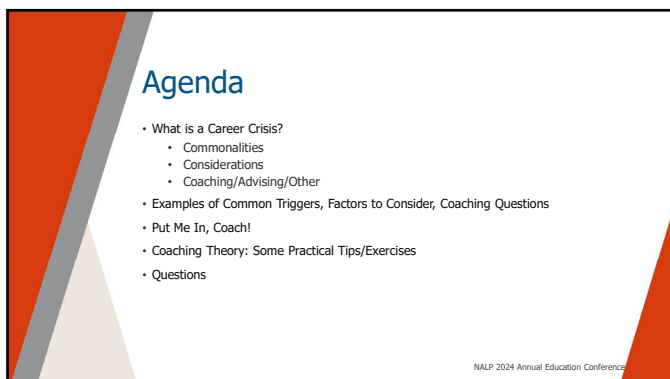




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What Do We Mean By "Career Crisis"

- Often associated with mid-career or mid-life crisis, a career crisis can happen at any point in a career but often happens mid-career.
- A career crisis is when a person is experiencing one or more of the following:
 - Burnout
 - Feeling "stuck" - like career options are narrowing and limited
 - Regretting prior career decisions or career path
 - External forces prompt a crisis e.g., layoff, performance challenges, personal issues, passed over for promotion/partnership
- Even someone who is just thinking about a transition is feeling uncertainty, what researchers call a "liminal" state.

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What is a Career Crisis, Continued

- Commonalities: Misalignment & Disengagement
- Considerations
 - Is the situation temporary or permanent?
 - Options within the firm and outside the firm?
 - What resources are available/needed?
- Coaching/Advising/Something else?

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Working Identity

- A career crisis makes us confront big questions about our identity:
 - Who we are
 - Who we thought we should be
 - Who we hoped to become
 - What we risk losing if we don't stay on the same path (risk-averse)
- What we do for our career is not who we are, but work is an important source of personal meaning and social definition.
- Work also provides the defining framework within which we set priorities and make decision about other important parts of our lives.

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The Intersection of Personal Identity and Career Crisis

- Coaches should be aware of the additional issues raised by the intersection of a lawyer's personal identity and a career crisis
- Imposter syndrome and career crisis
- Multiple crises and intersectional career challenges complicating career progression
- Under-represented lawyers
- First-generation lawyers
- Neurodiversity
- Lack of role models and effective mentors and sponsors

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What scenarios have you seen trigger a career crisis?

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Four Scenarios: Common Triggers of a Lawyer Career Crisis

- Partnership Decisions
- Family/Self-Caretaking
- Career Crossroads
- Retirement

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Crisis Scenario: Partnership Decision

Alex has spent their entire career – from summer associate to present – at the firm. Now they are getting close to partnership consideration by the firm. Possible crisis triggers include:

- Alex wants to make partner, but you, as the coach, know that it is highly unlikely to happen.
- Alex is likely to make partner but knows they don't want to be a partner. It's time to make a decision.
- Both you and Alex are unsure of their odds of making partner.

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Crisis Scenario: Family/Self-care taking

- John has elderly parents in another country and wants to spend time with them and help out when one has a health issue that may require extended care, far more than FMLA permits.
- Allie was a dedicated and seemingly-happy attorney at the firm. After the birth of her first child, she feels torn and wants to spend more time with the baby.
- Louis is the parent of teenagers, one of whom is facing a significant medical challenge, and he is no longer sure that working law firm hours is compatible with his family life.
- Steph is experiencing burnout. She billed close to 3000 hours last year and is considering quitting because her health and wellbeing are suffering.

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Crisis Scenario: Career Crossroads

- Noah attended law school to help others. He only intended to work at a law firm for two years to pay off student loans before taking on his dream job in public interest. At his fifth law school reunion, he wonders why he's still at the firm.
- Emma has always intended to make her career at the firm. She has achieved non-equity partner status, but wakes up one day and wonders if she can keep doing the same thing for the next 30 years.

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Career Crisis: Retirement

- Michael is a law firm partner – he always introduces himself as such. Now he's facing significant pressure to step down from his equity partnership at the firm.
- Joan always imagined herself doing something else, but here she is, in her early 60s and still a partner at the same firm where she began working shortly after graduating from law school. She could keep going but isn't sure whether she wants to.

