Fulfilling work over longer careers

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A practitioner - researcher

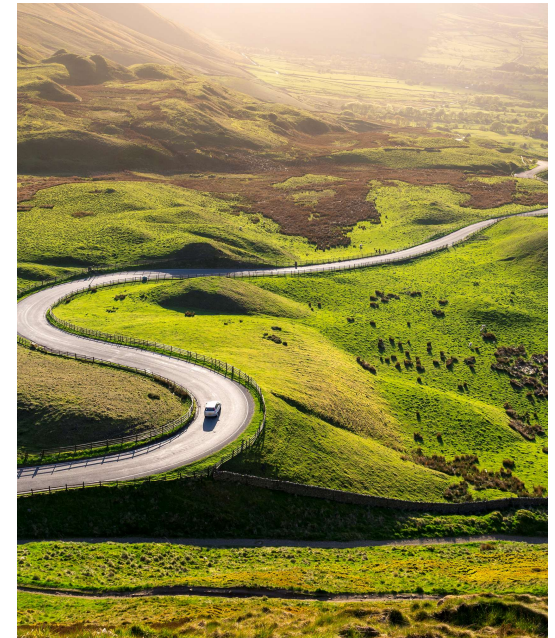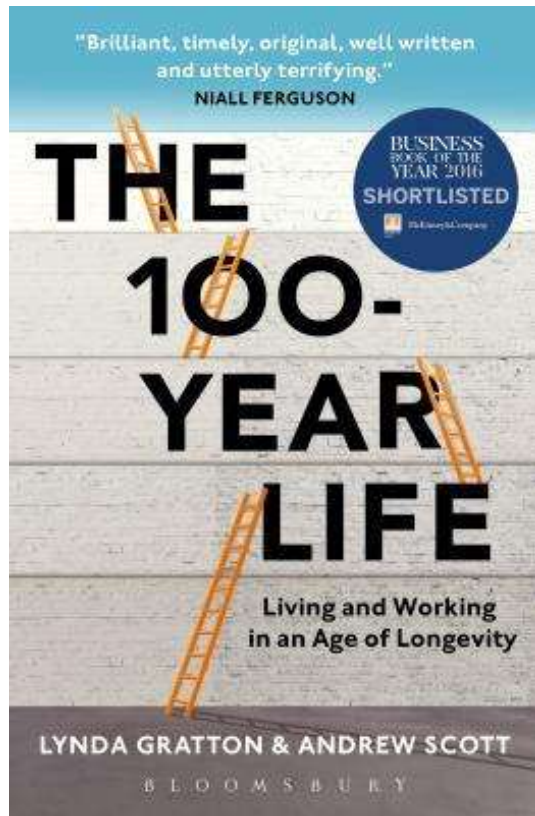Director level roles
across six sectors

Specialising in midlife
Psychology – doing a PhD
at the University of Kent

Fascinating and important clues from psychology

1. A bit about longer careers
2. What does 'fulfilling work' mean?
3. Can 'fulfilling' shift over time?
4. Is 'fulfilling work' equally available to all?
5. Key implications for our practice

1. Longer Careers

THE 100-YEAR LIFE

Living and Working in an Age of Longevity

LYNDA GRATTON & ANDREW SCOTT

BLOOMSBURY

A short quiz

1. How many different careers can those now entering work expect?
   a)   1-2
   b)   3-4
   c)   <mark>5-7</mark>

2. What % over 50s do change jobs?
   a) 20%
   b) 35%
   c) <mark>50%</mark>

3. What % over 50s want to progress?
   a) <mark>90%</mark>
   b) 70%
   c) 50%

4. 28% of digital start-ups succeed for under 35s, what is the % for over 50s?
   a) 28%
   b) 40%
   c) <mark>70%</mark>

2. How is 'fulfilling work' conceptualised in vocational psychology?

Related, but different concepts

Satisfying work

Meaningful work

Fulfilling work

Fulfilling work is the focus of my work:

- To acknowledge the possibility of different types of work (paid, unpaid, fulltime, part-time, portfolio, voluntary)

- To bridge disciplines – career counselling, vocational psychology, HR, management, and coaching.

