

Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career (12 parts + 10 video briefs)

In this series, I've outlined personal and professional development tools anyone can use to bolster mentoring and career development coaching. These can also work as self-study materials, and as resources for existing mentoring programs. The approach is grounded in nonformal education and adult learning theories. The ten main segments each include a short conversation-guide, video clip link, and a short homework assignment. I hope you find these helpful.

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A note to users:

The series begins with an introductory segment (no video) that outlines some initial questions to stimulate early-to-mid career thinking. Then, it presents three outlines on mentoring and why it matters.

1. (Introduction) Early-to-Mid-Career: A Fantastic Time for Growth
2. Why everyone needs a mentor. (2:55) - https://youtu.be/9_US-XtzaBs
3. How to find a mentor. (4:17) - <https://youtu.be/Hp5nt2tZkf4>
4. How to become a mentor. (4:28) - <https://youtu.be/YrJLz2WJOs8>

The next 7 segments and videos provide conversation-starting ideas (or self-study reflections) for early to mid-career thinking and growth. They can also help someone who may be contemplating a job move, or even retirement. They can help focus one's energies now, and plan for the future they desire.

5. Time vs. Energy: Which will you manage? (4:24) - <https://youtu.be/pZ83Y9UXHxM>
6. Opportunity vs. Meaning: Which will you pursue? (3:31) - <https://youtu.be/aq8iU-O4LvU>
7. Volition: What are your choices? (3:31) - <https://youtu.be/7ypwg6UN1uM>
8. Gratitude: Can making a list improve your career? (2:31) - <https://youtu.be/npboMBY-hJE>
9. Curiosity: The new currency. (2:49) - <https://youtu.be/FWThUed5Gow>
10. Appreciation & Love: What language do you speak? (3:34) - <https://youtu.be/dlVBjNjxU-KE>
11. Being Remembered. (3:17) - <https://youtu.be/allzLWcnpic>
12. (Summary) Opportunity questions and future career exploration.

You may share these in any way that works for your organization / platform / approach. Share with:

- **Teams, units, departments:** Copy-and-paste of each of the segments (including the video link), and share one per week (or one per month).
- **Managers / mentors:** Select "conversation" topics of interest, and share the video and text prompt via email in advance of sitting down to talk.
- **Leadership programs:** Assign one per session (again, in advance) and then go into deeper discussion as a group at the scheduled meeting time.

These materials are available at no cost for nonprofit, government, and educational organizations. (This does not include for-profit education.) Please let us know about your use of the materials. We want to make them better, add new topics, and ultimately meet the needs of organizations and people who are doing this important work in mentoring. Thank you.

#1 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: *A Fantastic Time for Growth (The introduction.)*



Whether you're working in business, industry, farming, education, the non-profit or government sector, or for yourself, *early-to-mid-career* can bring exciting professional development and growth, as well as great internal worry and doubt... *often at the same time*.

In early career, we're getting the lay of the land, and beginning to understand what we're good at (and perhaps where specific talents lie). As we move into mid-career, we begin to trust ourselves (having been around long enough to learn a few things), but we can also have lingering existential questions about whether we're really on the right path, or if our management and leadership and communication skill sets are as good as we'd hoped at this point. If you're feeling any of these concerns, good. It's a sign of humility which, according to the literature, is a key trait for great leadership.

That humility can also spur your intrinsic motivation to dig in and learn. This again is a good thing. In fact, I contend it's necessary for anyone who wants to move (as Jim Collins outlined) from *good to great*.

Regardless of age or career stage, I hope these mentoring segments will become foundational for anyone wishing to achieve personal and professional growth.

In this series, we'll dive into ideas that can help anyone in their early-to-mid (or even late-) career range. Most of these posts are extracts from my 2024 book, *The Encouraging Mentor: Your Guide to 40 Conversations that Matter*. This is a how-to manual for mentors, teachers, coaches, and anyone interested in becoming a better mentor, but the questions *also* work well for self-reflection.

But before jumping into the specific ideas / challenges, let's pause and do a quick career assessment.

Early-to-Mid-Career Homework Challenge: Here are some career questions to ponder. Take your time with these over the next few weeks. Jot a few notes on paper. Review them as you read the forthcoming posts (and video briefs) that provide specific ideas and tools.

