

Notes on **Designing Your Life** by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
How to build a well-lived, joyful life

Basic idea of book: We can apply design-thinking principles (like those of Silicon Valley) to making decisions about our life. We have a set of myths or dysfunctional beliefs we need to change as we apply this new mindset.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of all graduates don't end up working in a career related to their majors
 - Dysfunctional Belief: If you are successful, you'll be happy
 - Reframe: True happiness comes from designing a life that works for you.
- When emotions are involved, design thinking has proved to be best problem solving tool
- Life can't be perfectly planned, there are many designs for life.
- In today's highly technical world, almost all problems require a design team. People with very different backgrounds will bring their technical and human experiences to the team.
- Designers don't think their way forward, they build their way forward.
- Five Mindsets of designers:
 - **Be Curious.** Ask Questions. Everything is play.
 - **Try Stuff.** Have a bias to action
 - **Reframe Problems.** Step back, examine problems, open up solutions
 - **Know it's a process.** Let go of your first idea. Be aware of the process.
 - **Ask for Help.** Use mentors, collaborate with a supportive community.
- Passion comes *after* you try something. It is the result of good life design, not the cause.
- Story, p 5, about becoming a bio major because he liked his bio teacher. "He misperceived that her good teaching correlated to his stronger interest"
- People waste a lot of time working on the wrong problem. Identifying the problem is key

Start where you are- look at your Health/Work/Play/Love Dashboard

Build your Compass- you need your Workview and your Lifeview

- One goal for your life is *coherency*. Connect the dots between who you are, what you believe, and what you are doing.
- You can't always know where you are going, but you can know if you are going the right direction. Practice Wayfinding. You need a direction, not a map.
- Engagement, Enjoyment, Flow are paths to finding the right work for you.
- Work on a Good Time Journal- try to catch yourself having a good time. Track times that you find joy vs times that drain you.

Getting Unstuck: (*think of kids choosing college*)

- Dysfunctional Belief: I have to find the one right idea
- Reframe: I need lots of ideas so that I can explore any number of possibilities for my future.
- It's not about finding the perfect job, it's about making the job 'perfect'
- Getting a job through the want ads is not design thinking, it's just grasping
- Do not fall in love with your first idea
- Know difference between Actionable Problems, Gravity Problems (fighting against reality), and Anchor Problems- which are often actionable problems, although hard ones, where we get stuck by wedding ourselves irretrievably to a solution that isn't working.
- Try creating Odyssey Plans- don't think of just designing your life, thinking of designing your *lives*. 3 variations of your next 5 year plans-
 - Life 1- what you do now, Life 2- what you'd do if that were suddenly gone Life 3- what you'd do if \$ were no object
- We can get stuck refining one idea- if we start with multiple ideas in parallel, we may be more open to innovations and changes

Prototyping (*Much of our experiential curriculum, and our Itri is this*)

- Building is thinking
- When faced with a problem, start with the data. Understand what causes what.
- Don't just think a problem through- build prototypes- something that will isolate one aspect of a problem and design an experience that allows you to try it out.
- The simplest and easiest form of prototyping is a conversation. Create Life Design Interviews- get lots of peoples stories
- Most people fail not for lack of talent but for lack of imagination.
- Prototype experiences allow us to learn through a direct encounter with a possible future version of us.
- When trying to get a job- it is best to fit in before you stand out. Describe yourself with the same words that the company uses. There will be time to stand out later.
- Empathy is crucial in design thinking- understanding what the poor hiring manager's need to find the right person is a better path than focusing on your need for a job.

Designing your dream job

- Dysfunctional Belief: My dream job is out there waiting.
- Reframe: You design your dream job through a process of actively seeking and co-creating it.
- In your Life Design Interviews, don't ask if they are hiring, ask what it would take for someone like me to work in this organization.
- Networking is vital. Networking is simply asking for directions.

Choosing Happiness

- Dysfunctional Belief: To be happy, I have to make the right choice.
- Reframe: There is no right choice- only good choosing
- Good choosing starts with gathering and creating, then narrowing down options, then choosing, and then letting go and moving on. We often agonize too much.
- Often, when we have too many options, we don't choose. (6 jellies vs 24).
- Most minds can choose effectively between only 3 to 5 options.
- We use our critical mind in gathering and narrowing down, then connect with our gut feelings on making the choices. Need to trust the 'wisdom of the emotions'. Try 'living' the choice for a day- become it, see how it feels.
- Our mindset about how to make a good decision is as important as which decision we make. In an experiment about 'keeping options open' after people bought a painting (and could swap it out), they were less happy than those who committed to their choice.
- Keep your attention on something, not off something

Failure Immunity

- Know if you are playing a finite game (baseball- winners, losers, score kept) vs infinite game (love- everyone plays and it goes on forever)
- Designers like the infinite game of becoming more and more yourself
- Log your failures. Know if they are screwups (simple mistakes), weaknesses (tied to our personality), or growth opportunities (don't have to happen next time)
- When you understand who you are, design and live your life, you cannot fail.

Building a Team

- We design in collaboration and connection with others because we are always stronger than I
- Your life design isn't in you, it's in the world, where you will discover and co-create it with others.
- So many traditional approaches don't work because they are based on the false perception that you (and you alone) know the answers.
- Seek counsel- where people help you figure out what you think- instead of Advice- 'if I were you...'
- Seek community- where people show up and invest in the ongoing creation of one another's lives

Good summary of a Sage graduate

It's important to think of ourselves as life designers who are curious and action oriented, and who like to make prototypes and build our way forward into the future.