

Squiggly Careers® PodBook

Worksheets to support
your career development
and help you take action



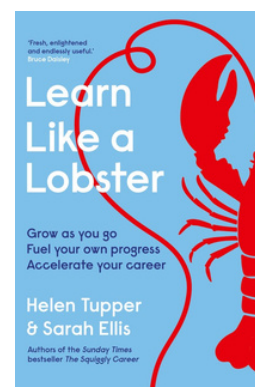
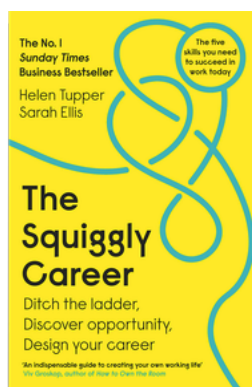
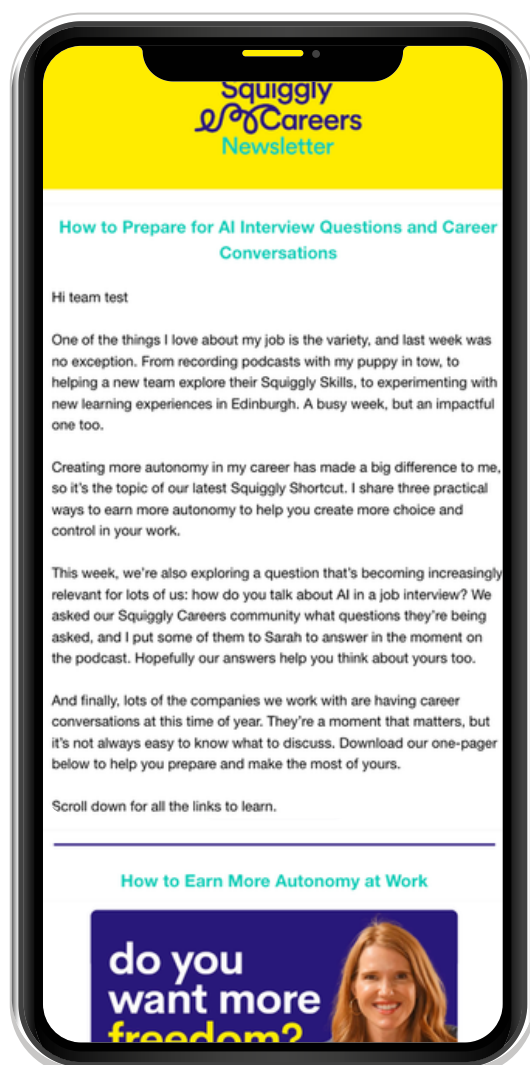
squigglycareers.com

About us

Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis are the founders of Squiggly Careers, a company with a mission to make squiggly careers better for everyone.

Together they have written three Sunday Times bestsellers, *Learn Like a Lobster*, *The Squiggly Career* and *You Coach You*. Their TEDx talk, "The best career path isn't always a straight line" has been watched by over 2m people and their weekly Squiggly Careers podcast has had over 5m downloads.

This workbook brings together over 50 PodSheets and more than 150 ideas for action to support you and your squiggly career.



Read our books



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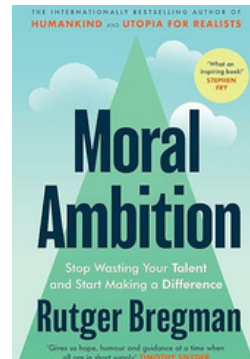
How to make friction more useful for you

Borrowed Brilliance: 3 ways to practice moral ambition

"You don't do good things because you're a good person. You become a good person by doing good things." - Rutger Bregman

Moral ambition challenges us to use our time and talents not just to do well, but to do good.

A full-time career is 80,000 hours – so how we spend them matters. It's not about saving the world, but making small, meaningful differences through our work.



[Longer read](#)



[Quick read](#)

Ideas for action



Volunteer your value

Find ways to volunteer your time or skills where they'll be most useful.

Give yourself a volunteering score out of 10 or track how many hours a month you spend giving your time or skills. Then find one small way to increase it.

Expand your impact

Bregman talks about a moral circle – the people your actions reach and affect.

Notice who already benefits from your time and energy. Then ask, 'who else could I support and how?' One extra person or group is enough to start.

Spot role models

Most of us act once others have led the way.

Find someone who's already making a positive difference or impact and study how they do it.

Borrow their brilliance to inspire what that looks like for you.

Coach yourself

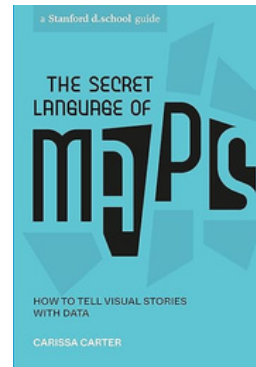
Who could benefit from your expertise and experience?



Borrowed Brilliance: how to map your career

Maps help us to make sense of the unknown and provide direction, but we don't just have to use them to navigate our way around the world, we can also use them to navigate our way around work.

In this episode, we borrow brilliance from Jürgen Appelo's article "I Started Drawing Maps" and Stanford Design School's book "The Secret Language of Maps".



Longer read

Quick read

Ideas to try



Map your energy

Draw two batteries every day for a week. One battery is green = moments that gave you the most energy, the other one is red = moments of least energy. Reflect at the end of each day on how your time at work has felt and what tasks and activities are in each battery. End your week by asking: How can I have more of the highs? How can I change or share the lows?

Map your career community

Spot who you help, who helps you, and where your career community could grow. Put yourself at the centre, add names, and draw arrows to show the direction of support (from you, to you or mutual). Use the width of lines to illustrate the amount of support (thick line = lots of support, thin lines = low amounts of support). Use the length of the line to show frequency (lines close to you = high frequency support, long lines further away from you = low frequency of support)

Map your career possibilities

Create a mind map to explore your development from different directions. Try using AI as a thinking partner with this prompt: *"I'm a XX in the XX sector. I'm curious to explore where my career might take me next. Act as a squiggly career mentor who has worked in lots of different roles and industries. Generate a mind map showing me 3 obvious career possibilities, 3 ambitious possibilities, 3 pivot possibilities and 3 dream possibilities for my career."*

Map your problems

If you feel a bit stuck in a knotty situation, try a facts vs feelings map. Create two columns on a page. On the left, write down the facts of your situation - what you know to be true. On the right, note your feelings, worries or emotions. Naming emotions can help you feel more in control of your response. Use your insights to come up with 3 'so what now' solutions.

Borrowed Brilliance: what can we learn from seats?

Where and how you sit can shape how you show up. A seat signals intention: whether you want to lead, listen or learn. Every setting (an event, meeting, or a Zoom call) has its own seat psychology.

When you start to notice the impact of where people sit, you can use it to build confidence and connection.



Watch on YouTube

Ideas for action



Experiment with your seat at events

At large events, notice where you naturally go. The front helps you stay engaged; the sides or back feel safer.

Try sitting somewhere different to shift your mindset.

If you're hosting, mix up groups so solo attendees feel welcome.

Choose your seat consciously at work

In in-person meetings, where you sit matters.

The head of the table signals leadership; the middle builds collaboration; next to the leader borrows presence

Choose your spot to match how you want to contribute.

Set up your space for virtual meetings

How you sit frames how you are seen on a screen.

A centred camera, good lighting and clear view of your face and shoulders show confidence and openness.

Take ten seconds before each virtual meeting to check your set set-up.

Coach yourself

What seating habits have I fallen into?



Which meetings could I use how I'm sitting to increase my impact?



Borrowed Brilliance: building team emotional intelligence

Team emotional intelligence is the habits, routines and norms that help a team work well together.

When teams understand and use each other's feelings to support, respect and challenge, they build trust, motivation and perform stronger together.

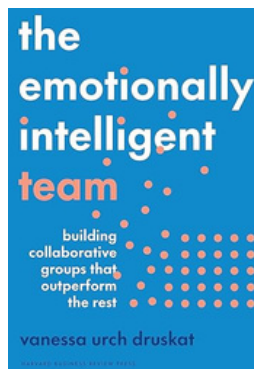


Do You Have an Emotionally Intelligent Team?

by Vanessa Urch Druskat



Start with



Deeper dive

Ideas for action

Challenge and build thinking

Turn team feedback into a useful habit.

Build a shared bank of challenge and build questions so it's easy for everyone to join in.

E.g. "What's one word to describe this?" "One change you'd make?"

Assessing strengths and opportunities

As a team, try quick best, okay and worst-case scenario thinking before a project to spot risks early and think ahead together.

You could even ask AI to generate scenarios to get started.

Build relationships that matter

As a team, map who influences your success and make time to connect.

Understand what matters most to them, and share with the team what you learn.

AI prompt to rate your team EQ

Create a quiz that I could share with my team using these categories: understanding each other better, routinely assessing strengths and opportunities, and routinely talking to stakeholders. Use 1-5 as a scoring scale. Make this quiz anonymous and give me the ability to review the team results without doing the quiz each time.

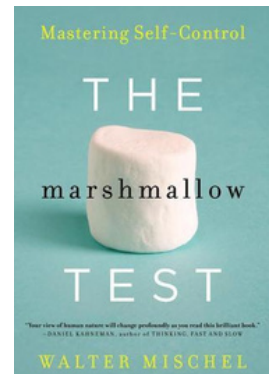
The two-marshmallow mindset: practising delayed gratification

The famous Marshmallow Experiment tested delayed gratification – one marshmallow now or wait and get two.

In a squiggly career there are lots of one or two-marshmallow decisions to make too: the quick wins that feel good now, or the moments where waiting brings a better payoff for you and your career.



Start with



Deeper dive

Ideas for action

Instant vs. impact response to email

One marshmallow: reply instantly. You feel 'on it' but you're constantly distracted by your inbox.

Two marshmallows: check emails once or twice a day. Chose what to respond to and focus on deeper work.

Saying yes vs. saying no

One marshmallow: say yes to every request – it makes you feel helpful, useful and kind to your colleagues.

Two marshmallows: say no, not yet or not me, to make progress on the projects where you add the most value.

