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About the Author

You can get the complete lifework decision and action system
at <http://choosingacareerblog.com/products-page>

Introduction

Welcome to the next 88,000 hours of your work life .

Maybe that's what our first employers should tell us.¹ Maybe then we'd think more carefully about where we're going and how we want to spend that much time.

When you think about how you're going to spend the equivalent of ten years of your life, 24 hours a day, it is easier to recognize that working for a good paycheck isn't going to be enough. It's particularly poignant when people settle for this, even though we live in a society where we are primed to find individual success, where we are blessed with the freedom to choose our work rather than be ordered by the state or by custom, and where we have the educational resources to gain the knowledge and skills we need. Yet so many of us fall into our jobs and careers almost by chance because we have some aptitude for them, rather than because we have a passion and sense of value about the work we do.

What if there is a better alternative? What if you could wake up feeling eager to get to work? What if you could discover and create a passionate lifework instead of just working all the weeks of your life? What if you could find work that is meaningful to you, work that is in line with your values, that leaves you feeling fulfilled and maybe even joyful in spite of its challenges and stresses? Would that be a better way to spend almost a hundred thousand hours of your time?

If that possibility intrigues you, then welcome to one of the great journeys of your life—the search for meaningful and rewarding work. Feel free to embark on this journey whether you are wondering about switching careers, or are retired and looking for volunteer work, or are just starting out looking for your first full-time job.

If you allow it, your journey of discovery will connect you to your deepest passions, dreams, skills, and values and lead you back out again into the world of action and connection with others.

¹ Multiply 40 hours per week times 50 weeks per year for 2,000 hours per year, multiplied by a career of 44 years (age 21 to 65). That simplification of the yearly number of hours Americans work is supported by "Key Indicators of the Labor Market 2001-2002," a study by the International Labor Organization, which found that Americans were working an average of 1,978 hours per year.

Everyone is on this journey, whether they recognize it or not. Everyone would like to live out their dreams, whether they've abandoned the attempt or not. Everyone must find out how to express who they are in relation to the needs and expectations of the world. It's just who we are.

By reading this book you are not only on the journey. You are also choosing to be more active and aware of your journey and the choices you are making to use the 88,000 hours (or the hours you'll have after you retire or the hours you'll have if you are fortunate enough to not need to work for an income). Doing the exercises, you will be clarifying what your vision is for your life, how it fits in with the life of your community, and how you can act to make that vision real. Discovering your vision and doing what you can to make it real—that is what lifework is about. This book is about making that happen. It is brief in order to focus only on what you really need to succeed.

Some people are very fortunate about work. Their journey toward a unique vision may be fraught with difficulties, but at least they know their destination at a very young age. They had a vision about their lifework and pursued it. Everyone who knew one of my nephews from the time he was two knew he would be a visual artist. His drawings of fish and dragons were delightful and impressive at that early age, and he took to it with great intensity and focus. At his high school graduation, in the mosaic of photographs shown in a slide show of the graduating class, there was a picture of him at about three years old in a smock, holding a paint brush in front of an easel, looking pleased with himself and the world. It fit him at 3. And you could take that same picture of him today in his studio where he's still painting with pleasure, though these days he's also designing CD jackets and often using his computer for graphics.

Let's look at another photo. In it a child is standing at a chalkboard in first grade writing the sentence, "I want to be a doktor." That's just what he became. I once interviewed this physician, and he told me he had no idea how he came to this decision since none of his relatives were physicians, nor had he experienced any particular life-altering medical event in his young life, but at age six right up through his current practice he knew this was his destiny.

Most of us need a little more assistance moving forward on our journeys. Between the covers of this book, you'll find that assistance. The tools and resources presented here have been tested and developed in years of practical workshops attended by engineers and artists, high school graduates and Ph.D.s, retirees and people in mid-career, teens and seniors, software developers and store owners—all seeking meaningful careers, just like you.

Completing the step-by-step exercises will help you do what you love and express who you are, to live by your values, to develop yourself, and to contribute to others.

To succeed in this work, you won't need to grit your teeth or display unusual reserves of willpower and determination. Instead, you'll be relying on your own dreams and vision to energize and motivate you. When you discover and accept your personal vision of meaningful and joyful work, your desire to accomplish it will be more powerful than any willpower you can muster.

