

THINK DIFFERENTLY

The Direction Reflection

A quiet, guided reflection for discovering
what you may want more of next.

Emma Kirkpatrick | Elevate & Progress

Elevate your Mindset. Progress with Purpose.

You don't need to work out what you want to do with the rest of your life.

This reflection has a much smaller job.

It's designed to help you look at your own experience for clues — the things that give you energy, the times you've felt useful, what has given you a real sense of achievement, and the things you might want more of in whatever comes next.

There are no scores, types or right answers. At the end, nobody is going to tell you what you should do.

Instead, you'll look back over your own answers and notice the themes that keep appearing.

Don't try to make your answers impressive. Make them true.

Write what comes to mind first. A small, everyday example can tell you just as much as a major life achievement.

And feel free to come back to a question if nothing comes to mind straight away. Sometimes reflection takes a little time. You don't have to complete this all in one sitting.

Take your time. This is yours.

What brings you to life?

Think of two or three occasions when you became really absorbed in something you were doing.

They can come from work, home, hobbies, volunteering, learning or anywhere else. They don't need to be significant moments — we're interested in what was happening when you found yourself genuinely engaged.

For each one, think about:

What were you doing?

What kept you interested?

Were you working alone or with other people?

What part of the experience did you particularly enjoy?

Use the next three pages for your examples.

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What part of the experience did you particularly enjoy?

What are you naturally curious about?

What do you read about, watch, listen to or talk about even when nobody requires you to?

What subjects or activities tend to catch your attention?

What are you interested enough in to want to understand more?

What are you willing to make an effort for — even on difficult days?

Think about the things that can make you want to get started, keep going or make the effort even when you're tired, busy or things aren't particularly easy.

Now look back at what you've written.

What activities or things seem to give you energy?

Don't worry about what they might mean yet. Just notice them.

When do you feel useful?

Think of two or three occasions when you felt that you made a useful contribution.

Again, these don't need to be enormous achievements. They might have happened at work, in your family, amongst friends, in your community or somewhere completely different.

For each one:

What was happening?

What did you actually contribute?

Who or what benefited from your contribution?

What about that mattered to you?

Use the next three pages for your examples.

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What about that mattered to you?

What do people naturally come to you for?

Perhaps they ask for your advice or perspective.

Perhaps you're the person who organises things, solves problems, listens, explains, creates, encourages, fixes things or simply gets something done.

Don't limit yourself to work.

What do people rely on you for?

And then ask yourself a slightly different question:

Which of those things do you actually like being asked for?

Being good at something and enjoying being the person who does it aren't necessarily the same thing.

When you feel most useful, what role do you seem to be playing?

Perhaps you're helping, creating, teaching, fixing, leading, protecting, connecting, making sense of something — or something entirely different.

Those are only examples. Use your own words.

What do you notice?

What makes you think, “I did that”?

For a moment, forget what looks impressive on a CV or what somebody else might regard as successful.

What are two or three things you've done that you're genuinely proud of?

They can be professional or personal. They can be large or small.

For each one:

What did you do?

What made it difficult or important?

What did you bring to it?

Why does that achievement matter to you?

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Why does that achievement matter to you?

What part gave you the greatest satisfaction?

- Was it the result itself?
- Overcoming something difficult?
- Helping somebody?
- Creating something?
- Being recognised?
- Mastering something you found challenging?
- Proving something to yourself?
- Having an impact?
- Or something else?

Again, these are prompts, not categories. What matters is your answer.

Now look back at your answers from Energy and Contribution.

Do you notice any overlap?

Are there activities, situations or themes that appear in more than one place?

Perhaps something that gives you energy also appears in the moments when you've felt most useful.

Perhaps something you're particularly proud of involved a kind of contribution that you enjoyed making.

Don't try to make the pieces fit. Just notice anything that seems to recur.

Being good at something doesn't necessarily mean you want more of it.

We can become very good at things we don't particularly want to keep doing.

Experience, praise and other people's expectations can make it easy to confuse:

"I'm good at this."

with

"This is right for me."

So let's look at the other side of the picture.

What are you good at that you don't particularly want more of?

What kinds of responsibilities or activities consistently leave you depleted rather than satisfied?

What have you continued doing
mainly because you're experienced at
it, people expect it of you, or it feels
difficult to walk away from?

And here's a different way to look at it:

If nobody were impressed by it, expected it from you or paid you more for it, would you
still choose to do it?

There is no suggestion here that you should simply stop doing everything that drains you.

Life has practicalities. Something can be necessary, financially important or part of a wider responsibility without being something you want more of.

Instead, ask:

What does this tell you about what you might want less of — rather than necessarily none of — in whatever comes next?

Now we're going to look for what keeps appearing.

You're not looking for one big revelation.

You're looking for repetition.

Put your pen down for a moment and go back through everything you've written so far.

Read it once without trying to analyse it.

Then read it again.

On the third pass, pick your pen back up and begin to mark what you notice:

Circle words, ideas, activities or experiences that appear more than once.

Underline anything that gives you an immediate sense of "Yes — that matters to me."

Put a star beside anything that surprises you.

You may find that one pass isn't enough. That's fine. Go through your answers again if you need to. Sometimes a pattern only becomes obvious once you've stopped looking for it too hard.

Take your time.

A thread I notice:

What evidence of it can I see in my answers?

Why do I think it matters to me?