Current-State Career Assessment:

1. What do you like about your work?
2. Are you challenged in this career field (or in your particular position)?
3. Are you finding meaning, feeling fulfilled, and being motivated? (Is that internal or external?)
4. In what ways are you learning and growing (both personally and professionally)?
5. Is work-life balance real? How do you make time for important life events?
6. What are some stressors in your current job (or career field)? What might you change to help?

Again, take some time pondering these. Please do not tackle them all at once. Questions such as these are meant for stewing. In doing so, you will begin to formulate a bigger picture, and ideas on how to move forward to see that picture completed. Some of these will be answered as you read and consider the upcoming segment questions.

Lastly, remember to give yourself some grace as you ponder these things. Enjoy thinking about the *potential* that's inside of you right now. (NOTE: If you don't believe much potential is there, you're wrong. And I'll prove it to you right now.) The fact that you're reading this is proof that you are interested. That's the first step in moving toward success and positive impact in this world. These conversations (reading them by yourself or discussing them with a mentor) will help you see your potential... and more. I believe in you. You're on the path.

#2 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: *Why everyone needs a mentor.*



Video brief - (2:55) - https://youtu.be/9_US-XtzaBs

Are you interested in personal and professional (career) growth? Would you like to discover potential that you may not realize you possess? How resilient are you? What's your energy level on any given day? All of these can be addressed through mentorship, a powerful tool that involves an experienced person guiding and supporting a less experienced individual. Good mentors offer:

1. **Guidance, Support, and Advice:** This helps you navigate your career or personal development journey.
2. **Skill Development:** Mentors can help you develop specific skills. They can also share insights and often, recognize potential that you may not yet see in yourself.
3. **Source of Knowledge:** Mentors may possess specific topical information, helping you learn faster.
4. **Goal Setting:** They can assist you in setting clear, achievable goals to focus your efforts.
5. **Accountability:** Mentors can hold you accountable for your goals, ensuring you stay on track.
6. **Networking:** Building a network through mentorship opens doors to new opportunities, connections, and growth.
7. **Objective Perspective:** Mentors can reflect current situations, and offer an unbiased view of potential challenges and opportunities.
8. **Motivation:** They can encourage and challenge you. These work together to help keep you motivated for positive progress.

Homework: Review the list of 8 things that mentors can provide. Circle the top two or three. Then, make a list of people who might become a mentor to you (that could begin helping you with your top concerns or goals).

#3 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: *How Do You Find a Mentor?*



Video brief - (4:17) - <https://youtu.be/Hp5nt2tZkf4>

The last time, we talked about “why everyone needs a mentor” (because the research shows it can be tremendously helpful in your personal and professional life!). But how do you find one?! Do you just walk up and ask, “Will you be my mentor?” (That can work... but it might be awkward.) And actually, you don’t start there. In fact, you start with an INTERNAL examination... thinking about areas in work or life that you want guidance, advice, or growth. This inward look is key. And THEN you can begin seeking someone (or a few mentors to help). Let’s just jump in.

Inward examination: Define Your Goals. Clarify what you want to achieve. Identify specific areas where you need guidance or development. Note: It’s okay if you can’t yet articulate this. [Tip: Do the “Personal Mission” worksheet. Once you’ve done this, begin your search.]

To find a mentor:

- Look Within Your Network.
- Past Connections: Consider former colleagues, professors, or supervisors. Look back at former teachers, coaches, or clergy you admire.
- Go to Events: Attend networking events, conferences, or workshops related to your field or interests.
- Use Online Platforms like LinkedIn or even FaceBook.

THEN... when you’ve identified a few people...

- Reach Out Respectfully.
- Have an elevator pitch: Can you, in 60 seconds, articulate your interest in personal and professional growth... and make a connection to someone? Note: This will likely require you investing time in writing a brief outline, and then practicing it with a friend.
- Initial Meeting: Request a coffee chat or a video call. Keep it low-key and non-committal.

Nurture the Relationship:

- Learn About Them: Understand their background, experiences, and values.
- Connect Beyond Work on a personal level. Discuss interests, hobbies, and experiences.
- The Key: See if it feels right. If so, continue making connections. . . but this time. . . go ahead and express your interest in calling it a mentoring relationship.