- To include a subjective 'felt-sense' of the work experience – to balance traditional external measures

Prevailing definitions

"Work fulfilment as work that is personally satisfying and meaningful" (Duffy et al., 2016)

"Fulfilling work is a holistic and complete sense of wellbeing and flourishing in the work context" (Allan et al., 2019).
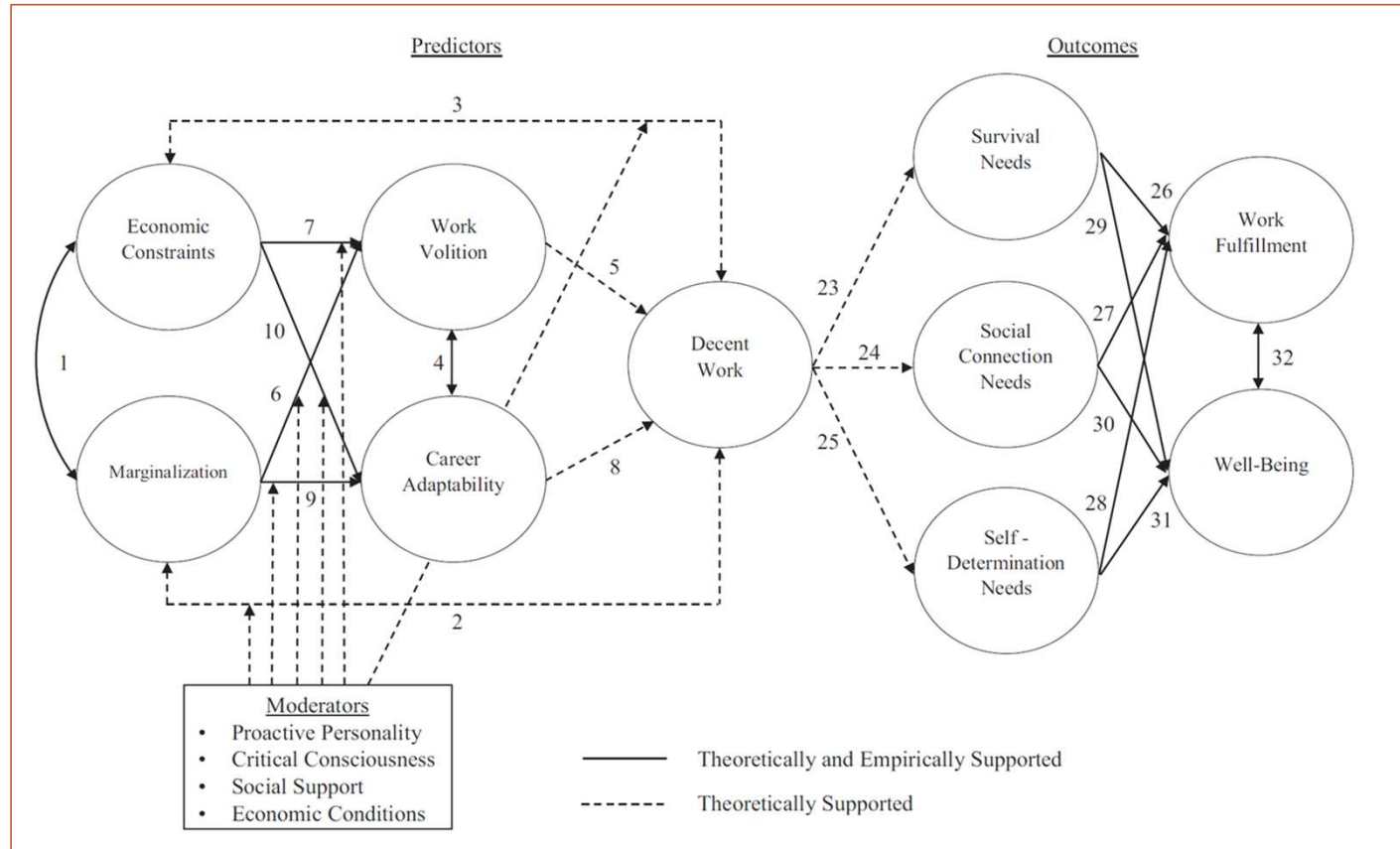
"A fulfilled life: a cognitive-affective experience referring to a sense of wholeness, fit, and value toward the self, one's life, and one's impact" (Baumann and Ruch, 2021)

"Fulfilment is a long-lasting, internal sense of wholeness, in which we find value in recognizing our personal impact on the world around us" (Baumann 2023 for WEF)

