

Andrew Macklin

CAREER COACH FOR CREATIVES



Next Stage: Career Development Workbook

Practical steps from where you are now to a more fulfilling future.

Hello, and welcome to this introduction to making your creative career more sustainable and fulfilling. This workbook will take you through the fundamental theories, psychology and principals of change that hopefully empower you to start a new and more fulfilling chapter in your career.

We will cover:

- What is coaching?
- Is change possible?
- What's at the core of decision making?
- How we can begin to work towards a desired future.
- What do we need for human functioning?
- What do we need for human flourishing?
- What is happiness?
- How to take a 360 view of your life and career.
- How to use solution-focused theory
- Creating a road map to where you want to be.
- The importance of personal narrative.



My name is Andrew Macklin. I am an actor and a qualified career coach. I specialise in helping creatives overcome career challenges to create a more fulfilling future. My own story has been one of slowly following the things that really mattered to me to create more sustainability in my acting career and more meaning in all areas. After a decade of tending bar between acting jobs I decided to focus more on my core skills and started working in applied theatre and community arts. Eventually I found myself working as a facilitator and then trainer for a domestic violence prevention charity. I love this work. It is important to me, it challenges me, and it co-exists with my acting career beautifully. Over the last eight years I've worked with thousands of people in hundreds of workshops on identifying the healthy and unhealthy aspects of relationships. I've seen how fixed in our ways we can become. How blinkered in our thinking and how important it can be to find a space where we can question our own (and societies) beliefs. To challenge them, change them and in doing so create more possibilities for ourselves.

While regularly facilitating change in groups on the serious and complex issues of relationship abuse I became increasingly aware of the need for creatives to feel they had more options and choice in how they experienced their careers. This curiosity bred a desire to understand how adults learn, change and develop. While researching applied forms of psychology that focused on empowering individuals to make the changes they want in their lives I came across 'coaching'. There are many different approaches to coaching; executive coaching for professionals in leadership positions, sports coaching for athletes, career coaching and personal coaching. It was important to me to find a coaching approach that was rooted in psychological and scientific research. One that was creative and robust enough to be applicable to artists and creatives alike no matter what stage in their career they were at.

What is transformational coaching?

Coaching is a conversation-based approach for taking someone from where they are to where they want to be. It looks to reduce the obstacles to a person's development and thereby increase their potential to do more of what they want in the world. Transformational coaching is an evidence-based coaching approach to personal change rooted in humanistic psychology, adult learning theory and behavioural science. It aims to make the most of a person's opportunities by working with them to increase their self-awareness, identify their core values, build resilience by learning to manage fears, change unhelpful patterns of behaviour and unpick limiting self-beliefs.

“Man plans, God Laughs” - Yiddish proverb



Backstage once, I asked a talented and respected actor how he planned his career or if indeed it was possible. “Man plans and god laughs” was his reply. It was a perspective I could relate to as it seemed to fit well with my own experience as an actor. I have no control over whether they like me in a casting, whether the show is a hit or a flop, whether the director in the audience thinks I’m genius or fails to notice me entirely. I put faith that the gods would do what they would and I would do my best to laugh along with them. But how true is this? Are all plans a waste? What is within our grasp and what is not? How much change can you really create?

Low points have a knack of being pivotal so here’s one of mine. On returning to London after a six-month theatre contract away I began to sink quickly, as usual, into the existential dread all actors know on finishing a job. When will the next one come? How do I find a new one? How long can I go without work this time? Is this really a way to live? This wasn’t my first rodeo, I knew the feelings would shift as events did but finding myself again back at stage one in the cycle at 34 was for some reason particularly debilitating. I remember asking myself “how much control do I really have here, in both my life and career?”. Somewhere I heard a tiny voice (not gods, I hope) say “I dunno, 5% maybe ...at best”. While that felt accurate at the time, I didn’t like it. 100% was too much to ask I thought to myself but surely 50% would be better?

