Jocelyn Munguia

Dr. Champion

Living a Life of Significance

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A Life of Significance

What is a life of significance? In all eighteen years of my life, this question had never been brought upon me until attending Birmingham Southern. I have been trying to develop a perfect response to this question in my head but each time the question seems more complex. From the discussions, readings, videos I have learned that finding a way to live a life of significance is a process but also the process is unique to every single individual in this world. There is a big emphasis on the “process” because the book *“Designing your life”* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans says it is not a plan and there is no certain end goal. It takes time. Although there are a variety of ways to create your own life of significance and be satisfied, the elements I see most fit to do this are having a close relationship with the people you love, being content with your physical and mental health, and doing things in life that you enjoy.

Our personal relationships with the people we love are so important. They contribute to our happiness and give us confidence and strength when we cannot do it ourselves. Your family are the ones who are there for you forever. They support you in school, athletics, financially, and with unconditional love. Our parents are our mentors. I have been very lucky to have two parents who I can say have helped me live the best life and are a big source of my happiness. Like Neil from *“The Sky Is Not the Limit”* said through everything he “continually felt their guidance ahead of me, their support behind me, their love beside me” (Tyson 61). Because of them I started soccer at three and fast forward I am now a collegiate athlete. While we are on the topic of soccer, teammates are some of the best relationships I have. They hold you accountable on and off the field, share common struggles with you, and most importantly show up for you when you need them most. I had an intensive hip surgery in May for a hip labral tear and bone spur. It was one step away from being a complete hip replacement. A day before I arrived at college, my surgeon called and said he would not clear me until next season. I was upset, I wanted to quit, and I didn’t see a reason why I should even stay at Birmingham Southern anymore. This is when I learned the importance of teammates and coaches. I needed to lean on them, express my feelings, and I needed their sole presence. I can give my appreciation to them for working hard at physical therapy every day, being their biggest supporter on the sidelines, and giving me the motivation to come back stronger and better for my next season. Like Philip told Neil, I had to look beyond what was in front of me. There is no I in team. In the process of designing your life, it is helpful to have others’ insights because throughout your life you are going to be in work communities, possibly have a family of your own, and have instructors to guide you. Most of us can say we have had coaches, teachers, advisors, friends, family, and teammates. They have all played a crucial role in our process. Without them, we would be walking in one direction, not venturing off the course and trying new things. You must be open to different groups, engage in meaningful conversations, and be able to receive criticism and opinions. Communication in relationships is key to building a strong system around you. Close relationships are so important because every one of them lives a completely different life but essentially “we have an interstate highway connecting us all” (Tyson 35).

Physical and mental health are two important topics that our whole world needs to spread more awareness about. If we are not content with ourselves, it is hard to be content about anything else going on in our lives. Like Janine in *“Designing your Life”* she had everything she wanted but she was “profoundly unhappy” (Burnett and Evans xi). I think especially being an athlete, I can say I have struggled with both my mental and physical health. We kill our bodies sometimes because we are always at risk of our spot being taken from us. We go to practice, study hours, classes, weights, and we get back home and feel so mentally drained often. I have learned what helps with mental health is staying positive and being appreciative. Look at the people around you, most often people are struggling with events that are way more difficult to deal with than what we have on our plate. To live a life of significance, it all comes down to creating a life that is best suitable to you. To increase our mental health, we must find pleasure in what we do every day. We all have our bad days, but those days are “worth emphasizing that failures and hardships are a part of everyday life” (Burnett and Evans xxx). Staying active is so important for your physical but also overall health. A lot of times when you go for a walk, a light run, or even ride a bike you feel accomplished. Mental and physical health are closely related. If your body feels good, your mind does also. Living a healthy life is important to live a life of significance. Going on walks can help you clear your head, decompress, and even help you gather thoughts together. From all the books I have read, try new things. One thing that I found helps my mental health is writing. I took advice, which is so important to do, from my senior literature teacher. Writing helped her when she felt lost, stressed, or even bored. She was right. When I feel down, I write every single passing thought in my head on paper and then move on with life. Keeping up with your mental and physical health is key to being able to create your own life of significance.

Doing what you love in life is so important. Finding hobbies is essential, but ultimately our careers are what will fulfill the majority of our lives. Finding a job, you will enjoy for the rest of your life is not a simple task, but it is important you do. “You weren’t put on this earth to work eight hours a day at a job you hate until the time comes to die” (Burnett and Evans xxv). Exploring, trying stuff, and reframing is part of the process to designing your life. You can say you want to be a doctor your freshman year of college and next thing you know you are a personal home designer. Do not try and plan your life because half the time plans change. Take the time to find things that interest you and you might find something you are passionate about. I have always said I wanted to work in the medical field. Every year my job in this field changes. I went from wanting to be a physical therapist, to an anesthesiologist, to a nurse, and now I am not sure what to do. After being in this class for just about five weeks, I am starting to think I need to start venturing out and exploring new career paths. I also agree with Neil that we are “expected to choose from a pre-identified list of professions” (Tyson 22). But that statement is wrong. I am telling you to do what is going to make you happy. There is no such thing as “boy jobs” or “girl jobs”. Explore all the possible work fields no matter what gender, race, or age you are. If you are stuck, remember nothing is wrong with asking for help. Think back to my second paragraph, you have support system to help you in difficult times. When you engage in life design, you start piecing your life together one piece at a time. By doing the things you love, you design a life most fitting for you.

Living a life of significance is easier said than done. After writing this paper, I have more questions, thoughts, and proposals for myself. But ultimately, your life depends on how you create it. I still have no perfect answer. I do know that I must take my own words as advice and start my own process. I must focus on the key features I stated in my thesis. In conclusion, we all must take steps, whether they are good or bad, to complete our process. Designing our lives is not just a process but also an expedition.