



# listen.sense.grow

7 Practices to Create the Work You Desire

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# Welcome.

The idea for this guide came about during my own career transition in which I chose to leave a long-established career in financial technology to start my own work and coaching practice.

I read lots of books and attended seminars on building a successful small business, however, all felt lacking in some way. They were primarily goal and outcome-driven, and I wasn't yet clear on either with respect to my own business. I began to doubt my decision to leave the comparative safety of my first career.

In the meantime, I struggled to get clarity around my coaching focus and at times I grew frantic around my finances and future livelihood.

Fortunately, with the help of key mentors, along with my capacity to keep going despite all of the mistakes I made early on, I was able to recognize what was working for me: a variety of practices that were organic, practical, energizing, and tapped into my intuition in a way that grew my confidence to act and move forward.

I soon realized that if I'd known these practices beforehand, my transition could have been much, much easier. In fact, I may not have left my career in the same way at all, but instead evolved it in a direction that was healthier and better aligned with my core values.

As I began writing about these practices, I also introduced them to my coaching clients in our work together ("planting seeds" is a favourite). It became apparent that many of you are interested in cultivating your work in a more natural way - one that is motivating and energizing rather than hard and depleting.

It is my great joy to share these practices with you in this guide, to support you in your own transitions. Each practice comes with an explanation and an exercise to try out on your own, as well as an overview of how and why the practices work as they do. I have included additional suggestions for what else you can do to help cultivate work of your own.

I suggest you read through the guide lightly at first, allowing the ideas and notions to sink in and take root in your consciousness. When the time is right, you'll re-read those sections that beckon further learning and integration.

*You'll grow. You'll cultivate. And the fruits of your labours that can thrive most, will.*

# How to know if this guide is for you.

*This guide is for you if:*

- You are looking for your next step in work and life, and are not yet sure what that is;
- You've investigated or tried traditional career development/ transition resources (assessments, counselling, books, seminars, etc.) but still haven't made a satisfying move forward, or are stuck in limbo;
- You don't have unlimited money or time and need to make the most out of what you do have (which may include learning to recognize the opportunities that are right in front of you);
- You're open to being creative and using all aspects of your mind and body to help you know what to do next and to take action.

# Getting started: What does it mean to cultivate work?

Cultivating work is about creating space for meaningful work to develop and grow, rather than trying to force it in some way (i.e., making a decision prematurely that may lead to increased doubt or second-guessing). It's about respecting the time it takes to produce positive change, yet not waiting around for something to happen either.

It is a light and sometimes even playful approach to knowing what to do next, especially when you're not certain. It is also associated with tangible actions and concrete outcomes, brought about in a way that feels natural, supportive and motivating.

## **I have identified 7 essential practices for cultivating work of your own. They include:**

- Unknowing
- Planting seeds
- Trusting
- Reflecting
- Sign-spotting
- Letting go
- Being curious in conversation

Each involves strengths and skills that you may be familiar with in some way already, while others may be brand new. These practices are strongly related to the accomplishments and success I have enjoyed in my own business, and they have proved useful and significant for others. I encourage you to note any additional practices that surface for you as you read, and trust they are important.

# The benefits of the 7 practices.

*The benefits of the 7 practices for cultivating work of your own include:*

## **1) Feeling productive when you run out of ideas for what to do next.**

“What do I do next?” is a frustrating question to ask yourself when you’ve run out of ideas. Once you’ve done everything you can think of to create the work you desire and it still doesn’t seem like you’re much farther along, you may look to identify more tasks that will make you feel as if you’re being productive.

The practices of cultivating work allow you to continue to feel productive in your journey, albeit in very different ways. They return you to the work of knowing and growing yourself, which has the greatest influence on the work you will create in your life.

## **2) Confidence despite uncertainty**

When you’re experimenting with new approaches to work or changing your work itself, you may experience a lot of uncertainty about the choices you are making. If your uncertainty is considerable, it may even prevent you from moving forward or trying something out.

The practices of cultivating work are all about increasing trust in self which then allows you to navigate uncertainty with greater confidence - for example, trusting that you are moving in the right direction even if you can’t predict the outcome of your actions or know where they may be leading you. This means you don’t get stuck as often along the way or tempted to go back to doing only what you know.

## **3) Full self-expression in your work and the act of creating it**

The ultimate goal of cultivating work is to access the best of every aspect of who you are and express it fully in the world. You don’t have to wait until the work is created to experience full self-expression though. The practices of cultivating work allow you to recognize and exercise fundamental elements of yourself along the way and this influences everything you’re working to create. As you change, learn, and grow, so do your possibilities.

