



CHAPTER 6

EVEN WANDERERS MAKE PLANS

WHERE ARE YOU NOW AND
WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

[It's] like driving at night in the fog. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.

—E. L. DOCTOROW, QUOTED IN *WRITERS AT WORK*, EDITED BY
GEORGE PLIMPTON, 8TH EDITION

In chapter 4 you started developing the vision of your future—the Probable or Possible Lives you might lead. In chapter 5, you reality-tested and honed your ideas through research-based and people-based experimental wanderings. Now it's time to shape your knowledge and experience into a plan. Planning your future isn't a once-in-a-lifetime activity. It's a series of decisions and experiments you'll be crafting throughout your life. The plans you're about to develop are designed to help you be focused as well as flexible, not only about your career but also about any other aspects of your life you'd like to change. You will learn to set up your environment to make achieving your goals natural and easy. Through this approach to planning you'll be able to take advantage of, and be resilient to, any changes.

I like to think of this phase as a GPS tracker:

You are **HERE** (what you learned about yourself in the discovery phase).

You want to be **THERE** (the vision you created and sharpened in the develop phase).

And now you're ready to **DESIGN** the path that will allow you to get from **HERE** to **THERE**.

In this chapter, we're going to clarify your "here" and "there" one more time, to help you develop your path. I like the GPS imagery because it's a logical and nonjudgmental system. Even if you stray off your path and make a turn that's not in the original plan (notice I'm being very careful here not to say "wrong turn," because there are no wrong turns), the GPS just resets to get you back on track. And if you change your mind and want to go somewhere else, you can create a new path.

The ideas you developed are not necessarily predictions of what will happen, but rather are probable or possible glimpses into the future based on what you currently know. The opening quote to this chapter from novelist E. L. Doctorow was taken from an interview where he was asked if he plotted out his stories ahead of time. As you can tell, he was content to let the story develop as he wrote. You can plan your life the same way. As you start developing your plans, keep the pressure off and your anxiety level down by remembering a key tenet of chaos theory: the further into the future you're trying to plan, the less accurate your plan will likely be. So in this chapter you're going to plan only as far as your headlights will permit, organizing and reducing the chaos. And even better, by the end of this chapter, no matter where you are right now, you will have an amazing answer to **THE QUESTION**.

So, to develop your plan, let's start with "here." Let's take stock of where you are at this point.

Wandering Off

HOW GOALS CAN GO AWRY

Any type of goal-setting system has built-in roadblocks, so before you set the course for your goals, let's consider some of the roadblocks that can wreck your plans before you even start. The chart below illustrates the most common goal-setting challenges and some quick ways to avoid or overcome them.

PROBLEM GOAL	SOLUTION
Too large and grandiose: Some planners call this the "big hairy audacious goal." <i>I plan to become a Supreme Court justice.</i>	Dreaming big is fine. But when you try to move toward the big goal, it seems so big you quickly become overwhelmed and lose energy. <i>Break your goal into smaller bites where you can see results quickly.</i>
Too many goals: <i>I want to become an Olympic swimmer, write the next great American novel, get married, and raise six children.</i>	Having lots of dreams is fine. But you probably can't do them at the same time or perhaps at the level of perfection you're describing. <i>Prioritize and move toward the one that is most appealing and then see what happens.</i>
Too-distant goals: <i>In twelve years I want to be a heart surgeon.</i>	This is a wonderful goal and very attainable for the right person. But it's a long-fuse, big-bang goal, so once again you need to <i>break it down into specific actions you can take now that will lead you to the goal.</i>
Problem-oriented goals: These goals are created to make your anxiety go away. <i>I just want to secure a job now, so I can relax and do nothing the rest of my senior year.</i>	There is no energy or enthusiasm toward this goal, so you're more likely to grab "whatever" so you can achieve your real goal of relaxation. <i>Instead, develop an interesting plan that moves you toward a desirable goal and makes you less anxious about the job search.</i>

PROBLEM GOAL	SOLUTION
Media-influenced goals: <i>It would be so cool to be a CSI.</i>	Being a CSI is a great career for the right person. You just need to make sure you're the right person. <i>Do your research. Learn the reality rather than the image.</i>
Parent-influenced goals: <i>My mom would be really pleased if I joined her law firm.</i>	Your parents can be a wonderful source of inspiration and support. But it's your life, not theirs, so be sure you're pursuing a career because you want it also. Law school is an investment of money and three years of your life. And then you're a lawyer. Hmm. Still sound good? Then go for it.
Money-focused goals: <i>My goal is to make \$50,000 in my first job out of school.</i>	This is a fine goal and achievable in certain fields of employment. But by setting such an arbitrary figure, you're limiting yourself to the opportunities you can explore. <i>Consider how flexible you can be about the money.</i>

