

LifeKeys for Difficult Job Transitions

A *LifeKeys* Application

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In these first years of the 21st century, most of the world took an economic roller coaster ride. For many of us, job security evaporated and financial security took on new importance. Either we ourselves, family members or close friends are “making do” with less, working under our skill/education level, holding part-time job(s) when we were once fully employed, or searching to replace our jobs! This decade has not been for the faint of heart.

Our faith can help us maintain hope and encourage others. However, this current environment is for many a test of that faith. Many of us discovered how our special gifts intersect with the work God needs done in the world, and played by society’s job-finding rules—only to see our career plans evaporate.

This new application resource for *LifeKeys* is for those who ask, “Why me” and “What’s next?” For each lens—life gifts, spiritual gifts, personality type, values and passions—we’ve added exercises or reflection activities for those who need new ideas and hope during their job transition journey.

If you lead others through the *LifeKeys* process, consider offering a course that focuses on the needs of people in job transition, using the new activities in this resource and the accompanying supplement to the *LifeKeys Leadership Resource*, as well as your own favorites.

If you are one of those in job transition, revisit the *LifeKeys* process using this resource. If you can’t take a course, consider finding a kindred spirit or accountability partner who is also on the journey. Schedule regular meetings—maintaining this schedule often increases people’s sense of self-determination—to talk through what you are discovering and actionable goals. What has changed in each lens? What has stayed the same? What needs to be different to maximize your current situation?

