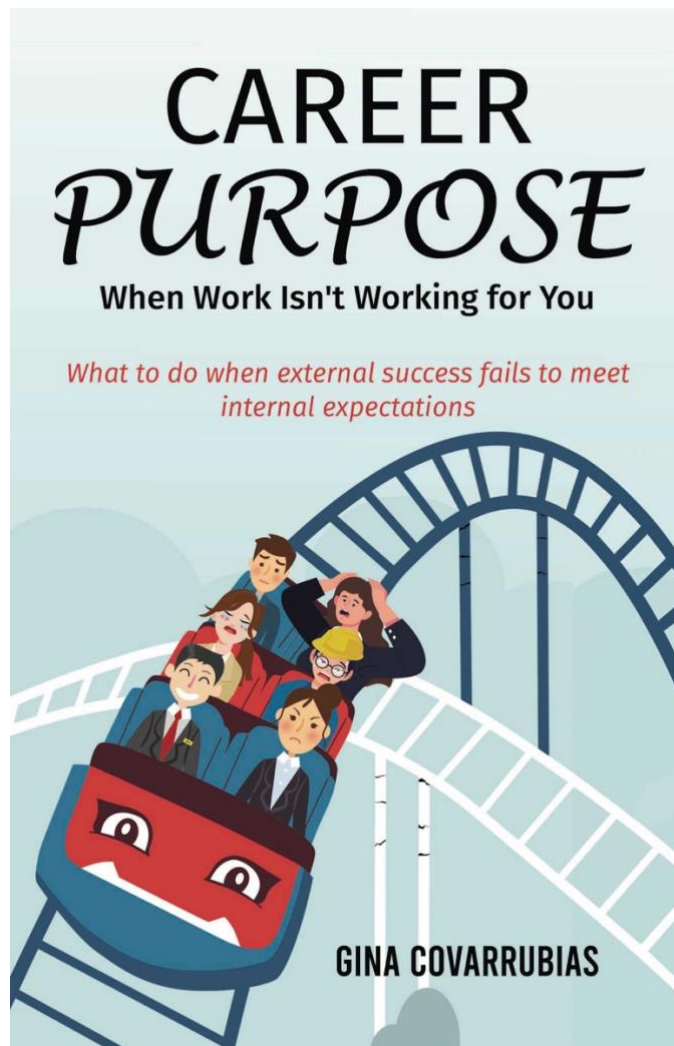




DELIBERATE *Doing*
ignite your career

Career *Purpose*: When Work Isn't Working for You

What to do when external success fails to meet internal expectations





FOREWORD

In general, we miss the purpose of our careers.

We do so by overinvesting time and energy toward misguided goals—common examples include chasing prestige or job stability. We become entranced by short-term, potentially deceitful rewards that often distract us from peaceful living.

To compound the problem, we justify this kind of behavior. We are taught throughout our lives to believe that accomplishing certain goals leads to lasting fulfillment. Such goals might include landing a dream job or achieving the next rung on the proverbial career ladder. Thus, we feel compelled to do what it takes to attain these (often deceitful) goals.

There are dire problems with this traditional approach to work. Overinvesting in our careers often doesn't produce expected or desired results. Unmet expectations can then lead to painful disappointment. Moreover, we end up missing out on the profound purpose of a career and the role it serves in our lives.

None of this should be acceptable, nor is it inevitable.

My first challenge for you is to contemplate the following quote by George Bernard Shaw:

"Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself."



PART I. THE SETUP

Chapter 1: Ripe Conditioning

“Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think.” ~Albert Einstein

The elementary years offer much to contemplate—how to pick and choose friends, how to treat others, how to pay attention all day in class, what to do during recess, how to deal with a bully, etc.

One of the pivotal messages we learn during these early years is that failure is bad. Therefore, **we become motivated to perform well from a place of fear or embarrassment.** We heed the messages to obtain good grades, to behave and obey. Those are the ticket items that earn us the next-level privilege of moving up and not being embarrassed in front of others.

There were always a few contrarians, and there were always a minority who did not care what others thought. These irregular souls were willing to pay a price and face possible punishment in the name of sticking with their own convictions.

It taught me that collective conformity was preferred and often rewarded, individual expression was rejected and often punished.

In short, students are set up to learn what it means to fit the mold. While there is utility in this kind of system, it unfortunately does not leave much room, if any, for students to learn one of the most critical life lessons. This often-missed lesson is something that can carry them through the unpredictability of life’s most challenging events—the ability to get in touch with their being at its core.