WHERE ARE YOU? ASSESSING THE PRESENT

It's time to compile all the information you've acquired so far. You have at least five main sources to consider:

1. Your **Wandering Map** categories, themes, and threads (from chapter 2)
2. Your **key mindsets**, including the ones that are your strengths and the ones you want to build (chapter 3)

3. The **strengths, skills, knowledge, and mindsets** acquired through your major, your additional coursework, and your experiences (chapter 4)
4. The **Possible or Probable Lives** you'd like to lead (chapter 4)
5. The **knowledge** you acquired through your experimental wanderings (chapter 5)

This information is your gold mine; it contains the unique strengths you possess that will interest employers and graduate schools. You will want to keep your gold mine in mind as you go through the rest of the book to arrive at your final destination.

On the next page you will find a form to help you gather the information you've acquired in one place. You can fill in the form or create a similar list in your notebook. Note: If you've skipped some of the chapters or exercises, this would be a good time to go back and complete them so you'll have the best information as you start making your plans.

DESIGNING THE PATHS TO GET YOU WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

"Ghost of the Future," he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen."

—CHARLES DICKENS, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

The Wise Wanderings system offers three approaches to designing your path based on the clarity of your vision and whether you are a Probable Life Seeker, a Possible Lives Seeker, or an Intention Seeker. If you aren't sure where you are classified at this point, read pages 136–142 and determine what category best fits you now, and read the planning section (strategy) that applies to you. (It's normal, by the way, to shift categories throughout this process. Some Intention Seekers discover their vision and become Probable Life Seekers—and some Probable Life Seekers, through their experimental wanderings, discover they don't want to pursue that life, and are actually Intention Seekers. It all works out, so never fear. Just identify who you are today. It doesn't matter where you were.)

PROBABILITY PLANNING (WISE WANDERINGS STRATEGY I)

Probability Planning is traditional goal-setting planning with a chaos theory twist. Chaos theory tells you that even though your goal may seem etched in stone, as you move toward it, you will learn new information and it may change. Probability Planning means you focus on that one option ("I will be at Harvard Law School in three years"), but as you move toward that option, you broaden your search to include other related options. After all, with most career decisions or choices, you aren't completely in control. If you could just will yourself into Harvard Law, then it would likely happen. But chaos theory reminds us of the complexity of the admissions process: how many other students are applying this year to Harvard, their grade point averages, the type of student Harvard is seeking, the average LSAT score for admission, and so on. You don't have control over all the variables, and since you don't have 100 percent

WANDERING MAP SUMMARY	KEY MINDSETS
Categories: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> Themes/Threads: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	Strengths: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> Want to Develop: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Key Strengths, Skills, Knowledge, and Mindsets Acquired through Major: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	Key Strengths, Skills, Knowledge, and Mindsets Acquired through Other Coursework: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Key Strengths, Skills, Knowledge, and Mindsets Acquired through Experiences: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	Information Acquired through Experimental Wanderings: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

control, you will want to develop some secondary options. In this example, specifically, you will want to identify other law schools you're willing to attend. If you're determined to attend Harvard and no other law school, then what would plan B look like? Perhaps a year off after graduation to build experience?

Because here's an even wilder option: suppose senior year comes along and you suddenly realize you don't want to be a lawyer? Oops. Now what do you do? No problem. Possibility Planning (in the next section) has you covered. But for the moment, if you are fairly certain about your decision, use the Probability Planning method. You can always use a different system if new information or knowledge emerges.

On pages 186–187, you will find a Probability Plan worksheet that you can adjust to fit your needs. While at first it looks a little complicated, it's actually very simple to use and easy to follow.

1. Start by brainstorming the key steps you need to take to attain your goal. (Having trouble with this step? You probably don't know enough about the subject. Time to do more research or speak with someone who can help you.)
2. Write the steps in the first part of the chart (or on a separate piece of paper). At this point, don't try to put them in any particular order. Just write them down as you think of them. The chart has an arbitrary number of twenty steps—you may have more or less, so adjust it as needed.
3. Determine the time frame from now until you plan to achieve your goal. For instance, if your goal is to work for the Peace Corps after graduation and you just finished your sophomore year, you have approximately two years before you will get there. That gives you a lot of time to prepare to be the best candidate for the job. On the other hand, if you're a first-semester senior and your goal is to join the Peace Corps, you only have a few months, so you will need to work quickly to become the best candidate.
4. Review your steps to achieve the goal and start placing them according to the time period you have available. Renumber them beginning with the first step to the last step. Break the steps into small groupings on the chart and write in a specific deadline

when you will achieve the various steps. Again, the grouping of five steps is arbitrary. Only use what you need, or add more if needed. You can start from where you are now and go forward to your goal, or you can start with the goal and work backward on your planning sheet, whichever you prefer.