Applying vs. creating opportunities

One marshmallow: find a job advert, apply quickly with a generic CV, and hope for the best.

Two marshmallows: create opportunities through conversations and connection. Roles start coming to you.

Coach yourself

Where am I choosing a quick win over impact?



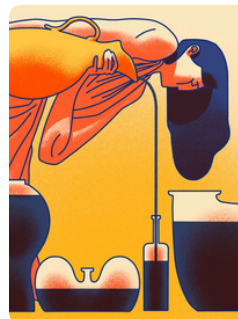
Where can I delay gratification to get a better result later?



Borrowed Brilliance: how to make rest work for you

We often think of rest as sleep, but Dr Sandra Dalton-Smith reminds us that rest comes in seven forms.

By understanding the different types of rest, you can spot what you need to recharge, and design routines that work for you and your team.



Watch



Read

Seven types of rest

Physical rest – Recharging your body through sleep, stretching, or stillness.

Mental rest – Giving your mind space to pause and reset.

Sensory rest – Reducing noise, screens, and overstimulation.

Creative rest – Refilling your imagination through nature or inspiration.

Emotional rest – Taking a break from carrying others' emotions.

Social rest – Spending time with people who restore, not drain, you.

Spiritual rest – Reconnecting with purpose or meaning.

AI prompt to create your rest profile

Act as my Squiggly Career Coach. Use this article <https://ideas.ted.com/the-7-types-of-rest-that-every-person-needs> and ask me one short and specific question at a time, to collect insights and identify my personal rest profile. Generate 3 personalised and practical recommendations for rest that I could add into my week.

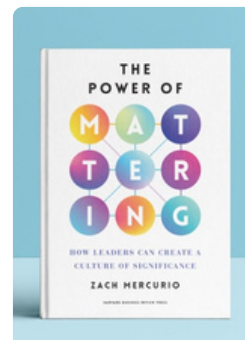
Try a team 'Reflection on Rest' session

Spend 10–15 minutes exploring the seven types of rest together. Ask each person to use the AI prompt to find their rest profile and shares one takeaway and a rest commitment for the week ahead.

Borrowed Brilliance: The Importance of Mattering

"Mattering is the experience of being significant to those around us. Because we feel valued and know that we add value" – Dr. Zach Mercurio

It enhances our self esteem ("I deserve to be here") and self-efficacy ("I can do it").



[Read the book](#)

3 ingredients for mattering

Notice out loud how people show up

Feeling seen signals value.

In meetings trying using *"I've noticed that..."* to spot contributions or changes in energy: *"I've noticed that you were trying to jump in – want to share that point?"*

Affirm, don't just recognise

Recognise what people do well but in a more meaningful way

Go beyond *"great job"* to: *"what makes you uniquely useful is X because..."* (name the specific strength + the impact + a concrete example).

Make people feel needed

If someone can't come to a meeting saying *"Don't worry, we'll be fine without you"* can make them feel replaceable.

Instead try: *"Sorry you cant be there. I value your xxxx. Can we find another way for you to contribute?"*

Coach yourself

When have you had a high and a low mattering moment in your career and what can you learn from those moments?



Borrowed Brilliance: how to approach hard conversations

Speaking out, setting boundaries and handling team conflict can all feel challenging. But learning how to handle these moments with intention can make a big difference.

We're borrowing brilliance from three past expert guests to help you navigate three types of hard conversation with more clarity and confidence.

Ideas for 3 types of hard conversations

When conflict happens in a team

When working styles clash, it's easy for small frustrations to build up.

Try a "how we work" conversation as a team. Compare preferences on things like time, speaking up and giving feedback.



More ideas in episode **#146** with Amy Gallo

Speaking out when something feels wrong

Tension is your cue that something feels off. Noticing it helps you move closer to a clear no. Try acknowledging out it loud:

"I'm not comfortable with this yet - can you clarify what you mean?"

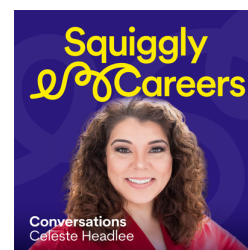


More ideas in episode **#475** with Dr Sunita Sah

When you feel defensive

It's easy to get defensive in tricky conversations.

Try pausing and using a quick affirmation to reset yourself: *"I can listen without agreeing", "I'm going to listen without judging."*



More ideas in episode **#207** with Celeste Headlee

Coach yourself

Which conversation am I avoiding, and what could help me approach it with more clarity?



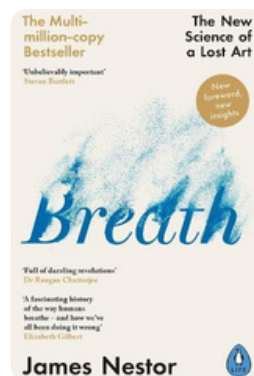
How to use intentional breathing for energy and impact

We take around 20,000 breaths a day but most of them happen on autopilot.

Intentional breathing is a small habit that can make a big difference to how you perform at work – especially in busy, high-pressure weeks. It can help your stress levels, energy, clarity and even how you show up in conversations.



Deeper dive



Explore more

3 moments where breathing can help

Your mind is racing before speaking

Take one long, slow exhale through your mouth for 4–6 seconds before you begin.

Why: A slow exhale reduces cortisol and relaxes your vocal cords, helping you start calmer – rather than rushing in with adrenaline.

You're feeling overwhelmed

Try a quick inhale through your nose and slow exhale through your mouth (and repeat).

Why: Stress creates shallow breathing that restricts the brain's logic and perspective; this exercise helps you reset so you can refocus.

Emotion is getting in your way

Use the Stanford physiological sigh: inhale → top-up inhale → long slow exhale.

Why: Strong emotion spikes your heart rate and narrows your thinking. This sigh helps lower the intensity so you can stay clear and present.

AI prompt to try

"I'm [Insert your situation e.g. on my way to deliver a presentation] and I want to show up in a way that's present and calm. Can you give me three different breathing exercises to try and explain why it works?"

End of year review - high / low learning for the year ahead

A year-end review is important for your development because it helps you understand what contributed to your progress and what held you back. By looking at your highs, lows, and the lessons in both, you can spot patterns, recognise your strengths, and identify actions that support your growth for the year ahead.

End of year coach yourself questions

High moments

What was the best day of your year ?



What made you laugh?



When did you feel most proud?



What experiment worked?



What are you looking forward to?



When did we work well as a team?



What was an out of work high?



Low moments

What day are you glad to leave behind?



What made you cry?



What made you disappointed?



What experiment failed?



What do you want to avoid doing?



When did we stall or get stuck?



What was an out of work low?



Themes for Squiggly Careers in 2026 - part one

Work in 2026 will offer new possibilities across roles and industries. By exploring emerging themes, you can better understand what they mean for you and how to respond.

It's about creating rather than waiting - building skills, curiosity and confidence to help you feel more ready for what's ahead in your Squiggly Career.

Ideas for action

Increased use of AI agents

Let AI work in parallel with you so you can focus on what matters most.

Set aside an hour to create a simple learning agent that finds resources on a topic you want to learn and builds a weekly learning agenda.

YouTube tutorials can help you get started.

Connection and disconnection

More people are feeling lonely at work, so we need new ways to connect together.

Try one agenda-less curious conversation this week, where the only aim is to learn more about someone rather than get a task done.

What are they working on? How are they feeling?

Employee influencers

Employees are being increasingly recognised for sharing what they do and their experience of where they work.

Try a four-week experiment to build your profile - share one social post a week in a way that suits you (it could be about a product, culture, or something you're learning).

Coach yourself

What do I want to be true about my career by the end of the year?



Themes for Squiggly Careers in 2026 - part two

Exploring emerging themes in the world of work can help you understand what they mean for you and the actions you might want to take now to feel more prepared for what's ahead in your career.

Ideas for action

Restructures and redundancy

Restructures and redundancies are happening more often.

If this happened to you next year, what would you wish you'd done already?

Try spending 30 minutes strengthening your LinkedIn profile or prioritise 3 relationships you want to invest in.

Learning that's recognised & rewarded

Learning matters because it feeds your development for longer, but it's not always recognised.

Try learning loudly.

Share what you're learning, what you tried, or what you're curious about next - with your team, your manager or more publicly.

Autonomy and accountability

Lots of us want more freedom over how/ what we work on. But organisations want more accountability.

For your role (or a project), get clarity on what matters most, what good looks like, and what's not for now.

Getting clear on the what gives you more autonomy on the how.

Coach yourself

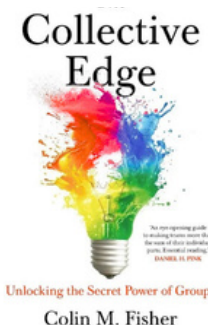
What small action can I take now to feel more in control of my career?



How to reset your team to achieve more together

Colin Fisher defines Collective Edge as when a group achieves more than the sum of individual capabilities. The edge comes from team synergy, created by the right conditions.

It's not about a radical team redo – it's about a regular team reset. Small, intentional refreshes that a team agrees together to work better.



Deeper Dive

Ideas for action



Move from relational to task-based trust

Relationships matter, but teams perform when they trust each other to deliver what's needed.

Try using our **Clarity Creator template**.

Everyone writes down what matters most and what's not for now, then shares it with the team. It helps spot duplication, gaps and understand priorities.

Use structure before coaching

The way a team is structured has a bigger impact on performance than team coaching can achieve.

Try a team communication reset. Agree which tools are for what, what urgent really means, and how the team communicates day to day. It helps reduce overload and make space to do the work.

Make things that are implicit, explicit.

Teams often assume they're aligned, but people can interpret goals differently.

Together as a team, agree five short statements that describe how the team works at its best. Then use challenge and build to ask: *"what have we missed, what would we change, and which statement matters most?"*

Coach yourself

What's one small reset my team could try to help us work better together?



Skills Sprint Day I

How to Learn as you go

Learn Like
a Lobster
Squiggly Careers
Skills Sprint

When you learn as you go, you never get left behind.

It's about taking small, manageable actions that build over time and finding simple ways to learn every day, week, month, and year through the work you're already doing.