The Psychology of Work Theory (PWT)

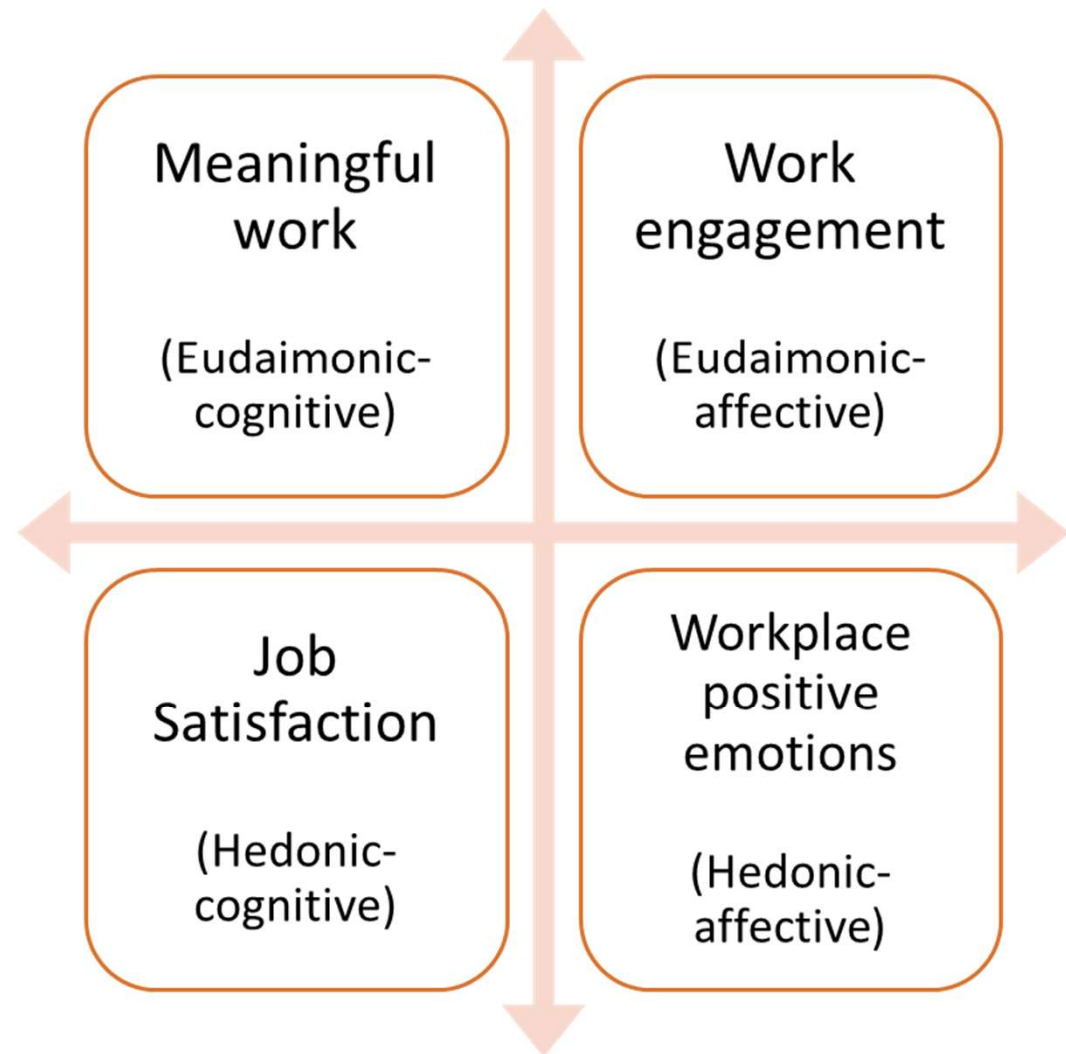(PWF: Blustein et al., 2008)
(PWT: Duffy et al., 2016)

"Work fulfilment is work that is personally satisfying and meaningful"

A model of fulfilling work

(Allan et al., 2019)

"Fulfilling work as a holistic and complete sense of wellbeing and flourishing in the work context"

Meaningful work (Eudaimonic-cognitive)	**Work engagement** (Eudaimonic-affective)
Job Satisfaction (Hedonic-cognitive)	**Workplace positive emotions** (Hedonic-affective)

