

# Catch Your Dream: And Live It!



Allyn M. Evans

## About The Author



Allyn M. Evans is an entrepreneur and author residing in Oklahoma with her husband and seven-year-old daughter. Upon completion of her MBA, Evans worked in higher education and the nonprofit sectors. Later, she co-founded a résumé and career consulting business, which gave her the opportunity to stay at home with her daughter. Following her daughter's first day of school, Evans transitioned from résumé and career consulting to nonfiction writer and hasn't looked back. Currently chasing her next dream, Evans is working on her latest book—*Grab the Queen Power: Live Your Best Life!* (Thus, explaining the tiara she's wearing!)

The book is scheduled for release by Star Publish ([www.starpublish.com](http://www.starpublish.com)) in June 2005.

## Catch Your Dream: And Live it!

Want a sneak peek at what all the fuss is about? Sign up for the Queen-zine by emailing to: [info@queenpower.com](mailto:info@queenpower.com). If you are interested in knowing details (release date, content, or purchase price), please email me at your earliest convenience. Pre-orders are welcomed.

## Contact the Author

I would love to hear from you via email. To contact me or ask questions, please go to [www.queenpower.com](http://www.queenpower.com). Or, email me ([info@queenpower.com](mailto:info@queenpower.com)). For those of you with specific questions, there is a Q&A format.

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## Chapter One

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*You were born with potential.  
You were born with goodness and trust.  
You were born with ideals and dreams.  
You were born with greatness.  
You were born with wings.  
You are not meant to crawl, so don't.  
You have wings.  
Learn to use them and fly.*

— Rumi

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### First Things First...

My career goals were written clearly in my high school yearbook along with the description of marrying my boyfriend and having three kids. I planned to be a psychologist. My predictions were a little off. Although never becoming a clinical psychologist, and only having one child, I did marry my high school sweetheart. After doing all the right things like taking the *right* courses and securing the *right* first job, I decided being a psychologist wasn't in the game plan. There were many reasons. The primary one had to do with my gut instincts. Besides, my family didn't support my decision. Oh, they supported it as long as I was pursuing it, but they *really* didn't like the idea. The minute I announced a change of plans, they rejoiced! Initially, I felt relieved, but after that I was confused. My confusion lasted for fifteen years.

Within several months the decision was made to pursue an MBA degree. I found great friends and had a lot of fun, but didn't really fit the typical business graduate student profile. I didn't want the high-powered job, wasn't good with figures and numbers and didn't want to work for the Big Eight accounting firms. I truly didn't fit there. Able to forge my way through, I completed my degree in eighteen months. The good news was that my husband's job created my first real job experience, which turned out to be at a small community college. In hindsight, I realized that it was the perfect place to test myself. However, I knew that it wasn't the right place. My husband always saved the day because his career moves continually allowed me to bow out gracefully from all my unsatisfying employment commitments. I was grateful we only stayed at the first place for two years.

Our next move was to Mississippi. Returning home excited me. My Dad offered my sister and me a place in his business. Again, much to my dismay and Dad's too, the

work didn't suit me. I felt empty. As typical, my husband's acceptance of a promotion took us a thousand miles away. I cried for days.

Over the years, I found myself in jobs that quickly bored me and left me feeling unsatisfied and trapped. It was so frustrating to watch my husband jump right into his "perfect career." I couldn't even verbalize what it was that I wanted. So unsure of myself, I couldn't justify plans or ideas and definitely couldn't convince myself or anyone else, for that matter, that they were worthwhile. Additionally, how to make money without sacrificing myself eluded me. Working provided income, but I always seemed to find jobs that paid low wages or underutilized my talents. For many years, we struggled to make ends meet. Most of my journal entries focused on our continual lack of funds. By our very nature, we were not extravagant. But even so, usually our expenses exceeded our incomes. Working through the insecurities and the unknowns was a painful experience.