Evaluate Progress:

- Review Your Goals: Discuss areas of growth, and areas needing work.
- Explore other topics or “discussion questions”
- Express your Appreciation: Acknowledge their investment of time and guidance. . . and let them know if there’s a particular area in which their mentoring conversations have helped.

Once you’ve had the experience of being mentored... your next challenge is to become a mentor for someone else!

Homework: Take your “potential mentor” list and begin networking so that you can identify your top one or two people to ask about becoming a mentor for you.

#4 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: *How do you become a mentor?*



Video brief - (4:28) - <https://youtu.be/YrJLz2WJOs8>

Regardless of your age or career stage... you have PROBABLY learned some things that, if you shared, could be valuable to someone else. "Sharing wisdom" is what a mentor does. Right?

Well..... Sorta. If I might suggest... studies and evaluations show the BEST mentors are NOT those who share their years of wisdom to "give advice" ... but instead... those who ASK GOOD QUESTIONS and engage in conversation SO THAT they co-construct approaches to life... or solutions to problems WITH their protégé.

YOU can become a mentor to someone else. All you need to do is be willing to invest a small amount of time... and to listen. Then, asking a few good questions (which you can get from any mentoring guide)... and you'll be ready. Here are some background steps to consider as you explore becoming a mentor:

- Know Yourself: Assess your skills, strengths, experiences, and networks. Understand what you can offer as a mentor.
- Consider a "Learn List" -- What are you reading or studying (at home at night!). Have you done an EQ assessment? (or read up on EQ?)
- Think about the help you've received. This reflection can really help you see how important it could be for you to reach out and mentor someone else.
- As we better know ourselves... we can better help others.

How do you find those others??? Well... DO NOT wait for someone to ask you to be their mentor. Most folks who NEED some guidance and conversation will not ask. Instead... pay attention to co-workers or friends. As you're starting out, you may be more comfortable "mentoring" someone who is younger than you. That's a great place to start.

Look for... and LISTEN to conversations in which you hear someone mention a need... or perhaps an interest in, for example, finding a new job... or getting a promotion... or figuring out how to better manage their credit cards.

REMEMBER: YOU need NOT be an expert. You can simply engage in conversations... listen... and be present. That's a big part of mentoring.

An aside: (There's a ton of new science on loneliness... even in the midst of a populated campus or workplace!) Being present... listening... and the key... humbly ASKING some questions. Again, you usually do NOT need to give "advice." But just be there... listen... and then help prompt their thinking.

Homework: Review the background steps outlined above. Consider one or two that you might try. Then, make a short list of people you could encourage (or actually begin a mentoring relationship with).

#5 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: *Time vs. Energy: Which will you manage?*



Video brief - (4:24) <https://youtu.be/pZ83Y9UXHxM>

Are you any good at managing your time? Some of you may think, “I’m not bad at it.” But most, like me, are no good at all. So here’s the question.

What if you worked on managing your energy instead of managing your time?

Time is finite. But energy can appear seemingly out of nowhere. In truth, energy has four sources: **the body, our emotions, our minds, and our spirit**. Tony Schwartz, founder of the Energy Project, says we can learn to harness these dimensions, creating our own energy.

Tony Schwartz, founder of The Energy Project says leaders can liberate the free flow of their own energy and achieve a contagious impact. The key is that they must role-model qualities such as openness, vulnerability, self-awareness, accountability, empathy and curiosity. Then, make a conscious shift from a performance culture to a growth culture.

Schwartz says a **performance culture** asks, “How much energy can we mobilize (tactical work to get things done)?” and the answer is finite. But a **growth culture** asks, “How much energy can we liberate together?” and the answer is infinite.

In my work and research, I think the term “generate” is more appropriate. To liberate indicates the energy is out there somewhere... contained... trapped. I think it’s not. I think the infinite opportunity is to generate it: mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. *But how do you do that?*

Reenergizing our body happens when we eat well, take breaks from work, and move (exercise). Physical energy is restored. Emotionally, the research shows that we gain energy by practicing gratitude, serving others, and making connections. Our minds can be easily drained by technology; so taking breaks from those distractions, getting outside for a change of scenery, or getting lost in a good story can increase mental energy. Lastly, when we engage in activities that give a sense of meaning and purpose, our spirit energy soars.

