

# In Kind

## Consciously Craft a Meaningful Life and Career

Written and Narrated by

**Michael G Neece**



PDF Supplement

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This PDF supplements the Audible production of *In Kind: Consciously Craft a Meaningful Life and Career*. Its intended use is by those who have purchased an audiobook version of that title or borrowed it from a lending library. If you are not a purchaser or borrower, please consider buying a copy. The information provided by the author was accumulated with great effort and placed into these helpful exercises for those who paid their fair share or were provided the book as a gift.

The supplementary exercises, surveys, and guided journaling prompts exist in this PDF only for the chapters where reading them aloud in the audiobook made no sense. Those were chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9. If you were hoping for tools and takeaways for chapters 7 and 8, those made more sense to read aloud into the audio presentation and are thus not presented here.

It is strongly recommended that you obtain a journal to record your reflections on the exercises and surveys from this book. If you have not obtained one, consider finding one in our shop at

[www.michaelgneece.com/shop](http://www.michaelgneece.com/shop)

If you have any questions or want assistance going even deeper, contact us at

[www.michaelgneece.com/contact](http://www.michaelgneece.com/contact) for a free consultation call with Michael.

Enjoy the exercises!

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### Chapter 1 Exercises

#### Exercise 1: Your Beliefs About Kindness

Write your beliefs about the following three concepts in a dedicated journal, notebook, or digital application like OneNote. Write a few sentences or bullet points about what each thought or phrase means to you.

- 1) The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have done to you.
  
- 2) The Silver Rule: Do not do to others what you would not have done to you.
  
- 3) Kind treatment of others AND yourself.

Even if your responses to the above change over time, writing your beliefs helps clarify what you feel is essential. When difficult situations test how well you uphold your beliefs, you can revisit them and develop better strategies (see below).

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### Exercise 2: Your Ideal Workplace

In your journal, describe what your ideal workplace is like. Don't hold back on descriptions. Focus more on the human interactions. How does everyone know what behaviors are expected and acceptable? When someone behaves in unacceptable ways, who handles it and how? When things get busy or complicated, how do people help each other?

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### Exercise 3: Fighting Fire with Fire

On a new page of your journal, write about experiences where you had troubling or difficult interactions with a colleague. If you have yet to engage in difficult interactions, rely on real-world interactions you have witnessed or heard about directly.

- 1) Write down any instance where you met someone else's force with force. Leave space below each instance for notes.
  
- 2) List repercussions for each interaction you listed, big or small. (Did you "win?" How were your relationships after that? Were there lingering downsides, such as fear of retaliation, lost trust, or broken relationships?)
  
- 3) Write down three ways you could use more kindness in similar situations in the future.

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4) Next, in your journal, note:

- situations in which you were less kind than you wish you had been.
- alternative strategies that might have helped you align with your beliefs about kindness.

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- 5) Write down any situations where not acting nor speaking up is resulting in unkind consequences for you or others.
- Briefly describe the situation.
  - Are there factors that are holding you back? What are they? What are you doing to try to create a more positive flow?
  - Are there ways you could speak up or act now or in the future when a similar situation arises? What are they?
  - Who are allies you can enlist in future situations? Will you communicate your needs to them in private? When will you enlist them: ahead of time, during, or after the uncomfortable situation has occurred?

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### Exercise 4: Your Ego

- 1) Write up to three instances *in life* when your ego took over.
  - a. Examples: Yelling at a customer service agent. Chasing down a driver who cut you off on the highway.
  
- 2) Write down any instances *at work* when your ego took over.
  - a. Examples: Talking over others during a meeting because you were sure you knew more about the topic. Gossiping about a colleague who got something you thought you deserved, like a better raise, better project, or a promotion.



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- 3) Write down the kindest assumptions about the others involved in those situations.
  - a. Examples: They cut me off in traffic because they were on their way to the hospital to see a dying relative for the last time. My colleague got that cool project because they had relevant experience in college that I didn't know about.

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### Notes About These Exercises

- By being concrete about situations that challenge the firmness of your beliefs, you are taking control of your behavior and building a strategy to help you be the person you wish to be.
- If you envision it, you can create it. It is impossible to hit a target you can't see.
- By thinking about others' motivations, you can remember that challenging situations frequently have nothing to do with you.
- Building better relationships and creating positive connections with others at work begins with reflection. The more mindful you are in these exercises, the more you will understand relationships at work.

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### Chapter 2 Exercises

#### Exercise 1: Discovering Your Limiting Beliefs and Taking Action

Take this survey of common limiting beliefs to determine which ones might be relevant to you. Review the common limiting beliefs below and determine if any evoke a strong emotional, visceral response. As you do this, you might think of limiting beliefs that are not listed that apply to you, so write those down too. Record them in your journal.

