



CHAPTER 4

WHY SETTLE FOR ONE CAREER WHEN YOU CAN HAVE TEN?

CREATING YOUR POSSIBLE LIVES

The chalk outline guy's got a good job. Not too dangerous—the criminals are long gone. I guess these are people who wanted to be sketch artists but they couldn't draw very well. "Uh, listen, John, forget the sketches, do you think if we left the dead body right there on the sidewalk you could manage to trace around it?"

—JERRY SEINFELD, *SEINFELD*,

FROM THE OPENING MONOLOGUE OF EPISODE 42, "THE TRIP"

It's time to revisit **THE QUESTION**. You've been wandering for a while now, uncovering and developing your talents, and you've discovered that your major is just one element of your future plans. But even if you've told everyone to stop asking you what you're going to do with it, you're probably still running headlong into the condensed version of **THE QUESTION**: "What are you going to do?" And that is almost as bad if you don't have an immediate answer.

What do you find challenging about that question?

Is it that you have absolutely no idea what you'd like to do?

Or maybe you were interested in one career but something changed, so now you're not so sure.

Or you have a career dream you'd like to pursue, but everyone

has warned you about how few people succeed in the field, so you prefer to keep it a secret.

Or you keep reading all those top-ten career lists on the Internet and they always seem to be careers you're not interested in.

Or maybe, just maybe, you're like a lot of students who don't have one idea about what they'd like to do because they have ten ideas.

Uh-oh. It's starting to look like career chaos again. And the chaos expands geometrically when you add in other ideas you're considering, such as taking a year off after school to volunteer, travel, or pursue hobbies.

Sometimes it feels as if the only way to bring order to the chaos is to select one choice and go for it. After all, isn't that what most people do? But that's a lot of pressure, and you're thinking linearly again. It's like staring at a candy machine with twenty interesting options, and you just can't make up your mind. But you know you have to pick one and only one. So there you stand in career paralysis, a state where you either wait for the aha moment of career inspiration, or where you just avoid thinking about it at all. Or worse yet, you just choose something because you're supposed to, or it's what you've always done before.

Well, you can relax: life is not a candy machine. That metaphor won't work for you. Because the candy machine approach to careers is very linear, and we've already established that you are not a linear person. Forrest Gump may be right: life is much more like a box of chocolates. It's your box of chocolates—you own them all, and you get to select them in the order you want, and in the form you want. And chaos theory tells you that some new chocolates will appear that aren't even in your box yet. But since you can't sit around and wait for them, how do you move forward when you don't know where you're going?

Sounds like a good time to create another map to clear up the chaos. An issue of *The Economist* devoted to the changing economy indicated that a student in college today can expect to have at least twenty-nine jobs in their lifetime. So instead of forcing yourself to select one career, maybe you need to find several. A while back, researchers coined the phrase "possible selves," which referred to the multiple potential selves you could try on to design your future.

Let's call your potential choices "Possible Lives," and in this chapter you're going to map, mine, and design them. So take a moment to assess where you are in your future planning process:

Do you have one job, field of work, or activity that seems to call to you?

Do you have so many interesting options out there that you don't even know where to start?

Does nothing interest you because you don't even know what's out there? (That can be particularly scary and stressful because it seems as if everyone else has a plan.)

Is your interest something that seems unattainable? Why?

Are you being advised by your parents, professors, or others to pursue a particular path? Do you agree with them? Is it your interest or theirs?

Are you pulled in disparate directions by two seemingly opposite interests?

Whatever your situation, a Possible Lives Map will help you make sense of this seeming chaos of your future. You already know from chaos theory that it's pretty dangerous to assume that you will know exactly where you will be in five or ten years. But as you also recall from chaos theory, it is possible to make some general assumptions, and it's also possible to make better predictions about the near future. So that's what we're going to do: we're going to examine all those ideas you have right now to see if we can turn them from a chaotic jumble of thoughts, hopes, dreams, and fantasies about the distant future to form a plan for the immediate future.

You will start by identifying your Possible Lives: all the different careers or future plans you've considered in the last few years, no matter how wild, crazy, or seemingly impossible. If you want to, you can even list that firefighter job you wanted when you were five years old. We're going to focus on where you might go, not where you have to go. And not necessarily even where you will go (don't forget that the butterfly hovers nearby). You don't need to know what one thing

you're going to do: you're going to do many things throughout your life. The Possible Lives Map will help you get your ideas down in one place so you can see them more clearly.

IDENTIFYING YOUR POSSIBLE LIVES

Possible Lives planning starts with you and where you are right now. So take a moment to consider your position. What year are you in school? What knowledge have you mined from your courses, your major, and other experiences? Or have you graduated and you're working at your first real job? Are you in a job or field you like? What strengths and themes have you identified?

As you reflect on your current status, it's not unusual to start thinking about regrets. Maybe when you look at where you are, you find yourself frustrated or unhappy. Maybe you wish you had pursued a different major. Maybe you wish your grades were higher. Maybe you . . . *it doesn't matter*. That's "if only . . ." and "should" thinking and if you recall the positive mindset in chapter 3, you know that that kind of thinking isn't going to help, so stop right now. *You are where you are* and you are just fine. It has to be fine—you can't change it, right? The Possible Lives Map is about hope and possibility, not regret or blame. So pull out your Wandering Map and any lists you've created so far, and remind yourself of your strengths and interests. Think about the Possible Lives you'd like to live. What careers or other ideas about the future have you considered?