As you set up your plans, keep your academic calendar in mind—don't schedule steps toward your career during exam week or when papers are due. Don't try to crowd too many deadlines into one time period. And don't set goals for Saturday night (unless they're fun, of course).

You can assume obstacles will come up. Walk around them. You can also assume that you might change your goal, in which case you just go back to pages 136–142, determine where you are, and use the system that best applies to your new thinking about the future.

*You know what the best part of Probability Planning is? When you're asked **THE QUESTION**, you'll have no trouble saying, "I plan to _____, and I've outlined my plan to get there." Congratulations on being so focused and organized!*

After the Probability Plan worksheet, you'll find a sample plan developed by Madison, a sophomore who will be graduating in May 2019. She wants to become a lawyer, but she hasn't decided which school she'd like to attend or what area of law to pursue. She has identified ten steps, so that's where she's starting, but she may add more later as she learns more about the process.

PROBABILITY PLAN

GOAL: _____

CURRENT DATE: _____

DATE TO ACHIEVE GOAL: _____

TIME REMAINING: _____

List of Steps to Attain Goal:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Breakdown of Timeline to Achieve Goal:

BY _____ (INSERT DATE) I WILL HAVE COMPLETED
THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

BY _____ (INSERT DATE) I WILL HAVE COMPLETED
THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

BY _____ (INSERT DATE) I WILL HAVE COMPLETED
THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

BY _____ (INSERT DATE) I WILL HAVE COMPLETED
THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

MADISON'S PROBABILITY PLAN

GOAL: Attend law school

CURRENT DATE: May 2017

DATE TO ACHIEVE GOAL: September 2019

TIME REMAINING: 2 years, 4 months

List of Steps to Attain Goal (In Any Order)

1. Take LSAT
2. Prep for LSAT
3. Review law school info—needed GPA, LSAT score, etc.
4. Get references
5. Keep grades up
6. Review online applications
7. Prepare essays
8. Do internship or find summer job in law firm
9. Research interest in criminal law
10. Research interest in public law

Breakdown of Timeline to Achieve Goal:

BY December 2018, I WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Submitted all materials to Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) to be forwarded to my schools
2. Submitted specific applications to law schools as needed

BY October 2018, I WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Finished final draft of all essays
2. Shared essay with prelaw adviser for advice
3. Read essays to friends for their reactions

BY September 2018, I WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Asked professors and others for letters of recommendation
2. Given LSDAS info to my references
3. Given my references a copy of my résumé to remind them about my background

BY August 2018, I WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Collected all admissions information from schools I'm interested in
2. Researched all the schools to determine their specialties
3. Started drafting my essays, taking into account the advice of admissions office

BY summer 2018, I WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. An internship or summer job with a local law firm
2. Researched the specifics of criminal law
3. Contacted alumni practicing different types of law
4. Registered for LSAT

BY December 2017, I WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Researched law careers in general
2. Learned typical salaries and best firms to consider for internship or summer job
3. Met with prelaw adviser to confirm that I'm on the right track
4. Begun creating a list of alumni who are lawyers
5. Researched best way to prepare for LSAT

Notice how Madison's plans get more specific the closer she gets to deadline dates. Also notice that she was flexible in her designation of dates. She didn't lock herself into a specific date at first, but rather chose to use general terms like *summer*. You may find you prefer a general date, or you may respond better to specific dates. It's your plan, so develop it according to what works for you.

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you set up and work through your goals:

How will I know that I'm on the right track? Which of the steps are particularly important?

Am I already pursuing this plan? Is any part of this plan already occurring?

What do I need to change or do differently to make this plan succeed?

What requirements must I meet to make this plan succeed?

Who could help me with various steps of this plan?

What is my backup plan and how can I incorporate it into these steps?

Energy check:

How does putting this plan together feel?

Am I excited?

Looking forward to the various steps?

Looking forward to the outcome?

Am I overwhelmed? How could I get help for that?

Am I tired or losing energy? Should I speak with someone about this?

Noting how you feel is important because feelings are a great clue to whether you're on the right track or not. It's normal to feel overwhelmed or anxious because this search (and your future) is important. But it's also a lot of work, and if you aren't excited about your future plans, or you find yourself putting off the work you need to do, that might be an important clue. Who could you talk to to sort out your thoughts?

POSSIBILITY PLANNING (WISE WANDERINGS STRATEGY 2)

Possible lives are all about dreaming, and Possibility Planning will help you organize your dreams and give you a more flexible and creative approach than Probability Planning. In their book, *Creative Decision Making*, H. B. and Carol Gelatt call this type of decision-making the "shift from 'either/or' to 'both and more'" kind of thinking. Instead of having to choose between distinct appealing futures, you get to plan as many as you want while you learn more about each one.