I need to know what to do.	It is my job to make you happy.	People are judging me.
No one cares about me.	I need a partner to be happy.	People should be self-sufficient.
I know what's best.	It is my fault.	They should agree with me.
I deserve bad treatment.	I should be different.	I have to work hard.
Something terrible is going to happen.	I missed my chance.	We must keep our promises.
Most people cannot be trusted.	Never settle.	I have to be careful not to hurt others.
People should respect me.	People should listen to me.	Money will make me happy.
I need to control how others feel about me.	I'm not enough.	I'm ashamed of my body.
I feel your energy.	I am a failure.	I need to be in control.
I need more money.	I will never make you happy.	My body should be healthy.
Life isn't fair.	I need to understand.	People need to be more trustworthy.
The world should be filled with love.	I need to do it right.	Take what you can when you can.

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Some people will never listen.	Nobody can control me.	There is a purpose to my life.
I cannot stay undecided.	Something is wrong with me.	I am worthless.
I can't do anything right.	Be happy with what you have.	Life is difficult.
I disappoint people.	S/he doesn't trust me.	People should be grateful.
I don't want to look foolish.	The world is not safe.	I am a fraud.
There's too much to do.	I shouldn't be so emotional.	I don't belong.
There's not enough time.	Nothing is reliable.	Rule breakers should be punished.
I know what you need.	I must know my life's purpose.	People are my friends.

In your journal, center on the strongest belief first. Which statement jumped out at you? If you thought of a new one while scanning the others, what was it? Was it the strongest? Once you have decided which statement is most potent, focus on it. Later, you can move to the second-most powerful message and do the following for it, and so forth.

Ponder how it could have originated. Was it the interactions within your family unit? Was it at school? Having a reasonable idea of where you picked up your belief can help you center on it and address it head-on.

Once you have some ideas written in your journal about the origins of the belief, the next step is to envision that belief as if it were a living, breathing entity that, at one time or another, served to protect you. Forgive it for the heartache and difficulties it may be causing now that you no longer need it. Thank it for the upsides as well, like realizing that the belief that you need to hoard money led you to more fiscal responsibility in household finances.

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My belief can make me feel excluded when projects are assigned, and I have no role, although I know I could contribute. My supervisor can push me off and, noting that he has plenty of time for my peers, I can worry that I have lost value in his eyes.

Knowing I have this limiting belief gives me power since I can spot these emotional reactions and put them into context. I may have no role on a project because a bigger project will need my attention soon. Maybe my supervisor knows that my peers need extra support right now, and didn't he give me his full, undivided attention just last week?

List your negative responses to situations and how they relate to your limiting belief. Come up with at least one strategy for reframing the problem so that you can calm your emotions when they come up again.

In this next part, you will own the narrative: write down each belief's positives in your life.

Taking my "nobody cares about me" belief as an example, what could the positives be for such a belief? It can be easy to dwell only on the negative sides of my limiting belief. Still, there are upsides to these beliefs, and the upside is always your powerful ability to adapt to life because of the challenges you had to overcome.

The upside to my limiting belief is that I persistently seek ways to ensure others around me feel noticed, heard, lifted, and cared for. In every job I have held since the age of 19, I have made it a point to ensure colleagues and friends know how to get support. I have written guidebooks on how to be good at various roles at each workplace so that others would always feel safe. Before new colleagues join, I brainstorm how to make them feel genuinely welcomed, setting out gifts and giving them helpful tips in a welcome email. I put recurring notices on digital calendars regarding work anniversaries and reach out

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to celebrate those dates. I join social clubs and community organizations where I can volunteer my time to make the workplace happier and more fulfilling. I have even gone so far as to create community organizations at work where none existed to give others a sense of belonging and better support than they might otherwise have felt.

What are the upsides of your beliefs? List them in your journal entry and expand on any that need more explanation.

Repeat the process for any other beliefs you feel deeply.

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### Exercise 2: Establish Strategies for Showing Up as Your Best Self

In your journal, list every way you know of to put yourself into the best headspace to utilize the positives of your limiting beliefs. Most of these can feel obvious after you have written them down, but it is invaluable to do so.

Consider these items for your list: eating a healthy breakfast daily; exercising regularly; staying hydrated; listing at least three things you are grateful for at the start of each day.

After that general list, make a list of strategies for handling difficult moments in the workday. Those might include assuming positive intent on the part of someone who seems at odds with you over a particular topic or in a particular moment; getting curious and asking questions rather than declaring your frustration and anger as a knee-jerk response; and reminding colleagues of your successful past collaborations and of your mutual commitment to project or company goals.