Data helps us learn as we go



Data creates clarity for our learning and confidence in our progress.



Lots of data is waiting for us to find in our everyday work.



Once we know where, we can use it to our learning advantage.

Ideas to get data for your development



Collect data about your strengths

Using our strengths increases our impact at work.

Write down 3 words you want to be known for. Then ask as many people as possible: *"what three words would you use to describe me at my best?"* Use this data to compare your intent with your impact.

Find your listening versus talking ratio

Listening creates space for new insights and helps us learn more.

In meetings and conversations, ask yourself: *"Am I listening to learn...or just waiting to speak?"*

Self-reflect, ask a trusted colleague, or use AI tools like [Fireflies](#) to help.

Know your notifications

Check how many notifications you had on your phone yesterday.

Assume each notification costs you 30 seconds of attention. Add up your total time spent on notifications.

Then ask yourself: *"how could this time be better used for learning?"*

24 hour action

Screenshot your notifications and share with a friend or sprint team. Turn one notification off and check your count tomorrow. How does it make you feel?

Skills Sprint Day 2

How to learn from feedback

Learn Like
a Lobster
Squiggly Careers
Skills Sprint

Lobsters grow by shedding their shells, and so do we.

The moments that stretch us, challenge us, and feel uncomfortable are often the ones where real learning happens.

Giving feedback is one of those moments. And feedback feels harder when we have to say the hard thing.

Why does it matter?

85% of people stay silent about concerns at work (Harvard Business School).

Imagine the learning we could unlock if people felt more confident to give feedback and say the hard thing?

Say the hard thing framework to try



Open with a question to understand someone's situation.



Acknowledge their response, and use what you've heard as part of the conversation.



Say the hard thing in a short and simple way.



Involve the other person and hear their perspective.

24 hour action – try our say the hard thing tool



It helps you practice saying the hard thing and get feedback on your approach.

Describe Your Difficult Conversation

Tell us about the feedback you need to give. Who is it for? What's the issue?

Example: I need to tell my manager that they've cancelled our 1:1 meetings three times in a row and it's affecting my ability to get feedback...

Skills Sprint Day 3

How to learn in hard moments (without spiralling)

Learn Like
a Lobster
Squiggly Careers
Skills Sprint

In hard moments, it's easy to leave learning behind because we want to fix the problem quickly or feel uncomfortable.

When we find ways to reflect as we go in those moments, we're able to learn much more, which leads to long-term growth.

Use the WWW/EBI formula

For reflection to work when things go wrong, it needs to be quick, easy and memorable.

You can adapt our favourite feedback framework What Went Well/Even Better If (WWW/EBI) in lots of different ways to increase learning in the hard moments.

Ideas for action



WWW/EBI x the 5:I formula

During a hard or messy moment at work, pause to capture:



5 WWWs



1 EBI for next time.

This creates some perspective in the hard moments, and keeps your learning constructive.

WWW/EBI x team projects

During a challenging project or process, ask everyone to share quick WWW/EBIs along the way.

You could set up a simple space like a Teams or Slack channel.

Then in a team check-in ask, *'What did we learn from this together?'*

WWW/EBI x long haul hard moments

Using WWW/EBI in longer term hard moments can help you feel more in control.

Try creating some categories to structure your reflection using WWW/EBI for people, and for progress.

It can help bring clarity and increase your learning.

24 hour action

Use the 5:I formula to reflect on a recent hard moment. Write down five things that went well, just one Even Better If - and capture the learning.

Skills Sprint Day 4

How to lead your own learning with adaptability

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a Lobster
Squiggly Careers
Skills Sprint

Lobsters don't wait for the perfect conditions to grow; they use what's already available to fuel their growth.

In a squiggly career, we need to do the same. We need to create opportunities for learning so our development isn't dependent on other people or places.

Start with adaptability

Adaptability helps us to lead our own learning even when the conditions aren't perfect (time, investment, or confidence).

Rather than letting your situation stall your development, adaptability means we can always find another way.

Use AI to adapt in advance



Plan for the scenarios that might get in the way of your learning, and decide what you'll do instead. Copy and paste this prompt into an AI tool to explore your learning goal, and the barriers you might face:

Act as a squiggly career coach. My role is: [your role]. I work in: [describe your organisation and context]. My learning goal for the next 3 months is: [what you want to learn]. Identify realistic barriers that might get in the way of this learning. For each barrier, suggest adaptive responses I could use to keep learning anyway. Present the output in a simple table.

Talk together as a team



Adaptability works brilliantly in teams too. Try sharing learning goals with each other, spot what might get in the way and talk about how you could help each other to adapt and stay on track. It makes learning visible and gives people support and accountability.

24 hour action

Use the AI scenario planning prompt then identify the adaptive response you want to focus on first.

Skills Sprint Day 5

How to lead your own learning by sharing it

Learn Like
a Lobster
Squiggly Careers
Skills Sprint

Sharing is a secret source of learning that most people miss out on.

Real learning doesn't just happen in our heads - it happens when we try to explain what we know.

Why does it matter?



When you share what you're learning, it lasts longer.



You notice gaps, make sense of what you know.



And help other people grow at the same time.

Create a Helpful How-To



Pick something you know how to do, at work or outside of it. It could be:

-  a process you've figured out
-  a fun skill you've been practising
-  a shortcut, habit, or tip that's helped you

Then create a Helpful How-To (a short explanation that would help someone else learn fast) and share it with your team so the learning lasts.

Practice with AI



If you're stuck, talk your Helpful How-to through with AI. Explaining your idea helps you clarify what you know, spot gaps, and shape something useful for others. Copy and paste this prompt:

I want to create a Helpful How-To about [topic]. Ask me questions to help clarify my thinking, then help me turn it into a short, practical explanation someone else could use.

24 hour action

Share your Helpful How-to with the Sprint Community on LinkedIn and tag us in the post (@amazingif). We want to learn from you too.

5 formulas for a high impact introduction

A great introduction can be the difference between someone saying *"nice to meet you"* and someone saying *"tell me more"* – it's what turns a moment into a conversation.

Rebecca Okamoto's TED Talk shares five simple formulas for how to introduce yourself with impact in under 20 words. Try spotting the situations where you need to introduce yourself or your work quickly, then choose the formula best suited to that moment.



[Deeper Dive](#)

Five introduction formulas



Benefit introduction

"I help (who) achieve (what)."

Breakthrough introduction

"I help (who) achieve (what) without (common frustration)."

Passion introduction

"I'm passionate about (what) to achieve (what your audience values)."

Strength introduction

"I'm known for (strength) to achieve (outcome)."

Mission introduction

"I'm on a mission to (what you're working towards), to achieve (what your audience values)."

Try our custom GPT

It helps you practice different ways of introducing yourself using the five formulas. Use it to generate ideas, compare options, and turn the introductions into your own words.



Impactful Introductions

By community builder &

I'm here to help you create a clear, confident introduction you can use in real life. I'll ask you five quick questions, one at a time. Then I'll create five short introductions based on Rebecca Okamoto's TED Talk approach.

How to generate new ideas if you feel stuck at work

At work, it's easy to get stuck solving the same problems or run out of fresh ideas.

The Deck of Brilliance is a curated collection of ideation tools designed by Juggi Ramakrishnan to boost creativity and fresh thinking.



[Deeper Dive](#)

3 ways to generate new ideas



Make the bug a feature

Take something you think isn't working and make it the feature - what looks like a flaw could become what differentiates you.

Write down one "bug" about your work or team and mind map 3 ways you could celebrate it instead.

Try switching perspectives

Ask 5 people who aren't close to your work to describe what you do - it helps you avoid getting stuck in an echo chamber

Compare their answers with what you want to be true.

Put your audience to the test

Turn your audience from passive to active participants by letting them shape what happens next.

Ask your team or audience: "How useful is this 1-10?" Then ask: "What would make it 2 points better?"

Coach yourself

How could I turn a current work problem into an opportunity for growth?



3 top voices to follow on LinkedIn

LinkedIn's Top Voices list is a shortcut to fresh perspectives and relevant insights.

Learn from people outside your usual circles, borrow brilliance from different industries, and stay connected to what's changing in the world of work.



LinkedIn top voices

3 top voices to follow on LinkedIn

Make accessibility part of everyday work



Follow: Dr Shani Dhanda disability inclusion and accessibility consultant.

Learn: how to make accessibility accessible. Dr Shani connects data with real experiences, stories and community insight in a way that's clear and practical.

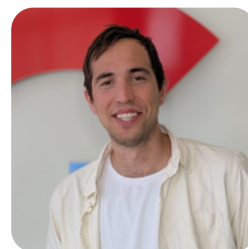
Stay informed on emerging technology



Follow: Zoe Kleinman, Technology Editor at BBC News.

Learn: what new technology is emerging and why it matters. Zoe explains complex tech stories clearly, helping you stay informed without the overwhelm.

Learn from a squiggly career in action



Follow: Cassian Horowitz, Head of Executive Digital Communications, Google.

Learn: how Cassian has transferred his talents across media, politics and tech. Cassian turns where he's worked into posts that join the dots across industries.

Coach yourself

What do I share that would make people want to follow me?



How to Change Behaviour at Work

Changing behaviour is part of improving how we work – but it can be difficult.

The 4T Model of Culture Change (developed by James Elfer, Siri Chilazi and Edward Chang) is a practical way to turn ideas for behaviour change into experiments to test and learn from.

Choose a specific behaviour to **target**; develop a **theory** of change; design a **timely** intervention; and **test** your effect.

To Change Company Culture, Start with One High-Impact Behavior

by James Elfer, Siri Chilazi and Edward Chang
January 19, 2006



Deeper Dive

Try the 4T model to experiment with change

Target:

Choose a specific behaviour to change – either for yourself or together as a team.

This could look like: reducing interruptions in meetings to allow everyone to speak, creating more inclusion.

Theory:

Design an idea. Ideas can come from your team, borrowing brilliance, or thinking about what's currently getting in the way.

This could look like: trying a no-interruption meeting.