For this type of planning, you will need two tools that you can buy at your college bookstore or almost any store or drugstore: a large piece of poster board (so you'll have enough room to work) and a pack of small Post-it notes (sticky tabs). The poster board can be white or any color you choose, as long as the sticky tabs are in a contrasting color so you can read them easily.

Review your Possible Lives Map from chapter 4 and make any additions or deletions you want based on where you are now. Decide which ones you want to continue considering. Don't worry about how disparate they are. They don't have to be in agreement. As you work through this process, you'll start to figure out how you might resolve any tensions or differences. Write each of the Possible Lives you're considering on a sticky tab and place them in a line at the top of your poster board.

Review what you wrote in the Where Are You? section of this chapter. How do your particular strengths or themes relate to any of your Possible Lives? Write some of those key strengths or themes on sticky tabs and place them near the Possible Lives they apply to. This will remind you of why you are pursuing this area.

Take a look at each possible life and think about what you need to do before you can do that job or activity. One way to think about this is "Could I start this career (or experience) on Monday?" If the answer is yes, then you probably have just a few things to do. If it's no, then brainstorm what events or actions would need to occur to get you there. At this point, you probably won't know every step until you've done more research, but fill in the likely steps you'll need to take, given your current knowledge about the field. Write each step you identify on a sticky tab and start placing them below the possible life. They don't necessarily have to go in order. As usual, don't worry about making your board perfect. The advantage of the sticky tab system is its complete flexibility. You can move lives around, reorder the steps, remove steps, and add new ones as often as you like. Your planning strategy keeps up with your life and with what you learn as you go along. Just to get you started, here are some typical general steps needed for most experiences (whether in the workplace or graduate school):

Write résumé

Write cover letter

- Search websites for more information
- Identify books that might provide helpful information
- Get application and apply for admission
- Acquire more education
- Take GRE or other exams
- Find a related internship or other experience
- Talk with people in field
- Identify who can help you
- Raise money to afford your plan
- Note trends in your areas of interest—is it a hot field with lots of opportunities?

You will want to modify this list based on your specific needs and what you learned through your research and experimental wanderings. Take the generic terms above and adapt them to your situation. For instance, you might adapt “get education” to “get an MSW degree” or “get certification in massage therapy.” Keep creating the steps for each of the Possible Lives you’ve listed. Once you’re done, step back and take a look:

Which of your strengths and skills enhance your ability to do each one of these Possible Lives?

What evidence are you using to make your decisions? Do you need to do more research before you can answer these questions? As you started identifying the steps to your Possible Lives, did any particular thoughts come to you?

Did you find it easier to fill out the steps to one life than another? Why?

Does one life seem more doable at the moment? Why?

Does one life seem more appealing or motivating than the others? Why?

Is one life more challenging than another? Does this make you less inclined or more inclined to pursue it?

Are you excited about a choice but resisting it for some reason?

What are the pros or cons of your Possible Lives? Are any choices particularly risky? In what way?

Is there a point where you’ll need to make a decision or choose between two or more Possible Lives? When will that likely occur?

Who could help you move forward with your ideas?

Based on your findings so far, would you like to eliminate or change any of your Possible Lives? If so, just remove it and the sticky tabs associated with it. Now, take a look at what’s left. Can you picture yourself in each of these roles? How does it look? How do you feel?

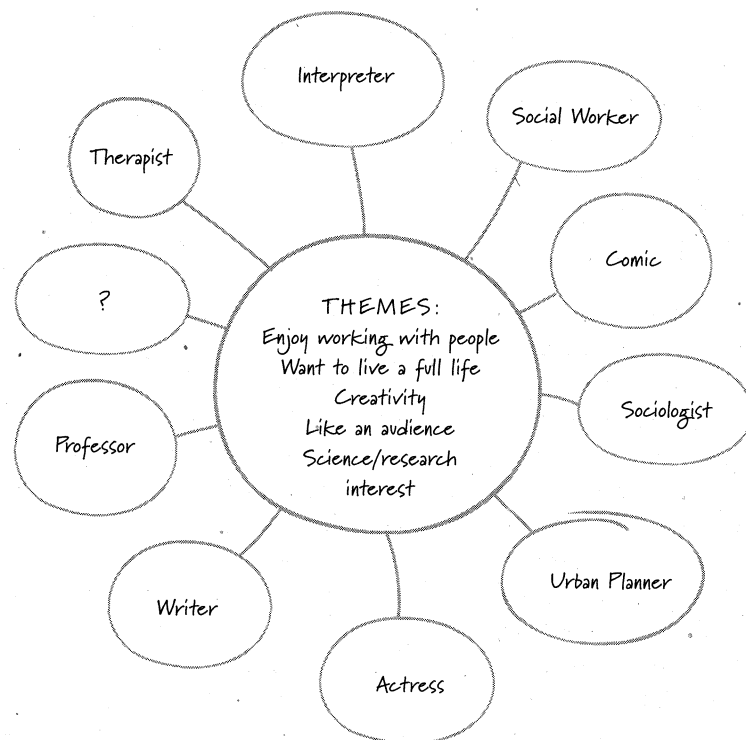
Do you have any duplicate steps in your lists? For instance, maybe all of your Possible Lives require a résumé. In that case, take the “write résumé” sticky tab away from each list and put it at the top of a new list. Now, write out the steps to doing your résumé on sticky tabs below the “write résumé” sticky tab. (Hint: Read chapter 8 if this is the first time you’ve written a résumé.) If each life has several steps in common, then you can easily pursue all of your Possible Lives simultaneously without having to eliminate anything for the moment.

