

just do it everyday

* PERSPECTIVES
FOR EVERYDAY LIFE



Just Do It Differently! Perspectives for Everyday Life

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Just Do It Differently!
Perspectives for Everyday Life

**»I've had a lot of worries in my life,
most of which never happened.«**

Mark Twain

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Just Do It Differently! A Foreword

On Courage to Act - Challenges for Everyday Life (in German: *Warum nicht anders? Der Alltag als Übung*) is the name of the booklet that we published in 2019 and have since distributed to several thousand students at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and other groups of people. It contains numerous interventions (e.g. from positive psychology) whose effectiveness has been scientifically proven and offers many opportunities for self-reflection and self-determination. The positive response has encouraged us to compile a follow-up volume consisting of further impulses, inspirations and exercises that we use at the House of Competence (HoC) in the development of our courses.

The new booklet is also intended to present the work of the *Perspektivenlabor*, which was founded at the HoC in 2020. The *Perspektivenlabor* promotes a change of perspective and a diversity of perspectives. Students can discover scope for action that is helpful in an increasingly complex and confusing world. It is important to us not only to prepare young people for changing external requirements in the world of work, but also to enable them to recognise the necessities of shaping the future themselves.

This has a lot to do with personality development. And with combining scientific and technical professionalism with human sensitivity. Just as the importance of recognising meaning and reflecting on one's own attitude is increasing, the significance of viewing the mega-topics of the present (such as education, environmental protection, repairing environmental damage, healthcare, the digital revolution or the creation of a more ecologically and socially just world) purely through the lens of market forces, power and profit, is decreasing. The contribution of the Perspectives Lab lies precisely in this: stepping out of the usual patterns of thought and behaviour and enabling change through new perspectives.

The following topics characterise the work at the *Perspektivenlabor* - and give this booklet its structure. We associate internal perspectives with measures that increase the ability to reflect and promote personal assessment. Shaping perspectives make development goals tangible and help people to set out on their own path. Perspectives on leadership motivate us to familiarise ourselves with good leadership practice and current leadership models or to help decide how

we want to work together in the future. External perspectives show new stories and offer the opportunity to come into contact with those involved in change. The common goal is to foster courage, confidence and motivation.

This seems to be sorely needed. Students in particular do not have it easy at the moment. While the whole world is asking how energy consumption can be reduced and rising prices capped - and war, the climate crisis and nuclear threats demand our attention – students, of all people, are once again falling out of the focus of public interest. This is despite the fact that this generation will one day have to fix what is currently being wasted and squandered. The past pandemic years and the social isolation measures have caused deep wounds and exacerbated life crises for many students. It's time to change this!

This booklet is a collection of perspectives for everyday life. It is intended to break the fixation on problems and conflicts because this attitude leads to a misjudgement of risks, fear, negative feelings and powerlessness. Anyone who only paints horror stories on the wall

should not be surprised that creativity, perseverance and willingness to act are neglected. But there are grounds for optimism. According to historian Rutger Bregman, who has compiled the latest findings from biology, psychology, archaeology, anthropology, sociology and history, it is realistic to assume that humans are "basically good" (2022a) and that we can organise our lives together in a completely different way. If we decide to resist the "negative reflex", we have space to tell other stories: about the world and about our own experiences (von Wurmb- Seibel, 2022). Bad news is not the end of the story. It is the beginning. Because after every catastrophe, no matter what kind, people are forced to react to it and find solutions. If they do this constructively, the solutions will be better. At technical universities, they would now say: "You can't swear at an engineer."

If the perspectives, interventions or experiences that are presented below help students not to resign themselves to the current situation, but to grow or even surpass themselves, this does not imply that the local community or society at large should shirk its own responsibility. On the contrary! In fact, the concerns of

the younger generation must be taken more seriously than ever before, as the judgement of the Federal Constitutional Court in April 2021 on climate protection and intergenerational justice has shown.

It is true: Change always starts with the individual, where there is an individual framework of control. But it also requires determination across the board to finally overcome the supposed lack of alternatives.

The motto is: Just do it differently!

Perspectives for Everyday Life. A Guide

How do we move from knowledge to action? Hardly any other question is currently being discussed so passionately. The following considerations may provide a framework: Change should happen voluntarily and be motivated by a clear desire to enrich one's own life or that of others. Desperation, fear or shame are not good starting points. If you want to take a first step on the journey, your baggage should be light. The articles in this booklet reflect this attitude.

Anyone trying out new things would do well not to lose momentum by having exaggerated expectations of the result. Change is not a surgical procedure that simply removes the old. The old can and will remain, and it takes time to establish new patterns of behaviour. The motto is: "Nothing is good until it gets done" (Erich Kästner). The old is still there, but the new gradually stabilises through regular practice. The exercises in this booklet should be used with this attitude.

The new is created on the basis of the old. It is helpful to realise that many people have good reasons to consider the old to be right and good. Recognising and acknowledging this and still committing to a direction that leads to a different future: how wonderful that would be. The more respectfully you treat yourself and others, the better. The more you take

setbacks, both for yourself and for others, into account without devaluing them, the better. Change is unfamiliar at first, it doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. The more often you practise together, the easier it becomes.

Change does not always bring improvements. Sometimes you simply have to be allowed to make mistakes. It is even normal for change processes to initially result in a drop in performance. Knowing this, putting up with it and establishing a culture of error in yourself and others that is characterised by both courage and composure lead in the right direction. No one has summarised this better than Ingrid Steeger. "Mistakes make you wise, so one is not enough!"

Psychological research has many proven effective recipes for change or, even more broadly, for learning processes (Mangelsdorf, 2020), which it would be grossly negligent to ignore. Nevertheless, some of them are still far too little recognised. One possible recipe: positive emotions such as joy, love, cheerfulness, hope, awe or gratitude help with change processes. It is advisable to regularly focus your attention on the good and enriching things in life, as this releases energy, strength and resources that would otherwise remain blocked

by the common everyday focus on problems and obstacles. Such a redirection or refocusing of attention can be practised.

There is not just one formula for successful change. There are thousands! Perhaps the best researched is the WOOP method (Oettingen, 2017), the effectiveness of which has been proven in numerous application examples. Otherwise, however, it is important to discover and try out the right idea, inspiration or intervention for yourself from the multitude of possibilities - preferably together with others in order to gain confidence and trust. In this booklet, we have therefore made a conscious decision to include texts that provide examples or ask questions, alongside specific exercise suggestions. Sometimes these perspectives can lead us down more helpful paths.

Finally, it is worth taking a look at the many good examples that have worked for others. There are many stories of success, both past and present, that we can draw from. And their examples create freedom. Moreover, it usually helps to join forces with others - because what has made the human species so successful is not the overabundance of genius, but the human propensity to imitate. In this vein, we hope that

the perspectives presented here can have an effect on your everyday lives.

Another note for the reader: For us, 'Just do it differently' also means that we always switch to 'you' when we present specific exercises. In doing so, we are following the common practice in our courses, where we have found that this somewhat more personal form of address helps people to engage better with the exercise.

Internal* Perspectives

It often seems as if the world is spinning faster and faster - and we are spinning with it. Time, for many the most precious commodity, is racing and slipping through our fingers. Pressure is omnipresent, we feel it within ourselves, in our environment and at work.

The time is ripe for a pause. We need a different approach to ourselves and others in order to counter superficial expectations and false claims. No more 'faster and faster, more and more', but more time for reflection, serenity and the joy of meaning.

Looking inwards helps us to look deeper and find new perspectives and perhaps also to look at our worries and questions in a different way. The best ideas often come from boredom: When we give space to thoughts and feelings that have probably been there for a long time and are bothering us. Admittedly, most people find it difficult to switch off and do nothing for a while. Many get restless and can't bear the peace and quiet - they gratefully reach for their smartphone, which always has a distraction in store.

* TIME FOR THE ESSENTIALS

Just concern yourself with yourself!

Creativity needs leisure. Good ideas and thoughts do not arise under pressure. Just by giving things our full attention, something changes. And if we manage to let go and relinquish control for a while, some things seem to develop by themselves.

This principle of Taoism is called 'Wu Wei'. It is one of the many impulses that can be found in the following pages alongside many other suggestions and exercises: why not start the morning in a completely different way or take time for yourself? Get closer to your wishes, values and goals. Feel inside yourself. Let your thoughts flow. Scientific studies show that this can make a significant contribution to happiness and well-being.

**Always give yourself time for such inner perspectives:
Time to look, time for mindfulness and reflection.**

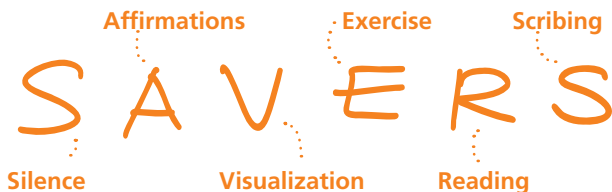
Motivational Boost in the Morning

The alarm clock rings, you press the snooze button, turn over again and go back to sleep. Who hasn't experienced this? But what happens when we postpone the first task of the day? As well as the risk of increasing our tiredness by snoozing, the next time we look at the alarm clock we feel hectic. We stumble out of bed, rush out of the house without breakfast but with increased stress levels. This in turn has an effect on our personal stress levels throughout the day.

Now imagine doing it completely differently. You make the first 30 minutes of the day your personal highlight by taking time for a relaxed start to the day and by using these minutes wisely. Reserve time first thing in the morning for activities and topics that are related to your personal goals and wishes, or that you have wanted to tackle for a long time but don't think you have time for.

An individual morning routine can consist of mindfulness exercises, reading, writing in a gratitude diary or visualising personal goals with a vision board, for example. Or you can do a short sports workout followed by relaxation. The habits you choose are up to you. The important thing is that you choose activities that are personally meaningful and important to you.

In his book *Miracle Morning*, Hal Elrod (2020), for example, suggests a one-hour morning routine in 6 steps:



With your personalised morning routine, you will get closer to your goals step by step and stay on the ball. Because even if you only read 10 pages of a book every morning, in a month you will have read a total of 300 pages and possibly the entire work. Even if you only learn 5 words of a new language every day, your vocabulary will continue to expand. This sense of achievement will accompany you throughout the day and kick-start your motivation. The snooze button becomes superfluous because you can look forward to your valuable routine as soon as you wake up. (saf)

Breathing Meditation

When was the last time you took a deep breath? Right now, simply take a deep breath into your chest, take a moment and then breathe out deeply again. I know it's tempting to just keep reading, but why don't you just try it out now - take a few seconds? Repeat this a few times. Breathe in and out deeply. Do you notice how you become calmer?

When we are stressed, our breathing speeds up and we become restless, while we breathe more slowly when we are relaxed. As you may have just sensed, we can control our own sensations by consciously focussing on our breathing. This allows you to react to situations in which you feel anxious or stressed.

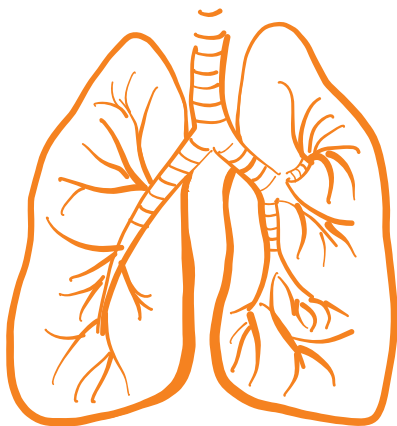
If you want, you can now go even deeper and take a few minutes to become more aware of your breathing. Where in your body can you feel your breathing?

The 15-minute mindfulness exercise, for which you will find the QR code and link on the right, is suitable for this. Try it out, get involved and discover something new!

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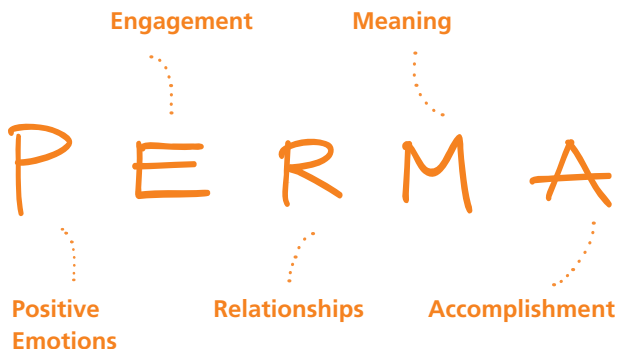
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How do you feel now? Has your breathing changed? Will you take a few minutes every now and then in your everyday life to consciously breathe and pause? Reflect on which helpful thoughts and sensations you would like to take away with you. (ale)

Flourishing: PERMA Model

Positive psychology, especially the co-founder of this still young science, Martin Seligman, is concerned with the foundations for a successful life. What factors contribute to our well-being? How do we achieve a state of 'flourishing', of authentic happiness? Seligman (2012) summarises the basics of this in his PERMA model: PERMA stands for five factors that are crucial for the development of our satisfaction and well-being. All of these areas can be shaped and influenced by us in order to go through life happier and more fulfilled.