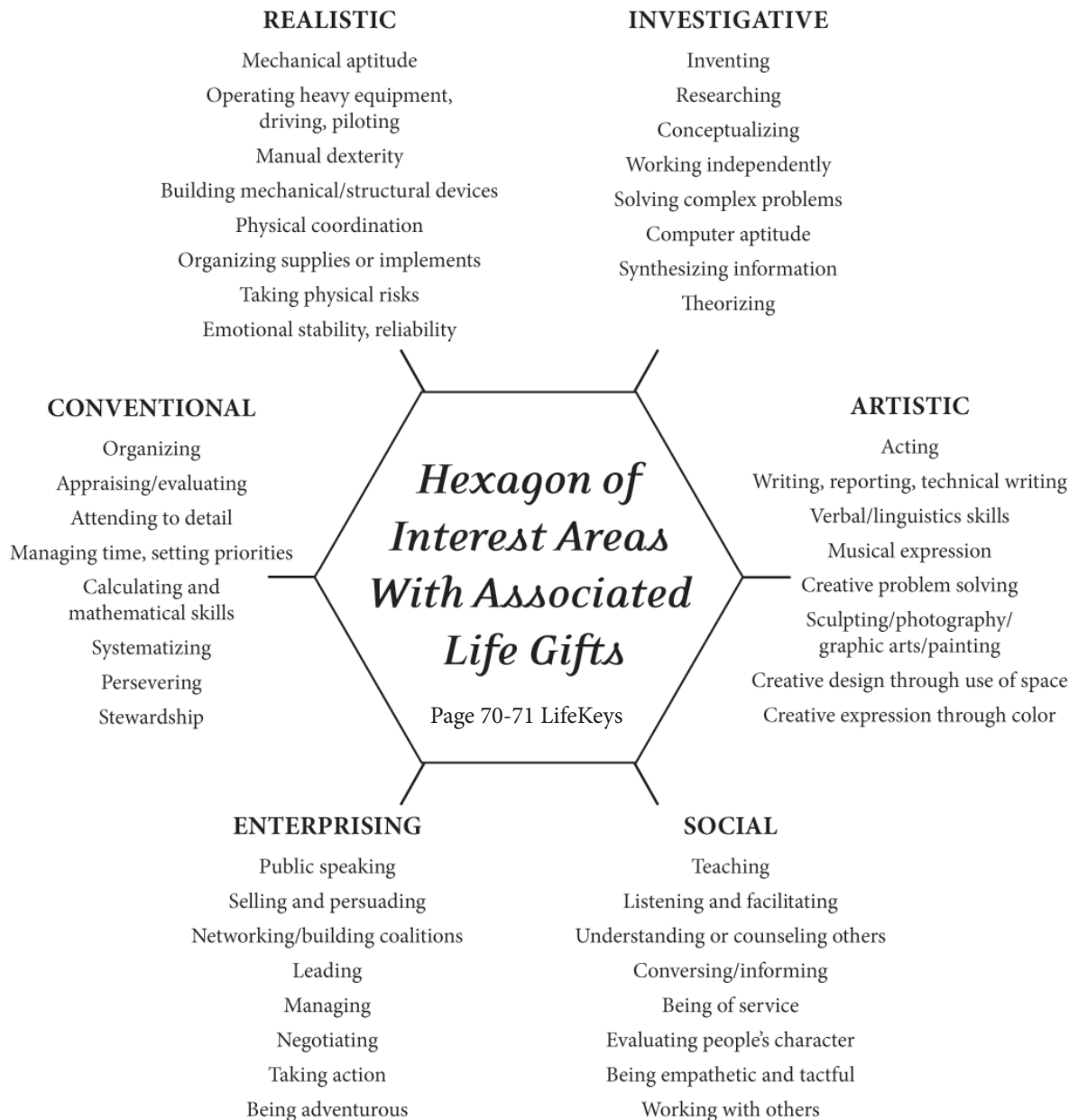
Life Gifts

LifeKeys asks you to identify your top ten Life Gifts, based on what you both like and do well. Some people limit themselves to just a handful that resonate strongly for them, but most people rate more than ten quite highly. Seeking employment in a tight economy may involve determining acceptable compromises. These activities will assist you in revisiting Life Gifts to discover any gifts that may not bring as much satisfaction but that you still do well, and to help you explore other ways that your Life Gifts might assist you during transitions.

1. On the fresh copy, below, of the *LifeKeys* Hexagon of Interest Areas with Associated Life Gifts.

- Highlight in one color the ones you originally identified as your Life Gifts. Circle the ones you identified as your top ten Gifts.
- Using the definitions on pages 48-65 in *LifeKeys* (or *Workbook*, pages 5-10), highlight in another color any other Life Gifts that you do well but don’t find particularly enjoyable.
- Consider the “new gifts.” Keep in mind that seeking work that involves this kind of compromise is likely just a stopgap measure. It is always preferable to find work that you both like and do well.

- Are there any Life Gifts you used successfully in previous positions but aren't in your top 10?
 - As a temporary measure, are there some you could use if it would help you tap into jobs or fields that aren't hit quite so hard by this economy?
 - How much effort would be involved in refreshing or improving your skills in these areas?
 - Would the potential positions drain you of the energy you'd need to continue seeking a better employment match?
- Remind yourself that while it's often recommended that we spend at least 60% of our time on work we like and do well, many people find that about 40% of their day is taken up with tasks they do not really enjoy even if they feel they have an ideal job. If you do take a position that's a less than perfect match, use the Life Gifts framework to find leisure or volunteer opportunities that use your core gifts—and might allow you to find the better match overall with 60% of your time going to things you like and do well!



2. While job transition means “full employment” on the task of job search, an essential part of mental health is engaging in purposeful or renewing leisure activities. However, it’s also true that finances may preclude some favorite activities. Review pages 278-9 of *LifeKeys*, which list popular leisure activities by interest area. Are there any new activities that are worth pursuing right now? Does the list bring to mind any activities that you might enjoy with your spouse? Or with a friend or colleague also caught in job transition? Might any of your favorite activities provide some income?
3. Consider surveying coworkers, friends, or people with whom you have volunteered to gain new insights into your strengths or other information that could help your job search. Use a free online survey service such as www.surveymonkey.com. It’s easy to set it up so that the recipients know that their responses will remain anonymous. Possible questions are:
 - What few adjectives or phrases best describe me?
 - What key strengths should I make sure to convey in job interviews?
 - What attitude or skill could I work on that would most help me in procuring a new position?
 - Why would you hire me?
 - Do you know of any resources I should tap?