Do your Possible Lives have no steps in common? How would you like to proceed with them? You could start by pursuing the steps that sound most appealing to you, regardless of which life they lead to. Then, as you learn more, see if one possible life jumps forward. If it does, switch to the Probability Planning approach. Otherwise, use the ideas in chapter 5 to help design experiments to learn more.

Whatever you decide, put your poster board up on a wall near your desk or transfer your sticky tab lists to pages in your notebook. They’re all in one place, and you can change them as needed. The more visible your various plans are, and the more you see them, the more likely you are to move forward in one or more of the directions. By doing this, you will quickly learn which ones are most appealing to you (for whatever reason) and help clear the chaos and confusion of too many lives.

Take a look at page 194, where you will see Emily’s Possible Lives map. She is a sociology major. After studying her map, Emily decided that she was most interested in pursuing three options for

EMILY'S POSSIBLE LIVES



now: writer, comic, and social worker. She is still interested in urban planning, but she thinks that she might look into serving on a city council or something like that after she's worked as a social worker first. She believes that her knowledge of some of the problems in the community might help her see a bigger picture of the needs of the city. She also knows she doesn't have the commitment to being an actress right now—that's more of a dream. But becoming a comic sounds like fun and right up her alley because everyone always tells her how funny she is. She would like to be a writer also, but she has no idea how to start that career. After doing a very quick search on the Web (by Googling "writing career," "comic career," and "social worker career"), she was able to quickly learn some basic steps to getting started in all those fields. She used her sticky tabs and poster board to create the chart shown on page 196.

Several of Emily's tasks overlap, including preparing a résumé and cover letter (which can be included in her publicity packet as well) and using a notebook to record ideas and inspirations. Emily may choose to start with those steps. Also, several of the steps can be combined: most comedy clubs operate in the evening, while most social work activities occur during the day, so Emily will be able to proceed with finding an internship or summer job related to social work while pursuing her comedy career plans at night. And writing can be done almost anywhere and anytime, so Emily will be able to find some time to write every day if she wants—carrying a notebook or journal will definitely increase the probability that she will write. Emily can pursue her three dreams all at once for the moment; if she changes her mind, she can simply adapt her plans accordingly.

Writer

- ⇒ decide on type of writing
- ⇒ create portfolio
- ⇒ carry notebook and pen
- ⇒ join writers' group
- ⇒ add writing to Facebook page
- ⇒ research likely publishers who would buy my writing
- ⇒ write résumé and cover letter

Writerdecide
on type of
writingcreate
portfoliocarry
notebook
and penjoin
writer's
groupadd writing
to Facebook
pageresearch
likely
employerswho would
buy my
writing?write
résumé
and cover
letterSocial
Workervolunteer
for local
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with differ-
ent clientsresearch
MSW
programstake more
Spanish
classeswrite résumé
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letterComicprepare a
5-minute
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friendsvisit local
comedy
clubstudy favorite
comedians
on TVdo an
open miccarry
notebook to
catch ideasput video on
YouTubeprepare
publicity
packetSocial Worker

- ➔ volunteer for local agency
- ➔ look for summer experience
- ➔ find ways to encounter different types of clients
- ➔ research MSW programs
- ➔ take more Spanish classes
- ➔ write résumé and cover letter

Comic

- ➔ prepare a 5-minute set
- ➔ try out routines on friends
- ➔ visit local comedy clubs
- ➔ study favorite comedians on TV
- ➔ do an open mic
- ➔ carry notebook to catch ideas
- ➔ put video on YouTube
- ➔ prepare publicity packet

Remember, singling out your top choices doesn't mean you have to completely forget about your other choices. Choosing for the moment to seek a career in advertising doesn't mean you can't later investigate teaching or consulting. Try thinking about your decision in phases: "For my first career, I'd like to pursue ____." This keeps the door open to other opportunities.