Positive emotions increase our attitude to life and can not only strengthen the individual, but also contribute to a positive society. They are like micronutrients that strengthen us and allow us to go through the day feeling upbeat. Most people feel negative emotions such as anger, annoyance, worry or frustration much more frequently in everyday life. If we manage to experience more positive emotions and consciously recognise them or incorporate them into our lives, we generally end the day happier and look forward to the next one.

Engagement is the second factor: people can flourish when they have interests or hobbies that they pursue with enthusiasm and passion and where they can utilise their strengths. According to Seligman, those who utilise their strengths enter the 'flow' - the wonderful feeling of being enthusiastically active and completely immersed in the activity. Perhaps you know the feeling of forgetting everything around you while immersed in sport, painting, gardening, making music or just playing.

Relationships are the third area. Well-being arises when people can live in a positive network of relationships. Positive relationships give strength, vitality, joy and security. We usually

experience moments of great joy with other people: a good conversation with friends, a warm hug, playing with children, a success in team sports. Moments that we like to remember.

The fourth point is the development of **meaning** in life. Research shows that this is best achieved when you are committed to others or with others. Put simply: giving makes us happy. A thank you from others lifts our mood. According to Seligman, "my grandmother used to say to me when I was unhappy: "Why don't you go out and help someone?" "

The fifth key is **success**. A sense of achievement makes you happy and proud, it boosts motivation and productivity. Well-being includes the feeling of having achieved something: finishing a task on time or eating muesli in the morning instead of leaving the house without breakfast. Seligman thus turns preconceptions on their head: it is not intelligence that is the prerequisite for success, but the determination to tackle things and see them through to the end. (*msc*)

This presentation is based on the description of the PERMA model by Philip Streit in Härtl-Kasulke/Revers (2018, p.11).

Manifesting Goals

Do you have a dream goal that you would like to live or achieve? If you find it difficult to get closer to it, the following exercise can help you. It is best to do the exercise in the morning immediately after waking up.

Get into a cosy position, for example sitting cross-legged on a blanket on the floor. Or sit comfortably on a chair. You are welcome to close your eyes.



Step 1 - Naming

Describe what you want to achieve in a short sentence. These can be smaller projects, such as "I will manage to repair my bike on my own", or larger ones, such as "I will hold my finished novel in my hands this year." Say your plan out loud or silently in your head several times.

Step 2 - Imagining

Anschließend stellst du dir passende Bilder vor, die dich zu deinem Traumziel führen. Du kennst dich selbst am besten: Was kannst du dafür tun, um deinem Vorhaben näher zu kommen? Willst du alleine dein Fahrrad reparieren, dann stelle dir vor, wie du neue Ersatzteile besorgst und an deinem Fahrrad rumschraubst. Möchtest du den Roman schreiben, dann stelle dir vor, wie du am Schreibtisch sitzt und an den Seiten schreibst. Male die Szenarien in deinem Kopf detailreich aus.

Step 3 - Feeling

Finally, feel inside yourself: How would it feel to have achieved your big dream goal? What emotions do you feel? Happiness, joy, satisfaction, pride, gratitude, a sense of purpose? Let these feelings radiate throughout your whole body and grow - so big that they seem to radiate beyond your physical boundaries.

Repeat this exercise regularly - and manifest your dream goal.
(sim)

Acting by Not Acting

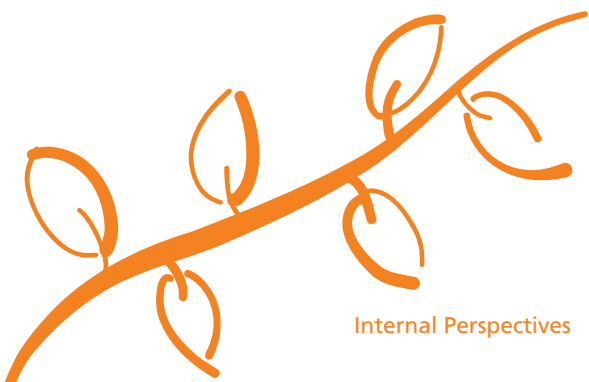
Being constantly busy, rushing into work and wanting to force things - we know these feelings only too well. Everything has to be done as quickly as possible so that we can tick it off and move on to something new. In our Western society in particular, there is an assumption that you are only productive if you take action and are busy all the time. The opposite of this is the Taoist principle of 'Wu Wei', which means 'action through inaction'.

Wu Wei does not mean remaining inactive, but rather giving things the opportunity to unfold. A good example to familiarise yourself with this principle is growing vegetables: Spring arrives and the first seeds are sown. Now it is nature's turn to allow the seeds to flourish. Watering the seeds excessively will not make the plant sprout faster. Nor will it accelerate growth if you pull on the plant.

Wu Wei means giving processes the time they need. It means adopting an attitude of effortlessness and trusting that things will develop in the right direction. Simply letting things run their course often makes us feel insecure and gives us a sense of loss of control. However, we find ourselves in a natural flow when we recognise when it makes sense to act and when it does not. In many situations, it is good to relinquish control

and let go, for example when it comes to expectations of our fellow human beings, of ourselves or our future.

The next time you have a problem, just sit back, give yourself some time and then look at the problem from a distance. Satisfaction and happiness always arise when you don't want to force anything, and perhaps new perspectives will even open up. Or your view of the big picture will be sharpened. Wu Wei is not a whitewash, but a practice-orientated path (Fischer, 2005) to more depth and serenity in the diversity of life. (*sim*)



Personal Values

Values define what is important to us personally across situations. They depend largely on our subjective view of the world. Because each person has a different world view, each individual has a different mix of values. In addition, everyone has their own hierarchy within this mix of values. For some of us, for example, freedom is important. For others, security, social justice or ecological sustainability.

We tend to experience positive emotions when we act in accordance with our values or when our environment represents similar values. On the other hand, we tend to experience negative emotions when the opposite is the case. Personal values tend to develop unconsciously over the course of our lives. However, the more consciously we realise them, the more likely we are to live by them. Scientific studies show that this significantly increases our chances of personal success and satisfaction.

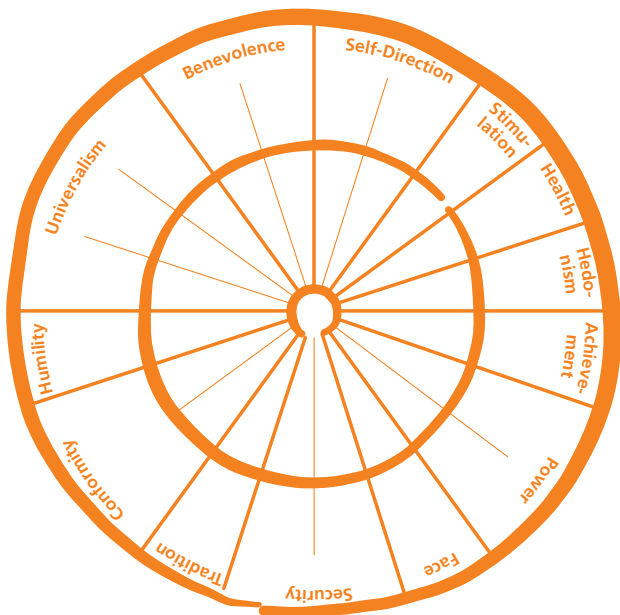
There are several valuable concepts that can help you discover important, often unconscious aspects of your personality. Based on scientific studies and professional experience, we are convinced that values are one of the most central aspects of one's personality. They play a decisive role in determining what fulfils us in life.

Research results imply that in our often hectic everyday lives, it is not self-evident to be clear about our own personal values. People who have clarity about their inner values and live in harmony with them are more likely to be personally successful and satisfied, and are more likely to act in a socially and ecologically sustainable manner.

To track down your values, you can, for example, refer to the cross-cultural values defined by Shalom H. Schwartz (Schwartz 2012). You can find an overview of this on the Core Values Finder website (see QR code). The following coaching impulse fits in with this (according to Blickhan, 2021, p. 51): What examples can you think of regarding how you live your values in everyday life? Do you remember a situation in which a value played a special role? What things or people remind you of your values? (*heb; msc*)

This text was first published in large parts at:

findyourvalues.de



bit.ly/3W6ey1q

The Wonderful World of Gravity

Do you remember a moment when you experienced the weight of the earth on your own body? For example, can you feel the weight of your arms right now? Why don't you take a few seconds to do this?

You can actively direct your focus and notice things that would otherwise happen unconsciously. Simply perceive the force of gravity, from moment to moment, in the here and now, completely and without comment. If thoughts arise, that's fine, just let them pass. Observe the present moment without judgement or evaluation. Now try to perceive the space between the sole of your foot and the ground you are standing on. Can you feel your points of contact with the ground? Do you perhaps even feel rooted?

The 16-minute mindfulness exercise (see QR code), which is dedicated to the power of attraction, will guide you. Perhaps you would like to give it a try? Have fun with it!

And did you know that bodies and the earth attract each other? There is an interaction. Can you perceive the force of attraction that you and your body exert on the earth? *(a/e)*



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bit.ly/3XdrJ2b

Self-Compassion

Life is full of challenges, some of which we master better, others worse. When we fall short of our expectations or something goes wrong through no fault of our own, we often take refuge in scathing self-criticism or try not to let our failure and the associated pain get to us in the first place. But how can we get in touch with our pain instead of confronting difficult feelings with fierce resistance? How can we observe it and respond to it with kindness and understanding?

The alternative to the programme we are familiar with is called self-compassion. As new and unfamiliar as the word may seem, the idea behind it is not. Self-compassion is the ability to treat yourself with love, especially when you are feeling bad - just as we would do with a loved one or another person in need. Compassion seems to be a natural response to suffering in other people. However, our brain blueprint makes it extremely difficult for us to give it to ourselves when we need it most. Self-compassion takes practice and first an understanding of what it is.

Self-compassion consists of three core elements:

1st mindfulness enables us to recognise how we are feeling and what feelings we are carrying inside. **2nd Self-kindness** helps us to be loving and compassionate towards ourselves in moments of pain, just as we would towards a friend who is not feeling well. **3rd being human together** reminds us that pain and suffering are feelings that all people in the world know and experience.

According to Doris Iding, self-compassion gives us the strength to recognise our suffering and to remember that everyone makes mistakes and that difficult feelings are part of life (Iding, 2019). Giving ourselves understanding creates space for comfort and a helpful way of dealing with the challenge. This does not mean that difficulties are sprinkled with glitter, but quite the opposite: self-compassion requires the courage to turn to painful experiences in order to care for them and enable healing instead of neglecting the wounds. If we manage to cultivate a friendly relationship with ourselves, we can gain emotional stability and strength. Cultivating self-compassion helps us to make friends with the most important person in our lives: ourselves. *(kol)*

Self-Compassion Break

This exercise helps you to remember to apply the three core elements of self-compassion when life gets difficult: Mindfulness, self-kindness and common humanity. It is important that you find a language for the exercise that is effective for you personally and feels good. Feel free to try out different formulations.

Think of a situation that was difficult, in which you felt burdened or stressed. This could be a problem in your relationship, a failure at university or at your part-time job or something that didn't go right first time. Look for a mild or moderate problem to start with. Footballers don't start out in the Bundesliga straight away either. It's similar with our self-compassion, which needs to be trained first. Choose an easy to moderately difficult problem - the resources of our self-compassion grow gradually, so don't start with the biggest challenge straight away.

Visualise the situation as clearly as possible. What are the circumstances? Who is saying what to whom? What is happening? Can you feel the associated discomfort in your body?

Mindfulness | Now say to yourself: "This is a moment of suffering." Alternatively: "That hurts."; "Ouch!"

Being human together | Try to say the following to yourself: "Suffering is part of life." Alternatively: "I'm not alone."; "Others feel the same as me. We all experience things like this."

Self-kindness | Try to say to yourself now: "May I be kind to myself." Alternatively: "May I give myself what I need."; "May I accept myself as I am." If you find it difficult to find the right words, imagine someone close to you who is in a similar situation to you. What would you say to this person?

