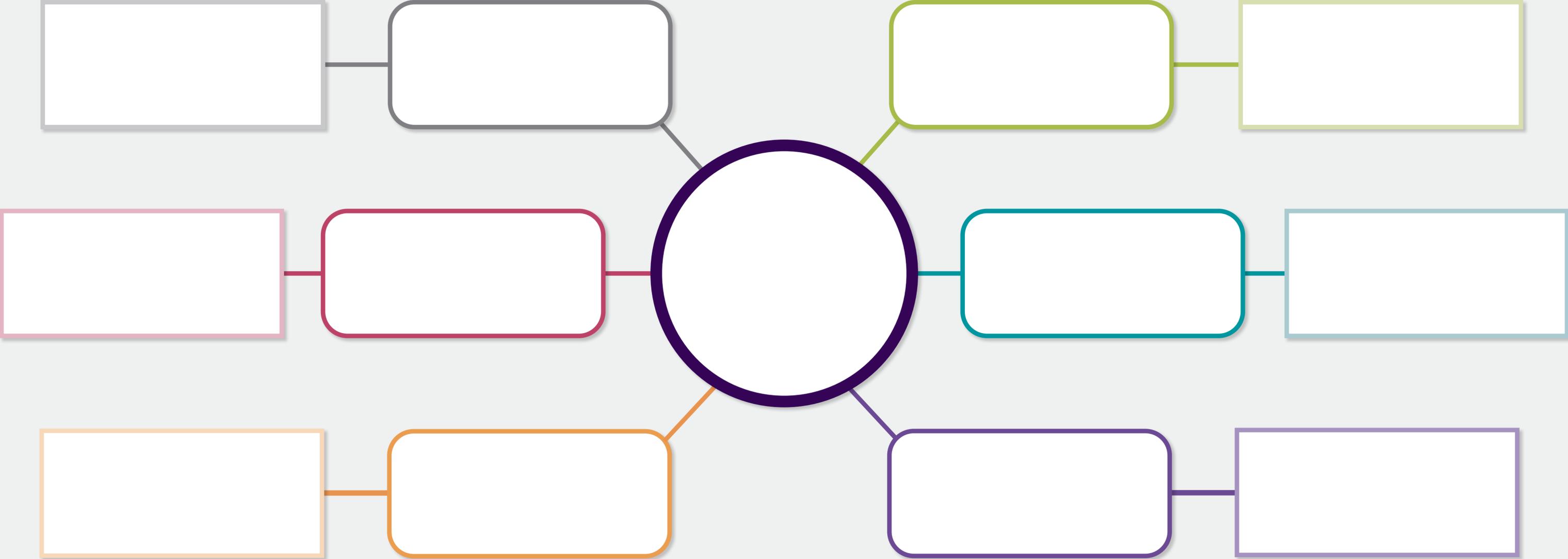
Map 2: Energy

Pick one experience or activity which completely made you feel **energized**.
Write five or six concepts around your topic and then make secondary connections.



Map 3: Flow

Pick one experience or activity which completely made you feel in “**flow**” (the combination of engagement AND energy).
Write five or six concepts around your topic and then make secondary connections.



PART 2

After you have finished the mind maps exercise, we ask you to attempt to create a fun (doesn't have to be practical) job description from each of your mind maps. Do so by completing the following steps:

- 1 Choose three different items from the outer rings of your mind maps.
- 2 Try and combine those three items into a possible job description that would be interesting to you.
- 3 Give the job/position you have outlined a title and draw a sketch of it.
- 4 Repeat this activity with each of the mind maps!



Your Turn

Create a job description based on one of your mind maps here:

My three selected outer-ring items are:

These combine into the job title of:

A description for this job would be:

Job sketch: (Click on the drawing tool  within the "comment" tab in your pdf preview window)

CHAPTER **04** CONCLUSION

By completing this chapter, you have successfully learned how to switch from a more limited (and potentially rigid) “what do I do next?” mindset to a more creative, open and opportunistic “what can I imagine?” mindset— which is the point of this workbook!

Now that you have made it to this stage in your journey, it’s time to start the task of innovating three life alternatives that really revolve around and work towards your True North!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 5 



CHAPTER 05

Design Your Western

IN THIS CHAPTER:

It is natural for one's "plan for life" to change as life happens. The reality is, during each of our lifetimes, we are likely to lead many "lives". Life Design is all about proactively recognizing that we each have multiple lives within us and creating an approach to accept, reflect upon and outline a number of the multitude of lives we will live.

- 1 Designing your lives not your life:** As noted above, a fulfilling life is one which often encompasses a number of different life paths – appreciating and embracing there are multiple great lives (and plans) within each of us allows us to gain a greater sense of what could be and the various ways by which we could live the life we WANT to live.
- 2 How to explore various life paths:** Odyssey Plans provide a concrete method by which to explore one's possible lives and map out a number of realities that could be. By creating sketches of possibilities, you are better able to make decisions regarding "next steps" to start prototyping elements of the plans you create.





Do you remember your first day on campus? When you felt those first-day jitters? Remember that feeling of finally stepping through the main gates and being excited about all things new—new school, new environment, new friends and new experiences?

In your first year, or even first day, at Western you probably had a vision for yourself — an idea and plan for how you would tackle this new phase of your life. Perhaps you had planned to join a specific club, ace all your assignments, or get a summer "dream job". We're also sure that, once you progressed a bit more into your university career, many of those ideas and plans changed. Maybe the club you thought you would like didn't spark your interest, or you didn't land that job you'd been dreaming about.

Your plans, interests, dreams, and life may have changed, but that's okay. Actually, it's great! You are destined to experience many life paths. In fact, as Life Design founders Bill Burnett & Dave Evans like to point out, studies show that people tend to think they live, on average, at least 3.4 lives in a lifetime. Wait, what? What does that even mean?! No, no, no, you can't resurrect yourself, but you can live many different lives during one lifetime. In other words, you have the ability to alter your life and are not limited to sticking with one life path. Life design can help with exploring many different life paths. In other words, if something feels off within your life, life design can help with creating life plans and new life paths that work for your situation.

One step you can take to creating many great lives is coming up with lots of ideas, as simplified in the equation below:



INFINITE IDEAS



MANY GREAT LIVES



INFINITE IDEAS

Things are not always smooth sailing. Life throughout university is especially unpredictable...everyone says that university is a time to, pardon our French, “SORT. S#!T. OUT:”, but it is tough to do that when you are experiencing so many different changes! Even though it doesn’t seem feasible, it is important to remember throughout these years that it’s okay to change what you want to do in your career. It is okay to change interests. “How do you do that?” you may be asking – well let us tell you.

This is where Western Life Design comes in—it can help you create viable and sustainable solutions to planning various life paths.

Specifically, life design provides you with the tools needed to ideate and design possible future paths. Ideating (e.g., creating and brainstorming ideas) many possible variations of your life is valuable as it provides you with the opportunity for better solutions and better-suited life plans.



MANY GREAT LIVES

Now that you are aware that it is not only okay to live many different lives within your lifetime, but that it is also encouraged, let’s figure out how to begin planning for them. The best way to design your life is to design your lives. To begin, let’s create Odyssey Plans. Odyssey Planning is an exercise that will help you find ideas and ways to jump-start the next chapters of your life. This exercise requires you to plan for 3 different lives by providing you with an opportunity to brainstorm and map out alternatives to the life path that you are currently living.

EXAMPLE

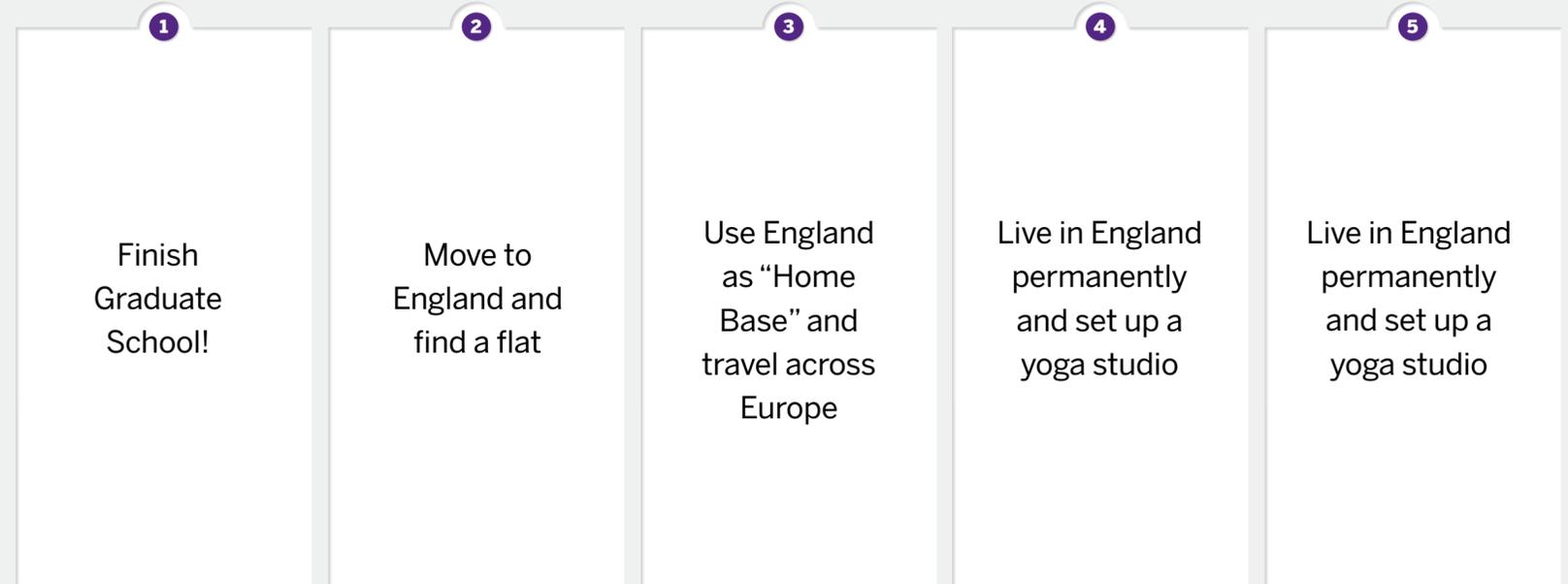
Let’s check out Hayden’s plans. ►



Hayden ALUMNI

Hayden created an Odyssey Plan for her current life path (Life 1) which consisted of finishing Graduate School and eventually landing a position within her field and making her way up the “corporate ladder”. Her next Odyssey Plan (Life 2) was created with the assumption that her current plan (finding a role within her field) was suddenly gone. The plan that Hayden came up with is to explore a role outside of the field that relates to her graduate studies. In her third plan (Life 3), as you can see in her diagram to the right, Hayden chose to explore her love for traveling and yoga by making it a goal to travel across Europe and set up a yoga studio in England. This life plan was created under the premise that money, status & image were no object.

Hayden’s Odyssey Plan



Alternative plan #:

6 word title:

Questions this plan addresses:

3

Ms. Worldwide

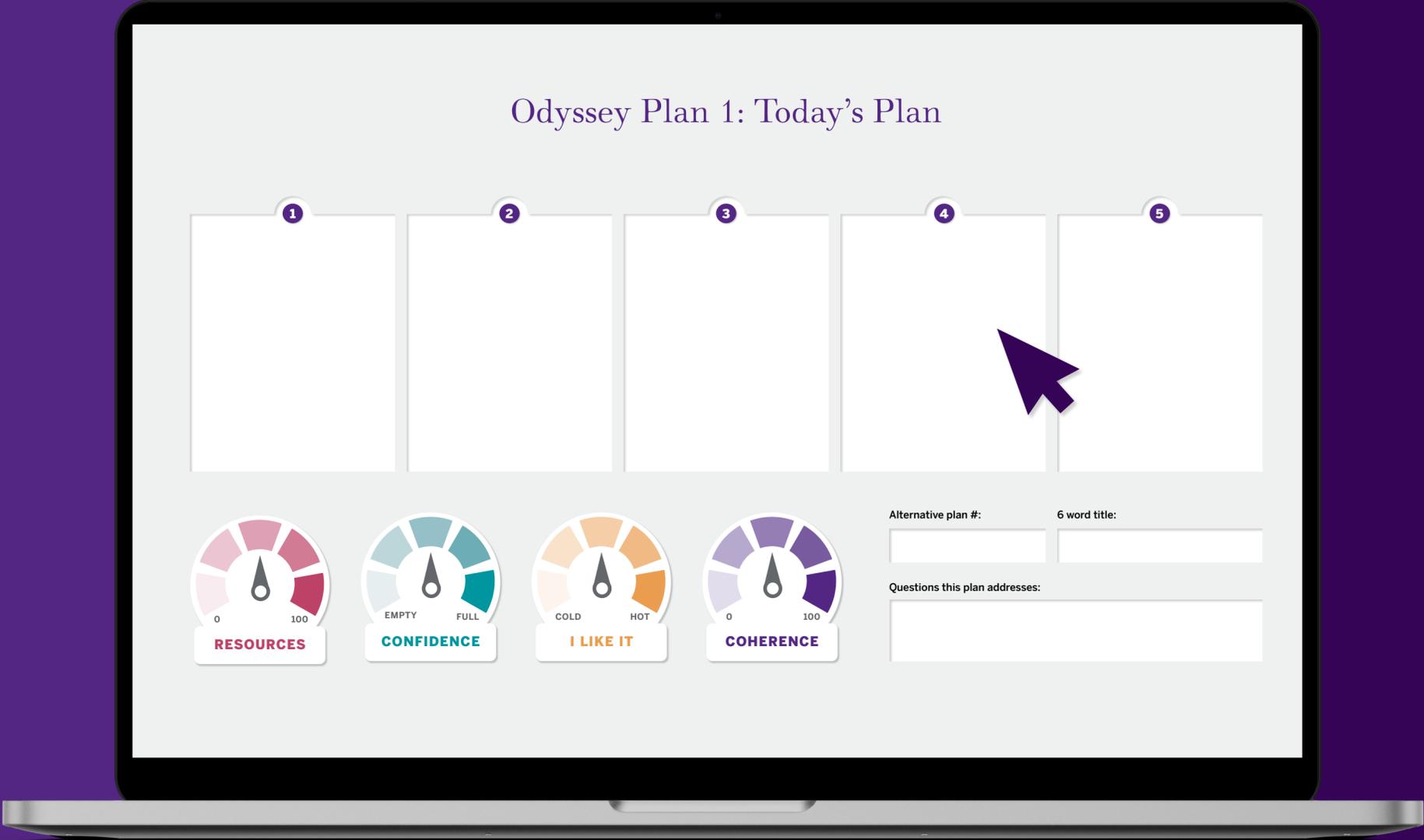
What would I do if money weren't an object?