Use this feedback to redesign your résumé and to enrich the answers you might give during employment interviews.
4. Using the insights or information gained from Activities 1 and 3, consider how you might revise your Life Gifts sentence (pages 66-68, *LifeKeys*). Would changing any of the gifts or motivations listed in it help you adjust your focus during this particular job transition?

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are both our resources and our responsibilities, given to us to use for others. During job transition, the gifts can aid our search, be part of the special talents we hope to put to use in a new position, or be used to help others. However, we can also reach out to those with different gifts who can in turn assist us or use this time to develop a gift more fully. Remember, few of us start at an “expert level” with spiritual gifts. We need mentoring, training and experience to be able to use them well.

1. In *LifeKeys*, suggestions for developing your gifts follow each of the spiritual gift descriptions (pages 86-129). In the chart below, list the spiritual gifts you’d like to develop further, along with any suggestions for development that might be feasible in this transition time. If none of our suggestions seem workable, talk with someone who has the gift, or with staff at your place of worship, for other ideas.

Spiritual Gift I’d Like to Develop Now	An Action I Might Take To Develop It

2. Many of the spiritual gifts provide particular forms of help during job transition. The list below is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to give you ideas of how you might use your own gifts and also whose help you might seek. Sometimes we know so little about gifts we don't have that we aren't even aware that we are in need of what those gifts might offer!!

Use During Job Transition

Is this one of my gifts? How could I be using it now?

Do I know someone with this gift who might help me?

Gifts of the Heart

Helps	Child care Résumé polishing		
Hospitality	Event planning Networking gatherings		
Mercy	Social work Prayer counselor		
Faith	Starting new ministries Encouraging others		
Giving	Non profit support Volunteer work		

Gifts of Proclamation

Evangelism	Helping others see God at work during transitions Sharing strengths with others		
Teaching	Life skills Bible studies Volunteer teaching		
Discernment	Guidance for career choices Discernment regarding motivations and advice of others		
Knowledge	Researching new opportunities Identifying helpful resources		
Prophecy	Leadership coaching Helping others understand how God's word relates to the present		
Wisdom	Decision making excellence Applying biblical wisdom to dilemmas		

Gifts of Action

Leadership	Leading job transition groups Organizing job fairs		
Administration	Office supervision or financial volunteering Record keeping for search process		
Pastoring/ Shepherding	Small group leadership Volunteer assistance to others		
Encouragement/ Counseling	Support group facilitation Individual coaching		
Apostleship	Mission experience Helping diverse populations with employment transition		

3. Here are four questions that may help you tap into your spiritual gifts at this stressful and intense time. When you have answered the questions, consider talking them through with a trusted family member or professional helper (clergy person, *LifeKeys*' coach, etc.).

- Think of someone whose has a spiritual gifts profile similar to you. Ask that person how their spiritual gifts help them during tough times. What kinds of spiritual practices do they engage in that might appeal to you? How would these practices add strength to you now?
- Think about yourself several years, or even decades, into the future. Will you be pleased with what you are currently doing with your spiritual gifts or who you have become? What can you do now to learn to use your spiritual gifts to the fullest? How do you think your future self would regard your practice of your current spiritual gifts?
- Reconsider your spiritual gifts practices through the lens of what is true about you. What are the hopes, fears, doubts, and blessings that impact your practice of your spiritual gifts?
- How can you increase harmony between your current situation and your spiritual gifts? An example of disharmony could be feeling discouraged with life now, even though a person has the gift of encouragement or helps. What needs to change to keep you in alignment?

Personality Type

- The theory of personality type has many applications, from career planning to spirituality to education to improving relationships. In *LifeKeys*, it's used as a lens for focusing on the places or atmospheres that appeal most to you. While this is one way to use type in job transition, type can also help you improve your job search effectiveness. The following tips are suggestions for actions or processes that may not come naturally but which might enhance your ability to seek more options, network, or otherwise enhance your job transition skills.

