



WORKBOOK

Professionals' Guide to Design a Life of Meaning and Freedom



A photograph of a train traveling through a mountainous landscape. The train is moving away from the viewer, following a track that curves through a valley. The mountains in the background are rugged and covered in sparse vegetation. The sky is clear and blue.

Welcome!

“The longer you stay on the wrong train, the more expensive it is to get back home...”

If you keep living exactly the way you are now, how will you feel five or ten years from now?

If that thought makes your stomach drop, it's time to reset.

Hi, I'm Fred—an optometrist who burned out, hit reset, and redesigned life from scratch. Today, I'm a travel optometrist, podcast host, writer, and speaker on work happiness.

I created this workbook to help other professionals find meaning and freedom too.

Dream big, but start small! This workbook is all about simple, practical steps.

Let's Go!

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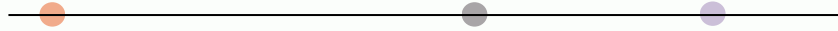


Redesign Life:

Slow Down

What's your current pace of life?

Nice and slow



Days blur together

- You can't reroute a train at full speed (lest it derail!). The same is true for life.
- Slow down using a tool I call the “1-1-1” Rule

“1-1-1” Rule

1 Hour/Day

1 Day/Week

1 Month/Year

1 Hour/Day: The Morning Routine

- Block off one hour each morning for yourself.
- Not for emails. Not for chores. Not for anyone else. Just you.

ANY COMBINATION OF:

- Stretching
- Journaling
- Reading
- A short walk

- Coffee ritual
- Meditation
- Breathwork
- Gratitude

TOO HARD?

How's this **10-minute** routine?

- 2-min stretch
- 2-min breathwork
- 2-min journal
- 4-min walk outside

- Numerous studies show that even *a few minutes* of mindful practices significantly improve mood and focus for the day.
- **The goal is consistency. Make it easy!**

MY EASY MORNING ROUTINE WILL BE:

1 Day/Week: Work A Day Less

Step 1: _____ for ____ minutes.

Step 2: _____ for ____ minutes.

Step 3: _____ for ____ minutes.

Step 4: _____ for ____ minutes.

IMAGINE AN EXTRA SUNDAY EVERY WEEK!
WRITE 3 WAYS YOU'D SPEND IT:

Drop a day of work:

- If you're at 6 days a week, cut it to 5.
- If you're at 5, try 4.
- And if you're already at 4... *dare I say, make it 3.*

COMMON PUSHBACKS

Pushback #1: "But I need the income."

Unless you're about to default on your mortgage, try it! You can always add the day back.

Pushback #2: "My job isn't flexible."

Some jobs are more flexible than others. Still, any job can be made better. See the later section on jobcrafting.

Pushback #3: "That's too big of a change."

Then make it smaller:

- Drop a half-day
- Leave a few hours early on Fridays (and beat the rush hour!)

1 Month/Year: Annual Sabbatical

- Once a year, take a *full month* away from work.
- Not a vacation. **A reset.**

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS:

- Attend a wellness retreat
- Invest in your growth (coaches, courses, certifications)
- Reconnect with loved ones
- Catch up on sleep!
- Write, paint, build, or *do nothing and let your mind rest.*

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH ONE MONTH SABBATICAL?

TOO HARD?

