

CHAPTER 5

DEFINE YOUR LIFE AND CAREER GOALS

Most of us should spend less time on most decisions, and we should spend a lot more time on a few key decisions.

—RAMIT SETHI

Imagine you're on a boat in the middle of the ocean, and you're lost. You know that, in theory, you should be able to navigate by the stars. That's great, but unless you know a method of actually doing that, you're in big trouble. Similarly, you can know that long-term goals are incredibly important, but if you don't know *how* to go about making them, you may as well be stuck in the middle of the ocean, with a map in the sky you can't read.

That's what this chapter is for. I will guide you through several different strategies and exercises that will give you not just the theoretical *why* of goals but the practical *how*. All of these strategies have been studied and found effective, and they're all things I've personally used for myself and with others. You can do the exercises in any order you like, but I've put the

exercises in the order I think is most natural, allowing them to build on one another.

I do recommend focusing on just one exercise at a time. You get out what you put in, so don't rush. I also recommend completing *all* of the exercises. Even if one doesn't seem particularly helpful, give it a try. If you really do hate it, you never have to do it again.

Each time I work through these, the way I think about myself and my goals get more refined and feel more “right” with each exercise, until I converge on a small set of goals and ideas that I can move forward with.

Here's a quick breakdown of what's ahead:

- **Involve Your Future Self**—This exercise is one everyone should do, repeatedly, especially when making a big decision. If you have a hard time predicting which decisions will bring you the most happiness or you have a tendency to prioritize present comfort over future gain, try this one out.
- **Identify Your Ikigai (Create a Purpose Venn Diagram)**—If you've ever felt like your interests, your strengths, what you think is important, and what you do to make money aren't aligned, this is the exercise for you. It can help highlight unexpected overlaps and promote making new connections between these areas.
- **Pick Five Things**—If you find yourself pulled in many directions or you're uncertain how to prioritize your goals, this is a great exercise. It can help you narrow your focus, so you can get better results on the things that matter to you most.

- **Ideal versus Current Time Comparison**—If you feel like you don't have a good balance in how you spend your time, this exercise can help pinpoint where you're out of alignment.

INVOLVE YOUR FUTURE SELF

Every choice you make will have real effects and opportunity costs for yourself in the near and far future. Some of those effects may be trivial—will I be happier with the macchiato or the flat white? Some may be dramatic—will I live to see tomorrow if I drive myself home after this party? But it will be your future self who lives—or dies—with those effects.



The number of people who will be affected by your choices varies, but there is one person who is always on that list: Future You.



Oddly, we are not particularly nice to our future selves. There are many possible explanations for this, and they're still being investigated and sorted out. One factor is our tendency to choose immediate gratification over delayed gratification (this is due to a cognitive bias called *time discounting*, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). We make our decisions based on what will make us most happy now and leave our future selves to sort out how to be happy in the future. Have the extra glass of wine—who cares if Future You has a hangover? Skip the stretching—Future You can deal with

the soreness and potential injury. Take home 2 percent more pay now and have 70 percent less saved for retirement later—that's Future You's problem.

Another factor is related to compassion. We are less compassionate toward people we don't know or identify with than with people close to us. For instance, we think of caring for the elderly as a good idea in theory, but most of us don't do much to help the elderly in practice. But let's say we get to know one particular elderly grandmother at an assisted living center. We learn about how she traveled the country as a dancer in her twenties, and she shares her lemon bar recipe with us—the one her husband always asked for on his birthday—and tells us surprisingly raunchy jokes that make us laugh. Now if we're asked to help, out comes the checkbook and the calendar for volunteering.

Interestingly, we tend to treat our future selves the way we would treat somebody we don't know or have never even been introduced to. We think helping our future selves is nice in concept, but we're not attached to the idea enough to actually make many sacrifices in the present. With this next simple, two-step exercise, you can combat this tendency and make long-term goals that will be good for Future You in addition to present you.