At the beginning of a game of chess you have control of 50% of the board. It’s reasonable to say that with a fuller knowledge of the game, plenty of practice and the right strategies you might extend your influence from 50% to 75% or more. God might well laugh at you but it’s a less confident laugh and it’s met with the steely smile of a worthy opponent. Importantly with this level of influence you can begin to enjoy the game and not feel so easily intimidated by it. You feel more capable, confident and creative. The game is on and whether you win, lose or draw the real fun comes from being a player once more.

The American psychologist Carl Rogers was one of the pioneers of humanistic psychology and its focus on human growth, self-direction and personal agency. He defined six necessary conditions for human change; one of which was that a person who is facing a challenge must want to change. If you’ve downloaded this PDF I assume you can safely tick that box. If not, take a page from the existentialists book and ponder the following: not making a decision is also a decision. A decision not to act, to stay where you are. We don’t really pause life when we decide not to change things, we opt to carry on down a road that we already know isn’t working for us. Every decision marks a fork in the road. Are you moving further towards or away from what you truly want?

Reflective questions:

- What is it to have a full, rich life?
- What are you tolerating?
- Who would you like to be in the future that you are not being now?
- If you were to leave one message after you that each person in the world would read what would you want it to say?

(NB. Life is not a chess board. That analogy implies a complete equality of resources and opportunity. And while this is not reflective of our society the principal of extending your influence through knowledge, practice and strategy is one that we can carry over from the chess board).

Values

Of the thousands of decisions we make each day, some are rationally considered and others come from a deeper place. Often our decisions are made more instinctively; we go with our gut, with what feels right, we just 'know' what will work best for us. We can call this instinctive, seemingly less rational, decision-making 'value-based'. The further away from our values our decisions take us the more uncomfortable we become. The more things stop feeling right and the more stress, strain and dissatisfaction we feel. For this reason, it pays to take time to identify our core values. In today's fast-moving world where we are forced into making more and more complex decisions in shorter amounts of time, knowing your core values can give you the edge in getting to where you want to be while simultaneously rolling with life's punches. From the list below, pick ten of your most important values. Be instinctive and go with your gut. Once complete, pick your top five from the list of ten. The reflective questions underneath will further help you to identify your key values.

Value examples:

Humour

Participation

Honesty

Performance

Partnership

Collaboration

Productivity

Community Service

Contribution

Freedom of Choice

Excellence

Connectedness

Fun

Acknowledgement

Focus

Comradeship

Romance

Lightness

Recognition

Spirituality

Harmony

Empowerment

Accomplishment

Self-Expression

Orderliness

Integrity

Creativity

Independence

Nurturing

Accuracy

Joy

Adventure

Beauty

Authenticity

Zest

Risk Taking

Tradition

Peace

Respect

Elegance

Growth

Vitality

Aesthetics

Trust

Fame

Success

Love

Fairness

Being Active

Novelty

Safety

Security

Excitement

Change

Curiosity

Learning

Kindness

Reflective Questions:

- What's really important to you in life and work?
- What is it about each that makes them important to you?
- What incredible/peak moments have you had?
- What makes them so special?
- What really annoys you?
- What is it about that which causes you to feel that way?
- What do you want to change, or improve upon, to be more aligned with your values?

Vision

It has been my experience as a coach that when creatives are given a space that is safe, confidential and non-judgmental, they find themselves quickly getting to the core of what they really want. The confusion and challenges lie more often in how to get there.

Our values give us a key to the 'why', before we talk of the 'how', we must naturally turn first to the 'what'. We're not looking for a photographic realism here, we are looking to an expressionistic view of your ideal. If we want a better future we must picture it first. Our deepest wants and hopes often arise in the form of images first, as with our dreams. This image then gives us a reference point for which direction we need to travel in. A north star to guide our journey. All of its colour and detail serves to enlighten our way forward.

Cognitively we can be bound by what seems like the rational next step. What's possible becomes based only on what we have achieved thus far. This would be an unnatural way for any child to think of its future and we could do with being more childlike and playful with our dreams, at least at this stage in the process. Using our imagination in this way allows us to briefly peer over the garden wall of our rational thinking to the beauty we might one day create.