By sharing my private moments with you, I hope you understand that you are not alone. So many of the books I read while trying to dig myself out of the hole were written by accomplished writers—writers who didn't appear to have *ever* struggled. If they had trouble making it, it wasn't a story they shared. I know that your story is different, but you can witness the fact that you are not alone. Sometimes, it doesn't matter what credentials or degrees you have. If you are lost, you are lost.

The rest of the book will focus on self-discovery, evaluation and creating. This unique offering of information should help you progress. I'll also continue to share journal entries with you to hopefully give additional support. With all this in mind, let's not focus on finding the "best" career. Instead, focus on creating a life that you will enjoy and for the most part find satisfying.

## **Journal Entries**

*2/20/94*

*First things first—I have to find a job. Things are TIGHT! But, we are both focused and ready to get started! We have a roof over our heads and live in a safe neighborhood.*

*2/25/94*

*The reason I continue to hesitate is because I don't know what to do. Of course, my main focus is to get hired doing anything. We have to eat!*

*3/17/94*

*Last night I had an interesting dream. I saw myself climbing a muddy hill. I was struggling. Many voices were saying, "Help us, help us, help us get over this hill." I could tell that I was at the top and hands had helped me reach the top. Wish I really felt like I was at the top helping others move up. I'm the one that needs a hand here.*

4/3/94

*I was talking to my sister tonight and she was so fired up about her interests. I'm not fired up about anything right now and it is a frustrating feeling.*

4/15/94

*Wow! The job hunt continues. I'm beginning to feel like I will **not** get a break. I don't know what to do. I know there are more people to contact. I am getting to the point of desperation. Surprisingly, I am happy right now. Maybe it's because on some level I know that no matter what, everything will work out.*

5/17/94

*My birthday was yesterday. Hopefully what I was doing yesterday or today is not an indication of the next year of my life. Right now I am frustrated and afraid! I am afraid that I will not find what I am looking for and I am afraid that we will run out of money. I'm afraid.*

8/15/94

*I'm still trying to follow my heart. I thought Marsha Sinetar claimed, "If you do what you love, the money will follow." Where's the money? Still scared. We're not talking riches, simply enough to cover our basic needs.*

10/28/94

*Today was depressing! I went out and about and handed out résumés and talked to others and well, I seemed to be at the wrong place at the wrong time the entire day. "He's in a meeting. She's with someone." Yuck! I have to admit that today I let it get the best of me.*

*Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the greatest puzzle.*

Lewis Carroll

## **Help Me, Please!**

For years, I struggled with my desire to do something I loved that provided me freedom to come and go while supplying us with the income we needed. I never found that perfect job. It was a painful ordeal in many ways. For one, we severely lacked finances. There were months that we made *nothing!* During those lowest times, we added to our debt with the hope that one day we'd dig out of it. I hated, yes hated, every job. Of course, there were parts of each job that appealed to me, but overall I wasn't satisfied. I cannot tell you how many self-help books I read or exercises I completed. Each book inspired me to make change, but never seemed to move me forward. The experts had great ideas, but they couldn't make it real for *me*. Probably my biggest burden besides having no direction was that we had zero finances. It's hard to spend money when you don't have money. And, the only way I knew how to make money was

to get a regular job. So, that's what I did. Of course, that's not necessarily a bad thing, but if doing so leaves you drained and empty, then you have a problem.

Something deep within me pushed me constantly to change and to try to fix my situation. With each change, I grew abundantly aware of my ability to create a different life. Granted, there are some of us facing severe challenges. Despite all the inequities, the truth is that we all have the opportunity to discover and create fulfilling lives for ourselves.

