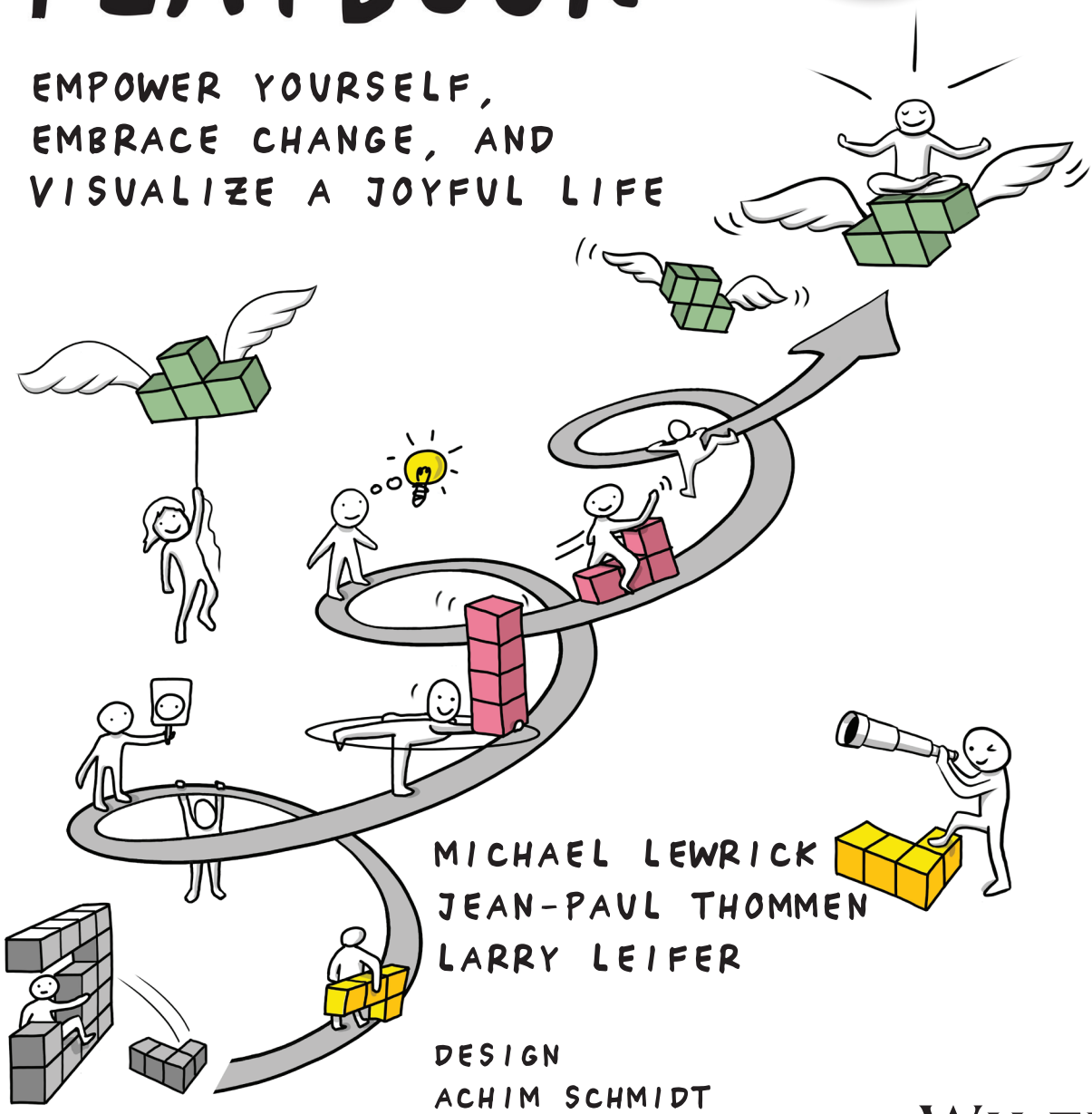
THE DESIGN THINKING LIFE PLAYBOOK

Builds on the International Bestseller, *The Design Thinking Playbook*

EMPOWER YOURSELF, EMBRACE CHANGE, AND VISUALIZE A JOYFUL LIFE



MICHAEL LEWRICK
JEAN-PAUL THOMMEN
LARRY LEIFER

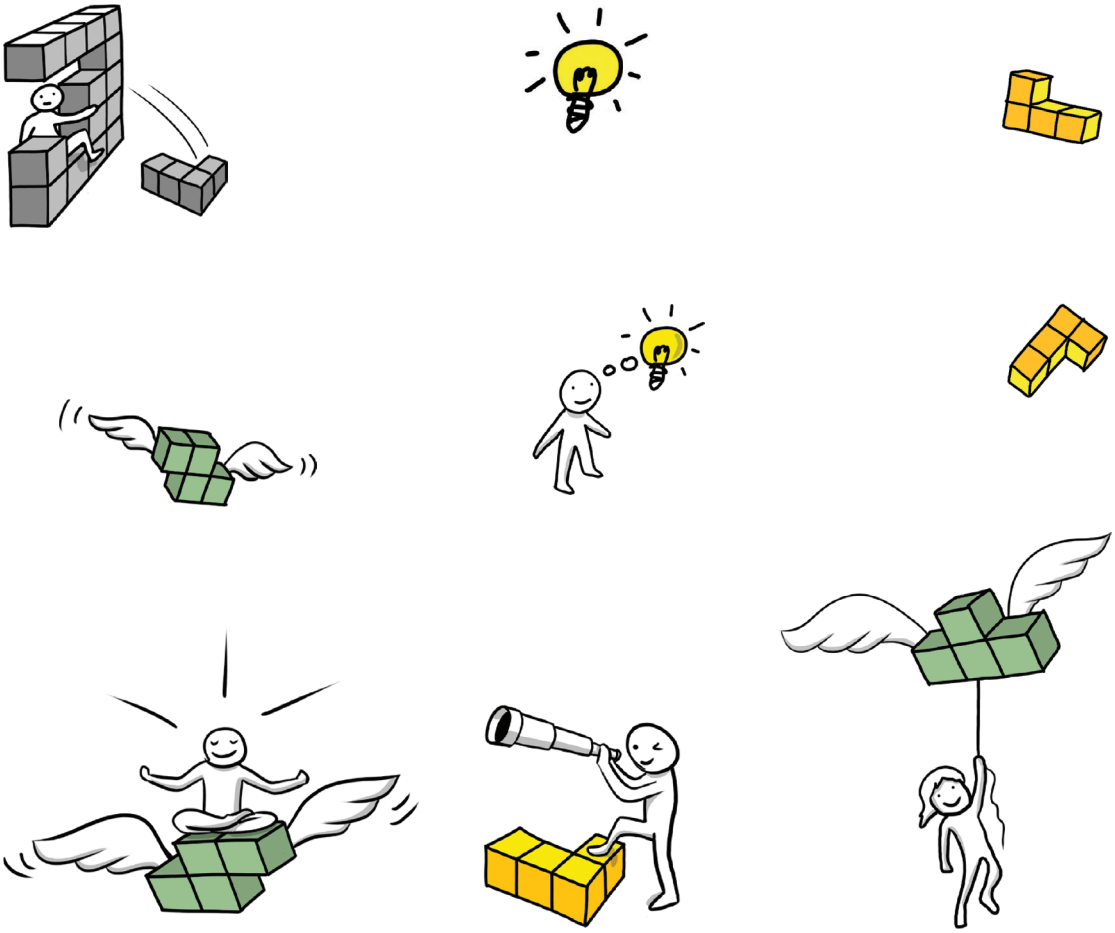
DESIGN
ACHIM SCHMIDT

WILEY

Also by Michael Lewrick and Larry Leifer:

The Design Thinking Toolbox by Michael Lewrick, Larry Leifer, and Patrick Link

The Design Thinking Playbook by Michael Lewrick, Larry Leifer, and Patrick Link



THE DESIGN THINKING LIFE PLAYBOOK

THE DESIGN THINKING LIFE PLAYBOOK

EMPOWER YOURSELF, EMBRACE CHANGE, AND VISUALIZE A JOYFUL LIFE

MICHAEL LEWRICK
JEAN-PAUL THOMMEN
LARRY LEIFER

DESIGN
ACHIM SCHMIDT

WILEY

Originally published by Versus Verlag AG.
This edition (c) 2020 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.,
Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the Web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at http://booksupport.wiley.com. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

ISBN 9781119682240 (Paperback)
ISBN 9781119682257 (ePDF)
ISBN 9781119730439 (ePub)

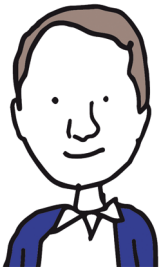
Cover image and illustrations: Achim Schmidt

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This is the DTL Playbook of:

. . . . . .