Review these strategies before any workday that you think could be tricky. Review these strategies after a workday presenting severe challenges.

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### Exercise 3: Create Strategies for Moments When You're Not at Your Best

Make a list of your triggers. You know, the types of challenges that put you at risk for acting and reacting in ways you want to avoid. Having this list can save you headaches because you will more easily spot those moments and actions, access more compassion for yourself, and choose to be kind instead of reacting.

Consider these items for your list: someone cutting you off when you are speaking; someone not making eye contact with you or someone else at the table; and anything related directly to your limiting belief, such as budget discussions if your limiting belief has created money worries.

For those items related to your limiting beliefs, list ways you think you can stay open-minded and optimistic. Consider letting others know that you sometimes feel outsized reactions to a particular topic before the discussions occur so that they understand any lapses in your positivity around that topic. By humanizing yourself, you help them know you better while simultaneously role-modeling how to better relate to others, and you become a better version of yourself.



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### Exercise 4: Create Strategies for Caring for Others

When others do not show up as their best selves at work, how can you make them feel valued, supported, and at ease? Depending on the situation and your knowledge of the colleague in question, this can be tricky. Seeing a colleague crying at their desk can feel clear-cut, knowing that it is kind to check in with them and ask if they need someone to talk to or sit with. What about another scenario where your supervisor is grouchy?

My favorite suggestion is to get curious and ask questions. Sometimes humor can masquerade as curiosity, so you should only use humor if you know with great confidence how it will land with your audience. Humor, especially sarcasm, can be deeply triggering and garner poor outcomes. Asking how your colleague or supervisor feels or if they are okay shows unambiguously that you care and want to be helpful.

In your journal, list ways to show colleagues that you care, that you can be trusted, and that are likely to dissipate tension in difficult situations. Part of that list could include mentally reviewing what you know about the colleague's recent life events, such as difficult medical news, problems at home with a spouse, child, or parent, or if they had car troubles recently. You can even note what brings joy and comfort to specific colleagues.

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### Exercise 5: Understanding the External Limits on You

The following exercise will help you get a rough estimate of your perceived social status within the United States of America. Start with a score of 10 and add/subtract points as directed.

- 1) Wealth: If you are wealthy, add a point. If you are middle class, make no changes. If you live in poverty, subtract a point.
  
- 2) Gender: If you are male, add a point. If female, make no changes. If you are part of the gender spectrum outside of male and female (i.e. non-binary, asexual, etc.), subtract a point.
  
- 3) Race: If you are white, add a point; otherwise, subtract a point.
  
- 4) Sexual Orientation: If you are heterosexual, add a point.
  
- 5) Ethnicity: Add a point if you are non-Hispanic/non-Latino.
  
- 6) Origin: If you were born in the US, add a point. If you were born in any other country, make no changes.

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- 7) Religion: If you are Christian, add a point. If you are any other religion, make no changes. If you are atheist or agnostic, subtract a point.
- 8) Political Party: If you are Democrat or Republican, add a point EXCEPT whenever interacting with the “opposite” of what you chose, in which case subtract a point. If you are neither Democrat nor Republican, subtract a point.
- 9) Disability: If you are non-disabled, add a point. If you are disabled, subtract a point.
- 10) Age: Add a point if you are between 16 and 65. If not, make no changes.

It is crucial to understand that your score reflects your societal status and is not a measure of your worth. Regardless of any score, you are a marvelous wonder, so bear that in mind.

Whenever you have added and subtracted all the points as advised above to arrive at a final score, write down your score here: \_\_\_\_\_. If your score is 20, your perceived status in the United States is at its peak. The farther your score is below 20, the more externally imposed limits you face.

The vast majority of people in America have some level of privilege and some limits when measured this way. The good news is that you likely have groups you can be an ally to. The other good news is that more groups are probably trying to support you than you can name or count if you have any of the societal limits measured in this score.

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**An Important Note:** As we improve society, we raise scores. As we build the future we want to live in, one kind act at a time, we support those who are perceived as “lesser” and, thereby, shift the hearts and minds of more and more people. A genuinely equitable society won’t be able to perceptibly quantify differences in societal status using a scoring system like the one above because trying to do so won’t even make sense. All the scores would be between 9.5 and 10.5, and adding or subtracting whole points based on any factors would be unimaginable. We can get there together. Meanwhile, find groups who support you as you face limits put upon you and join other groups to help those who need you as an ally in their fight.