# How this guide works.

An overview of each practice is accompanied by exercises to begin trying and developing these practices right away. I have also included questions to reflect on further to help you connect each practice with the work you are cultivating for yourself. With practice and reflection, you will develop a clearer understanding of what will grow your work, along with new ideas for enhancing and fast-tracking your efforts.

You will need a pen and some drawing utensils (i.e., pencil crayons, markers or oil pastels, etc.) to respond to each question or exercise. Space has been provided throughout the guide for your work, or you can use your own journal or drawing paper.

Let's begin with Unknowing.

## Unknowing.

Most people would prefer to know what their work is meant to be and the concrete steps they can take to create it for themselves.

They'd appreciate a clear path, steps to follow, and rewarding milestones to achieve along the way. They want to know they will be successful, realize their career aspirations, and get the most they can out of work.

Here is the truth though: many people embark on their work without having a clear vision for what they want or how they want it to evolve. They sense more is possible and desire it to be so, yet they are uncertain about how to manifest what they desire into their lives.

While working in the financial technology sector, I spent many years wondering what I could be doing instead and how I could get there. I exhausted every possibility I came up with (switching companies, taking night courses in a variety of subjects, attaining job-related certifications, etc.). Eventually I resigned from my full-time role, initially to pursue consulting. It was then I discovered:

*"You don't have to know what you want or how to get there in order to create the best work for yourself."*

In fact, the better you are at unknowing your future and expected outcomes, the more effective you will become at connecting the dots in your life that can truly guide you towards what you want.

By shifting your focus away from wanting to know something you truly do not know right now, your attention is freed up to be used for more productive activities such as trying things out, learning from your experiences and feeling or sensing your way forward.



**For further reflection:**

What do you already know about yourself and your work today?

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What don't you know still, and are curious about?

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What is it like to not know what you want to know? What is easy about that?  
What is challenging?

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# Practice in the moment: Unknowing.

*Using the three blank pages provided below (or on paper of your own) and your drawing utensils, practice unknowing the exact details of the work you desire and instead, sensing your way forward.*

1) **On the first piece of paper, draw your response to this question:  
Where is my work at now? (Or, what is my work at present?)**

- Don't over think it; just let your fingers flow across the page however they want. Your artwork may be abstract or you may find yourself drawing specific images - either is perfectly fine.
- Debrief what you've drawn by describing the images/colours on the paper and what they mean to you (out loud or in writing).

2) **On the second piece of paper, draw your response to this question:  
What does my work want to become?**

- Let your fingers flow again and let go of any expectations you have for what you 'should' be drawing - whatever is appearing on the page is exactly what needs to be there right now.
- Debrief what you've drawn again - the images and colours you've used and what they mean to you.

3) **On the third piece of paper, draw your response to this question:  
What is needed in the meantime?**

- Debrief the final drawing by describing it again.

While you may not know any or all details of how your work will unfold for you, your heart (or inner voice) knows where it wants to go and will guide you in the right direction. Creative activities like the one on page 9 can help you access this source of internal wisdom on a regular basis and provide the answers that are available to you in those moments. Repeat this exercise every 6 or 12 months.

**Where is my work at now? Draw response below.**

**What does my work want to become? Draw response below.**

**What is needed in the meantime? Draw response below.**

# Interested to read more?

Please contact Maggie for your copy of the whole guide, which is also available as a complimentary resource to support Career Development coaching.

By working with me as your career development coach, you will:

- Have a creative thinking partner to help you gain clarity around what you want next for your career, including what's important to you now, how to get to where you want to go, and be able to identify your transferable skills
- Be supported to discover compelling career-related options to choose from, and that allow you to make the best decision for you
- Come up with an actionable plan with clear direction and goals for identifying next steps that align with your skills, experience, and values, enabling you to move forward with confidence

For more details visit:

***<https://maggiedistasicoaching.com/programs/career-development-for-leaders/>***

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## **Unknowing.**

Let go of needing to know the answers to your big questions, become open to all the opportunities and possibilities available to guide you forward.

## **Planting Seeds.**

Brainstorm ideas for your work, plot them on your 6-12 month horizon.

## **Trusting.**

Build self-trust by practicing in low-risk ways (e.g., go for a walk without a planned destination).

## **Reflecting.**

Step back and observe yourself in the moment: Notice your physical sensations and write or speak 10 thoughts on your mind - What stands out and what are you learning about yourself now?

## **Sign-spotting.**

Make meaning of your environment to validate and affirm your choices (unintentional coincidences or intentionally looking for a sign).

## **Letting Go.**

Practice letting go by focusing your attention on something other than your thoughts (e.g., breathing, walking).



## **Curious in Conversation.**

The baseline for being curious in conversation is listening. What are you listening for and what gets in your way?