

# Lifework Lifeline

The term “lifework” is preferred because it is broader and more holistic than the terms “job” or “career”. Lifework includes all activities, paid and unpaid, that contribute to the enhancement of one's own life and/or that of others.

As you begin thinking about a lifework transition, reflecting on your past can help inform your future by:

- Becoming aware of patterns, both positive and negative,
- Realizing the impact certain people and events have had on your life,
- Noticing why you made some of the decisions you have made, and
- Helping you know what has worked well for you in the past and what has not worked so well.

One way to do this is by “drawing” or “charting” your Lifework Lifeline, or a history of the path that has brought you to where you are today.

## Tips for Drawing Your Lifework Lifeline

- A Lifework Lifeline can take many forms. While there is no one set way to create a Lifework Line, a common approach is to draw a horizontal line through the middle of a piece of paper to represent your life path. However, since our lives are anything but linear, you may find that your lifework path is better presented by a meandering or circuitous line rather than a straight one.
- It can be helpful to think of your life by decades, e.g., events and decisions in your teens, 20's, 30' etc.
- Many people need to add an extra piece of paper or two as their lifeline unfolds.
- Note with an asterisk those events or influences that effected your career and lifework. Use a plus (+) sign for positive influences and a negative (-) sign for the influences that resulted in challenges.

## What to Include in Your Lifework Lifeline

Starting with your earliest memory, include any and all memories, events, and decisions related to how you got to where you are today. Don't be concerned about how relevant a memory is to your lifework:

- Any and all career ideas and dreams you've ever had.
- Messages you remember receiving (verbally or nonverbally) from family, friends, teachers, society, etc., about schools, learning, careers, and working.
- Any experience or event that may have impacted your lifework path (e.g., going to school, being on a committee or in an organization, moving, significant life experiences,

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- changes in relationships, learning new skills or information).
- All jobs (paid or unpaid) and why you took each job; why you left.
  - Significant people who have influenced your life, positively or negatively.
  - “Non-events” – those things you always assumed or expected would happen that never did, such as getting into medical school, finding a life partner, having children, getting that promotion, etc.
  - Major lessons you’ve learned or “ah-ha” moments.

## **Action Steps**

### **Questions for Consideration**

1. What do you notice as you reflect back on your Lifework Lifeline?
2. Are there any patterns or themes that emerge?
3. Are there things you wanted to do along the way that you didn’t do or things you didn’t want to do that you did anyway?
4. How well did the things you planned turn out?
5. How did unplanned or unexpected events or situations turn out?
6. What would be helpful to keep in mind as you go forward with your lifework transition?

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