*11/6/94*

*Today I begged. Actually pleaded with God to help me. I need to be shown the way. I can't do it alone. I'm not sad or upset—just ready to move on and begin my work. I really don't know what the problem is, but I need to have something to grab on to. Is that such a bad thing? Is this my challenge right now? Do I have to overcome this need to grab on to something while also understanding that one needs people to make it?*

“Strange as it may sound, I now encourage my clients to focus less on finding the best career, business, opportunity or relationship...as they focus their attention on improving the quality of their life, the life they are meant to live unfolds before their eyes.” What a terrific relief I felt when reading those words written by Cheryl Richardson, author of *Make Time for Your Life*. For years, as referenced in my journal, I struggled with finding the “perfect” job or occupation.

Discovering Richardson's work confirmed my new understanding. I finally realized identifying the essence of the life you wanted was much more important than the actual job you had. Previously, the information gathered from the collective experts was insightful, but didn't help me move forward. No matter how much I agreed I still wasn't able to create a better life. However, with new understanding, clarity and information, I finally put all the pieces of the puzzle together. In reviewing my journal, I realized I often cried out for someone to show me the way. I also realized, rather sadly, that I never seemed to be able to find someone.

## **The Journey**

How do you create a different life? Where do you begin? The road to life fulfillment is threefold. First you must understand and live according to your values. Doesn't it make sense that what you value is what's most important to you? That's why it is essential to live a value-based life. Second, you must have meaning in your life. Finding your purpose in life is how meaning is typically described. I don't like using the phrase, “purpose in life”. Instead, discover how you can make a meaningful contribution. Our vocation and contribution do not have to be tied together. But, it is important that we contribute in some way whether we do so occupationally or whether we do so in another way. The third step is cultivating and using your gifts and talents. Barbara Sher once said,

“Our wishes are messages our talents keep sending us.” She also states, and I concur, that we are never given a talent or a gift from God that we can’t use.

### **Dream recorded in my journal...**

*A former boss opened his office door and asked me to look at the small box in the corner. His office was completely empty except for this box that resembled a standard mailbox. He said, “Allyn, I want you to fit yourself in that box while I’m gone.” I agreed and said that I would do it for him. He closed the door and left. I tried for a long time to fit myself in that small box but couldn’t do it. No matter how hard I tried the box wasn’t big enough.*

A statement made by Marsha Sinetar helped me recall this dream. She said, “Maybe this narrowing of life—the eroding of interests and hope—could be likened to being cooped up in a room that’s too small...The only thing that’s stopping you is *you*.” How true both her thoughts and my dream turned out to be.

So what comes first? It is the discovery of you. Quoting Marsha Sinetar: “Determine your needs and values—not what you don’t fear. Identity the mark you honestly want to hit. Know what charms you.” But first a word of caution—avoid the formula that Bruce Wilkerson author of *The Prayer of Jabez* warned us about. “My abilities plus experiences plus training plus my personality and appearance plus my past plus the expectations of others equals my assigned territories.” You are so much more. Please, as you go through the process of self-evaluation remember your worth and value.

## Chapter Two

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Don't be like Bill Murray in the movie, *Groundhog Day*. His character wakes up each morning to the day he had finished the night before, trapped for eternity in the same old routine.

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1/26/96

*God, I don't know. I am so tired of not doing whatever it is that I am supposed to do. I know that is a wimpy thing to say. Everything is vague and I don't know where or how to get started. It is so frustrating. I need a vehicle, a way to get on the right path. I'm confused about what I am supposed to do again and again and again. Whine. Whine. Whine.*

### **Reinventing Your Life**

It's time to get to work. In the next set of chapters, I will ask you to do many exercises. Keep up with your answers because closer to the end, you'll be asked to compile all the information. Purchase a notebook or journal. Something you can easily carry around and find in a pinch. I will continue to share my personal journal entries. Hopefully, reading them will encourage you. With a vision and intent to reach a destination, you will arrive. Trust me on this one. You found this book for a very good reason.