In other countries, many factors could be the same, but adding or subtracting a single point might be too little or too much, so partner with someone you trust and develop your own system of factors and points. Ultimately, the exact point amounts and the factors we use can be debated. What is certain, however, is that in nearly any community on Earth at this moment, there are measurable differences in how different types of people are viewed and treated. It is neither fair nor is it healthy. To build the world we want to live in, we need to reduce the points counted and the factors that matter as close to zero as possible.

The good news is that we can change the world the more we think about these systems and work with others to improve them. What is the best and kindest way forward?

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### Chapter 3 Exercises

#### Exercise 1: Identifying Inspiration

To make progress in life feel easy, almost effortless even, identify what inspires you. You probably already have a mental list of what drives you, like food, music, stories, travel, companionship, learning new things, or something else. Make that list concrete by writing down everything you can think of that inspires you.

It can be helpful to reflect on anything that has motivated you recently or garnered a comment from a friend or coworker regarding how energized you have been since some event.

Ponder any relationships with mentors, teachers, or adults you admire. List anything about those people and those relationships that have felt inspirational.

Whatever list you create in your journal now, your mission is to add as many of these elements into your daily life as possible. If you feel energized when listening to music, create and update playlists to hear that music. If you love hearing stories about successful disaster relief, find news sources that dwell less on the disaster and more on the successful support provided. If you find that a particular teacher believed in you and made you feel excited about life, use the lessons they taught to continue building the life you want.

With sources of inspiration cataloged and understood, take the final step: list ways of infusing those sources of inspiration into your workplace, your work tasks, and your career, and then do it. Use these new ideas to make your workplace *your* workplace. You might need alignment from your supervisor and colleagues to make them stick, so talk through your ideas whenever you feel it will help. For anything else, dive in and make your work more inspired.

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### Exercise 2: Creating a Compass for Your Life

While a compass points to a true magnetic north here on Earth, your life's compass points toward your ideal life. So, let's make one to keep you aware of where you want to go versus where you are headed at any moment.

If you prefer the written word to guide you, use your journal. If you are more visual, there are several tools you can use to put images in the forefront, including Pinterest and Microsoft PowerPoint. I suggest using Microsoft OneNote for those preferring a visual and written word version.

In your preferred medium listed above, create four categories:

- Values and Beliefs
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Life Goals (as far into your future as you can imagine)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Long Term Goals (within the next five years)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Short Term Goals (within the next year)

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*Values and beliefs* are the ideas that guide why you act and how you act. If you believe running a pet store is the best fit for your life, the values could be “pets deserve good lives” and “pet owners need good resources to care for their pets.” The belief could be that “pets have worth because they have feelings and need love just like humans do.”

*Life goals* are the things you hope to accomplish during your life. While these could be work-related, they need more context than your career or specific jobs. If you wish to marry, travel, or create beautiful paintings, these life projects must be on the list. By starting with this list, you break down the steps needed across your lifetime to accomplish these big goals. With this list in place, it can be easier to know tasks that need to be done in the next ten days, let alone the next ten years.

*Long-term goals* are the steps you need to take to support your life goals. Long-term goals give you a sense of how to reach each life goal. Any long-term goal, like marrying, traveling, creating beautiful paintings, or opening a pet shop, will require more than good intentions. It will also demand knowledge and money. Each long-term goal could spawn several other goals or, at the very least, could be interdependent with other goals. An example would be owning a pet shop (goal one) requiring specific education (goal two), certifications (goal three), plus enough starter money (goal four) to afford rent on a building and starter inventory.

*Short-term goals* are the tasks or projects you need to do in the next year to support your long-term goals.

As you create your vision for your life, remember that your values and beliefs are like a compass showing you a reliable direction. The goals, be they short-term, long-term, or life goals, can take longer because of obstacles, your health and energy level, unexpected changes in employment, or other

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unforeseen circumstances. Your goals can just as quickly change because you achieved things faster than you previously thought possible.



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### Chapter 4 Exercises

#### Exercise 1: Your Five

In this exercise, you will list out your most trusted, most supportive, most aligned work colleagues and write notes about them. This exercise is analytical in nature and can feel at odds with the emotions you have for the people you list. Further, the notes you take during this exercise could be sensitive and you should guard them well.

In steering your life, you must consider the nature of your friendships and kinships plus the impacts that each can have on your life's course. Similarly, in considering your career trajectory, you must consider the nature of the connections within your network. If your closest colleagues bring positivity, support, humor, and joy into your life, then this exercise should be straightforward. If, however, you're already worried, trust that instinct. It is *because of* those colleagues in particular that have immediately sprung to mind that you really, truly need to do this exercise.