ACTIVITY

Your Odyssey Plan

Okay, let's begin. For this exercise, you will plan 3 alternative academic or post-university lives over a timeline of the next 5 years. Note: If you are just beginning your academic journey (i.e. you are in your first year), feel free to plan for more years, like 6 or 7 years, to better outline what you could be up to after graduating! To plan these lives, you will use the diagrams on the next few pages and follow the instructions on the next page.



INSTRUCTIONS

LIFE 1: Detail your current life plan. Record where you are now and what you currently are planning for or hoping/expecting for your future (i.e. the plan that feels most obvious).

LIFE 2: Ideate a life or an alternative path if Life 1 were to disappear (i.e. if you couldn't do what you have outlined in Plan 1, where does your mind go next?)

LIFE 3: Think of a life plan that you would follow if money and image were no object and life's typical constraints. (finances, family expectations, gender/societal norms, etc.) were removed.

Now, give each alternative life path a headline or a title (make each title no more than 6 words in length) describing the essence of the life plan.

To help get you started, consider these tips:

- 1** Include personal and non-career elements such as your relationship status, where you envision being located geographically, as well as hobbies/interests/non-employment goals you will pursue.
- 2** Be sure to account for the resources that will be required to carry out each plan such as money, skills and contacts you may need.
- 3** Consider how much you like each plan, the degree to which the plan aligns with your True North and the questions that each plan causes you to ask of yourself as you design it – try to think of 2 or 3 questions that come to your mind in respect to each plan.



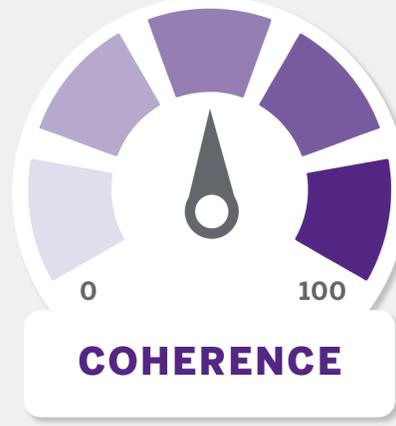
TIP

Try enrolling in electives outside of your discipline to get a taste of other possible life paths! See a full list of Western courses [here!](#)

Now that you know how this activity works, try it out! ►

Odyssey Plan 1: Today's Plan

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



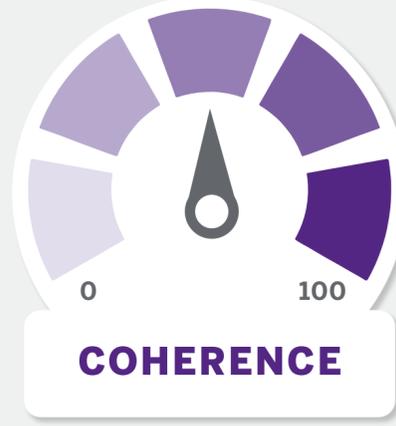
Alternative plan #:

6 word title:

Questions this plan addresses:

Odyssey Plan 3: Game Changer

1	2	3	4	5



Alternative plan #:

6 word title:

Questions this plan addresses:

PART 2

These Odyssey Plans can help define the important things, people and experiences within your life and can also highlight the direction you need to take to start achieving each plan! Consider the Western resources, services and programs offered that can help you move forward with each life you design.

Finally, reflect on:

- 1 Is this plan meaningful?
- 2 Do I have what it takes?
- 3 What Western resources can I take advantage of to achieve this plan?
- 4 What do I need to do to get here?
- 5 Why do I want this?
- 6 What plan plays it safe?
- 7 What do you notice when you compare your plans?
- 8 What aspect about each of your Odyssey Plans excites you most?



Odyssey Planning Reflection

Type your responses to the reflection questions below:

CHAPTER **05** CONCLUSION

Now that we have a better sense of what some of our life paths could look like, let's try and test some of these plans out through prototyping.



PRIZE!

Submit your Odyssey Plans! Submit a photograph of your completed Odyssey Plans to careereducation@uwo.ca to be entered into a draw for 1 of 50 Spoke gift cards! Draws will occur throughout each semester. Winners will be emailed!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 6 



CHAPTER 06

Testing Out The Thames

IN THIS CHAPTER:

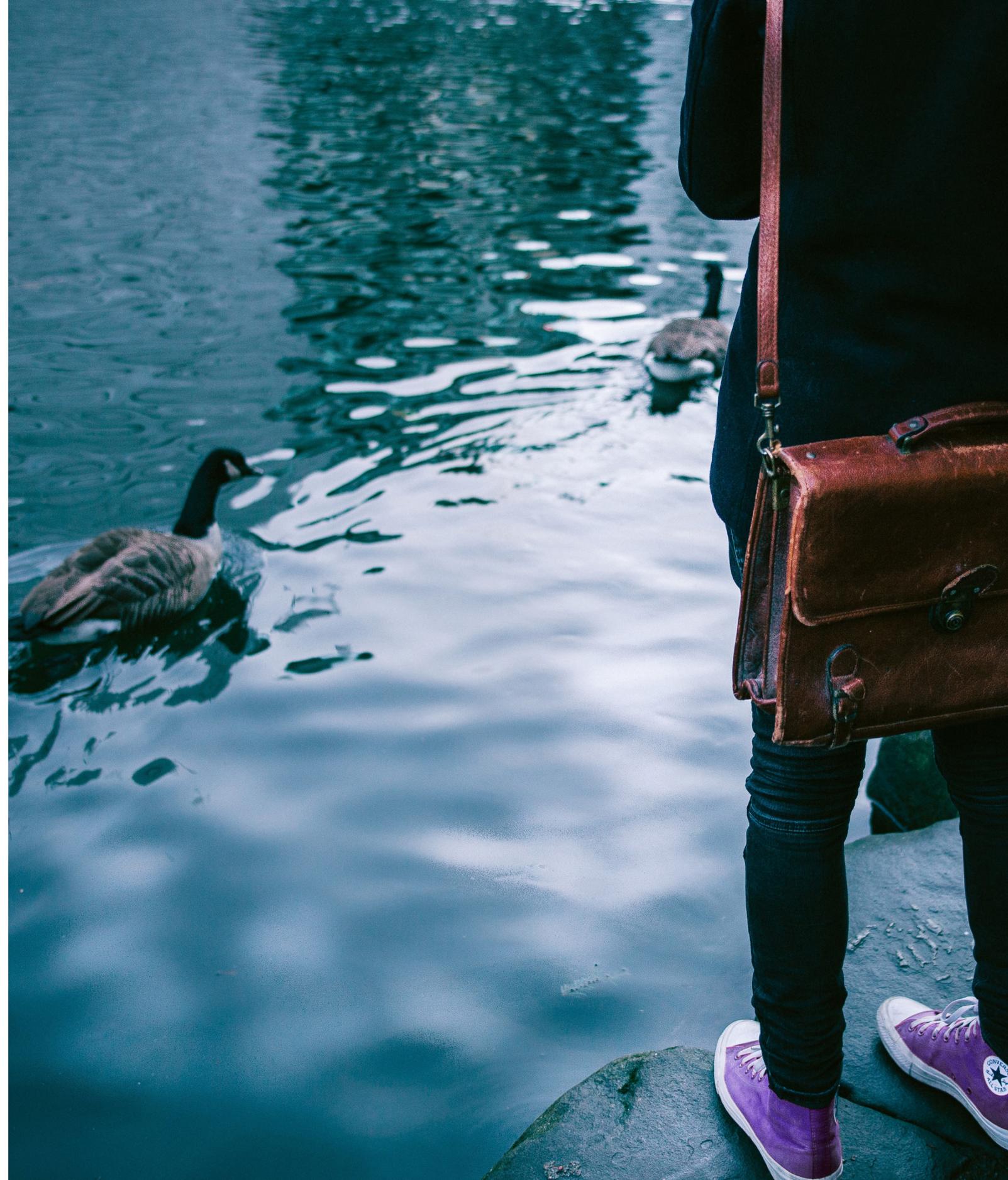
When you look to solve the day-to-day problems you face, it's common to start with what you know about the problem, look at the information you have on hand and develop an effective strategy for solving the issue. When you are looking to solve a "wicked" problem such as designing your life, there is not a great deal of reliable data about your future to use a standard problem-solving approach. Given that traditional cause-and-effect thinking won't work, it is necessary to utilize an approach which can allow you to "sneak up on your future" and gain data & insights before you move into full problem-solving mode. Prototyping is the process by which you can gather such future-focused data.

- 1 Introduction to prototyping:** By asking good questions, identifying hidden biases and assumptions, coming up with lots of ideas, and iterating rapidly, you can create momentum exploring a path you'd like to try out.
- 2 Determining what you like (or don't like):** Prototyping is extremely valuable as allows you to gather important information in an efficient manner. Through prototyping you can identify further possibilities as you confirm things you like as well as bring to light components of your possible plans that do not actually align with your interests.



Have you ever walked over the Med-Syd bridge and thought, “Hmmm I’ve always wanted to test out the Thames by taking a dip in the water!” Well...you are not alone! And this line of thinking points to a major principle of Life Design—testing things out! Being curious and asking good questions (i.e., testing things out) is a key tool to landing on a new idea, creating new experiences, and redirecting yourself on a new academic or life path!

Sometimes this can be challenging. We may be interested in testing a variety of life alternatives, but be too nervous to take the first step in pursuing them! In these moments, it is valuable to remind yourself that you need to test out the Thames in order to feel comfortable getting into the water. In other words, giving things a try will allow you the space to feel comfortable pursuing a potential life path. You may even need to dip your toe in more than once (although, we wouldn’t recommend that you do this in the Thames too many times...YIKES!).



How can we start testing things out? Well, let's follow the equation below!



QUESTIONING



UNDERSTANDING



PROTOTYPING

Let's Get Started



QUESTIONING

As is the case when solving most problems, the first step to prototyping is "gathering the data". To do this, we need to ask questions. In other words, you should start by asking yourself exactly what you would like to test out and why you want to give it a try.



UNDERSTANDING

Through questioning, you will be able to gather greater insight into what you are specifically looking for from an experience. You will be able to challenge biases and assumptions you may hold which have held you back from pursuing such an experience. Further understanding can create the momentum to develop a plan for prototyping. But...what is meant by prototyping?



PROTOTYPING

Prototyping is the process of using data/information around you (e.g., people, past experiences, or future plans) to test out whether a plan you are interested in is actually worth pursuing and/or investing in. Using the understanding you developed through asking questions, you will be able to specify what it is you would like to prototype and how you can undertake an effective prototype experience. It's important to understand that anything can be prototyped—an idea, career path, a position, a new project...the list goes on and on! All these different sources of data can help you explore questions about your alternatives or the experiences that you may want to explore.



TIP

Explore [Western Connect](#) and [Working at Western](#) to find out what job opportunities are out there that relate to your interests!

Western Connect contains a job board that connects Western students to external job postings.

Work at Western is a job board that connects Western students to internal job postings (job opportunities at Western University).

How Can I Prototype?



PROTOTYPING (CONTINUED)

So, you may be asking, “how can I prototype?” The simplest way to prototype is through conversation. We like to call this process a “Thames Testing interview”. Now, the word “interview” can scare some people off, but don’t worry, a Thames Testing Interview is more of an informational discussion or “coffee chat” than an intense, investigative interrogation! It provides you the opportunity to hear the story of the person you are chatting with and gain insight into a field of work, kind of job, organization or area of study through their lens.

Frame your chat by asking the ‘interviewee’ about their experiences. Through this framework, you will be able to gather real-life information about a job position, industry, or academic discipline and can begin to see what aspects you like or don’t like regarding the area or topic you are exploring. From there, you can determine whether you are still interested in that topic, and whether you would like to learn and invest further in that pathway.



TIP

Having trouble figuring out who you should prototype with? One useful resource is your [Odyssey Plan](#). Review the questions you had about your various life paths and search for people who may be able to answer the questions you posed! Another useful activity is brainstorming. Use the brainstorming techniques highlighted in [Chapter Four](#) to flush out your thoughts and find different ways to prototype an idea!

Still don’t believe in the power of prototyping? Meet Ethan. ►





Ethan
4TH YEAR - BMOS

Until his fourth-year, Ethan found it rather challenging and overwhelming to figure out what area of business he wanted to pursue—it is very normal for university students to be anxious about what their future might hold! He settled on Human Resources (HR), but found himself second-guessing this potential career path.