You'll be encouraged and helped to locate the values you hold that will most help you on this journey. And you'll be helped through the hard times as well. Some of you may have tried to make changes in your life before and run into difficulties that stumped you. Similarly, no matter how brilliant your lifework plan, no matter how motivated and excited you are, you may bump into moments of discouragement here as well. You may find the world doesn't respond to your dreams as you expected or as quickly as you hoped. That's why this book also includes the keys to successfully dealing with setbacks so you don't become so discouraged that you abandon your plans or act as if you are helpless.

A Note on How to Use This Book

This is a four-part program. Following the exercises in order, chapter by chapter, will move you most logically and quickly from your impulses to your vision to your action plan and success. But feel free to focus on what is most relevant to you now, while not avoiding something just because it seems scary or difficult. Not every exercise will prove appropriate for everyone, but if you're not sure of an exercise, give it a try, and enjoy the journey.

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Chapter 3. Your Passions

My name is Leonard Lang. Am I an author? A teacher? A man? A human being? A learner? A tiny movement in the great fluctuating ocean of life? An energy field with a certain vibration? A good guy? An uncle, a brother, a son, a loser, a winner?

Am I all of these things or none of them?

Who am I can be a silly or profound question. It is sometimes used as a mind-stumping meditation question by Zen students, urging them into ever-deeper levels of themselves and beyond all temporary definitions of self.

In the context of lifework, who am I can be seen practically as a way of finding out what moves us most in life, what makes me, me and what makes you, you—without which you feel life is not quite meaningful or fulfilling. Who am I is about what is essential to the full expression of your spirit, your soul, your core, authentic self.

To learn that, you need to know what your passions are. If you discover what they really are, you can move ahead very powerfully in your journey toward achieving your lifework. You can act from your essential self by expressing the deepest passions and values which arise from the indescribable depth of ourselves.

You could just list your passions. But I've found that it's more helpful and generally satisfying to organize your passions with a greater sense of wholeness and connection. A good way to do that is to use the technique of mindmapping®.

Mindmapping, developed by Tony Buzan, is a marvelous way to brainstorm while connecting factors that might otherwise seem disjointed. It's more fun, colorful, and playful than simple brainstorming and is designed to use more of our brain. It is also quite simple. (Use the mindmap at the end of the directions as a reference.)

EXERCISE 4: Your First Passions Mindmap

Purpose

- ❑ To reconnect with those things you love by brainstorming about them
- ❑ To define your many passions in a few words
- ❑ To organize your main passions in a simple, clear format

What You Need

- ❑ The Example of a Passions Mindmap that follows the instructions
- ❑ Unlined sheet of paper or the Passions Mindmap Worksheet that follows the instructions
- ❑ Pens or markers in a variety of colors
- ❑ 15—20 minutes