The Energizer Experiment:

Grab a piece of paper (or open a phone app) and write down the four sources of energy: Body. Emotion. Mind. Spirit. Then, under each source, think of four or five things that can energize you. These can be related to home or work. Look over that list. Ponder it a bit. Circle the top two or three items (whether home or work). Could these be motivators for you? For example, I am super energized by encouraging people. It’s what I love to do. I can apply this at work or home, and gain a great serotonin boost in my brain when I do that.

When we lean into our energizers, we automatically begin saying “no” to other things (time-stealers) freeing us to increase our output and have more impact at both home and work.

So... instead of trying to **manage** your time, invest in **generating** and managing your energy.

Final Challenge: *How might you apply these ideas in your work (professional life)? How might you apply them at home?*

Reference: Schwartz and McCarthy (2007). *Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time*. Harvard Business Review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2007/10/manage-your-energy-not-your-time>

#6 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career:

Opportunity vs. Meaning: Which will you pursue?



Video brief - (3:31) <https://youtu.be/aq8iU-O4LvU>

Imagine a point in the future where you have achieved your greatest professional goal. Invest a moment here. Visualize your career success. You have worked hard and have earned this. Now consider this question: ***How does this success feel?***

I think most people will have some level of contentment or satisfaction. Others may feel a bit of pride in the accomplishment. Some may begin to ponder, “What’s next?” Those responses are all normal and valid.

Now, **imagine it’s six months after that major achievement.** Consider these questions:

- How do you feel now (six months later)? What is motivating you now?
- What occupies your time and thinking now (both at work and at home)?

Yale professor and economist James Choi tells his students that “the greatest scarcity they will face in their professional lives is not a scarcity of opportunity, but a scarcity of *meaning*,” He contends that finding happiness in life can be accomplished only by knowing our *why* (or our *purpose*.)

Choi explains that thinking about some future ultimate success or reaching major life goals can become ***arrival fallacies***. Here, we mistakenly believe that we achieve happiness only after achieving a particular goal. This, he contends, can lead to deep disappointment.

Choi maintains that the only way to find contentment and happiness in life is to identify *a purpose*. Our purpose answers *why* we get up in the morning and go to work. It answers *why* we live, laugh, and love. It answers the deepest existential question of our *raison d’etre*.

Your challenge: Make two lists: 1.) Past Opportunities, and 2.) Future Opportunities (that you hope for)

e.g., Perhaps you had the opportunity to play sports in high school. Perhaps you’ve had college or training opportunities. Maybe you’ve traveled, or had some good (or bad!) job opportunities. *Jot these down.*

Then, make your second list of opportunities you hope to have in the future.

e.g., Maybe you hope to have the opportunity to gain a training certification, or a college degree. Perhaps you hope for opportunities to start a business... or travel... or volunteer... or get a promotion at work, advancing your career. Maybe you want to find a partner, start a family, or help solve a societal problem. *Jot your ideas.*

Now, review both lists. What items have deeper meaning related to your life goals (your real purpose), as opposed to surface level professional achievement. Circle the opportunities that are most meaningful. Then **ponder *why*** they’re meaningful. Lastly, ask yourself where you want to spend your time: pursuing opportunity, or pursuing meaning.

Debrief: You are now practicing *missional thinking*. This leads to clarity. Deep questions move us from simply going through the motions of life or work, to actually living. Finding *internal* fulfillment—and not simply career success—can be remarkably energizing. Are you ready for the challenge? What might happen if you decide to pursue *meaning* over everyday opportunities? The time to begin is now.

Homework Challenge: *How might you apply these ideas in your work (professional life)? How might you apply them at home?*

#7 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career:

Volition: What Are Your Choices?



Video brief - (3:31) <https://youtu.be/7ypwg6UN1uM>

Have you ever found your ability to make a choice and act upon it lacking? Choosing and acting define the broad concept of volition. Some label this as having the power to use one's free will. But in times of stress or anxiety, we sometimes feel hindered in our ability to exercise that choice and action. We may even feel powerless, frozen in place, and unable to act at all.

Can you think of a time when you felt unable to make a decision and then act? It could be something major or minor. Take a moment to reflect.