**Step One:** In your journal, list out as many colleagues that you have in your current company and any others who stand out from prior jobs you have had. These should be connections who have the power to influence your projects, your daily work, or other aspects of your career. They could be someone who stands out in your mind because they always greet you in kind ways even though you don't usually have much opportunity interact otherwise. Take no more than ten minutes for this step.

**Step Two:** Next to each name, create three columns: Positive Impacts, Negative Impacts, and Bring Closer.

Under Positive Impacts, rate, from 0-5 how big the positives are from this person. A five means powerfully positive impacts on your work life (or positive intent/potential for those kinds of impacts), 0

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means zero noticeable positive impacts, and the numbers between give you flexibility to put more or less weight to that person's positivity.

Under Negative Impacts, rate the negative impacts from that colleague in similar fashion with 5 being powerfully negative impacts and 0 being zero noticeable impacts.

Under Bring Closer, you have the chance to rank how interested you are in exploring a connection with this colleague. If you feel compelled to include this person as a network connection, rate this category as a 5. If you feel zero interest in including this person in your network, rate this category as a 0.

Total the points for each colleague using this equation: Positive Impacts rating minus Negative Impacts rating plus Bring Closer rating.

Example 1: Gerald is a teammate who treats you well much of the time, but sometimes interrupts you in meetings and takes credit for joint work. You are not particularly close, and you have little desire to get closer. You might rate Positive Impacts as 3, Negative Impacts as 4, and Bring Closer as 0 for a total of  $3 - 4 + 0 = -1$ .

Example 2: Your supervisor is always busy, but somehow manages to get you good projects and tells others about your great work. While you wish you could get a better performance rating during annual performance reviews, the ratings are never terrible. For your supervisor, you might rank Positive Impacts as 4, Negative Impacts as 1, and Bring Closer as 4 for a total of  $4 - 1 + 4 = 7$ .

Example 3: An informal mentor from your last job has kept in touch, listens carefully to you regarding current work struggles and helps as a thought partner. You might rank Positive Impacts as 3,

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Negative Impacts as 0, and Bring Closer as 5 (because you thoroughly trust and enjoy this connection) for a total of  $3 - 0 + 5 = 8$ .

**Final Step:** Create a new list of your network connections with the highest scores at the top, lowest scores at the bottom. Consider the top of the list in particular and list ways you can help support, sustain, and grow those connections. How can you make those connections life-long connections? Consider the bottom of the list and write down ways you can improve them. Realize that sometimes the best way to improve a bad connection is to distance yourself as much as possible from that connection.

In no way do I advocate throwing relationships away. There is room for us to spread kindness even to those who are unkind to us. It is imperative, however, not to fool ourselves. We have to approach relationships that are toxic in clear-eyed fashion. By continuing to treat toxic coworkers with kindness, we lose energy at each engagement, and we gain no ground if that person is stubborn. So, create distance between yourself and those toxic others. Be too busy working with those who give you uplift to spend time with those who would drag you down.

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### Exercise 2: Creating Your Network Tracker

We have a multitude of applications that can hold contact information for you as you build your network. You will weigh that network's worth more fully with each passing month and each new entry. Knowing how valuable it becomes over time, preserving your contact information needs to remain a high priority throughout your career. Don't risk losing your contacts when the newest technology overwrites something in your records. Keep backups in different applications so that when one gets corrupted, you can find a new place to store backups.

You can track your network with something as simple as a contacts section within an email application, such as Contacts within Gmail, Outlook, or in an application on your mobile device. I cannot stress sufficiently how important it will be to have the ability to access and transfer that contacts list multiple times during your career, so choose wisely. The nightmare scenario is that a hardware glitch or software update obliterates your latest contacts which might also be your most critical ones. You are wise to preserve your contacts list as if each contact is worth a year of earnings. Even if you are only right about one out of 100 contacts, wouldn't it be critical to you to make sure you save that one contact's information?

Each time you meet a new colleague, take three minutes to record the following in your networking contacts application:

- Their name
- Their contact information
- Their family details (spouse, children, parents, pets)

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- Details that make this contact unique (same college you went to, same home state, shared love of a particular hobby)
- How and when you met this contact
- What this contact has offered to do on your behalf in the past
  - Act as a reference during job hunting
  - Brainstorm with you as a safe thought partner
  - Connect you to other potential contacts with key support capabilities
- What you can do, or have done, for this contact. Be sure to include timelines.
  - Provide them information
  - Introduce them to a colleague
  - Mentor them
  - Act as a thought partner

When creating new entries for your network, it can feel constructed and contrived to list the names of the pets or family members of a new contact. Fight through that feeling by remembering that you value the new contact enough to take notes so that you can better support them, understand them, and connect with them. Remind yourself that recording details about your colleagues and friends is your way of supporting yourself in the future when a detail otherwise slips away from you.

