

How to design the life you love

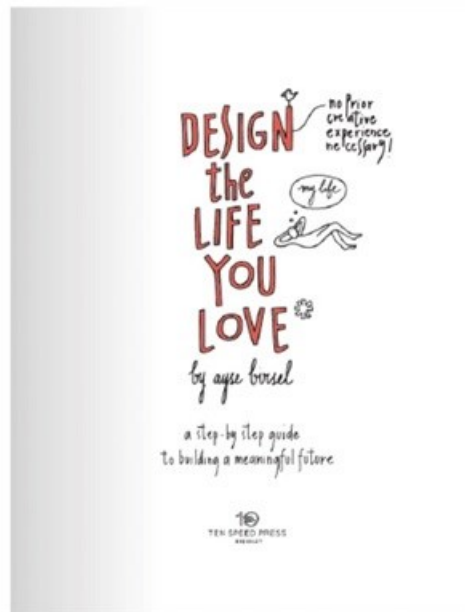


By Pasqua Heard

1 Mar 2017

Ayse Birsal, co-founder and creative director of award-winning design studio Birsal+Seck, gave a thought-provoking presentation at Design Indaba, which included a worksheet and homework activity for conference attendees to practice designing the life they love.

Drawing from her book, [*Design the Life You Love: A Step-By-Step Guide to Building a Meaningful Future*](#), as well as her past experiences, Birsal took the audience on a journey of discovering what they truly value through steps of deconstruction, point of view and reconstruction.



Explaining how *Design the Life You Love* came to be, Birsal said she applied her design process to her life during a particularly difficult time, and this formed the foundation of the concept. She then helped the audience to apply the design processes and tools in order to think about their life like designers.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction was the first step to help the audience begin to reflect on what they love. Birsal encouraged the audience to write down the name of a hero or role model and draw an icon which resembled that person. Their next task was to list this person's most admirable qualities.

Her hero was her teacher Rowena Reed Kostellow. "A very strong-willed, resilient, beautiful woman who was the best at what she did. She had developed a process to teach designers like myself how to design in three dimension," she demonstrated.

Point of view

Birsal's next step referred to seeing familiar things differently. In this part of the exercise, Birsal instructed the audience to cross out the name of their hero and replace it with their own, as she explained that they had in fact just listed their own values.

"The reason we admire our heroes is because they carry our values and we want to emulate those," she explained. "We need our values to design the life we love, because our values are the foundation of our life and they allow us to make choices."

Reconstruction

"Reconstruction, our third step, is about making choices, while knowing that we can't have everything," explained Birsal.

This step refers to the ingredients that make up the life you love. Birsal encouraged the audience to write down these ingredients according to four quadrants, namely emotion, physical, intellect and spirit (read more about this process [here](#)).

Offering the audience a series of examples of how you may express your vision for your life in a design, Birsal said that she wants to be "the Katy Perry of Design the Life You Love". I fell in love with the way that Katy Perry connects young people and their parents with the beauty of her music, and I thought – that's what I want to do."

“ *"Design the life you love, then go and live it" parting advice from [@AyseBirsalSeck #DesignIndaba](#) [pic.twitter.com/WmNShtEjqp](#)— Chris Rawlinson (@ChrisRawlinson) [March 1, 2017](#)* ”

Homework

Birsal encouraged the audience to go home and define who they are and the life they would love.

"Our parents gave us a very linear roadmap that if you follow you could have a good life... Today we don't have roadmaps, because things are changing so fast, but in design challenges are opportunities. There are no roadmaps, so design the life you love and then go and live it."

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