But regardless of how many Possible Lives you're pursuing, you now have a wonderful answer to **THE QUESTION**: "I'm actively pursuing several exciting plans at the moment. I'll let you know where I end up." Congratulations on being so creative and coming up with several interesting paths to your future!

INTENTION SETTING (WISE WANDERINGS STRATEGY 3)

The only thing we know about the future is that it will be different.

—PETER DRUCKER

So you don't know what you want to do. Join the crowd. You probably thought you were off the hook here. After all, because you don't know what you want to do, how can you plan? There's actually a lot you can do—every action you take will reduce your anxiety about the future and because you're so open-minded, you're the most likely candidate for the butterfly effect. You just need to do a few things to increase your odds of finding the butterfly.

Intention setting is a planning system for nonplanners that uses intentions instead of goals. It works just as well as, and sometimes even better than, any traditional goal-setting linear plan. Want to know a secret? It's my favorite planning method. I have used intention setting for everything—with it I have found new jobs, connected with my agent, written this book, and discovered lots of other opportunities in my life.

There are lots of hypotheses about the reasons some people don't make a clear career decision. Journal and magazine articles about career indecision cite many psychological explanations: perfectionism, anxiety, low self-esteem, fear of commitment, depression, lack of motivation, procrastination, and so on. Some students get angry and blame themselves and everyone else, including their career centers, for not finding them a job. For the most part, I have found that it's more likely that you simply have lots of interests and don't have the information you need about your strengths and skills and how to use them in the workplace. Or perhaps you don't have enough knowledge about what's out there. So then you get bogged down and feel ashamed, angry, or anxious because you don't have a plan, particularly when it feels as if everyone else does. But the bottom line is it doesn't matter why you're undecided, because we're going to focus on the solution, not the problem. We already know that chaos theory supports you. Instead of viewing yourself as undecided (or clueless), consider yourself open-minded. And you do have a plan: your plan is

to find something that interests you. To paraphrase the earlier quote by Dr. Wayne Dyer (see page 121), if you don't have a career goal in mind, then your goal is to identify a career. And it may be that you're just thinking too much instead of *doing*. Go back and review the ideas for experimental wanderings in chapter 5 to discover lots of ideas and actions that will help you find the butterfly and develop your career options without making any long-term commitments.

One concern often expressed about this type of planning is that it's too open and unclear—aren't you just casting your fate to the wind? Also, isn't it just an excuse for doing nothing? Actually, this system is quite the opposite. You've already been doing a lot of work: focusing, noticing and evaluating opportunities (maybe for the first time), crafting experimental wanderings, and moving forward with your ideas and interests. And because you're staying open-minded, you are allowing space for the butterfly effect.

So let's get started. Review the information you collected about yourself in the Where Are You? section of this chapter. Are there any themes, strengths, or threads you'd like to continue in your life? For instance, maybe you have a thread of "writer," but no careers are coming to mind. Or maybe you have a strength in "athletics," but you know you can't be a professional athlete but don't know what else to do. Why not use one of your threads or themes as your starting point? And then, because the destination is still a question mark, you can develop some intentions (instead of goals) that might help you map out your direction.

Intentions are statements that invite an as yet unknown answer. They are less concrete and specific than goals. By creating an intention and *reminding yourself of it on a regular basis*, you encourage the likelihood of bringing it about. It all goes back to what you think about, you bring about; when you believe it, you will see it; and you see what you want to see. Psychologists have a fancy term for this: *selective perception*. I like to call it the MINI Cooper effect. You see, a few years ago one of my friends started talking about a great car called the MINI Cooper. She desperately wanted to buy one and had even created her ideal MINI Cooper on their website. I mentioned that I hadn't noticed many of them so she would certainly be unique on the highway. But then, the next day as I was driving to work, I saw at least ten MINI Coopers on the road. Not only that, my next-door

neighbor owned one! MINI Coopers were around me all the time, but my mind wasn't on them so I didn't "see" them. Your future is like the MINI Cooper: it's out there; you're just not seeing it yet. As soon as you start focusing on it, it will appear and appear and appear. That's where intention setting comes in. You set an intention and focus on finding an interesting summer job, or an interesting internship, or meeting someone who will help you find your career and you'll start seeing a way to make these things happen.

All you need is to identify what you want and be ready for it to happen. When you create your intentions, make them as specific as you can, based on what you currently know. Here are some sample intentions to get you started:

I intend to find a great summer experience.

I want an opportunity to work with children who have special needs.