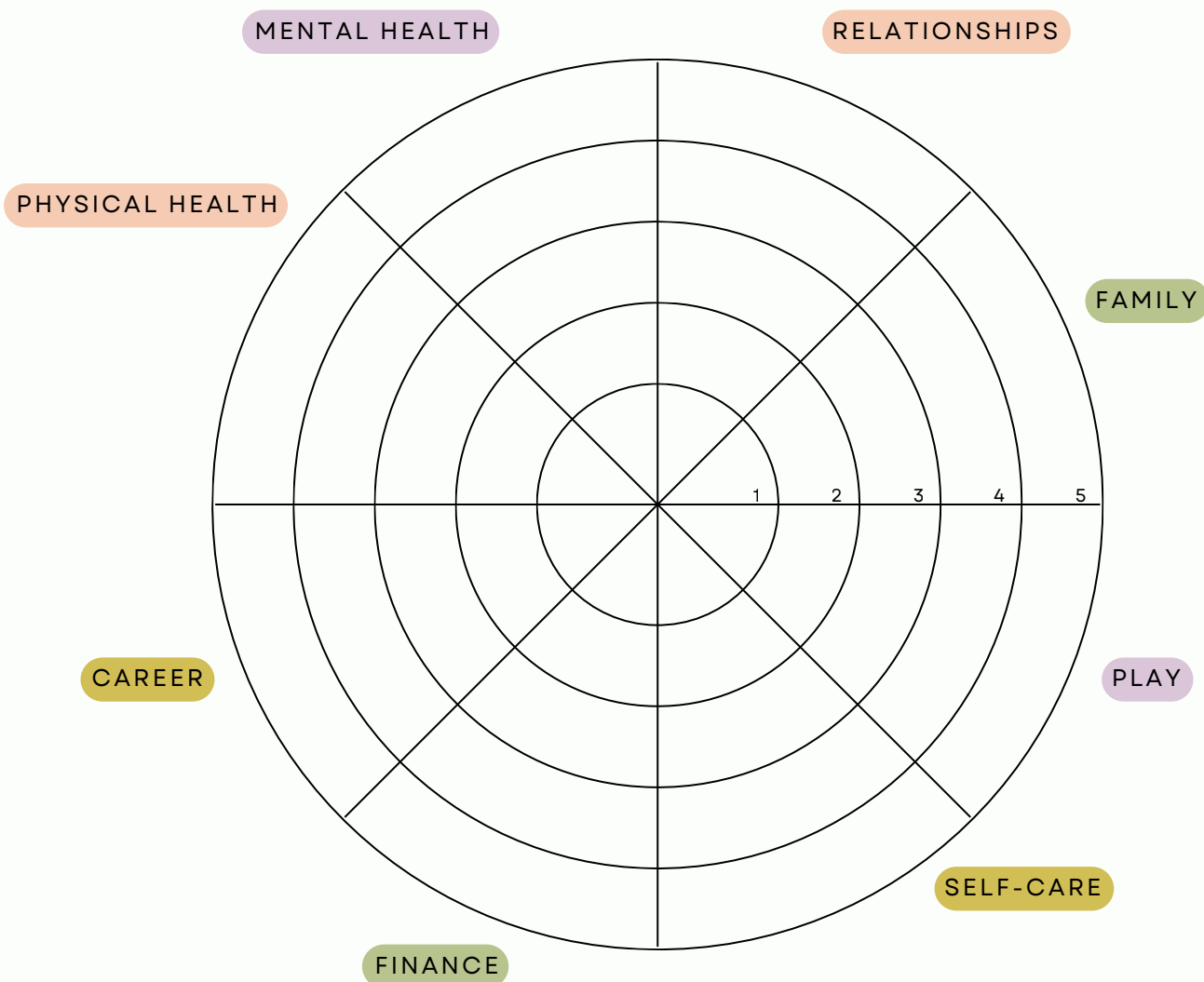
If 1 month is too hard, then make it easier!

- **2-Week Mini-Sabbatical** – Step away. Reset.
- **4-Day Reboot** – Break your routine and spark new momentum.
- **Weekend Reset** – Two days to realign.
- **Single-Day Retreat** – One day to clear your head.

Redesign Life:

Well-Being Audit

- For each life area, mark your current and desired state on the wheel (try different colors).
- Connect the dots to create two webs—one for current, one for desired.
- **Notice the gaps:** which areas need the most attention?



WHAT'S *ONE* CHANGE YOU CAN MAKE
THAT WOULD HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT?

Redesign Life:

Time Audit

When we imagine living our best life, we picture **big and exciting experiences**:

- Family Disney cruise
- Living abroad for a year
- Early retirement
- etc...

But we often overlook the **small and mundane experiences** that fill our typical day:

- Morning coffee routine
- A quiet walk in nature
- Calling your best friend
- Quality time with your partner

To design your *ideal life*, start by designing your *typical day*

WHY ARE THESE SMALL EXPERIENCES SO IMPORTANT?

1) What you do on an average day reveals your true values.

- "Show Me Your Calendar and I'll Show You What You Truly Value"

2) What you do on an average day shapes your future.

- Left unchecked, we repeat the same day.
- Being intentional about daily small experiences shapes a happier future.

3) Small, consistent actions compound in powerful ways.