Penn State professor and author Dr. Heather Holleman has researched human volition, and has suggested one key question that you can ask someone (or that we can ask ourselves), that will help: *"What are your choices?"* If you can name just *one thing* that you might do, you can unlock your potential for taking action. . . deploying your volition.

In real life, after asking the first question and breaking through the mental block, simply follow up with: *"Then what? What's your next step?"* If you or someone is struggling deeply, you might be more specific: *"What is a small task today that could get you moving?"*

When serving as a mentor, we sometimes are directly asked, "What do you think I should do?" This is a natural and expected question. But it's one we should never answer. Instead, Holleman suggests a simple redirect: *"What do you think you should do?"* This is not cheating! You are still there in conversation, engaging with the person who's struggling. But, by asking this, you're helping them with self-reflection and perspective change. You're also sending a message that *they* can be empowered to think and act... that their volition is intact if they only activate it. Holleman notes that these volitional questions can help others feel in control, exert agency, and escape feeling trapped. They can also help them focus or regain focus on their goals.

Your challenge: Think of someone (perhaps a friend, family member, or coworker) who is feeling stuck or stressed or anxious in some way. Try to engage them casually. When the opportunity arises, empathize first (e.g., *"I can only imagine how difficult that must be."*) (and always avoid saying, *"I know how you feel"* because we rarely truly do). Then pose the simple questions: *What are your choices? What's one thing you might do?*

Conversation Bonus: Any time you are tempted to ask "How are you?" or "How was your day?" stop yourself. Holleman advises us that *are* and *was* are weak verbs that aim to reflect an existential sense of being. That's a pretty impossible question for casually passing someone in the hallway. Instead, Holleman suggest getting a bit more specific. Try some of her questions this week.

1. What surprised you about your day today? Did you gain any insights?"
2. What's been a highlight of your day?
3. Did anything interesting or unexpected happen today?
4. Is there something specific you're looking forward to today?
5. Did anything make you smile today?

Homework Challenge: *How might you apply these ideas in your work (professional life)? How might you apply them at home?*

Additional reading: Holleman, Heather (2022). *The Six Conversations: Pathways to connecting in an age of isolation and incivility.* Moody Publishers. Chicago.

#8 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career:

Gratitude: Can making a list improve your career?



Video brief - (2:31) <https://youtu.be/npboMBY-hJE>

Can increasing gratitude improve your brain chemistry and help you feel better? Can it help your career?

The science of gratitude has expanded greatly in the past twenty years. Studies increasingly show that regularly practicing gratitude contributes to better relationships, decreased anxiety, and increased internal satisfaction. These bolster what Daniel Goleman labels emotional and social intelligence, key items for success in our careers and lives.

Though once labeled soft skills—i.e., teamwork, communication, leadership, mission focus, curiosity, and others—employers now recognize that these are critical skills that function in the workplace as well as in everyday life. Well, gratitude is high on this list too.

When we pause to focus on things we're grateful for, we activate the prefrontal cortex in our brains and release important neurochemicals that help give us feelings of reward, bonding, and understanding. When we shift our thinking from negative to positive, there is a surge that can energize and reinvigorate us even on a bad day.

So how do you increase your practice of gratitude? This may sound very simple, but we need only write down three things for which we're grateful for 21 days in a row. Writer and former Harvard researcher, Shawn Achor, says practicing gratitude for 21 days will train our brains to look at the world differently. Once the habit is formed, we start scanning the world for positives instead of threats. It's a game changer.

Researcher Robert Emmons, likewise, said that even though we do not have total control over our emotions, "being grateful is a choice that can sustain us through the ups and downs of our lives." When we become more grateful, we are more stress resistant and our self-worth increases. This often shows outwardly. And again, when that is noticed, it can result in career progression and success.

Homework Challenge:

Are you willing to try the 21-day gratitude test? (i.e., Will you write three things per day that you're grateful for?)

How might increasing gratitude help your career? (Make a list of ideas on this as well.)

I have several gratitude lists, many pertaining to a certain aspect of or event in life. E.g., I have two full pages noting gratitude for the many positive things (and a few challenges) around our daughter going to graduate school in Alaska. That list (and our faith) literally changed my brain chemistry and allowed me to sleep at night.