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### Chapter 5 Exercises

#### Identifying Your Mentors

Similar to the activity in Chapter 4: Assembling the Right Crew, in this exercise, you will list out your most trusted, supportive, and aligned work colleagues and write notes about them. In this case, however, you are attempting to identify someone who is farther along in their career path than you. This exercise is analytical in nature and can feel at odds with the emotions you have for the people you list. Remember, the notes you take during this exercise could be sensitive, and you should guard them well.

In finding a mentor, you must consider the nature of your work relationships and the impacts that each can have on your life's course. If your supervisors and the seasoned workers at your workplace bring positivity, support, humor, and joy into your life, then this exercise should be straightforward. What you might find, though, is that some of your candidates for mentorship come from prior experiences, like previous jobs or school. Just because you never thought to put the label "mentor" on someone doesn't mean you should overlook them now.

**Step One:** In your journal, list out seasoned colleagues that you have in your current company, even those in other work groups, and any others who stand out from prior jobs you have had. These should be connections who have had the power to influence your projects, your daily work, or other aspects of your career. Note that they could be someone completely apart from your specific workflow, but stood out to you as special, knowledgeable, and kind nonetheless. They could be someone who stands out in your mind because they always interact with you in kind ways. Add the names of any teachers you have had who seemed genuinely interested in your success. Take no more than ten minutes for this step.

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**Special note:** There is no need to list anyone who has similar or less experience than you do.

You should only be listing potential mentors, which means that they have years of experience more than you do. One notable exception is if you have been in the workforce for 20 years or more, then it is worth looking at those who have made big gains in the working world as a more significant factor.

**Step Two:** Next to each name, create two columns—Positives and Negatives.

Under Positives, rate how big the positives are from this person from 0 to 5, where 5 means they understand your industry, the roles you aspire to, and have mastery of their own higher position; 0 means they are unlikely to provide anything you need in terms of advice and insight; and numbers between giving you flexibility to give weight to that person's positives.

Under Negatives, rate the negatives in similar fashion, with 5 meaning that they leave wreckage and disharmony in their wake; 0 meaning they are flawless in their kindness practice and don't appear to bring negative issues to a potential mentorship; and the numbers in between allowing flexibility in your rating.

Total the points for each colleague using this equation: Positives minus Negatives.

**Special Note:** If you expect that the negative impacts rating would be poor or if you have a gut instinct about a potential mentor that tells you not to list them, put them in a special list off to the side and indicate that they are not under consideration. If, at some point, you reevaluate them and they appear to have shifted toward the positive and your gut instinct has settled into a more positive feeling, reconsider. Until that time, be satisfied that you have other choices.

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Example 1: Naomi is rising through the company fast, has great skills, and understands the work ecosystem in great detail in the areas you care about. She also treats others above her incredibly well, but those who report to her say she is not the best listener and does not foster growth. For Naomi, you might give her a Positives score of 4 and a negatives score of 3, leaving her with a total score of  $4 - 3 = 1$ .

Example 2: Your supervisor always stops to show you why things are being done. He solicits your input. Others who have reported to him for years really like his ability to listen, explain and motivate. For your supervisor, you might rank Positives as 2, Negatives as 0 for a total of  $2 - 0 = 2$ .

Example 3: Your college professor, Dr. Janeway, worked in your current industry for 25 years rising to a role five titles above yours. At school, she always showed deep interest in your progress and invited you to keep in touch. It has been a long time, but if you can step past the worry of being an imposition, this seems promising. You might rank Positives as 4, Negatives as 1, for a total of  $4 - 1 = 3$ .

**Final Step:** Create a new list of your potential mentors with the highest scores at the top, lowest scores at the bottom. Consider the top of the list and make an action list. Which great candidate do you reach out to first? It is always worthwhile having more than one mentor, but you will need to drive the conversations and the mentor-mentee relationship, so perhaps start with one, then build up to two or even three. Start by setting up a time with your mentor candidates and see how they “fit” you and your situation. Once the timing feels right, ask if they will formally take on the role of mentoring you.



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### Keeping Your Mentor Close

On your primary calendar, create a regular check-in with the mentor or mentors identified in the previous exercise. This entry should have no end date, should be at least once per quarter and probably no more frequent than biweekly.

By sending a text, email, or having a regular phone, video, or in-person coffee date, you can remind yourself that you have a resource in the form of a mentor who cares about your career progress and probably about you personally as well. These check-ins can enhance the life of your mentor as well since as you gain experience and wisdom, you can be a sounding board for them as they navigate work choices as well.