Reflection | Take a moment to reflect. How did you feel about the sentences you said to yourself? Was it possible to find kind words? Were you able to say them to yourself? Was this easy or difficult? Did something inside you change? Sometimes it takes a while to find a language that is right for you personally and feels genuine. Take the time you need to do this. *(kol)*

Confronting Worries Differently

In everyday (study) life, there are always occasions for minor and sometimes major fears and worries. The occasion is often a situation that seems both unavoidable and uninfluenceable, and which we therefore feel exposed to. This judgement creates and reinforces our fear. This prevents us from recognising what steps we can actually take to deal with the situation better or even change it. If we learn to face our fear differently, we not only create immediate relief, but also gain an insight into how we can deal with the situation differently. One way to face our fears differently in this sense is to take a close look at them - instead of avoiding them or losing ourselves in them.

Go to a quiet, undisturbed place and sit down comfortably. Focus your attention on your body. Can you feel where the anxiety is located? There is often an area within your body where the feeling of anxiety is particularly noticeable. This can be in the lower abdomen, the diaphragm, the heart or the throat. Sometimes it takes some time before we can localise this area. Where do you feel your anxiety?

Then notice how this area feels. Stop thinking about the situation and your fear of it and playing through possible scenarios in your mind! Instead, focus your attention completely on this area and notice how it feels. Continue to breathe calmly. You may notice some tension. Or an impulse for a movement. Or a thought arises. Perhaps the feeling in this area will change after a while. Or another area comes to the fore. Whatever happens: register the change, come back to your current perception and continue to breathe calmly.

Then ask yourself the following questions and observe how your feelings change in each case: What exactly am I afraid of? What would happen if what I'm afraid of happens? What can I do to deal with the situation? Make sure you always come back to feeling when you ask yourself these questions and don't get lost in thinking!

Finally, finish the questions to yourself, stand up and notice whether anything has changed. Perhaps there is something to do? If you find the exercise easy, try it next time without the questions. Maybe that will be enough. (*dsc*)

The Inner Wolf

Which of us hasn't had them? Those days when we only notice the negative things, when nothing works out and we're just in a bad mood.


What about a change of perspective?

Sound difficult? Let the following story inspire you: Once upon a time there was an Indian who was sitting round the campfire with his grandchildren. He told them about two wolves. One was very bad, angry and bad-tempered. Whereas the other wolf was cheerful, friendly and generous. These two wolves fought a tireless battle. Sometimes one was stronger, sometimes the other. A constant to and fro. "But which of the wolves will win?" asked a grandchild. The grandfather answered wisely: "The one you feed."

What does this mean for our lives?

These two sides also regularly emerge in our thoughts. Each of us carries them within us, both the negative and the positive side. It is up to us which side we want to strengthen, where we put our focus: on the negative, angry side or the happy, empowering side. We can decide where our energy should flow. We can actively decide and shape life. *(kmy)*

»ENERGY
FLOWS
WHERE
ATTENTION
GOES.«

A circular arrow diagram in orange ink. It starts with an arrowhead pointing towards the word 'ENERGY' in the top line, curves around the right side, and ends with an arrowhead pointing towards the word 'ATTENTION' in the bottom line, illustrating a cyclical relationship between energy flow and attention.

- HAWAIIAN
WISDOM

Letting Go of Tension

Small, slow and gentle movements can relax tense parts of the body. At the same time, the feeling for your own body is improved.

Put on comfortable clothes and lie down on a blanket. Lie on your back with your legs stretched out and your arms beside your body. Feel your breath: the inhalation, the exhalation and the short pause after the exhalation. Observe how the breath comes and goes, but do not interfere with the breathing rhythm.



Bring your attention to your head. Slowly and gently lift your head a little away from the floor. The movement is so small that it is almost invisible; only the weight of your head is released from the floor. How does the movement feel? Which parts of your body are active to perform the movement? Where do you feel a change in tension? Answer these questions not by thinking, but by feeling! Then slowly lower your head back to the floor and lay it down completely; in other words, let go of any superfluous tension that you can still feel. Take a short pause (for about one breath).

Repeat the raising and lowering of the head a few more times. Make sure that you are fully alert each time; the path back to the floor is just as important as the movement away from the floor. Then take a break in which you just lie down and don't move.

Then turn your attention to the left shoulder and go through the same steps as with the head (only move the shoulder, the arm remains still); then to the right shoulder. Then to the left and right arm. To the left and right leg. Take a break after each body part.

Turn onto your stomach and repeat all the steps.

Finally, notice your body as a whole again. Then slowly come over to one side to sit and continue to stand. Stand upright, arms and shoulders hanging, gaze towards the horizon. Has anything changed in the way you are standing now? Do you feel different?

Next time, try lying on your left side and then on your right side. Place a pillow under your head so that your head doesn't hang down; your legs are on top of each other and your knees are bent so that you don't tip forwards or backwards. When lying on your side, you can only move your head, upper arm and upper leg.

Which other body parts can you move in this way? From which starting position? (dsc)

Emotions

You find yourself in a challenging situation and your thoughts are torn back and forth. There's just a lot going on and you're feeling restless inside. So allow yourself a little break. Take a step back mentally and distance yourself from the situation. Take a moment to consciously recognise your sensations and feelings. What is going on inside you?

Now you can think about which of these feelings and thoughts are more of a hindrance to you and your situation and which are beneficial. Decide for yourself how you want to deal with the situation and your thoughts. You are free to choose your own behaviour.

Sometimes it helps to link the change you want to make with a specific everyday situation. For example, the next time you walk through a door, take this as an opportunity to adopt a new inner attitude and the corresponding posture. Observe what it does to you and your surroundings. The more often you practise this, the easier it will become over time to consciously choose your own emotions. *(kmy)*

just see it differently

How do you measure success?

Do you remember something that made you so happy that you would have wanted to embrace the whole world?

When have you grown beyond yourself?

What does wealth mean for you?

What are the things preventing you from having regular moments of silence and reflection?

What activities give
you strength and ener-
gy right now?

What are you grateful
for?

What reminds you
of your values in the
everyday?

What connection is the-
re between the things
you do every day and
the things that are really
important to you?

What are you really
good at?

Shaping Perspectives



Life is like a canvas on which an infinite variety of possibilities can be depicted. Initially, there are no limits for the artist. But before he or she hatches, erases, brushes, paints in oil or chalk, adds small accents or even covers the whole canvas in colour, he or she would do well to understand the craft of painting, the properties of the tools, brushes and colours and to have all the possibilities in mind before creating the work of art. This is especially true for young artists.

Students today are also often faced with an almost infinite number of options, have to make decisions, find their vocation and profession and follow their path. And this in times that are characterised by change, uncertainty and a flood of impressions and events.

The inspirations and exercises in this chapter are intended to give you ideas for taking a different path. To rethink life plans. To ask yourself: am I on the right path? Who am I, what defines me, who do I want to be? Am I happy with myself and who I am? What would I like to do differently or would I simply like to try something

* DISCOVER LIFE'S JOURNEY

new? All this in order to find out what characterises me, what style suits me, what I am passionate about, how I can best express myself and create my 'art of living'.

The texts and challenges help to make starting a job and other life paths colourful, unusual and insightful and to get a taste of different areas of life. They get to the bottom of the questions of how we can align our daily compass with our goals and get going, what our personal strengths, needs and passions are and what gives our lives meaning - regardless of the habits and expectations of others.

To make the world of tomorrow a more colourful place, we need courageous people who are prepared to take unfamiliar paths.

Today I Am Brave

After waking up, think about what is important today. What quality - in the sense of an inner attitude for the day - you would like to practise today. Perhaps one that could be particularly helpful in a situation or that will transform your surroundings into a more beautiful place.

Formulate an **intention** for the day, for example:

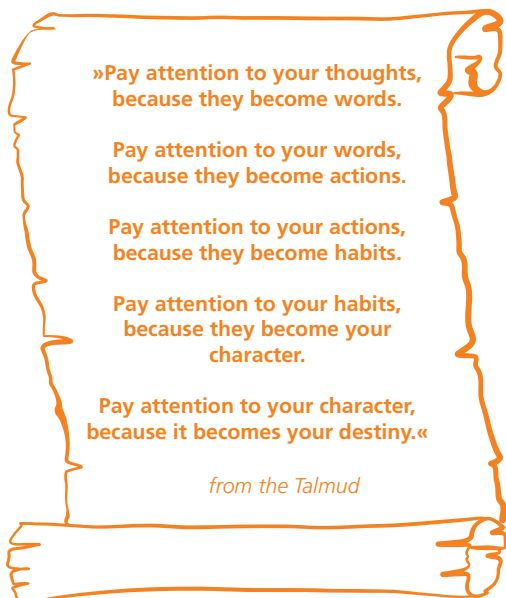
"Today I'm going into the exam calm and relaxed".

"Today I am open and friendly", or: "Today I am courageous".

Then make a playful exercise out of behaving as if you have already mastered this characteristic. Like an actor slipping into a completely new role. How does it feel to possess such a characteristic? How would someone who already has this quality behave? Rejoice in every moment when you remember your intention, don't focus on moments of forgetfulness or failure, which will probably happen at some point or other.

We know about the **neuroplasticity** of our brain: the ability of our synapses and brain regions to change according to use - and we utilise this. Intention (thinking) becomes practice (action) and new habits are formed through repetition, which are mapped in neural networks. In this way, you automatically

promote your positive qualities over time and strengthen your conviction that you can overcome challenges on your own.
(rie)



Find Your Superpower

Strengths are an important foundation for a vision of your happy future. People who live their strengths in everyday life often feel happier than those who are unable to utilise their strengths on a regular basis. However, it is not always easy to discover and utilise your own strengths, your “superpowers”. To find out exactly what your superpower is, the following approach can help.



Focus 1: Self-Perception

Write down six strengths, talents, skills and character traits that you can think of spontaneously. Anything goes. Even if you don't often encounter and perceive something as a strength in yourself, it is still a strength. Write it down and ask yourself: "What else?" You can also write down more than six strengths.

Focus 2: Outsider's Perspective

Choose a person from your environment who is favourably disposed towards you. Imagine asking this person, "What are my six greatest strengths?". What would they answer? Write down the person's name and their answers and ask yourself, "What else would they say?"

Do the same with a person from your family and circle of friends. Or ask them directly in person!

Focus 3: Personal Track Record

In a two-column table on the left, write down one success of your life per cell. This could be the swimming badge, the driving test, something you didn't think you could do before but later achieved anyway. Something you helped others with - and much more. You define which experiences are a success

for you. Have you already added some successes in the left-hand column? Then take a close look: What talents, skills or strengths were necessary for you to achieve this success, this performance? Write them in the right-hand column. At the end, read through the talents, skills and strengths on the right-hand side: congratulations! They all belong to you and you can use them to shape your future.

Focus 4: External Perspective

What inspires you about other people? Think about a specific person that you really like - and a few different facets of their personality. This could be one of your friends, a family member, a famous personality from politics, sport, culture or history, from a book or film. What fascinates you about this person? What qualities appeal to you? Write down the person's name and the qualities that inspire you.

Conclusion

At the end, you can summarise all the strengths, talents and skills you have noted into clusters and give them headings. And? What is your superpower? By the way: The things you find remarkable about others in Focus 4 are also strengths that are inherent in you. Try them out in everyday life!

(leg; ber)

Between Stimulus and Response

According to Stephen R. Covey (2018), a fundamental characteristic of effective people is being proactive. In this context, proactive means not only taking the initiative, but also taking responsibility for your own decisions. To do this, it is important to recognise the difference between the things that happen to me and the way in which I react to these things. Or, to paraphrase Viktor Frankl, there is a space between stimulus and response in which our development and freedom are founded.

Every person has the innate ability to choose their reaction or perspective on a situation and to act accordingly. Proactive people do not blame their behaviour on external, unchangeable factors, but make conscious decisions based on their values. In this way, they train their effectiveness and learn to control their lives better. You yourself choose the reaction rules according to which you act.

On a small scale, you can practise this with daily external impulses or stimuli, so that your emotions slowly cease to twist you this way and that, as they once did. When you practise this on a small scale, you realise that you can also influence your own reactions and feelings in major life situations by changing your assessment of the situation. Because often it

is not the circumstances that need to be changed, but rather the perspective on the situation. (vas)

» I AM NOT A
PRODUCT OF MY
CIRCUMSTANCES.

I AM A
PRODUCT OF MY
DECISIONS. «

- STEPHEN
R. COVEY

Wheel of Life

The Wheel of Life helps you to look at your current life situation, reflect on it and check whether your life is in the desired balance or whether there are areas that you should perhaps pay more attention to again. If we focus very strongly on a particular task or project, it can quickly happen that other areas of life are forgotten and therefore lose their balance.

The Wheel of Life is about personal growth by giving each area of life the attention it deserves - and thus checking whether something is out of balance.

Create your own Wheel of Life

You will need about 30 minutes, a sheet of A4 paper and a few coloured pencils.

