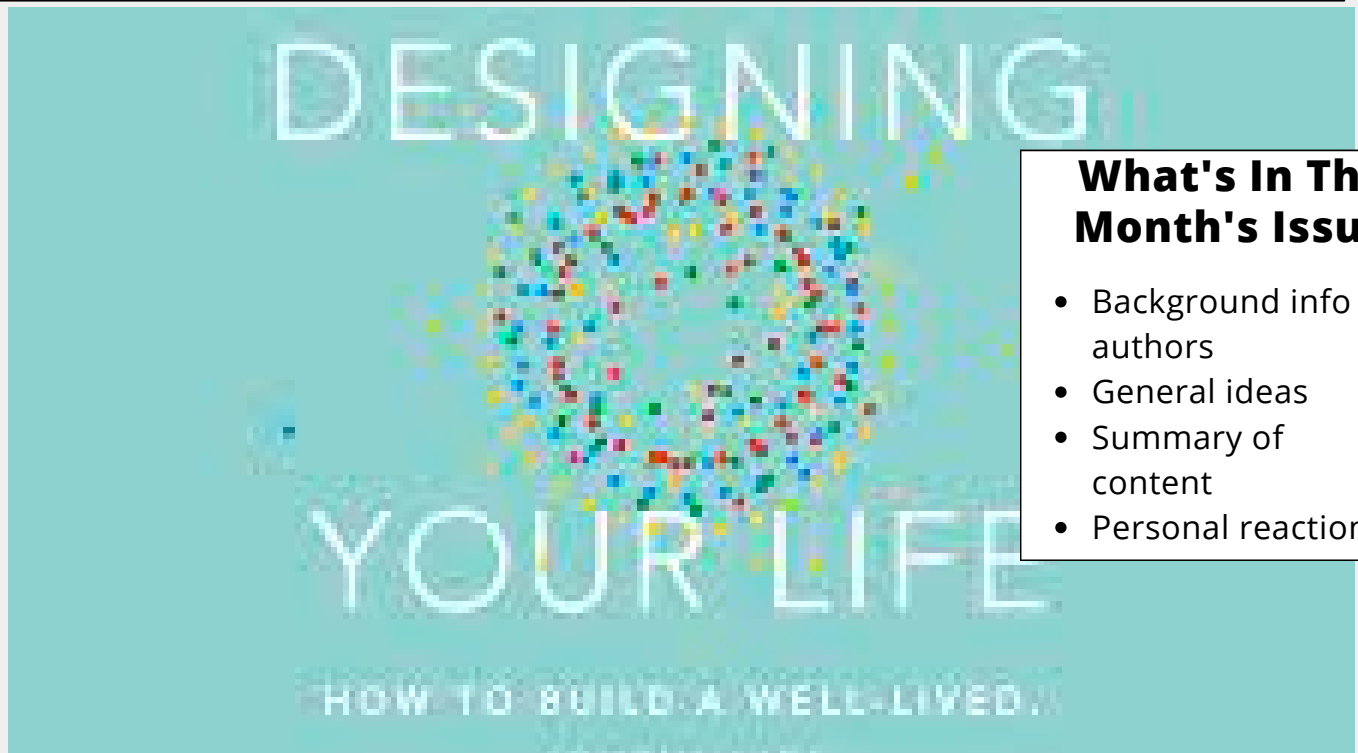


# DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

2016

BILL BURNETT & DAVE EVANS

Self-help Book  
Blog



## What's In This Month's Issue:

- Background info on authors
- General ideas
- Summary of content
- Personal reactions

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bill Burnett and Dave Evans dedicated this book to helping others figure out what they want and how to create it. They believe that in order to change, people need a process - specifically a design process in order to build a future, step by step, that is appealing to their goals and aspirations.

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**Bill Burnett** is the executive director of the Stanford Design Program and was a product leader for Apple's PowerBook business.