Ethan decided to explore these feelings of apprehension further and began to prototype (although he did not know that he was prototyping at the time!). To do this, Ethan sought out more information about the HR field as well as any information he could gather about what a future in other business streams might be like. Ethan talked to friends, mentors, and family who have experience with, or who have worked in, various business disciplines. From these conversations, Ethan became aware of an internship program which was rotational in nature (i.e, it allows interns to experience what it is like working in different departments of the organization). It was a perfect way to prototype his future career plans! Ethan applied, and was hired.

Through the rotational internship program, and through this experience, was able to determine what area of business he was really passionate about—Human Resources! Even though this was the very area he first thought he wanted to begin his career within, his prototyping experience helped affirm his plan and become more comfortable in his area of study!

- ▶ As seen through Ethan, gathering information and having prototyping conversations can do wonders to jump-start a prototype journey. Keeping an open mind and finding ways to explore options is a great way to design your life and set you up for success!

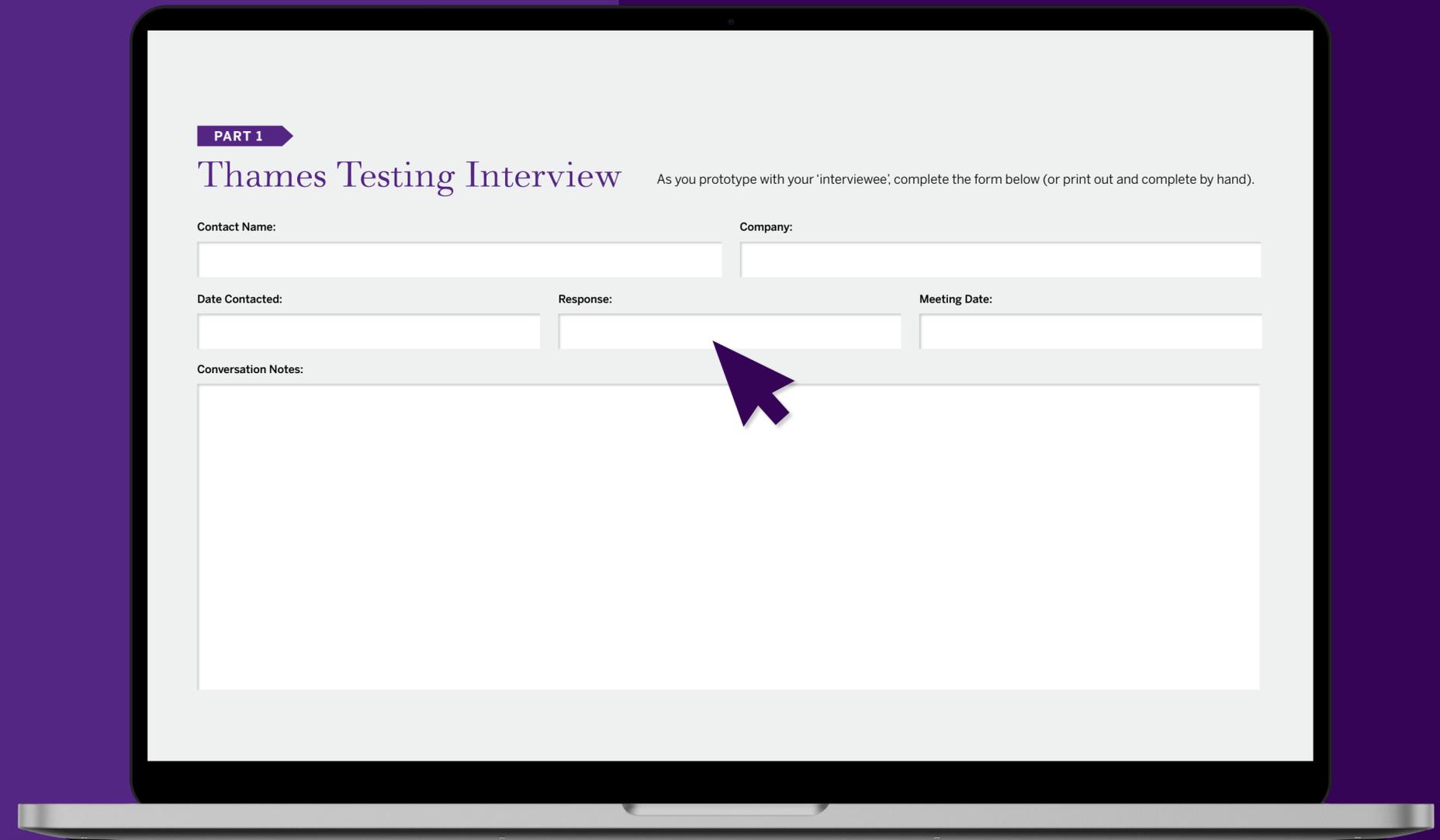


ACTIVITY

Thames Testing Interview

Alright, let's prototype! To begin, find some people you would like to have conversations with. Again, this can be anyone! Once you've decided who you would like to meet with, use the following Thames Tester Conversation Notebook to keep track of what was discussed and how successful you were at:

- 1 Coming up with alternatives
- 2 Identifying biases
- 3 Avoiding judgement
- 4 Building off the ideas of others
- 5 Going for wild ideas



PART 1

Thames Testing Interview

As you prototype with your 'interviewee', complete the form below (or print out and complete by hand).

Contact Name:

Organization:

Date Contacted:

Response:

Meeting Date:

Conversation Notes:

PART 2

Thames Testing Interview Reflection

Take a moment to complete the checklist on this page by indicating which of the five elements of prototyping came out of your conversation (click the square next to each element to identify its successful achievement).

To the right of each indicator there is space where you can reflect and comment on how you have implemented each of the prototype indicators in your prototyping journey. Take some time to really “dig deep” and think about how you can change your prototyping journey for the better and benefit your life overall.



CHECKLIST & REFLECTION

Came up with alternatives

Outted biases

Avoided judgement

Built off of the ideas of others

Went for wild ideas

CHAPTER **06** CONCLUSION

Now that you have an appreciation of the power of prototyping, let's dip our flippers (or toes) in the water and continue on the journey of figuring out what life paths are worth exploring in greater detail!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 7 



CHAPTER 07

Spoke Chats

IN THIS CHAPTER:

A stark reality, often not understood by most job seekers, is the standard approach to finding and applying for opportunities is extremely ineffective. Research suggests the traditional model of identifying and stating interest in a position results in ‘success’ only 5% of the time (at best!). The traditional approach to job seeking fails so frequently because it is based on the idea the "perfect" job is out there waiting for you.

- 1 Dissecting the industry:** Every field or area of work has its’ own culture, norms, and way of “doing business”. Gaining as clear an understanding as possible of an area of interest is vital to help you navigate the industry and utilize your precious resources (time, money, effort) most effectively.
- 2 Introduction to networking:** When done honestly and authentically, networking is simply an activity of connecting with others to ask for direction(s); you don’t know your way around an area/topic/field, so you are doing research – asking those who have experience how to best “arrive” at the destination you are interested in.
- 3 How to set up a coffee chat:** A “coffee chat” is a relaxed, yet professional, interaction which can allow you to ask for directions comfortably and confidently. Preparing an effective "pitch" to ask for such a discussion is important as is thinking in advance about the kinds of questions you want to ask to gain the information necessary to determine whether you want to continue on your journey to the destination you are inquiring about.



The Spoke is known for many things: amazing bagels, Rick McGhie, and...coffee chats? As detailed in the previous chapter, it is important to get a feel for possible alternative life paths before pursuing them. Taking a seat at the Spoke and meeting with your favourite mentor, colleague, or peer can do wonders for understanding an industry or field you are interested in. So yes, the Spoke is known for curating the best coffee chats too! Grab a bagel, pull up a stool and connect with others to learn about different industries, how to prototype in those industries, and gain an understanding of how to best arrive at your destination (so you can get that job offer in the end!). This can be simplified as:



**UNDERSTANDING
THE INDUSTRY**



PROTOTYPING



JOB OFFERS



UNDERSTANDING THE INDUSTRY

Much like navigating university life, navigating the workforce is not a piece of cake. But, if you live life according to Western Life Design principles, and learn how to approach job-hunting, your path forward will be smoother and less stressful.

To get a job that satisfies your True North, you have to understand the industry you are going into. This doesn't necessarily mean you need to know all the ins and outs of the role you are looking to pursue (although that will definitely help down the line), rather, this refers to **understanding the caveats present in many job markets**. Lucky for you, we are about to give you the inside scoop on how to get the most out of job-hunting across any industry.



INSIDE SCOOP #1

You should note that perfection and Western Life Design do not go hand in hand. Frankly, you will experience many setbacks and many highs and lows while life designing and well...while just living life. Most people search for jobs by finding a job listing, determining if it is the "perfect" job for them, submitting a resume and then waiting for a response. This type of approach has a very low success rate because people are conditioned to think that the perfect job is waiting out there for them—to lean into truly becoming designers of our lives, we need to flip this belief on its head.

There is this idea that the internet and online job postings are the **ONLY** way to find a job. **THIS. IS. SIMPLY. NOT. TRUE.** There are many great jobs out there that aren't publicly listed. In other words, there are many job postings that are not posted externally (e.g., they are only passed around within an organization) or that are simply not posted at all (e.g., opportunities within entrepreneurial or small companies that don't have the resources or infrastructure available for posting or actively advertising jobs). This is your first key to understanding the industry...**just because you don't see a posting, doesn't mean an employment opportunity doesn't exist.**



INSIDE SCOOP #2

No organization wants to miss out on a good candidate. This results in organizations seeking out as many candidates as possible and creating very generic position descriptions. While this works to the organization's favour, it also means more unqualified candidates will be applying for the role. This is your second key to understanding the industry—don't disregard a posting simply because a job description doesn't match exactly what you would like to be doing.

Industry Tips & Tricks

Now that you have a better sense of how the industry operates, here are three tips for navigating industry realities:



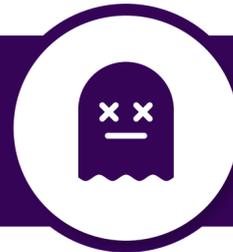
Alter your resume & cover letter to contain key words from the job descriptions

It is important that the phrases and keywords used in your resume and cover letter match the keywords used in the job description because many organizations use a software system (often called an Applicant Tracking Systems or "ATS") that scans application materials and "matches" key words found between an applicant's resume, cover letter, etc. and the job description. If there is a match, the candidate's application will then be flagged for a corporate recruiter or hiring manager to review.



Identify (and be wary of)
"Super-Job Descriptions":

Super-job descriptions are also known as “wishful thinking” job postings. Organizations often publish job postings with the intent of finding “super candidates”, individuals who are able to not only do all the things the person who previously held the job did, but who also possess all the skills and traits the previous employee in the position did not. This results in a job description which is often filled with skills and experiences that most, if not all, candidates will not possess. This, in turn, results in a recruiting process that typically ends up never successfully hiring someone. It’s important to watch out for these super job descriptions and be wary of applying to such opportunities as it may be an indication that the organization has unrealistic expectations and may not be an ideal place to work.



Identify (and be wary of)
"Phantom Job Listings":

Phantom job listings come to be when organizations create and publish a job description already having a predetermined candidate. Be aware of these kinds of listings by determining how quickly job listings are “taken down” after being posted for an organization. If you notice an organization frequently only posts opportunities for a very short period of time (typically one week or less than a week), make note of this and prepare yourself for the fact that it is an organization which may only be “going through the motions” of recruiting while already having identified the candidate that is going to be hired. If the organization is one you would really like to work at, it is of extra importance that you network with people who are currently employed within the organization so they can refer you internally.



TIP

Use the [Careers & Experience](#) department at Western to get another opinion on and suggestions as to how to strengthen your application materials (resume, cover letter, etc.)

Being familiar with these three tips and learning more about how the industry (or industries) you are interested in operates is invaluable when exploring potential career paths and can help you determine how to most effectively open new doors. Once we know how an industry works, it’s time to figure out how to prototype it!



PROTOTYPING THE INDUSTRY

Let's talk about the "hidden" job market. The "hidden" job market describes the collection of jobs that aren't formally advertised or published online. Research suggests 70-80% of all opportunities that exist are part of the "hidden" job market. Typically jobs within the "hidden" job market can only be accessed via connections and relationships...through networking.



NETWORKING

Networking can be done by reaching out to professionals to begin your prototyping journey. Some of these professional connections can be built by utilizing social media platforms such as LinkedIn or by participating in networking events in order to identify contacts within a certain field or organization of interest. Once you have identified such contacts, a natural next step is to set up informational conversations or "coffee chats". When having these conversations, your primary objective is to listen and understand the story of the person you are interacting with to gain further insight and direction – such efforts should not be undertaken simply to "get a job". Building relationships and finding out what you like and don't like about a certain industry or position is not only prototyping, but it also helps you build professional connections that can provide leads to a future job. First and foremost however, holding such conversations allows you to gather information, ask for directions and gain more knowledge which helps you gain a clearer sense of the direction you want to go while also allowing you a greater opportunity to reach your destination as easily as possible.



TIP

If you follow Western University on LinkedIn, a prompt with different Western alumni will be shown. Here, you'll be able to connect and chat with them...you'd be surprised at how many people are willing to help out and chat!

Check out Western's LinkedIn page [here](#). This page has information about Western and can help you identify any of the more than 200 000 alumni who are on LinkedIn and can share their insight and experience with you!

Although reaching out to other professionals, setting up coffee chats and establishing relationships can seem daunting, consider such conversations simply a way of getting direction from those who have already arrived at the location you are considering travelling to—take the pressure off yourself by setting a readily achievable goal of actively listening, building rapport and gathering information (in the form of hearing others' perspectives, insights and experiences). From here, doors will open!