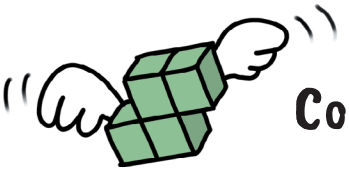
About the authors:



Michael Lewrick, PhD, is a featured speaker and teaches Design Thinking at various Universities. He is the author of *The Design Tthinking Toolbox* and the international bestseller *The Design Thinking Playbook*, in which he describes the mindful transformation of people, teams, and organizations. Michael is a thought leader in applying different mindsets to solve thorny problems. He collaborates with colleges, universities, and companies and focuses on the self-efficacy of people in personal and organizational change. He is an internationally recognized leader in the field of digitization, innovation, and the management of change.

Jean-Paul Thommen, PhD, has coached and developed students and managers for many years. At the European Business School (Wiesbaden), he established a coaching program that thousands of interested people have successfully completed over the last decade. His German publication *Coaching* is one of the foundational works in this field. He is a professor lecturing at various colleges and universities in the fields of leadership, organizational development, and business ethics. He has also advised large and small enterprises on these topics.

Larry Leifer, PhD, is one of the most influential personalities and pioneers of design thinking in the world. He has introduced design thinking globally and guided numerous companies, innovation practitioners, and student teams in their search for new market opportunities. Over the years, he has developed various design thinking techniques and adapted them to the individual needs of the design thinking life. Furthermore, he is a professor of engineering design and the founding director of the Center for Design Research at Stanford (CDR) and the Hasso Plattner Design Thinking Research Program at Stanford.



Contents

Why we're taking you along with us on this journey 8

Foreword 10

Introduction 13

Part I: Apply the DTL mindset 24

Reflect, accept, and understand 42

Keep an energy journal 56

Integrating other people's observations and perceptions of us 88

Define point of view 98

Find and select ideas 110

Design, test, and implement life plans 146

Self-check 178

Part II: Professional and career planning 184

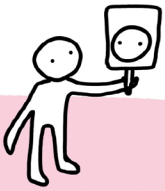
Design career paths 214

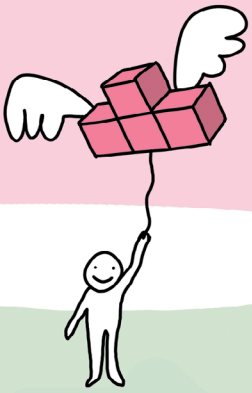
Evaluate, test, and implement options 226

Questions for reflection on options 244

Last but not least – The journey's end is really the beginning 248

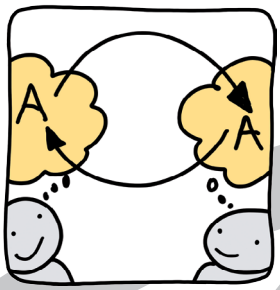
Index 253



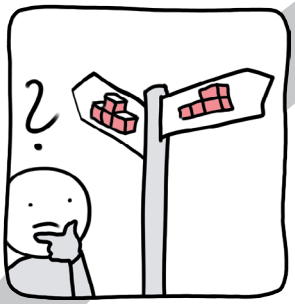


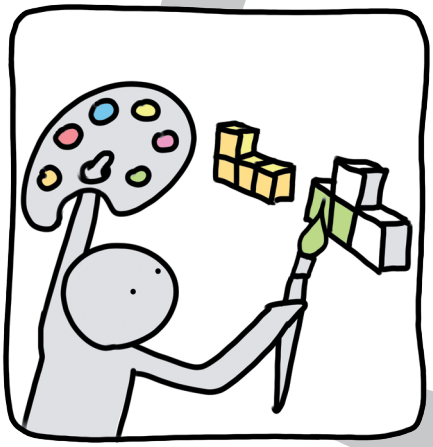
Why we're taking you along with us on this journey

Because empathy and self-efficacy are essential for further development.

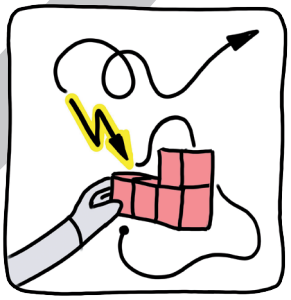


Because you will have moments when you wonder what comes next.