Timely:

Introduce the idea as close as possible to the moment so people have the opportunity to act.

This could look like: starting meetings with "We're trying a no-interruption meeting" or adding a diary reminder 5 minutes before the meeting starts.

Test:

Measure if the change worked by creating a simple before-and-after data point.

This could look like: before and after the meeting change, asking: "On a scale of 1–5, how included did you feel?"

Coach yourself

What small behaviour change could I experiment with this week?

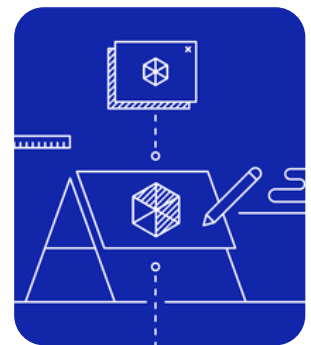


How to use prototyping to build better ideas

Prototyping is a way to develop, test and improve an idea before you commit time, money or effort.

Experiments start with an unknown and help you learn quickly. Prototyping involves a more considered process to build and test an idea, usually together as a team.

Try using Nesta's Prototyping Framework for a practical way to turn ideas into action and learning.



Deeper Dive

Nesta's Prototyping Framework

Do the groundwork:

Be clear on the problem you're trying to solve, who you're solving it for, and any assumptions you might be making.

In a team, ask everyone to write down their thoughts. Then share and notice what's different.

Build the specification:

Move the idea into something people can see and react to. It could be a sketch, mock-up or journey map.

In a team, try giving everyone time to create a quick prototype. Share and discuss the differences.

Test and iterate:

Share the prototype with real people and invite challenge and build.

Your aim is to listen (not to defend your idea).

Notice what works, what confuses people and what people ignore.

Learn and decide:

Prototyping only works if it ends with a decision.

Do you move forward, refine, pause or stop?

In a team, review what you've learned and make a clear decision about what happens next.

Coach yourself

What idea could you prototype before committing to it?



How to use attachment styles to build better relationships

Attachment styles describe how we think, feel and behave in our relationships with other people. Researchers commonly describe four styles: *secure, anxious, dismissive-avoidant and fearful-avoidant*.

Understanding your own style can help you notice how you show up at work and adapt your behaviour when it matters. Spotting the style of people you work with, particularly a manager, can also help you respond in ways that build stronger, more effective working relationships.



Deeper Dive

AI prompt to find your attachment style

"Using John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's work on attachment styles - ask me 5 questions to identify my attachment style at work."

Adapting to different attachment styles

Secure

Comfortable with collaboration. Build trust easily and learn quickly.

But might overlook the need for reassurance.

If this is you: Share your thinking out loud, and ask for help and feedback. It creates space for others to do the same.

If this is your manager: Ask for their perspective. Secure managers are usually open to sharing experience and ideas.

Anxious

Conscientious and responsive. Care about how others think and feel.

But might worry and need more reassurance.

If this is you: In a hard moment, ask yourself: *"On a scale of 1-10, how did that go?"* Then ask someone you trust for their view to create balance.

If this is your manager: Ask what information would be helpful and share updates so they feel informed about progress.

Avoidant dismissive

Independent and self-sufficient. Prefer to work things out alone.

But might avoid collaboration or involving others.

If this is you: Share your first thoughts to involve others. Build a habit of asking: *"Here are my halfway thoughts - what would you do to make this better?"*

If this is your manager: Don't make involvement feel like an energy drain. Agree quick check-ins at key points in a project.

Avoidant fearful

Perceptive and aware of dynamics. Good at reading a room.

But might react strongly to criticism and avoid engaging.

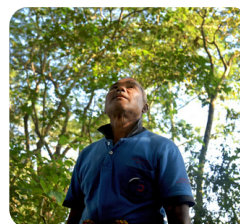
If this is you: Look for the say / do moments - notice when people do what they say they will to build trust over time.

If this is your manager: Be open about what's not working. Ask: *"I've been reflecting on some Even Better Ifs. What have I missed?"*

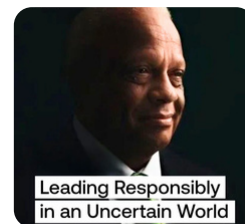
How to stop cynicism getting in the way of your career

Cynicism often starts with a real experience but can become a mindset that limits what you do next.

Replacing cynicism with small actions, curiosity, generosity, and grounding gives you more control and a more useful perspective on your career.



Quick Read



Deeper Dive

Try some cynicism swaps

Create space for small actions

When problems feel big, it's easy to feel powerless.

Small actions build momentum and replace cynicism with a sense of control.

Try: spending 5 minutes a day on learning something new.

It adds up to 100 minutes a month (and 2 days a year) of learning that you didn't do before.

Learn from different views

Cynicism grows if we only spend time with people who see things the same way as us.

Try: working with someone who thinks differently to you (e.g. if you value freedom, they might value efficiency).

Use that difference to ask: *"How is their approach useful? How could we be better together?"*

Give without keeping score

Cynicism can make you think you need to keep things to yourself to get ahead.

But sharing what you have helps everyone do better.

Try: doing a 5-minute favour every Friday.

Share something useful, make an introduction, or offer your time - without expecting anything back.

Build a daily grounding habit

Cynicism can grow when things feel out of your control.

Grounding can help you to reset your perspective.

Try: doing one small thing every day that grounds you.

It could be walking, listening to music, growing something or taking a moment of quiet.

Coach yourself

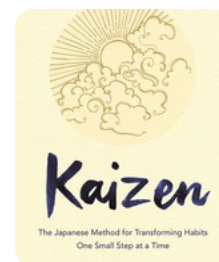
Where is cynicism showing up for me at the moment?



How to Kaizen your Squiggly Career

Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy meaning good change or improvement. It's about making small, consistent changes that build momentum over time.

In a squiggly career, Kaizen techniques can help you focus on making small, incremental changes to keep learning and growing at work.



Deeper Dive

Kaizen techniques to try for your growth

GEMBA

Observation is stronger than speculation.

Before making a career change or following a new opportunity, get closer to the real situation.

This could look like job shadowing, volunteering, joining a new project, or talking to people doing the work.

MUDA

Notice where your time and energy are being wasted.

It might be waiting, being busy without making progress, or not using your strengths as much as you could be.

Try picking one area this week, then decide what you could stop, start or change.

HANSEI

Structured reflection helps you decide what to improve.

Try building a regular reflection rhythm into your week, and use the time to ask yourself:

"What have I learned this week?", "What's worked well?" and "What would be even better if?"

PDCA

A practical way to turn reflection into action.

Plan a small change, do it, check (reflect on) what happened, and act on what you've learned.

If something works well, standardise it so you keep doing what's working and then improve what isn't.

Coach yourself

What's one small change I could make this week to improve how I work?



How to read with a learning mindset

Reading can be a great source of learning, but it's easy for ideas to stay on the page.

Borrowing brilliance from Ryan Holiday, reading intentionally is about being more deliberate in how you engage with what you read so that ideas are easier to remember and apply.



Deeper Dive

Five ways to read more intentionally

Build an anti-library

Choosing books you wouldn't normally pick can expand your thinking & introduce new perspectives.

Try reading something where your first instinct is to dismiss it as "not for me".

Use a pen or Post-its

Marking pages with Post-it notes and annotations turns reading into a more active and creative process.

Try noting "what does this mean for me?" or capturing questions and ideas as you go.

Re-read books

Re-reading can help you notice ideas you didn't see before as your perspective changes over time.

Try revisiting a book you've read before and notice if anything new stands out now.

Make books your own

Treating books as something to use (not keep perfect), can help you connect more with what you're reading.

Try writing in the margins, folding pages or letting your books show signs of use.

Share your reading

Sharing what you read can help ideas stick, spark new ones and support other people's learning too.

Try creating a short reading list. Share it with your team and ask what they would add.

Coach yourself

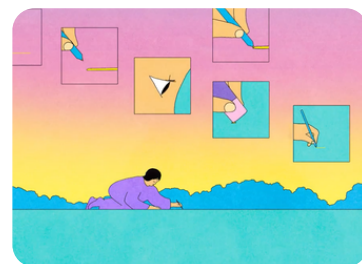
What one new way to read more intentionally I could try this week?



How to use mastery to grow in a Squiggly Career

Big Think define mastery as the *"timeless quest to go beyond competence and achieve excellence"*. It's intentional and a choice.

In a squiggly career, mastery can help you go from good to great in how you show up in your work and how you improve over time.



Deeper Dive

Mastering your response to tricky situations

There are moments at work where you respond in ways you'd like to change. Maybe you have a *"I'll just do it myself"* default or send quick Teams messages if frustrated.

Try moving your response from a default to a deliberate decision, using the space between the situation and what you do next to pause and reflect.

What is a default response I'd like to change?



What could I do differently next time?



Mastering your ability to succeed

Success often involves risk. Things might not go to plan, and it's easy to see it as failure. But failure can give you great data for your development.

Try choosing one stretch goal that you want to achieve over the next 6 months. Identify the risks, then think about what you could learn if it doesn't go to plan.

What is something I want to succeed in in the next 6 months?



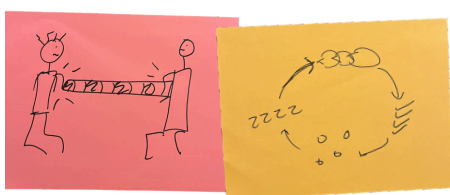
What might failure look like, and how could I reframe it?



How to draw your way to a better work day

Drawing activates your brain in a unique way, combining both logic and creativity. It can boost your mood and help you remember more. In a squiggly career, it's a fun way to help you think differently, build team connection, and learn in new ways.

Four drawings exercises to try



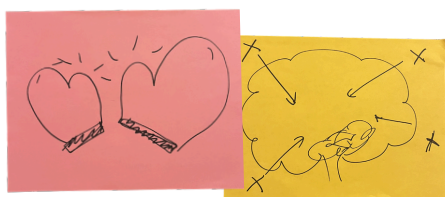
How you're feeling about work this week

It helps you spot what's going on, so you can visualise and describe it more clearly. Try using it as a quick weekly check-in to notice any changes. Or in a team, share your drawings so people can help support each other.