As an important aside, I am not suggesting that the educational system is irresponsible. What I *am* suggesting is that the system isn’t perfect.

Society does our youth a disservice by supporting the sole message that a good education coupled with conformity is key to a good future.

How is it possible that the very system we’ve painstakingly followed and obeyed—a system meant to reward us with prospects, stability, and happiness, etc., could have set us up for anything but?



CHAPTER 2: Delusional Preparation

"Each of us tends to think we see things as they are, that we are objective. But this is not the case.

We see the world, not as it, but as we are—or, as we are conditioned to see it." ~Stephen R. Covey

Before we further explore how our institutional systems and cultural conditioning may help to set us up for failure, it is imperative we understand the other culprit—the human brain. Human brains are designed to keep us alive and actively contribute to our lived experiences. Sometimes these contributions are helpful or truthful, other times obstructive or even dangerous.

Many people, from adolescents to adults, are too inexperienced to recognize false narratives, let alone tap into their higher consciousness to contextualize them.

"Our most high-level, complex (or in-states) mind-states are also fundamentally hooking themselves into the most basic biological machinery that literally we share with alligators that keeps us alive. That is both the power and the potential of being a human and the danger of it." ~Dr. Immordino-Yang

Dr. Immordino-Yang describes how the higher-level state of the brain can make us feel capable and confident, or as she says, expansive. It works alongside our survival-mode alligator brains. Only humans can claim a right to this unique duality, allowing for both higher and lower-level consciousness at the same time.

When we combine the accumulation of our life's limited nurturing (as explained in Chapter 1) with the creative yet deceitful capacity of our brain's nature (as explained in Chapter 2), what does this produce?

It results in a somewhat delusional system of beliefs that will follow us through the years into adulthood and into our careers.

This delusional belief system tricks us into thinking that the world has adequately qualified us for the next phase in life (whether that phase is our professional career, promotion, or major life change).

This flawed belief system, a term I call delusional preparation, is the result of our limited nurture and creative nature.

To take it an unfortunate step further, these young adults apply their delusional preparation and lack of life skills to the workforce, often presenting themselves as ready to conquer the world. Little do they know that in one form or another, they have been set up for partial or total failure.

Who are they to believe that a career should offer anything less than bliss?



CHAPTER 3: Off to the Races, Onto the Mistakes!

“By working faithfully eight hours a day, you may eventually get to be a boss and work twelve hours a day.”

~Robert Frost, American poet & Pulitzer prize winner

Your moment of truth finally arrives: the first day on the job. This is what you worked so hard for after all the painstaking years of education.

The rewards can be numerous, at least that’s what you tell yourself. Everything from a generous starting salary to health insurance to a newfound title—your patience and hard work *must* count for significant prizes, like earning a life-sized stuffed bear at the fair.

You want to show everybody, oh so badly, how you are going to be a success. Yes, all your hard labors, sacrifices, student loans and sleepless nights are going to pay off. The fruits of your labor will, as society promises, will reward you in the form of good salaries, high job security and professional prestige, to name a few.

As a rookie professional your young and fresh out-of-college brain could have a field day, taunting you with narratives such as:

- *I must put my education to good use.*
- *I must work toward paying off my student debt.*
- *I better perform.*

In addition to delusional preparation, young professionals start their careers with multiple pressures and high expectations, sometimes intermingled with entitlement (that was me!). For both young and seasoned professionals, rookie mistakes can derail self-confidence, inhibit wellbeing, or worse.

Career Mistake #1 People Self-Identify with Their Jobs

The “What-do-you-want-to-be” question is a rigid, linear-minded approach to life. This poorly-worded question implies that a person’s existence is synonymous with their occupation—that they *are* their careers. It is a self-defeating question that does no favors for our youth as it nudges them to self-identify with a title.

Career Mistake #2 People Drink too much Company Kool-Aid

To some extent, all employees must buy into the system at hand—they must drink a portion of the Kool-aid. You choose to accept the employer location, assigned job duties, and current pool of colleagues.



CHAPTER 3 continued

Buying in requires a delicate balancing act because the degree to which you choose to buy in may backfire. Too little, then you're treated as a weird enigma. Too much, then you've sold your soul. The way you choose to buy in (or not) is of course, your own judgment call. You must decide how far is too far, how much Kool-aid is enough.