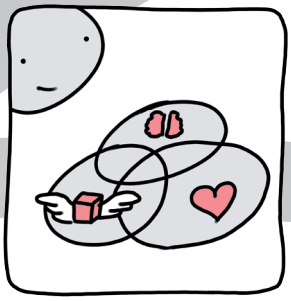


Because your life is one of the biggest and most complex projects you will ever undertake.



And, above all, because you can initiate a change in yourself at any time.

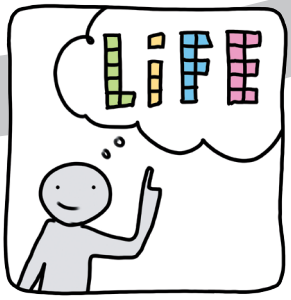
Because design thinking is a holistic approach that provides you with the tools to dig deeper.



Because a positive mindset helps you experience more happy moments in your life.

Because another way of looking at problems helps you bring about change.

Because a personally efficacious life is a happy life.



Because a life that you can visualize can be better realized.

Foreword

Bernie Roth

- Professor of mechanical engineering
- Co-founder of the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (the d.school)
- Author of *The Achievement Habit*

I have had the pleasure of teaching design courses for more than 60 years. Originally, I mainly taught about designing ordinary machines. Then I began to include designing robots. From there, I expanded into fostering creative thinking and improving students' personal efficacy. About 15 years ago, I was one of the founders of the Stanford d.school, and that transitioned my main activities from design to what we now call design thinking. Design thinking is a range of methods that apply techniques and ideas, originally used primarily to design physical objects, to problems dealing with a much wider range of issues.

At the Stanford d.school, the original bias in design thinking was toward designing for others. It was felt that objective outsiders brought insights that someone immersed in his or her own issues might overlook. We developed the mantra "Don't design for yourself!" This created a conflict for me because by then a lot of my teaching had to do with getting individuals to take control of their own lives by applying the very same principles that became part of design thinking.

So, when I started to write my book *The Achievement Habit*, I was concerned that my design thinking colleagues would accuse me of heresy. Instead, the opposite happened; it became acceptable to apply design thinking to oneself. For example, Tim Brown, then CEO of IDEO (one of the world's leading design thinking consultancies), wrote on the book jacket of *The Achievement Habit*: "Before unleashing design thinking on others, unleash it on yourself. You, and the world, will be far better for it." Even more gratifying to me were the e-mails from numerous readers telling me how grateful they were for the positive changes they were bringing into their lives.

In the last few years the design thinking world has evolved, and there have been other books guiding readers to apply design thinking to their own lives. This makes perfect sense because one of the most important principles in design thinking is to be user-centered. This implies empathy by the designer for the user. Empathy means the designer seeks to "step into the shoes" of the person for whom something is being designed. So, clearly, if people are designing for themselves, they are already in the shoes of the person they are designing for. However, there is a danger because we tend to be less objective when it comes to self-assessment. It is therefore important that the problem-solving methods we apply to our own lives include safeguards to alert us when we are deluding ourselves or simply not seeing things clearly. I was pleased to note that the authors of *The Design Thinking Life Playbook* are aware of these potential pitfalls, and they do a good job of alerting their readers. This is one of the strong points that makes this book a welcome addition to the field of design thinking.

The methods set forth in *The Design Thinking Life Playbook* present tools for people who seek to make their lives more fulfilling and have the courage to look at their current situation honestly. The techniques and strategies that Michael Lewrick, Jean-Paul Thommen, and Larry Leifer lead their readers through in this workbook can be used to redesign one's life, in terms of both one's activities and one's relationships. Going through the exercises should prove to be a valuable experience for all who want to initiate change and have the courage to think, act, and take advantage of life's opportunities.

–Bernie Roth

Welcome from the authors

In this *DESIGN THINKING LIFE (DTL) Playbook*, we would like to present a selection of techniques and strategies that help initiate change. These tools work best when they are adapted to the specific situation and when people in our environment also know which "journey" we are on right now. This is why it makes sense that our circle of friends, family, and colleagues also have the *DTL Playbook* at hand and embark on this journey themselves or together with us. When dealing with DTL, we will quickly notice that change also has a lot to do with our social environment. The question of our self-image versus Other people's perceptions of us is an integral part of our social system.

