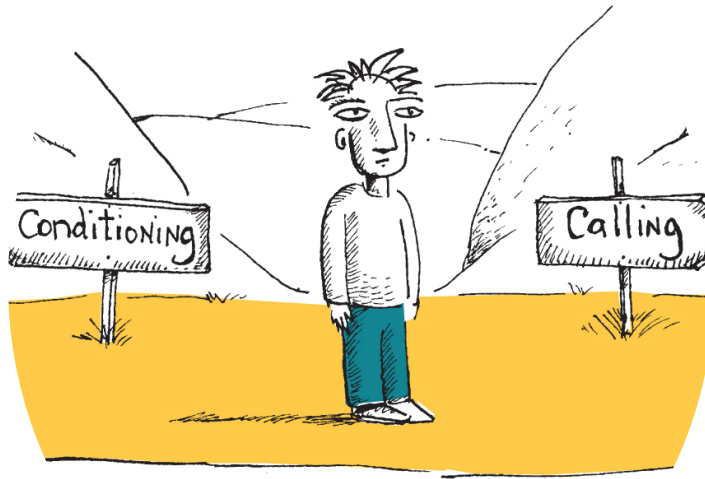


# Are you at the Crossroads?

Eric Klein



---

**I**magine you're walking down a dusty road in the hot sun when you come to a crossroads. The road divides in two and you have to decide which way to go. Creative work, often compared to a journey, includes many crossroads. Not physical crossroads, but inner, psychological, even spiritual situations that bring you to a crossroads in your life.

**The crossroads is an uncomfortable place to be.**

When you're at the crossroads you know you've got to make a move. There's pressure to get going, start doing, initiate action, and forge ahead. But what will inform, guide, and motivate your next step? That's what the crossroads demands you clarify. The crossroads is a sacred place on the creative journey—a place where you can redirect your life.

**At the crossroads you're poised between the paths of Conditioning and Calling.**

At the crossroads, you're in a suspended state that endows you with a kind of stereophonic consciousness. In one ear you can hear the voice of your Conditioning. In the other ear, there's the voice of your Calling.

**Both beckon you forward.**

Which path will you choose? That depends on how slowly you proceed. Yes, how slowly.

**It's important to take your time at the crossroads.**

Slow down so that you can begin to discern the different flavors, textures, tensions, and qualities of your Conditioning and your Calling. The discomfort at the crossroads comes from *both* your Conditioning and your Calling. And it's easy to confuse the two.

**But these discomforts are very different from each other.**

By taking your time, by slowing down at the crossroads, you'll be able to distinguish the discomfort of Conditioning from the discomfort of Calling. On the surface, they're similar. Both generate discomfort. But in fact, they're not the same at all.

**What is the discomfort of Conditioning?**

Conditioning creates the experience of discomfort whenever you stop acting in accordance with your...um...conditioning.

Growing up, you were taught what was expected, what you needed to do in order to *survive* and *even thrive* in your family, school, religious community, peer group, etc.

You were given precise messages by authorities of all kinds—from parents, to teachers, to coaches, to media celebrities.

You were given verbal and even more powerful non-verbal messages about how to act, how to fit in, how to win approval.

**The underlying message of Conditioning is—you're not enough.**

No matter what you're doing, achieving, realizing, or creating—it's not really enough.

At the crossroads, this *not-enough* message intensifies. Because when you're at the crossroads you're not doing anything. You're waiting, being still, seeking to decide your next move.

### **Conditioning can't stand waiting.**

In the stillness, the pause of *waiting*, there's the chance for you to choose a direction other than the one dictated by Conditioning. The forces of your Conditioning start to rattle inside you and make you very nervous.

### **Conditioning needs your attention to thrive.**

The forces of conditioning don't really have a life of their own. The forces of Conditioning feed on your attention. When you act in ways that give attention, validation, and life to Conditioning—it relaxes. You feel relieved.

### **When Conditioning is satisfied that you're doing as you've been told—it relaxes.**

It stops causing you discomfort. It stops reminding you that *you're not good enough*, that you don't measure up, that there's more to do, and that you'd better hurry up. It stops putting pressure on you...as long as you continue to follow its dictates.

### **The discomfort of Conditioning comes from convincing you that you're fundamentally blowing it.**

That you're a failure. A fraud. And that unless you get with the program—you're *goin' down*. And hard.

It's just too painful to hear that. So you take the *blue pill*, follow the dictates of Conditioning—to prove that you're worthwhile.

### **Calling also causes discomfort.**

But this discomfort is different. Calling's discomfort isn't imposed by outside standards.

It's more like the pressure that an acorn might experience as the oak tree inside it starts to grow. The shell of the acorn—that has provided structure, safety, and security for so long—is now in the way.

### **What's your acorn shell?**

It's all of your skills, talents, ways of working, interacting, and being that have taken you to your current level of achievement and fulfillment. It's what has taken you this far but isn't designed to take you *further*.

### **There's an oak tree inside you trying to grow into full expression.**

There's something that wants to be expressed through you—that's yours alone to do.

That's why it's a Calling. It's calling you. And you can't delegate this Calling. You can turn away from it. You can delay enacting it. You can even dull the pressure—through a variety of self-medication strategies—including following the promptings of your Conditioning.

### **But, your Calling will just keep growing.**

From inside you. The work that is emerging won't abandon you. The creative impulse won't die. It will keep applying pressure. Which is why you need to slow down at the crossroads. So you can distinguish the discomfort that comes from:

- Conditioning: which tells you that you're fundamentally flawed and offers you a path of relief.
- Calling: which tells you it's time to allow yourself to be broken open by what is emerging and offers you a path of transformation.

### **Transformation...it's a nice word.**

Even a popular one in some circles. There's a shorter way to spell transformation. It's *d..e..a..t..h*. Not as appealing as the relief that Conditioning promises. At least not at first.

But if you look down the road a bit, you see a different picture.

Because while Conditioning offers you relief in the short term, it guarantees you'll be caught in a perpetual struggle to prove your worth.

### **Calling has a different offer.**

In the short term, taking the path of Calling offers the death of certainty, security, and

clarity about who you are, what you do, and how you serve the world.

But in exchange for this short-term confusion, Calling offers you:

- An ever-deepening sense of your unique place in the world
- An ongoing development of your gifts
- An expanding horizon of awareness that dissolves the need for ego reassurance in the ocean of gratitude for the oak tree that is taking shape through you

### **So the next time you find yourself at a crossroads—*slow down*.**

Don't rush ahead. Take your time and allow yourself to experience the confluence of pressures that surround you. Pay attention to the voices in your head. Notice the emotions, the anxiety in your heart.

Sort out the different discomforts and put them in two piles.

One: your Conditioning.

The other: your Calling.

Remember, at the crossroads they both generate pain. But down the road they take you to different lives. One path promises frustration and an endless struggle to prove your worth. The other breaks you open to experience the ever-deepening revelation of the creative energy of life expressing through you.

Which will you choose...this moment?

# Next Steps

## Take Action

I hope you found this provocative and that you'll not just read it but live it.

## Let's Talk

I'd love to talk with you about your leadership and bringing mindfulness to your work. [Click here](#) to schedule a time to connect.



Be well,

Eric