Preparation

Draw a large circle. Divide it into eight pieces of cake. Think about eight areas of life that are relevant to you and name the boxes accordingly. Possible areas of life could be: Family, partnership/love, social contacts/friendships, health/fitness, Pleasure/leisure, study/career, finances/money, relaxation/self-care, fulfilment of purpose.

Divide the circle from the centre into a scale of 1-10 (see illustration).

Evaluate your areas of life

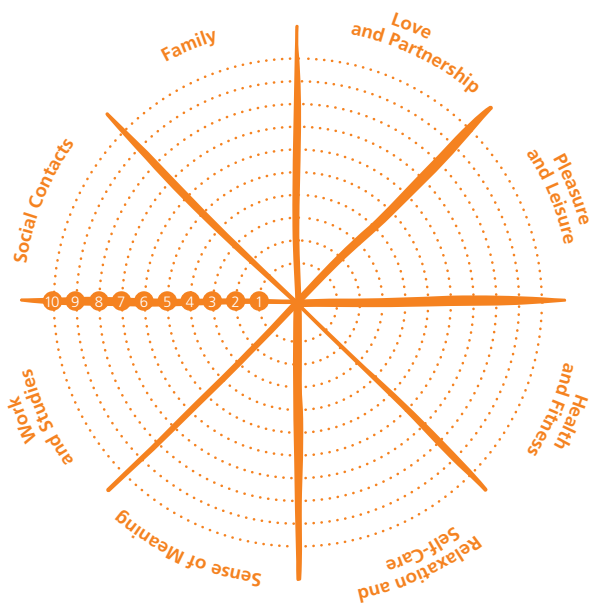
Now take a few moments for each field and think about how satisfied you currently are with the respective area of your life. Rate from 1 (dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). Colour in the corresponding fields. This creates a network of your satisfaction.

Reflection

Take a quiet look at your wheel of life. What do you notice? What makes you happy? Which areas would you like to change and tackle? Finally, take a few minutes to write down ideas of what you can do today to get closer to your desired goal.

Your wheel, your rules

It's not about creating a perfect circle or having all values at 10. Perhaps a lower number is enough for you in some areas because they are not quite so important at the moment. The wheel of life is not something that is fixed. It is something that changes. Repeat the exercise at certain intervals. You will see if and what has changed. This can help you to keep focussing on the important things in life and stay in balance! (aos)



Build a Compass

We can expect ups and downs in life. Sometimes it's easy in the sunshine and sometimes we have to brave dark storms. You need a compass so that you don't lose your bearings in the high waves.

The following questions can help you to find out in which direction you would like to steer your life. Don't worry if you don't know all the answers straight away. Feel inside yourself to see whether each question is good for you and whether you want to get to the bottom of it, otherwise just skip to the next question. The questions help you to build a compass that is made up of the areas of work/study and life. This can help you determine your course and set your personal north when making decisions in life. Such a course is not straight, but with your compass from a work and life perspective, you can orientate yourself in the future. Ask yourself the following questions:

Work perspective

Why are you studying or working? What higher goal are you aiming for? What constitutes meaningful/good work for you? How important is money to you? What space do you give to experiences, growth and dreams? What added value/

meaningfulness does work provide you? What core values do you pursue with your work?

The following aspects can serve as food for thought when considering these questions: How important to you are time flexibility, opportunities for advancement, lifelong learning or externally visible success? How important is it to you to work with others towards higher goals, for example technologies, environmental protection, humanitarian or social goals?

View of life

What do you strive for in life? How important is your free time to you, how much space do hobbies take up? What relationships do you have with others? What role do your family, friends and other people play? What is a good life for you? Do you believe in a higher power, fate or something else? How does this affect your life? What space do joy, fun, love and confidence occupy in your life? What space do suffering, conflict, injustice and fear of the future occupy?

Write about 250 words each on both points of view and then compare them. Where do they agree, where do you recognise differences? Does one drive the other?

Example: In the work perspective, someone has indicated that a career and a high income are very important to them and that they would like to manage something. In the area of life, however, a lot of free time and time with the family are important to them. These two areas are in conflict and it makes sense to reconsider the areas. (vas)



Crossing Thresholds

Crossing a threshold - what does that actually mean? A threshold on a path means that we sometimes have to take a bigger step, a higher step, perhaps slow down or maybe climb up a little. If you miss a foothold, you could stumble - and you don't always realise what lies beyond the threshold. In any case, you have to adjust your gait a little to master crossing a threshold, to make that little extra effort.

There are also such thresholds in learning - these were first described by Jan Meyer and Ray Land as threshold concepts (Meyer/Land, 2003): These are concepts and issues that are particularly challenging in learning and are not immediately accessible. Threshold concepts are typically transformative, i.e. they enable new perspectives on a discipline, they are irreversible, i.e. difficult to unlearn, and integrative, i.e. they create new contexts. They also change and transform our ways of thinking and perceiving in our field of learning or subject and are suitable for gaining a deeper understanding and new perspective on a topic. Instead of a threshold, the image of a portal can be used, that allows access to completely new worlds and environments as soon as it has been passed through. Threshold concepts can be the 'jewels' of a curriculum that draw attention to key points that open up a discipline and appear particularly challenging.

It's exciting to think about what threshold concepts have shaped your thinking. What could be thresholds in your field of study that perhaps frustrated you, but ultimately changed your thinking? Were there any such moments in your school career? What made you get excited about something, find a new subject fascinating?

In our personal development, we also go through phases of transformation that seem like thresholds or portals. They can change how we perceive ourselves, how we categorise what we have experienced and achieved so far, and how we act and communicate. They can be explicit events such as starting university or a new job - but also conflicts, personal experiences, setbacks and unexpected encounters. Think about it - what thresholds can you identify that have made you who you are now? (*ehl; eig*)

Mind Maps

Many people are familiar with mind maps from school when it comes to collating existing knowledge on a new topic. But mind maps can do much more. It is a simple technique that can help you keep an overview, narrow down topics, generate ideas, sort notes, create summaries or to-do lists and much more. The procedure is always the same:

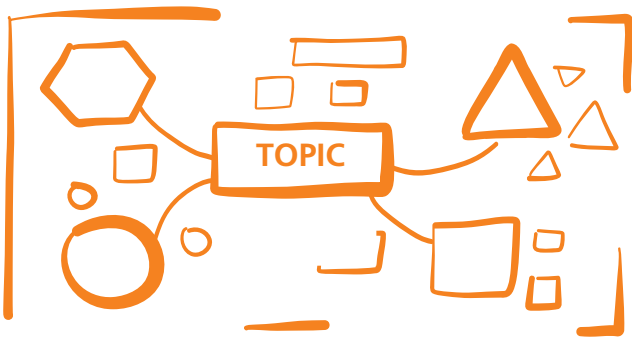
Step 1: A central term (topic, idea, event title, meeting, etc.) is placed in the centre of the sheet, preferably in landscape format.

Step 2: Now all associations, agenda items, topics etc. are arranged with connecting lines starting from the central term. Further sub-items can be derived from these associations.

It can be helpful to work with colours and/or symbols to make the mind map clearer - there are no limits to creativity. Mind maps can be used, for example, to recognise interactions, priorities or sequences at a glance. There are also digital solutions that make it easy to create mind maps, for example *MindMeister*. Whether mind maps are created in analogue or digital form depends entirely on your own preference. However, if the mind map is used for learning, it is advisable to create a mind map with pen and paper. The spatial

arrangement is already a mnemonic aid, which can be lost due to the infinite expandability in the digital world.

Mind maps are brain-friendly because we store our knowledge in as- sociations, i.e. not in a linear way. Mind maps put this structure on paper. This helps to maintain an overview, but also to memorise information. Associations can also stimulate new ideas. (hof)



WOOP

The WOOP method is a scientifically well-researched and highly effective goal-setting method that is suitable for all areas of life, be it personal, professional or academic (Oettingen, 2017). It is important that the achievement of the goal lies within one's own sphere of action. The WOOP method consists of four steps. All you need is a piece of paper and a pen (or you can use the WOOP app) and you're ready to go.

Wish

What is your current wish? The wish must be achievable in principle, but can certainly be challenging. It should inspire and motivate you.

Outcome

What is the best possible outcome if your wish comes true? How would you feel if your wish came true? Go into the feeling calmly, perhaps closing your eyes. Try to imagine it as vividly as possible.

Obstacle

What are your inner obstacles to achieving this goal? What is stopping you on your way to fulfilling this wish?

The important thing is that it is an obstacle that lies within you

(for example, a feeling, an irrational thought, a bad habit, a worry). Visualise this obstacle vividly: What do you see, what do you feel?

Plan

Specifically: What can you do to overcome your obstacle? What would be a thought that could help you? Draw up a concrete if-then plan: When X (obstacle) comes, then I will do Y (concrete action). Repeat this sentence to yourself, maybe even say it out loud. Let the new plan sink in. This point is particularly important so that your brain can fall back on a strategy in the specific situation. Imagine, for example, that you want to exercise more but are often too tired in the evening to get up. However, you will feel really good when you have exercised. So your if-then plan could be: If I'm too tired to exercise in the evening, then I'll make an appointment with someone to exercise together.

The following applies to all goal-setting methods: Approach goal instead of avoidance goal. So write down what you want to achieve and not what you want to avoid. (*hof*)

Big Five for Life

What really counts in life? Strelecky (2009) has shed light on this topic and formulated various life questions that can reveal new perspectives for a life that you want and find meaningful. If you are currently in a difficult phase of life, a life question is not currently doing you any good or you cannot find an answer to it, Strelecky advises you to simply skip to the next question and only return to it when it feels right. Some people find it easy to find a clear answer, others take a little longer, some search for a lifetime - and everything is completely okay.

A day at the museum

It can be helpful to look back into the past. Imagine looking back in 30 years on what you have experienced. Or, to paraphrase Strelecky, you visit your life like a day in a museum, where the things that shaped you are on display. Was it your job that made you unhappy? Your problems or bad mood? Or was it the moments and stages that you found valuable, meaningful and worth living?

It's worth asking yourself who you would like to have been (Welzer, 2021). What do you want your life to have been about? What will your dreams have been? What will you have considered the ideal life? What rooms will your museum hold

for you? What names can you give the museum rooms? Take a moment to think.

Purpose of existence

Then think further: What will have made you happy? What will have repeatedly filled you with the happiness of having lived your life to the full? Then ask yourself the questions: What have you seen as the purpose of your life so far? What do you want to add?

Big Five for Life

Strelecky describes the so-called 'Big Five for Life': they complement the purpose of existence. If you see the 'Big Five' while travelling through Africa - elephant, rhinoceros, cape buffalo, lion, leopard - then the journey was successful. In terms of life, these are the five things we want to do, see or experience. Then the trip was a complete success.

So what are the five things you want to have brought into the world in your life? (*win*)

Volunteering Makes You Happy

One of the cornerstones of human happiness is mutual support. "It's better to give than to receive", as the saying goes. Helping is scientifically proven to make people happy. And where is the best place to do that? Volunteering means taking on responsibility. Getting involved. Making a difference together with others. You do an important, meaningful job and often feel a sense of happiness and satisfaction.

Think about it: What are you really passionate about? What gives you the feeling that you are doing something worthwhile? Sometimes it also helps to take a look at your past: was there something you were involved in and had the good feeling that you were doing something really enriching? Were you a team leader in the community or in a club? Did you coach a sports team? Lead a choir? Or regularly help out neighbours in need?

There are countless possibilities. In stressful times, we are all too quick to give up such fulfilling activities in order to concentrate on work or study. Even if we feel that something is missing for happiness.

Another opportunity for students to get involved on a voluntary basis is offered by their own university: for example in faculties and university groups. Volunteering not only offers the opportunity to make new contacts and get to know other students. You can also try out what it feels like to take on responsibility, advance issues and lead and inspire teams - making volunteering twice as much fun! (*ger; msc*)



Odyssey Plan

Difficult decisions have to be made shortly before graduation. Which job is right for me – or are there more than one? Many people are afraid of taking a wrong turn at this juncture. It can be a relief to realise that there is no one true or right job. Many things are possible! A good method for realising this is the so-called odyssey plan, which is not really a plan at all, but rather a kind of brainstorming session on what life could look like in five to ten years' time (Burnett/Evans, 2016). The very name odyssey refers to the fact that life is an adventurous journey, with ups, downs and inexplicable, improvised or unplanned twists and turns.

Create three different plans for the odyssey planning. Start your **first** odyssey plan by writing down (or drawing, etc.) what you are currently doing and who plays a role in it. What changes over the years? Where do you want to be in five years? Then create a **second** plan in which you develop an alternative to the first plan and change a key component. For example, what would happen if you followed your partner to another city? In the **third** plan, you think in a completely new way. What if money or image didn't play a role and you only did what made your heart beat faster?