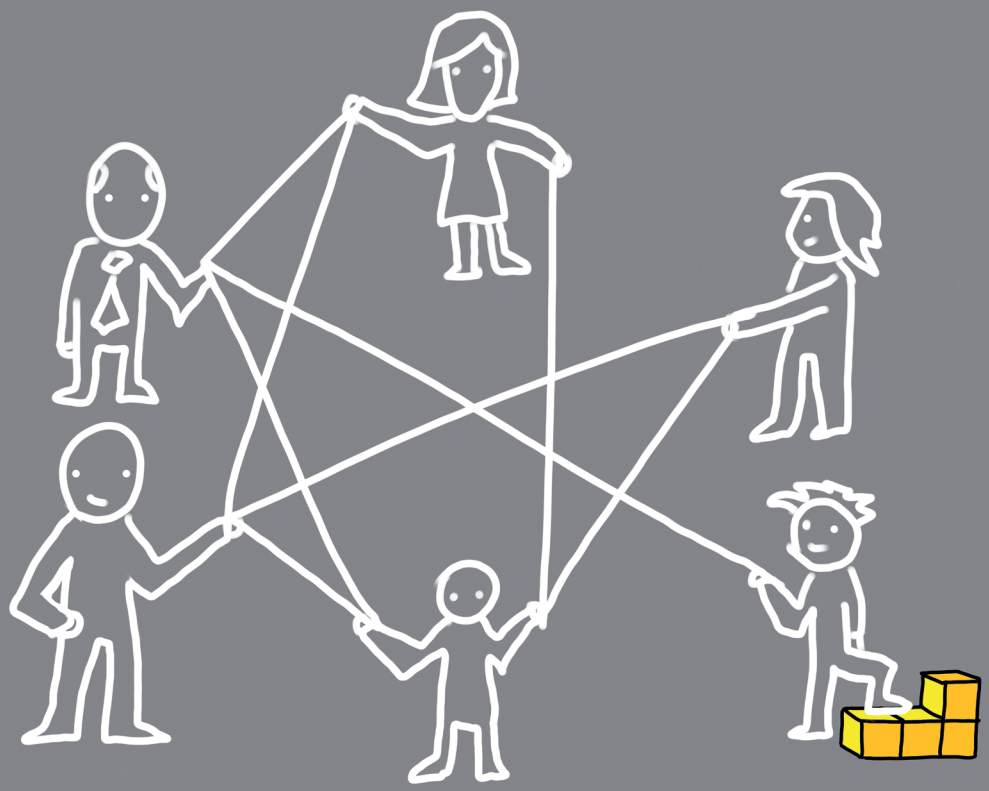
As in design thinking, the DTL process presented is used for orientation, i.e., to know where we are in the DTL cycle. A flexible application, adapted to the situation and the respective topic, is critical for success. Finally, the effect and the effectiveness are critical.

This playbook deliberately dispenses with scientific treatises on the topic of life design and puts application at the heart of things. Of course, it is desirable to apply any kind of new knowledge – for example, from the neurosciences – to one's personal life, to deepen one's understanding of the subject by reading specialist literature, or to adapt the techniques presented.

It is also very important for us to point out at the beginning of this playbook that certain topics are extremely complex and our emotions prevent us from helping ourselves. When we notice such signs, it is important to take advantage of professional coaching – with an appropriate expert. Professional coaches don't bite!

–Michael Lewrick, Jean-Paul Thommen, and Larry Leifer

Introduction



How is the DTL Playbook structured?

We have deliberately divided the book into two parts.

In the first part, we accompany Sue and John in their desire for change. We present strategies and techniques that help you act in a self-efficacious way. Typical questions are:

- What do I enjoy?
- What robs me of energy, and how do I recharge my batteries?
- What small changes can I initiate on my own and experiment with?
- How can I implement these changes?

The second part deals with the big decisions and changes in life. The focus is deliberately on professional and career planning because we have discovered that it is an issue we feel confronted with at regular intervals, from school age to retirement. We accompany Steve as he questions himself about career planning. Typical questions are:

- What are my skills and talents?
- Where can I apply them profitably?
- How do I find out what I like in order to make the right choice in terms of course of study, profession, and career?
- How do I choose between different options?
- How do I prepare myself to leave my comfort zone and initiate a change?

What is the best way to use this playbook?

The *DTL Playbook* provides us with different strategies and techniques to start the process of change. We recommend that you study Part 1 of the book first and Part 2 as a second step if the topic of career is currently vital to you.