My intention is to go calmly through the job search process, honing my skills.

My intention is to attract helpful people who can assist me with my career plans.

I'm creating an interesting future for myself.

I intend to find an interesting international opportunity.

I am in the process of finding a great opportunity in nonprofit services.

I am developing a career where I can use my writing skills.

My intention is to attract a great job in the advertising field that allows me to use my talents and skills.

I'm going to find a way to work with special needs children this summer.

Now it's time to refine your intentions from what you wrote in chapter 4. You can fill them in below or write them down in your notebook.

I intend to

I am seeking

I am developing

I am creating

I'm in the process of

To succeed in this approach, you must keep your intentions in mind and be ready to take action when opportunities appear. You have so many distractions in your life, it would be easy to set some intentions and then forget all about them, like last year's New Year's resolutions. Visual reminders are one of the best ways to keep your focus on what you really want. You could write your intentions on

your class notebooks so you'll see them every time you go to class. Or place them on an index card on your mirror or at your bedside. You can even create a special notebook or collage, or make a box to keep reminders of your intentions or things you'd like to have in your life. Doing this is a great way to make your vision of the future more tangible.

To create a simple intention box, just get a box (plain or fancy—any size you want), and when you see something that interests you in a newspaper, magazine, or elsewhere, cut it out and place it in your intention box. Collect pictures of what you'd like to attract into your life. You can keep the focus on career-related items, or you can include anything you'd like in your life—from a car to a house to a relationship. You can put in pictures of places you'd like to visit or live in, articles about someone living a life you'd like to live, favorite quotes, and so on. If an idea comes to mind of something you'd like to do, write it out and place it in the box. Take some time every now and then to go through your box and remind yourself of what you want. Remove the items or experiences that you've already acquired (it will happen) or anything you decide you no longer want. You can even make a "digital" intention box by setting up a bookmark folder called Intentions and bookmark interesting websites and online blogs or other inspiring items from the Web. While this may sound trivial or even silly, the act of collecting these visual images helps you focus and encourages you to look for clues that might lead you to your future.

*Now that you have set your intentions, are keeping them in mind, and are actively pursuing them, you have a great response to **THE QUESTION**. Just say (with complete confidence and pride): "I am in the process of designing an amazing career." And kudos to you for moving forward and staying positive in the process!*

WISDOM BUILDER #20

DESIGN EACH DAY: ARRANGING YOUR LIFE TO FIT YOUR DREAMS ONE DAY AT A TIME

Your future arrives one day at a time. And we know from chaos theory that it's a lot easier to plan in a controlled environment, such as a twenty-four-hour period, than five years out. How you create each day will go a long way toward how you create your future.

Every day you make choices. (Getting out of bed in time for that eight o'clock class is a choice.) And it's not so much about whether each is a good choice or a bad choice but rather what is the effect of your choice. Is it going to move you (and your life) forward in some way or is it going to hold you back or keep you further away from your dream? What will happen to you today because of your choices? How will the choices you make today affect you at the end of the semester or in a year? Remember, the butterfly requires almost no time to do her work: one day in your life can be life changing.

- Have you placed the job search in the background?
- Do you think or fantasize about it occasionally, but then go back to your friends, your activities, or your classes, thinking, "I'll work on it when I have time"?
- Do you find yourself saying, "I have a life. I don't have time to worry about this now"?

In his book *On Writing*, Stephen King explains how he was able to write profusely even before he was paid for it. He, too, had a job, a family, and a life. But he found, and continues to find, a way to write every day. Before or after work, during his lunch hour, every evening, and every weekend. He arranged his life to fit his dream, not the other way around. You can make time and space for your plans so that they will evolve naturally with much less effort.

Start your day by setting intentions for what you'd like to have happen. And then be on the lookout for signs that support your intentions. Focus on who or what is connecting you to your future.

- Who might you see today who could help you with your plans?
- What's your soundtrack for the day? On the TV show *Grey's Anatomy*, whenever the medical students feel too stressed, overwhelmed, or depressed, they put on upbeat music and dance. They're shaking off any negative vibes and creating positive energy. What theme song plays in your head? Pick a song that will motivate you all day.
- Take your top three goals (some of which are probably not career related, by the way) and write them on sticky tabs. Place them everywhere—on your mirror, on your computer, and so on. As you go through the day, think about whether what you are doing is moving you toward one of those goals. If not, stop and think. Is it worth the time you're spending doing this non-goal-related activity? Only you know the answer. But if you find yourself continually doing things that take time away from your goals, it's time to use your analytic mindset to figure it out. How could you make your goals part of your day? For instance, if one goal is to become a social worker, what one thing could you do today to make yourself more knowledgeable about social work or connect yourself to a possible opportunity?
- Finally, can you think of a small object you could use to remind yourself of your goals or intentions? Professional writer Anne Lamott describes using a one-inch-square picture frame to remind herself to just write enough to fit in the frame when she becomes overwhelmed by a writing project. Remember Emily, who was considering a career as a comic? A friend photographed her with her favorite comic at a venue recently, and she keeps that picture in her notebook as inspiration. Brianna, who hopes to become an archaeologist, keeps on her desk a small arrowhead she found on a dig. Diego, who plans to become a heart surgeon, keeps a small heart-shaped tin milagro (a religious folk charm) on his desk. Think about something small that can represent your dream, and keep it where you'll be reminded on a regular basis.

