



# STUDY GUIDE

## WHAT'S A QUARTER-LIFE-CRISIS?

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**KEY TERMS:** mid-life crisis  
goal

lonely  
realistic assessment

mobility

**NOTE-TAKING COLUMN:** Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

**CUE COLUMN:** Complete this section after the video.

What did Miss Perino do right before her 25th birthday?

What is a Quarter-Life-Crisis?

How many plates and how many cups did Miss Perino own during her 'nimble' years?

What is Miss Perino's advice for getting through it?

What is the outcome if you sit on a couch waiting for life to happen?

## DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Miss Perino shares with us that, “I felt like I was falling short... almost everywhere. I missed my college days which seemed, in retrospect, so carefree. The future just looked boring and hard.” Why do you think that some people feel this way? Have you had similar feelings? Explain.
- Later, Miss Perino advises, “There’s no reason to be stuck in one place, especially if that one place isn’t working for you.” Why do you think that some people just ‘settle’ for where they are? Why might this be great advice for some people?
- Miss Perino later explains, “I’m not saying you can’t change, that you can’t grow, of course you can and must, but you are who you are and you need figure out who that is.” What do you think she means by this? Why do you need to figure this out? How might one best go about figuring out ‘who one is?’ How will you figure out who you are? Explain.
- After pointing out the importance of being realistic regarding one’s potential, Miss Perino then asks, “...what is it that you want out of your life? You need to make a realistic assessment of your strengths and weaknesses. Again, lists. This will help you take the next step in the process: setting a goal. Okay, ballerina not practical. What is? Be honest. Figure it out. Write it down.” Why is a realistic assessment so important? What practical goals have you set for yourself?
- Towards the end of the video, Miss Perino states, “No one is going to hand you the life you want. You’re going to have to go out and get it.” What do you think she means by this? What kind of life do you want? Explain.

## EXTEND THE LEARNING:

### CASE STUDY: Millennial Careers

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “How Many Careers Do You Get In A Lifetime,” then answer the questions that follow.

- How does the author characterize the manner in which millennials view careers? What does the author have to say about vetting? Why did the author bring up Misty Copeland?
- What are the significant points made by the author in this article? When do you think people should start trying to figure out what their career will be? When did the author choose her career?
- Does this article support any of the points made by Miss Perino? Explain.



# QUIZ

## WHAT'S A QUARTER-LIFE-CRISIS?

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1. If you're feeling trapped, what is one of the best ways to set yourself free?
  - a. Move.
  - b. Quit your job.
  - c. Quit school.
  - d. Get married.
  
2. You have unlimited potential, even at 25.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
3. How can you get the life you want?
  - a. It will be handed to you.
  - b. You're going to have to go out and get it.
  - c. Get a job that pays at least six figures.
  - d. Move to Washington D.C.
  
4. If you sit on the couch and wait for your life to begin, what will happen?
  - a. You will be offered your dream job.
  - b. You will save enough money to buy a house.
  - c. You will get into an Ivy League school.
  - d. Nothing.
  
5. At 25, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. You're pretty well formed.
  - b. You know what you're good at.
  - c. You know what you're really bad at.
  - d. All of the above.



# QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2016/07/18/how-many-careers-do-you-get-in-a-lifetime/#6904c7977556>

Jul 18, 2016 @ 08:21 AM

# How Many Careers Do You Get In A Lifetime?

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

*This is a guest post by the daughter of Steve Denning, Stephanie Denning, who writes about leadership issues from a millennial perspective. The views expressed here are her own.*

I was maybe five or six, and forced to face one of those "What Will You Be When You Grow Up" exercises, I didn't choose astronaut or architect. I chose "career-person," as I so aptly called it, outfitted with a fancy pantsuit and a nice office. I guess you could say I was prescient. Or had little imagination.



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*Ugh, I hear you say, enough of this millennial existentialism.*

Give me a page or two to explain.

## **One Career Story**

In my junior year of college, I picked my future career: finance. Or more specifically, making money. It seemed like a good idea at the time. For 1) It paid a lot, and 2) Everyone else was doing it. Luckily, life course-corrected my foolish plan, by bestowing the market with a financial crisis

the very year I graduated. I failed to get any job in finance because there were little to no jobs to get.

If I wasn't going to work in finance, which seemed to me to be the only job with any social cachet, then it didn't matter where I worked. For those reasons anyway. So, I stopped to think what I might actually find interesting. The truth was I loved to read. So, I surmised, *Why not go into the business of reading?* And so I did. I went into digital media, where I still find myself today, in a position I like a lot. Why not? There were a lot of interesting problems, problems everyone still had yet to solve.