STEP #1: ENVISION YOURSELF IN THE FUTURE

Picture yourself in the future. How old you picture yourself will depend on the decision you're trying to make. If you're trying to decide which TV to buy, you might want to picture yourself just a few months or a year in the future. If you're trying to decide whether to go vegan, you might want to

picture yourself five or ten years in the future. If you're trying to decide on a career, it might make more sense to picture yourself twenty years into the future. For most decisions, it's helpful to picture yourself at several different points in the future, which is also what you should do if you don't have a specific decision in mind.

For now, envision yourself at sixty-five. Create a detailed picture in your mind. Better yet, create an *actual* picture, using digital aging software, an app, or filters. People who interact with a digitally aged version of themselves, in a photo or, even more powerfully, in a virtual reality setting, even for five minutes, subsequently save more for retirement.³³ If you're digitally challenged, no worries—even being asked to sit quietly and visualize ourselves as an older person changes our eating and exercise decisions in the short term.

Taking the time to picture an older version of yourself helps you see Future You as a real person you can care about, not just a stranger. You might even consider printing out a digitally aged version of yourself and keeping it at your desk, on your fridge, or anywhere else you'll regularly see it, so that Future You becomes a close companion.

STEP #2: ASK "FUTURE YOU" QUESTIONS

Now, holding on to your mental image or looking at the digitally aged photo, ask Future You questions that will help you make your decision in the present. You can ask anything you think is useful, but here are good questions to start with:

³³ H. E. Hershfield, D. G. Goldstein, W. F. Sharpe, J. Fox, L. Yeykelvis, L. L. Carstensen, and J. Bailenson, "Increasing Saving Behavior through Age-Progressed Renderings of the Future Self," *Journal of Marketing Research* 48 (2011): S23–27.

- What is important to you? Financial security? Health? Your home? The stuff you own? Family and friends?
- What are you happy you did or didn't do?
- What are you proudest of?
- What do you regret?

Write down any insights you gain. Then, related to whatever decision you're considering, pick one of the options. Imagine the choice as if it was in the past and ask Future You, "Are you happy you made that decision?" Cycle through each potential option and ask the same question again.

Don't delude yourself into thinking you now know how you'll feel decades into the future. We all change far too much over time to really predict that. The point of this exercise isn't to become a fortune-teller; it's to get you thinking more effectively about the decisions that will serve you best in the long-term, rather than just in the present moment.

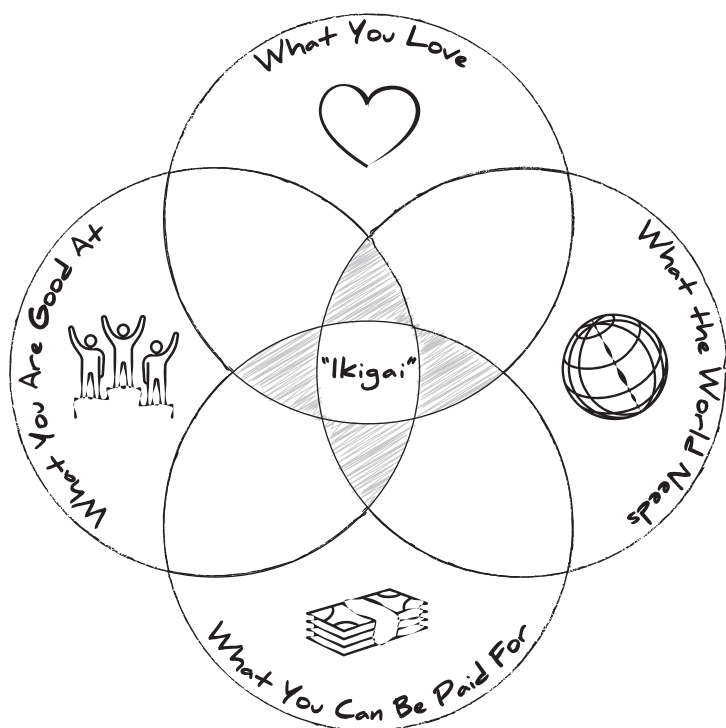
IDENTIFY YOUR IKIGAI (CREATE A PURPOSE VENN DIAGRAM)