A fulfilled life

(Baumann and Ruch, 2022)

"A fulfilled life: a cognitive-affective experience referring to a sense of wholeness, fit, and value toward the self, one's life, and one's impact"
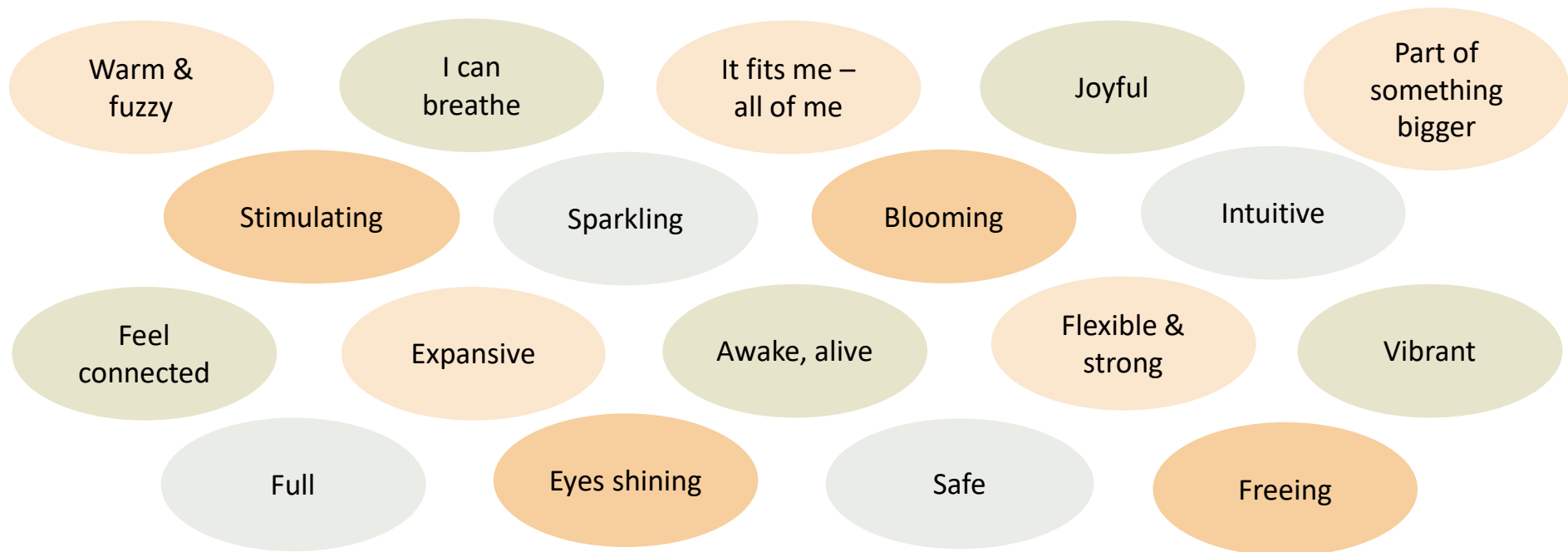
Unfolded self and life
Positive impact and legacy
The worthwhile life
Fulfilled life affective experience

The sensory experience of feeling fulfilled...

Warm & fuzzy

I can breathe

It fits me – all of me

Joyful

Part of something bigger

Stimulating

Sparkling

Blooming

Intuitive

Feel connected

Expansive

Awake, alive

Flexible & strong

Vibrant

Full

Eyes shining

Safe

Freeing

AI prompted

1. As a practitioner, which definition below resonates most for you?

"Work fulfilment as work that is personally satisfying and meaningful"
(Duffy et al., 2016)