To help expand your thinking, take a look at the myriad Possible Lives other college students have identified:

Actor/Actress	Advertising Executive	Aerobics Instructor
Animal Rights Activist	Anthropologist	App Developer
Archeologist	Architect	Artist
Art Museum Curator	Astronaut	Athlete
Attorney	Au Pair in Europe	Auto Mechanic
Bakery Owner	Ballerina	Bank President

Bar, Hotel, and Restaurant Owner	Bed-and-Breakfast Owner	Biology Researcher
Blogger	Boarding School Teacher	Bookkeeper
Bookstore Owner	Botanist	Broadway Dancer
Business Analyst	Campaign Organizer	Career Coach
Celebrity	CEO of my own company	Certified Sky Diver
Chef	Christian Summer Camp Director	CIA Officer
CNN Reporter	College Advisor	College Professor
Comic/Anime Artist	Computer Programmer	Congressional Assistant
Congresswoman	Consultant	Contemporary Art Museum Curator
Costume Maker	Counselor	Crisis Counselor in Women's Shelter
Cultural Researcher	Dancer	Dance Instructor
Debate Coach	Department of Justice Employee	Design and Create Cards
Digital Artist	Diplomat	Director of After School Program
Doctor	Documentary Filmmaker	Dog Breeder
Economist	Editor	Educational Law Specialist
Engineer	English Teacher in Asia	English Teacher in Developing Country
Enlisted Navy Officer	Entrepreneur	Environmental Lawyer
Environmental Resource Manager	Environmental Policy Writer	Estate Planner
Event Planner	Farmer/Rancher	Fashion Designer
FBI Agent	Film Critic	Film Director
Film Editor	Financial Advisor	Fire Fighter/Paramedic
Flight Attendant	Food Critic	Food Network Producer
Football Coach	Foreign Service Officer	Forensic Psychologist
Foundation Development Director	Freelance Journalist	French Teacher
Fulbright Scholar	Game Show Host	Game Warden
Gay Rights Advocate	Government Researcher	Graphic Designer
Historian	Hotel/Hospitality Manager	Human Resources Specialist
Human Rights Activist	Illustrator	Interior Designer

You Majored in What?

International Business Consultant	International Lawyer	International Relations Specialist
Interpreter	Inventor	Investor
Investment Banker	Journalist	Judge
Landscape Architect	Language Professor	Late Night Show Coordinator
Lead a Community Charity	Lead a Volunteer Organization	Legislator
Librarian	Literary Critic	Lobbyist
Marine Biologist	Market Researcher	Master Brewer
Medical Examiner	Medical Missionary	Merchandiser
Meteorologist	Military Officer	Missionary
Model	Motivational Speaker	Museum Curator
Music/Art Therapist	Music Critic	Music Engineer
Musician	Music Management/Producer	NASCAR Driver
National Geographic Photographer	Navy Intelligence Officer	Newspaper Columnist
News Reporter	Novelist	NPR Reporter Abroad
Nurse	Nutritionist	Obstetrician
Oceanographer	Opera Singer	Optometrist
Own a Dance Studio	Own a Hotel and Casino	Own a TV Station
Own a Vineyard or Ranch	Own a Vegan Restaurant	Painter
Paleontologist	Park Ranger	Parks and Wildlife Employee
Peace Corps Volunteer	Personal Organizer/Planner	Photographer
Pilot	Plastic Surgeon	Poet
Policy Analyst	Political Analyst/Strategist	Preschool Teacher
President of the United States	Product Manager	Professional Athlete
Promoter	Psychiatrist	Psychologist
Public Health Specialist	Public Relations/ Marketing Specialist	Publisher
Rapper	Real Estate Agent	Real Estate Developer
Record Producer	Renewable Resource Analyst	Renewable Resource Engineer

Why Settle for One Career When You Can Have Ten?

Reporter	Researcher	Retail Buyer or Manager
Sales Representative	School Counselor/Advisor	Senator
Sign Language Interpreter	Small Business Owner	Social Worker
Spa Owner/Operator	Speech Writer	Sports Agent
Sports Coach	Sports Journalist	Stockbroker
Studio Musician	Sustainable Design	Teacher in Public School System
Teach Abroad	Tech Blogger	Therapist
Train Seeing-Eye Dogs	Translator	Tour Guide
Travel Agent	TV/Film Writer	United Nations Interpreter
Urban Planner	Video Game Designer	Website Designer
Wedding Planner	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Preserve Director
Write/Edit Children's Books	Writer	Zookeeper

Are you getting some ideas? Are these futures appealing to you? Notice that not all of them are jobs, certainly not those traditional, linear jobs you'd expect from a particular major.

WISDOM BUILDER #10

MINE THE VAST RESOURCES OF THE INTERNET FOR CAREER IDEAS

The chart below identifies common career fields. Did you know that dozens of job titles fit under each field? For example, job titles under the Publishing category could include editor, researcher, technical writer, production assistant, marketing coordinator, agent, and sales representative.

Select a field that interests you, enter it into a search engine (e.g., Google) with the words "careers in ____" and see what shows up. Entering "careers in art" into a search engine, for example, brought up a great site listing 150 careers related to art, ranging from typeface designer to film concept artist. Using this technique is a great way to connect to the butterfly effect. You never know what you might find or what might catch your attention. If something intrigues you, keep digging. Look up all you can on the topic. And be sure to add the career(s) you've discovered to your Possible Lives Map.

Accounting	Acting/Drama	Advertising	Aerospace
Agriculture	Airlines	Animals	Architecture
Art	Arts Administration	Athletics	Automotive
Banking	Biological Sciences	Boating	Bookkeeping
Building Services	Chemical Sciences	Children's Services	Commercial Art
Communications	Computers	Construction	Consulting
Corrections	Counseling	Crafts	Criminology
Data and Statistics	Economics	Electronics	Elementary Education
Energy	Engineering	Entertainment	Entrepreneurial Enterprises
Environment	Family Services	Film	Finance
Fine Arts	Food	Forestry	Geriatrics

Government	Graphic Arts	Hazardous Material Management	Health Care
Higher Education	Hospital Administration	Hotel/Motel Management	Human Resources
Industrial Design	Information Services	Insurance	Interior Design
Investment Banking	Journalism	Languages	Law
Law Enforcement	Leisure	Lobbying	Management
Manufacturing	Market Research	Marketing	Mathematics
Medicine	Mental Health	Merchandising	Museum Work
Music	Nonprofit Organizations	Oceanography	Office Services
Parks and Recreation	Performing Arts	Personal Services	Photography
Physical Sciences	Politics	Preschool Education	Printing
Project Engineering	Public Relations	Publishing	Real Estate
Recycling	Religion	Repair Services	Research
Restaurant Management	Retailing	Sales/Sales Management	Sciences
Secondary Education	Social Entrepreneurship	Social Services	Speech Pathology
Sports Management	Systems Design	Technology	Telecommunications
Television and Video	Textiles	Toys and Computer Games	Trade
Transportation	Travel/Tourism	Union Operations	Urban/Regional Planning
Wellness	Writing		

After looking at all these options, are you ready to create your future? It's one blank piece of paper away.