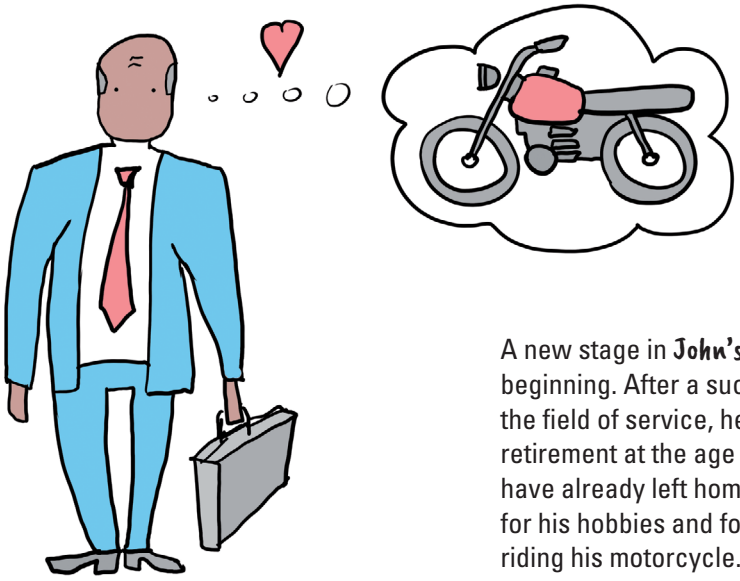
It is never too late to initiate a change.

The strategies, techniques, and examples presented are aids, which we adapt according to the situation.

- We follow the DTL process presented.
- We implement the instructions and fill in the empty pages with our thoughts.
- We note down our wishes, sketch out our milestones, and evaluate our experiences.
- We find a way to change based on our own needs.
- Achieving self-efficacy should become our top working motto.
- We take time for this journey on which we learn more about ourselves, try out new things, and gradually introduce change.
- We use the examples of John, Sue, and Steve as inspiration and guidance in implementing the tools presented.

Who are John, Sue, and Steve?

John, Sue, and Steve are people like you and me. They have arrived – as we might have – at a point in life where they would like to change something. The three fictitious characters (so-called personas) work, at different points in the DTL book, on their new milestones in life and thus help us with the application of the tools presented.

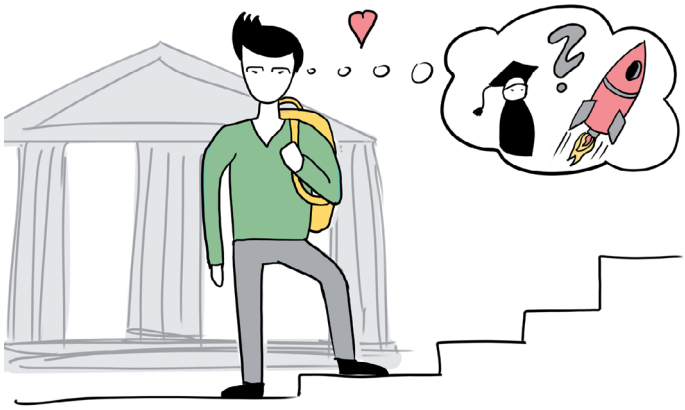


A new stage in **John's** life is just beginning. After a successful career in the field of service, he is going into early retirement at the age of 55. His children have already left home. He now has time for his hobbies and for his great passion, riding his motorcycle.

But this new phase of life also has its pitfalls; his relationship with his wife, for example, could do with some new ideas. John also wants to design this phase of his life actively and uses a number of DTL tools to do so.

Our second persona is **Sue**; she's in her mid-30s. After her studies and international career in marketing, she realizes that something is missing in her life.

Sue wants a life partner. She also misses her parents and siblings who live in Switzerland. Her life and work in Hong Kong are exciting and challenging, but not fulfilling in the long run.