"Fulfilling work is a holistic and complete sense of wellbeing and flourishing in the work context"
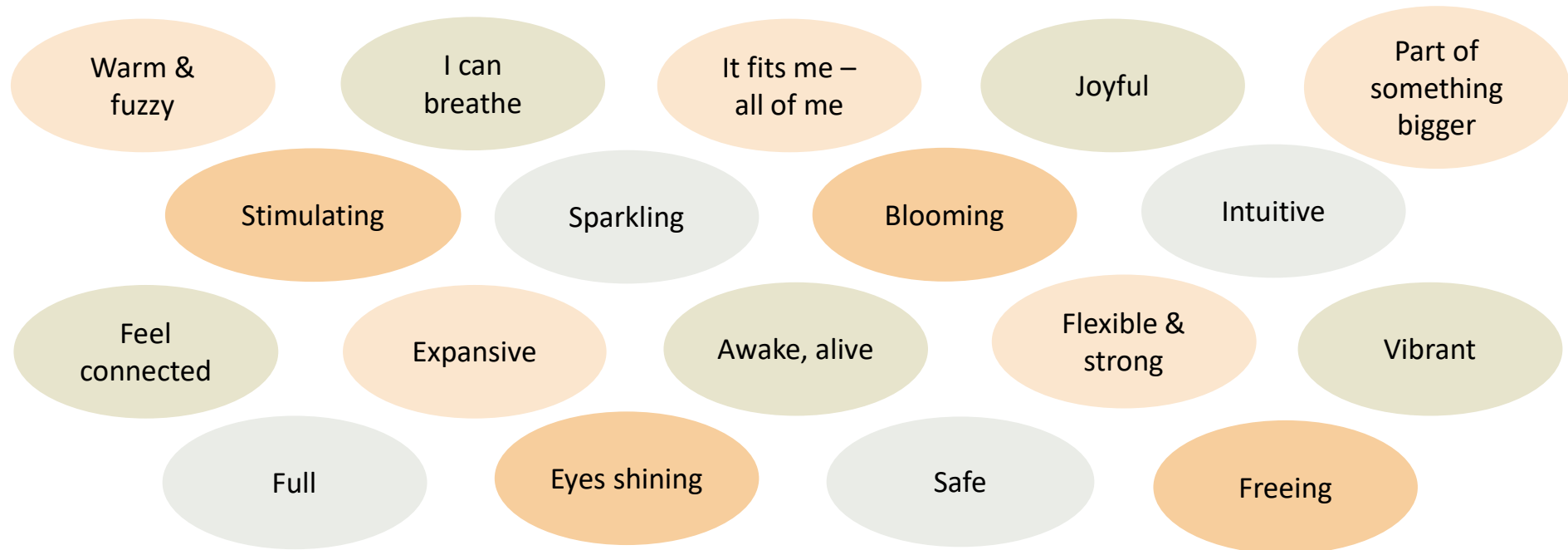**(Allan et al., 2019)**

"A fulfilled life: a cognitive-affective experience referring to a sense of wholeness, fit, and value toward the self, one's life, and one's impact"
(Baumann and Ruch, 2021)

"Fulfilment is a long-lasting, internal sense of wholeness, in which we find value in recognizing our personal impact on the world around us"
(Baumann 2023)

2. As an individual, which words resonate with you?

Warm & fuzzy

I can breathe

It fits me – all of me

Joyful

Part of something bigger

Stimulating

Sparkling

Blooming

Intuitive

Feel connected

Expansive

Awake, alive

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Freeing

3. Can 'fulfilling' shift over time?

'Fulfilment' is influenced by your life course, stage and events

| Life course & events	Life stage
Life course theory argues multiple factors shape people's lives from birth to death (Hutchison, 2011) • Interplay of human lives and historical time • Linked or interdependent lives • Human agency in making choices • Diversity in life course trajectories • Developmental risk and protection When historical / social events coincide with early formative adult experiences there is a greater impact later in life (Duncan & Agronick, 1995).	Levison (1978) proposed eight stages including a 'mid-life transition' stage (age 40 to 45) and a 'questioning and modification' stage (age 50 to 55) Mid-life can be a uniquely challenging time with the collision of social, physiological and emotional challenges (Ryan, 2023; Jackson, 2019). Choices made at this stage can significantly impact future health, wealth, wellbeing and happiness in later life (Lachman et al., 2015).

How others experience our age can have an impact

- Ageism is the most prevalent form of prejudice

- Can be experienced by both older and younger people resulting in prejudice, discrimination and ridicule (Bratt et al., 2020).

- Age stereotypes can involve positive and negative stereotypical beliefs simultaneously (Dordoni & Argentero, 2015).

- Almost all (93%) of older US people (age 50 to 80) regularly experience ageism (Ober Allen, J. et al (2020).