MAPPING, MINING, AND DESIGNING YOUR POSSIBLE LIVES

The Possible Lives Map can be one of the most enlightening, helpful, and inspiring maps you create because it provides a chance to dream, fantasize, and examine your many thoughts, ideas, and plans for the future. Creating your Possible Lives Map is very similar to creating your Wandering Map in chapter 2 except that instead of looking back, you're looking forward. You will include the jobs or careers you are considering or have considered in the past, but you might also want to include other important parts of your life, such as travel, volunteering, raising a family, and so on. And as with the Wandering Map, you will be able to mine it for lots of career gold. Just remember, it is a work in progress, not a final statement. You can keep adding to it anytime you want.

Now, at this point you might be thinking, "I don't need to do this map. I know what I want to do. I want to be a ____." That's a great plan, but heed the warnings of chaos theory. Be careful about predicting too far ahead. Your career plan may be a wonderful dream you should pursue with all your energy and commitment. But life has a way of intervening in our plans and you might find that a year from now you no longer want to pursue that career. For instance, taking organic chemistry often changes medical school plans. Doing an internship in a law firm can change your mind about going to law school. Spending an afternoon on the trading floor can change your mind about that career on Wall Street. Of course, all of those experiences might serve to cement your determination to pursue your chosen career, but because *you don't know what you don't know*, go ahead and play along. Do the Possible Lives Map and see what shows up. If nothing else, you will discover terrific plan B career options so that if your first choice doesn't work out, you won't panic or become discouraged. You'll have another plan ready to go. So let's get started.

MAPPING YOUR POSSIBLE LIVES

1. Take out a blank piece of paper. In the center, briefly write your current status. Keep it simple. "Junior: Marketing Major." "Senior: Writing Theme." "Graduate: Working at coffee shop." "Theme: Helping others." "First job in journalism. Want to move up." Draw a circle around your status.
2. Start brainstorming and write down Possible Lives all over the paper in no particular order—everything you've ever thought about, fantasized about, or thought would be interesting or cool to do. Draw a circle around each one and then draw a line connecting each one back to the circle in the center (you).

List two to ten Possible Lives (or more, if you don't find it overwhelming).

Always include one circle with a question mark in it for the yet undiscovered career!

Don't censor your ideas.

No limitations other than basic laws of physics or physiology

Don't consider whether you have the education or talent

Don't consider the salary (or lack thereof)

Jot down your ideas even if you "know" they're unrealistic

A sample Possible Lives Map is shown on the next page.

MINING YOUR POSSIBLE LIVES

Now that you're done, step back and take a look at your map. Do any opportunities seem particularly exciting or interesting? Was it fun to just dream and write whatever you wanted? Did you uncover any new ideas or hidden wishes? Just as you did with the Wandering Map,

you're going to analyze your Possible Lives Map for common themes or relationships among your different lives. Are many of your lives:

Artistic or creative?

Athletic?

Active?

Thoughtful or quiet?

People intensive?

Risky or safe?

Serving or helping others?

Related to money or status?

Based on additional education such as graduate school?

Based on a talent?

Notice your role or the setting you'd be in:

Are you often in charge?

Are you the center of attention?

Are you in a medical, educational, business, or other setting?

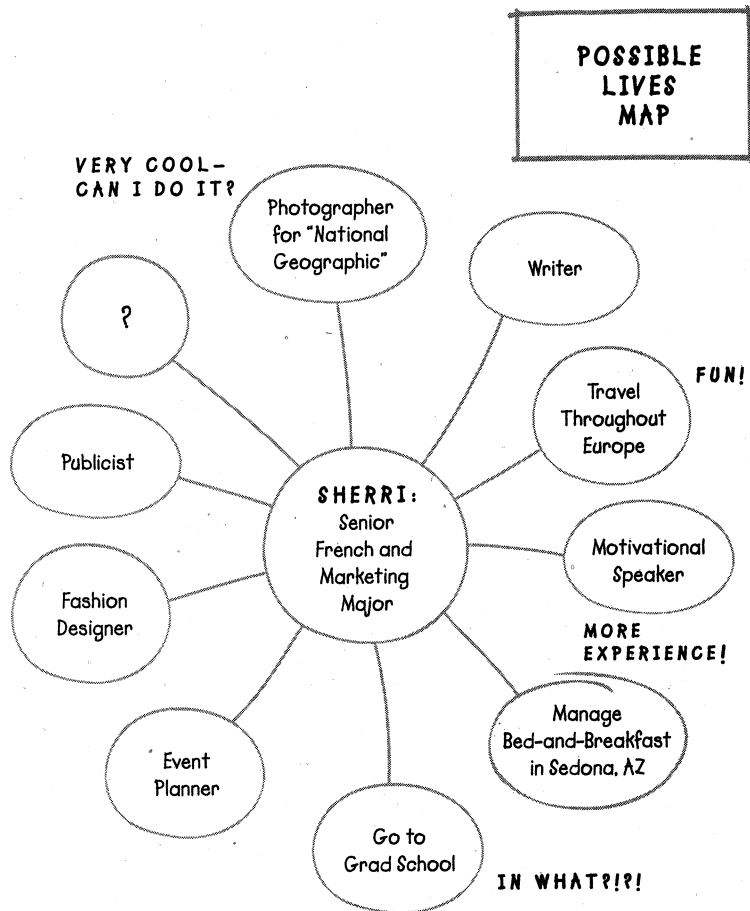
Are you performing in some way?