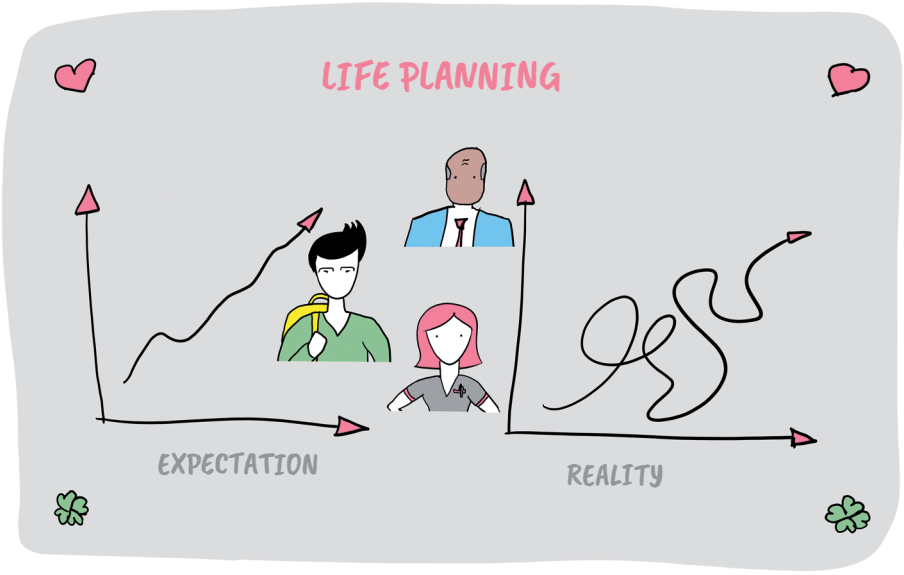


Steve is still at the beginning of his professional career. He has just graduated from Stanford University with a bachelor's degree in business information systems and is uncertain whether to pursue a master's degree or accept a job in a start-up.

The start-up sounds exciting, but Steve has no work experience at all. Steve's role model has always been his older brother Alex. After high school, Alex stayed and lived close to his parents in upstate New York; immediately after getting his bachelor's degree, he earned his master's degree. Now he is in the final phases of earning a doctoral degree at Cornell University. His big dream is to live and work in Singapore. However, Steve also finds this path very tedious and lengthy.

We return to Steve and Alex, who are both facing major life changes, in the second part of the DTL book. We will explain later why this happens only in the second part and why we start with small changes.

The three fictional characters are the result of our DTL work at companies, at universities, and in countless coaching sessions. All three characters have initiated a change and have steered their lives in a new direction. For them, DTL has become a continuous process of reflection, self-efficacy, and adjustment that is never completed. DTL has become the basis for the creation of a satisfied and happy life.



For all of us, the individual design of a fulfilling life is moving more and more into the center, because the world we live in is becoming more and more difficult to orientate and demands that we commit to high performance. The growing complexity and high performance demands are difficult to keep at bay, so we have no choice but to develop strategies to deal with them in the best possible way. Reality is exciting, and you can write your own personal scenario for life if you want to!

> "If your mindset is unprejudiced...it is open to everything. 'In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, but in the expert's mind there are few.'"
>
> – Shunryu Suzuki

What is design thinking?

In design thinking, we adapt methods that are commonly applied by designers. This is why we make use of an iterative approach in design thinking, from the problem statement right up to a problem solution. Supported by various creativity techniques, the aim is to generate as many and at times "wild" ideas as possible. The creative working method aims at triggering both halves of our brain. On our "journey" to a solution, iterations, leaps of imagination, and combinations of ideas are desirable so that ultimately we arrive at a solution that meets the needs of people. On the way to the solution, a high level of error tolerance is of great value, particularly in the early phase. The techniques and strategies presented in this book are a means to an end; that is, you always adapt the tools to your situation.

A pivotal aspect of the design thinking mindset is to free yourself from prejudices and assumptions. This means to be open to a world of possibilities because at the beginning of the "journey," we do not yet know what is possible and what is not.

In design thinking, we use a persona, a fictitious character that has certain needs and for whom we work out a solution. In the DTL book, we also have personas but with the aim of showing how a fictitious person solves a problem. The respective solutions are only examples of an individual change. **They are not sample solutions or the authors' recommendations for your life!**

The design thinking process and the mindset we use in the DTL book will be discussed in more detail later.