- Intersectionality e.g. Gendered ageism (Itzin and Phillipson, 1993)

# Fulfilling work goes hand in hand with health and wellbeing

The biopsychosocial model "construes human health as a product of the reciprocal influences of biological, psychological, interpersonal, and macrosystem contextual dynamics that unfold over personal and historical time"
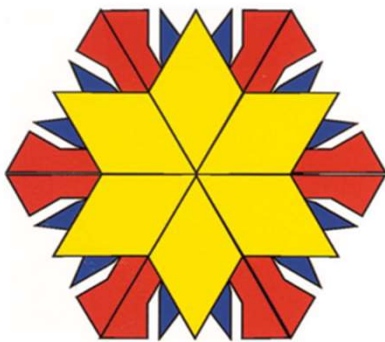
(Lehman et al., 2017)
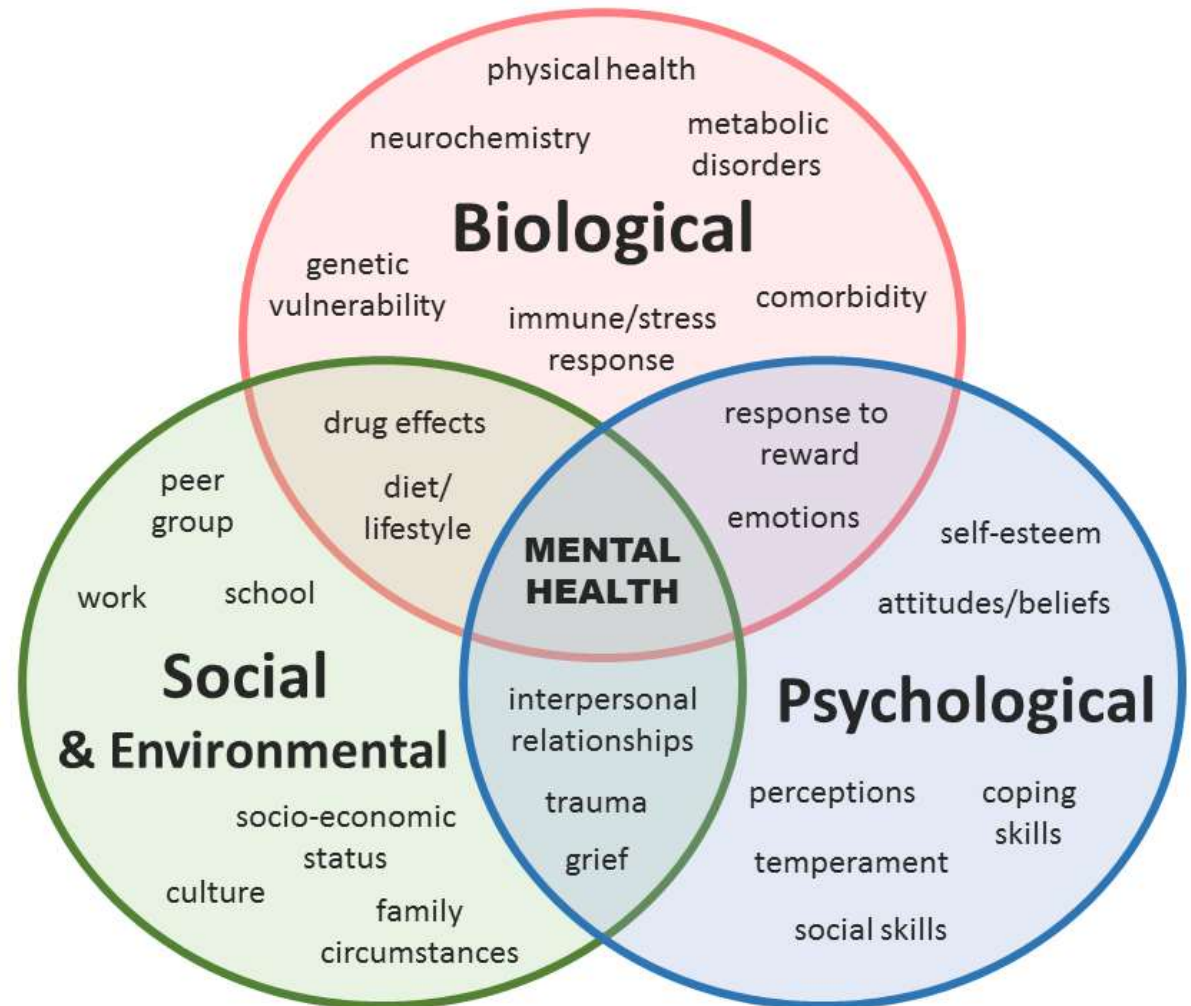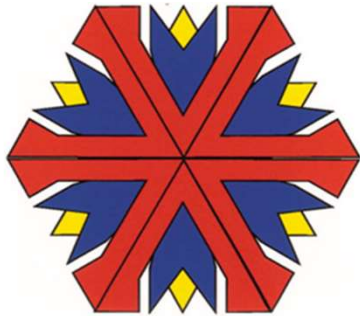
Beginning Stages of the Professional Career.