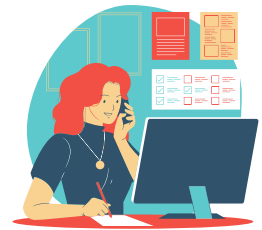
**Dave Evans** is the codirector of the Stanford Life Design Lab, and cofounder of Electronic Arts, one of the world's largest interactive entertainment companies.

# Designing Your Life

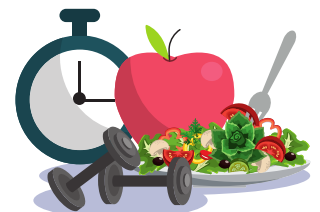
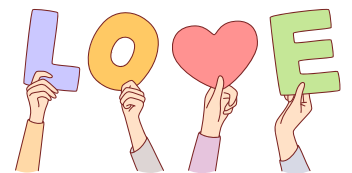
At one time or another, I think we have all considered ourselves “stuck” with some aspect in our lives. Whether it be our professional or personal lives, we all go through phases of uncertainty which can lead to a lot of confusion and anxiety. Many of us might ask ourselves, “What is my purpose?”, or “What is this all for?”, which can be very hard questions to answer. I know in my personal experience, I had to go through a lot of trial and error when it came to figuring out what I wanted to do with my life after school. I jumped around from idea to idea, with no organization whatsoever, and had a very difficult time finding a career that stuck with me. I even have some close friends who are at a point in their lives where they are done with school, but have no interest in using their degree, but feel like they don’t have any more options, and they are forced to enter into a career that they hate – they’re stuck. But what if there was a way to use creative thinking to figure out a plan for your life? What if we haven’t been using the right mindset to come up with more ideas to create a happier life for ourselves? It’s time that we start looking at our lives differently, in order to build a joyful lifestyle.



In *Designing Your Life*, by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, they outline the steps you should take when trying to build an enjoyable life for yourself. Say you are stuck – you have a career that you dread going to everyday, and your only relief is when the clock hits 5 o’clock on Friday, and you can finally enjoy your weekend without worrying about the terribleness that is your job, only until you have to get right back to it on Monday... It’s time to rethink things so that you can love your life, rather than dread it.



You may be thinking, “Where do I even start?”, and the answer to this question is with a Life Design Assessment. We can’t possibly know what we want to change about our lives without understanding which aspects of our lives are lacking. This is where the Life Design Assessment comes in. Burnett and Evans break it down into four categories, work, play, love, and health. The whole purpose of this assessment is to gauge where you are at in each of these categories on a scale from 0-Full, and determine which parts of your life you need to pay the most attention to. Knowing the current status of each of these categories will give you a basic framework of what is good enough, and what is not good enough and needs some reworking. For example, when I completed this assessment myself, I realized that my work and love gauges were relatively high, while my play and health gauges were lower than I expected. In this case, I would choose one of those two categories to focus on. While I am going to focus on how the next steps might help you out in your professional life, they can work in any one of these categories.



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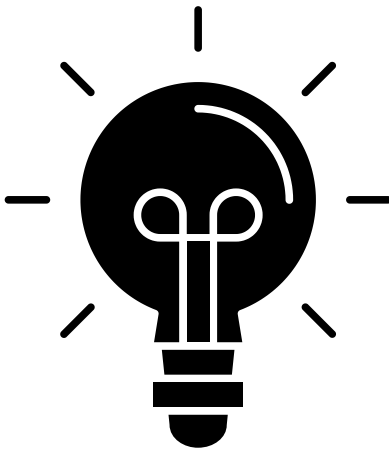


Next, you need to “build your compass”, more specifically, determine your Workview and your Lifeview. You need to discover what work means to you. What is work for? Why do you do it? What makes good work good? Answering these questions for yourself can ensure that you are taking charge of your own professional goals, and not letting someone else make the decisions for you. Your Lifeview comes from asking questions like, “What gives life meaning?”, or “What makes your life worthwhile or valuable?”. This is simply your ideas about the world and how it works. The point of this step is to verbalize your view on your life, as it can be challenging to ignore all of the people who tell you how life is supposed to be, or what you are supposed to be doing with it. Surprise – This is all up to YOU.