A strength you want to make stronger this year

It can help you to focus and find ways to make your strengths stand out. Try using your drawing as a prompt to think about where you want to develop. Or in a team, share your strengths to see who could help you make it happen.



A confidence gremlin getting in the way of what you want to achieve

Making your gremlin visible makes it easier to understand and cage. In a team, create a gremlin gallery (or share on camera if virtual) and explain what each gremlin means to build connection and understanding.



Describe your dream workday and ask someone else to draw it for you.

Share your drawings to learn more about each other's values, what matters most, and what drives people. Talk about what you could do differently to get closer to the dream

How to gamify your working week

Gamification is a fun way to motivate yourself differently, turning your progress into something visible, rewarding and enjoyable.

It's about using game-like elements (points, challenges, rewards) in non-game contexts to boost your engagement and help you take action. Try our squiggly games to gamify some of your work this week, or make up your own (and share them with us!)

Our squiggly game rules

Play on your own or play together – if you play together, ask the the winner to share what worked so you can learn from them too.

Play for 2 weeks: week 1 – play the game as is, week 2 – try and beat your score.

Play one game at once.

Choose a squiggly game to try at work

Score your to-do list

Aim for 20 points a week to unlock a reward of your choice.

+1 for each to do list item you tick off

x2: every tick before 10am

Score

Power up your energy

Aim for 10 energy points a week

+1: take a proper lunch break

+2: go outside for a walk

+3: put your devices away for 30 mins

Score

Boost your connections

Aim for 10 connection points a week.

+1: message someone you haven't spoken to in a while

+3: introduce two people

+5: have a curious career conversation

Score

Level up your learning

Aim for a 5 day learning streak

+1: ask a who/why question in a meeting

+1: read/listen to something new for 5 minutes

+1: write one thing you learned each day

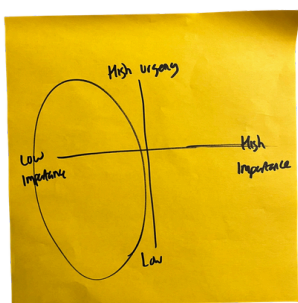
Score

How to use 3 frameworks for your time, strengths and team

Frameworks can help you zoom out and see the bigger picture. In a squiggly career, they can help you take control of your time and priorities, stretch your strengths, and make it easier to start meaningful conversations.

Three frameworks to try

Try the Eisenhower Matrix to take control of your time



Map your work from the past week into urgent vs. important, and add the direction of work – has it come to you or are you creating urgency for yourself?

Zoom out to see where your time is really going, and where you might be stuck in low-impact busyness. Use it to refocus on what matters most, and for priority conversations with your manager.

Try an AI prompt to deepen your thinking

Act as a squiggly careers coach, help me prioritise my work and development using the Eisenhower matrix (urgent versus important). Start by asking me 4-5 questions to understand how I currently spend my time and what matters most in my career.

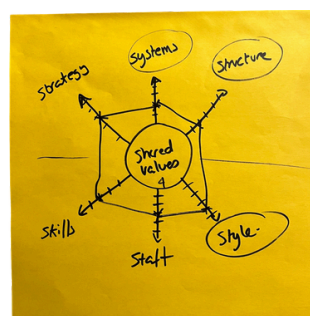
Use the Ansoff Matrix to stretch your strengths



Map your existing strengths (and new ones you want to build) across existing and new contexts.

For each quadrant, try to add a way to use your strengths differently or develop new ones. Use it as a simple plan to keep your development moving forward.

Use the McKinsey 7S Framework to spot team strengths and gaps



Plot the 7 areas (strategy, structure, systems, skills, staff, style, and shared values). Score yourselves as a team on each 'S', then turn into a spider diagram to see your team profile.

Compare perspectives and use the gaps to agree on what to improve together.

What to do if your work feels pointless

Lots of us will experience work at some point in our career that feels unnecessary, difficult to justify or disconnected from real impact. It can feel frustrating and draining.

If you're stuck in this situation right now, and leaving isn't an option, there are still ways to create learning, build relationships and regain energy, usefulness and control.



Quick read

Deeper dive

Five ideas for action if you're in this situation

Frame the job as an experience, rather than your identity

Seeing your role as one experience in your career (and what it's teaching you), rather than a reflection of who you are, can help you stay curious, learn faster and avoid getting stuck in self-doubt.

Do a sideways scan - find useful work from someone or somewhere else

Offering your capacity, or experience to different teams, leaders or projects can help you find more meaningful work, build relationships and stretch your strengths into new contexts.

Get out of the office as much as you can

Try going to events, have curious career conversations, join new communities, or do some mentoring or volunteering. It can give you fresh perspectives, new ideas and remind you that your situation isn't permanent.

Pitch a new position or opportunity for the business

Try creating a proposal for a new opportunity and put yourself in the position to do the job. Use examples from other organisations as inspiration and evidence to show what's possible.

Use the time to learn new skills

If you have capacity, try learning useful skills that support future opportunities. This could look like starting a side-project, doing a skills sprint, or becoming the person who shares new ideas and learning with the team.

Coach yourself

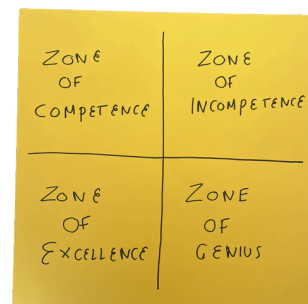
What's one thing I could do this week to feel more useful at work?



How to spend more time in your zone of genius

Gay Hendricks' Zone of Genius is about identifying the work you're uniquely good at, which gives you energy and creates the most value.

Grab some paper (or some Post-it notes) to reflect on where you're currently spending most of your time at work, and how to get closer to your zone of genius.



Write down any work you do in each of the zones

The zone of competence

Work you can do and enjoy, but recognise that there are people who can do it better than you.

The zone of incompetence

Work you spend time on that you know you're not very good at, and you don't enjoy.

The zone of excellence

Work you're good at, that people come to you for (but not necessarily what you want to be known for).

The zone of genius

Work that's uniquely you. You're great at it, you enjoy it, it adds value, and it's what you want to be known for.

Look back at your diary and to do list

For each meeting, conversation, project or task from the past month, decide which zone it belongs in for you and add a tick.

Turn into data for your development

Count all the ticks and analyse what percentage of time you're spending in each of your four zones (or take a photo and ask AI to do it for you).

Where are you spending most of your time?



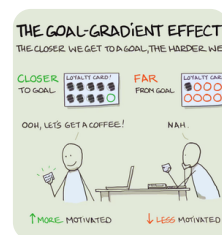
What could you do to move closer to your zone of genius?



How to use Finish Line Fridays to make progress on your goals

The closer you are to completing your goal, the more motivated you are to get to the end (the goal gradient effect).

Finish Line Fridays borrows brilliance from this idea to help you build momentum and make progress towards your goals by creating smaller, weekly finish lines.



[Quick read](#)



[Deeper Dive](#)

How to create your own Finish Line Fridays

Pick one goal that you want to make progress on

What would meaningful progress on your goal look like in a month? It could look like a decision, progress on a project, or learning something new.

Break your goal down into four smaller actions to complete by each Friday

Start by writing down something you've already done towards your goal, so you begin with motivation, rather than a blank page. Keeping your actions visible in one place can help the finish line feel closer and motivate you to keep going.

Decide when the work will happen

Add your weekly finish line actions into your diary. A small, protected block of time can help stop work on your goals being deprioritised by emails, meetings or admin.

When you finish each action, tick it off and choose the next one at the same time so momentum keeps moving from one week to the next.

Try sharing a finish line together as a team

Lots of goals at work are shared, and making progress with other people can help you stay motivated and keep momentum going. Try choosing one shared goal with your team and agree what progress should look like by each finish line Friday.

AI prompt to try

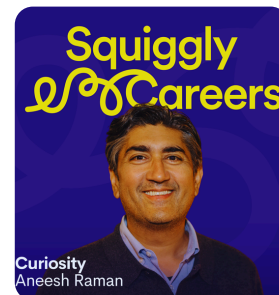
Loyalty cards feel motivating because every new stamp makes the finish line feel closer. Try asking AI to create something similar for actions towards your goal.

Inspired by loyalty cards, create a simple, visual finish line focus scorecard for me based on the goal gradient effect, where visible progress towards a finish line increases motivation. My goal is [GOAL] to complete over four Fridays. Include four weekly finish lines, space to add actions, and a visual way to track progress and tick off completed actions. Keep it easy to update each week.

Skills that matter most in the age of AI: curiosity

"Every answer should lead you to another question." Anesh Raman

In a time when AI is reshaping how we work, curiosity is one of our greatest advantages and one of the most important skills we can develop. It helps you stay adaptable, keep learning, embrace new tools and skills, and think differently about the work you do.



Deeper Dive

How to build your curiosity

Find a curiosity thread and pull on it.

Try picking one assumption you want to challenge about yourself, your role or a project you're working on and ask yourself:

*Why do I/we do it that way?
What could I/we do differently?*

Notice which question sparks your curiosity - then keep pulling on that thread by exploring it further, asking more questions, trying a new experiment, or talking about it in a team.

Use AI as a starting point to help you decide what to explore

Don't use AI to replace your curiosity - but use it to spark new ideas, questions, and directions to explore.

Try this AI prompt:
"I want to build the muscle of curiosity. I am (more about you), I'm excited about X and afraid about X. Can you give me 5 things to get started with?"

Not every idea will be useful, but one or two might spark a curiosity thread you want to pull on.

Create more curiosity in a team

At your next team or project catch-up, try creating space for people to explore ideas and be curious together. This could look like asking:

*"What haven't we questioned yet?"
"What might we be missing?"
"Is there another way to think about this?"*

Skills that matter most in the age of AI: courage

"Courage is a willingness to act despite the possibilities of failure." - Aneesh Raman

As work and careers become more uncertain and less predictable, courage becomes more important.

It helps us step into the unknown, try new things, and act on our curiosity, even when there's a possibility of failure.