Take Jenna for example. ►



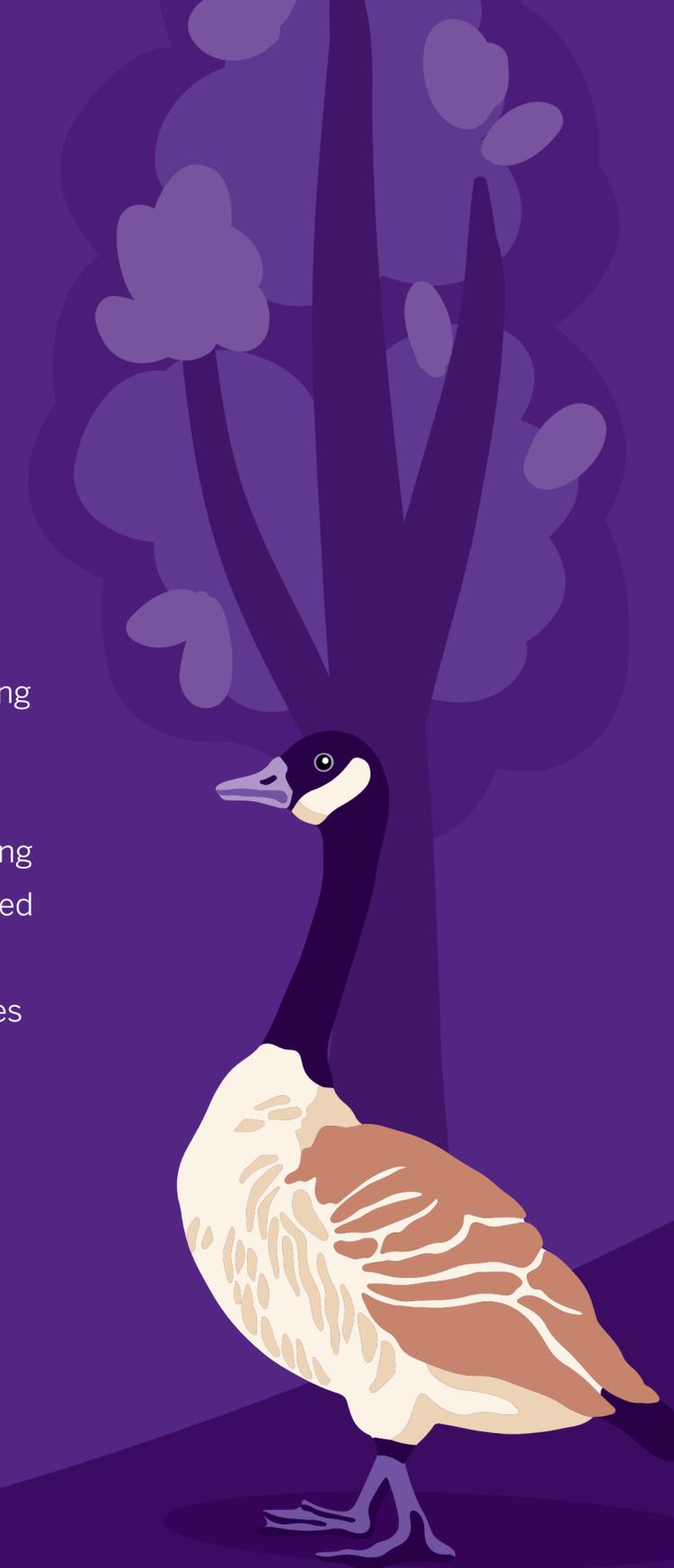
Jenna RECENT GRADUATE

Much like many recent grads, Jenna felt very overwhelmed with the thought of finding and securing a job post-graduation. To explore her options and get started on finding a position after graduating, Jenna began reviewing positions which sparked her interest on LinkedIn. From here, Jenna reached out to related professionals for a coffee chat (aka a “Thames Tester Interview”).

Jenna was pretty apprehensive about “cold-calling” professionals and asking for their time. But, once Jenna got the momentum started, she was able to connect with a handful of professionals that were willing to divulge industry secrets and have productive conversations. She even got a job offer after one of her conversations!

From these conversations, Jenna learned that many professionals are eager to talk about their careers and experiences. She realized that it’s better to reach out and receive a “no” than to not reach out at all and miss out on the potential of developing new professional relationships.

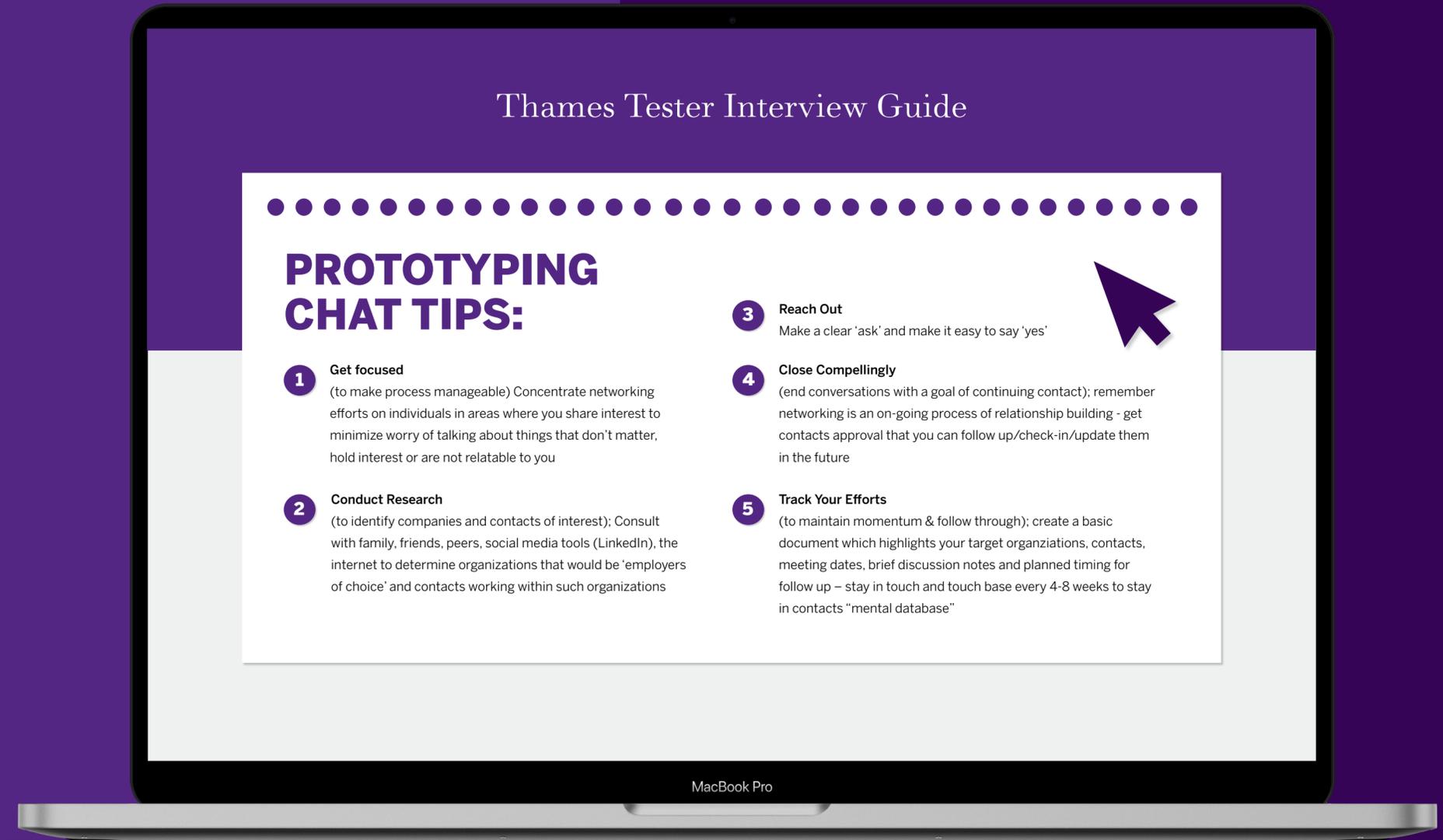
- ▶ As shown by Jenna’s experience, prototyping can have a variety of positive effects—the greatest being the opportunity to get a job offer! But, we also recognize that prototyping isn’t that easy. So, use the activity referenced on the next page to help you prepare for it! The Thames Tester Interview Guide provides you with a great outline of questions and talking points so that you can feel more comfortable exploring and prototyping potential life paths.



ACTIVITY

Thames Tester Interview Guide

On the pages that follow, tips for prototyping Spoke Chats and an outreach template are provided to help you as you get ready to connect with those professionals who can provide you with invaluable insight & direction. Remember to focus on having individuals tell their story and share their experiences and what they have learned along the way. Keep the spotlight off yourself and keep things relaxed yet professional. Think about what would be helpful for you to know as you work to determine if the path that the individual you are speaking with has travelled is one that you want to explore further!



Thames Tester Interview Guide



PROTOTYPING CHAT TIPS:

- 1 Get Focused**

Concentrate networking efforts on individuals who work in areas/fields you are genuinely interested in to minimize the chance of having conversations about things that don't matter, hold interest or are not relatable to you.
- 2 Conduct Research**

Consult with family, friends, peers, social media tools (LinkedIn), and other internet resources to determine preferred organizations that would be "employers of choice" as well as contacts working within such organizations.
- 3 Reach Out**

Make a clear "ask" and make it easy for contacts to say "yes".
- 4 Close Compellingly**

Remember, networking is an on-going process of relationship building – as you end your coffee chats, get approval that you can follow up/check in with them in the future.
- 5 Track Your Efforts**

Create a basic document which notes your target organizations, contacts, meeting dates, brief discussion notes, and planned timing for follow up. Look to stay connected and "touch base" with contacts every 4-8 weeks to stay in their "mental database".

INTERVIEW GUIDE

EMAIL TEMPLATE:

- 1 Introduce yourself & provide context**
State who you are, where are “at” in life, your interest in their field/area, how you obtained their name and your understanding of the position they hold.
- 2 Make a clear “ask”**
After your introduction, ask for an “informational meeting” or “coffee chat”, to be held in person, over Zoom, or by phone, for a relatively short amount of time (15-20mins or 20-25mins.). Given that people are busy do not ask for more than 30mins. of a contact’s time.
- 3 Set the stage & outline expectations**
Provide a sense of the “agenda” for your discussion/meeting – part “strategic discussion” or professional dialogue re: the industry, company, department, position they hold as well as current issues/trends, and part “personal conversation” regarding their career path, how they arrived at where they are today, things they would do over again, things they would do differently, etc.
- 4 Get ready for the discussion**
Prepare for your informational meetings in advance; plan the questions you will ask so that you can demonstrate your professionalism and your genuine interest while maximizing the conversation’s value (doing so also ensures you will be ready regardless of how quickly they agree to meet!)

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Hello [contact],

My name is [your name] and I am currently studying in the [program of study] program at Western University. I’m very interested in the [industry of interest] industry, specifically the area of [area or department/field of interest within the industry]. I came across your profile on LinkedIn and my understanding is you hold the role of [position title of contact] at [organization contact works for] in [geographic location of contact].

I am wondering if you would be open to meeting with me, in person, on Zoom or over the phone, for 15-20mins. I would appreciate the opportunity to gain your perspective on [area of interest], the projects you are currently working on within [organization contact works for] and discuss with you the challenges and rewards you experience within your role. I would also enjoy chatting with you about your own career path and gaining a greater sense of the steps you have taken to achieve your career success.

I am available [enter availability during week noting days and times of availability]. If you would have time to connect over the next two weeks, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to chat with you. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I hope to have chance to speak with you in near future.

Kind regards,
[Your name]

CHAPTER 07 CONCLUSION

Now that you have the inside scoop on your industry (or industries) of interest and will soon have made too many connections and received too many job offers to count, let's move on and learn how to choose which path makes the most sense for you when you have so many paths or options to choose from.

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 8 



CHAPTER 08

Choosing Your Golden Egg

IN THIS CHAPTER:

Designing a career and a life you WANT to live requires you to not only have lots of options and good alternatives but also to make good choices and live into those choices with confidence. Regardless of your program, year of study, level of education or favourite style of Western hoodie for that matter, we are willing to bet that wherever you are in your Western journey, all the choices you have made to this point have had a common goal – to bring you a sense of happiness (by satisfying yourself, by making others around you happy/proud, by accomplishing goals you have set, etc.). In life design, being happy means you CHOOSE happiness.

- 1 How to choose well:** Adopting a healthy and wise life design choosing process is critical to a happy outcome – it is important to recognize that when you have too many options you actually have none at all. Options only create value in your life when they are chosen and realized. Choosing well involves narrowing down options, and choosing discerningly.
- 2 Moving on after making a choice:** To truly move towards happiness and living the life you WANT to live, it is essential that once you make a choice, you “lean into” your choice fully. Only “half choosing” an option is one of the most effective ways to short circuit yourself and keep you from reaching the destination you have already thought about carefully and decided upon.



PICTURE THIS:

Say you lay a couple of eggs. “What?! I can’t lay eggs!!” Congrats, Professor. Yeah, obviously you can’t lay eggs, but a theme’s a theme, we’re rolling with it. So, say you lay a set of eggs. These are YOUR eggs. You made them, you carried them, you’ve thought long and hard about them, and the future possibilities that exist for each egg. You presumably like each of them and have a deep sense of attachment and caring for each egg.