Give all three versions a descriptive **title** consisting of a maximum of six words and write down possible **questions** that this version raises or answers. Different topics such as place of residence, development opportunities, effects on leisure time and friends or the topic of 'Career versus self-realisation' play a role.

Finally, use the following criteria to consider what speaks for, or against, each plan.

Ressources | What do you have at your disposal to implement your plan, e.g. money, qualifications, contacts?

Enthusiasm | How passionate are you about this version of your plan?

Confidence | Are you confident in the plan or are you full of doubt?

Coherence | How does the plan fit with your values, ideas and world view?

Unlike Odysseus, you don't need ten years for this method, but perhaps 30-40 minutes for the three plans and 15 minutes for the evaluation. (vas)

Future Skills

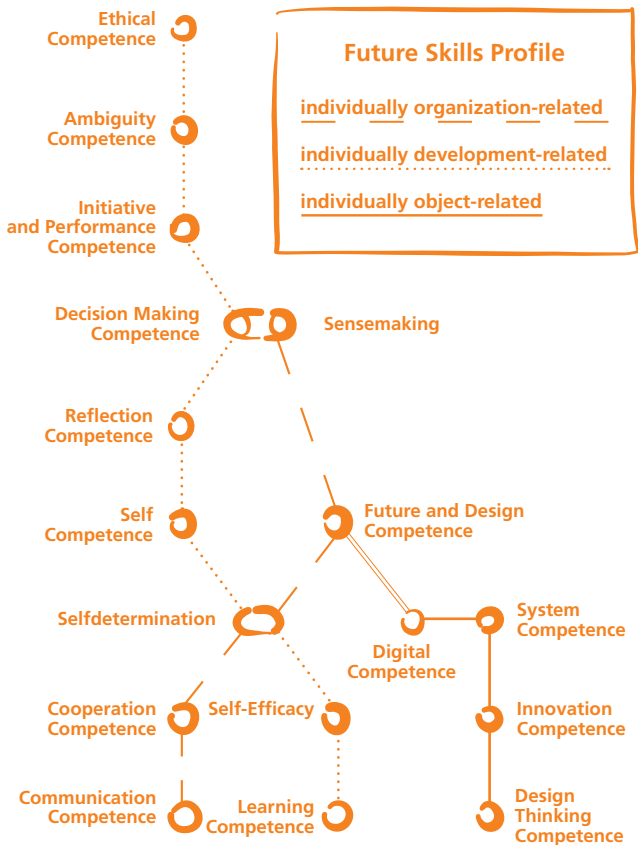
Anyone starting a degree programme today is setting out to help shape the future of our society. But what will it look like? What will change in our society, our everyday lives and our working world? And how will areas such as mobility, housing, science, the environment and our coexistence develop? When will these changes occur - and what role will each individual -including you- specifically play in them? How can you help shape the future?

When we talk about future skills, we are talking about competences, i.e. abilities and action dispositions that are based on knowledge, values, attitudes and experiences. These are special competences - namely those that enable us to be able to act in a future that we cannot yet accurately predict or accurately envision: certainly different from now. Challenges such as climate change, digitalisation, the pandemic and globalisation have already brought about change in recent years that has demanded a lot from us. It won't stay that way - but we can help shape this change.

The currently largest study on future skills in higher education - NextSkills 2020 - shows which future skills are particularly important for mastering the challenges of tomorrow: Self-competence, communication competence, ethical compe-

tence, learning competence, future and design competence. These are just some of the most important future skills identified there; others can be found in the illustration or with a detailed description at nextskills.org/future-skills-finder. The good news is that they can be learnt and deepened - through real challenges and reflection on them, in your free time, at university, at work, in your private life and in the interlinking of all of these. It starts with thinking about yourself, the future and future skills, and asking yourself how you can play a positive role in shaping the future.

What do you think - what challenges will the future hold for us? How can you actively help shape them and what do you still need to learn? Which future skills are important and how can you work on deepening them yourself? Think about it, talk about it with others - including lecturers - and set about becoming a professional in future skills! (*ehl; eig*)



just see it differently

What do you want your life's story to be when you're 80 years old?

What activity puts a smile on your face?

What do you admire in others? Why?

What does a successful day look like to you?

What would you do if you knew that you can't fail?

What do you neglect
although it is very
important to you?

What do you say
more often: yes or no?
Why?

With whom would you
like to have a detailed
conversation about your
plans for the future?

What did you learn from
a great challenge?

What situations or
experiences have
shaped you?

Leadership Perspectives

Students are the managers of tomorrow. Many of them will work in management positions in the course of their careers, be it in a working group, a laboratory or in middle or senior management. At present, however, only a fraction of them use their degree programmes to prepare themselves specifically for this. This is hardly surprising, as the subject has hardly been anchored in the curricula of degree programmes up to now.

But you can (always) learn leadership, even in the midst of student life: when preparing for exams, exchanging ideas in study groups or voting in shared flats. Or when you take on a leadership role in an honorary position and get involved in a university group or the student body, for example. If you want to learn leadership in everyday life, you first need to be willing to reflect. True to the motto: "If you want to lead other people, you must first learn to lead yourself". The goal of self-leadership is self-knowledge, because self-knowledge promotes knowledge of human nature. You cultivate an interest in people: how someone ticks, where their interests lie, where their strengths are, where you are knowledgeable.

* TAKING THE LEAD

Especially in a time of dynamic change, it is good to look at the prerequisites, requirements and room for manoeuvre in leading and being led. It's not about "What I should do...", but about "How I should be...". Leadership in this sense is not a career ladder, but a personal path to maturity: an incentive to develop. The bar does not have to be set so high. The important thing is to set out on a journey to do justice to yourself, others and the environment, to take responsibility for your own actions, to get to know your inner attitudes and develop them further, to build up an appreciation of your own strengths, qualities and resources and to get to know and question your own sensitivities and prejudices in relation to others.

It is worth leaving the beaten track. The many crises of the present day show that new leadership approaches and attitudes need to be developed. The path does not lead to artificial actionism, but to the exact opposite - to reflection and silence (Janssen, 2018).

Positive Meeting Start

Our beliefs and convictions about what makes a good leader have a major influence on the goals we set ourselves and whether we ultimately achieve them. Sometimes I get the impression that some students don't want to become managers because they have a certain image of managers in their heads that they believe doesn't suit them. And so, for example, the quiet, soft-spoken or empathetic people don't aspire to management responsibility. What a pity!

It's true: managers often have the task of working through problems or resolving conflicts. But at least as important are the measures that lead to flourishing, successful cooperation and an experience of flow. Nevertheless, many managers pay more attention to difficulties than to successes (which also exist). This attitude is fuelled by the fact that human attention is developmentally more focused on the negative than on the positive (only bad news is good news).

There are enough studies from positive psychology about what can be achieved by focussing attention. What can happen when we divert attention from the problems and instead focus on what strengthens people and helps them to develop?

There is a good exercise for this (from Feuerborn, 2020, p. 90f.), which is just as suitable as the start of a course as the start of a team meeting. Each participant (including the lecturer or team leader) is given 1-2 minutes of undivided attention and answers one of the following questions:

What has worked well in the past few days? What made you happy in the past few days?

What improvements or new ideas have been developed recently?

I usually let the person who feels the first impulse to do so begin; then it continues in a clockwise direction so that the otherwise quieter ones also have their say. It's helpful if the contributions don't remain generalisations, but pick up on small, concrete experiences or results. This little ritual then brings a lot of energy and a positive atmosphere to the seminar or meeting and many sensitive points become less difficult than expected. (sto)

Five Minutes of Learning Leadership

Every day, there are many situations in which we lead, or are led by others. Often you don't even realise it. Unless you are explicitly acting in a specific role, for example as a coach at a sports club or as a board member of a university group. Even then, you are not always aware of how you are acting and may have doubts as to whether the way you present yourself really matches the way you actually want to be, or: how you could actually be.

That is why managers and those who want to become managers need two qualities above all: the ability to reflect and the realisation that most managers are 'only human'. Nevertheless, self-doubt and pessimistic thoughts are completely normal, especially for new managers. The following five-minute exercise shows how you can encourage yourself and find your own strength. The list of questions is a classic from *Encouraging Leadership*, which is often quoted (Berner et al. 2015):

What do I like about me?

.....
What do I like about the way I deal with people?

.....
Where am I making progress?

.....
Thanks to what strengths have I gotten this far in life?

.....
What else would I like to learn and to try out?

.....
Who can help me with that?

.....

Take 5 minutes three times a week for this list and keep adding to it. You can also look at this list again and again afterwards and reflect on your future path in an appreciative way. (ger)

Mindful Communication

The majority of all conflicts can be traced back to difficulties in communication. Conversations often happen so quickly that it is very challenging to break out of automatic patterns of perception. Careful communication is difficult, but possible: you just have to practise it. The easiest way to do this is in the more harmless everyday situations in which you come into contact with other people. Here you will find welcome training sessions to get out of the automatic mode of communication. Try it out and think about how you want to practise today. Mindful communication covers various areas:

Pause | With an inner stop at the beginning of the communication or in between, you create a space in which the conversation can take place consciously instead of automatically and casually.

Relax | Get in touch with your feelings and needs. Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings without judging them.

Open up | Extend your mindfulness to the other person. In this way, you are at one and the same time in contact with yourself and your patterns and with the other person and their views and feelings. Opening up to the other person's

world can also be expressed through eye contact, active enquiry and empathy.

Trust in the arising | There is no need for a script: remain flexible and open to what is going on inside you at any given moment and what you perceive in the other person. Know that everything that emerges will change or disappear over time.

Listen deeply | Heart-to-heart communication is also about the relationship level. Distance yourself from prejudices and be compassionate. Listen and recognise your impulses to interrupt without giving in to them.

Speak openly | Be sensitive and friendly to the moment. You are not sharing from the fount of all wisdom, but your subjective truth, your point of view. (*rie*)

Growing Together as a Team

People often work in teams, whether as part of a sports team, a project team or a flat share. Teams can develop in very different ways. It can take different lengths of time for the team to function properly. New team members are sometimes integrated more quickly, sometimes it takes longer.

What all teams have in common, however, is that they develop in phases. Knowing them is helpful in order to strengthen the team development process and develop cooperation. The model of the **four phases of team development** described by Bruce Tuckman (1965) has become a classic.

Like all models, it must be applied to the specific situation. However, it is always important to realise that team dynamics change and that each phase should be taken into account in order to move forward together. If you are aware of these phases, you may be more successful in creating a culture of open feedback and solidarity.

1st Phase: Forming

In this phase, the team gets to know each other. The questions arise: "What should I do?" and "Where do I stand?". The team clarifies procedures, objectives and the allocation of roles and tasks. The team leader provides orientation and

security, identifies tasks, gives clear instructions and regularly records the results.

2nd Phase: Storming

After a certain time, the first conflicts arise, whereby important points often crystallise. These relate more to group development and less to the fulfilment of tasks. The team leader pays attention to discipline, encourages constructive dialogue and listens carefully and actively.

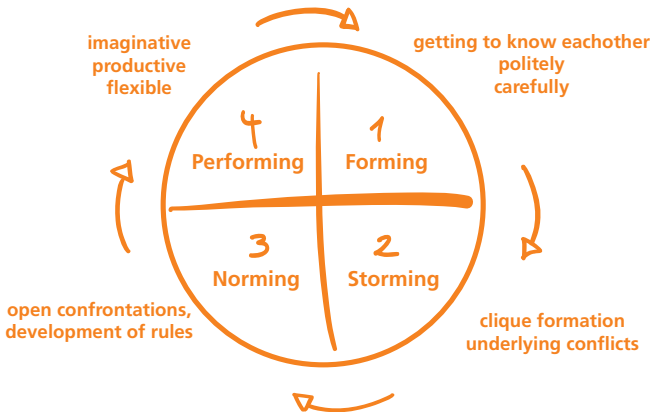
3rd Phase: Norming

The first regulations and framework conditions have been established and clear structures have emerged. Questions such as "How can we achieve the goal?" and "How do we want to deal with each other?" are answered. The team leader coordinates this process, involves everyone, organises team meetings and makes successes visible. The team co-operates and a harmonious working relationship is created.