Reflective Questions:

- What is the dream?
- What is the urge you're feeling?
- What would happen if you did nothing?



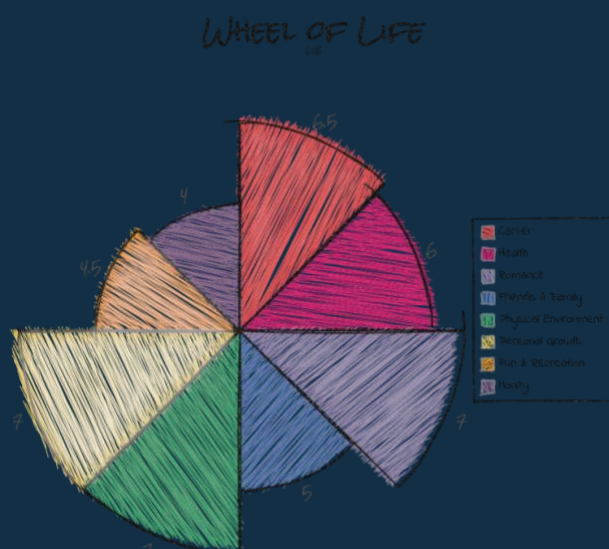
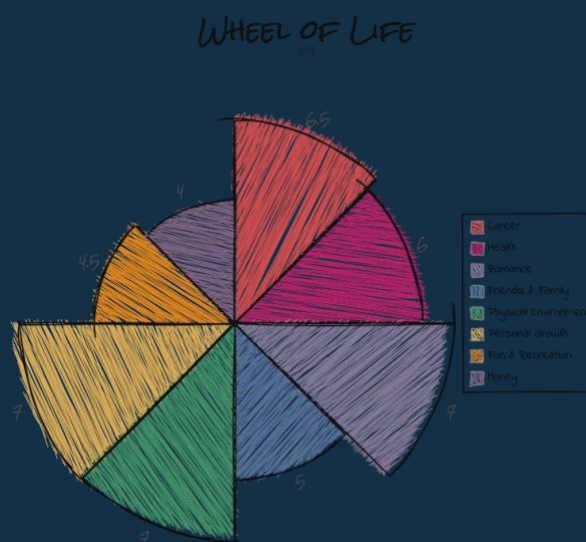
Present needs

If coaching is a journey from A to B we must now take our attention back to the starting point; where we are right now. Starting in the present, from the context of our vision of our future, allows us to see with greater clarity where we need to focus our attention to make the greatest strides forward. Our careers exist within the larger ecology of our lives as a whole, so in looking at where we are now it can be useful to take a whole-life perspective (the life wheel). By marking where you are at the moment in key areas of your life on a scale of one to ten you can gain a clearer picture of which areas we need to develop and grow. Below are two examples designed around a life and career context. You can design and download a personalized version for both your life and career at <https://resourcesof.life/#/>

Suggested categories:

Life

- Health
- Relationships - personal
- Finances
- Self-improvement
- Spirituality/Creativity
- Life Richness
- Career/Vocation
- Relationships - professional



Career

- My creative practice
- Business
- Self-promotion
- Networks (building/sustaining)
- Well being
- Professional self-development
- Personal Project
- Career fulfilment

Reflective Questions:

- What do you notice when you look at your wheel?
- What surprises you about it?
- What would you like to change?
- How would changing one section make a difference?
- If you changed one section where would you derive the greatest benefit with the least amount of effort?
- What actions could change more sections of the wheel?

Fulfilment and Psychological Wellbeing

Life, and certainly a creative career, could both be described as a process of taking small steps continually into the unknown. Who knows if where you choose to live, the job you choose to take (or leave) or the choice to take a brave new direction in your career will lead to actual fulfilment? We can cover our bases to a large extent by checking in with our values and needs and ensuring our choices are aligned to both. But can we do more?