What skills are you using?

Where are you located?

Are you in a permanent career or in something you'd do for just a year or so?

As you discover your themes, write them down on the back of your map. If you look at Sherri's map, you'll notice that a lot of her Possible Lives are creative or artistic in nature, or they are business or management oriented and require attention to detail, strong communication skills, and lots of energy. Notice, too, that she left one life blank to fill in later. She's leaving room for the butterfly.



As you continue reviewing your map, how many of these possible lives would you like to pursue seriously?

One? As you look at your options, do you have one particular option that pops for you? Then that's where you can begin your planning. Ask yourself: "Can I do this job tomorrow?" On the line connecting your first choice to the circle in the center (you), list some steps you need to take before you can start doing that activity or job. Don't worry if you don't know every step; you'll develop a more detailed plan later. For instance, if Sherri had selected "event planner," she might write "find internship at hotel" on the line.

Two or Three? Draw an extra circle around your top two or three choices or put a star next to them. Start thinking about how you could begin pursuing each of them now, and write those ideas on the lines connecting to the circle in the center. For instance, if each of the three options requires a college degree, then you're already on the way. You can keep doing what you're doing.

If any of your choices requires a particular skill (like writing), then you can look for opportunities to improve that skill and develop a portfolio of writing samples.

If you see them as opposing ideas, do they have to be? Can you think of a creative way to combine them? If you are interested in a career as a golf instructor but are also considering graduate study in architecture, could you find a graduate program at a university that has a great golf program as well? Maybe you could work at a golf resort while attending school. If you can't find a golf instructor job, there's always caddying or working in the store, playing in local tournaments, and so on. You'll learn a lot just being around the golfing atmosphere. Maybe you could even specialize in designing golf resorts by adding landscaping courses to your architectural degree.

More than Three? No problem. Remember that you don't have to choose: this is a box of chocolates, not a candy machine. Here are some ways to resolve the "I want all the candy in the box" feeling:

1. **Rank order them.** Pick one at a time, fully enjoy it, and then move on to the next.

- a. Maybe you want to teach English in Japan, travel throughout South America, and also start a career in human resources (HR) management. Knowing that once you start up the management ladder you might not be as free to travel, you might choose to take two years now and teach in Japan for one year and in South America the next, and then pursue the HR career when you return.
 - b. Perhaps you would like to start a nonprofit organization to fund college education for traditionally underrepresented students, but you need to earn a lot of money first. You might want to work in a financial field for part of your career and then when you've saved the money you need to start your business (and developed some great connections), you can pursue your ultimate dream.
2. **Do several simultaneously.** Pick several and do one piece of each.
- a. The person above who wanted to teach abroad before starting her HR career could *do everything at once* perhaps by teaching English to workers in foreign corporations. She could contact their HR departments and perhaps be hired temporarily or be permitted to advertise her services in the company newsletter. She might get a taste of HR while she's exploring the world. Just think how that will look on her résumé when she returns to the United States.
 - b. Maybe you listed "rock star" as one of your lives. And maybe you actually play in a band and have started playing in clubs. *There's no reason you can't explore that career on the weekends while you work at another job to cover your expenses.* And it's even better if you actually enjoy your day job. Then when that music career takes off and your travel interferes with your day job, you'll know which choice to make.
 - c. One recent graduate pursued an accounting career, which he enjoyed, while pursuing his dream job, musician, which he loved, playing in clubs on weekends. When his music career picked up and he found an agent, he dropped his regular job to pursue the music career full-time. The bonus: he knows

accounting, so he can monitor his income and investments. But he also knows the fickle nature of the music business, and if his music career doesn't take off, he plans to start a financial management business for musicians in a few years.

3. Do several consecutively. Bounce back and forth with one option remaining consistent and the other changing as you wish.

a. Teaching, for example, gives you three months a year to sample different ideas. Some teachers save up for a trip each summer to teach English in Mexico, volunteer in Costa Rica, research a special interest, or work at archaeological digs. Others devote their time off to a creative project, such as writing a book or composing a symphony. Many teachers supplement their income and find variety by pursuing extra careers as travel agents, entrepreneurial tutors, or other business roles. If you have always had an interest in space travel, NASA offers a special summer program just for teachers.

b. You can use this approach to *pursue grad school on a part-time basis while you work at your regular job*. Your employer might even pay for grad school.

c. *You can incorporate your different career ideas and themes into one job*. It's a little like taking several pieces of candy and mixing them together. It might be hard to see while you're a student, but it is possible to incorporate your interests into your job. Even though I've managed career centers for the bulk of my career, I've added lots of extras to my job, including taking students to Ireland to explore internship opportunities, teaching film courses such as Psychology and Cinema, training college professors in Italy, and even doing art projects (a hobby) with students and staff.

4. Pursue one or more areas as a hobby or volunteer experience.

You don't have to abandon your dreams just because you can't make a living from them. Pursue a living you enjoy while continuing to play the French horn, take photographs, create a blog, write in your journal, and so on. If you love opera but can't even sing in the shower, you could volunteer for your local opera society and

be surrounded by people who love the same thing you do. You can channel your creativity or other themes and skills into jobs that on the surface don't seem related. If you have strong creative talents, you're probably also an idea person, and you might like a job where you would use your imagination and creative thinking skills. Have you considered consulting firms that design creative training programs for large corporations? If you're a writer, you might want to look at technical writing where you can craft the best how-to manuals for the nontechnical people among us. You might want to teach in a public or private school where you can design unique lesson plans and teach courses related to your interests.