4th Phase: Performing

The team is now well-rehearsed and the tasks are successfully completed. Work becomes more creative and flexible. The questions "Who has to do what?" and "How can we achieve the goal most effectively?" arise. Communication is open and

people support each other. The team leader coordinates the tasks, gradually withdraws and is open to new ideas. (*kmy*)



(after Windolph/Blumenau)

I Look at Everyone

For a long time, it was widely believed that carrots and sticks were needed to motivate oneself and others. Today, there are better approaches, such as the model of basic psychological needs by Edward Decy and Richard Ryan (2017). What really motivates people is the need to be recognised (to demonstrate their own competence), to relate to others (to experience connectedness) and to make an important contribution (to create meaning). What does this mean in the context of leadership?

Here is a true anecdote: the orchestra conductor Claudio Abbado was immensely popular with his musicians and regularly managed to spur his orchestra on to top performances. And this despite the fact that he spoke very little. His motivational leadership style was so legendary that the University of St. Gallen conducted scientific research into the methods Abbado used. How did he manage to be so well received? Abbado said in an interview: "I give every member of the orchestra the feeling that I am looking at them. I look at everyone." (Storch/ Tschacher, 2016, p. 127)

Apparently, it is therefore important that a manager recognises the diversity of his or her employees and supports them in demonstrating their respective skills. The eyes play a central

role in this, as can be seen from another great musician. Leonard Bernstein demonstrates what happens when you show your 'team' that they can be seen. He conducts only with his eyes and thus achieves a special form of connection. Together, the ensemble creates a wonderful performance of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 88 in G major (4th movement *Allegro con spirito*). (sto)



bit.ly/3tzg8Nj



Non-Violent Communication

Non-violent communication (NVC) according to Marshall Rosenberg has been an important part of our collaboration at *soulbottles* since the very beginning. There are also personal reasons for this: Shortly before we met, my co-founder Georg Tarne had completed his NVC trainer training and I had taken part in one of his first workshops at the occupied university in Vienna. I was studying communication sciences and was also interested in this topic, which led to an intensive dialogue and a deep friendship.

Shortly afterwards, we founded *soulbottles* together. When you work together in a small start-up, with few resources and rapid change all around you, you need stable emotional relationships: People you can honestly and sincerely argue with, but also make up with, without leaving any inner resentment behind. “Scary Honesty” was Rosenberg's formulation for this. It helps to make difficult decisions together. It requires an emotional security that gives everyone the courage to address things.

The concept of NVC has helped us to build and deepen such relationships and spaces. Since then we have been integrating these ideas and attitudes into our day-to-day work. At *soulbottles*, we are now more than 60 people and of course I

don't have the same relationship with all of them as I do with Georg. But the way we interact with each other at *soulbottles* is different to many other workplaces. Through honest dialogue and sharing, a connection can be created that is good for the community as a whole and for the individuals.

soulbottles has a clear purpose and a great vision, but when many passionate people are working towards a common goal, sooner or later conflicts will arise. The NVC helps us to grow rather than break from these conflicts. If I can trust that the people around me will address things and I also have the confidence that we can resolve conflicts, then a kind of deep relaxation sets in that I don't experience in many other organisations. It's easier to work in such a relaxed atmosphere. And it's also more fun.

I recommend reading the book *Solving Conflicts through Nonviolent Communication* by Rosenberg from 2012.

If you would like to delve a little deeper into non-violent communication, there is a free online course from a trainer I really like (see QR code). He also has a good podcast you can listen to. (*pku*)



bit.ly/3TKzzNy

Really Good Feedback

A good team climate is created by ensuring that everyone feels that they belong, are accepted and valued. Above all, an atmosphere of clarity is important for this, in which goals and expectations for working together can be expressed and shared. A lack of clarity discourages team members because they can never be sure whether the other members are in favour of the decisions. Clarity includes openness and the willingness to give feedback.

You can learn to give really good feedback. There are many methods for this. Starting with the 3-W idea (perception, effect, desire) through to the 5-finger method (easy to find on the internet).

It is always important not to misuse feedback as a way of manoeuvring criticism or 'settling accounts', but as an opportunity to focus your own mindset on growth. The question "What can I do for my counterpart so that he or she can grow and develop further?" gets you moving in a helpful direction. Take a step back and concentrate on the other person, because you are giving them a gift with your feedback.

Reflect on your inner images and experiences of feedback: What is my image of feedback? What do I understand by feedback? How have I received feedback so far? How did I like this way? To what extent was I able to accept the feedback and implement parts of it? What does good and useful feedback look like for me today? How would I like to receive feedback *today*?

In the next step, ask your environment the following questions: What do others understand by feedback? How do they personally perceive feedback? How should feedback be organised for these people so that they can take it well and use it as a growth booster? At what point does feedback become torture for them and go too far?

With these insights from both self-reflection and from an external standpoint, you can create a feedback process that is good for you and at the same time good for those to whom you will be giving feedback. (*ger*)

The Inner Team of Advisors

In times when we face many challenges and don't know our own mind, it's good to have smart and reliable people at your side who can give you good advice. Whether it's a friend, a fellow student or a coach - these people support us along the way with helpful hints or ideas for our next steps. Seeking advice is therefore an effective way to get back on track.

Another powerful option is to take the lead yourself and find helpful tips within yourself. Imagine that you have an 'inner board of directors' to support you in challenging times and keep an overview. The following exercise is intended to inspire you to put together an 'inner team of advisors' who will motivate you and reliably accompany you on your journey. Take a few days to ruminate on the following questions: Who impresses you with their life story, their values or the message they bring to the world? Who motivates you to see things in a new light and who would you like to learn from?

When putting together your team, you can choose people from your environment or people from public life, such as actors, artists or people in politics. Or you can address your question to fictitious personalities. It's up to you how many advisors you set up. Wouldn't it be a powerful experience to consult a team consisting of Nelson Mandela, Yoko Ono,

Reinhold Messner and Superwoman? There are no limits to your imagination. The only important thing is that these people inspire you and that you are willing to take advice from them. Once you have put together your team, assign at least five qualities to each character that you particularly value in him or her. If you like, you can also visualise your board members by creating a collage of their photos or saving them on your mobile phone.

Whenever you have a question, feel insecure or need to make a difficult decision, close your eyes and mentally step in front of your 'Inner Board'. Bring up an issue and get the opinions of the individual people: What would they advise you to do? This method can broaden our horizons, protect us from short-sighted decisions or simply be fun. It can help you to distance yourself from a stressful situation, adopt a new perspective and thus remain calm inside. *(mhs)*

PERMA-Lead

Do you recognise this feeling: you are working on a project, are totally committed, can develop your personal strengths and enjoy your work? Then you are most likely in flow and unconsciously living the facets of PERMA. Earlier in this booklet, we explained the PERMA model of well-being according to Martin Seligman (**P**ositive Emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning and **A**ccomplishment).

But what does this have to do with leadership? Numerous studies have shown that promoting the five PERMA factors actually improves people's performance, motivation and resilience. Imagine that you are led by a manager who gives you tasks that you enjoy and that encourage you. Have you ever met a manager who lives these values?

The business and organisational psychologist Markus Ebner has developed the new leadership model shown on the next page, which he calls PERMA-Lead (Ebner, 2019, p. 71), as well as an associated test procedure.

The PERMA-Lead management model

P - Positive Emotions | The manager helps to ensure that employees feel comfortable at work, are satisfied and enjoy their work.

E - Engagement | The manager gives employees tasks that match their individual strengths and helps them to develop them.

R - Relationships | The manager ensures that the employees in the team support each other and treat each other with respect.

M - Meaning | The manager helps employees to find meaning in their work and to know why their work is important.

A - Accomplishment | The manager is happy with the employees when they have achieved their goals and praises them for it.

LEAD | The manager follows a strength- and resource-orientated approach.

Ebner was able to show in several studies that managers using the PERMA approach were able to significantly reduce sick days, halve the risk of burnout and increase turnover. He was also able to observe a favourable development in the managers themselves: they became more resilient and were more creative in finding solutions in challenging situations.

You too can learn to lead yourself and others using these criteria. A first step would be to build genuine relationships, communicate about the purpose of your own actions and recognise your own strengths. *(kmy)*



Evening Questions

It was a long time ago when I decided to take part in extensive further training to become a systemic organisational consultant. At the time, I was working as a personnel developer in a large insurance company and experienced the growing need to change things. In the administrative structures in particular, many things were deadlocked and seemed frozen. However, it soon became clear that the goal of necessary technical progress would not be achieved without a change in and further development of the people involved - especially those with management responsibility.

In my training group, it was considered very desirable to be different and not simply to adapt to the circumstances. We wanted to understand the dynamics of the systems and of social interaction, and find out how we could develop ourselves further and encourage others to promote change in the organisation, the family or society as a whole.

It was during this time that I learnt about the **4 questions in the evening** exercise: following them for a few minutes allowed me to distance myself from the turbulence and experiences of the day, to experience events with an inner distance, to get to the bottom of things - and of myself. Well-being and contentment set in. Positive psychology in

particular has recently researched how effective these and other exercises can be, and that positive emotions are a key factor for long-term satisfaction, success and well-being. Qualitative studies show that the **4 questions in the evening** exercise leads to a sensitisation of perception, to a change in the interpretation of situations and thus also to a change in one's own actions (Ebner, 2019). I think it is important to do the exercise regularly. It can be helpful to set a visible anchor that reminds you of this moment of calm and reflection. This could be a ribbon on your desk, a hand charm or a shell from the beach. Before you try the exercise, close your eyes for a few seconds and breathe in and out. This will make it easier for you to come back to yourself. Then turn to the following questions:

What gave me pleasure today?

When did I feel alive today?

Which strengths could I live out today?

What and who can I be grateful for today? (bst)

Maintaining Dignity during Conflicts

For some time now, the House of Competence has been organising an excursion seminar to Münsterschwarzach Monastery. Inspired by numerous impulses from the monks living there, in this seminar we deal with the Benedictine Rule, which offers a great deal of wisdom with regard to value-orientated and healthy leadership. One sentence from the Rule of Benedict regularly attracts particular attention. It says about the abbot: "He hates error, he loves the brother" (chapter 64, verse 11). Most people immediately think of their own experiences: Conversations or arguments about things or events where someone has done something wrong. Or where there was a disagreement about how this 'mistake' should be assessed. Questions arise immediately: How do I deal with mistakes (keyword: error culture)? How can I communicate about them appropriately (keyword: conflict dialogue)? How can I stay connected with my counterpart despite all adversity? Is love a category for managers? It often gets down to the nitty-gritty, to basic questions about how a manager should be and what this has to do with self-leadership. The experiences and accounts of the monks are often helpful in such moments, which, following Fidelis Ruppert and Anselm Grün (2000), can be summarised as follows:

Being open to the possibility | Perhaps an issue is raised by the person with whom you have a conflict, that contains a message or lesson to which you were previously not very receptive. In this way the “difficult” fellow human being helps you attain (more) self-knowledge.

Listening | "Listen to the person who is speaking to you with undivided attention and do not think about your answer while they are speaking." (Grün/Ruppert, 2000, p. 11)

Speaking | "Speaking with love means speaking without aggression, not wanting to take revenge, not wanting to hit and hurt the other person, not speaking tactically and with ulterior motives." (ibid., p. 12)

Criticising | Not in the role of know-it-all or do-gooder, but understandingly, humbly and lovingly. Avoid the tone that does not tolerate contradiction.

Staying realistic | "Hate mistakes and love your brother" is not an assignment that you can fulfil with just a little good will. It is a life task. It will take a long time to empathise with other people with love until your own dislikes and prejudices are reduced. (sto)

Leading People

In traditional African communities, a leader was expected to be someone who could 'foster life'. It was his task to ensure that the life of the tribe could unfold and develop well. A similar attitude can be found in the 6th century in the monastic rule of Benedict of Nursia. He compares the office of the abbot, i.e. the head of the monastery, with that of a shepherd and then says that the abbot should lead the community in such a way that he can 'rejoice in the growth of a good flock'. This growth of the community is not meant here in quantitative terms, but rather the intellectual and spiritual growth of the monks; their lives and personalities should be able to develop well through the abbot's leadership style. Leadership is therefore not about the career of the leader (and the bonuses that can flow into his pocket), but about the well-being of those he has to lead. Leadership is a service to people, and that is no easy task.

Benedict says: "To whom more is entrusted, more is demanded. He must know what a difficult and arduous task he is taking upon himself, namely to lead people and to serve the character of many. (...) According to the character and capacity of each individual, he should adapt himself to all and respond to them." (Salzburg Abbots' Conference, 2019, p. 40f). The abbot must therefore have a good sense of people's

needs and then find the right measure in dealing with them. And the right measure for everyone can be "that the strong find what they desire and the weak do not run away." Those who are strong and talented should be encouraged and challenged accordingly, and the weaker ones should be treated in such a way that they do not run away in fear.