Positive Psychology, now in its second wave and with twenty years of empirical research to its name, would say yes. PP can be defined as “the scientific study of optimal functioning, focusing on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfilment and flourishing”. PP has derived the ‘pillars of wellbeing’; core elements which together equate to fulfilment and flourishing.

The categories of positive psychological well-being include:

- Environmental mastery (competence)
- Autonomy
- Positive relations with others (relatedness)
- Self-acceptance
- Personal growth
- Purpose in life



While this introduction is too short to go into each in depth, consider for yourself which areas might be lacking for you right now and what changes you can make to have more of them in the future. That Oscar win might not award you any these, but they may well be the prelude to an Oscar and more importantly, your actual level of satisfaction and fulfilment.

It's often said 'you get what you ask for', and while this isn't always true, when we say we want happiness PP would ask 'what type and by what means?'. Aristotle kicked off this discussion on happiness and its make-up over 2000 years ago and it remains a complex and contradictory topic. Who's happier; the millionaire sipping a claremont on her yacht, or the Doctors Without Borders medic working in a war zone? Either way, it's useful to know when asking for happiness exactly what type you're asking for. Some run deeper and are more long-lasting than others.

4 types of happiness

1. Hedonic - pleasant moments “eat, drink and be merry”
2. Prudential - “Flow” doing what one does best.
3. Eudamonic - Fulfilment from pursuit of meaning “making a difference”
4. Chaironic - The feeling of being blessed and fortunate “part of something bigger”

When we consider why we want careers in the creative world or indeed any sphere, ‘happiness and fulfilment’ often come up as a core wish for our lives. Why not start with the end in mind? Consider these four types of happiness and where they are present or not in your current position. Are they present in your vision of the future? If they are not sufficiently present in the world of your ideal, what are the changes you'd like to make so that there is more happiness in your future career?

Reflective questions:

- When you think of happiness which type do you think of automatically?
- Which type do you experience least at the moment?
- What one thing could you regularly do to create more of that type happiness?
- What would a life that incorporated regular amounts of each type look like for you?

Solution-Focused Action Planning

We've picked a destination, warmed the engine and checked that the weather conditions at our destination is to our liking. The wheels are spinning and all that is needed now is for the rubber to meet the road. The good news is the road is right underneath us and all around us. Accessible and familiar. I find again and again in my coaching practice that the next best step for clients comes from the people around them right now, their current network. From the success they have already achieved and strategies they devised to get them there. From the things they already know how to do and their innate personal strengths. We don't need all the steps from here to your goal at this point, just the next best one. The reality is that with our worlds changing as fast as they are the gods are right to laugh at such long detailed plans. We need to be adaptable, to think on our feet. To be curious and open-minded enough to see opportunities as they emerge and not be locked into a well-formed plan that can quickly lose its relevance. Plot your next best move and take it. Then survey the new horizon, change what's needed and plot the next one. Just like chess. Not only will working in this way get you moving, it will build momentum and confidence. All the time meeting new people, while re-evaluating our goals and how they might be achieved in this new context. This is the opposite of mental rigidity and the essence of creativity. This is the solution-focused approach to career planning.

1. Outcome: Get specific – What's the ideal?

- What is your long-term goal?
- What will reaching your goal look & feel like?
- How will you know when you've achieved it, what will actually be different?
- How important to you is this goal?
- What would the cost of not doing it be to you?

2. Present: Where are you now?

- What do you see as the main obstacle/issue getting in the way right now?
- How did you first notice something wasn't working for you?
- What isn't working at the moment?

- What is contributing to the problem?
- What is working well?

3. Options & Resources: What's already here?

- What could you do to start resolving the issue?
- What do you need to start addressing the issue?
- What has worked well for you in the past?
- What choices do you have at the moment and what are the pros and cons of them?
- Who could you go to for help?
- Where could you find out the information you need or develop the relevant skills to move forward?
- What would you advise someone in your position to do?
- What would you do if you knew what to do, or weren't afraid?
- What's the worst that could happen?
- What's the best that could happen?
- Which choices will be best to move you towards your outcome?