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Put Me In, Coach!

- One volunteer from our audience who would like to role-play or be coached on a career crisis scenario
- Three additional volunteers from our audience willing to coach
- Coaching will begin with one of the presenters and "volunteer" coaches will step in

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Common Coaching Questions

- Tell me more about your situation. What are your thoughts and feelings?
- What are some options you're considering? Can we explore more to add to the list?
- What have you always wanted to try or do?
- What is your timetable for making a change?
- What resources do you currently have to make this decision? What resources do you need? Where can you find them?
- Who can you talk to? What can you try?
- How can we (firm, coach) support you?

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Debrief

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Career Change Theories

- Typical approach: Inner insight guides action
We need to discover what we really want to do next ---> then use that knowledge to guide our actions
- In reality: Often doing comes first
We experiment with different possibilities
We make new and different connections
Step back to make sense of what we learn along the way

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Action-oriented Approach

- Stop trying to find your one true self. Focus on which of your many possible selves you want to test and learn more about.
- Allow yourself a transition period where it is OK to oscillate between holding on and letting go.
- Resist the temptation to start by making a big decision that will change everything in one fell swoop. Accept the crooked path.
- When seeking advice, distinguish between counsel and opinion. Counsel is from those who've actually experienced the career path you're interested in. Everyone else has an opinion.

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Practical Options: Designing Your Life

- *Designing Your Life* books and trainings by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans (Stanford)
- Brainstorming like a designer can help you get "unstuck" in your thinking
- The Odyssey Plan exercise – come up with 3 alternative realities
 - What life will look like in 5 years if you continue on your current trajectory? (Plan A)
 - What would you do if Plan A can't happen and you need to pivot? (Plan B)
 - What would you do if money and time were no object? (Plan C)

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Your Possible Selves Exercise

- Make a list of your possible selves.
- Don't censor yourself.
- They do not have to be realistic or consistent.
- Include the things other people think you should do.
- List choices you think you may regret in future.

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Questions?

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THANK YOU



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**Goodbye Yellow Brick Road:
Coaching Experienced Lawyers Through Significant Career Changes**

Amy Killoran, Mary Maher, and Marcia Pennington Shannon

Resources

Try this:

- Clifton Strengths assessment
<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252137/home.aspx>
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessments <https://www.themyersbriggs.com/en-US/Products-and-Services/Myers-Briggs>
- Odyssey plans exercise from *Designing Your Life* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
<https://designingyour.life/>
- Values Exercise from Brene Brown's *Living into Our Values*:
<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/living-into-our-values/>
- VIA Strengths assessment <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>
- Your Possible Selves exercise from *Working Identity* by Herminia Ibarra
<https://herminiaibarra.com/working-identity-book/>

Read this:

- *The Book of Beautiful Questions* by Warren Berger
- *Designing Your Life* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
- *Designing Your New Work Life* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
- *Flourish* by Martin E.P. Seligman
- *From Strength to Strength* by Arthur Brooks
- *How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci* by Michael J. Gelb
- *Lawyer's Career Management Handbook* by Marcia Pennington Shannon et al.
- *Life After Law* by Liz Brown
- *Next! The Power of Reinvention in Life and Work* by Joanne Lipman
- *The Power of Regret* by Daniel Pink
- *Retirement by Design* by Ida O. Abbott
- *Roar into the Second Half of Your Life* by Michael Clinton
- *Unhappy Lawyer* by Monica Parker
- *What Can You Do with a Law Degree* by Deborah Arron
- *Working Identity* by Herminia Ibarra (Ibarra has various Harvard Business Review articles including: <https://hbr.org/2023/09/how-to-think-strategically-about-a-career-transition> and <https://hbr.org/2023/11/why-career-transition-is-so-hard>)

Listen to this:

- Former Lawyer podcast
- Personal Jurisdiction podcast

Watch this:

- TED Talk: Why Some of Us Don't Have One True Calling by Emilie Wapnick:
https://www.ted.com/talks/emilie_wapnick_why_some_of_us_don_t_have_one_true_calling?language=en