

Part I

Apply the
DTL mindset

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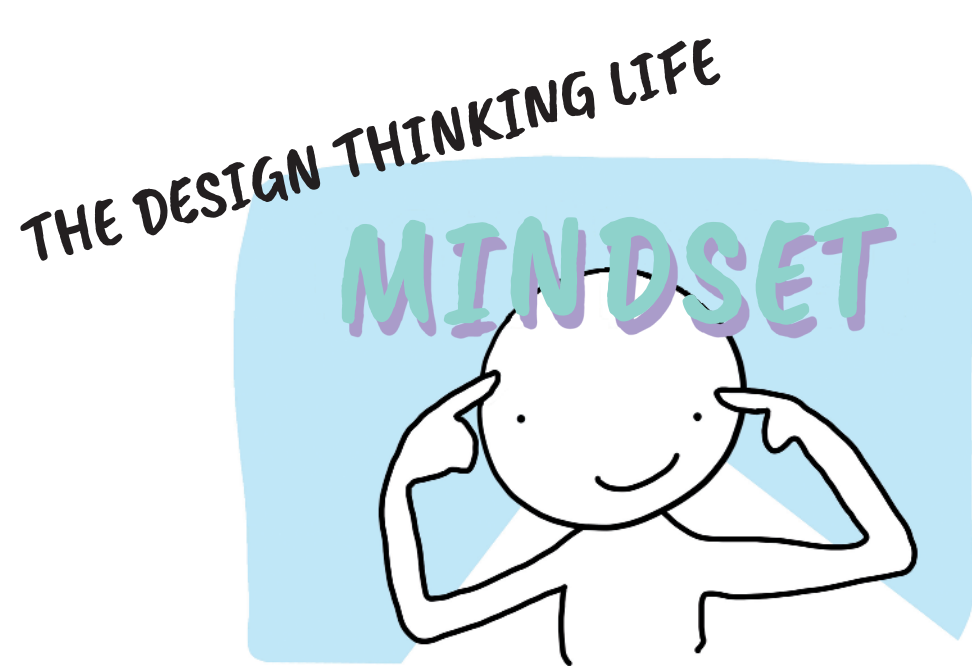
In our warm-up “Back to the Future,” we have already imagined a possible future in our minds. But “**DESIGN THINKING LIFE**” is about more: Above all, we want less stress, more well-being, and greater satisfaction. And who among us doesn’t want that? Many people are dissatisfied with their current lives: at work, in their relationships, or with their personal circumstances. Reason enough to change something about it and become active yourself? If not now, then when? The “**DESIGN THINKING LIFE**” mindset helps you design your future consciously.



Which mindset helps us initiate change?

The design thinking mindset actively initiates positive change and transformation. So it is high time to apply this mindset to the topic of life design – now!

To change our lives, we need some courage, the ability to reflect on ourselves, the willingness to criticize ourselves, and finally a personal vision of the change. The “DESIGN THINKING LIFE” mindset gives us techniques that help us develop and enhance our own lives. These techniques include the exploration of our own needs, the search for new ideas, and the willingness to try something new before we initiate the change in repetitive steps.



The design thinking mindset is characterized by curiosity, openness, collaboration, and by pragmatically trying things out.

The DESIGN THINKING LIFE mindset

We accept that we are on a journey.

It's less about the outcome than how we feel on the journey.

We let other people help us.

Personal development is a collaborative process because new ideas, insights, and feedback help us change our lives the way we want them to change.

We're curious.

Curiosity prepares our brain for learning new things.