Ikigai is a Japanese word that translates roughly as "reason to live." *Ikigai* and purpose are often conflated, but they're not quite the same thing. They're both a reason for being, but "purpose" suggests a grand, lofty goal you can dedicate your entire life to, while *ikigai* can be found in the smaller, everyday realities of life. In the Japanese philosophy, *ikigai* is the thing that makes you want to get out of bed in the morning, and it can be anything—it could be the ninety-year-old woman who gets up to see her grandchildren, or the forty-year-old man who gets up to help launch a new product at work, or the twenty-year-old college student who gets up to spend time with friends. Part of

practicing ikigai is practicing gratitude—learning to appreciate what you have in life and cultivating a positive mindset. You can also have more than one ikigai, and it can change over time.

The exercise I'm about to show you is not really an ikigai exercise. If you look online or in other works, you will often see it called ikigai, but it is actually a Westernized framework loosely based on the concept of ikigai. Most accurately, it should be called a purpose Venn diagram. I've chosen to use the ikigai terminology as well, because understanding the concept of ikigai will help you get the most out of this exercise. This is what the Venn diagram looks like:

Defining Your Ikigai



Like all techniques, this exercise is not magical. It is, however, very useful, especially in thinking through big life-direction decisions.



One way to get closer to your ikigai or purpose is to search for the intersection between things you love, things you are good at, things you can get paid for, and things the world needs.



I've done this exercise several times, and I have a tip before you get started: don't assume you know what your ikigai is. Sometimes when I do this exercise, I come up with things that surprise me on the margins, but usually I converge on the same items in the center. At this point, I'm beginning to wonder if my brain rigs the game, assuming it knows what is "supposed to" go in the center and thus building the options around the edges to create the "desired" outcome. Fight against that tendency. There's no point to the exercise if you work backward from what you think "should" be at the center for you. You have to work from the outside inward, and allow yourself to (maybe) be surprised by some new ideas.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: IKIGAI DIAGRAM

For a printable ikigai diagram, visit fredericbahnsen.com.

STEP #1: PRINT (OR DRAW) YOUR DIAGRAM

Start by creating your diagram. You can print off a template from the internet, or you can draw your own.

STEP #2: LIST THINGS YOU LOVE

In one circle, list anything and everything you love and enjoy doing—for example, sailing, hiking, solving interesting problems, making things with your hands.

Some tips for success:

- Don't worry yet about whether you're good at these things, whether you could make money from them, or whether they're things the world needs. Right now the only thing that matters is whether you enjoy them.
- Make sure you are listing things you actually enjoy *doing*, not *having done*. For example, I think it would be really cool to be able to tell people I hiked to the South Pole. Would I enjoy actually doing that? Nope. Definitely not. It would be cold and exhausting and sounds utterly miserable to me. Avoid listing things you would like to be known for or that you'd like people to know you have accomplished. Focus on the things you enjoy inherently, for their own sake.
- Include both specific examples and broader categories. For instance, let's say you put sailing and hiking on your list. If what you love about those things is being active outside, you should put that on your list as well, as it will open up many more potential options.

STEP #3: LIST THINGS YOU ARE GOOD AT

In another circle, list the things you're good at—for example, practicing new skills, working with others to solve problems, sailing, making things with your hands. If you're using this exercise to set education or career goals, it makes sense to consider your strengths. You might love playing basketball, but if you're already an adult and still not very good at it, becoming a professional basketball player probably isn't your best career option.

Some tips for success:

- Again, focus only on your strengths right now. Don't worry about the other categories in the diagram.
- Include both specific and more general items, just like you did with the things you enjoy. When you list something specific, ask yourself, "Why am I good at this thing?" That could lead you to a broader strength you didn't realize you have. For example, maybe you're really good at jigsaw puzzles—that might mean you're good at pattern recognition, which is a skill that has lots of uses.
- Consider listing not only what you're good at right now but also what you think you could become good at. Remember that your skills and strengths are not fixed. If there's something you show potential in and you're interested in it or passionate about it enough to want to develop your skills, it's okay to include it here.