Deeper Dive

Try starting with microcourage

Courage doesn't have to be one giant leap. It can start with small moments of micro courage.

It could look like: challenging something in a meeting when you'd normally stay quiet, or asking someone for a conversation or coffee you've been holding back from.

Over time, those small moments of micro courage compound. One question can change a conversation. One new conversation can lead to a new relationship, mentor, or opportunity.

What's one small act of courage I could take tomorrow?



Building courage in a team

Creating space for failure helps create space for courage too. When failure becomes something people can openly talk about, it creates more shared learning, support, and courage to try new things.

Try "*mistake moments*" in your team. Create a channel or space where, if a mistake happens, people share what happened, why it happened, and what they learned from it.

Skills that matter most in the age of AI: creativity

"Creativity is the imagination of what's never been." - Aneesh Raman

In a world where AI can generate generic content at scale, human creativity is becoming even more valuable.

Creativity doesn't just mean art. It can also be a new idea, process, project, or business. And it's a skill we can all develop.



Deeper Dive

Try creating a video to build your creativity

Creating a video is a good way to do something a bit more challenging to build your creativity.

Start by: spotting a project for yourself or your team where a short video could help explain what you're doing, manage a moment of change, share external content, or tell a story you believe in.

Then: explore what tools could help you get started and help you approach creating the video.

Even thinking about a two-minute video pushes you to become more creative. The tools can give you a starting point, but the human part is connecting dots, thinking differently, and understanding what people will connect with.

If a video feels like too big a step, try doing the same with a presentation instead

Building creativity in a team

Understanding what helps different people think creatively can help teams work better together - and create more space for collaboration and new ideas.

Together as a team, try asking: *"When are you at your creative best, and what contributes to it?"*

For some people it might be rest or quiet thinking time. For others it might be collaboration, discussion, or connection with other people.

Skills that matter most in the age of AI: compassion

"The human part of work is going to be the core of work." - Aneesh Raman

As work changes, compassion is an important skill for understanding ourselves and supporting other people.

It's recognising that everyone carries their own strengths, experiences, and challenges - including ourselves.



Deeper Dive

Ideas to build compassion

Recognise your strengths

It can be easy to focus on what we're missing or what we need to improve.

But focusing on your strengths instead can help quieten your confidence gremlins and build more compassion for yourself.

Try writing down what you like about yourself and your strengths (things that give you energy and what you want to be known for) - without using job titles or qualifications.

Then come back to it when you need it most.

Have a conversation beyond work

Try taking a walk or having a conversation with someone at work where the goal isn't to talk about tasks or projects, but to understand each other more.

Try asking: *"How are you feeling at the moment?"* or *"What are you excited about right now?"*

The key is to listen. It can help you to better understand the experiences, strengths, and challenges other people are carrying and build more compassion and connection at work.

Try the 'what's in a name' exercise

Ask people to share the story behind their name. It could be where it came from, who chose it, what it means, or even whether it's the name they use outside of work.

Simple conversations like this can help teams better understand each other's backgrounds, experiences, and identities.

Skills that matter most in the age of AI: communication

In a world where AI can make generic communication easy, human communication becomes even more important.

Communication isn't just sharing information. It's also how we tell stories, create clarity, connect the dots, and help people move from anxiety to understanding. And it's a skill we can all build.



Deeper Dive

Try building your communication skills

Speak more human

Try replacing corporate speak and jargon at work with simpler, more human language.

Ask yourself: *"What would this sound like in a normal conversation?"* or *"How could I explain this to someone outside my industry?"*

Simple words don't mean you're a simplistic communicator. Some of the best communicators use the simplest language because it helps people understand and connect more quickly.

What's one moment next week where speaking more simply could help me communicate better?



Use stories or analogies

Try adding a story or analogy into your next presentation, meeting, or update.

They can help turn complex ideas into something people understand, remember, and connect with more easily.

It could look like turning something small from everyday life into a story, or using an analogy that helps people picture and understand the idea more clearly. (*"This is like X"*).

Where could I next use a story or analogy to explain something more clearly?



Six opinions from Emma Grede to reflect on for your career

Emma Grede has built hugely successful businesses, but what makes her advice interesting is that it can often feel uncomfortable.

We've picked six of her statements that challenge some common assumptions about success and careers, and turned each one into an idea to try this week. Some will resonate immediately. Others might make you disagree. If they do, try to think about what your alternative could be instead.



Deeper dive

Ideas for action

"Expect guilt"

Guilt is often seen as a negative emotion, but Emma suggests it can be a useful signal. It can highlight where something feels out of balance, out of integrity or needs attention.

Try: Noticing something that's been playing on your mind recently. What is it trying to tell you, and what action could help you move forward?

"You can do all things - you just can't do them all at the same time."

Most of us have more to do than time to do it. Progress often comes from making conscious trade-offs, rather than trying to do everything at once.

Try: Creating a 'now' and a 'not for now' list. Decide what matters most to work on this week and what can wait (but put it on your not-for-now list so you don't lose it).

"An extraordinary career is always the result of extraordinary effort."

The careers we admire are rarely built just on talent. Behind most successes is a consistent investment of effort, learning and creating opportunities.

Try: One new thing that creates opportunity for your future career, not just your current role. It could be learning a new skill, starting a project or building a new connection.

"We push off conversations that we really need to have."

It's easy to put off saying something that feels hard. But the longer you leave it, the more likely it is to take up headspace and hold back progress.

Try: Thinking about a conversation you've been meaning to have. Then use our [**Say the Hard Thing tool**](#) to practise how you'd approach it before the conversation happens.

"It's not about networking. It's about building a network."

Just going to a networking event isn't enough to build your network. Valuable networks are built through relationships, trust and helping others over time.

Try: Reaching out to one person you'd like to know better. Share an idea or offer help.

"You can't build anything of value by yourself."

Getting started on your own can create momentum, but most ideas become ever better when other people give their experience, challenge your thinking and help you improve.

Try: Sharing a piece of work with someone and ask: "What could make this even better?"

How to design a tiny experiment

An experimental mindset starts with curiosity rather than certainty. It helps you learn through action and collect evidence about what works for you.

Anne-Laure Le Cunff's tiny experiments are a simple way to put this mindset into practice: "I will [action] for [duration]".

If you're exploring a career change, learning a new skill or building confidence, tiny experiments can help you discover what to do next.



Deeper Dive

Use PACT to help design your tiny experiment

Purposeful - Choose something you're genuinely curious about and that feels meaningful to you.

Actionable - Start with the time, money, network and resources you already have. Keep your experiment and duration small and achievable so you can get started straight away.

Continuous - Choose something you can do more than once, rather than a one-off activity.

Trackable - Keep it simple with a tick, yes/no or habit tracker. Focus on completing the experiment before analysing the results.

My tiny experiment

"I will [action] for [duration]". This could sound like, "I'll share one idea in every team meeting for one month" or "I'll walk for ten minutes before work for ten days."



Reflect on what you've learned

Once you've finished running your experiment, try using Plus / Minus / Next to review what you learned

Plus (+)	Minus (-)	Next
What worked well?	What didn't work so well?	What will you continue, change or try next time?

Zero Distance: getting closer to yourself, your team and customers

Zero Distance is the idea of getting closer to the people you want to understand and support, so you can learn and respond to what matters most.

In a Squiggly Career, it can help you strengthen your self-awareness, build better team relationships and stay connected to the people you want to be useful for.

Track your distance, then try close the gap

Grab a pen, paper or Post-Its and draw a maximum to zero-distance scale for each area that matters to you. Mark where you are right now, then use the ideas to try close the gap.

Zero distance from yourself

Using and stretching your strengths

Maximum distance: Doing work that comes your way and waiting for others to tell you what you're good at.

Zero distance: You spot what gives you energy, connect it to your strengths, and look for ways to stretch them.

Close the gap: Track one energising task each day this week and identify the strength behind it.

Learning from feedback

Maximum distance: You never ask for feedback, or only when something goes wrong.

Zero distance: Building regular opportunities for feedback into the way you work and learn.

Close the gap: Try asking "*What worked well, and what would be even better if?*" to make feedback part of how you learn.

Zero distance from other people

Knowing what matters to your team

Maximum distance: Only understanding colleagues' priorities when problems arise.

Zero distance: Knowing the priorities, pressures and motivations of the people you work with.

Close the gap: Try asking - "*What's most important to you right now?*" "*What's on your worry list?*"

Learning from the people you help

Maximum distance: Making assumptions about what people need.

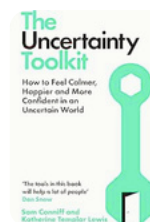
Zero distance: Learning directly from the people you want to be useful for and using their insights to inform your decisions.

Close the gap: Ask one person you want to be useful for: "*What's one thing that would make the biggest difference to you?*"

How to get better at holding uncertainty at work

Uncertainty is something we all experience in our careers. You can't always turn it into certainty, but you can get better at holding it.

The more comfortable you become with holding uncertainty, the easier it is to stay curious, take action and keep moving forward.



Deeper Dive

Calculate your uncertainty tolerance score

Copy and paste our prompt into AI: *"I want to try the IUS-12 intolerance of uncertainty tool. Ask me the 12 questions one at a time (1=not at all like me, 5=entirely like me), total my score and explain what it means in simple language."*

Reflect on your default response to uncertainty

We all have a default response to uncertainty. Understanding yours can help you identify what's working for you and what might be getting in your way.

Think about a recent uncertain situation at work.

What was your first reaction? Did it help you move forward or hold you back?

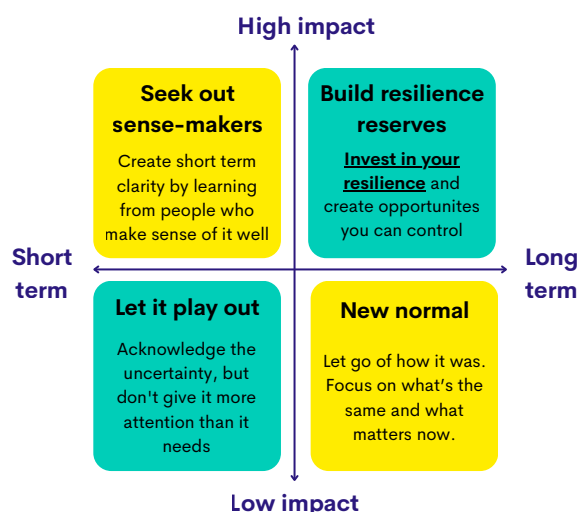


Choose an action for your uncertainty

Not all uncertainty needs the same response.