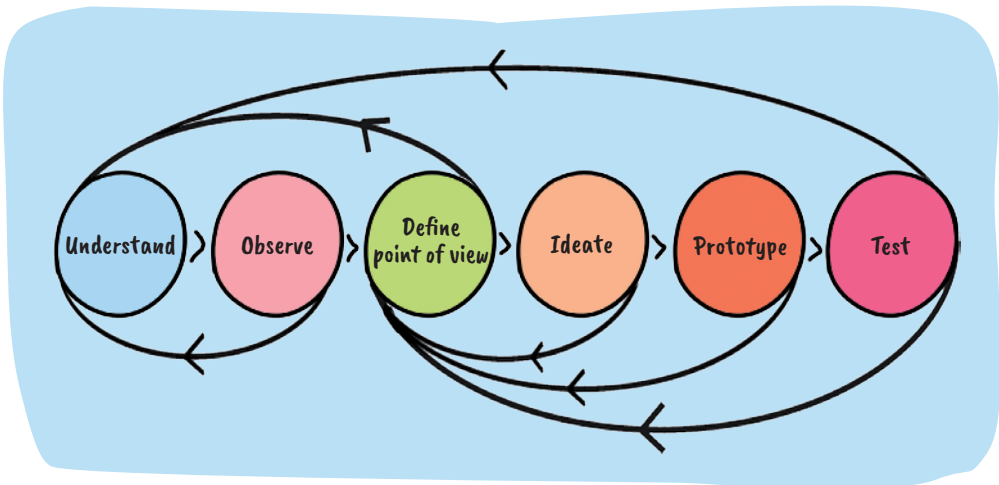
We try out new things.

Experiments help test our assumptions and visions.

We look at problems from different angles.

Situations that are put in a new light make room for new solutions.

In the “DESIGN THINKING LIFE,” we go through the phases: understanding, observing, defining point of view, ideation, prototyping, and testing.



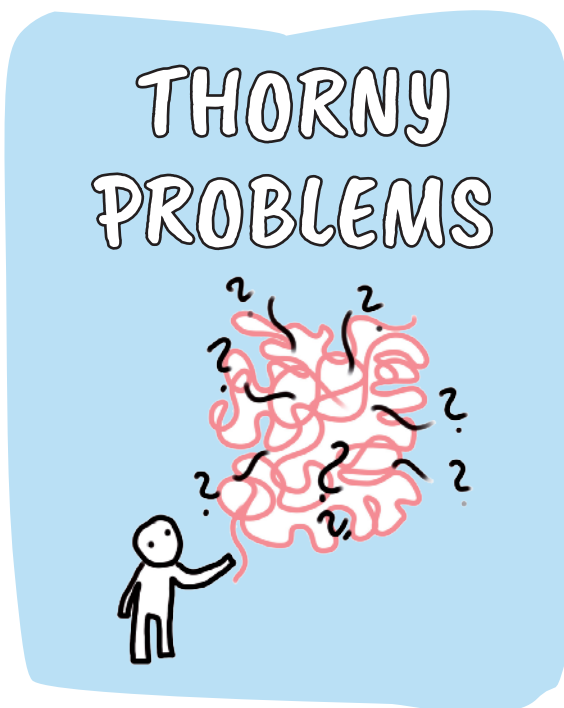
We will use this process again and again in the DTL book as guidance so that we always know where we stand.

In the beginning, the path to the desired change is unknown. The change takes place in many small, iterative steps.

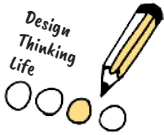
A basic approach in design thinking is to place people with their needs and values at the center of our considerations. We have to fulfill tasks (jobs-to-be-done), undergo experiences that make us particularly happy (gains), and survive situations that frustrate us (pains). This focus on us humans is a core element; this is why design thinking is often referred to as human-centered design. So we try to get deep insights into people’s needs. In the case of the “DESIGN THINKING LIFE,” this means deep insights into ourselves. It is done predominantly with the help of self-reflection and others’ perceptions of us that come from our social environment.

To deal with it now is actually optimal because at this moment a motivation for change already exists – not least because we deal with the topic of the “DESIGN THINKING LIFE.” In other words: We can imagine living in a future that fulfills us and in which we feel better. We would like to illuminate from different sides problems we have recognized and react differently to them than before. We have the courage to think and act proactively and to seize our opportunities.

Design thinking has the aspiration to solve complex problems with creative ease – and where are there more complex problems than in our lives?



In taking stock, we assemble topics without evaluating them.



1) Which topics would you like to change, e.g., leisure, relationships, career?