Challenge · Balance · Authenticity
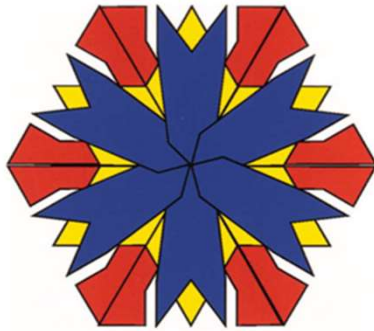
Middle Stages of the Professional Career

Balance · Challenge · Authenticity

Advanced Stages of the Professional Career

Authenticity · Balance · Challenge

What matters most can shift over time

Mainiero, L. A., & Gibson, D. E. (2018). The kaleidoscope career model revisited: How midcareer men and women diverge on authenticity, balance, and challenge.
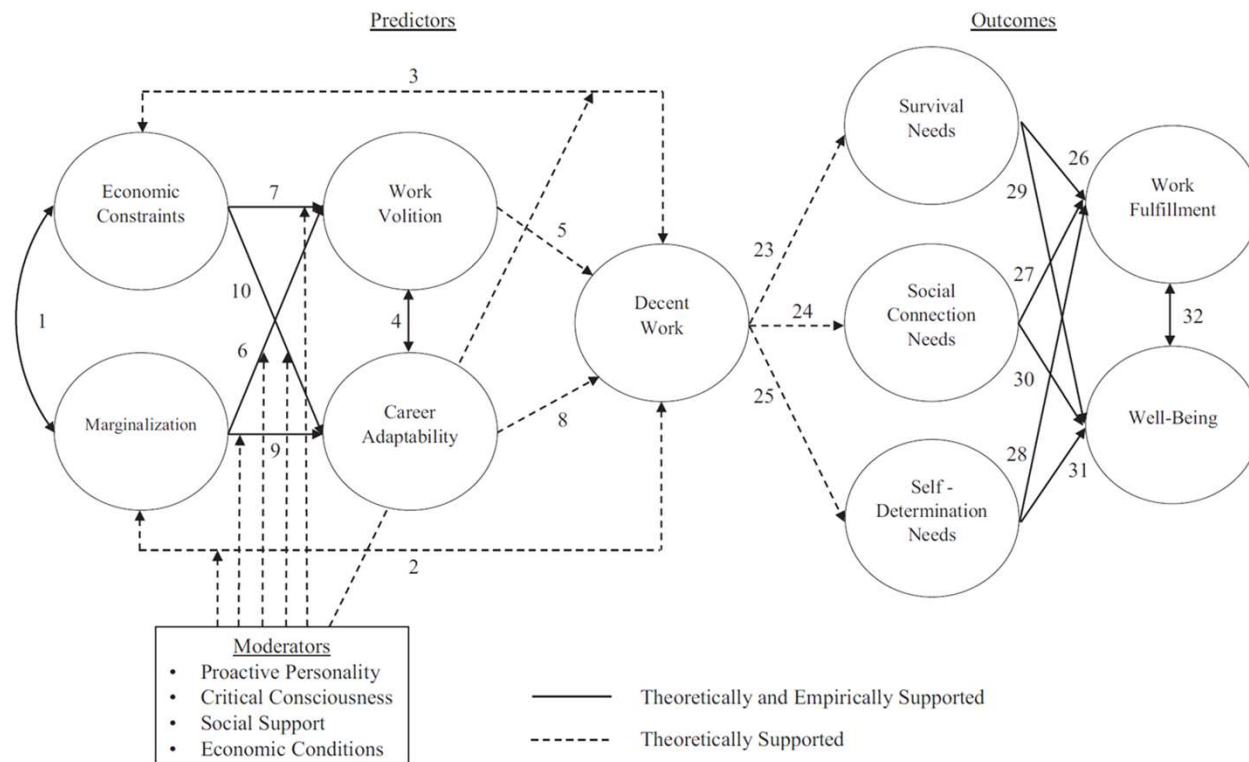
EXERCISE:

IN PAIRS

Have you experienced fulfilling work in your career so far? How did you know?