Now imagine someone asked you to pick only one of them. Only one of them gets to hatch. You only get to see the future for one of your eggs. An impossible choice! Whether your set was made of 2 eggs or a farmer’s dozen (that’s 13, not 12, for all you non-farmers out there), you care about each of them. You want each of them to have a chance at a future, you want to see where each of them might go!



In life, we run into many branched paths... there are lots of different choices we could make that might end up changing our lives in very grand ways. It can seem really difficult to make choices like this. Fortunately, you can't lay eggs, and this isn't a choosing-your-kids situation, but making choices can be a really challenging process. Whether you're deciding where to go for university, what program to take, what to major in, what to specialize in, or what job you're going to accept—life is full of options, and we want to see them all through! Life Design helps you get the most out of all your options, or at the very least, helps you break things down to help make deciding feel a bit easier. The equation we use for choosing in Life Design is:



**UNDERSTANDING
THE OPTIONS**



PROTOTYPING



DECISION MAKING



UNDERSTANDING THE OPTIONS

An important thing to remember in choosing is that everybody is trying to make the “right” choice. People are making choices all the time, and while daily choices are usually easier than choices in “life or death” situations, we do run into some complicated scenarios. Think of the trolley problem: you are faced with an ethical dilemma (or decision) and have to choose between saving a group of people from an oncoming train or choosing to save just one person from the train. The decision to save a group of people rather than one person seems like the obvious answer. However, this decision would still be INCREDIBLY stressful. But now think, how many times are you going to see people on train tracks in real life? Probably about never. But you will have to choose an option that saves you the most time, an option that has fewer sacrifices, an option that has more gains. And while it’ll hopefully be much less stressful than the trolley problem, it’ll probably require lots of deliberation.



PROTOTYPING

Going back to those eggs you laid, you have to understand what each of your options personally means to you before you get anywhere close to making a decision. The best way to make this whole process less daunting is prototyping. Blindly choosing an option with no real idea of the possible outcomes associated with it is quite dangerous. Moreover, choosing in such a manner can create immense amounts of regret! The best way to make a choice is to have some sort of idea of where that choice would lead, and if you can’t see the future (and last time we checked this was a capability none of us possessed), prototyping (re: the last chapter) is your best bet.



DECISION MAKING

Now we certainly don’t mean to make choosing sound easy. Indecisiveness is all too common... anyone who can decide on an UberEats order in under 30 minutes definitely has some sort of superpower! It can be much easier to shove a decision onto somebody else, or to just flip a coin if you don’t want to think too hard. But if you’re choosing for your life, and your future, you might want to be a bit more involved. When you’re looking to make a choice that will affect you, it’s important to remember that you’re working towards what makes you the happiest!

No matter what situation you’re in, the overall goal is to choose whatever makes you the happiest in the long run! Happiness in Life Design is learning to choose well, which isn’t necessarily knowing what the “right” choice to make is, it’s letting yourself know what options you have and choosing based on your relationship with each option. As Life Designers are often heard to say, **“There is no right choice – only good choosing”**. That being said, choosing isn’t always straightforward.

Take Puru for example! ►



Puru 3RD YEAR

Puru is a third-year Western University student that is currently undeclared (i.e., is not associated with a specific program or degree). You may hear that and think “Oh no! He doesn’t know what he’s doing!” But truth be told, he’s never been more sure of his academic journey in his entire life!

Puru started his Western journey in Medical Sciences. He was passionate about Science, cared deeply for it, so much so that he ran for and became one of the first-year representatives for the Science Student Council. But when it came to the end of his first year, he wasn’t sure anymore. He still really liked science and had all these goals for a science-based career, but it didn’t feel the same – he wasn’t as moved by it. To get past this, in his following year, he tried out a variety of different programs – he dipped his toes into Psychology,

General Sciences, and some Arts courses. He spent quite a bit of time trying to figure out what he wanted to do. He kept looking back on his switches and wondering, “was that the right choice?” Regardless of how much he reflected, he just couldn’t seem to move on (Step 4 in the choosing process).

At the beginning of the summer before his 3rd year, he decided to seek the help of Academic Advisors and Mental Health Services. Puru accepted that he needed help committing to a choice, and figuring out where he was most comfortable academically. As he was talking to his advisors, he discovered that his favourite part of everything he’d done so far had been the involvement of people! Getting to be a part of someone else’s journey and enhance their well-being through teaching them was the highlight of all of his academic experiences thus far, and he decided that the best way he could do that in the future would be as a professor.

Now, going into third year, Puru is listed as undeclared, but will be registering (in this year’s Intent to Register process) in the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics program here at Western, in hopes of getting a well-rounded education in a variety of topics. When he took his step back, slowed down, and decided to commit, it didn’t matter what his past choices were, he was finally able to move on.



TIP

Mental Health Services at Western are a great resource to help you make decisions. Understanding your mental and emotional state is a key part of decision making, and who better to help than an on-campus therapist?

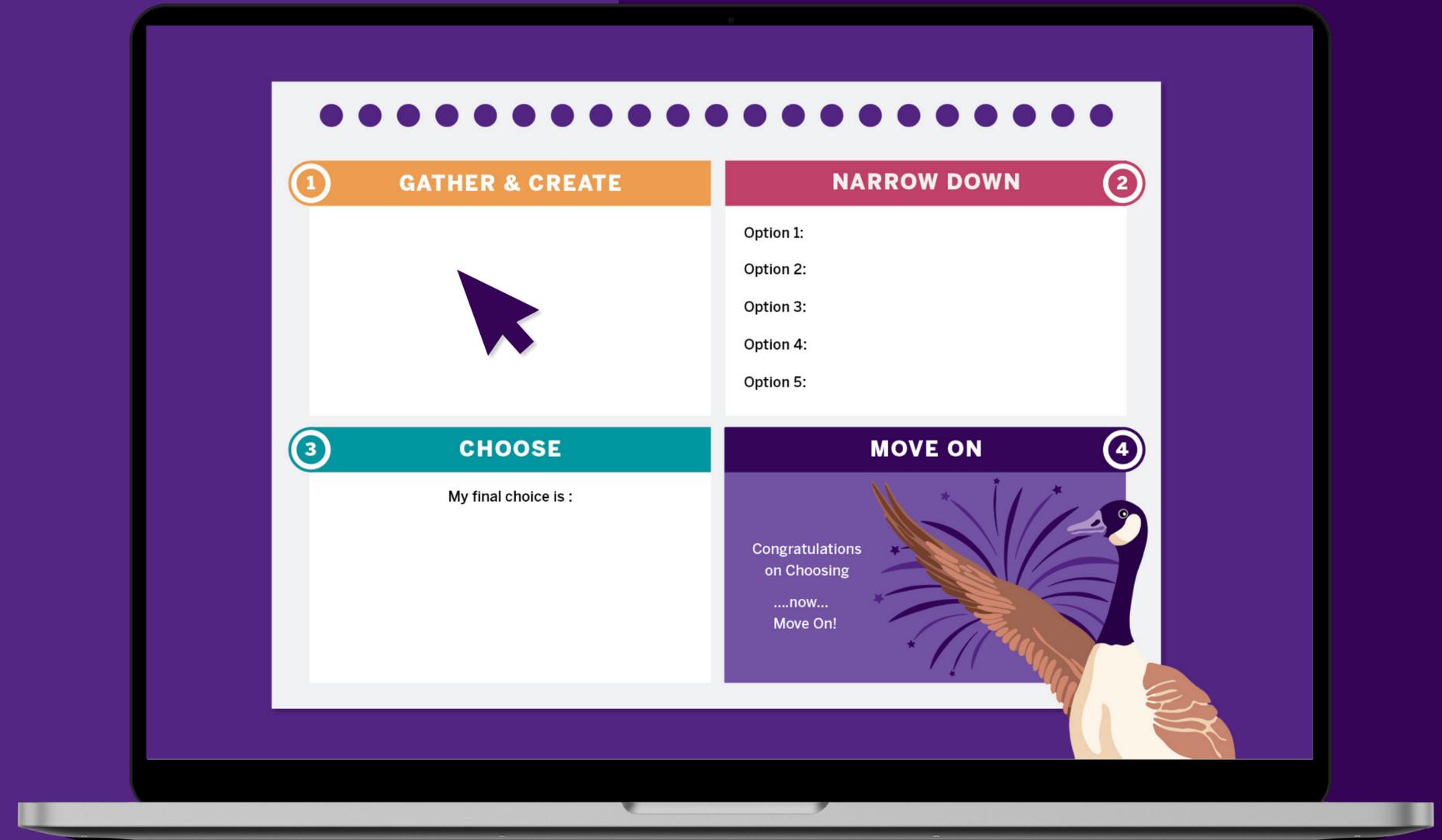
ACTIVITY

Decision Making Template

Through Western Life Design, we outline the process of good choosing using four steps. These steps are outlined in our Western Decision Making Template.

Use the next three pages of the workbook to walk yourself through a decision you've been trying to make or a decision you had to make recently. Go through the four following steps and write down:

- 1 Your ideas
- 2 How you've narrowed them down
- 3 Your choosing process
- 4 How you plan to move on after making your choice



How Does Decision Making Work?

PART 1

Review these four steps before completing the Decision Making Template.

1

GATHER & CREATE

Hopefully after the Design Your Western and Testing Out The Thames chapters you're not completely lost as to how to come up with ideas! Take your time to jot them down, actually WRITE down your ideas! It is harder to choose an idea if you aren't able to visualize the set of ideas you are choosing from. Remember that idea you had in the middle of the night and then promptly forgot about when you woke up in the morning? Yeah, us neither. Come up with ideas! Jot them down! Draw them if you need to! Do whatever you can so you can see what you're choosing from.

2

NARROW DOWN

Now hear us out. You don't need that many options. In fact, having that many options is probably making it harder to choose. Did I assume you wrote down your options before reading this part? Definitely, but the point still stands. Seeing a million things on the Wave menu will not help you figure out what you're craving! You have to rule things out, and group things together! Cross off whole categories! Choose the top option of each category! This isn't the making-a-choice part, this is just getting-rid-of-options-i-probably-don't-want-that-much-anyway part.

Everything might sound good, but everything is a lot, and you probably don't want that much anyway. And if it's causing you mental turmoil to bring yourself to cross out those options, keep them! If your relationship to that egg is too strong, you're probably not willing to part with it yet, which means you value it above some others! See? You're making decisions already. When you cut certain options out, rewrite the list, without the ones you cut. Get rid of them as options. This helps you reduce your list down to, ideally, 5 solid options. Now let's get down to choosing.

How Does Decision Making Work?

CONTINUED

Review these four steps before completing the Decision Making Template.

3

CHOOSE

Now that you have fewer options, you can make a well-informed choice. You know your options. You've made your "pros" and "cons" lists. You're emotionally in tune with yourself and your relationship to these options, what they mean to you, who they make you feel like, and where they take place in your dream life. Making a well-informed choice isn't just going with your gut or letting fate decide. Using both your cognitive and emotional skills to assess each option is done through understanding the facts and understanding your emotional state regarding the

possibilities. Well-informed emotional knowledge will help us discern the better choices. Once you've processed all this and have seen the many possible futures for yourself, it's time to...choose. And yeah, just do it. Just choose. There are a million and one cliché ways to say this, but you just have to commit to an option and get to it. Make that choice, no matter how painful it seems. Cross everything else out, and erase them as possibilities. Take those other options and toss them out the window (do a quick little defenestration – it's ok if you need to look that word up). Got it? Perfect. Now for our last step.

4

MOVE ON

Made your choice? Good. Now stop thinking about it. Accept that the choice you've made is now a reality. LIVE that choice. LOVE that choice. LAUGH that choice(?) Whatever. Do whatever you need to do to forget the other options. By any means necessary. Write them down on a piece of paper and burn them. Bury them and make a little grave for them. Make a paper airplane out of them and toss them in the Thames River. Being able to look back on an option makes us doubt and devalue our choices, and we live in regret! So again. Choose, then MOVE ON.

PART 2

Your Western Decision Making Template

Now that you know the steps to good choosing, try it out yourself using this template!

1 GATHER & CREATE	2 NARROW DOWN
	Option 1: Option 2: Option 3: Option 4: Option 5:
3 CHOOSE	4 MOVE ON
My final choice is :	Congratulations on Choosingnow... Move On!



CHAPTER 08 CONCLUSION

As exemplified through Puru's story, when you take a step back, slow down, and decide to commit, it doesn't matter what your past choices were, you will finally be able to move on. And once you are able to move on from your past choices, you'll have a pretty easy time getting back in the saddle!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 9 



CHAPTER 09

Getting Back In The Saddle

IN THIS CHAPTER:

It would be amazing to be given a magic potion or perhaps be granted three wishes from an unbottled genie so that you could guarantee your life would go just the way you wanted. A life without any rough patches or unexpected challenges – just one success after another after another. No disappointment, no trouble, no grief, no setbacks. Unfortunately, such a life only exists in fairytales or fictional stories. Failure is a part of life and in many ways, failure is what allows us to appreciate success and feel the joy inherent in overcoming obstacles and “finding our way”. While avoiding failure is not possible, becoming immune to the range of negative feelings and emotions that often burden us when things don’t go as planned can be achieved.

- 1 Reframing Failure:** So as not to get fixated on the negative when things don’t go as planned, it is vital to see the term “failure” from a different perspective. Rather than than seeing failure as a negative, it is valuable to reframe failure as simply a step to achieving success sooner. You learn from all experiences and every single outcome actually helps you achieve success.