STEP #4: LIST THINGS YOU CAN GET PAID FOR

A fundamental aspect of well-being is having one's basic needs covered—food, shelter, and security—and that rarely happens without at least some amount of money coming in. So, assuming you're not already independently wealthy, what can

you get paid for? List them in another circle—for example, handyman, building furniture, teaching.

Some tips for success:

- List only those things you could reasonably work your way into from where you're at now. The idea isn't to list every single possible job in the world. That would be a very long—and unhelpful—list. You need some boundaries on this. This is where leaving “professional basketball player” off the list is appropriate for most of us. It's definitely a thing some people get paid for, but not a thing most of us ever will get paid for, even if we try.
- Keep your mind open to the possibilities. This can be a tough balance. You need some boundaries here, but you don't want to get too aggressive, dismissing potential jobs as “unreasonable” or “off limits.” A certain job might take a lot of time and work to be a possibility, but it's still a possibility. Leave off the truly unreasonable options, but challenging ones are okay.
- Again, be general and specific. You can list a particular role, like web developer, or an entire field, like computer science, or both.

STEP #5: LIST THINGS THE WORLD NEEDS

Now move on to the final circle, and list things the world needs—for example, access to education, safe shelter, and beauty.

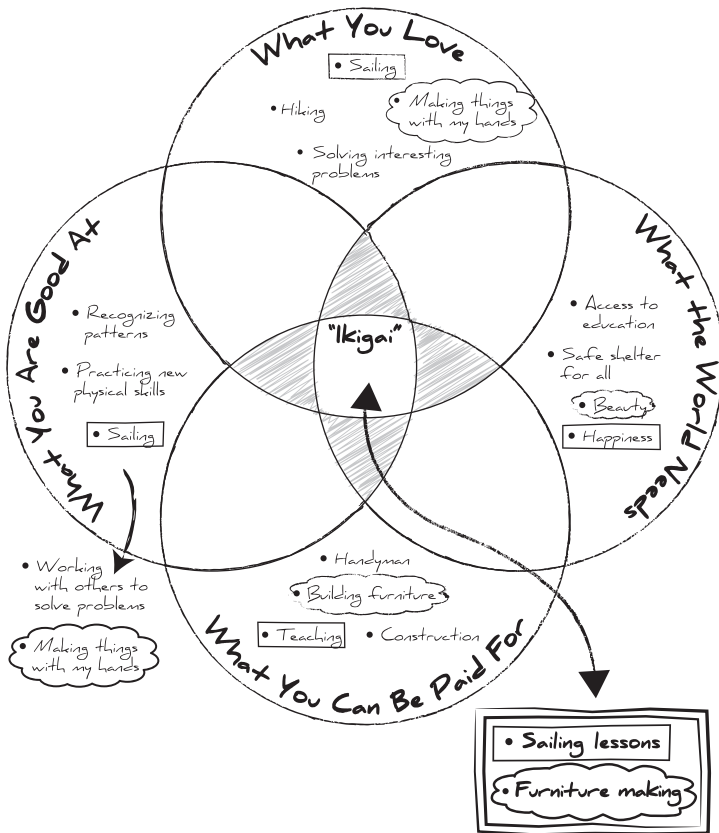
Some tips for success:

- Focus on the needs you care about most. As with jobs, the world has a lot of needs. If you try to list everything, it'll

be overwhelming. So instead, zero in on the needs you're passionate about, personally interested in, or think are most important.

- Think both big and small. The world needs people to address large issues like climate change, and it also needs people to address smaller needs, like the need for safe and secure homes or pets to keep us company.

Defining Your Ikigai



Other Ideas:

- Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity
- Teach vocational skills?
 - ↳ Construction?
 - ↳ Furniture-making?