#9 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career:

Curiosity: The new currency



Video brief - (2:49) <https://youtu.be/FWThUed5Gow>

What are you curious about? Some folks will respond to this question with an immediate answer: “*Everything!*” Others may just look at you and ask what you mean. Whether at one end of the spectrum, or somewhere in the middle, watching someone respond to this question will allow you to immediately know a lot about them and their potential for long-term success.

In brief, curiosity is one of the most important traits and a high predictor for success identified by researchers at Korn Ferry, an international business consulting firm. In CEO Gary Burnison’s Special Edition, *The Fall Whisper*, he says most people think of growth, strategy, and vision as key traits for leaders. But curiosity has recently become recognized as an absolutely critical piece.

Since the pandemic of 2020, Burnison says our world has experienced “*nonstop ambiguity*” which requires leaders to look at the world with an open mind. Whatever your organization (for profit, non-profit, education, government, etc.), today’s rapid changes can only be met if we are aware of emerging trends and subsequently ready ourselves for action to meet the opportunities (or the risks) presented. We can meet this challenge by increasing our curiosity.

Here are three questions that can help increase curiosity:

1. **What are you curious about right now?**
2. **How might you increase your curiosity (in more areas of your work and life)?**
3. **Might listening be a strategy for increasing your curiosity?** (Think about that one for a few moments.)

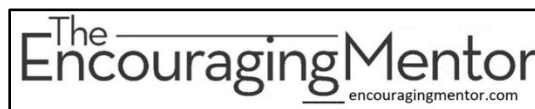
Think about context. Burnison says context is best friends with curiosity. By considering context, almost any event, trend, or observation can be handled or reframed to help visualize a path forward. By pairing curiosity with context and perspective, we can determine action.

Summary: In cultivating your curiosity, don’t forget to expand your knowledge (and possible options) further by remembering to listen well. The saying about “*experts not listening because they already know the answer*” rings true here. Imagine what might be missed if we are not open and curious to hear and learn about the other opportunities out there.

Homework Challenge: Create a list of some ways you might increase your curiosity... for things at work (to boost your professional career), and at home!

Additional Reading: Burnison, Gary (October 9, 2022). *The Fall Whisper*. Korn Ferry special edition publication.

#10 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: ***Appreciation & Love: What's your language?***



Video brief - (3:34) <https://youtu.be/dlVBNJxU-KE>

Do you want to become a more effective leader, or teacher, or team member? Or how about becoming a better family member?

I teach a short segment on EQ in my grad classes here at Ohio State... and if you know Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* construct... you understand that when we know ourselves better (recognizing our own emotions), we can use that knowledge to guide our thinking and behavior. That's powerful stuff.

But how do you improve your emotional intelligence? One way is to learn a new language. I'm not talking about a communication method specific to a geographic region... but a different kind of language that can help you communicate and improve relationships at a deeper level.

Some of you have guessed it. I'm talking about Dr. Gary Chapman's "5 Languages of Appreciation" or more commonly known as "The 5 Love Languages."

Love languages? Stick with me here! The research shows that people have an emotional communication preference. (Think EQ.) So it makes sense to apply that in our communication interactions every day. Right? Originally developed for couples, marriage counseling, and etc., the *5 Love Languages* are truly applicable far beyond those confinements. Hence, Chapman renamed a version as *appreciation* for workplace applications.

Whether at work or home, Chapman says there are basically five main styles that people prefer (which subconsciously enhance their reception of communicated messages): **1. Words of Affirmation 2. Physical Touch 3. Acts of Service 4. Quality Time 5. Gifts**

In other words... Some people **hear** you better when you use affirming words. Others **hear** you when you do acts of service, or spend some time with them. For example, who do you know that prefers *time* with you vs. a note (*words*) of thanks? Everyone has these communication (language) preferences, and they vary. Understanding this is central to good leadership communication... and it can make your work and home life better as well.

In the workplace, understanding what language others speak can help you better supervise, teach, mentor, care for, work with, and serve them. By communicating in the method others prefer to **hear**... we can experience improved connections that are profound.

But how do you find out what language people prefer? Yes. There's a quiz. It takes only a few minutes. And it's free here: <https://5lovelanguages.com/quizzes>

Homework Challenge: Are you willing to take the quiz? Might you share it with your team or family?

Bonus challenge: Think about whether you can learn a person's language of appreciation by observing them. *Hint:* Watch how they communicate with others. That's a clue as to what they subsequently wish to receive.