- A daily call with a loved one → Meaningful, enduring relationships
- Ten minutes of reading → a library of wisdom
- Daily walk → long-term health

DESIGN YOUR IDEAL DAY

Step 1: Review

- Check your calendar and list everything you did last week in the space below.

Step 2: What's Missing

- What's missing in your ideal day? What makes you feel *alive*? Add these to the list.

Think small: For example, you can't fly somewhere new every day, but you *can* explore a new café on your morning coffee run.

Step 3: Filter

- *Circle* energy-boosting activities
- *Cross out* energy-vampires

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DESIGN YOUR IDEAL DAY

Step 4: **Design**

Build your ideal day around these key principles:

- Increase what gives you energy
- Eliminate/delegate what drains it
- You're not designing the *perfect* day. Experiment and have fun!

Your Ideal Day

MORNING

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AFTERNOON

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NIGHT

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Redesign Work:

Build Your Dream Job

- **Dream jobs are not found; they're built.**
- Most professional jobs aren't 100% strict on the role. Over time, you can shape your job to align with your values, passions, and life's needs.

- “*Jobcrafting*” has 3 ongoing steps:



Step 1: What's Missing?

- Identify aspects of your job that make you unhappy.
- Go through this list of motivational factors, and circle what's missing.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Fair Salary
- Work-life balance
- Job security
- Job title, status
- Work culture
- Connections with coworkers

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Freedom over work (when, where, and how work is done)
- Competency
- Growth
- Purpose
- Alignment with personal values

Step 2: Advocate For Needs

- This does *not* mean barge into your employer's office and demand sweeping changes.

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR EMPLOYER TO SAY YES

- Start small
- Look for a win-win
- Suggest a trial period
- Ask with curiosity, not confrontation

- Let's say you're an optometrist, and end-of-day emergencies being squeezed into your already full schedule cause you significant anxiety.
- Here's how you *could* communicate your need:

“ Evening emergencies have been stressful for both me and the staff. I think we can provide better quality of care for all our patients (**mutual benefit**) if we schedule emergencies earlier in the day or first thing next morning (**options**). Can we try this on just Fridays (**small ask**) for a month and reassess? (**trial period**) ”

WHAT'S *ONE* SMALL, REALISTIC REQUEST YOU CAN MAKE?
HOW WOULD YOU FRAME IT?

Step 3: Keep Adding Value

BECOME *INDISPENSABLE*

- Go beyond your job description when it makes sense
- Show initiative
- Grow your skills (courses, certifications, coaching)
- Cultivate soft skills—being agreeable, kind, and reliable

When you create value, *you* become more valuable, which opens the door for bigger changes to your role.

Then, return to step 1 and identify the next aspect of your job you'd like to improve!

Redesign Work:

Build Your Unique Career

- Think of your favourite food. Could you eat it 3x/day, everyday, *forever*?
- School trained us for one role (doctor, nurse, etc.), but you can be so much more!
- **Start a passion project to redefine your identity.**

But...

“What if my passion doesn’t pay the bills?”

- Keep your main job for stability and pursue a creative passion project.

“I don’t see how my passion can turn into a career...”

- If you follow these steps, your passion project will open unexpected doors.

“I’m not good/qualified enough.”

- *Everyone* starts as a beginner. *Everyone* feels the imposter syndrome.

“I’m too busy.”

- As discussed in **Section 1**, slow down!

And on and on... I’ve heard it all!

There’s never a perfect time to start, and you’ll never be perfectly ready.

Just start where you are.

FROM BLOGGING TO TRAVEL OPTOMETRY

After a burnout, I became a freelance optometrist and started a well-being blog.

To my surprise, blog opened the door to **unexpected opportunities** — leading to my current career as a travel optometrist, podcast host, blogger, and speaker on work happiness.

Was all of this part of some grand plan?

No! I didn't set out for any of this — I just followed my passion, and it transformed my life in the best ways.

Here are more **real-world examples** of optometrists who transformed their career with passion projects:

Go-Getter	Passion Project	Career Transformation
J. Luk	Social media & cosmetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencer • KOL in dry eyes & cosmetics • Founder of a cosmetics brand, <i>Eyethos</i>
R. Khamis	Sports vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision specialist for professional hockey teams • 1-on-1 vision coaching for elite goalies
V. Gao	3D printing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online store for 3D printed optometry tools
B. Rhue	Tech innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founder of <i>Dr. Contact Lens</i>, a software solution for contact lens ordering • Tech entrepreneur

But what if your passion has nothing to do with your main job? You can pursue both!