STEP #6: DO A SECOND PASS, THEN LOOK FOR THE OVERLAPS

Go back and review each category a second time. Did things you thought of for later categories trigger ideas about things to include in earlier categories? Add those in now.

Then, look for the overlaps and add those into the diagram. For instance, in my example, there's an overlap between making things by hand (which appears both in "things you enjoy" and "things you are good at"), building furniture and being a handyman ("things you can get paid for"), and the need for both beauty and safe shelter ("things the world needs"). This suggests several different options you could put at the center of the diagram. Build furniture? Work in construction? Make inexpensive tiny homes? Join a nonprofit that works to house the homeless, either as a full-time job or as an intermittent volunteer?

The ultimate goal here is to try to find things that combine all four categories, but it's worth noting *any* overlap. Even if something only overlaps in two or three circles right now, you might realize that there's actually a way for it to check off every category. For instance, with the example I've used, sailing appears in both "things you enjoy" and "things you're good at." Looking at that overlap, you might realize, "Oh, I could totally make money through sailing! I could give lessons or take people on sunset sails. And hey, that actually solves a need in the world too—people need new experiences to be happy, and I'd be providing them an adventure."

What if you go through this whole exercise, and you don't find anything that overlaps in all four categories? First, go back, look at the specific things you've listed, and see if you

can translate those into broad, general things. Do the opposite too, looking at the broad things you've listed and coming up with more specific examples within that category. Second, look at the places where you have some overlap and see if you can find ways to create additional overlap (as in the sailing example). After that, if you still don't have anything in the center of your diagram, don't worry! This is not an all-or-nothing exercise. Any overlap at all is a good thing. If you have overlap between what you love and what you're good at, that's a passion. Overlap between what you're good at and what you can get paid for is a profession. Overlap of what you can get paid for and what the world needs? Vocation. Overlap of what the world needs and what you love? Mission.

You can achieve *ikigai* without having an overlap in all four categories. In fact, not a single one of these categories is *required* for *ikigai* in its true form. *Ikigai* in the Japanese philosophy is about feeling that your life is worth living. You could experience *ikigai* doing a job you find meaningful but don't necessarily enjoy. You could experience it in taking your dogs for a walk on a sunny day. You could experience it volunteering at your kid's school. The point of this exercise is basically to identify the things that will get you the most bang for your buck. We all need things in our lives that we enjoy, that we're good at, that we can get paid for, and that help solve the world's needs. If we can identify one thing that does all of that, great! If not, that's okay too. You *are* allowed to do more than one thing—a revolutionary idea, right?

PICK FIVE THINGS

If you've completed the *ikigai* exercise, you likely have a lot of options to consider. Hopefully, many of those things

overlap, or you can see how they might fit together in your life. But for the vast majority of people, they won't all match up. Some goals and activities will be completely incompatible with others, and some just won't nest neatly together, even if they're technically compatible. So how do you choose?



While you're allowed to do more than one thing in your life, you can't do everything.



That's what this next exercise is for. It comes from Warren Buffett. As the story goes, Buffett asked his private jet pilot of many years something along the lines of "Do you have goals or aspirations other than continuing to be my pilot?" The pilot admitted that yes, he did indeed, but he hadn't been able to work toward them. So Buffett laid out this general process for him, in three simple steps.

STEP #1: LIST 25 OF YOUR GOALS

This exercise is about zeroing in on your top goals, but to get there, you first have to figure out all the goals floating around in your life and your head. So list them out, including both career and life goals. List at least twenty-five, but don't stop there if you've got more.

When I did this exercise for the first time, I was skeptical. Who has *twenty-five* goals? Then I started listing projects I was involved in. Résumé fodder I was working toward.

Positions I hoped to move into. Hobbies I wanted to explore. Skills I wanted to develop. My list went past twenty-five pretty quickly.

STEP #2: CIRCLE YOUR TOP 5

Next, really think about the whole list. Go over it. Search your soul. Circle your top goals, but *no more than five*.