Think about a current uncertainty you're experiencing. Is it high or low impact? Short or long term?

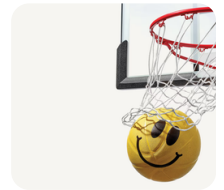
Then use the matrix to choose a response that best fits your situation.



How to become a super team

Super teams manage their time, energy and attention effectively. They actively make each other better and consistently build new skills and improve together.

Borrowing brilliance from Ron Friedman's research, these seven ideas will help you explore your team's super team status. Use the questions to spark discussion and the actions to try new ways of working together.



Deeper dive

Questions and actions to build your super team

1. Run more experiments

Super teams ask questions, try new things and innovate even when things are going well.

Ask: "What's one thing we're already good at as a team?"

Try: Choose one strength and design one small team experiment to make it even better.

2. Make curiosity contagious

Super teams know what they don't know and are intentional about learning together.

Ask: "What don't we know enough about that feels important?"

Try: Bring the outside in. Ask someone in a different industry: "What are the biggest challenges, priorities and insights in your world right now?"

3. Ask the uncomfortable questions

Super teams spend time uncovering what's getting in the way of progress.

Ask: "Our biggest priority is X. What's getting in the way of making progress?"

Try: Create a Blockers and Unlockers list. Pick one blocker, identify possible unlockers and agree one action to try together.

4. Roll up your sleeves

Super teams pitch in and use their strengths where they make the biggest difference.

Ask: "What are two strengths you have that could help the whole team?"

Try: Run a hive mind session. One person shares a challenge and everyone brings their two strengths to help solve it.

5. Make feedback feel like support

Feedback fuels learning, and super teams are good at giving and receiving feedback.

Ask: "Where are the moments where we could add feedback into the way we already work?"

Try: Pick something you're working on as a team. Ask everyone to share one "say the hard thing" statement about what's getting in the way of progress.

6. Encourage growth even when it doesn't benefit you

Super teams support learning, even when it doesn't directly benefit the team.

Ask: "What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work?"

Try: Team Pecha Kucha Passions sessions. Share something you love outside work and what you've learned from it.

7. Lead with meaning, not just metrics

Super teams have a clear sense of purpose and know what that team is there to achieve.

Ask: What metrics are getting in the way or distracting us from making progress?

Try: Why this? Why us? Why now? If you can answer these clearly, you have a metric with meaning.

Oracy: how to improve your speaking and listening skills

Oracy is the skill of speaking and listening well.

Instead of just presenting information, an oracy-first approach helps people learn through talking, listening and sharing. These conversations help people spot gaps in their thinking, connect ideas and build better conclusions together.



Quick read



Deeper dive

Three moments to try an oracy-first approach

1:1s with your manager

Usual approach

Talk through tasks, priorities and updates.

Oracy-first approach

Bring one question from your to-think list instead of your to-do list.

Use the conversation to learn from each other's thinking and build better ideas together.

Team meetings

Usual approach

Share team priorities and updates.

Oracy-first approach

Pick one piece of work and do a live Challenge and Build together.

Discuss the work in small groups and ask:
"What stands out as being most useful?"
"What's one thing you'd change?"

Team away days

Usual approach

Leader shares the team's goals and priorities.

Oracy-first approach

Start with people talking to each other about a goal they've achieved before sharing the team's goals.

Try asking: *"What's a goal you've achieved at work or at home? What helped you achieve it?"*

Coach yourself

Where could you next swap presenting information for a conversation?



How to solve tame, critical and wicked work problems

Not every problem needs the same approach to solve it. If you treat every problem in the same way, you can waste time, energy and effort.

Keith Grint describes three types of work problems: tame, critical and wicked. Knowing which type you're facing can help you choose the most effective way to respond and make progress.



Deeper dive

Three types of problems

Tame problems

Easy to spot and relatively easy to solve. They have a clear solution that can usually be reached by following an existing process.

Solve: with the right process.

Assign to the person best placed to solve it, set a clear deadline, use existing checklists or processes to speed things up, and don't let tame problems build up.

Critical problems

Problems that need solving now. They are urgent and high-stakes, and need fast, decisive action (often under pressure).

Solve: with the right response.

Stop or deprioritise everything that doesn't focus on the fix, manage the noise with regular updates, and be clear about who needs to do what by when.

Wicked problems

Complex, ambiguous and interconnected. Attempts to solve them can uncover new problems.

Solve: with the right mindset by reframing from solving to progressing the problem.

Learn by listening to different perspectives, then ask: "What if?" to explore options, "What would X do?" to see things in a new way, and "What now?" to decide what action to take for now.

Team idea to try

Ask your team to write down your team's tame, critical and wicked problems. Group similar ideas together, then and ask:

"What does this tell us about our overall problem-solving context? Which types of problems do we spend most of our time solving?"

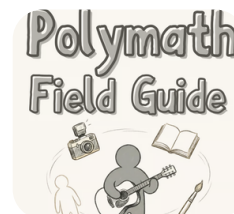
How to map your M-shaped career

M-shaped careers help you build multiple areas of mastery and the skills to connect them.

They can help increase your resilience, make you harder to replace or replicate, and help you spot and communicate what makes you unique.



Watch



Read

Your M-shaped career



Map your M to reflect on what makes you uniquely useful and where you want to invest your learning.

What makes you uniquely useful?



Where could you invest your learning next?



1. Your stability pillar

Start by choosing one area of mastery – something you're already good at, enjoy and want to keep developing.

Try asking yourself: *"What feels like an 8/10 already? What do people consistently come to me for?"*

2. Your growth leg

Pick a growth area that energises, motivates you, and where you want to invest your learning in over time.

Try asking yourself: *"What do I want to become better at? What would I love to be known for in the future?"*

3:1. Connect the dot skills

Spot skills that help you to create value, whatever you're working on.

Try asking yourself: *"What skills do I use across lots of different situations? What would still be useful if my role changed?"*

3:2. Your curiosity playground

Interests, ideas and experiments you want to explore, without the pressure of becoming an expert.

This could look like: Your weekend projects, hobbies, and the things you're already curious about.

How to build a career that lasts

London Business School Professor Lynda Gratton uses the metaphor of weaving to help visualise what it takes to build a career that lasts.

Every choice you make strengthens a different thread to help create a career that's resilient, fulfilling and uniquely your own.



[Listen](#)

THE 100-YEAR LIFE

Living and Working in an Age of Longevity



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Three threads to try strengthen

Mastery thread

Mastery is about building the things you're good at, love doing and create value.

Strengthening your mastery thread also means looking for adjacencies – opportunities to use your strengths in new directions.

Try: Spotting one skill or strength that people consistently come to you for. Then ask yourself: *"Where else could this skill create value?"*

Adventure thread

Adventure opens up new career possibilities by encouraging you to explore and experiment with new things.

It doesn't have to be big – it can also involve trying small experiments and staying open to what happens next.

Try: Saying yes to one new thing. It could be a new project, attending an event, or testing a new idea before committing to something bigger.

Amplification thread

AI can amplify your impact, but your own human experiences and stories are what make you unique.

Keep experimenting with AI, while building the skills and experiences that AI can't replace.

This could look like: Using AI to support one task this week, then adding something only you could contribute, like your own opinion or real-life example.

Coach yourself

What is one small action you could take to strengthen one of your threads?



How to spend your time more intentionally

When lots of things compete for your time, it can feel like there's never enough of it.

Borrowing brilliance from Laura Vanderkam, thinking in 168-hour weeks can help you see where your time really goes and help you to make more intentional choices about how you spend it.



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Three ideas for action to try this week

Track your time

How you feel about your time isn't always the same as how you're actually spending it.

Tracking your time can give you useful data to make better choices about where you want your time to go.

Try: Tracking your time for one week. Check in 3–4 times a day and make a quick note of what you've been doing. Then ask: *"What would I like to spend more, or less time on?"*

Think about future you

It can be tempting to say yes to something months away because you imagine you'll have more time in the future.

But future-you is likely to have just as much competing for their time as you do today.

Try: Before saying yes to a future commitment, ask: *"Would I do this tomorrow?"* If the answer is no, think again about whether you want to make time for it.

Plan the week ahead

Looking at your week as a whole can help you make more intentional choices about how you spend your time.

Planning ahead can also help you feel less rushed when busy moments arrive.

This could look like: Each Friday, ask: *"What would make next week great professionally and personally?"* Pick a couple of things and think about where they could go in your diary.

Coach yourself

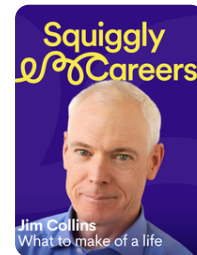
What's one change I could make to spend my time more intentionally?



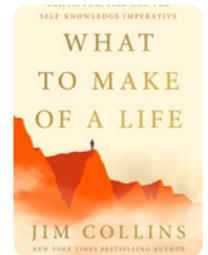
How to find your way through career fog

Jim Collins studied remarkable lives to understand how people navigate uncertainty, change and transition.

His research shows that career fog is something everyone experiences. But discovering and using your encodings (the capacities within you) can help you make choices about where to focus your time and energy.



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How to spot and use your encodings

Discover your encodings

Encodings are the things you're naturally drawn to, instead of the things you've learned to be good at.

Looking back across your life can help you spot patterns and clues about what you might be naturally encoded for.

Try: reflecting on what you naturally gravitate towards, or what you instinctively say yes to. Ask others what they've noticed in you too.

Turn your encodings into super strengths

When you combine an encoding with learning and development, you have the opportunity to turn it into a super strength.

It can help you have more impact and build a career that feels more aligned with who you are.