Dealing with different types of people in such a sensitive and differentiated way is a major challenge for any leader and requires a certain level of human maturity. The leader must therefore be aware of his or her own weaknesses, which are often the cause of inappropriate or even unruly behaviour. Benedict of Nursia already knew this and therefore said that the abbot should be someone "who knows how to heal his own wounds and those of others". Firstly, he should discover his own inner wounds and flaws and seek to heal them so that he can also treat those entrusted to him in a healing way. Constant work on oneself and on one's own maturation should therefore be a high priority for all leaders. In this way, a properly practised leadership task can also be a path to maturity.

And then leaving office! In African tradition, a leader is expected to sense when his time is up, when he has to vacate

his position, and to do so in good time so that he can then hand over his office to a younger person in a benevolent and peaceful manner. Timely and peaceful resignation is therefore part of mature leadership behaviour. The manner of resignation can reveal a lot about how selflessly or autocratically the office was understood and exercised. (*rup*)



just see it differently

Who else is responsible
for you achieving the
things you want in life?

What is the craziest
thing you have ever
done out of love?

How will your fellow
human beings benefit
from you being there
this month?

What have you learned
from mistakes?

When was the last
time someone gave
you a leap of faith?

How do others benefit from you being around?

When was the last time you gave a leap of faith?

How do you feel when you consciously give up control?

Who personifies your ideal of good leadership?

When and how do you let others share something with you that is important to them this month?

External Perspectives

The negative often dominates our everyday lives today. This makes it all the more important to realise that bad news is not the end of the story. It is the beginning, according to journalist Ronja von Wurmb-Seibel (2022). After every catastrophe, people are forced to react to it and find solutions. Focussing on crises and problems leads to a kind of negative trap. However, there are almost always examples of people who manage or have managed to learn or grow from difficult situations. Crises often bring out the best in people. Rutger Bregman (2020a) assumes that humans are friendly and co-operative beings, i.e. 'basically good'. There are plenty of examples and scientific evidence for this.

So we can ask: How have other people solved problems and overcome crises? What ideas and alternatives have been around for a long time? What conclusions can be drawn from them? Where does science provide good models or strategies that can be used as a guide? With whom could we ally? Sometimes redirecting one's own (or the public's) attention helps us forge a more helpful path.



NEW STORIES

We can observe that new scope for action is already being sought everywhere in the economy, organisations and society. Forms of activity and companies, work processes and value chains are changing. Innovative ways of doing business and new ways of working together are more in demand than ever. Young people in particular should be allowed to participate in this and have a say in decision-making.

Positive visions begin with invitations, encouragement and inspiration to break new ground and become active. Especially in times of crisis, it is important to get involved, to understand the experiences and values of others and to work together to contribute to the upcoming transformation process of the economy and society. New alternatives are possible. We just need a few people to get started.

Assuming the Best

"For a long time, we assumed that man was an egoist, an animal, or worse. For a long time, we believed that civilisation formed just a thin surface layer that would tear at the slightest opportunity. This view of humanity and this view of our history have proven to be completely unrealistic." (Bregman, 2020a, p. 415)

This is the conclusion reached by Dutch historian Rutger Bregman in his groundbreaking book *Humankind: A Hopeful History*. In it, Bregman brings together findings from psychology and biology, archaeology, sociology and history. He explains why soldiers shoot into the air and exposes the famous Stanford Prison Experiment as a hoax. He makes it clear why chimpanzees are *homo oeconomicus*, whereas humans are *homo puppy*: a friendly creature that becomes smarter through social proximity and friendliness. The book is a treasure trove of examples and evidence that our gloomy view of humanity needs a complete overhaul.

The effects of a new image of humanity could hardly be more dramatic: "As soon as we believe that most people are good, everything changes. We can organise our schools and our prisons, our rule of law and our democracy completely differently. And we can also lead a different life." (ibid., p. 415)

Although Bregman is explicitly not a fan of self-help books (such as this one), he offers ten rules for life at the end of his. The first is: When in doubt, assume the good! "Because once you don't trust someone, you'll never know if your mistrust is justified, because you won't get any more feedback." (ibid., p. 417)

So let's be realistic. Let's come out of the closet. Let's follow our nature and trust. Let's bring the good to light. Is that foolish and naive? Perhaps the naivety of today is the sobriety of tomorrow, says Bregman. "It's time for a new view of humanity. It's time for a new realism." (ibid., p. 433) (*sto*)

Adventures Around the Corner

I would like to introduce you to a perspective that allows you to take a closer look at everyday life and the things we take for granted. It helps us to better understand other ways of seeing and acting instead of pigeonholing them. This is the ethnographic perspective.

Ethnography is a research approach from the cultural and social sciences. Its aim is to describe and understand lifestyles and everyday habits. True to the motto 'The adventure begins around the corner', ethnographic studies are carried out in companies, schools or certain milieux, such as the gaming scene, in order to understand how these microcosms function.

Ethnography has a long tradition: early ethnological research from the 19th century is linked to the painful colonial conquest of other countries. At that time, it was normal for researchers to have seafarers bring back artefacts and tell stories and to write about people in other countries based on this - without ever having been there themselves. The first ethnographic explorers, on the other hand - the best known among them Bronislaw Malinowski - rejected this approach. They wanted to understand other cultures locally and from within themselves, and to visualise their perspective instead of imposing their own. Malinowski and co. were not free from

a colonial viewpoint either, but in the context of that time, it was revolutionary to give other cultures their own significance and to take an interest in their world view.

A 'real' ethnography is a complex endeavour that requires a great deal of research expertise. Of course, there are specialists for this. But what we can all learn from ethnography is the basic attitude of taking a closer look at things that are supposedly taken for granted and not immediately condemning strange, perhaps even alien ways of seeing and living, but rather taking a genuine interest in them.

You can practise this: for example, on your next tram journey, imagine you are an alien here for the first time: What do you notice? How do people behave? What (unwritten) rules do they follow? How do they treat each other? What kind of behavior is appropriate on the train, what kind is not? What is normal here that would not be ok elsewhere - for example, wishing everyone a good day when getting off the train (why not?!). Everything that previously seemed normal is now special. The great thing about it is: the ethnographic view is the beginning of the adventure around the corner and you can train it at every opportunity. You discover new things, train your senses and your analytical thinking and learn that

next
Stop: *EARTH*



your own habits are less self-evident than you often think. Internalising this attitude not only makes everyday life more interesting, but can also contribute to a more appreciative way of dealing with one another. With this in mind: Happy exploring! (*amk*)

Serendipity

Challenge chance and embark on a journey into the land of serendipity. This still relatively unknown word stands for an unplanned discovery of something that you weren't even looking for, and which can therefore prove to be all the more surprising or enriching. The vernacular likes to speak of 'serendipity'. Serendipity goes one step further.

Many discoveries and innovative products are attributed to the serendipity principle. For example, superglue, silicone, Velcro or the Post-it. Discoveries and innovations thrive on chance!

Serendipity moments happen to us quite naturally in everyday life. An example from the internet that you will certainly recognise: You were actually looking for a recipe and ended up looking at the most beautiful beaches in Europe!

However, you can always challenge chance in a targeted way and I would like to give you a few ideas for everyday life:



Oftmals reicht es schon aus, ganz bewusst und in einer beobachtenden Haltung durch die Straße zu laufen, die Sie täglich gehen, und ich bin mir sicher: Auch hier fällt Ihnen heute was auf, was Sie bislang noch nicht wahrgenommen haben. Viel Spaß auf Ihren Entdeckungsreisen! (aos)

Active for Change

Many people share the view that things cannot go on as they are at the moment. That 'business as usual' would only exacerbate the current ecological and social crises.

Perhaps you already pay attention to the ecological footprint you leave on the earth, lead a minimalist lifestyle, only cycle to university and buy second-hand clothes. All of this is important! But sometimes you wonder whether you can do even more good for the world - because you're not just a consumer. You are also a creator and have personal influence at various levels!

Your life is embedded in unsustainable structures and framework conditions that make it difficult not only for you but also for everyone else to behave sustainably. Nevertheless, you can leave a handprint on this world that symbolises your commitment to sustainable development. The Handprint was launched by the Indian non-governmental organisation *Centre of Environmental Education* (CEE) and further developed by the non-governmental organisation *Germanwatch*.

You can find more information and suggestions at:
[germanwatch.org/de/handprint](https://www.germanwatch.org/de/handprint)

Take a sheet of paper and write down the following questions as well as your answers to them:

What is important to me in a good life? What structural problems have I noticed that make it difficult for me and others to act sustainably? Where would I like to get involved? For example: More bicycle parking spaces, more vegetarian/vegan options, support for local public transport ...

At what level can I influence structures and decision-making processes? For example: At university, in the neighbourhood, in a club, at a party ...

What specific actions could lead to an improvement? For example: signing petitions, holding talks with decision-makers, creative protest ...

Research ways in which you can realise your project and look for allies who can support you. For example: friends, acquaintances, colleagues, politically committed people ...
Live the difference and make a difference! (*fri*)



I Am Because You Are

According to the Gaia hypothesis, our earth, with all its living and non-living matter, is an organism in its own right and a self-regulating system. Everything is in resonance with everything else, keeping the whole in balance. Different species and natural processes work together to keep life on earth stable.

We also come out of this cycle of regeneration. We take what we need and put something back into the cycle. However, it is precisely this give and take that has become imbalanced as a result of industrial civilisation. If we look at our ecological footprint or Earth Overshoot Day, for example, we realise that we are taking much more than the earth can provide. This can make us feel ashamed or anxious. But alongside negative emotions such as despair, fear and anger (which are all allowed to be there!), positive emotions help and motivate us so that we don't despair, but instead work honestly and courageously for a good life. We can deepen our sense of belonging to the world and thus our ecological awareness. Our personal well-being is based on the well-being of the natural world (Macy, 2014).

Go out into nature. When you see a tree or a plant, take a moment to close your eyes. Breathe in and feel gratitude with every breath. Because the oxygen you breathe is given to you by them, the trees and plants. You are because they are. You can also find a nice place, for example in a meadow in the forest, where nobody will disturb you. Sit down, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in and out. Pay attention to the natural world around you and thank it. Take it in. Perhaps you feel the wind in your hair, hear the rustling of the leaves or a blackbird singing. Can you feel the grass beneath you? Can you smell the earth, the scent of the flowers or even taste the damp autumn air?

Realise that you are part of this earth. You are part of a greater whole. You are because you are. *(fri)*

»You are life that wants to live, in the midst of life that wants to live.«

Albert Schweizer

Overview Effect

Have you ever heard of the Overview Effect? It describes the experience of astronauts in space when they look back at Earth and feel an overwhelming sense of awe at the beauty and vulnerability of our planet. It is only from this great distance that looking at the Earth creates a deep connection with the place where we live, and for which we are responsible as humanity. This experience is mind-altering for astronauts and helps them to see themselves as part of a greater whole. The documentary Overview by Planetary Collective conveys the formative impressions of female astronauts during their space missions 40 years after the first image of the Earth was taken from space (see QR code).



bit.ly/3V1njta



Very few of us are space travellers and can experience this effect for ourselves by looking out of a space capsule. But there are other ways. Especially when we have the feeling of getting lost in everyday life, such a change of perspective can help (White, 2021).

Take to the skies on a clear day: whether it's on a city observation tower, a mountain hike or in a hot air balloon - there are numerous ways to view our planet from above. It doesn't have to be a flight to the moon that gives you the necessary perspective. A visit to the 3D cinema or planetarium is less costly and a pleasure even in rainy weather. Films that show our Earth from space can convey a similar awe of our ecosystem and our place in the universe.

You can also experience the feeling of being part of a whole with the help of a meditation exercise. On the website of Mahashakti Uta Engeln, [loslassen.rocks](#), you will find Mindfulness Exercise 21: Aloneness and All-Oneness. (sde)

Design Thinking

Design thinking is a working method and at the same time a way of looking at the world and overcoming challenges. The aim is to find solutions that are convincing from the user's point of view. This is done in an iterative process that approaches the solution step by step, always involving the people using the product and focussing on their perspective. As the saying goes:

"The fish must like the worm, not the fisherman."

Design thinking consists of the following steps:

1st Understanding and observing | At the very beginning of a project, it is clarified what the framework is and what the objective is, or in short: What should be improved?

2nd Defining the point of view | Qualitative interviews are used to find out what the user's point of view is and what exactly their needs are.

3rd Finding ideas | As many ideas as possible are found for the solution. Quantity over quality applies here. At this point, we don't think about the implementation, but deliberately ignore it.

4th Developing prototypes | In a creative and playful process, a prototype is developed that makes the idea tangible for the users. This allows the direction to be changed quickly very early on in the project (prototyping).