You really have to be serious about deciding what your five (or fewer) most important goals are. Let me tell you, it's *not* easy. If you struggle to narrow your list like I did, I recommend using the “several stages of why” technique. For each goal, ask yourself why you want to achieve it. Then ask why again, and again, until you get to the root of the goal. When you first start asking why, your list will likely expand, but then there's a good chance you will find that several of your goals are really mid-level goals, with the same overarching goal above them. That top-level goal is one of the five goals you need to circle.

As an example, I had “gain programming experience” on my list. Why did I want programming experience? Because it moved me toward being on the data science team. Why did I want to be on the data science team? Because I wanted to work on clinical decision support—helping doctors make better medical decisions in complex situations. Looking back at my list, I realized I had a couple other mid-level goals like “gain programming experience.” These goals weren't particularly important in and of themselves. They were important because they moved me toward the bigger, more unifying goal: working on clinical decision support. That helped me narrow the field quite a bit—instead of including all the mid-

level goals in my top five, I included just the top-level goal: improving clinical decision support.

After you've weeded out the mid-level goals, if you're still struggling to pick just five top-level goals, you can temporarily put the list aside and either review or move on to the other exercises from this chapter. Also think about the things from the previous chapter—what makes us happy and the importance of passion and purpose. And if all else fails, just take your best shot for now, and schedule a reminder to revisit this exercise in a few months or a year.

STEP #3: AVOID THE OTHER 20

Now, take a good, hard look at the remainder—the other twenty goals on the list that are not in your top five. Remember these, because, according to Warren Buffett, you are to *avoid them at all costs*. This doesn't necessarily mean throwing out all your mid-level goals. But it does mean relegating them to their proper place: only of value in service to one of your chosen top-level goals, not in and of themselves. Remember the hierarchy of goals. Sometimes you can achieve a top-level goal without achieving all the mid-level or low-level goals below it. You don't want to get too hung up on lower-level goals.

This comes back to opportunity cost. Any time, money, or energy you spend on other goals is time, money, and energy you can't spend on your top five most important goals. If your attention and resources are divided between too many goals, you'll struggle to make significant progress on any of them. So get focused.

IDEAL VERSUS CURRENT TIME COMPARISON

This last exercise is about better understanding how you *want* to spend your time and how you *actually* spend your time. You probably already know that you're not spending all your time how you'd like, but you might be surprised by how much imbalance there is and where exactly the imbalances are.



In order to plan a change from how things are to how you want things to be, you first have to identify the gap between the two.



I recommend doing this exercise multiple times—once based on a day's worth of time, then a week, a month, and a year—because we all have some activities that we only do on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. For now, we're going to run through the exercise looking at the week level. Hang on to all your work here, because we will be using it again later in the book (Chapter 8).

STEP #1: FANTASIZE ABOUT YOUR IDEAL LIFE

First, take some time—ideally thirty minutes—and really envision what you want your life to be like five to ten years from now. Really fantasize. Don't worry about being “practical” or limiting yourself to what you already think is achievable. This is your *ideal* life. Of course, do keep things in the realm of reality. There's a difference between fantasizing about having

a dragon as a pet and fantasizing about being able to take twelve weeks of vacation a year.

Set a timer for thirty minutes—I mean it. If you don't set a timer, you're probably not going to give this the time it needs. Then write down your thoughts, ideally in a journal or someplace where you'll be able to return to them later if you want. Again, I mean it. If you don't actually write these things down, you're not going to get as much out of the exercise.

Get detailed. Where are you living in this ideal life five to ten years from now? Who do you spend time with, and what do you spend your time doing? What do you do to earn money? Do you have new skills or hobbies? Have you reached a new level on anything you already do and enjoy? What does an average day look like? A normal week? Month?

STEP #2: ESTIMATE HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME IN YOUR DREAM LIFE

Now let's get even more detailed. Look over that dream life description. Create a table where you list out the activities in a typical week in that life and how much time you will spend on each one. You can do this with pen and paper or a spreadsheet. I prefer a spreadsheet because it makes it easier to sort and organize my list. It also gives me the option of turning the data into a pie chart as a visualization tool. If you opt for pen and paper, you'll need room for five total columns (activity name, ideal time budget, current time budget, difference between your ideal and current budgets, and a fifth column that will be added when we return to this exercise in Chapter 8).