When I turned 24 or 25, I sprouted another interest: writing. It started as a hobby, but quickly turned into what I feared might be taking the shape of a vocation. The inconvenient truth was I wanted to write. Inconvenient because I liked my job and had no intention of leaving. What I wanted was a second act to run in parallel to my first act. It quickly became evident, however, that I had no idea how to get this second act going. My weekends were now consumed with writing. Aside from that I had no idea what I was doing.

And here I experienced for the first time the switching costs of finding a gig in a different industry. I was armed with no credentials except for my own writing, which to date had been unpublished. Even if I did want to be a writer, no one seemed to think I had any credentials to find my way in.

For a long time I thought I might be the only one with this problem. It is admittedly unusual. Then, I had dinner with a friend who brought up this very thing. She told me she started interviewing for a broad range of jobs she was interested in. But reality soon set in and she realized the only interviews she was getting were for positions very similar to her current role. The market seemed to think she was only qualified for the job she came from. She lamented that if only these companies would give her a shot, she could prove she could do the job. She truly believed she make up for any experience she lacked by learning quickly on the job. And I believed her.

### **A Career Is Like A Marriage**

Today, the way millennials view careers is a little like millennials view marriage. We want to spend our 20s trying to figure out what we don't like, so we can settle on something that we do. Hopefully settling down to a career we really love in our 30s.

Oddly, the evolution of careers is very similar to that of marriage. Alain de Botton's article in *The New York Times*, *Why You Will Marry The Wrong Person*, serves equal part marriage counseling as career advice. Because paraphrasing won't do Alain de Botton justice, here is an excerpt:

“For most of recorded history, people married for logical sorts of reasons: because her parcel of land adjoined yours, his family had a flourishing business, her father was the magistrate in town, there was a castle to keep up, or both sets of parents subscribed to the same interpretation of a holy text. [...] The marriage of reason was not, in hindsight, reasonable at all; it was often expedient, narrow-minded, snobbish and exploitative. That is why what has replaced it — the marriage of feeling...”

Much the same is true of jobs today. Jobs used to be a transactional affair. Today, we want a “career of feeling.” One recent discussion I had with a baby boomer explained that 50 years ago, “People didn't expect to find meaning in a job.” Today, they do.

## **Career Switching Costs**

While careers have evolved, hiring has not. Millennials have a very modern view of what their career trajectories should look like, but when you find yourself applying for a job or in an interview you, you could very well find yourself back in 1950s.

The hiring process hasn't evolved as neatly or quickly with the evolution of careers. We still hire based on past experience. Business school is a supposedly quick (and egregiously expensive) fix to this problem, a little like a reset button. But business school only offers the lure of opportunities, it doesn't level the playing field. If you were a consultant before business school, you are much more likely to get an interview and job in consulting than someone who wasn't. Same goes with startups. Finance. Marketing. Most jobs I can think of. Everyone accepts careers are no longer linear, so haven't hiring practices?

We like to pretend we value raw skills like learning and hard work. But we shouldn't kid ourselves. The reality is we turn to the past in hopes it's done the hard work for us. If you have an M.B.A. from Harvard, a company understandably assumes Harvard has already vetted the candidate, so they must be good. And when Harvard Business School accepts someone from Facebook or Goldman Sachs, they too likely assume that those two great companies have done that hard work of vetting the candidate. It's the Russian doll phenomenon of careers, which continues looking further and further back until your kindergarten records are being reviewed to make sure you went to the right school.

In the working world, things become even more specialized. Brand names in general are no longer enough to get you very far. Instead, it's about industry brands, the right industry contacts, the right industry profile. Of course, switching careers is always possible. It's just not easy. It takes a lot of luck and effort to overcome the switching cost between industries.

This would all be fine and swell if we could accurately predict what we wanted to do at 22. We would just waltz into the right industry right after school, and there we would stay for the next 50 years. Many of us think we're too young to marry at 22. Why would it be any different for our career?

## **A Fateful Career**

I recently watched the documentary on Misty Copeland, the principal ballerina for The American Ballet Theatre, who explained she started ballet when she was 13. In other words, in ballet years, she was middle aged when she started her career. What if they had ruled her out for lack of experience?

No one tells you how hard it is to switch careers halfway into a pre-existing one. And sometimes, we can feel fated to work in the same industry or career for the rest of our working lives. A career choice which may have taken a week or two to make in college, can impact the future course of your career. Choose wisely.

Then again, what good would it do? When I talk to successful people who seem happy with their careers, most of them say their job isn't remotely close to what they envisioned as a kid. Or their job didn't even exist back then. They couldn't have predicted it, even if they had tried.

Maybe all we can do is watch and wait.