LIFE MAP



Discovering Your Leadership Story

A practical guide to help you align your past, present and future while you continue your professional journey.

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Life Map

Using this Workbook

As professionals, particularly as researchers or academics, we are used to focusing on the data, the results or the impact of the project.

Yet behind every career is a story.
The Life Map exercise gives you a structured way to step back and look at the experiences — big and small — that have shaped you.

This isn't about nostalgia or self-indulgence.
It's about recognising the patterns of curiosity, responsibility, resilience and adaptability that run through your life.

Reflecting on the milestones that made you who you are, you'll begin to see yourself not just in your current role, but as someone in the making — with a story worth telling and a future you can shape with intention.

These are my reflections

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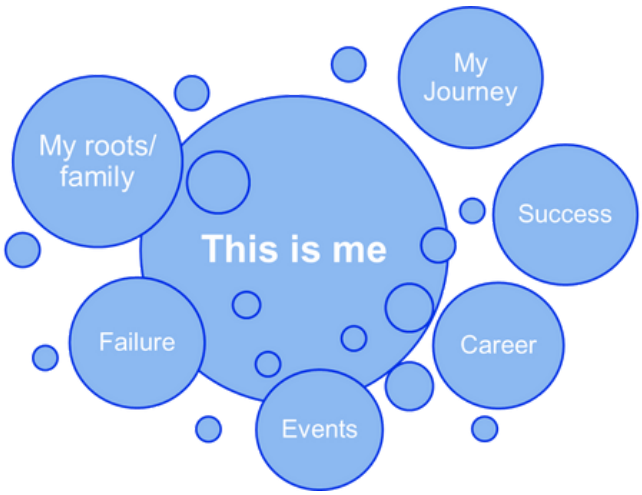
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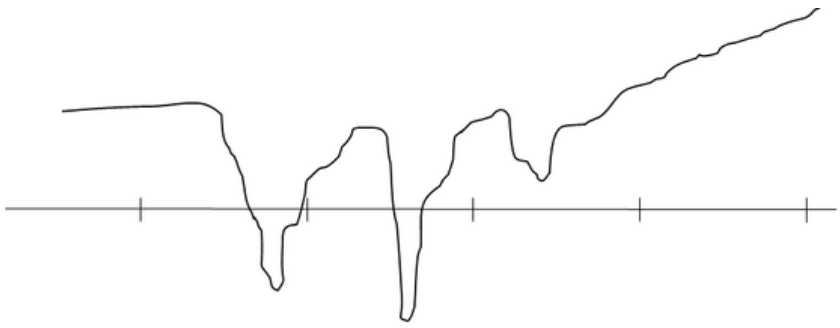
1. Your Life Map

This is an opportunity to reflect upon your life and to identify the events or experiences that have shaped you.

This is not meant to be an exercise in "therapy", more an opportunity to look for the patterns in life. Please don't dwell on any challenges beyond seeing the lessons you learned and the strength you gained. If you have traumatic incidents in your past, either seek the support you need or don't dig deep in this activity.

Create a linear lifeline or a bubble map, whatever works best for you.





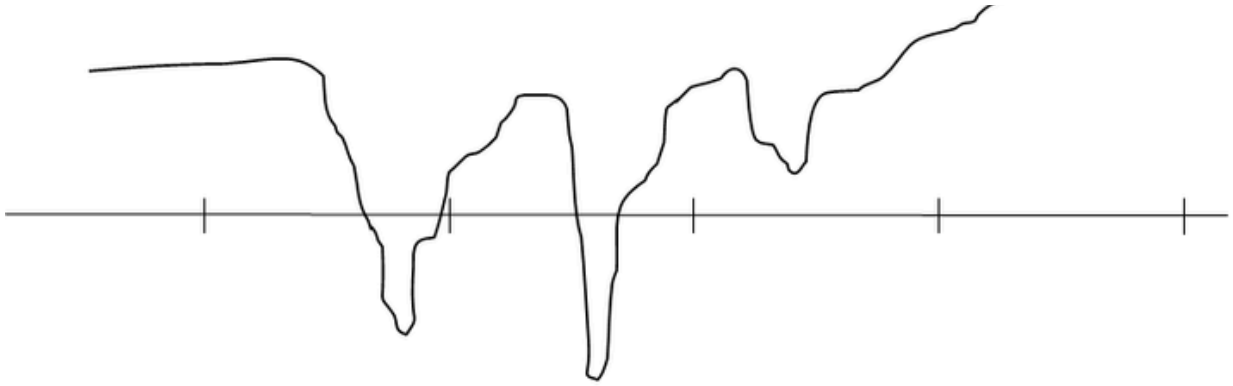
This is my journey

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Reflections for a lifeline:

- Take a pen and paper: draw a wavy line from left to right across the page to represent the story of your life, from your birth to the present. Let the 'ups' stand for the good times and the 'downs' for the not so good times.
- You may find it useful to add important dates, your age or key events such as leaving school, exams, key jobs, moving house, getting married, children arriving, even failures or loss.



