

Designing Your Life Workshop

WOW Virtual Event
March 2025

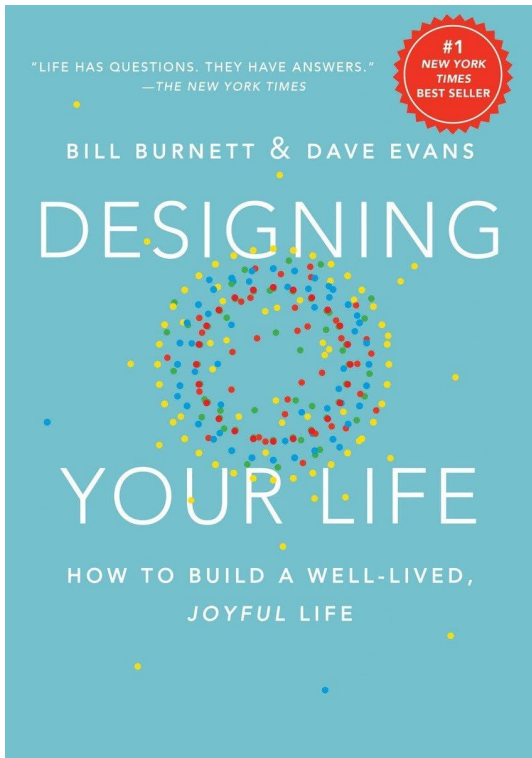
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Who I am and why I'm doing this session

- Stanford Ph.D. in Psychology
- Mom of 2 (17 and 19 yr old), wife, daughter
- In 2024, I wrapped up a 25-year career in Tech across 8 companies, including 2 FamilyTech startups that I founded and led
- My last full-time job was as a VP at Meta, leading a team of 1,500+ data scientists
- I'm enjoying a portfolio career as a startup advisor and investor, Zumba instructor, mentor, and founder of Women of Wisdom
- I'm actively designing the life I want and want to help you do the same



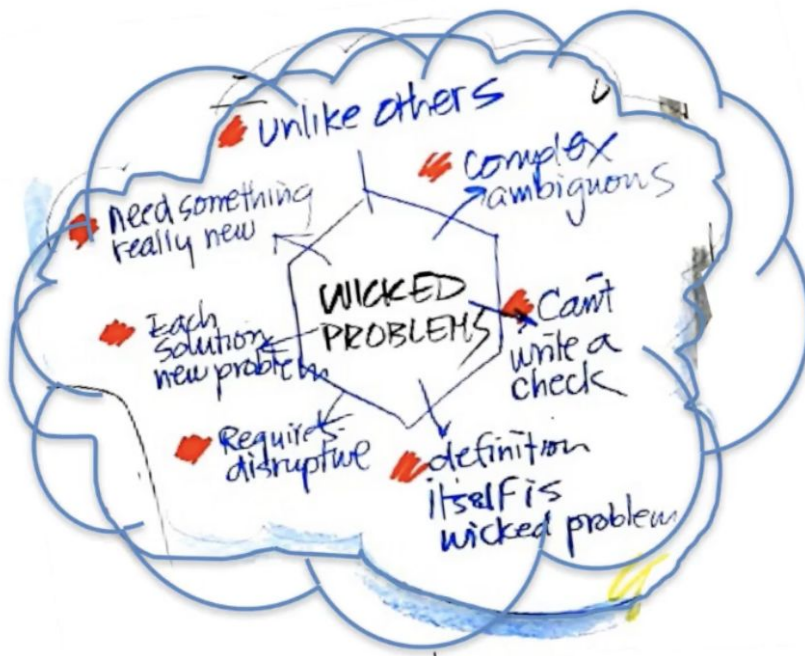
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“Taking the creative tools and mindsets that designers use and applying them to the “wicked problem” of creating a well-lived and joyful life”

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Wicked problem



Can't be solved with:

- Engineering thinking (solve)
- Business thinking (optimize)
- Research thinking (analyze)

Can be solved with:

- Design thinking (build)

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5 key mindsets



CURIOSITY



BIAS TO ACTION



REFRAMING



MINDFULNESS OF PROCESS



RADICAL COLLABORATION

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How we typically think of work-life balance

- Work and life are on opposite sides
- Strive for the perfect equilibrium
- Don't let the scale tip in either direction
- Zero-sum game: more work = less life



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But what if we could reframe it?