Note: Dr. Chapman approaches the "5 Love Languages" from a Christian faith-based worldview; however, the results are not couched in religious dogma; and I believe the concept is applicable to anyone from any culture, faith, or non-faith tradition. For additional reading: Dr. Gary Chapman's 5 Languages of Appreciation - <https://www.appreciationatwork.com/>

#11 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career: *How do you want to be remembered?*



Video brief - (3:17) - <https://youtu.be/allzLWcnpic>

How do you want to be remembered? This is a big question. But it's not just about when you're gone from this earth. How do you want to be remembered when you leave a meeting at work? Or after a conversation with a friend? Or at home? *How do you want others to remember you?*

Steven Covey asked this question in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. It is one of the most powerful questions you can ponder. Throughout recorded history, people have asked the question of life's purpose.

Last week, I attended the 2024 OSU Football season home opener and watched two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin celebrate the 50th anniversary of his first Heisman. Archie will always be remembered as a football star. But over the years, I've heard Archie speak a dozen times (student groups, civic events, on campus, etc.) and though I think he enjoys being remembered as a great football and team player, his messages at every one of those dozen speeches I've seen are not just about football.

When Archie talks, he encourages people. He speaks of the important things in life... of his personal values... of the importance of being humble and serving others... He speaks of his faith. He speaks of unity. He wants to be remembered for MORE than just football.

Homework: Grab a piece of paper. Jot down a few phrases or ideas on the question: *How do you want to be remembered?*

Let these ideas ruminate a bit. If able, go outside or take a walk or if you're in a chair... roll for a bit. Be curious about what you've written. Consider questions that might come to mind, including, "What else?" "Is there more?" You may even let your responses sit for a week. But then, go deeper. Think about how to boil it down to the basics... maybe even just a couple of words.

Bonus challenge: After you've done the exercise, pose this question to a friend. It could be a great conversation.

#12 - Mentoring Early-to-Mid Career:

A Fantastic Time for Growth

(The summary conversation questions.)



I hope you've enjoyed the brief conversation outlines and video segments... whether in conversation with someone (a friend or mentor), or as a self-study for reflection. We began this series with some introductory questions about your job and career. (Review those if you have a moment.) Our aim was to share ideas that can help anyone in their early-to-mid (or even late-) career stage discover what's most important through the process of conversation and introspection. Most of conversations were extracted from my 2024 book, *The Encouraging Mentor: Your Guide to 40 Conversations that Matter*. I'm working to provide all of the materials online for free... hopefully eliminating barriers to access!

So. Now that you've come this far, please allow me to pose some additional "opportunity questions" and "future career" questions that may be of interest in your personal and professional growth.

Opportunity Check:

1. Know Thyself: Have you taken an EQ assessment, cultural inventory, hidden bias test, or used other personal growth tools? (Will you give one a try this week?!)
2. Coach/Mentor: Do you have a career coach and/or mentor? (Hint: Have several.)
3. Learn List: What are some things you want to learn?
4. Bucket List: What are some things you want to do or achieve?
5. Values Review: How can you exhibit your personal values in your work (again, bringing your whole authentic self)?

Future-State Career Potential:

1. Mission: What is your compelling "why"? How can you let it guide and bolster your career?
2. Leadership: How can you lead and encourage and enable others (at any level in your organization)?
3. Legacy: How do you want to be remembered?
4. Challenge: Will you become a mentor (informal/nonformal) and be an encouragement to others?

As noted before, take some time pondering these. In doing so, you will begin to formulate a bigger picture, and ideas on how to move forward to see that picture completed. You are on a great path, and you are moving forward. If you don't have a mentor, get one or two. If you already have one, diversify your conversations by adding another (perhaps topic-specific) mentor. Find someone who's different from you so that you can learn even more and sail even higher.

My best wishes on your journey.

About the series and author: Professor Brian Raison offers this series with suggestions on how you can clarify your purpose, advance your career, and create the future you envision. His materials are extracted from graduate courses he teaches at The Ohio State University, as well as current research and practice. The approach is grounded in *nonformal mentoring*, which parallels nonformal education and adult learning theories. Each post will feature question prompts to help you grow personally and professionally, regardless of your age and/or career stage.