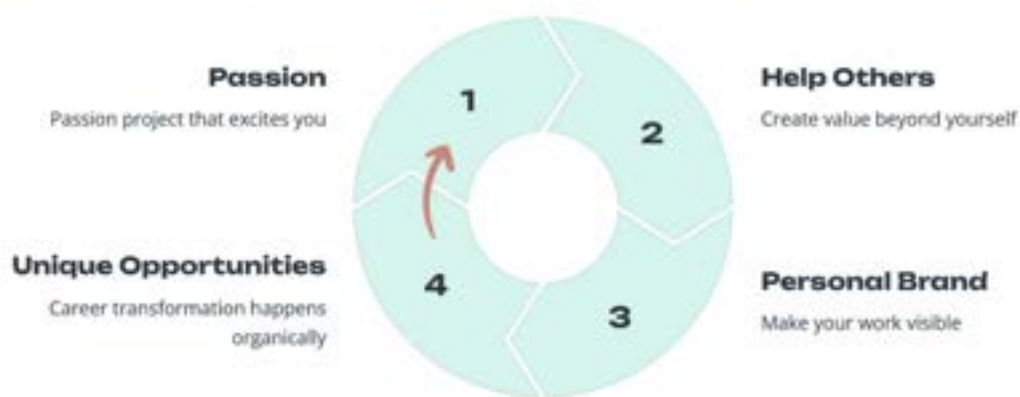
Go-Getter	Passion Project	Unique Career
H. Lam	Tattooing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optometrist • Tattoo artist
B. Hewitt	Mental health & psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optometrist • Mental health counsellor (through additional training)
A. Keeling	Women empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optometrist • President of Business & Professional Women of Greater Moncton • Canadian delegate at the United Nations General Assembly

Same optometry training. Unique careers. Passion made all the difference.

Which means... **you can too!**

The very qualities that drive a passion project—being a quick learner, adaptable, and disciplined—are the same ones that got you through professional school.

4 Steps to Build a Unique Career



Step 1: Find Your Passion

Creating art, hosting a book club, podcasting—we all have that passion project we haven't gotten around to.

What's yours?

.....

.....

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BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT MY PASSION IS...

Start by asking:

- *What makes me lose track of time?*
- *What problem could I spend hours solving?*
- *What do people often ask me for help with?*

Step 2: Help Others

You might wonder, “*How’s this different from hobbies?*”

- **Hobby** is something you do purely for your enjoyment.
- **Passion project** is something you love that also *helps others*.

Here are some examples:

Hobby (Deep Passion)	Passion Project (Deep Passion + Helping Others)
Painting for fun	Creating art that raises mental health awareness
Coding for fun	Building apps that help nonprofits
Writing for yourself	Writing books that inspire young adults

Brainstorm how your passion could solve problems, help others, and create real value:

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Step 3: Make Your Work Visible

- A personal website. A blog. A YouTube channel. Public speaking. Anything that builds a digital footprint of your interests and contributions.
- **Build your personal brand** by consistently sharing your work.
- You don't need to reach a ton of people – *only the right few*.

Step 4: Unique Opportunities

- Putting it all together:
Passion + help others + online visibility = **Your work becomes a magnet for unique opportunities.**
- Over time, you'll attract collaborations, connect with decision-makers, and shape a career that reflects not just what you studied, but who you truly are.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Courage to take the first step
- Creativity without constraint
- Have fun!

WHAT YOU DON'T NEED

- Perfect plan
- Perfect time
- How to make money ASAP



From Insight to Action

“The longer you stay on the wrong train, the more expensive it is to get back home...”

Designing your ideal life and career can feel overwhelming. But remember: **the first step is always the hardest.**

Standing at the edge of water, we wonder how deep it goes and if we'll sink. But when we finally take that step, we realize it was just a puddle.

And with every step (*especially* the “wrong” ones!), we learn more about ourselves and gain clarity on where to go next. *Action brings clarity.*

So, start moving! Build a life of meaning and freedom one small step at a time.

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