You can leave out the day-to-day activities that are non-negotiable, like brushing your teeth or sleeping. But don't leave out things that can vary and impact your other time, like commuting, work, time with friends, time with your kids, reading, practicing ukulele, and so on. Use your own judgment here about what to include or omit. Prepping and eating food is a major planned activity for some, just a little piece of the day-to-day basics for others. Basically, if there's an activity that you think is going to remain static no matter what your life circumstances are, you don't need to include it.

There are 168 hours in a week. Subtract out sleeping (about 56 hours, if you average 8 hours a night) and the non-negotiable basics, like pooping, clipping your toenails, getting dressed, showering, and so on—call that another 2 hours a day, or 14 hours a week. That leaves you with about 98 hours per week to allocate. (This number may be higher or lower for you, depending on what you include as non-changeable, routine activities.)

If your list of activities is very long, group them into categories. If you have fifty different things in your list, it's hard to take all the information in, and it will be difficult to compare it to your current reality later (Step #4). Ideally, you won't have more than ten or so items in your list. Here are some common categories you might want to use:

- Work
- Relationships and social time
- Health/fitness/wellness
- Hobbies
- Fun/recreation
- Chores

If there is a specific activity that takes up a lot of time or that is particularly important to you, you may want to keep it on its own, even if it fits into one of these categories. For example, if you want to spend a significant amount of time doing a specific hobby, it could be helpful to keep that separate from the general “hobbies” bucket, so that you can more easily compare your ideal and current time allocations.

If you’d like, once you’ve finished your list, you could turn it into a pie chart, so you can easily visualize the proportions of how you want to spend your time.

STEP #3: RECORD HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME NOW

Now do the same thing with your current life. List how you actually spend your time right now.

Be very detailed here, and be realistic. Actually take a week and document how you spend your time, leaving out all those things you chose to leave out in the breakdown of your ideal life. Make sure it’s an average week—doing this while on vacation wouldn’t make the exercise very accurate. You should group your activities as you did in Step #2 for your ideal life, but you may need to add a category or two if there’s something you spend time on now that wasn’t on your “ideal” list at all.

In another column in your table, record how much time you currently spend on each category. As in Step #2, you can turn this information into a pie chart if you’d like.

STEP #4: COMPARE THE TWO

Analysis time. Compare the numbers for your ideal life and current life. Create another column in your table and list the difference in hours for each category.

Where are your mismatches? Are there any places where your reality actually matches your dream life? If you're using a spreadsheet, try out different sort methods, like by biggest current time allocation, by biggest ideal time allocation, or by biggest gap between current and ideal.

Highlight or mark any items from your dream life that are missing from or don't get enough time in your reality. These are the things you should try to do more of. Start thinking about how you could add these things into your life. What can you give up to make time for these things?

Then, using a different color highlighter or a different type of mark, identify activities in your current life that are not included in your dream life, or that get significantly less time in your dream life. Unless you want to incorporate these into your concept of a dream life, these are things you should try to eliminate or do less of. Start brainstorming how you could do that. Are they optional activities you can just eliminate, like watching TV? Will you have to hire someone else to do them, like chores? Or will you have to replace them with something else, such as replacing a job you don't like with a different money-making activity?


There are a number of ways to correct the imbalances between your ideal and current time budgets. Search for quick wins. Making a complete career change will probably take a lot of work, while decreasing TV time may be fairly easy. Or maybe

you could talk to your boss about shifting your focus to the activities you enjoy most at work, which will help you feel more balanced even if your overall work hours remain the same. If you feel overwhelmed or unsure of what steps to take next, a coach can be a good idea, as they can help you create an action plan.

Now that you understand the gaps between your reality and your dream life, you can refine and make your goals more specific.