WISDOM BUILDER #21

MANAGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT TO BETTER ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS

Now that you've set some goals or intentions, take a look around your living space. Have you set it up to make achieving your goals easier? Are your goals and intentions visible? If you have something you want to accomplish (write a paper, read a book, play your guitar), can you just walk in and do it? Or do you have to clean up a bunch of junk first and remove last night's pizza crusts and beer cans? Your personal environment plays a big role in shaping your dreams. If you don't think your setting makes a difference, try studying in the middle of a fraternity party.

When you're trying to set new goals and move forward in your career plans, it's important that your lifestyle support those plans. The college environment doesn't always support job searching—students are often working with last-minute deadlines, distractions, and time-wasting activities. With so many choices to make, procrastination can easily become your lifestyle.

Let's say your goal is to manage a golf resort, and one step toward that goal is to improve your golf game so you can get a job at a local country club where you'll likely develop a great network. You've even found a way to get credit for pursuing golf by taking a phys ed course on golfing. Take a look around—what in your room supports your goal? Do you have some clubs? Are they readily available? Do you have some golf magazines or books?

A professional musician friend leaves his instrument in his hallway and every time he walks past he plays a scale or a short song. He has found that short exercises throughout the day make his scheduled longer practice sessions go much better, and he plays much more than he otherwise would. The same idea applies to the job search: are your job search materials easily accessible?

- Keep all your job search-related materials in one place—a notebook or file.

- Keep your résumé near your phone or maybe in your wallet in case you get a call on your cell phone.
- Keep the materials you need for an interview in one place so you don't forget them.

Here are some areas to assess and possibly change in your environment:

Time. There's an adage that says we don't manage time; time moves on regardless of what we do. We manage ourselves. Do you have a system for managing your time? How's it working for you? If it's not helping you, or you're constantly late or missing events, it might be time to find a new system.

People. Your roommate or friends may be great, but they may not be your best support system unless they share your goals and values. It's not unusual for others who aren't working as hard as you on the job search to be jealous or resentful. So enjoy their friendship, but look elsewhere for support if necessary. All sorts of people can help you: professors, coaches, alumni, career center staff, advisers, family members, supervisors, older students in your major, and even clubs devoted to your interest areas.

Health (Diet, Exercise, and Sleep). You probably know what's going to be said here. Is there a way you can eat healthier and stay away from too much fast food? Are you staying fit and getting enough sleep so that your energy level stays high? Nothing will torpedo your goals faster than being too tired to take action or even think about your plans. College is hard and intense, and you need to find a way to restore your energy without relying on supercaffeinated drinks to keep yourself awake and energized.

Other Distractions. Are there areas of your life that are distracting you, causing worry, or keeping you from focusing on your job search? Does your car need repairing, is your room a mess, are you in a troubled relationship, are you having financial problems such as overdue bills or maxed-out credit cards? Worrying can

deplete any energy you might have to tackle the job search. If you can't fix the problem on your own, figure out who can help you and seek the help. Colleges are filled with people who can assist you at no charge, from financial aid planners to mental health counselors to academic advisers.

WISDOM BUILDER #22

PSYCHOLOGY AT WORK: PREMACK'S PRINCIPLE

Keeping yourself motivated is the key to the job search process. For that matter, if you hope to supervise other workers, it's important to start thinking about how you might motivate them. Consider Premack's principle, which states that a behavior is more likely to occur if it is *followed immediately by a more preferred behavior*. What this means is that you (or those who might be working for you) will accomplish more if you set up a reward system for each of your goals and objectives. Certainly one reward is how much better you'll feel when you can check another item off your to-do list. But sometimes special accomplishments require special rewards. This can be the fun part of planning if you turn it into a brainstorming session.

By finding reinforcements that are similar in nature to the task involved, you could apply Premack's principle to your current job search. Conducting research related to a career interest might be worth a coffee break. Completing your résumé and uploading it to ten carefully selected employers is probably worth an afternoon off pursuing your favorite hobby.

FINAL QUESTION

What could you do in the next twenty-four hours to move forward with your plans?