



Integration: LIFE PATH CONVERSATIONS

“Passion for your work is a little bit of discovery, followed by a lot of development, and then a life time of deepening.”

- Angela Duckworth

What should I do with my life? Many of us freeze up when we think about this question. Others engage in a constant state of worrying about it, but don't try anything out to get new data.

We want to help you break out of these dysfunctional states. **Your Integration this week is to engage in at least two life path conversations.** Look back at your [three alternate life paths](#) that you created. For the two non-default plans¹, find someone who is already living this life and have a conversation with them.

EXAMPLES

This exercise is an adapted version of the prototype conversations from Stanford's [Designing Your Life program](#). Take a look at [the videos](#) and [blogs](#) directly from the Designing Your Life authors if you need some ideas. For more specific examples, buy the [book](#).

PROTOTYPE CONVERSATION TIPS

- **This is not a job interview - just a conversation. Never hurts just to ask for a conversation.**
- Don't think of it as networking - just ask them for their story. Everyone likes talking about themselves.
- Ask them about how they came to their career, how they make decisions, etc.
- If you can prototype the experience, try it out! See if you can work virtually on a project for a week or so.

¹ We are assuming that you have already had conversations with people on your default life plans. If you haven't, do that as well.

“Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers.”

- Proverbs 11:14

SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

- **Expectations vs. Reality:** Research shows that asking for advice is way more beneficial than we would expect.²
- **Weak Ties:** These conversations can expand (and can build off of) your weak ties that are very important to career success and personal fulfillment.³
- **Effectiveness:** In the United States, only 20% of jobs are actually posted anywhere. So the vast majority of jobs are only available to those in the “know”, and you can become aware of opportunities through these types of conversations.⁴
- **Reframing Networking:** Instead of thinking of “networking” as a slick way to take advantage of someone else, think of it as just asking for directions. People like being helpful, and it can’t hurt to ask for directions.⁵

“It is better to be a poor but wise youth than an old and foolish king who refuses all advice.”

- Ecclesiastes 4:13

² Yoon, Jaewon, et al., “[Why Asking for Advice Is More Effective Than Asking for Feedback](#)”, *Harvard Business Review*, 20 Sept. 2019.

³ Granovetter, Mark S., “[The Strength of Weak Ties](#)”, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, no. 6, 1973, pg. 1360–1380, doi:10.1086/225469. For a more generalized and contemporary overview, read [this BBC article](#).
Ltd, 2019.

⁴ Burnett, William, and David J. Evans, *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2020, pg. 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 150.