<p>If you have a preference for Extraversion, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journaling about your previous <i>LifeKeys</i> “map” and reflecting on new applications Taking time for introspection even if it feels uncomfortable to do so and you feel you have “no time” for it Writing out a new plan based on the above steps 	<p>If you have a preference for Introversion, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going out and exploring options even if you have to push yourself – informational interviews will help Sharing with others the plans you have tried and have yet to try Forcing yourself to act even you aren't sure you are ready
<p>If you have a preference for Sensing, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending time journaling or daydreaming about your occupational dreams or possibilities for the future Talking with a trusted other about your insights and inspirations Watching so that you do not become all “doom and gloom” 	<p>If you have a preference for Intuition, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facing reality and getting exact about how much money you need, how much time you actually have, etc. Noting what practical things you need to stop or start immediately Being careful you don't overeat, over-commit, or overdo
<p>If you have a preference for Thinking, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding an accountability partner for processing goals, plans Seeing what feelings/emotions need expression (be careful to curtail your tone of discouragement) perhaps with a trusted other who prefers Feeling Being self-affirming while avoiding placing the blame on others 	<p>If you have a preference for Feeling, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking yourself about the logical pros and cons of your situation Assessing the truth about your situation (downsizing, personal limitations, and development needs), perhaps with a trusted other who prefers Thinking Watching out for nagging others, or criticizing others unfairly
<p>If you have a preference for Judging, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding off a bit and not jumping at the first thing that comes along Being more flexible and adaptable in your job search Expanding your comfort zone by taking your time and gathering more information 	<p>If you have a preference for Perceiving, try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watching out for procrastination Selecting the most promising options and closing in on them Expanding your comfort zone by adding urgency to decisions, perhaps through setting a timeline

- Check the “Suggestions for Growth” on your type page in *LifeKeys*, pages 148-163. Are any of these something that you should work on in this time of transition?
- Revisit pages 170-172 of *LifeKeys*, “Letting Personality Type Structure Your Search.” Your personality provides clues as to what will work well for you in the job search process, but also to possible barriers you might create for yourself. Take some notes to make reflecting on this information as useful as possible.

a. Here's how knowing my type can help my search:

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-
-

b. Here's what I need to keep in mind about how my personality might hinder my search:

-
-
-

c. Here are the next steps I need to take to make maximum use of my answers from the above two questions.

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-
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Values

In *LifeKeys*, values help us determine the places or atmospheres that appeal to us the most. There are also several suggestions for using them to reflect on our situation, guide how we might change, or evaluate what is and isn't working in our current setting. In job transition, they can add clarity to our goals as well as insights into our priorities, worries and dreams.

1. The way we prioritize our values often changes when circumstances change. Resort your values, again having no more than eight in the category, "These are very important to me." When you are finished, compare them with your previous sort. Note especially where values such as financial security, advancement, and happiness now fall. Why? Remember that Abraham Maslow, who developed a hierarchy of needs, suggested that we all need to have our physical and security needs met before we can move up higher in the hierarchy to address our needs for social interaction and self-actualization. Your values can help you name how your priorities have changed. Note as well how comfortable you are with those changes.

My Top Eight Values During Job Transition	What I Need To Keep In Mind About This Value During My Search
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

- What values are new to your top eight? Which are no longer in your top eight? Is this reflected in your actions?
- What would you like to change, if anything, to reflect this shift in values priorities?

2. Sometimes, clarifying values during job transition unearths key emotions, both positive and negative. Take some time, and give yourself some grace, to explore what this new reality is trying to teach you. Below are some common reactions that may or may not describe your experiences, along with some questions to assist you in processing your thoughts and feelings about employment transition.

Often people who experience job loss find it hard to accept the reality of the situation. Some isolate themselves and think, “How did this happen to me?” or “This can’t be happening to me.” Some even hide their job loss from friends and family. One person went so far as to get dressed for work each day, leaving the house at 7 and returning at 6, as if the normal routine still existed. Others avoid former colleagues out of embarrassment. These are normal, yet ever-changing feelings. Remember that former colleagues can be a helpful resource. Further, those who are still at the “old” workplace may experience survivor guilt because you were let go and they were not!