You don't need to manufacture five because there happen to be five spaces on a page. Three strong recurring themes may tell you far more than ten things you think ought to matter.

A thread I notice:

What evidence of it can I see in my answers?

Why do I think it matters to me?

A thread I notice:

What evidence of it can I see in my answers?

Why do I think it matters to me?

A thread I notice:

What evidence of it can I see in my answers?

Why do I think it matters to me?

A thread I notice:

What evidence of it can I see in my answers?

Why do I think it matters to me?

Now look at the threads you've identified.

If you had to choose three things that you particularly want more of in the next part of your life, what would they be?

1.

2.

3.

Don't worry yet about how you're going to get them.

For now, simply notice what they are.

Don't choose. Explore.

The three things you've identified don't have to point neatly towards a job title, business idea or dramatic life change.

That's not their job.

For now, they're simply clues that can help you judge whether a possibility is worth exploring.

So let's look forwards.

Where could these things exist?

What kinds of work, activities, environments or experiences might allow you to have more of them?

What interests, activities or ideas have you been curious about but never seriously explored?

Could some of the things you've identified be expressed somewhere other than through paid work?

Not everything that gives our lives meaning has to become a career.

Are there possibilities you've previously dismissed?

If so, why?

You don't need to challenge those reasons yet. Some may be entirely valid.

Just write them down.

What could you explore without making a major commitment?

You could talk to someone.

Read something.

Investigate a course.

Try a small project.

Volunteer.

Explore a different responsibility at work.

Spend an afternoon researching something you've always wondered about.

Try something you've always wanted to try.

Or do something entirely different.

The purpose isn't to make a decision.

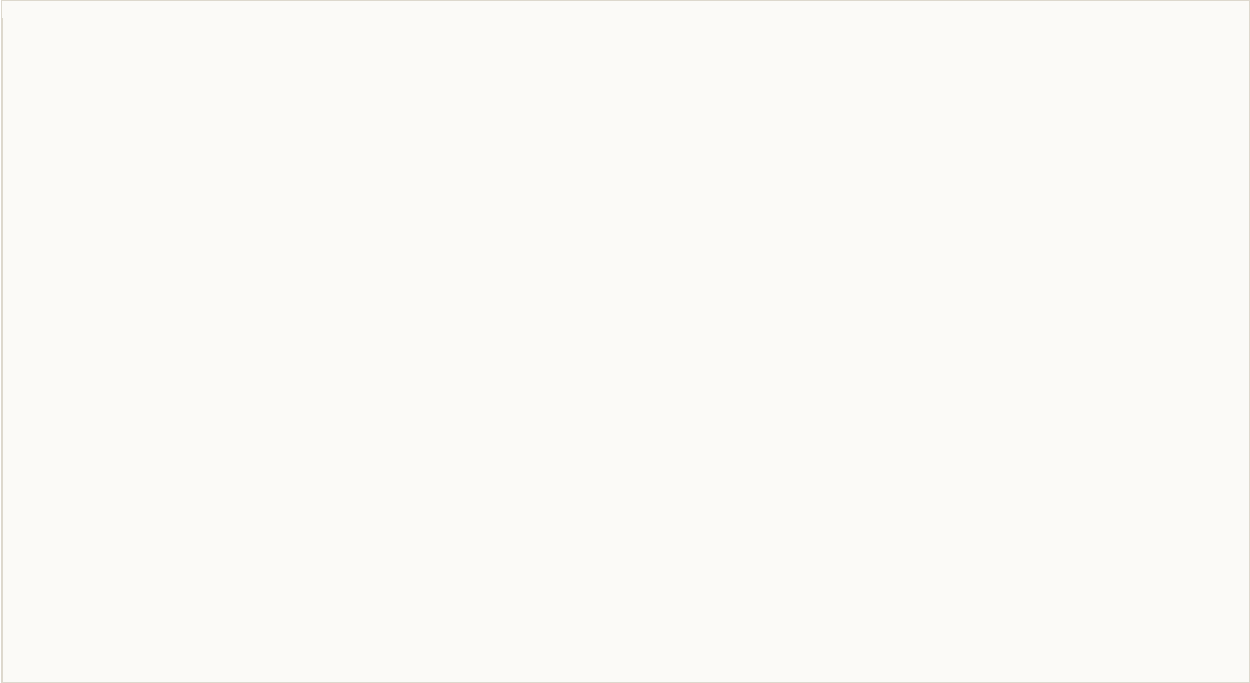
It's to learn.

Choose one.

What's one small thing you could do in the next seven days to learn more?

Write it down.

Make it specific enough that you'll know when you've done it.



You may still not know exactly what you want next.

That's okay. That wasn't the goal. But perhaps you now know more about:

what gives you energy;
how you like to contribute;
what gives you a genuine sense of achievement;
what you want less of;
and what you want more of.

That's a much stronger place from which to consider what comes next.

And as you begin considering the possibilities, you may notice another set of thoughts appearing:

I'd love to, but...

I'm too old to...

I couldn't afford to...

What if I get it wrong?

I don't have the right experience...

People like me don't...

FINAL THOUGHT

Some of those concerns may be entirely valid.

Others may be assumptions worth examining.

Learning to tell the difference is part of learning to **Think Differently**.

You don't need complete certainty about the destination before you take a step towards it.

Sometimes the next step is simply to become curious about what might be possible.

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