### Journal Reflection: What to do when your supervisee or peer becomes your supervisor?

- 1) Accept the situation. If you have feelings of envy or jealousy, make sure to cry it out, journal about it, hit a punching bag, or talk to someone you trust who does not work where you work. If you are happy about the promotion they got and don't have residual feelings about it, you will still need to accept the change, so anticipate what things will be like and what might change so you have fewer surprises.
- 2) Signal to your new supervisor that you understand the new relationship and that you will support them. Ask what kind of support would be most helpful so that it is clear to both of you.

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- 3) Balance who they are now with who they were to you before the promotion.
  - a. If the supervisor was a friend prior to their promotion, continued closeness will undoubtedly be noticed by your peers. Understand that some perceptions are out of your control while also doing your best to avoid a relationship of favoritism.
  - b. If the supervisor was a colleague you had an antagonistic relationship with, avoid speaking negatively about their decisions, their new role, or other aspects of them that might aggravate you. As you genuinely support them, each good outcome or faithful attempt to support them will build trust.

Journal Reflection: What to do when YOU become the new supervisor?

- 1) Accept the situation. You have power and responsibility, take both seriously. Forfeiting any of the power leaves others without a sure-footed leader, while abusing that power leaves others less willing to speak truthfully about important aspects of work, so walk a fine line and get feedback from your new team.
- 2) If you have familiarity with some of your supervisees more than others, become a scholar of the ones you don't know as well and learn how to equally support all of those in your care.
- 3) Avoid playing favorites.

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### Chapter 6 Exercises

Survey: How Healthy is Your Workplace for You?

You can rate your workplace across various subjective measures in the following checklist. Take a moment beforehand to guess how positive your workplace is from zero (the worst imaginable) to 60 (the best imaginable).

**Initial Guess Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

If your initial guess score is shockingly different from the total derived from scoring all the questions below, that is worth exploring. Circle a single answer per question.

1) My company's mission aligns with my "why." (i.e. I am excited about what we do here.)

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

2) My pay is at least comparable to what others in this role in this industry get.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

3) My colleagues recognize the excellent work that I do.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

4) My supervisor recognizes the excellent work that I do.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

5) The workplace culture is clearly defined.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

6) The workplace culture aligns with my values and beliefs.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

7) Bullies and difficult personalities are rare or nonexistent in my daily work life.

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8) Kindness is a core characteristic of the culture here.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9) Gossip is rare or nonexistent here.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10) There are clear opportunities for me to work on appealing projects.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11) I have clear opportunities to advance (i.e. get promotions).				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12) Robust training is available as I learn new tasks and roles.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13) There is a high level of psychological safety (feel safe even when conflicting opinions arise).				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14) My company is objectively doing better than our competitors.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15) My company is always staying on pace with rising technologies.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16) My company has good processes to help adopt new technologies.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17) I have not looked for another job in at least six months.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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18) The turnover rate here is quite low. (i.e. Most colleagues stick around for years.)

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

19) Mistakes are expected, and support exists to help us learn from them.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

20) When others ask me where I work, I am proud to talk about my company.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

Scoring: Add up every “Disagree,” then every “Agree,” and finally every “Strongly Agree” score. Plug the totals into the following equation to get the final score.

# of Disagree                  \_\_\_\_\_ (Carry this same #) = \_\_\_\_\_

# of Agree                  \_\_\_\_\_ (Multiply this by 2) = \_\_\_\_\_

# of Strongly Agree                  \_\_\_\_\_ (Multiply this by 3) = \_\_\_\_\_

Add the numbers on the right to give you the **Total** = \_\_\_\_\_ (out of 60)

If your score is 50 or higher, you agreed or strongly agreed with nearly everything. That’s great! You are probably in a good place. Any job search in this instance should be purely to create a backup plan in case your company suffers a catastrophic or unexpected problem that causes layoffs or a company closure.

If your score is 30 to 49, it is worth pondering what issues you scored as “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Are they worth leaving for? Ask your mentor for guidance.

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If your score is less than 30, you have indicated that you disagree or strongly disagree more often than you agree or strongly agree. In other words, you selected mostly negatives. You should reexamine your relationship with your current workplace and consider other options

Of particular interest, if you feel like your personal purpose in life is misaligned with the company's mission (question 1), or if you have one or more bullies/difficult personalities in your daily life (question 7), you deserve better. It would be best if you discussed alternatives with your mentor and trusted friends and family.

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Survey: How Good is Your Supervisor?

You can rate your supervisor across various subjective measures in the following checklist. Take a moment beforehand to guess how positive your supervisor is from zero (the worst imaginable) to 48 (the best imaginable).

**Initial Guess Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

If your initial guess score is shockingly different from the total derived from scoring all the questions below, that is worth exploring. Circle a single answer per question.