Career Mistake #3 People Believe Human Resources is Their Friend

The term “Human Resources” is a bit misleading, almost duplicitous. The phrase tends to bring about a false warm and fuzzy image to the young professional who doesn’t know any better. The name can imply a safety net that offers employee refuge when something goes awry.

They may welcome you into their private office with open arms, but it is not a sacred, safe space to speak freely—**they are not your therapist!** Part of their job is to monitor everything you say and then determine if you are a liability. Therefore, whether you come to their office complaining, sobbing, or snitching, act as though upper management is also in the room.

Career Mistake #4 People Believe Formal Education is Enough for Success

What many young professionals fail to realize—something professors may not have revealed or didn’t know, is that formal education doesn’t teach us *how* to do a job. It doesn’t teach us the nuances of performing in the workplace. In other words, the hard skills are not enough. We need to supplement with soft skills. *Classrooms do not simulate the real world.*

After years of building a reputation, expertise, and a dependable network, it can be difficult to pivot. As soon as employees convince themselves they are stuck in an undesirable job with few options, employers gain the upper hand. It is a disempowering state of existence.

Many professionals suffer in the name of a high achieving, over-productive career driven by a desire for happiness or some other external outcome. After all, we’ve been delusionally prepped to strive for such outcomes without deliberate forethought of the disempowering consequences.

Our delusional preparation catalyzes a most insidious mistake that deserves its own chapter—a deceptive blunder spawned by our enchanting alligator brains.



Chapter 4: Career Attachment

“Receive without pride, let go without attachment.” ~Marcus Aurelius

Perhaps one of the most *detrimental* expectations we hold is that our hard-earned careers should translate to an emotional return on investment.

Our alligator brains work alongside delusional preparation to offer ideas of what a career should be. Then we painstakingly cling to those ideas.

Often, it is not your fault if you are too attached to your career. In fact, you’ve been taught to become attached!

We have been groomed to expect certain things from our careers.

When you think back on your education and societal messages, career attachment makes sense.

For instance, think of the advertisements and billboards that boast of superb school rankings and high job placement. Recall the unrealistic messages on job sites that offer dream jobs just for you. This kind of propaganda, in turn, sets you up for emotional dependence on your job, employer, boss, colleagues, and anyone who holds a stake in your work environment.

When your version of happiness, fulfillment, or some other expectation has not panned out, it may leave you desperately wondering:

- *What if I’m in the wrong job?*
- *What if I need to go back to school?*
- *Why can’t I find something that makes me happy?*

Career attachment is a disempowering, exhausting way to approach a career. Led by our lower-level, unsophisticated brains, attachment is easy since we haven’t been taught any other way.

That’s about to change.



PART II. AUTONOMY

Chapter 5: Stop Controlling the Uncontrollable

“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” ~Max Planck

If you think you can control external outcomes or engineer results, I hate to say that you’re sadly mistaken.

Switching jobs, employers, or industries does not resolve your career attachment.

We all create expectations, yet most of us don’t realize we do this. Somewhere along the way in your life’s journey, someone or something fed you an idea that management should always be competent. That a workplace shouldn’t be toxic, or that colleagues should always be nice to one another.

Thus, the true problem lies in the common denominator—attachment to belief systems.

Relying on delusional preparation and our lower consciousness makes it seem like we are living at the effect of the world around us.

As if we have no say in the way we feel. But humans are blessed with higher brainpower. We were not designed to simply react to our surroundings like the animal kingdom.

“What we think, we become.” ~Buddha



Chapter 6: Start Controlling Your Reward Systems

“The highest reward for a man’s toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.” ~John Ruskin

The more we try to control the uncontrollable, the more *out* of control we will feel. This describes the common, ineffective external reward system.

The more we try to control the controllable, the more *in* control we will feel. This describes the uncommon, effective internal reward system.

A balance between the two promotes less attachment and more control.

If we remove the external reward system along with extrinsic motivations, we remove attachment. **To remove attachment is to remove dependencies on outside factors.**

The external reward system is your attempt to fulfill internal needs by external things. In contrast, an internal reward system is the art of fulfilling internal needs (emotional voids) by internal things.

An internal reward system involves owning, recognizing, and celebrating your internal efforts and pursuits compared against yourself. It’s about finding rewards throughout your internal journey *on the way* to a goal or achievement. It’s not about the external goal or achievement itself.