At least some anger about job loss is also normal. If you find yourself caught in the “blame game,” or immobilized by envy for those who haven’t been laid off, know that you are not alone. Recognizing that you are angry is the first step toward making productive use of the energy it provides or working to dispel it. Internal anger eventually increases stress. And, it has a way of “seeping out,” evolving into striking out at others, physically or verbally. That is a fate to avoid, especially during job or informational interviews. One way to dispel these emotions is to write an honest letter to yourself about the anger you feel. Then, destroy the letter. Feel free to shred it, burn it, rip it into tiny pieces, or otherwise take out just a bit of that anger in a productive way!

Another common strategy for coping with loss is trying to barter with family, with former employers, or with God. Barterers may say, “If I do this, will you bring back my job?” or “If I change this behavior, will I find what I am looking for? If your thinking follows this pattern, analyze your request to see the message you are telling yourself. Why might you need to exchange one aspect of yourself for another or what might you really need to find success in the job search?

Still other people bury their anxiety or abdicate responsibility by opting out of the job search, saying, “It’s all in God’s hands. Something will turn up” or “I don’t need to work out my difficulties; God will.” This may be an unsafe place. God is there for us, but we need to keep doing everything humanly possible to secure the future. If this describes you, consider talking with a spiritual director about your part and God’s part.

Feelings of depression are also both common and normal. If the employment search stretches from weeks into months, most people have at least some mornings where their first thought is, “I can’t get myself going; I’m stuck.” Further, some people are naturally more likely to experience despair than others. However, don’t let depression paralyze you. People who feel depressed may need counseling to become proactive again. In some cases, people need medical intervention and this may be an appropriate avenue for you.

While some people in job loss situations may feel some of the emotions covered above, others may say to themselves. “This is the way it is. I will do my best to learn from this experience and surmount it.” It is hard for anyone to predict any individual’s response. Knowing and appreciating what others have gone through may help you to accept your situation, meet it head on, and find new opportunities. Accepting a new reality lets us take steps toward new goals. During this time, however, be cautious about taking on too much or adding additional stress.

- What are your current emotions about your job loss? Note that feelings are facts but feelings are most often transitory. Some people move quickly through any emotional state, others may get stuck for awhile, while others have emotional ups and downs as they try to make sense of what they are experiencing. Where are you? Who might help you sort through your feelings?
- Take time to re-sort your values again, thinking just about this time of transition. Which values are most important to you during the process of seeking new employment? How does that

change your daily and weekly routines during this period of your life? Would concentrating on aligning your actions with one or more of these values help you move ahead productively?

- Reflect on how your spiritual gifts might help you manage the stress. Or, might it help to meet with someone who has a specific gift?
- Discuss your emotions and what you have learned in your reflection with trusted others. Are there practical steps you could take to move to a more positive emotional state?

PASSIONS

Someone told us recently, “If I set out to make money, I usually end up with a mess. If I set out to do what I love, I usually make money.” During a prolonged job search, it can be difficult to honor your passions, and in fact it’s true that seeking temporary work or a position that advances your skills, knowledge, or finances may be more important than a job that you are passionate about, at least for the short term. However, sometimes, we make these compromises too quickly, thinking that fulfilling our passions is selfish when bills need to be paid. Or, it feels safer to stick with what we know than to pursue a passion down an as-yet unexplored path.

Before setting passions aside, use these exercises to consider how passions might be fulfilled wherever you work, how they might become an avocation that gives energy for your work life, or how you might invest in one now to create your own work or ponder a new career.