1) My supervisor cares about me.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

2) My supervisor aligns with positive company culture.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

3) My supervisor focuses on my stated needs.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

4) My supervisor recognizes the excellent work that I do.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

5) My supervisor ensures I get the training to do great work.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

6) My supervisor works with me on a development plan so I can grow toward my goals.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

7) My supervisor gives me grace whenever possible.

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Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

8) My supervisor is available as much as I need them to be.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

9) My supervisor is effective at disrupting negative behaviors on the team.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

10) My supervisor is also a mentor to me.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

11) My supervisor will be at the company for a long time.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

12) My supervisor does not claim credit for the ideas of others.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

13) There is a high level of psychological safety when speaking with my supervisor.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

14) I believe my supervisor cares for my well-being, at least as much as my productivity.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

15) My supervisor is interested in my advancement more than keeping me in my current role.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

16) My supervisor gives me evaluations that make sense.

Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Strongly Agree



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Scoring: Add up every “Disagree,” then every “Agree,” and finally every “Strongly Agree” score. Plug the totals into the following equation to get the total.

# of Disagree        \_\_\_\_\_ (Carry this same #) = \_\_\_\_\_

# of Agree        \_\_\_\_\_ (Multiply this by 2) = \_\_\_\_\_

# of Strongly Agree        \_\_\_\_\_ (Multiply this by 3) = \_\_\_\_\_

Add the numbers on the right to give you the **Total** = \_\_\_\_\_ (out of 48)

If your score is 40 or higher, you agreed or strongly agreed with nearly everything. That’s great! Supervisors like this are quite helpful. Any searching you do for another should be solely to have a backup plan in case of catastrophic events you cannot foresee.

If your score is 24 to 39, it is worth pondering what issues you scored as “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Are they worth leaving for? Ask your mentor for guidance unless that mentor is your supervisor. Consider bringing significant issues to your supervisor if you feel the score to question 13 was “strongly agree.”

If your score is less than 24, you disagreed or strongly disagreed more often than you agreed or strongly agreed. You should reexamine your relationship with this supervisor and consider other options. Other roles at your current company might be a good fit but understand that if you apply, your current supervisor will be alerted to that application.

You deserve a positive relationship with your supervisor, so consider your options if you don’t. If you do, count your blessings.

**\*\* Reminder: No Exercises for Chapters 7 & 8 are printed in this PDF Supplement \*\***

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### Chapter 9 Exercises

Life Pursuits Exercise:

- 1) Set a timer for 20 minutes. List out everything you think is most important in your life. You are answering the question: where should I spend my time?

Note: List things that inspire you, bring you joy, pull you into a state of flow when you do them. Perhaps it is math, spending time with animals, or building model airplanes. There are no wrong answers, just answers that fit versus answers that don't.

- 2) Circle the top five items from your list.
- 3) Look those top five items over and ponder them hard. Will these help build the future you want to live in? Are these skills you can apply? Will they enhance your life? Will they get you to a version of yourself you are proud of?

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If you have an inkling that others might dismiss anything on your list, remember that this is your list and not theirs. Besides, if you think you can change the world through art, grooming cats, balancing financial statements, repairing plumbing, writing short stories, or some other pursuit that appeals to you, you are most likely correct. You may not even see it yourself as you ponder this list, but if you think creatively, it could come after years of effort and skill-building.

The third and final step is to select the top choice out of those five. This is the item you want to start on first. It might be the best, it might just be the most appealing for where you are in life right now, but whatever made you select it, trust that instinct.

Since this feels like your most important item, create repeating times on your calendar when you will focus on it. Make the time for it early in the day whenever you can so that you are at your most energetic with your best focus, and when few demands of daily life have taken over your attention. As Oliver Burkeman advises in *4000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*, “the advice given in the financial world to pay yourself first else the money will vanish as you pay for other things in the meantime, the same applies to your time. If you do not set aside your time early and often, so, too, will it vanish.”

In other words, if you wait until the end of daily tasks to try to fit in your most important goal, you will reflect on your activities over the course of months or even years and find that you have devoted little or no time to the endeavor you claim is so important.

After placing your top item on your calendar, go through the other four pursuits you see value in and do the same. Once they are on the calendar, set one more calendar entry that is monthly titled “Check in.” It can be 30 minutes long or more. This is the time where you scan back through the

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calendar and evaluate how it is going. Honestly evaluate how much you adhered to each effort, and determine if you need more time on one and less on another and if you included an item that doesn't feel so important after all. If you left something important out, add it. These honest evaluations inform you so you can create the results you want.

Want to go deeper? Schedule a free call with me:



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