What To Do

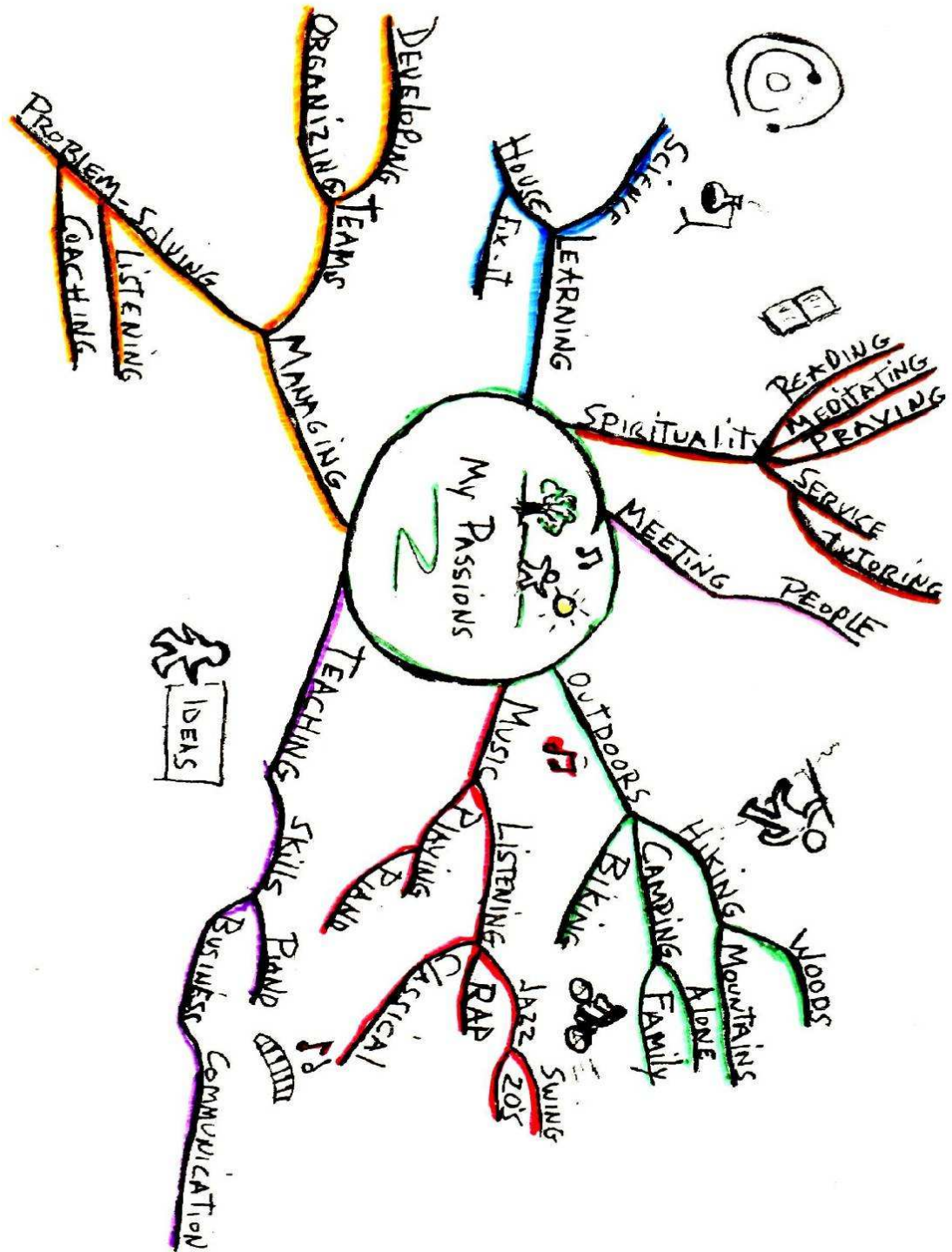
1. Place the paper in landscape mode, meaning it appears wider than it is tall. In the center of your paper write the words My Passions using any color(s) you like.
2. Next to the words, draw and color some picture that signifies to you the topic, in this case, your passions.
3. It may be something symbolic such as a heart with lightning flying out of it into a blue sky. Or it may be abstract shapes like a doodle. Or you may like to draw figures doing activities you most love. The only rules here are to let yourself go and to keep it simple. Don't try to be all-inclusive. The picture need not win any art awards (my classes always relax after they see some of the inscrutable images I produce). It simply has to signify for you, your passions.
4. Now you have the words My Passions and the drawing that represents those passions. Enclose these words and your drawing in a circle, oval, or similar shape.
5. Radiating out from this oval, print a single keyword representing a passion, and underline that word so that the line is attached to the inner oval. For example, a passion might be music. Another might be nature. Another might be history. Another might be friends. There will probably be some overlap between these categories, as between friends and nature. That's fine. Feel free to draw pictures or images that represent those passions, such as a sketch of a piano or of notes for the music.
6. Add sub-branches with keywords. For instance, after writing music, you can draw additional branches from the main music branch to define what you mean by your passion of music. For example, you may have a branch labeled playing music and one labeled listening (see the example that follows). The listening branch in turn can break up into branches labeled classical and jazz. The jazz

branch may then break up into music from the 1920s and swing. Keep all these sub-branches in the same color as the main branch.

Some people tend to dismiss activities, especially their work activities if they know they don't like their work. Yet there are probably some activities at work that they love. For instance, you may dislike your job as a computer programmer, but you do enjoy meeting with your creative team and leading them into new ideas or solving problems. That's important to note, even though you are dying to get out of a particular job or field.

The point is to get them down on the page in some connected manner. You can redo your mindmap later to reorganize it or to add or subtract branches. So don't worry if it's not perfectly organized or complete right away.

Example of a Passions Mindmap



You can get the complete lifework decision and action system
at <http://choosingacareerblog.com/products-page>