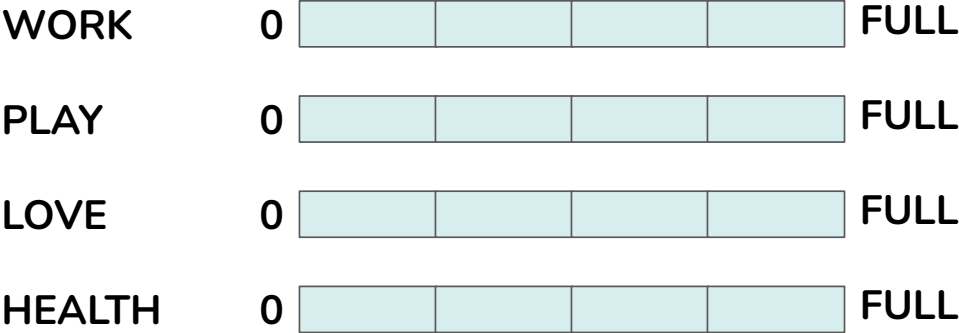


Life is multi-dimensional

Work is part of life

WORK Includes paid, unpaid, volunteer, caregiving, daily chores	PLAY Activities that bring you joy and are done purely for fun
LOVE Includes both primary relationships and more casual ones	HEALTH Includes physical, mental, and spiritual well-being

Start where you are



- 1. Assess how satisfied you are with each area of life, fill in the gauge
- 2. Define the “wicked problem” you want to solve, put an arrow there

My assessment





Draw the dashboard and fill it in

WORK	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL
PLAY	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL
LOVE	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL
HEALTH	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL

Design your balance

1. **Reflect:** Reflect on the area you want to improve
2. **Ideate:** Generate ideas for how you can improve in this area
3. **Prototype:** Choose 1-3 incremental changes to try next week

A few tools to help with ideation

1. Set the bar low
2. Reprioritize
3. Re-sequence
4. Reframe
5. 2-for-1 (or 3-for-1 or even 4-for-1) activities
6. Compromise and defer
7. Time box
8. Change location or tools
9. Change people

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Reflect, then share in the chat

What one incremental change
will you try next week?

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ENERGY - ENGAGEMENT MAP WORKSHEET

- List your top energy giving or draining regular activities/engagements:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- Draw a bar of each one's (+) or (-) energy effect.
- What do you notice about your energy patterns?

- What relatively accessible changes can you make to improve your energy flows?



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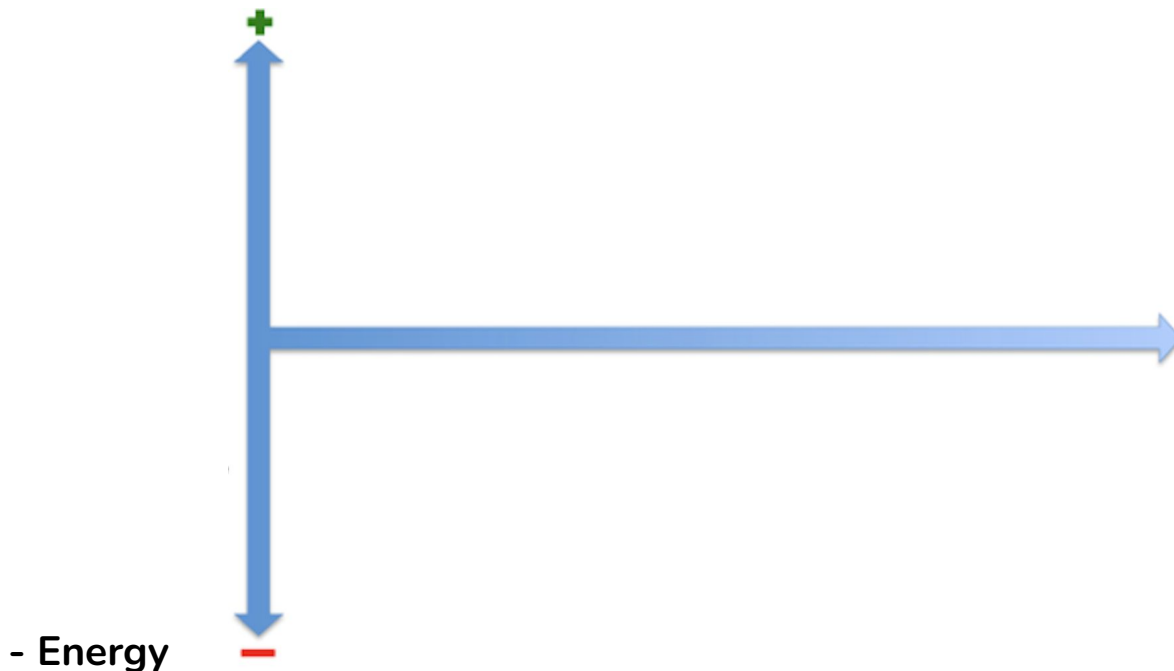
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Energy / engagement framework