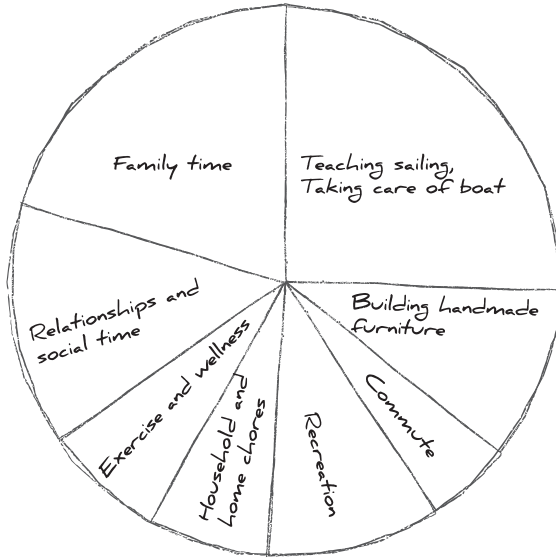
Current to Ideal Time Comparison

| | Ideal (hrs/wk) | Current (hrs/wk) | Difference (Ideal-Current) |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Office Work | 0 | 45 | -45 |
| Teaching Sailing | 25 | 0 | +25 |
| Building Furniture | 10 | 0 | +10 |
| Commuting | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Relationships and Social Time | 14 | 4 | +10 |
| Family Time | 20 | 8 | +12 |
| Exercise and Wellness | 7 | 4 | +3 |
| Household and Home Chores | 7 | 12 | -5 |
| Recreation | 10 | 20 | -10 |

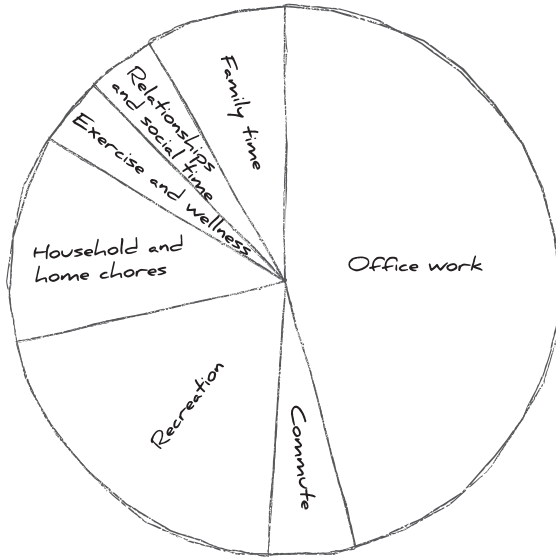

 This is the amount of change to make to get from current all the way to ideal

Ideal to Current Time Comparison

Ideal



Current



CLARIFYING YOUR GOALS TAKES WORK, BUT IT'S WORTH IT

Doing these exercises takes time and energy. But in return, you can better understand your purpose, your goals, and yourself. You learn more about what you want, and you take one step closer to getting it. And bonus: the process can be fun! Who doesn't like fantasizing about their dream life and learning more about themselves?

If you've never done something like this before—or if it's been a while since you've done it—just give it a try. While you do need to take these exercises seriously and set aside a decent chunk of focused time to do them, they don't take *that much* time or work. For one night, skip your TV show, or order takeout instead of cooking, or let the dishes sit in the sink for a little longer. Make one of these exercises your priority that night. Do this to work through them all, because they'll pay off in the long-term. You don't need to do all of them at once. Spacing them out can help keep you in the right mindset of forward-thinking improvement. Also, these things aren't a one-time activity—you should return to them periodically throughout your life—so there's no point rushing through them just to finish.

You now have strategies for how to actually create your long-term goals. You might still be stuck in a boat in the middle of the ocean, but now you know how to use the night sky as a map—you know what general direction to head. The next step is to start navigating toward your destination. Your purpose and goals are your compass, but using that to navigate—actually making the small decisions that will get you to your destination—can still be challenging. A process helps. That's what we'll discuss next.