We ask ourselves: Who am I? What do I like? What is working well, what not so well? What did I already try out in the past to change my situation? What has contributed to the fact that there has been some improvement?

A 10x10 grid of dots on a white background. The dots are arranged in a regular pattern, with 10 dots per row and 10 dots per column, totaling 100 dots.

In addition, we note down which skills and talents we possess, i.e., abilities that distinguish us from others. Maybe we are especially good listeners; or we enjoy working with numbers.



Top-flight athletes make use of another idea that is quite valuable for DTL. Besides self-reflection, they use a visualization of their athletic performance in their inner eye. For this reason, in the DTL book we will encourage you again and again



to visualize or sketch milestones and goals using your inner eye. This visualization helps us implement our wishes for change. At Stanford University, the phrase was coined:

"WHAT YOU FORESEE IS WHAT YOU GET."

In our example from professional sports, we would see ourselves on the top of the winners' podium.

The result of the “**DESIGN THINKING LIFE**” is an idea of what we aim at in the future and what helps to attain the desired goal.

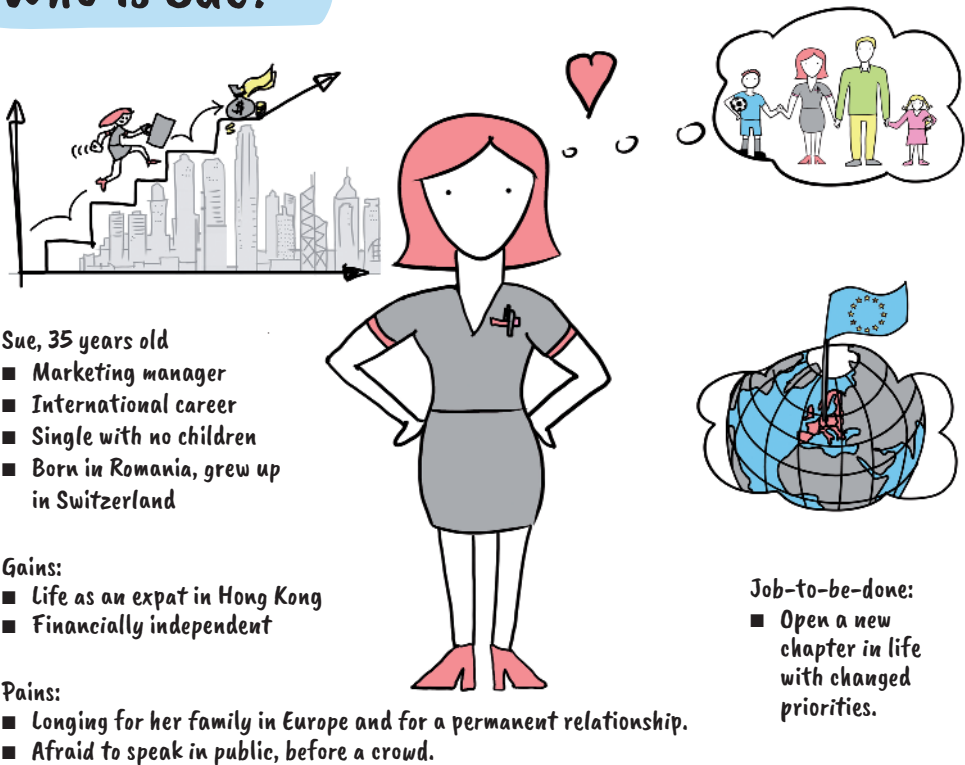


At this point, we would like to show you a little trick so you will be really satisfied in the end with the results achieved. We know the feeling: We had a firm desire to achieve something, and at the end we missed the target by an inch, so we were dissatisfied – despite our personal success. We can frequently observe the phenomena when we achieve only second place in a sports event or when we narrowly fail in our application for team leadership. In general, we tend to orient ourselves upward and make comparisons, which can motivate us to become better. But often we feel frustrated because our current capability has natural limitations and we can influence it only within the bounds of the possible.