As you contemplate your motivations for working, consider the two key differences in our reward systems:

- The externally directed reward system promotes **artificial, extrinsic motivation** to perform well (usually in the name of mandates, deadlines, expectations, or other external direction).
- The self-directed, internal reward system promotes **genuine, intrinsic motivation** to perform well (usually in the name of self-challenge, intellectual expansion, growth, or other mode of self-improvement).

Despite how tempting they might be, external rewards can lead us down a career path of chasing wherein the end achievement is never enough. In contrast, internal rewards lead us down a career path of internal pursuit and effort for the purpose of self-expansion.



Chapter 7: Career Purpose

“In the fixed mindset, everything is about the outcome. If you fail—or if you’re not the best—it’s all been wasted.

The growth mindset allows people to value what they’re doing regardless of the outcome. They’re tackling problems, charting new courses, working on important issues. Maybe they haven’t found the cure for cancer, but the search was deeply meaningful.” ~Carol S. Dweck

This chapter teaches an adaptable approach you can customize and apply to your career for more autonomy and less stress. The flexible framework guides you to build upon unquantifiable internals that cannot be measured by metrics or instrumentation.

Career Purpose Pillar 1—Service

Service involves contribution to things that exist in your external environment, like people, places, or organizations.

You can create a service mindset by answering:

- Where or whom can I serve for the sake of serving?
- How can I make it a point to serve the difficult people around me?
- What might alternate or unusual contributions to my surroundings look like

Our choice to take the high road and serve in difficult moments is the kind of expansion that the workplace offers us.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” ~Mahatma Gandhi

Career Purpose Pillar 2—Development

Development involves the expansion of your mind, like intellect, hard/soft skills, and emotional intelligence.

You can create a development mindset by answering:

- How can I change myself to meet people where they are?
- How do I respectfully disagree?
- What does it mean for me to push back or speak up?



CHAPTER 7 continued

Pillar 2 encourages a development mindset to take advantage of self-expansion and thus, higher consciousness. This can include enrichment of both the hard and soft skills. But it also includes stepping outside of your familiar comfort zone and embracing unknowns.

“Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still.” ~Chinese Proverb

Career Purpose Pillar 3—Legacy

Pillar 3 is not your traditional version of legacy!

When people speak of legacy, they often refer to surface-level features such as achievements, awards, or perhaps buildings erected in their names. Legacies, however, are also created by ordinary people whose names never make historic records—like the doctor saving lives, the researcher testing materials, or the teacher shaping society’s future.

Sometimes people feel they must unreasonably aim for the stars. As if working in ordinary jobs and living their ordinary lives aren’t good enough.

Not only can legacy involve what you did, it’s about how you:

- Improve everything and everyone around you, leaving them in a better condition
- Express thanks and gratitude
- Set the world up for prosperity, especially in your absence

You can create a legacy mindset by answering:

- Why might people want to work with me?
- What can I do to make my job as easy as possible for the next person?
- How many people can I thank today?

One of the most practical features of the three pillars of career purpose is that **employment is not required!**

Do not exploit yourself to evolve a career, exploit a career to evolve yourself.



Chapter 8: Life's Real Work

“And I sort of feel that’s your responsibility as a person, as a human being—to constantly be updating your positions on as many things as possible.

And if you don’t contradict yourself on a regular basis, then you’re not thinking.” ~Malcolm Gladwell

On a high level, we have established that external rewards cannot fulfill innate needs, and that too much pleasure leads to pain. In the context of our careers, emotional dependence on job outcomes is an artificial form of fulfilling our innate needs.

You’re bombarded with daily challenges as well as opportunities. The process of figuring things out, of slowly unraveling answers, or painstakingly defeating obstacles, affords you to self-expand. You own the privilege of utilizing both challenges and opportunities in the name of self-development. All while getting paid.

Employment is just one platform in which we can construct higher-level decisions that compound over time.

Graduating to a higher level of consciousness is only the beginning of life’s hard work.

Our life’s real work is to mindfully address challenges that every moment may offer—by making the deliberate choice to earn the next complex level of ourselves. Or not.

Thus, if you optimize your time at any job by:

1. Critically thinking beyond external circumstances,
2. Engaging your higher consciousness, and
3. Celebrating internal expansion,

then you will have mastered the purpose of a career!

That’s autonomy. Therefore, *“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”*

THE END

For full details and insights, this book is available on [Amazon](#).