

Conversation 45 – *Mid-Career: A Fantastic Time for Growth*

Note: Complete this exercise as a self-study, or use it to guide several conversations with a mentee or student.

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

At 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. Regardless of age or career stage, reflecting on things like who you are, how you want to be remembered, what values you hold highest, and your personal mission can be foundational for anyone wishing to achieve personal and professional growth.

Mid-Career Homework Challenge: Here are some mid-career questions. Take your time with these.

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. Are you learning and growing (both personally and professionally)?
5. Is work-life balance real? Do you make time for important life events?
6. What are some stressors in your current job (or career field)? Would a change help?

Opportunity Check:

1. Know Thyself: Have you taken an EQ assessment, cultural inventory, hidden bias test, or used other personal growth tools?
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: Can you exhibit your personal values in your work?

Future-State Career Potential:

1. Mission: What is your compelling "why"? Will you let it guide and bolster your career?
2. Leadership: How can you lead 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 and be an encouragement to others?

Again, take some time pondering these. Please **do not tackle them all at once**. Questions such as this are meant for stewing. In doing so, you will begin to formulate a bigger picture, and ideas on how to move forward. Give yourself some grace, and enjoy thinking about the potential that's inside of you right now. Having these conversations (with yourself or a mentor) will help you realize that potential and more.