### **Values**

What do you value? Really, what means something to you? That's where we need to start. Before you answer those questions, though, I want you to ignore what others think. I want you to pretend, for just a moment, that you are going to answer these questions without any influence from external sources. I say pretend, because to get to the truth of our desires you have to *not* worry about what others will think. This is about you and your private thoughts. You do not have to share your feelings, ideas or thoughts with anyone. Return to my original question and carefully evaluate it. *What do you value?* Also, think about the things that motivate your actions. The best place to begin is by asking yourself: *What are the highest priorities in my life?* Remember this is about you and what you truly value or find important—not what your family, parents or significant other believes to be important. You've got your own values, and it's up to you to recognize and identify them!

**Topics to consider:**

Children	Family	Spouse
Financial Security	Health/Fitness	Spirituality
Integrity/Honesty	Efficiency	Service to others
Education/Learning	Inner Harmony	Happiness
Imagination/Creativity	Influencing Others	Generosity
Dependability/reliability	Time Management	Productivity
Occupational Satisfaction		

Remember, values explain why you want to accomplish certain things in life. Even though our values are our highest priorities, there often exists a gap between these ideals and our present reality. Our performance related to those values is never perfect; but as our ability to honor the important things in our live improves, something wonderful happens. We suddenly experience the satisfaction that so often eludes us. As Abraham Maslow explained, "Unifying our values and our everyday performance provides 'self-actualization'." Basically this means that we are able to bring together what we do on a daily basis with what we truly value, and doing so makes us happy.

According to the experts, if you make a decision and disregard what is important to you, your happiness will be short-lived. Makes sense, doesn't it?

**Here's my example:**

I value...

1. God/Spiritual Life
2. Husband and Daughter
3. Immediate Family and Close Friends
4. Peace, Harmony and Balance in My Life
5. Change

*Listen, nature created you and nature wasn't fooling around.  
Nothing you love is there without a reason.*

Barbara Sher

**Value Exercise**

I value....

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2/27/96

*I'm still not 100% sure what it is I'm supposed to do. Ha! How funny, huh? Here I go again. One of the reasons I hesitated is because I'm afraid to commit to the big one—the final career.*

*I read Making A Living Without A Job by Barbara Winter all day yesterday, and as a result of reading her material, I had tons of ideas. This scared my husband to death. He has learned to hate my ideas.*

## **Themes**

Recognizing the themes that rule your life is helpful to understanding what motivates you. My desire for freedom had been one of the driving forces in my life. Many a decision was made, pushed by the desire for freedom. Another theme that has influenced me is the need to control things. These two are probably my strongest themes. Other reasons (or themes) that motivate people might be security, status, rules, truth, or acceptance.

*Real freedom means the right to be who you really are.*

Barbara Sher

What themes have permeated your life? Here are some other suggestions:

- Freedom
- Control
- Security
- Rules
- Power
- Truth
- Acceptance
- Love
- Status

## **Theme Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3/2/96

*Well, My husband and I need cash now! Shoot me, please! It is so frustrating! It eats my lunch. Unfortunately all the jobs I find (and am offered) don't pay much. God, help me! I'm so tired of this...being unsure, wishy-washy and confused.*

## **Time**

Where does the time go? In 1999 an interesting thing happen to me. I found myself in the “perfect” job. The job had a fancy title. And best of all, the executive-level position paid me more than I had ever been paid in my life. Initially, not believing my good fortune, I was surprised that I had somehow managed to pull this one off. Although more than qualified, my bad tapes kept playing over and over in my head. Thrilled in the beginning, it didn’t take long for me to understand that I had made a big mistake. The job sucked the life right out of me, literally. I moved in slow motion barely able to keep up with daily explosions. Exhausted, tired and frustrated, I had to make a change. One night while working late, I closed the door and forwarded my phone to voice mail. Grabbing a sheet of paper and pen, I started writing. Lacking a clear direction, I intuitively started focusing on my over-demanding schedule. Primarily experiencing guilt about not being available for my daughter, I realized my options were limited and for the first time thought about quitting.