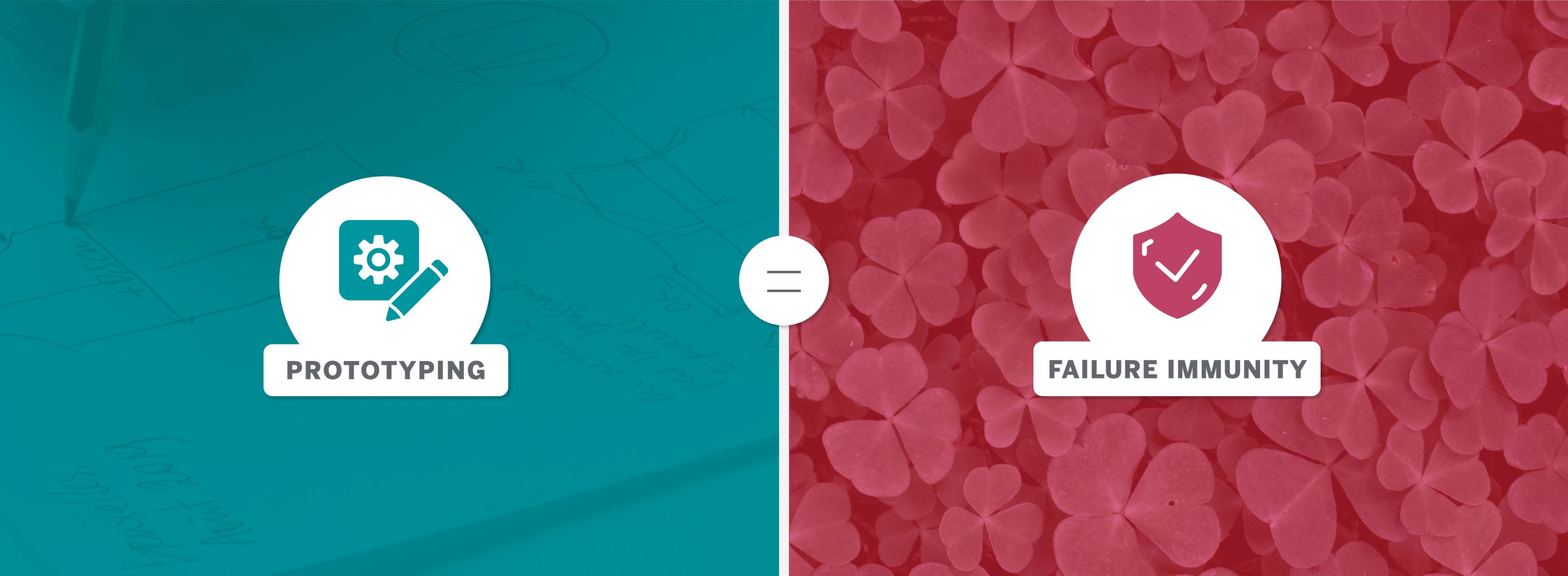


As geese-filled and hopefully comical as this workbook intends to be, we aren't attempting to have you believe Western Life Design is easy. While there will be "ups", there will also be "downs", and that can be very hard! You may have prototyped something and felt really passionate about it, only to find out the positive result you were hoping for did not occur. You may have built a study technique from the ground up and felt super confident in your understanding of a subject, only to get a mediocre mark back.



It's hard to bounce back from things like that quickly - we all want to succeed and progress into better things, and when it doesn't work out, it can often seem like the next best option is to just give up! Well, we're here to hopefully put a stop to those negative thoughts, or at least maybe have your brain see a yellow light (caution) vs. a red one (stop!). It's time to slow down, reflect a bit, and work on getting back in the saddle, Mustang!

And what better way to hop back in than to keep making prototypes? Our equation for this is:





PROTOTYPING

Now, you might be thinking. “A prototyping equation again?! That’s like, the third time in this book!” What can we say, it’s a great concept! As much as you may expect each chapter to cover unique elements of Life Design, prototyping takes the cake as one of the most pivotal concepts.

Anyhow. Back to failure! Nobody loves to fail, yet somehow everybody does! And as “Butterflies, Rainbows, and Spoke Bagels” as this workbook tries to be, we aren’t going to pretend you can make a wish, snap your fingers, and simply avoid failure. What we do believe though, is that failing doesn’t have to result in you experiencing the chaos of emotions that tend to come with failure. A lot of time, failures leave you with a sore feeling. You tried really hard to get things done, you put in 100% of everything you had, but it didn’t work out. How do you put in your best effort and not feel bad when things fall flat? Well the answer’s simple really - you don’t.

Think back to those eggs you laid in the last chapter. If you picked one egg to live its life and it hatched and ended up being a lazy goose that lives in your basement at 8 (that’s the equivalent of 35 years old in human years) with no real plans of leaving and no long term job and it always asks you for money but never pays you back, you wouldn’t be very pleased with your choice. You put all this effort into caring for that egg, only to see things fail (side bar – please, please, please don’t think of your own kids as failures if you have a personal experience like this in the future, we’re sure they’re trying very hard to get everything sorted out, and we know they’ll pay you back!).

The problem here is the investment, the full-out commitment. If you put all your goose eggs in one basket (last goose analogy, we promise) and then things happen to cause you to trip along the path you chose, there’s no real way to recover. But if you put one egg in your basket, and you choose a path, even if you trip, there’s plenty more eggs waiting for you back at the farm! Yay prototyping! (sorry we couldn’t help ourselves).



FAILURE IMMUNITY

When you prototype you are essentially trying to fail on purpose. By testing out a bunch of different ideas, you can see what might go wrong with any of them without the full-out commitment that can make failure feel so overwhelming. Without all the pressure being on one idea to go right, you'll be able to learn from what goes wrong, and when you finally want to commit to a big idea, you'll have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge from what failed previously! It's what our parents, family members, and a wide range of "older people" (who told us they were looking out for us) meant when they said "Learn from your mistakes!" The more you get used to making mistakes on purpose, the more immune you become to the effects of failure! Think of it like a vaccine! You get some sort of genetic material or part of the virus and you gain a bit of immunity - this isn't virus repellent, but if or when the virus does come in contact with you, your body won't have the same strong reaction it would have if you were unvaccinated! Yay, science analogies!

Ultimately we encourage you to be open to trying new things, and when you are being open, go in with the knowledge that it could not work. You could drop the egg. But if you do, you've learned what went wrong, what you didn't like, and now you're on to new heights, trying newer things! And if those new things don't work out, on to newer heights again, trying even newer things! The cycle continues and if it's hard to fully get to that "failure immunity" mind state at first, you'll definitely build up to it the more you prototype! And hey, the more you do, the more you learn about and get to develop into the truest version of yourself. **Life is a process, not an outcome.** In Western Life Design you live your "best life" by prototyping and seeing where things go – not by working to a conclusion day in and day out. We'll look to practice reframing failure with our next activity.

But first, a word from our sponsor, Emmanuel! ►
(Emmanuel being one of the authors of this very workbook)



Emmanuel
3RD YEAR

This past summer, aside from writing parts of this workbook, Emmanuel has also been working as a Summer Academic Orientation (SAO) Advisor. He is typically very good at his job (self-proclaimed) and quite enjoys guiding incoming students. However, he doesn't love sending emails. While balancing writing this workbook with his job as an advisor, Emmanuel noticed three separate times that he had forgotten to send out his zoom link emails for his SAO appointments! Each time Emmanuel would feel so guilty for giving late notice to the students who he had appointments with, while simultaneously recognizing that such events were happening because he had so much going on!

He chose to recognize this issue as a **growth opportunity**. Every time he would get a notification that someone had booked an SAO appointment with him, he would send out that email right away, or he would set a reminder on his phone to send out those emails as soon as he got home. By recognizing this as a growth opportunity, Emmanuel was able to better manage his schedule and feel less guilty.

Another "to-do" item on Emmanuel's summer task list was attempting to go to bed at a reasonable time each night. His weekly average of 5.5 hours of sleep a night was not making for enjoyable mornings. Emmanuel recognized not getting to bed at a reasonable time each night as a **weakness**. As much as he'd like to not wake up feeling like he had just written a 3 hour exam, he felt as though everything he was involved in made getting 6 or more hours of sleep a night very challenging. He decided getting more rest would be something he would work towards slowly. On a somewhat related note, although he did intend on going to sleep early yesterday, last night Emmanuel left his bag and phone in his friend's car! After waiting for over an hour hoping his friend would notice he had Emmanuel's gear, Emmanuel eventually decided to walk to his friend's house at the wee hour of 1:15am and politely ask if he could get his bag from the car. Fortunately, this doesn't usually happen. This was just a **screwup** and will hopefully never ever happen again.



Emmanuel
3RD YEAR

Emmanuel's Failure Reframe

FAILURE	SCREWUP	WEAKNESS	GROWTH OPPORTUNITY	INSIGHTS
Weekly sleep average of 5.5hr. per night	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work on getting a bit more sleep each night, not going to be an immediate solution
Forgetting to send emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send emails as soon as appointments are booked/set reminders on phone
Left bag and keys at friends	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...don't do that again silly!

How can you label your failure?

PART 1

Review the failure label explanations below before completing the chart on the next page.



SCREW UP

A simple mistake that you normally don't make. You're usually fairly good at this, but one thing led to another and you screwed up. No real lessons to be learned.



TIP

PAL CENTER: Get help from peers in order to learn from (and grow from) their past failures and your own!



WEAKNESS

A failure that happens over and over, it's something you recognize as a common occurrence in your life. It's something you are well aware of, and something you are working on, but from time to time it catches you. There's not much you can do immediately to resolve this so that it never happens again, but by working on it bit by bit you are hoping to have it cause you less problems in the future.



GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Failures that didn't have to happen, and definitely don't have to happen again in the future. The cause of these failures is known to you, and there is something tangible you can do immediately to make sure it doesn't happen again. These are the failures we want to focus on (for example, rather than getting in the dumps about how you left your favourite pen in UCC two weeks ago, focus on how you can improve your study method for your next exam!)

CHAPTER **09** CONCLUSION

With the insights we've shared in this chapter, you'll be able to deal with (and get over) the next "failure" you have more quickly and without quite the chaos of emotions that failure can bring! Once again, it's important to recognize that this sort of mindset change isn't instantaneous. You can't wake up one day and go "I'm immune to failure! I'm going to ace that exam I started studying for last night!" (we're TOTALLY not speaking from experience). Over time, the more you practice reframing, the easier it will be to prevent the negative thoughts often associated with failure from weighing you down and the more you'll be able to grow!

CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 10 



CHAPTER 10

Your Mustang Gang

IN THIS CHAPTER:

Every great product, service, finding, achievement, milestone, or accomplishment has come about due to the collaborative efforts of a group of people. Even individuals who have achieved amazing “solo” accomplishments have done so in large part due to their “ecosystem” and the people around them. Life design is built on the principles of design thinking and designers embrace a mindset of radical collaboration because any individual design can be made exponentially better by including the thoughts, input, perspectives and ideas of others. “We” is always stronger than “I”.

- 1 Recognizing the roles people play:** When it comes to having a strong team, it’s valuable to appreciate the different ways people support you. When building your team, it’s important to identify “supporters” who encourage you & share feedback, “players” who actively participate in the life you are creating, and “intimates” who are influential and whose exact role in your life design must be carefully considered.
- 2 Qualities of a well-rounded team:** In building your life design team, think quality over quantity – this team has a vital task (aiding you in designing your life!) so keep it small so everyone can contribute & be heard. Be mindful and build a team with varied experiences & perspectives and valuable personal characteristics (think creative, practical, constructive, participative).
- 3 Separating advice and counsel:** Counsel involves someone trying to help you figure out what YOU think. Advice is someone telling you what THEY think. Advice is fine to receive – you want to be careful about how much of it you take (when building YOUR life). Counsel is always helpful and good counsel can leave you in a clearer and more settled state of mind as you make decisions.



As we come to our last chapter of the workbook, let's end with our last "picture-this-scenario" well, scenario. Ok...

PICTURE THIS:

You're a first-year student, on campus for the first time ever and... there's no one around but you. Not one person, student, professor, staff, nay, not even a quack of a noise. Even though you are feeling like you are the lead actor in a movie about a recent apocalyptic event, you have to get to class! It's 10:28 am, and your first EVER class starts at 10:30! You're completely lost and there's no one to point you in the right direction. Doesn't that sound like a nightmare? Well, luckily, you'll never have to figure out what to do in such a scenario! There is always someone on campus to help get where you need to be, which just goes to show that **your journey will go much smoother if you have people around you for support!**



When contemplating how you can get the most out of the concept of radical collaboration, we encourage you to embrace the equation below:





As you might have guessed, this chapter is about the people around you that are part of your team, your squad, your “Mustang Gang” if you will. We’re going to talk about how to use your Mustang Gang (or whatever you’d rather call them if “Gang” seems too violent, seedy, or rogue... perhaps “Thames Troop”?, “Forest City Flock”?, “Western Wedge”? – a group of swans in flight is called a wedge, did you know that? We didn’t either until we created this workbook!) to help you complete your thriving toolkit of resources for tackling the rest of your Western journey.

However, this workbook isn’t telling you to go out and make new friends for the sole purpose of filling the roles we’re about to outline! By all means, make new friends...but what we want you to do is to recognize the roles different people (that are already in your life) play in your support system. Besides, most of this workbook has been about you! Which, wow, self-absorbed much? Let’s open up the sphere a little bit.