One suitable strategy for improving our motivation consists of orienting ourselves by looking downward in terms of our previous achievements and comparing ourselves to those who have achieved less. In our example from sports, second place may be our best result of the season. It's similar to a desire for a career change. For example: You may have already held your ground against other internal and external applicants and were very close to the target. You'll notice that you'll feel a lot better with this attitude. This mindset helps us especially when it comes to grades, ranks, best-seller lists, or a desired career goal.

After this brief introduction to the “DESIGN THINKING LIFE” and an initial stocktaking, we want to turn to our personas and subsequently design our own future. At the beginning of each exercise, Sue, John, and Steve will tell us something about their lives and their challenges, ideas, and solutions so that we can apply the tools without further assistance.

Who is Sue?



Sue, 35 years old

- Marketing manager
- International career
- Single with no children
- Born in Romania, grew up in Switzerland

Gains:

- Life as an expat in Hong Kong
- Financially independent

Pains:

- Longing for her family in Europe and for a permanent relationship.
- Afraid to speak in public, before a crowd.

Job-to-be-done:

- Open a new chapter in life with changed priorities.

Seen from the outside, Suzanna – or Sue, as she affectionately calls herself – has a perfect life. She has a very good job with a bank in Hong Kong and, thanks to an assignment agreement as an expat, a very good salary to enjoy life in the former British colony. Nevertheless, she is unhappy with some aspects of her life. This is why she wants to change her life with the help of DTL tools.

Sue grew up in modest circumstances. Her parents didn't have the chance to attend high school, let alone a university. With a great deal of ambition and a strong will, Sue became the first member of her family to graduate from college. Almost thirty years ago, Sue's parents had come to Switzerland from Romania to work as seasonal help in the catering business. The family had a basic knowledge of the German language; the culture and the way of life in Switzerland, however, were quite different from the lifestyle in the small village in the Carpathian Mountains where Sue lived during the first years of her life.

Sue is very ambitious. She was a diligent student and graduated from high school as one of the top honor students of her class. After long discussions, her parents allowed their daughter to study at the university. Again, Sue graduated with excellent grades, although she had to finance her studies on her own with countless part-time jobs. After studying at the university, it was not so easy for Sue to enter into professional life. She applied for jobs everywhere, only to find out at the end of the process that other candidates had been chosen.

So Sue had no other choice than to complete another internship and, after that, accept a temporary position as a maternity leave replacement. Sue was able to build up a solid network in the company during the period of her employment and win over her bosses with good work, so she was offered a permanent position in the marketing department. After a few years in the job and completion of many internal training programs, her big opportunity came along. Sue was offered a management position in Hong Kong.

For Sue, it was a big career leap. Since then, she has had the privilege of experiencing five challenging years in Hong Kong and is increasingly aware of the fact that she misses Europe and her family. Moreover, Sue is still single. Although her open and direct manner allows her to meet lots of men, nothing has worked out thus far in terms of a longer relationship. Now, at the age of 35, she realizes that she wants to change her life. By means of self-reflection, she tries to figure out where she stands in life.



Self-reflection by Sue – where does she stand in life?

					
Relationships					
Leisure					
Work					
Health					

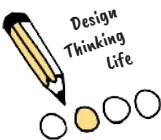
Through self-reflection, it becomes more and more clear in her mind that her desire for a partner, aspiration for a professional change, and longing to live again in Europe have top priority.

Now it's time to find out and define which points each of us would like to develop further: career, leisure, or our way of life – the possibilities are multifarious. In our introductory stocktaking on page 30, we already compiled topics. Now we'll evaluate them and put them in relation to one another in order to identify fields of action where our desire for change is strongest.

Possible fields of action may be relationships, leisure, work, and health. We will introduce more strategies and techniques starting on page 184 to deal with greater wishes for change in terms of professional life and career planning.

We start our journey with a pragmatic screening as to where we currently stand in life:

Self-reflection: Where do you stand in life?

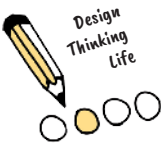


					
Relationships					
Leisure					
Work					
Health					
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According to what we know about Sue, she'll certainly tackle the issue of relationship. Next to the job situation, the fact that she has no permanent partner puts the greatest strain on her.