None? What if you are still staring at a blank piece of paper? If you are, you might feel like quitting. Don't. There's no reason to. All the blank piece of paper is saying is that you don't have a clear vision yet. Remember chaos theory: figure out what you know, what you don't know, and what you need to learn. And you have done just that: you know what you don't know.

While discussing his book *The Power of Intention*, Dr. Wayne Dyer said that if you don't know your purpose in life, then that's your purpose in life: to find your purpose in life. Well, if you don't know what your possible lives might be, then you have a mission: to find some possible lives that would interest you.

You can still make plans, set goals and intentions, and start experimenting. Just keep going. The answer is inside you; for a variety of reasons, it's just not ready to come out.

Be honest with yourself, though: is it true that you have no ideas or is there another issue at work here? Do you have a dream, but you're too afraid to write it down because of what others might think? Do you just not have the energy or interest? Is there something blocking you? If so, you might want to take your Wandering Map and the other exercises you've done to a counselor and get some assistance sorting it out. Often other people can see what we can't see about ourselves.

Jillian created a very lackluster Possible Lives Map. She wrote down a few ideas halfheartedly and stared at her paper. "I just don't have any ideas. I'm majoring in sociology and I don't think I can do anything, I guess. At least nothing I can think of." We

talked for a few moments and she told me that she was the first person in her family to go to college. She felt this huge burden to be "special" and fulfill everyone's dreams for her. "I feel like a bug stuck on a pin. I can't move anywhere." I told her to close her eyes for a minute and just breathe. She didn't have to go anywhere—at least not this minute. When she relaxed a little, I said, "I want you to pretend that it's tomorrow morning and you wake up and you know exactly what you want to do. Quickly now, what is it?" She opened her eyes, looked at me, and said, "nanotechnology." We looked at each other in shock and both of us burst out laughing. Where did that come from? How did she go from "I don't know what to do" to "nanotechnology" in one minute? "I like reading about nanotechnology," she said. "I know that sounds weird, but I heard about it on TV about a year ago, and I've been reading about it ever since: books, magazines, research. But I don't have any formal training. It's stupid to even think I could work in that field." Within a week, Jillian had made a connection with a woman who had a liberal arts degree and was working at a nanotechnology research company. She invited her to intern in the summer.

Wandering Off

WHEN A HOBBY SHOULD STAY A HOBBY

Wouldn't it be a dream to be able to pursue something you love as a career? It might. But some people find that turning their passion into a career is no dream.

Alexis loved making cards, scrapbook pages, and paper craft products. Everyone told her she should turn it into a business—her work was so professional. Alexis envisioned a wonderful life where she could make money crafting all day. What could be better? So she contacted a local craft store and arranged to teach several classes, and she advertised her services to make scrapbooks and other projects for customers.

She quickly learned that preparing art classes was *hard*. She had to do the boring prep work of cutting the paper, setting up the kits, gathering the materials, and writing the instructions, and then she had to teach the class. She found it frustrating when not everyone worked at the same pace or followed her instructions. She learned that it wasn't nearly as much fun to put together a project for someone else—she had to abide by their wishes, which stifled her creativity. Plus, she didn't like the business side: seeking clients and discussing the cost of her services.

Alexis happily returned to crafting for fun, not for profit, doing projects as she pleased.

Whatever you do, don't stop. There's a simple formula for moving forward in the chaos: Left foot. Right foot. Breathe. Repeat. And just keep wandering.

Still struggling to identify some Possible Lives? Here are five more Wisdom Builders to help you clarify and refine your vision.

WISDOM BUILDER #11

DEVELOPING THE VISION OF YOUR FUTURE CAREER

Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others.

—JONATHAN SWIFT

Still struggling with career ideas? Let's start painting a picture of your career. I'm going to ask you a deceptively simple set of questions about your future. As you answer them, try to visualize your answers. Don't worry if you don't have a vision yet: this list of questions works better when you don't know because you're more open-minded about what you want.

You can fill in the chart on page 126 or write your answers on a separate sheet of paper, but if you really want to make your future compelling and harness the power of vision, consider downloading images from the Internet to create a portrait of your future. To do this, create a Word document and insert the images you find online that illustrate your responses to the questions—or print out your images and glue them onto a piece of card stock or poster paper.

Whether you choose to write about, draw, or illustrate your vision, consider printing your responses and placing them on your bulletin board, refrigerator, or somewhere where you can see them. And always add new responses when they arise.

Remember, the beauty of vision is that it changes and grows, so no matter how vague this process starts out, you will develop greater clarity about your future plans.

Here we go. Answer the following questions:

1. **Who?** Think about whom you would like to be around all day at the workplace. What type of people do you want to interact with as clients, customers, or colleagues? Picture them. How are they dressed? How old are they? What are they discussing or doing with you? Are some of the "who's" in your vision animals?

2. **What?** Picture yourself working on a great project or providing a service that inspires you. What are you doing? Maybe you are counseling, advising, writing, creating spreadsheets, consulting, making trades or deals, selling, promoting, using computers, designing a purse, working outdoors, inventing a new medicine, flying a plane, using specialized equipment or machinery, creating political or advertising campaigns, developing a new product or service, creating an app, starting up a business, saving the whales, fighting hunger and homelessness, and so on?
3. **Where?** Think about this on several levels: What sort of office or outdoor setting are you in? What location: city, state, or country? Are you in a cubicle or are you working from home? Are you in a hospital, a school, the Pentagon, a camp, or a food trailer? Be creative and think about the setting in which you'd like to work.
4. **Why?** This is actually the most important question you will answer. The why question is all about your motivation and the meaning of what you do. What is important to you about doing this work? What is it about this work that appeals to you? Take your time to think this through: the more meaning you can find in your future, the more motivated you will be to pursue it. Create the story you will tell others about why you have chosen this type of work.
5. **When?** When can you start your new career? Quite frankly, the best answer is "now." It's tempting to put off pursuing your plans because you don't have time or you're not sure what to do. Instead, what could you do in the next twenty-four hours to move toward your ideas or goal? If you don't know, well, then that's what you can do in the next twenty-four hours: get online and get more information. Most people who are stuck are simply lacking in information. You don't need to plan everything out here. Just jot down a few steps you could take.
6. **How?** What steps do you need to take? What do you need to know? Don't worry too much about this right now.