1. Know that your personality type can help or hinder your ability to imagine turning a passion into an entirely new vocation. Given that many jobs have truly disappeared for good—due to technology and globalization—some of us truly need to rethink our pathway to employment. However
 - People who prefer Sensing may have a natural inclination to stick with their education and experience. “Considering entirely new fields feels like stepping into a black hole,” is the way one person described it. If you prefer Sensing, keep in mind that your natural reaction is to question or even resist change. As you work through one or both of the following exercises, be open to what change may bring.
 - Revisit the *LifeKeys* exercises on pages 206-209. Choose one from each section: “One Talent” People, “Make Me an Offer” People, and “Right Under Your Nose” People. Start a notebook, listing the passions each exercise suggests to you, leaving blank pages after each exercise. Ignore the “that won’t work” or “I’m not trained for that” messages your natural Sensing preference may evoke and brainstorm possibilities for how your passions might lead to new work. If you are stuck, talk through ideas with someone you trust who tends to be optimistic and full of ideas (often someone with a preference for iNtuition).
 - Work through at least two of the “Dreamer” exercises on page 210. Because many people who prefer Sensing view such exercises as too impractical, you may need to talk them through with that same idea-filled, optimistic friend.
 - Work toward answering these questions. Share them with a few other people. Do they have ideas on how these dreams could come to match your reality?

Are you more interested in working with a specific group of people, in a specific kind of setting, or using a particular life gift or spiritual gift? Is more than one of these really important? (for example, using culinary skills but in a business owned by someone else rather than my own restaurant)

What worries you most about pursuing this passion? Who might help you plan for contingencies that would lessen your anxiety?

What new skills might you need? How might you develop them? Interning? Observing? Classes? Offering services to family, friends, or nonprofit organizations?

What is keeping you from pursuing this passion? How might you get around these obstacles?

- People who prefer Intuition may be too confident that they can seek work in an entirely new field. They may gloss over training or experience requirements and then become discouraged when no opportunities open up. If you prefer Intuition, keep in mind that optimism works best with realistic (not pessimistic) evaluation of the environment. And, find a friend with a Sensing preference to bring a reality base to your dreams.

–Work through at least two of the passions exercises on pages 206-210 in *LifeKeys*. Make a note of any new passions that emerge this time as well as ones you discovered in an earlier *LifeKeys* process (if applicable) that are still of interest to you. For each one that you would consider pursuing seriously, consider the following

Are there specific credentials you would need? Are there alternative ways of getting them or is formal training required?

What is a realistic timeline for bringing this passion into reality? Remember that it takes 3-5 years for most businesses to launch. You might need to sit down with someone with experience in new businesses, starting a nonprofit, or whatever form of vocation your passion is leading you to establish.

Quantify the costs—time, education, startup costs, etc. What about the stress pursuing this passion might place on those around you?

2. As hard as transitions can be, they also bring clarity in a way that nothing else can. Otherwise it's easy to stay on the treadmill of our responsibilities or remain stuck "in the groove" rather than responding to the new normal around us and identifying our place in it. In fact, many of us stay so busy that we haven't had time to reflect on how we've grown and changed. Opportunities and circumstances often helped us develop talents or skills without our knowing it. Transitions provide a good time to review the One talent approach to finding your passions. Revisit your life gifts, spiritual gifts, and the various crafts and abilities described on page 207 in *LifeKeys*. Add to that list other things that come to mind.

- Which talents are the most marketable at this point in your journey?
- In which arenas are these talents in demand?
- What do you need to research around these talents?
- Could part of your transition time go to volunteer opportunities or internships that could help you develop this talent into a marketable asset, if it isn't already?

3. Joseph had a dream, given by God, at the beginning of his life. He went through many twists and turns as the reality of his dream unfolded, with times of great triumph and times of great challenge. Read the article, "Off the Job Training" by Jane Kise and David Stark (included in the supplement to the *LifeKeys Leadership Resource*) to ponder how Joseph's 13 years of waiting might relate to

seeking employment. God does not forget the dream for our lives, which is a temptation to think during times of transition. Take time to remember the ways that God has been faithful to you in your life thus far. What threads do these memories have in common? What parts of the dream still look like they could be part of the future?