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If you would like, you can put these subcategories in relation to one another again or use the matrix for other categories:

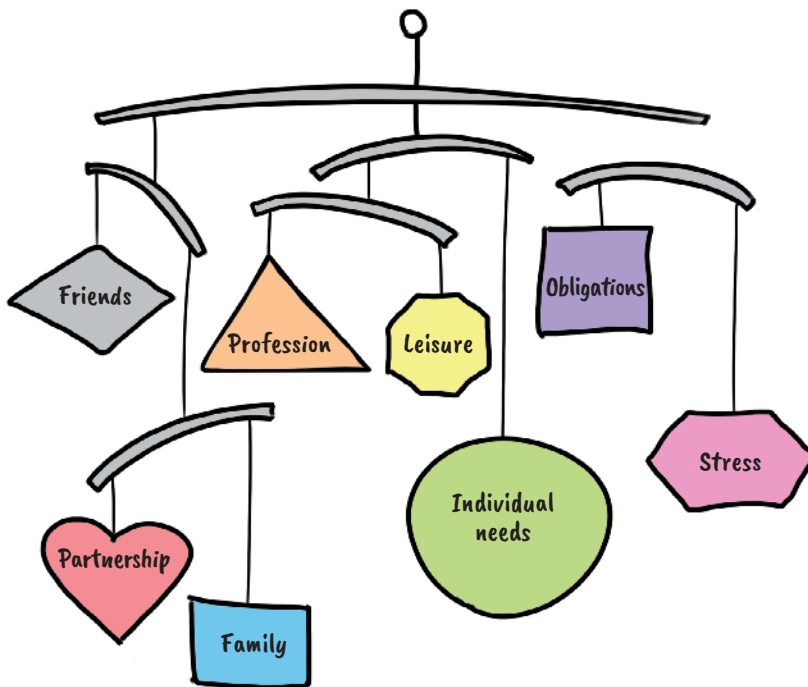


					
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How everything is connected

From the previous phase of self-reflection, we can derive the themes and the points that we want to change. Sue, for example, would like a change in relationship and career. Usually, there are one or two sub-areas where we wish for a change. However, we can assume that all these areas of life are connected with one another. Imagine a mobile. Everything is held together in the system, and the individual elements mutually influence one another.

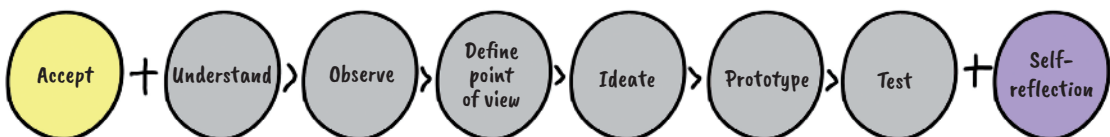


Dissatisfaction at work translates into physical ailments such as stress or headaches, which in turn might lead to insomnia. What's important here is that we first change our current life in small steps so that we still have the energy for greater changes. Often, a little thing kicks off something big or indicates the direction the change should take.

How do we find out what we want?

In design thinking, we work with empathy maps and in-depth interviews that help us learn more about a person. In the “DESIGN THINKING LIFE,” we must go one step further and develop the ability to direct mindfulness toward ourselves and come to new insights by way of self-observation. The aim is to take a bird’s-eye view (meta level). So we want to find out what we enjoy in life and which situations and experiences make us unhappy. This type of reflection helps us identify interference factors and unfavorable dynamics that may throw the system off balance.

For this reason, we expand the design thinking process defined in the beginning by two phases: acceptance and self-reflection. Now we have a total of eight phases that provide guidance and yield information on where exactly we are in the “DESIGN THINKING LIFE” cycle at the moment. We have integrated these eight phases as a color bar in the *DTL Playbook* so we always know where we are in the process.



We took stock and performed an initial phase of self-reflection at the beginning of the DTL book.

You asked the following questions: Where do I stand in life right now? What do I like? What do I want to change?

Self-reflection is a continuous process, so we apply this phase both at the end and at the beginning of the design cycle. This allows for a continuous development.