The next section of the Wise Wanderings System will help you with that.

Finally, take a look at everything you wrote down or the images you gathered off the Internet. Do you see any sort of a pattern? Do any jobs come to mind? If not, try some more online research. Follow the instructions in the “Wisdom Builder #10: Mine the Vast Resources of the Internet for Career Ideas,” starting on page 112. Jot down your ideas and add them to your Possible Lives Map.

Who?	Consider: customers, clients, colleagues
What?	Consider: activities, actions, projects, accomplishments
Where?	Inside or outdoors? City, state, country? Business, government, nonprofit, education?
Why?	What makes this meaningful to you? What is important about it?
When?	What could you do in the next twenty-four hours to move toward it?
How?	What do you need to know to move forward?

WISDOM BUILDER #12

FINDING MEANING AND PURPOSE IN YOUR CAREER

FINDING A MEANINGFUL CAREER

When you completed the “Wisdom Builder #11: Developing the Vision of Your Future Career” on page 124, I mentioned that the question “why” is one of the most important questions you will answer about your career choices. During recessions and tough economic periods, many people are simply satisfied to have a job—any job. But when the economy improves or when people have an opportunity to change jobs or careers, a word that features prominently is “meaning.” Many students and young workers express a desire for a meaningful career, but they don’t always know what that means or how to find one. Some people equate meaning with some sort of selfless devotion to a low-paying career field, as in “it doesn’t pay much, but it’s very fulfilling.” Others scoff at the notion of meaning, stating that it’s more important to pay bills, including student loans, and that a search for a meaningful career is a luxury many can’t afford.

It’s important to go past the stereotypes of “meaning” and delve into what is meaningful for you. It’s a personal decision; there is no abstract definition of what is “meaningful.” Like beauty, it is in the eyes of the beholder. Roman Krznaric, the author of an excellent career book, *How to Find Fulfilling Work*, has constructed a simple formula for identifying a personally meaningful career. In chapter 3 of his book, he lays out five dimensions of “meaning” in work, which I am placing in five blocks (in alphabetical order):

Achieving Status	
Earning Money	
Following Your Passions (Interests)	
Making a Difference	
Using Your Talents (Skills)	

Take a look at these different dimensions and write them in the second column in the order that is important to you, starting with your most important characteristic at the top, and the least important at the bottom. Some thoughts to consider about each item:

Money. How much income do you want/need? Are you setting your own monetary goals or complying with someone else's? What is a comfortable living, and what careers might fulfill that?

Status. How does status or respect fit into your definition of meaningful work? Status is closely aligned with pride and is highly subjective. One can take pride in teaching children, building a bridge, designing a building, writing a novel, making a hamburger in a restaurant, or helping someone achieve their monetary goals for retirement. Status as defined by others is compelling yet seductive—how concerned are you with others' definitions? What is **your** definition?

Making a difference. Many college students express a desire to make a difference in their work. What is your definition of "making a difference"? Making a difference isn't always about saving the whales or other large humanitarian projects; you can also make a difference when you compile the payroll for your company. Teachers make a difference every day—but you will likely not see the results immediately. Can you step back and see the big picture, or do you need to feel you're making a difference every day?

Following your passions (interests). This is a long-running and oft-derided theme in career decision-making. The image that comes to mind is that of a starving musician or artist "following their passions" but living with their parents because they have no money. How important are your passions and interests? Have you investigated the variety of careers where your interests could be used? How have other people made a reasonable income out of their passions? Must you be a starving artist or are there other, perhaps better, models to follow?

Using your talents (skills). Talents and skills are key to success in your career. And they can be closely related to your passions. Try looking within the passion to find the talents and skills. For instance, you might be passionate about raising orchids, but careers directly related to that passion might be limited. So what talents are behind that passion? Could it be your patience? Or attention to detail? Or the researching skills needed to learn how best to care for the orchids? Or your appreciation of beauty and aesthetics? Consider your top five skills or talents. When you are at your all-time best, what are you doing? And how can you find a job that lets you do more of that?

WISDOM BUILDER #13

WRITE YOUR CAREER AND LIFE MANIFESTO

This is your life. Do what you love and do it often. If you don't like something, change it.

—HOLSTEE MANIFESTO

Ever see the movie *Jerry Maguire*? Tom Cruise plays a sports agent who is being crushed by the limitations of the firm he's working for and one day decides to strike out on his own, creating a job and a life that fits his needs. As part of his transition, he writes a passionate manifesto describing what is important to him and how he will serve his clients.

Manifestos sharpen your thoughts about life, your vision, your opinions, your beliefs, and what you're committed to. A well-written manifesto makes you think but also makes you feel. Reading a manifesto should make you feel motivated, empowered, and supported. It's not a to-do list, but rather a to-believe-and-commit-to list. It clearly defines what is important in your life.

The founders of Holstee, which started as an apparel company, wanted to clarify how they defined success and keep their values and mission clear to themselves and to their employees, so they created a brilliant and bold manifesto, which ironically became an iconic poster and a top-selling product for their company. Since then, the Holstee Manifesto has been credited with changing lives and giving people the courage to pursue their dreams. (You can read more about their company and the manifesto here: <https://www.holstee.com/pages/manifesto>.)

What if you wrote your own manifesto? How might that inspire you to dream bigger, create a more powerful vision, or live your life in a new way?

Here are some steps to get started:

1. Your manifesto doesn't have to be long. You may find that one phrase will work. A nonprofit organization, Project H Design, has a great exercise called Six-Word Manifestos.