Choose one of your encodings: then find one new way to develop it through learning, practice or new experiences.

Use your encodings to give

Your encodings aren't only something you can develop for yourself. You can also use them to give to others.

Shifting your focus from what you can get to what you can give can help you use your encodings in ways that support other people and add more meaning to your work and life.

Try asking yourself:
"How could I use one of my encodings to help or support someone else?"

Coach yourself

Where could you use one of your encodings more?



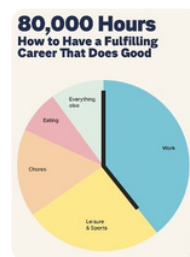
How to make a bigger impact with your 80,000 working hours

When we think about doing work that makes a difference, we often focus on finding the right job title, following our passion or discovering our purpose.

Benjamin Todd's research suggests starting somewhere different: with the problems you want to help solve, and how you could use your talents and energy to contribute.



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3 ways to do more good with your 80,000 hours

Start with problems, not passions

Following your passion can narrow your options.

Starting with problems instead can help you see where your skills could make a difference.

Try: writing down three problems you care about helping to solve. They could be problems in your organisation, industry or the wider world.

Then ask yourself: *"Which of these feels most important for me to contribute to, and why?"*

Connect your career capital to a problem

Your career capital is the skills, knowledge and connections you build over time.

Connecting what you're good at with a problem that matters can help you find ways to make a bigger difference.

Try: listing the strengths, experiences and relationships you already have that could be useful. Then identify one way you could use them to contribute to a problem you want to solve.

Find your own way to contribute

Making a difference doesn't have to mean changing your job.

You could mentor, share useful ideas, donate money, or use your skills to support others.

Try: choosing one problem and ask yourself: *"What could helping look like for me?"*

Think of three possibilities: from using your skills or time in a small way to exploring where it could take your career in the future

Coach yourself

What problem could I use my talents to help solve?



How to use the next 88 days at work wisely

September can bring a 'new pencil case' feeling to work – a chance to reset, refocus and think about how you want to use the rest of the year.

With 88 working days left until the end of the year, these eight questions will help you reflect on your priorities, time, people and skills and decide what you want to focus on next.

Pick and prioritise those that feel most useful to you

Priorities

What's your number one priority at work between now and the end of the year?



Try: Check your diary. Is your priority reflected in how you spend your time?

Who are the 3 most important people who will influence/support you in achieving it?



Try: Choose one person and agree one thing that could help you work better together.

Time

What are you going to start or continue saying no to?



Try: Identify one 'no' that will give you more time or energy for what matters most.

What boundary do you want to protect so you can be at your best?



Try: Experiment with protecting one boundary for a week and notice what difference it makes.

People

What five-minute favours are you going to do more of?



Try: Do one five-minute favour each week that supports someone else's priority.

Who do you want to borrow brilliance from and how could you make that happen?



Try: Set up one curious career conversation with someone you could learn from.

Skills

What's one skill you want to get 10% better at?



Try: Look at how you're using this skill now. What could you do differently to get 10% better?

What do you want the role of AI to be in your work over the next 88 working days?

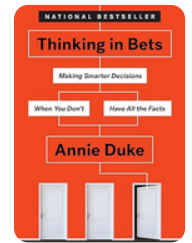


Try: Pick one way to experiment with AI as a thought partner rather than outsourcing your thinking.

No regret skills: how to make better decisions

Decision-making can help you choose where to focus, feel more confident about the choices you make, and adapt when things change.

Borrowing brilliance from poker player Annie Duke, learning how poker players make decisions can help you improve your own decision-making at work.



Deeper Dive

Four ways to make better decisions

Score your confidence

Putting a confidence score against a decision can help you get clearer on how certain you feel and what you might need to know or do next.

Try: Pick a decision and score your confidence from 0–100%. Then ask: *What would increase my confidence by 10%?*

Find your truth group

Other people can help you challenge your assumptions and spot things in your thinking that you might have missed.

Try: Share a decision with 2–3 critical friends. Explain what you're thinking about it and ask: *"What am I not seeing?"*

Create a decision menu

Not every decision deserves the same amount of thinking. Separating your decisions can help you spend more time on the ones that matter most.

Try: Sort the decisions you're making into routine, considered or strategic.

Compare how much time each one deserves with how much time you're spending on it.

Try some time travel

Imagining a decision has worked out well can help you work backwards and identify what you need to do now.

Try: Pick a decision and imagine yourself in the future, feeling confident it was the right one.

Then work backwards and write down what you would need to do now to get there.

Coach yourself

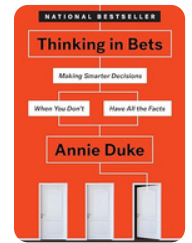
What could I try to help me make my next decision?



No regret skills: How to get better at adaptability

Adaptability is the skill of changing how you think or act when things change. It helps you keep making progress when plans change, pressure increases or you don't have all the answers.

Research by Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon identifies eight dimensions that show what adaptability can look like in practice.



Deeper Dive

Eight dimensions of adaptability

Crisis / Emergencies - Quick, decisive action under sudden pressure

Work Stress - Staying composed and effective under pressure

Creative Problem-Solving - Generating new solutions to new problems

Dealing with Uncertainty - Functioning well without complete information

Learning New Tasks / Tech - Quickly mastering new content or methods

Interpersonal - Flexing style and message for different people

Cultural - Adjusting your approach to fit cultural norms

Physical - Adjusting to new physical demands or settings

Ideas for action

Spot your adaptable best

Which of these dimensions is you at your adaptable best?

Think of a time when you did this well. What did you think or do that helped you adapt?

Find your even better if

Which dimension feels less natural for you?

Think about who you know who is good at it and what you could borrow from their approach.

Coach yourself

Where could being more adaptable help me most right now?



How to answer AI questions in job interviews

AI is having a growing impact on how we work, so interviewers are increasingly interested in how you're using it, thinking about it and adapting to the changes it creates.

We asked our Squiggly Careers community what questions about AI they're being asked in interviews to help you prepare, practise and stand out.

Four questions from our Squiggly Community

How do you use AI in your work today?

A strong answer can show practical experience, productivity, judgement and how you combine AI with your own expertise.

To prepare: Think about how you're using AI at work: where are you experimenting, and what's already become part of your everyday?

Where does AI add value in your work and where are its limits?

Your answer can show your understanding of AI's strengths and weaknesses, and your judgement about when it's useful.

To prepare: Start with the purpose of your work: what are you trying to achieve? Then, how does AI help you do it better, and where are its limits?

How do you know when AI is wrong? And how do you increase your confidence in it being right?

This question can test your critical thinking, judgement and how you check and verify AI outputs.

To prepare: Think about how you check AI outputs: do you check the original source or ask another AI tool to critique the answer?

How do you think AI will change this role, team or the way you work?

This question can test your curiosity and strategic thinking. A strong answer considers both the opportunities AI could create and the risks to be aware of.

To prepare: Think across different time horizons: how could AI change the role today, in the next six months and in the next 1–5 years?

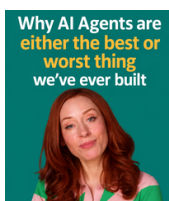
Deeper dive



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Real Talk



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A question to ask

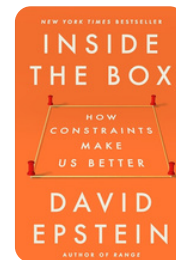
Prepare an AI question to ask your interviewer too.

This could sound like: "How does your organisation use AI today?" or "How do you see AI changing this role?"

How to use constraints to think more creatively

Creative thinking can help you find different ways to succeed in your Squiggly Career, creating more choice and resilience.

Borrowing brilliance from David Epstein's Inside the Box, choosing constraints can help you think more creatively and come up with new possibilities.



Deeper dive

Quick listen

Use constraints to develop your Squiggly Skills

Strengths: the things you're good at and enjoy doing

Choose only one strength to make stronger for the rest of 2026.

Ask yourself: "Which strength do I most want to be known for?" Then, spot one action you could take to develop it.

Values: what motivates and drives you

Choose one value and give yourself just 15 minutes a week to add more of it into your work or life.

This could look like: changing how or where you work, making space to learn, or creating more choice in your week.

Confidence Gremlins: the beliefs that hold you back

Write one sentence for what your Confidence Gremlin says when it's in charge.

Then try: write a new sentence that reframes what your Gremlin is saying when you're in charge.

Possibilities: being curious about where your career could take you

Choose one possibilities activity to focus on for the next month - either scanning or scoping.

Try: scanning job descriptions to spot themes and trends, or scoping your obvious, ambitious, pivot and dream possibilities.

Networks: people helping people

Build two new relationships to support your career either inside your organisation or outside it - but not both.

Think about: which option would be most useful for your career right now? Then spot two people to connect with.

Coach yourself

Where could a constraint help you think more creatively about your career?



How to make friction work for you

Friction is anything that slows work down or makes it harder than it needs to be.

It can be unhelpful but it can also be useful when it creates moments to pause, reflect and think more carefully – because faster doesn't always mean better.



Deeper dive

Three ways to make friction more useful

Spot sources of friction

Start by noticing when work feels frustrating, harder than it needs to be or just isn't working.

Ask yourself, *"When do I feel most frustrated in a week?" or "When is something not working but I'm not sure why?"*

Try to get specific about what's creating that feeling. Is it a meeting, process, person or way of working?

Then look for patterns in where friction shows up.

Get rid of bad friction

More isn't always better. Extra meetings, emails and people involved in decisions can make work slower and more complicated.

Try: Choosing one source of friction for you and look for something you could subtract.

This could look like: making a weekly meeting fortnightly, inviting fewer people to a conversation, or sharing a project idea on just one page.

Create good friction

Some friction can make your work better. Slowing down at the right moment can improve the quality of thinking and decisions.

Before a meeting: Try adding some good friction by asking for a clear decision and discussion agenda before it gets booked.

In a discussion: Try asking a friction-creating question. This could sound like: *"If we didn't do it this way, how else could we do it?"*

Coach yourself

What's one change I could try this week to reduce unhelpful friction?



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