Have you experienced work that definitely wasn't fulfilling? How did you know?

4. Is fulfilling work equally available to all?

"FULFILLING WORK IS A WORTHY ASPIRATION FOR AN ARRAY OF INDIVIDUALS" (OWENS ET AL., 2019)

Fulfilling work is predicated on decent work...

but is the possibility of decent work equal?

Economic constraints	Marginalisation
Work volition	Career adaptability

|		
'Relational' careers – intricate web of interconnected issues (Leonard & Burns, 2006)	Over-represented in part time roles, 'feminised' positions (World Development Report)	Victimisation, violence, harassment (World Economic Forum, 2017).
Bias and access to opportunities - career, education, mentoring (Flores er al., 2021)	Career progression structures more of a barrier – less linear, more gaps and transitions (Cabrera, 2007)	Representation in political, business and religious leadership (World Economic Forum, 2017)

Worldwide indicators clearly show that women are socially and economically disadvantaged relative to men

5. Implications for practice

Seven key insights from psychology

Fulfilling work ...

- ❖ Is a subjective and cognitive experience - but largely a felt sense
- ❖ Seems to be predicated on decent work
- ❖ Can shift through the life course - becoming even more important
- ❖ Goes hand in hand with health and wellbeing
- ❖ Maybe differentially available / a different experience for different groups
- ❖ Can be interwoven with a 'fulfilling life'
- ❖ May not be as uniquely individual as career practitioners can assume
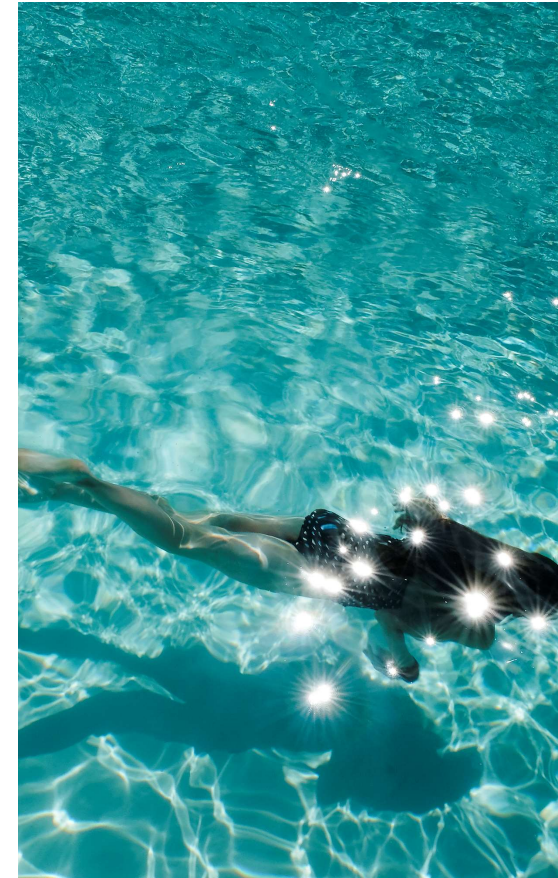
A worthwhile aspiration? Here are examples of images of what it is to feel fulfilled from my research...

Implications for your practice

In small groups:

1. To what extent do you typically talk about fulfilling work with your clients?

2. What is your top take away from the session?

3. What will you do differently / more of?

Fulfilling work ...

1. Is a subjective and cognitive experience - but largely a felt sense

2. Seems to be predicated on decent work

3. Can shift through the life course - becoming even more important

4. Goes hand in hand with health and wellbeing

5. Maybe a differentially available / a different experience for different groups

6. Can be interwoven with a 'fulfilling life'

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www.midlifecareers.co.uk
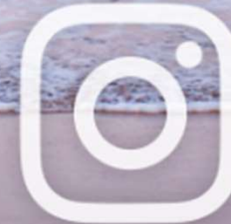
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Laura Walker

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