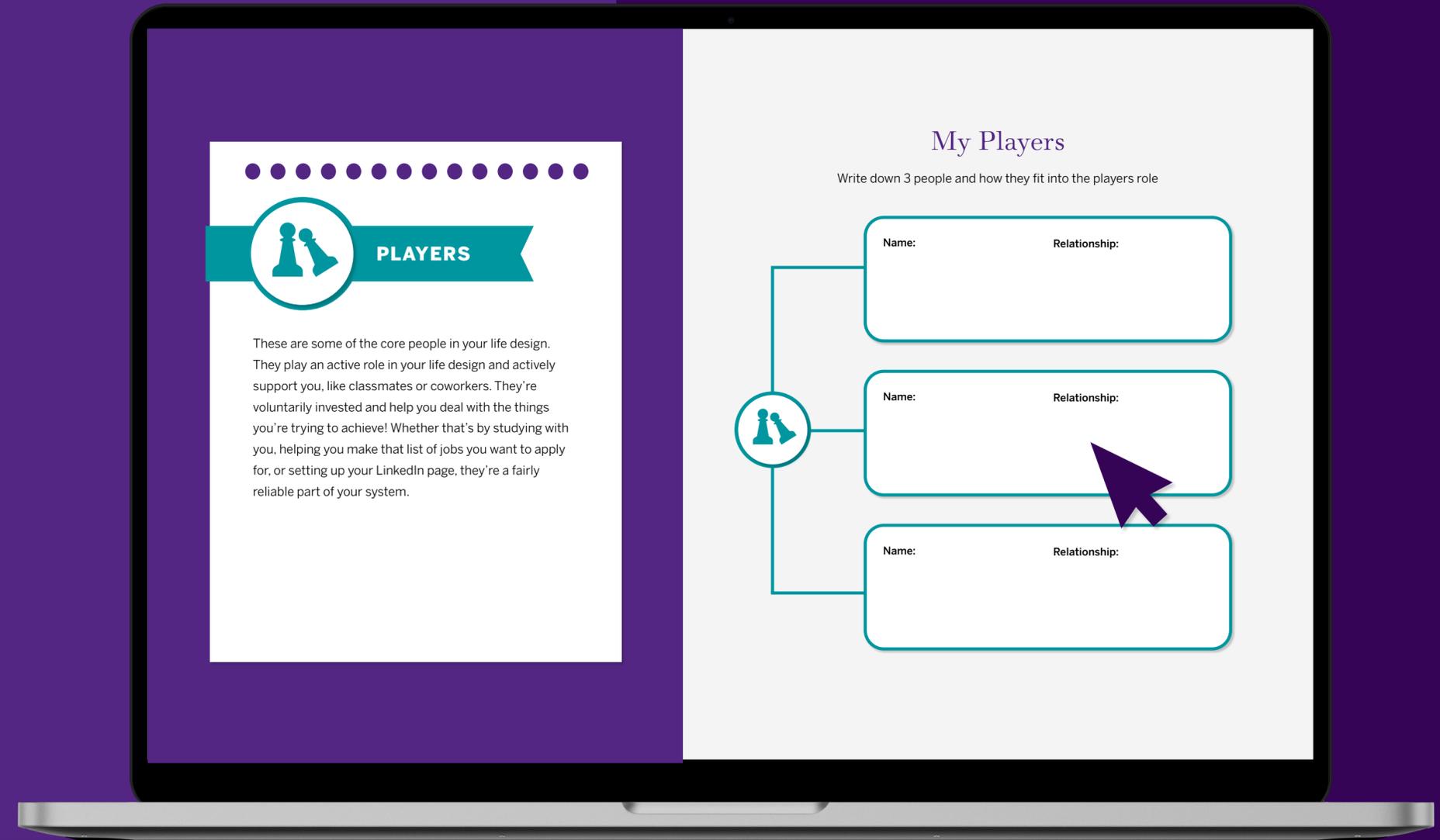


ACTIVITY

Gathering Your Gang

We've given you tons of suggestions of people to reach out to for support on your Western journey, but what about the people you already know? Whether that's your friends, your family, your 7th grade teacher who you talk to about all your major life decisions, or your pet goldfish, you should recognize them as part of the gang!

Take some time to recognize the different roles people play in your life! Under each section on the pages that follow, write down the names of three people you know that fit each role. Do it brainstorm style!





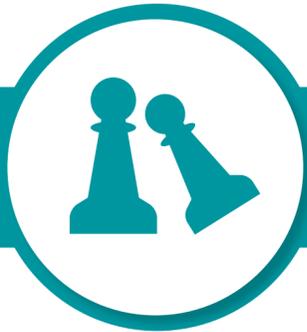
SUPPORTERS

The people in your life who are there to... well, support you. They care about you and the life path you choose! Your decisions and path don't directly affect or impact them, and they aren't right in the mud with you, but they care! You are a person they want to see achieve happiness and do well. There's many people in your life that care – if you're looking for examples, you certainly have us! We want to see you happy and doing well!

My Supporters

Write down 3 people and how they fit into the "supporters" role

Name:	Relationship:
Name:	Relationship:
Name:	Relationship:



PLAYERS

These are some of the core people in your life design efforts. They play an active role in your life design and actively support you, like classmates or coworkers. They're voluntarily invested and help you deal with the things you're trying to achieve! Whether that's by studying with you, helping you make that list of jobs you want to apply for, or setting up your LinkedIn page, they're a fairly reliable part of your well-rounded team.

My Players

Write down 3 people and how they fit into the "players" role

Name: **Relationship:**

Name: **Relationship:**

Name: **Relationship:**



INTIMATES

The people in your life who are directly impacted by your life and decisions! Your choices don't only affect you in a bubble, y'know! Seeing as your choices affect them, they are quite influential in your decision making. Whether they are your immediate family, extended family members you are close to or close personal friends, you play a significant role in their life and that inspires and influences what you choose to do in yours.

My Intimates

Write down 3 people and how they fit into the "intimates" role

Name:	Relationship:
Name:	Relationship:
Name:	Relationship:

The people you've listed so far hopefully fit into a well-rounded team you have built for yourself all on your own! Even if you can't name too many people, you have a strong variety of individuals who are reliably a part of your team, and will be great supports in your life design.

With that, let's consider the important qualities of a team! We find that the best teams for life design planning are made up of 3-5 people, not too big for too many ideas, and not too small for too few. A well-rounded team has individuals with different skills and qualities that are able to properly bounce ideas off each other and offer different perspectives.

Take, for example, this Business 2257 Feasibility Project Group. ►



Business 2257 Group

If you didn't know, 2257 is a pre-entry course for the Ivey Business School and the "Feas" (the feasibility assignment) is a year-end group project which asks a set of students to come up with a business idea or concept and plan out the details of how such a business would operate.

This project is very important as it accounts for a large chunk of the course grade for those who take 2257. As a result, individuals are wise to seek out and attempt to form a well-rounded team (i.e. a group of individuals whose strengths and weaknesses balance each other out). This is how Julia, Maanasa, Emma, Michael, Adam, Daniel, Joey, and Massimo all came together. Each team member had their own strength in relation to business – Operations, Finance, Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, and so on – and the team took these strengths into account in splitting up who would take the lead on different aspects of the project. The team also valued feedback and used each other's perspectives and critiques to help add nuance to the sections they worked on. This resulted in them receiving an excellent mark on their final project!

This "Feas" group (or Team JNEMADJM as we like to call them) shows the importance of diversity of thought within a group and the importance of receiving feedback! You want a team around you that can keep you on track and give you feedback in order to help you maximize the success of your life design, or in this case, your business plan, and this team excelled at that!

HOW CAN I FIND MY OWN GROUP?

For your own team or group, remember that although you want to have people in your life giving you feedback, you don't want to be living your life for someone else's dream, which is why we have to separate **Counsel** and **Advice**. When you're dealing with a problem, you want to sort through your own thoughts and consider different perspectives and ideas - good counsel will help you do that! Whether it's a supportive friend, a therapist, or a career coach, you'll be able to gain insights and reframe your thoughts to better understand what you want. What you don't want in this case, is someone telling you exactly what to do, and yes we know that can be a lot easier, but it's not your life design if it's completely based on other people's decisions! Advice can often be phrased as, "If I were you..." statements, and those tend to actually be, "if you were completely different and had my experiences and thoughts, you would do this." Advice can be good when you are asking a specific question and want another's point of view, but not when you are trying to design the life YOU want to live!



TIP: FIND YOUR MUSTANG GANG

There are lots of groups on campus who would welcome you to join their Mustang Gang! Check out the following links to find out more about them:

[Intramural Teams](#)

[Sophing Teams](#)

[Residence Teams \(RAs, Support roles\)](#)



CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

And there you go! All the parts of a well-rounded team are listed out and exemplified for you by none other than the Design Your Western Digital Career Workbook team. We really hope you've enjoyed going through this workbook, and we hope you are able (or perhaps already have been able) to incorporate Western Life Design principles into your own life! Best of luck out there! And don't provoke any geese, they will bite you. We repeat. They will bite you.



PRIZE!

Share a photo of you completing the Gathering Your Gang activity to careereducation@uwo.ca to be entered into a draw for 1 of 50 Spoke gift cards! Draws will occur throughout each semester. Winners will be emailed!

COMPLETE YOUR JOURNEY 



TIME TO FLY

Congratulations! By making it all the way here, we are confident that you have put your wings on and are ready to fly using the life design principles you have learned!

Throughout these chapters, we hope that you have come to learn that life design is a process, and an imperfect one at that! Just as our Western football team did not win every game in their 2021 season but ended up as Vanier Cup Champions (for the 8th time, might we add!), reaching your goals will not always be a straight path. Don't try and fight this! This is the reality, and life design works best when we accept what is true and work around it to make the best of the situation.

Before coming to a close, we want to highlight a major theme of this workbook one last time—using the resources around you and asking for help. **You are not alone in the process of life design.** It takes a community—a strong community—in order to achieve one's goals! Luckily, at Western we have one of the most collaborative student bodies and a great variety of resources to help you jump-start any one of your future successful lives. Take note of any individuals you may be interested in talking with, or resources that would be of benefit to you and keep them in a list that you can always reference. Keeping up with this practice will allow you to develop a strong group of supporters. To view the full list of resources discussed in this workbook, see [Appendix A](#).



To really show the power of building a supportive network, we thought we would tell you a bit more about the team behind this Design Your Western Digital Career Workbook. The content of this workbook was curated and drafted by three “Western Student Superstars” - Jenna Dart, Hayden Brennen, and Emmanuel Akanbi. Each member of the team came from a different faculty on campus, and this terrific trio used each other’s strengths to collaborate and support each other through the development of this workbook!

JENNA DART

Jenna recently finished her undergraduate degree in Psychology and will be pursuing a degree in Law! Before finishing her four years at Western, Jenna had gone through many different programs, so she brings a plethora of knowledge from all different sides of campus!

EMMANUEL AKANBI

Emmanuel is in Medical Sciences, specializing in Epidemiology and Biostatistics! Besides his charming personality, he brought his love for storytelling to this workbook! Emmanuel made up the countless analogies and goose jokes found in this workbook, which hopefully you’ve enjoyed.

HAYDEN BRENNEN

Hayden completed her undergraduate degree at Western and had such a rewarding experience that she decided to pursue a Master of Library and Information Science at Western as well! Hayden’s planning skills really shined among the group, figuring out the best times to meet and keeping the team on track is a large reason why you’re able to read this workbook now and not in 2025!

Throughout the creation of this book, and the period in which it was written, Jenna, Hayden & Emmanuel were each required to use life design principles. Whether it was related to prototyping with different professionals within Western’s Careers & Experience department to get a better understanding of how student resources work, or practicing effective failure reframing when an idea didn’t execute itself in the book as planned, each member of the team made exponential progress in their personal and academic lives, and realized the value in practicing life design. Hopefully now you will too considering you’ve made it this far in the workbook!



To close things off, we're sure you aren't in need of more new reading, so feel free to review the chapter recaps that follow to remember what you learned!



01 THERE'S A GOOSE IN YOUR PATH

- 1 Understanding The Problem:** Problems come in all shapes and sizes and are often multi-dimensional. To develop an effective solution to a problem, you must first understand each aspect of the problem.
- 2 Problem Types:** Some problems in life are able to be "actioned" and some are not. To be able to move forward and design the life you want to live, it is vital to understand the different types of problems that exist.
- 3 Assessing a Problem:** By looking at unique areas of your life, you can gain a greater understanding of issues you may want to work on as you build your future path.



02 FLYING NORTH! WHICH WAY IS NORTH?

- 1 Workviews and Lifeviews:** Your own individual definitions regarding what "work" and "life" mean are needed for you to build your "compass" so you can continually orient yourself and ensure you're heading in the direction you want to go.
- 2 Our True North:** Appreciating how your views on work and life integrate, as well as where they differ, allow you to understand how to create harmony amongst your views. Such understanding increases your ability to orient yourself and live a consciously coherent and meaningful life.



03 CHOOSING THE RIGHT SPOKE BAGEL

- 1 Engagement and Energy:** Your level of excitement, focus and enjoyment when you are doing something speaks to your engagement with the activity. Activities which give you energy naturally bring you to life, uplift you and feel effortless vs. exhausting, boring or consuming you. These factors can each provide us a strong sense of what we find fulfilling in our lives.
- 2 A state of “Flow”:** Whenever someone is simultaneously engaged and energized a sense of euphoria often results. Those experiencing such moments may say they are “in the zone”, “have complete clarity”, or feel “at absolute peace”. Such feelings define being in a state of “flow” and can provide us with a strong sense of how to best move forward.



04 CLIPPED WINGS?!

- 1 Ideas:** You can't know what you want until you consider what you might want and to consider what you might want you have to ideate – generate a lot of ideas and possibilities
- 2 Judgement and Comparison:** Worrying about what others may say about the ideas you generate or whether others are doing the things you are contemplating can keep you from generating the wild ideas, the unconventional ideas, the greatest volume of ideas. In Life Design, more ideas are better and judgement and comparison are the arch nemeses of ideation.
- 3 How to become “Unstuck”:** When you feel reallly stuck, getting “unstuck” can feel near impossible. It's not. The secret to becoming unstuck is to suspend judgement and ideate broadly and wildly. The wild ideas often aren't the ones we end up picking but by broadening our minds and thinking in a wild and free manner we can see new and innovative possibilities that can work (and allow us to continue moving in the direction we want to go).