5th Testing | The prototype is tested with the users and feedback on the idea is obtained.

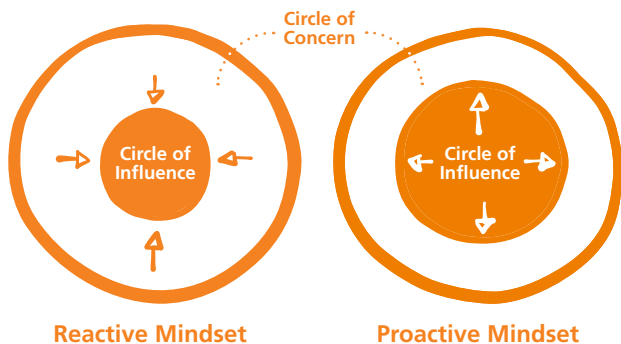
Iterative process | Feedback and new ideas are incorporated. The project is worked on in iterative loops. Feedback is central - with the attitude of not wanting to realise the prototype at any cost, but being completely open to feedback. An early failure is celebrated as a success. Design thinking is therefore also a mindset with which new approaches to solutions can be developed with vigour.

Design thinking is a creative process that incurs hardly any costs and is organised using the simplest possible means. This can put people in a good mood and make them want to work. (*hun*)

Circle of Influence

We often spend far too much time thinking and worrying about things that we cannot influence. This not only ties up our attention and time, but above all our energy.

The **Circle of Influence** model, which Stephen R. Covey describes in his bestseller *The 7 Ways to Be Effective* (2018), can help us to focus on the things we can shape and thereby increase our self-efficacy.



The model describes two essential areas of our lives:

The Circle of Concern

This area includes all topics that affect us, that we are affected by but cannot influence. Typical everyday examples are the weather or the global political situation.

The Circle of Influence

In contrast, the inner circle describes our sphere of influence. The things that we can influence and that we can consciously shape or at least help to shape. This includes, for example, our attitude, our reactions, our behaviour and our decisions.

Actively shape your sphere of influence

If we pay too much attention to the Circle of Concern, our stress levels increase. Our thoughts and worries paralyse us and we adopt a reactive attitude. By adopting a proactive attitude, we focus our energy on our sphere of influence and the things we have control over. This increases our room for manoeuvre, within which we can take an active and self-determined approach.

How do you move from a reactive to a proactive attitude?

Firstly, realise what circle you are currently in. How much time do you spend on things over which you have little or no influence? What can you specifically do to improve the situation?

Take a look at your current situation: what challenges you and your energy? Take a piece of paper and write down on one side what you cannot change. Once you have defined this, think about what is preventing you from letting go and stopping to think about it.

On the other side of the sheet, write what you can influence yourself. Collect ideas on what you can do specifically or who you can ask for help.

Expand your sphere of influence and shape your life in your favour! (aos)

Reinventing Organisations

More and more people feel that the way work is done in organisations no longer works. Numerous studies indicate that a large proportion of employees no longer enjoy their jobs. And it's not just companies that are affected; many employees in the public sector also complain about regulatory frenzy, for example. Many managers are exhausted by the constant competition, meetings and restructuring. We are obviously living in a crisis-prone transitional period in which the old is slowly falling apart but the new has not yet emerged. What does this mean for students and their perspectives on a changing world of work? It's high time to try something different! The former management consultant Frédéric Laloux (2015) has compiled many examples of how companies can do this. In his analysis, he discovered features that characterise contemporary and sensibly structured organisations:

Self-management | More centralised management is replaced by self-management, in which employees share in the power. This increases the responsibility of the individual. Problems can no longer be blamed on managers or other people. Decisions are made in a consultative process in which everyone is prepared to take responsibility. Those affected must at least be heard when a decision is made. Flexible and natural hierarchies are created.

Wholeness | Every person can contribute their individuality and distinctiveness. "Titles, competitive thinking, self-presentation and other factors of dominance and protection become insignificant, as they are no longer decisive and careers are no longer characterised by power, displacement and hierarchy. Information is shared transparently. Co-operation and early feedback prevent and resolve conflicts." (Odermatt/Postler, 2021, p. 283f)

Evolutionary sense | The focus is on team performance. The aim of doing business is not just to make a profit, but to take responsibility for different interest groups: Investors, customers, employees, suppliers and others. At the centre is the sense of joint action and a pronounced sensitivity for development opportunities. (*sto*)

For a detailed overview, see:

www.denkmodell.de/reinventing-organizations

Semco Style

When you build pyramids, you have to reckon with mummies. However, if you create a horizontal organisation, there is room for autonomy and trust. Autonomous, self-organising teams are successful because they have a greater sense of responsibility, can react more quickly to change and accelerate innovation. The employees in these teams are more satisfied, which in turn leads to more satisfied customers.

Ricardo Semler is a pioneer in rethinking work. In 1980, at the age of 21, he took over his father's company and became the new CEO of Semco, a Brazilian engineering company. When he realised that his employees were unhappy, he introduced a radical new concept. His philosophy: give employees complete freedom as long as their work is completed on time.

With the opportunity to participate, he gave people control over their work. Profit sharing motivated them to do their work better, and radical transparency of all information showed them what was working and what was not.

Why do we take work into the weekend but not go to the cinema on Monday lunchtime?

Semco employees could determine their own salaries, hours

and supervisors, attendance at meetings became voluntary, and the entire company - from the owner to the maintenance staff - consisted of only three levels of hierarchy. There was no organisational chart, no guidelines, no business plan, no dress code and no job descriptions. Everything was based on the idea that adults should use their common sense and be treated like adults at work. Within a few years, Ricardo Semler succeeded in transforming his father's old hierarchical company into an industrial democracy. To make his company's methodology and philosophy tangible and applicable, and to accompany other institutions on their journey towards more self-organisation, Semler founded the *Semco Style Institute* in 2016. Today, the *Semco Style Institute* is active in eleven countries worldwide.

Whether at work, in a shared flat, in the family or at university - the following questions can help you to utilise Semler's philosophy for working with others:

Are there rules that everyone adheres to but that have never been questioned? Are there tasks that you do not take on because you feel that they are not your responsibility? Are there (unspoken) hierarchies that characterise teamwork? If so, do these hierarchies fulfil a purpose? Are there tasks that

you take for granted in your everyday life or in your hobbies, but which you do not feel confident doing at work (e.g. finance, planning, management)? When you delegate tasks, do you also hand over all the information you need to carry out the task successfully? Are you already looking forward to the working week on Sunday evening? If not, what needs to change?

You don't have to answer these questions alone. It is often enough to question old and supposedly tried-and-tested behavioural patterns together and share personal assessments. This is the first step towards better functioning relationships as well as personal development and fulfilment. (wol)

For more information on the *Semco Style Institute*, see:

www.ricardosemmler.com

We Are Society

We all like to get upset about things that don't suit us in social, political or economic life. Who hasn't heard themselves say: "That's so harmful, so stupid, it should be banned!". Or we rail against politicians. Most of the time, however, these expressions of displeasure are enough to put us and our fellow human beings in a bad mood. Too often we forget what power we actually have, as we are part of society, politics and the economy. This exercise is a reminder that we as individuals have a voice that we can bring to bear in many areas of life!

Write a letter or email to a person, for example from the media, journalism, business or politics. Address an environmental, social, economic or cultural problem that you have observed and would like to change. Choose the problem that is closest to your heart. Reflect: How did you feel while writing it? Did you have the feeling that you had the power to change something? Or were there other thoughts in your head? Make a note of the thoughts and check whether they are really true.

And don't forget: send the letter! (*huf*)



Almost half a century ago, the report *The Limits to Growth*, to some extent *the* original text of the ecology movement, underpinned a very simple fact with elaborate calculations: that you cannot grow indefinitely in a limited space. Precisely because this fact is so simple and the calculations made then so plausible, one would have expected that from 1972 onwards, at least in the rich societies, all possible wheels would have been set in motion to limit growth - for example, to limit the consumption of land and raw materials, to make cars smaller and to reduce mobility. But the opposite was the case: in the time that has passed since then, resource consumption has multiplied. The only events that have ever interrupted the unchecked logic of increasing our lives and economies were the global economic crisis triggered by the collapse of the financial markets at the end of the noughties and the market quake caused by a tiny virus called Covid-19 in 2020. Voluntarily: no reduction anywhere.

This may seem irritating, above all because the scientific scare stories and warnings have not diminished since then and the predictions regarding the dynamics of climate change and species extinction proved to be overly conservative. And in 1972, there was still no talk of things like plastic swirls in the sea and microplastics in animals. Did all the calculations,

speeches, warnings and admonitions not help? Apparently not. Or it may even have had the opposite effect. Quite a few people believed what the science said, but unfortunately they drew the following conclusion: "My God, if this is all true, then we'd better get out what we can, while we can! At some point, the fun will be over for good." And the more doggedly people pursue consumerism, the clearer the sense of ecological doom becomes, and the more intensively the sciences produce bad news – hoping against hope that someone will listen and turn back at some point.

Consequently, at some point it seemed pointless for us to continue contributing to conventional eco-communication and we - sociologist Dana Giesecke and I - founded *FUTURZWEI. Stiftung Zukunftsfähigkeit*. We had observed that there were a considerable number of individuals, initiatives, groups, companies, co-operatives, associations and organisations already working together and organising their world very differently under the real existing conditions of a society geared towards increasing consumption. In other words, they did business differently, produced differently and organised themselves differently from the mainstream.

Firstly, it seemed very important to us that there are so many

people who, against all odds, are trying to live a better life in the wrong place. Secondly, we thought that we could learn a lot from such people and their projects on how to practically move from an unsustainable society to a more sustainable one. And thirdly and finally, we believed that it would be good for eco-communication as a whole to tell stories of success for a change, instead of rebranding armageddon for the umpteenth time. So we secretly described ourselves as a 'PR agency for a social movement that doesn't know it exists' and actually started to advertise - for a different way of dealing with the world that didn't remain in the subjunctive, but became effective in practice.

These stories of success should explicitly not be moralistic, i.e. without any world-saving pathos, but simply - like any good story - have a beginning, a middle and an end. And they should be about characters who did interesting things, who had experiences that they tried to overcome. And these people didn't have to be likeable or larger than life, they just had to be people about whom you could tell an interesting story.

FUTURZWEI was successful because it was very often possible to combine interests and resources, whereby we never cared

which scene and filter bubble the institutions and people belonged to - we just had to share the same interest in success and in changing reality.

And above all: FUTURZWEI thrives on a large number of brilliant young people. Very important: a good team working on a project must work without hierarchies. Even without timesheets and records. Any formalisation of joint work is deadly for the spirit. Everyone is encouraged to say at any point if something is going in the wrong direction; and everyone is encouraged to say when they have reached a point from which they can go no further.

From an employer's point of view, we didn't care whether someone worked their paid hours because the quality of a product can't be measured quantitatively - something created in half an hour can be better than something that took a group two weeks. We didn't care.

The basis for the functioning of such a project is that it already bears the characteristics of a concrete utopia - work that is measured by quality and not quantity, not by task fulfilment, but by meaning. Everyone involved takes it seriously, which is why the results can sometimes be incredibly funny and

hilarious. Some of the best moments are when I (an old white man) tell the audience on a podium in front of around 2000 people (education congress in the Bregenz Festival Theatre) that the guiding principle of FUTURZWEI is the following sentence: "We don't do shit." And a few minutes later, Neela Janssen, a young white woman also sitting on the podium, identifies the problem: "Unfortunately, shit is systematically poorly defined." One project, one team, conflicting views in front of a large audience. This is utopian, freedom from the fear of being different.

And of course, the grammatical form of the future tense II is based on the concrete utopia. As far as we know, humans are the only living beings who can imagine a future (future tense I). But they can also imagine themselves in a future state and, what's more, they can look back from this imagined future place to the path they had to travel to get to this place in time (future tense II): Who will I have been? What will we have done? Where will we have got to? This is the core operation of imagining, and in this operation itself lies a utopian moment that transcends the conditions of the present. The prerequisite for this, in turn, is that you have a basic trust that the future can actually succeed. Sometimes it takes a

little longer and is a little more difficult, but - another guiding principle - "If it were easy, the others could do it too." (wel)

www.futurzwei.org

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(Metelmann/Welzer, 2020)

just see it differently

What do you want
to achieve in this
world in the future?

What is the most interesting
thing that you
recently discovered?

What could be a first
little step for today?

If you could change
something immediately -
What would it be,
and why?

Who do you want to
have been one day?

What factors of the external surroundings contribute to the quality of your work?

Which volunteer position would you like to have some day?

What are you looking forward to in your near future?

Who are the people that support you the most?

Where can you count on them the most in the future?

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