2. Brainstorm what is important to you.
 - a. What parts of your life matter most?
 - b. What actions could you take that would make your life better? (One of my favorite lines from the Holstee Manifesto is "If you don't have enough time, stop watching TV.")
 - c. What is important to remember every day?
 - d. What goals or dreams do you have? For instance, if you want to be an artist, but aren't painting, maybe one of your statements will be "Create. Every day."
3. Try expressing your thoughts in declarative statements that empower you.
4. Collect favorite quotes from movies, books, and the Internet. Check out Pinterest and Instagram for inspiration. Modify the quotes as needed to better fit your situation.
5. Write your manifesto in a way that appeals to you. Maybe you will handwrite it. Or paint it on a canvas. Or create a Word document. Produce it however you wish. And post it where you can see it and read it every day.
6. Make it a living vision. Let it change and evolve as you change and evolve.

WISDOM BUILDER #14

HOW TO THINK ABOUT A CAREER IN THE ARTS

Creative interests pop up all the time on Possible Lives Maps, but many people resist pursuing them because they see an inherent risk in creative careers: they don't follow a traditional path, they rest on the individual's talent, and they aren't sure who gets to decide whether someone has the right talent or not. Plus, how often does luck or fate factor into one's success in a creative field? There are myriad ways to pursue a creative interest: you can make it the direct focus of your career (as in becoming a dancer, singer, or other artist), you can work in a creative field such as advertising or publishing, you can teach an artistic pursuit, and so on. How do you decide?

First of all, it's your decision. Family members and other concerned individuals may try to encourage you to take the "safe" route of a more traditional career. And that may be a right decision. But it's also a right decision to pursue your talents and dreams. What you need to do is what psychologist Eric Maisel calls "dream upholding and reality testing." In his excellent book *Coaching the Artist Within*, Maisel identifies the many challenges facing someone who wants to pursue a creative career. He provides guidance around dealing with anxiety, creating when you're too busy to create, developing goals, and gaining control of your thoughts, which might try to sabotage you.

An important part of creative career decision-making, according to Maisel, is testing the reality of your dream. As he writes:

We must dream large, and we must also reality-test well. It is imperative that we do both. A person who dreams large but doesn't effectively test reality ends up living in a fantasy world. A person who tests reality well but doesn't nurture large dreams lives paralyzed in the ordinary world.

Remember the TV show *American Idol*? If you watched their tryouts, you have seen the, shall we say, misguided dreams of people who think they have more of a gift than they really do. If you're considering a professional career in the arts, you might want to assemble your own panel of judges. You need to find someone like Randy Jackson: a talented artist and producer who knows the business thoroughly and has managed careers of other people with talent like yours. Then, of course, you need a Paula Abdul—someone who will be kind and encouraging and tell you how genuine you are while offering fashion advice and motivation. Finally, you really do need a Simon Cowell. Someone who will look you in the eye and give you the most honest (if blunt) opinion of your work. It may be painful to hear, but if it's a positive verdict, then you know you have the talent you need.

Start thinking about who could serve those roles in your creative ventures: Your professors? Professionals in the community where you live? Alumni from your institution who are in the field? If you're considering a performing art, an audience can help—they applaud, laugh, boo, walk out, or give you a standing ovation. Whatever they do, you will have feedback. If your art is visual or written, you can post it on your website and actively seek feedback. Ignore the Internet trolls who always respond with ridiculous and inappropriate comments. Look for the general audience reaction and then make your decision. Consider asking a local store, restaurant, or library to display your paintings, photos, or visual pieces. Label each piece carefully with its title, your name, and a price, if you'd like to sell it. Money talks, as they say. Or leave a clipboard with a pen attached and ask people to join your mailing list for future showings, and invite them to leave comments about your work.

By the way, a negative reaction doesn't mean you should stop. It might mean that you are doing groundbreaking work, or that you need to develop your craft further or try new approaches. Keep going as long as you want and are able.

WISDOM BUILDER #15

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AVOID THE THREE TOP EXCUSES FOR NOT PURSUING YOUR PLANS: AGE, EDUCATION, AND MONEY

Age is a state of mind. Years ago, someone wrote advice columnist Ann Landers about whether to pursue a college degree at age forty. The person commented that it might take eight years because he'd have to pursue it part-time. He worried that he would be forty-eight by the time he finished. Her reply: "How old will you be in eight years if you don't pursue the degree?" So you have a choice. You're going to be whatever age you're going to be. The only real question is whether you want to be that age having achieved your dream. You might also think you're too young. Unless you're running into a legal issue (such as having to wait until you're thirty-five to become president of the United States), chances are you're never too young to pursue your passion. Go for it!

Education can be another roadblock. It works both ways: sometimes people feel they must pursue a particular career because they have a degree in that field; others think they can't pursue a particular career because they don't have a degree in that field. Just because you're getting a law degree doesn't mean you need to practice law. And if you want to work with lawyers but don't want a law degree, there are lots of ways to acquire the knowledge and skills you need to enter the legal field in another capacity. Many successful entrepreneurs have built businesses without the so-called "proper education." Remember, what you need is knowledge, not education.

Money. Don't let your chosen field's average salary keep you away. Consider pursuing it for a year or two, or getting additional education or certification that will boost your income. There are entrepreneurial ways to make money in almost any field. Most experts would tell you there's no money in early childhood education, for example; after all, home day-care operators seldom get

rich. But don't tell that to Julie Aigner-Clark, who created preschool videos from her home and developed them into a multimillion-dollar business called Baby Einstein. The reverse is also true: don't assume that a high-paying field is the key to career satisfaction. You will likely earn that income by working long hours in an intense setting. The relationship between money and happiness is not linear, and if you're not enjoying your life, the money will lose its cachet.