05 DESIGN YOUR WESTERN

- 1 Designing your *lives* not your life:** As noted above, a fulfilling life is one which often encompasses a number of different life paths – appreciating and embracing there are multiple great lives (and plans) within each of us allows us to gain a greater sense of what could be and the various ways by which we could live the life we WANT to live.
- 2 How to explore various life paths:** Odyssey Plans provide a concrete method to explore one's possible lives and map out a number of realities that could be. By creating sketches of possibilities, you are better able to make decisions regarding “next steps” to start prototyping elements of the plans you create.



06 TESTING OUT THE THAMES

- 1 Introduction to prototyping:** By asking good questions, identifying hidden biases and assumptions, coming up with lots of ideas, and iterating rapidly, you can create momentum in exploring a path you'd like to try out.
- 2 Determining what you like (or don't like):** Prototyping is extremely valuable as allows you to gather important information in an efficient manner. Through prototyping you can identify further possibilities as you confirm things you like as well as bring to light components of your possible plans that do not actually align with your interests.



07 SPOKE CHATS

- 1 Dissecting the industry:** Every field or area of work has its' own culture, norms, and way of "doing business". Gaining as clear an understanding as possible of an area of interest is vital to help you navigate the industry and utilize your precious resources (time, money, effort) most effectively.
- 2 Introduction to networking:** When done honestly and authentically, networking is simply an activity of connecting with others to ask for direction(s); you don't know your way around an area/topic/field, so you are doing research – asking those who have experience how to best "arrive" at the destination you are interested in.
- 3 How to set up a coffee chat:** A "coffee chat" is a relaxed, yet professional, interaction which can allow you to ask for directions comfortably and confidently. Preparing an effective "pitch" to ask for such a discussion is important, as is thinking in advance about the questions you want to ask to determine if you want to continue on a journey to the destination you are inquiring about.



08 CHOOSING YOUR GOLDEN EGG

- 1 How to choose well:** Adopting a healthy and wise life design choosing process is critical to a happy outcome – it is important to recognize that when you have too many options you actually have none at all. Options only create value in your life when they are chosen and realized. Choosing well involves narrowing down options, and choosing discerningly.
- 2 Moving on after making a choice:** To truly move towards happiness and living the life you WANT to live, it is essential that once you make a choice, you "lean into" your choice fully. Only "half choosing" an option is one of the most effective ways to short circuit yourself and keep you from reaching the destination you have already thought about carefully and decided upon.



09 GETTING BACK IN THE SADDLE

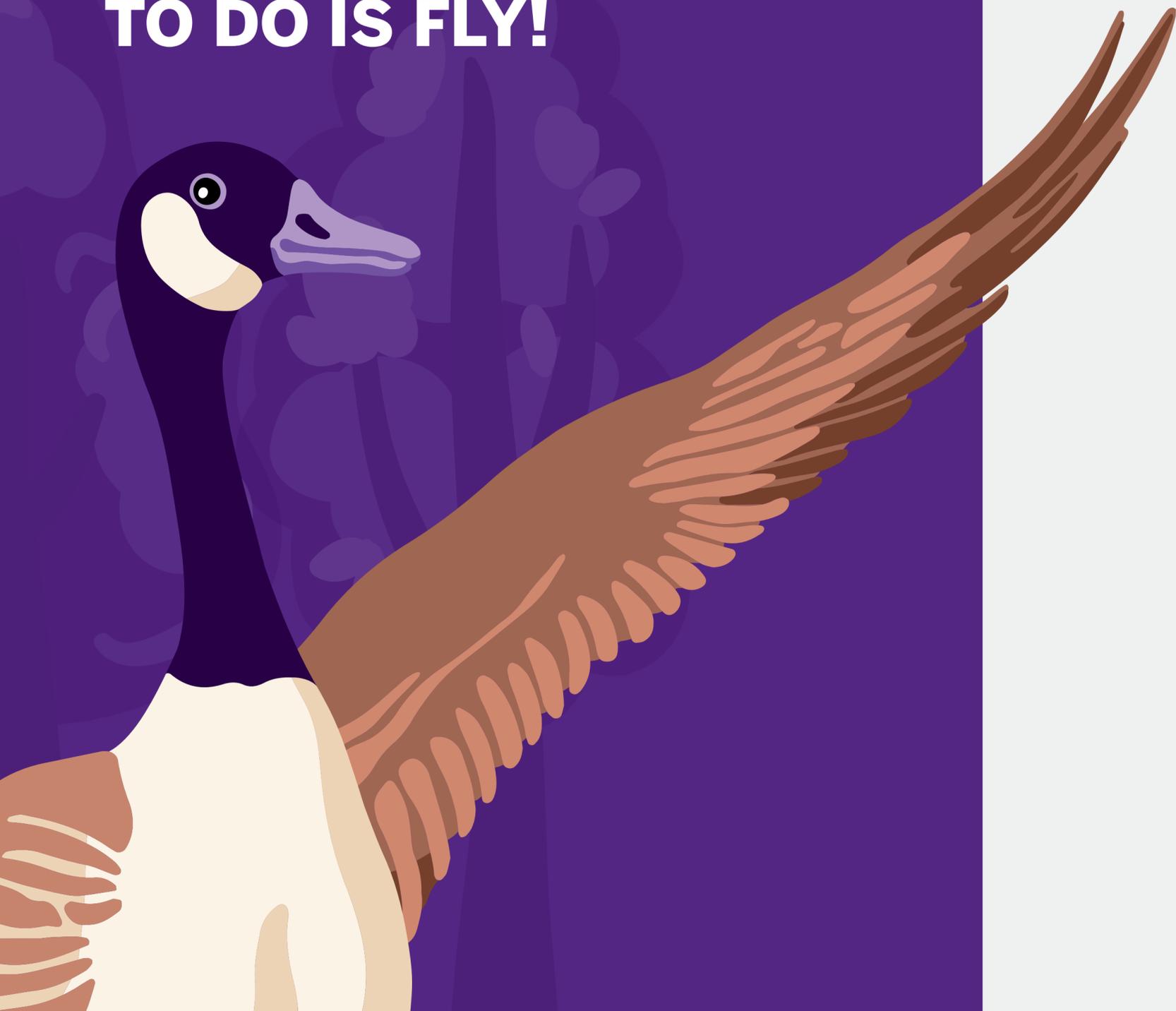
- 1 Reframing Failure:** So as not to get fixated on the negative when things don't go as planned, it is vital to see the term "failure" from a different perspective. Rather than seeing failure as a negative, it is valuable to reframe failure as simply a step to achieving success sooner. You learn from all experiences and every single outcome actually helps you achieve success.



10 YOUR MUSTANG GANG

- 1 Recognizing the roles people play:** When it comes to having a strong team, it's valuable to appreciate the different ways people support you. When building your team, it's important to identify "supporters" who encourage you & share feedback, "players" who actively participate in the life you are creating, and "intimates" who are influential and whose exact role in your life design must be carefully considered.
- 2 Qualities of a well-rounded team:** In building your life design team, think quality over quantity – this team has a vital task (aiding you in designing your life!) so keep it small so everyone can contribute & be heard. Be mindful and build a team with varied experiences & perspectives and valuable personal characteristics (think creative, practical, constructive, participative)
- 3 Separating advice and counsel:** Counsel involves someone trying to help you figure out what YOU think. Advice is someone telling you what THEY think. Advice is fine to receive – you want to be careful about how much of it you take (when building YOUR life). Counsel is always helpful and good counsel can leave you in a clearer and more settled state of mind as you make decisions.

**YOUR WINGS
ALREADY EXIST,
ALL YOU HAVE
TO DO IS FLY!**



APPENDIX **A**

Resources Discussed



ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Western's Academic Calendar provides in-depth information regarding degree, module and course information. An amazing resource for all potential academic questions and inquiries, the academic calendar also has detailed information regarding academic policies, information about Western and the Affiliate University Colleges as well as links to the multi-faith calendar, the Office of the Registrar, the School of Graduate & Post-doctoral Studies and Western Continuing Studies

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Academic advising for undergraduate students at Western is managed by the faculty in which the program a student is taking resides. Experienced Academic Advisors and/or front-line office staff are available to provide support and help in all academic matters.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Accessible Education provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Accessible Education arranges academic accommodation for classes, exams, internships and other course or program activities, as well as provide digital and Braille textbooks, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction for students with learning disabilities, access to computer labs that are equipped with assistive technology, referrals for assessments and other services, and bursaries for students who meet OSAP's eligibility criteria.

CAREERS & EXPERIENCE DEPARTMENT

Careers & Experience helps students deepen their academic learning and actively plan for personal and professional growth through career education, experiential learning, and industry exploration. Careers & Experience fosters an environment in which students are able to discover their potential and design their future.

CLIFTONSTRENGTHS @ WESTERN

By engaging with your unique strengths, you will work better in academic and interpersonal settings, build confidence to pursue meaningful careers, and positively impact your community. Western Student Experience has partnered with Gallup Inc. to bring you the CliftonStrengths for Students assessment, which will help you improve self-awareness, thrive in and out of school by applying your talents to every area of your life, improve performance in the classroom, at work, and everywhere else.

INTRAMURALS @ WESTERN

Taking part in intramural sports is a great way to get involved in university life at Western. A full range of activities are offered where individuals can participate in men's, co-ed, or women's leagues at the competitive or recreational level. Participants can enjoy a fun, equitable, and safe playing environment! Meet new people, enjoy friendly competition, and learn new skills in our facilities around campus. Campus Recreation's Intramural program is open to all Western students and Campus Recreation members.

LEARNING DEVELOPMENT & SUCCESS

The Learning Development & Success team offers resources and support to all students at Western. Counsellors and staff members help students cope with the demands of post-secondary learning, helping to identify strengths and develop new skills and strategies for success. Counsellors also work with students to alleviate academic stress, and to develop positive motivation and confidence toward learning. This service is available for successful students wanting to maintain their already strong skills and those having academic difficulties.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Health & Wellness Services provides mental health support to the Western campus population. Health & Wellness provides professional and confidential services, free of charge, to students needing assistance to meet their personal, social and academic goals. Services include consultation, referral, groups and workshops, as well as brief, change-oriented psychotherapy.

MUSTANG MAPS

Western has so much to offer, at times it can be hard to know what could apply to you. Mustang Maps were created as an experience planning tool to help give you an idea of what could be of interest to someone in your area of study. Take the opportunities outlined in the maps as suggestions for you to consider as you shape your experience. They are not requirements and we encourage you to focus on enriching opportunities that interest you. This way, when you leave Western, you'll take with you a set of experiences that are meaningful and specific to you.

ORIENTATION WEEK TEAMS

“Sophs” are Western’s beloved Orientation Leaders who help welcome new students and provide an orientation to campus life. Sophs volunteer their time as spirit leaders, peer mentors, and campus guides to help integrate new students into the University’s social and academic environments. They aim to be one of the first friends you make on campus, chosen to welcome new students because of their Western pride and care for the student experience. Sophs model academic determination, encourage healthy lifestyles, and promote positive perspectives.

PAL (PEER ASSISTED LEARNING) CENTRE

The Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Centre is the place to develop effective learning strategies and get free, one-to-one, course-specific help. Western and Affiliate University College students are welcome. Help is provided by Learning Peers who are trained, upper-year Western students who have excelled academically, and are ready to help you SUCCEED.

RESIDENCE TEAMS

Contribute to the residence experience by joining Residence Staff as a Residence Don, Living Learning Community (LLC) Don, or Residence Education Advisor. Develop your leadership skills while being part of a strong, dynamic team.

THE WRITING SUPPORT CENTRE

The Writing Support Centre helps you meet the expectations of university-level writing. The Centre offers free 50-minute one-to-one appointments with a writing advisor. You can visit one of Centre's two campus locations in-person or meet with members of the Centre online. The Writing Support Centre supports all members of Western's community - undergrads, graduate students, postdocs, and faculty use the Centre's comprehensive services. The Centre can assist writers with any academic or professional writing, at any stage of the writing process, in any genre, across the disciplines.

WESTERN CONNECT

Western Connect is Western's primary communications portal and resource hub for programs & initiatives that allow you to i) get the most out of your Western experience, ii) garner assistance in meeting your academic and non-academic goals and iii) gain experience outside of the classroom that will help you maximize the knowledge, skills & capabilities you will carry forward after you complete your studies at Western.

WESTERN UNIVERSITY LINKEDIN PAGE

With over 30,000 students and 300,000 alumni, Western creates progressive new pathways for extraordinary trailblazers, advocates, visionaries and entrepreneurs. As one of Canada's top research-intensive universities, we welcome scholars from around the world to beautiful London, Ontario. More than 200,000 Western alumni can be found on LinkedIn.

WORKING AT WESTERN

It takes a lot of great people to make a university great. During the busiest times in the academic year, more than 12,000 people work at Western, including approximately 1408 full-time faculty members and 2461 full-time staff members.

What does it take to work at Western? We value integrity, innovation and leadership. We often hire those with many years of experience in their profession or chosen field, but we also have some opportunities for those who are just getting started. Many jobs at Western are considered "regular, full-time" but we also offer temporary contract positions that are a great opportunity to explore what working at Western is all about. We also employ thousands in part-time roles. Many of those part-time jobs are filled by Western students.