The design thinking mindset means:

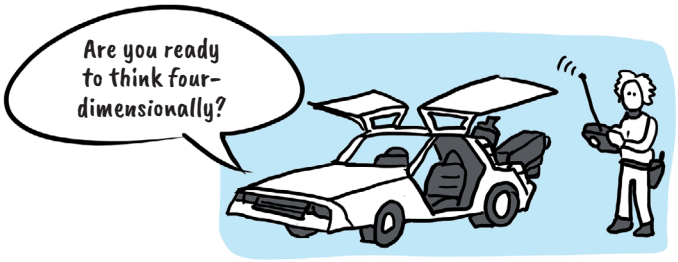
- We **say goodbye to prejudices** about **"how things work."**
- We **put aside expectations** about what will happen.
- We **are curious** so as to **understand facts and problems in depth.**
- We **open** ourselves up to **new possibilities.**
- We **ask simple questions.**

If you want to know more about design thinking, refer to:

- *The Design Thinking Playbook* by Michael Lewrick, Patrick Link, and Larry Leifer
- *The Design Thinking Toolbox* by Michael Lewrick, Patrick Link, and Larry Leifer

60-minute warm-up "Back to the Future"

Imagine you can embark on a time travel journey with Marty McFly and Doc Brown from the successful film trilogy *Back to the Future*. Your TIMER is geared to the future; exactly ten years from today.



TEMPORAL DESTINATION

Day	Month	Year

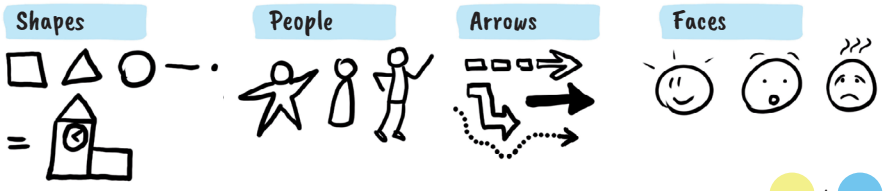
1) Start the journey!

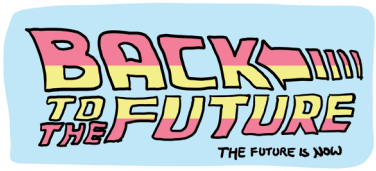
10 min

The journey begins. There is a short flash, blinding light, and you arrive in the future version of your life. As we know from *Back to the Future*, there are sometimes cracks in the space-time continuum, and you may be teleported to a different location in the future.

Make a sketch of what you see in this flash-forward.

You think you can't sketch?
Use these sketching shorthand techniques or devise your own.





2) Reflect on your journey through the space-time continuum!

a) What is the key feature of your vision of the future of your life?

5 min

b) Who were the people in your environment? Were they similar to people today or different?

5 min

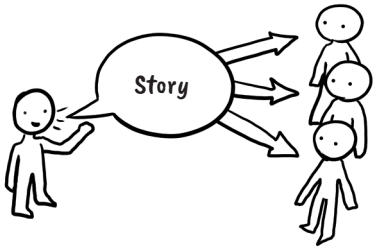
3) Write a headline in a newspaper of the future!

10 min

Write the headline and the first two sentences of the story of your life. Don't just describe the situation, but, above all, emphasize the news.

4) Act it out!

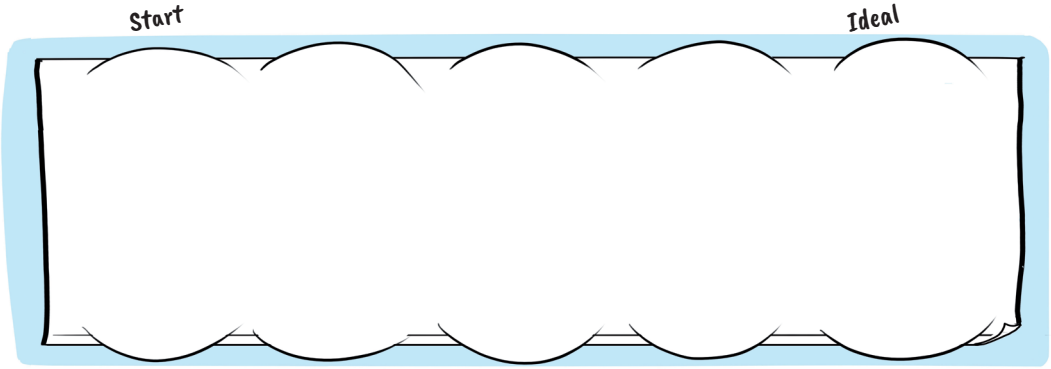
10 min



Tell someone from your circle of friends, family, and acquaintances about your journey into the future.

Show your vision of the future to a third person and ask what he/she thinks.

5) Create a timeline!

10 min

Think about four stages, starting today, that will lead you to your vision in ten years.
Draw the stages on a timeline.