DETERMINING THE SCOPE OF YOUR VISION

Now that you've seriously considered a variety of career fields and created your Possible Lives Map, how focused are you? The actions you take now will be determined in large part by how focused your vision is. Compare your vision to the types that follow. First, ask yourself three simple questions:

1. Do I know what I am planning to do after graduation?
2. How clear is my vision?
3. How many "visions" or "possible lives" do I have?

Your responses likely fit into one of these three categories:

1. Probability Planner. You have a vision that is crystal clear, and you're ready to move forward to achieve it. Examples of this could be:

I am going to law school.

I want to be an investment banker in New York City.

I'm going to teach history to high school students.

I'm going to get my PhD in economics and become a college professor.

I'm going to medical school.

I want to work in retail merchandising.

I'm going to get my MFA in creative writing and become a novelist.

I'm going to teach English in Japan.

I want to work with adolescents in a drug rehabilitation program.

Can you see that these goals are clear and easy to picture? They provide enough detail to move forward in a clear and concrete manner. If this fits you, write your goal below. And to make it even

stronger, try writing a short paragraph that describes what your life will look like when you are living your goal. Create a compelling story that will motivate and inspire you.

My career goal is:

Here's what my life will look like:

You can move to the next chapter and start crafting experiments to be fully prepared for the field you plan to enter.

2. Possibility Planner. You have several visions for your future, and you find all of them interesting. You are concerned about limiting yourself to just one option. You would like to explore several opportunities at once, if possible. Your answers are more like this:

I've identified three Possible Lives, but I really can't choose. I'm thinking of teaching gifted children or working in advertising or starting a cupcake business.

I would like to teach English abroad or maybe work in a kibbutz or do something at a nonprofit.

I am interested in marketing, but I'm also interested in fashion design. And I'm thinking about getting an MBA.

I want to get a doctorate in psychology soon, but I'd like to run my own equine therapy center or own a camp for children with special needs.

I'm torn between living in New York City and San Francisco. I'm interested in a career in policy, but I'm not sure what to specialize in.

I'd like to work at Disney World or a fancy resort in California, but I'd also like to take a gap year and travel through South America, working at whatever I can find.

I'm applying to medical school, but I don't think I'll get accepted, so I'm looking for something to do next year that will enhance my application in the future and build my medical knowledge.

Does this sound like you? If so, take a few minutes and write the top three options you're considering (and, yes, it's OK to write up to five as long as you don't overwhelm yourself). Try telling the story of your different options. How clearly can you see each? Where are you living? What do your surroundings look like? What would your life look like? Remember, the clearer you can see your different visions, the easier it will be to pursue them.

My possible lives are:

Here's What My Possible Lives Will Look Like When I'm Living Them (Tell the Story):

Possible Life #1:

Possible Life #2:

Possible Life #3:

When you're done, take a look at the stories you created.

- Could you see yourself in all the roles?
- Which ones gave you energy? Did any take energy away?
- Which was the most fun to dream about and create?

- ⇒ Was one story easier to create than another?
- ⇒ Did any of your stories make you a little anxious or uncomfortable? Why?
- ⇒ Could you see any of them blending together in any way?
- ⇒ Did one story stand out as a starting point with other stories following later?

Now it's time to test your vision. **Go on to the next chapter.**

Still reading? Ah, you are probably getting a little nervous. It seems like everyone has a plan, and you're still struggling. Not to worry, it's OK if your vision is still unclear. Some of the best careers my students have moved into came from this state of mind. You are simply an:

3. Intention Seeker. You probably have a few ideas of what you'd like but just haven't landed on the specifics yet. Your answers to the vision-clarifying questions probably sound like this:

I have no idea what I want to do, but I want to live in Dallas.

I want to use my writing skills in whatever I do.

I want a career that's adventurous and exciting. I don't want to sit in a cubicle.

I want to use my creative-thinking and graphic design skills, but I don't want to be a graphic designer.

I want a career that has meaning.

I want to work with people and help them in some way.

I want to work in business.

I'd like to work internationally.

I want to work in a nonprofit setting.

I want a position where I can work independently.

Remember, you are not alone. Many of the students and clients I work with express these same ideas. Since you can't describe a clear vision at the moment, focus on what you can picture. Did you notice that each of the intentions above focused on either a skill set the person wants to use, a general idea of a setting, or a way he or she wants to feel when in a job? That's a great start. Try setting some intentions based on the information you know about yourself. Don't worry if they sound a little vague. Intentions are a great starting point.

My intentions are:

Now try to write a story or two about what these intentions might look like. For instance, if you said you wanted to "work with animals," tell me about that. Where might you be doing that? What types of animals interest you? Are you saving lions in Africa? Are you designing a zoo focused on creating a more humane environment? Have fun. How far can you expand? Nothing is etched in stone, and if you don't like a story you're creating, trash it, and write a new one. See what develops.

Stories of my intentions:

You Majored in What?

Now you're ready to move on to the next chapter, in which you'll use experimental wanderings to test your plans and develop more clarity. Your goal is to explore and learn.

CHAPTER 5

SHARPENING YOUR VISION

TESTING THE WATERS BEFORE YOU TAKE THE PLUNGE

Do not be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make, the better.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Congratulations! Whether you know it or not, you have made incredible progress on your path to your future. You have mapped out your strengths, identified the skills you possess that employers are seeking, and created a vision of your future.

You are almost ready to move into the third phase of the process: designing your path. But in order to design the best path, you need to test and clarify your vision, particularly if it's a relatively new vision and you don't have a lot of knowledge about it. Conducting some "experimental wanderings" will help you do just that. Experimental wanderings are some of the most fun you can have in the job search. Some of them will be obvious and directly career related, such as an internship in your chosen field. But others will be just about you having fun doing what you like to do and encountering a chance connection or lead that will move you closer to your dream.

Chaos theory stresses that greater knowledge leads to better predictions, so the information you gather through your research and experiments will help you make better decisions about your future.