+ Energy

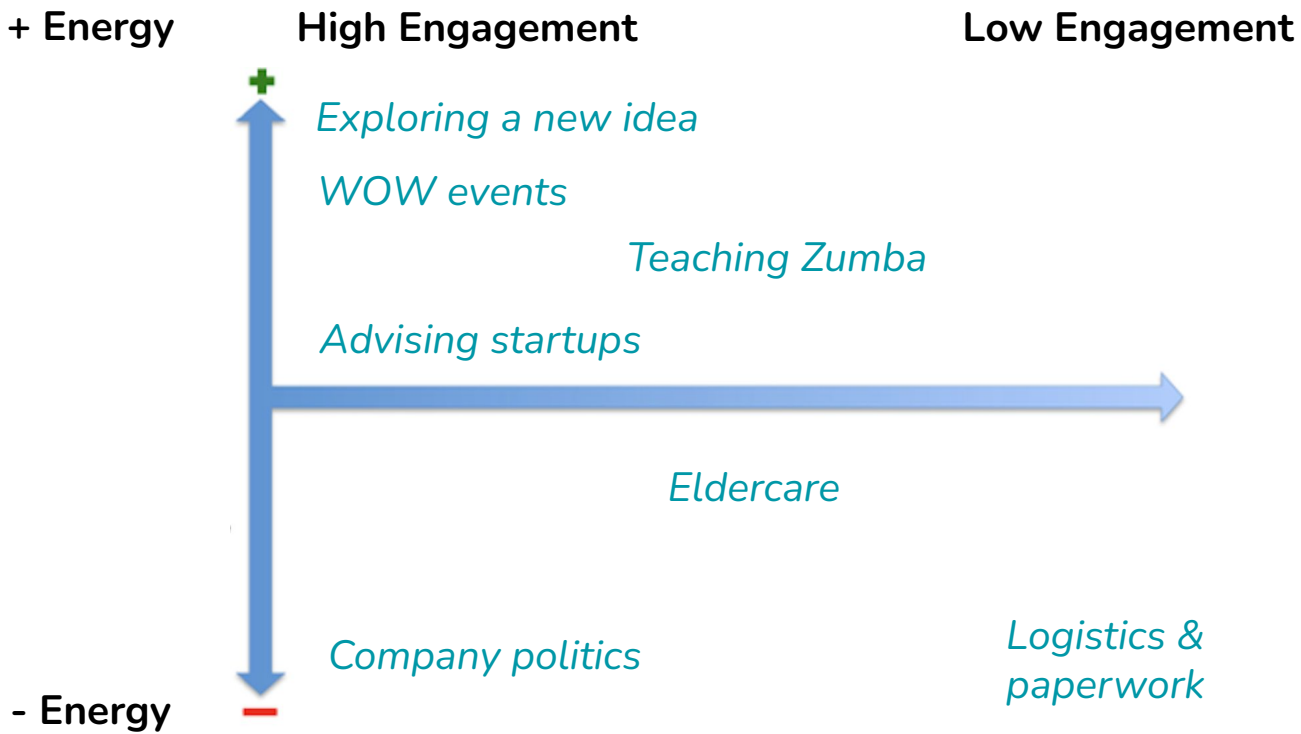
High Engagement

Low Engagement

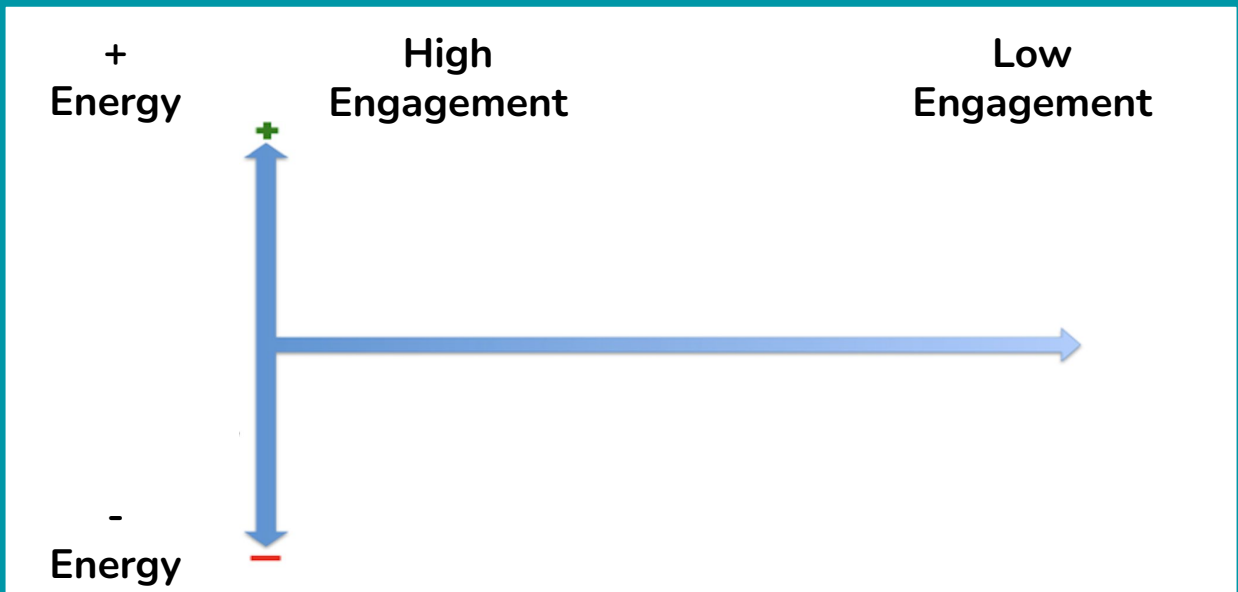


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My example



Draw the Energy / Engagement map and fill it in with examples



Flow

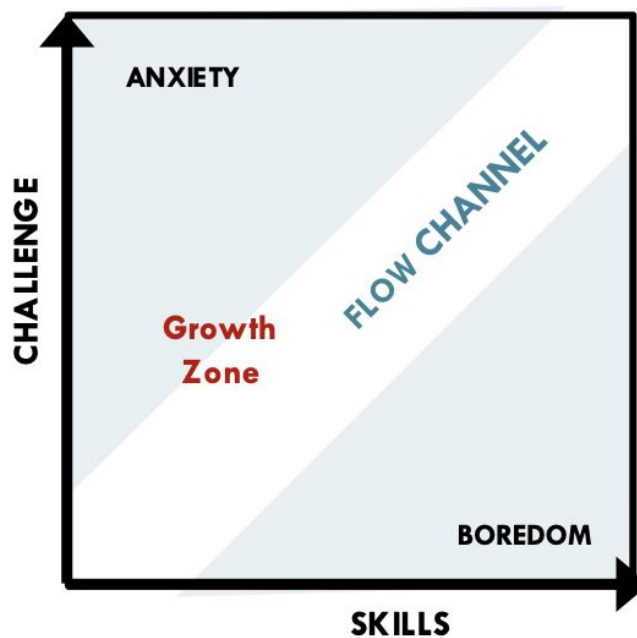
Flow is a state where attention, motivation, and the situation meet, resulting in a kind of productive harmony

Flow is often experienced as a feeling of clarity and hyperfocus, where time stands still or passes without notice

Flow occurs when there is an optimal balance between the challenge of the task and the skills of the performer

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Flow



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**Reflect on your experiences of flow:
What activities were you engaged in?
Do you notice any themes?**

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Try stuff: Flow homework

Pick an experience that you are excited to delve into further

Let your mind fully recall that experience

Write a detailed description of the experience. What was happening? What was it like to be in the midst of it?

Set aside what you wrote for 1 day

The next day, re-read what you have written and notice if anything new emerges. You can add to or edit your description.

What conditions are conducive to creating flow for you?

Do you want more flow in your life? If yes, how might you create conditions for flow?