Next, you need to focus on the things you DO like about your job. For some of us, this might be very little – but it might surprise you to find out how many things you actually enjoy by keeping a Good Time Journal for at least two weeks. The purpose of this journal is to list all of the things you do on a daily basis at your job. You might give each task a small description, and then you rate each one on how engaged you are, and how much energy it gives you when you are completing it. Some entries might have low engagement and low energy. These are the ones that you want to stay away from in your new endeavors. But, some tasks might have high engagement or high energy, and these are the ones that you may want to keep in the back of your mind when trying to decide on a different career path. Once you have an idea of some activities you are interested in, it's time to ask yourself the AEIOU's of these tasks. What was the Activity? What was the Environment like when you completed this task? Who or what were you Interacting with? Were any Objects or devices involved? Who else was there, and how did those Users affect the outcome of the task? Asking these questions can really help you zoom in to discover which specific parts of that task made it so enjoyable.

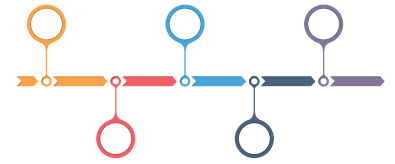


Now it's time to ideate. At this point, you should have a list of things that you do well in your current job, and now we are going to use those skills to come up with new ideas of how you can use them. As creatives, we all know the basic rules of ideation. Defer judgment, seek wild and unusual ideas, and build on other ideas. Your job is to choose an activity that you were engaged in, one that you were energized from, and one that put you in a state of flow (Being completely in the zone), and create 3 mind maps – one for each. You will then look at the outer rings of each mind map and pick three things that jump out at you, and create a job description from them.



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Now it's time to create a visual or graphical timeline of each role. You should include personal and non career events in your timeline. The goal is to create a 5 year plan for each job description that you came up with in the last step. Where do you see yourself in 5 years with this option? What steps will you need to take along the way? What resources will you need? How much confidence will you have throughout each process? Is each plan consistent with your Workview and your Lifeview? Once you have these timelines, it can be very helpful to share them with some friends to get some feedback – preferably ones that are aware of deferring judgment.



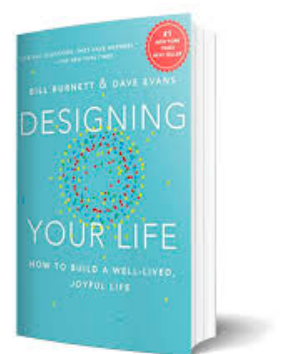
Once you have some ideas to work with, the next step is completely up to you. This part of the process is called prototyping. In this step, you will need to find ways to try out your new career paths on a smaller scale. For example, shadowing someone who is currently working in one of your desired careers, or starting a new hobby that coincides with your new interests. Another big part of this step is reaching out to as many people as you can to ask questions about the specific careers you may be interested in. And who knows, you may even find yourself in a position where these people are offering you a position within their company based on how eager you are to learn more about it – it's happened before.



Personally, I believe that these steps are very similar to ones in the creative problem solving process. And from experience, this type of thinking and understanding of your own life including your needs and wants can really help you when it comes to building an enjoyable life for yourself. We are all creative people, and it is time that we use our creative talents to figure out the next steps we need to take in life in order to get to a place where we can be proud of all that we have become. And Burnett and Evans have laid out these possibilities in a step-by-step format that has proven to be successful with several people that they mentioned throughout the book.



Now, I have only touched the surface of the information that was provided in this book, so I highly recommend putting this on your reading list. Not only has this helped me to understand which areas of my life I need to put some more work into, but it has given me some hope that even though I may not be at the *exact* spot that I want to be in my life, I will get there by taking the steps to build a more enjoyable life – and I hope after reading this, you feel that same kind of hope.



Written by: Samantha Landahl