4. Actions: Actual next steps – What will you commit to doing?

- What actions are you willing to commit to?
- When will you take them?
- What might get in the way of taking this action?
- What can you do to pre-empt what might get in the way?
- Whose support will you need?
- How will you maintain motivation?

5. Review: What will help sustain change?

- When will you review your progress?
- What will you do to see if your actions are moving you forward or not?
- How will you maintain momentum?
- How will you celebrate taking action?
- What can you do differently as you move forward?

Obstacles

When working with people in coaching one thing I notice is how our expectations of ourselves, others, or circumstances, often lead us to falling at the first hurdle and deciding to go no further. Obstacles are to be expected, so too failure. So too a development process that will initially begin with us feeling uncomfortable and incapable and then, as we learn the required skills and ways of being, lead us to increasing competence and confidence until what once seemed impossible has somehow become second nature.

Check in with yourself before taking action as to what your expectations are. Are they realistic? Do we expect to succeed immediately with little change or effort? What would a more realistic and positive expectation to have of yourself be as you move forward, of those you'll be engaging with and of the results you might encounter along the way?

Think back over the last ten years, or any ten-year period in your life, and identify two of your greatest obstacles or challenges. Looking back on them now, how did you grow from them? What did you learn to do as a result of them that you consider to be a strength now? Looking at obstacles of the past in this way we can see that while we'd prefer less obstacles they were in fact fundamental to developing some of the best parts of who we are. This can be harder to see when looking at the obstacles in front of us or at those we can see on the horizon. We are much more likely to engage with obstacles if we can see the value they are creating for us.

What might be the gift or opportunity for development or growth that could come from the obstacles you're facing now? Imagine for a moment what it would be like to be that future version of yourself who has moved through those obstacles; in what ways are they stronger? How do they see things differently? What do they feel more confident about? What has been the gift to them of working through the obstacle?



Building a new Narrative

The metaphor of the story is universal and one I work with as a coach. We all instinctively know what is meant when we speak of ‘starting a new chapter’ or ‘turning the page’. Story narratives naturally tie together so much of what it is to be human, our dreams and desires, relationships, hopes, failures, emotions, plans and resolutions.

Psychologically, narratives can be described as the ways in which we make meaning of our experiences. We see our ourselves as characters in a film or story, travelling through time. There’s a present and a past from which we imagine a future. This process is interpretive. The meanings we give to our experiences have a direct effect on our present actions and future course. Unsurprisingly then, the narratives we choose to believe often become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Ultimately, we create our own stories and who better than artists to create stories that support and empower our creative ambitions. You can find plenty of evidence to back up the story that the odds are against you or that your work doesn’t matter but if you want a career in the arts this might not be the most useful narrative to adopt.

- What is the story you are telling yourself about your past?
- What is the story you are telling yourself about your future?
- What do you lose, if anything, by seeing things this way?
- How do both of these stories impact you in the here and now?
- Why choose this way of seeing things?
- What other perspectives are possible?
- What’s a way of seeing things that will make the next stage in your career more possible?
- What would a new, upgraded and more empowering story be?

Why not run with a narrative where you are essential, and where what you think and what you do really does matter. Why not explore how living this way might change how you feel about yourself and what you want to create? You might wake up one morning to tackle your work and find that the world around you has adopted your narrative. That the story you created for yourself is the one you’ve ended up living.



This has been a short introduction to making changes that often lead to a greater sense of fulfilment. It's been designed to give you all the tools you need to start thinking deeply, acting differently and doing more of what really matters to you.

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For one-to-one coaching, book a FREE consultation via the online form here:

<http://www.andrewmacklin.com/coaching>

Enquiries about group-coaching, workshops or seminars, please get in touch via email:

andrewmacklincoaching@gmail.com

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“It has been honestly transformational. This is not hyperbole, through Andrew's coaching I have been able to thoroughly reassess previous assumptions and create new ones that have got me back to an energised, focused and ultimately happier space.”

KARL - (ACTOR / WRITER / DIRECTOR) IRELAND