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Try Stuff Mind Mapping

Good Time Journal – Activity Log

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1. Review your Good Time Journal and note activities in which you were engaged, energized, and in flow.
2. Choose an activity that you were engaged in, an activity that you felt highly energized from, and something you did that brought you into flow, and create three mind maps—one for each.
3. Look at the outer ring of each mind map, pick three things that jump out at you, and create a job description from them.
4. Create a role for each job description, and draw a napkin sketch.

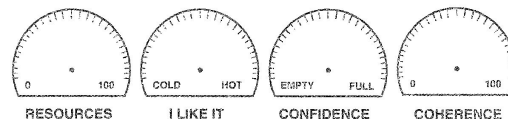
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Odyssey Plans

Create three alternative versions of the next five years of your life. Each one must include:

1. A visual/graphical timeline. Include personal and noncareer events as well—do you want to be married, train to win the CrossFit Games, or learn how to bend spoons with your mind?
2. A title for each option in the form of a six-word headline describing the essence of this alternative.
3. Questions that this alternative is asking—preferably two or three. A good designer asks questions to test assumptions and reveal new insights. In each potential timeline, you will investigate different possibilities and learn different things about yourself and the world. What kinds of things will you want to test and explore in each alternative version of your life?
4. A dashboard where you can gauge
 - a. Resources (Do you have the objective resources—time, money, skill, contacts—you need to pull off your plan?)
 - b. Likability (Are you hot or cold or warm about your plan?)
 - c. Confidence (Are you feeling full of confidence, or pretty uncertain about pulling this off?)
 - d. Coherence (Does the plan make sense within

itself? And is it consistent with you, your Workview, and your Lifeview?)



- Possible considerations
 - Geography—where will you live?
 - What experience/learning will you gain?
 - What are the impacts/results of choosing this alternative?
 - What will life look like? What particular role, industry, or company do you see yourself in?
- Other ideas
 - Do keep in mind things other than career and money. Even though those things are important, if not central, to the decisive direction of your next few years, there are other critical elements that you want to pay attention to.
 - Any of the considerations listed above can be a springboard for forming your alternative lives for the next five years. If you find yourself stuck, try making a mind map out of any of the design considerations listed above. Don't overthink this exercise, and don't skip it.

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DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

Alternative Plan # _____

3 word title _____

Questions for your advisors _____

Alternative Plan # _____

3 word title _____

Questions for your advisors _____

Alternative Plan # _____

3 word title _____

Questions for your advisors _____

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DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

Failure	Screwup	Weakness	Growth Opportunity	Insight

“We are always growing from the present into the future, and therefore always changing. With each change comes a new design.

*Life is not an outcome; it’s more like a dance. **Life design is just a really good set of dance moves.** Life is never done (until it is), and life design is never done (until you’re done).”*

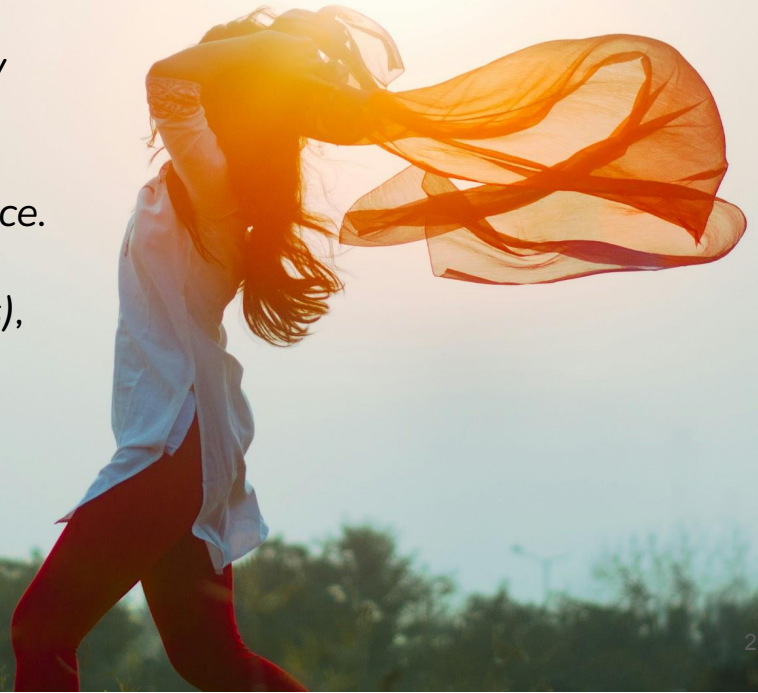


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Share in chat

What one commitment will you make after this session?

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