Draw your personal journey of ups and downs on the next page.

- Mark high and low points and write a few words about the experiences they stand for.
- Mark the beginning and end of important phases or periods. Name each phase: e.g. 'Young and carefree', 'Climbing the career ladder', 'At home looking after the kids', 'Working for Bloggs'.
- Reflect on what happened at the transition times or turning points? What changed? What did you learn?
- Can you see patterns - things that bring you pleasure, cause you problems, or initiate change?
- What might the next phase be

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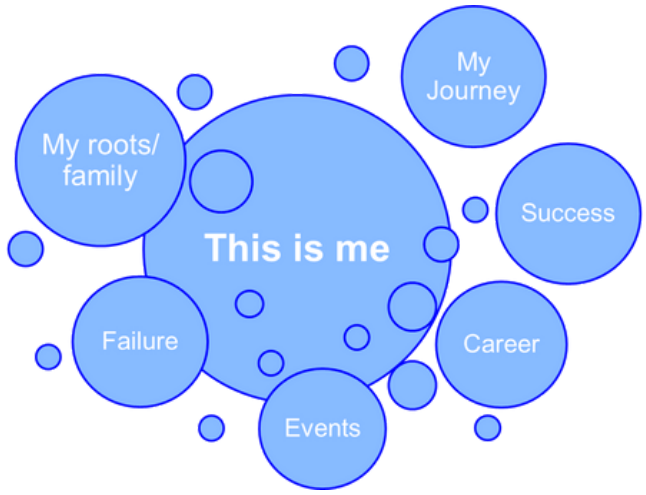
My lifeline:

Draw your personal journey of ups and downs

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Reflections for a bubble map:

- Start with a "This is me" bubble
- Add experience bubbles - make notes of what happened:



Possible experiences include:

- My family
- My school time
- Interests, hobbies, passions
- Exams passed or failed
- Career path
- Life events

Draw your personal bubble map and story on the next page.

Examples from my personal story include:

- Eldest child: taking the lead, looking out for others, being comfortable with responsibility came easily to me
- Microbes: I was fascinated by nature, by germs and the way infections spread through school classrooms!
- Failure – Not getting what I wanted developed resilience, persistence, and my own sense of self-worth
- Working abroad – I enjoyed independence but realised it's good to have others around.

What events or experiences shaped you and leave fingerprints in the person you are today?

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My bubble map:

What events or experiences shaped you?

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2. Who am I - What made me?

By reflecting on the experiences and events that made you who you are, you'll begin to see yourself not just as a "someone in a job", but as "someone in the making", a person on a journey to becoming, with a story worth telling and a future that can be shaped with intention.

Once you see these themes, you can use them with purpose:

- Tell your professional story with more impact in interviews, on panels and in leadership meetings.
- Connect your personal history with your vision, mission and purpose - *this* is why this is important!
- Boost your confidence by remembering the strengths you've gained, obstacles you've overcome and lessons you've learned along the way.



Reflections

- What choices did I make?
- What values shaped those choices?
- What experiences did I have?
- What lessons did I learn?
- How does this shape who - the leader - I am becoming?

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Versions of "My Story"

In practical terms, your life map becomes a toolbox of stories you can draw on:

- For interviews and promotions, when you need to demonstrate resilience, adaptability or motivation.
- In panels or public talks, where you want to inspire others with authenticity.
- In mentoring or leading teams, when your experiences can encourage those who follow.



"We don't need perfect leaders. We need leaders who are willing to be real."

— Brené Brown

All of these experiences are authentically you.
Learn to weave the threads to form a positive and professional narrative that supports your vision - mission - purpose,
that positions you well for the next stage in your career journey.

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Final thoughts

Your Life Map isn't fixed — it grows with you.
Revisit this exercise each year or at times of transition.
You will uncover new insights and will be reminded that your story is the foundation of your confidence, your purpose and your leadership.

Looking Back

- Which one or two moments on your Life Map stand out as most formative for your leadership?
- What do these experiences reveal about your core values?

Looking Inward

- Where in my current work do I already see these lessons in action?
- Where am I ignoring or overriding what I've learned and what does that cost me?

Looking Forward

- How do I want my story to continue from here?
- What qualities do I want to lean into more intentionally in the next stage of my career?
- What's one small action I can take this week that honours who I am and the leader I am becoming?

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WANT MORE?



This workbook uncovers your leadership story by reflecting on your life map.

When we see the bigger picture and realise the choices we made in response to the events of our lives we learn, it's about more than being lucky. It's about being brave.

This reflection helps you step back from the daily demands of "doing the job" to prepare you for your next phase. It helps tame Imposter feelings – "I didn't just arrive here by accident; I've always been learning, flexing, adapting and building resilience."

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.
I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

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Resources

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

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