### **Here’s what I discovered.**

This new wonderful job was turning into a horrific nightmare. Knowing that many people would be disappointed and burdened, I felt embarrassed and sad. I had made a promise to the gentleman that hired me and it was a promise I was going to have to break. But, needless to say, that was a major turning point in my life. It was during that moment I knew, without question, I was going to build a life around my dreams, desires and hopes.

3/20/96

*I am miserable—and, it is because I see no end to my dilemma. I know, I know, it can't continue forever, but I have been here (this place of nothingness) so many times before. I'm so ready for the dry/quiet spell to pass. God, please help me! I don't know what else to do.*

### **How does your life look?**

It’s time to take a closer look at your life—the problems and frustrations, the old buried dreams and the forgotten desires. Be honest with yourself. Tell the truth. The way to record this truth will be different for each person and it is important that you select the best way to do it. Personally, I prefer writing everything down. Others might wish to share their truth with a loved one or a dear friend. Someone else might prefer telling his or her story to a tape recorder. Writing a letter to God or a trusted companion is another option. The point is to accurately describe your situation and record it in some form.

### **Describe Your Life Exercise**

*Accurately describe your current situation. Be honest!*

## **What drains your energy?**

While treading water in the “perfect job”, I was drained. Absolutely exhausted. Every weekend I licked my wounds and recovered. Slightly. That’s all I had the energy to do. Any left over energy was given to my two-year old daughter, and there wasn’t that much to go around. Typically, women have a bigger burden in our society when caring for children. My friends amaze me—especially the ones that have two or more kids and hold down full-time, energy draining jobs. Back to 1999, remember, I seriously considered what was draining my energy. For me, it was easy to identify the problem—my job. If I could change my job, it followed that I could change so much about my situation. So, I quit. After the fallout, I restructured a life that was low on stress and high on family. Accepting a part-time job at the same place, my life gradually changed. The job relieved some of my monetary worries and allowed me to have lots of free time to spend with my family. But most importantly, I had time to dream.

## **More energy going down the drain**

Jobs are not the only energy drains. People are great at snatching the energy right out of you. Actually, you are usually handing over your energy to others by fretting and worrying over what you said, what they said, or how they said it. You also turn over energy when you are around negative situations and people. I remember I had to deal with a very energy-draining situation in my “ideal” job. One individual constantly stirred up trouble and repeatedly lied. I expended tons of energy trying to manage her. There are also the negative emotions you carry around such as hanging on to all the bad things others have done to you. You nurse your wounds, and allow the hurt places to grow inside of you, which simply means more energy is depleted. The biggest favor you can do for yourself is to forgive others for what you think they’ve done to you. Yes, I know that some of you are dealing with very serious wrongs and hurts, but those wounds are literally sucking the life right out of you. If you think that you are losing energy to the past, I highly recommend the work of Caroline Myss, specifically an audio series titled: *Why People Don’t Heal and How They Can*.

We find many ways to drown our sufferings—alcohol, certain foods and drugs—to name a few. Taking care of your physical body is important. Eating balanced meals and exercising are ways to do this. You’ll find as you transition into a healthier lifestyle your energy level will be stronger. Don’t forget lack of sleep will also drain the life right out of you. So, what does it for you? Where are you losing your energy?

## **Energy Drainers Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

1/8/97

*I feel like I'm struggling to figure it all out. What direction do I take? I was watching Ellen Degeneres's sitcom, Ellen tonight, and her character made a New Year's resolution that interested me. She resolved to do things that she wanted to do despite the fear. Fear has always stopped me from doing what I truly wanted to do. I guess it stops many. I've got to go for it. My New Year's resolution (and, I swore I wouldn't have one) is to have fun. Do things that make me happy and do it despite my fear. Okay. That's it.*

## **Stop the Leaks**

Unfortunately, I don't have any magic spells or potions to share with you. I can't tell you how to stop your energy drains. All I can do is help you recognize they are there. Make every attempt to fix the leaks. If you identified specific people, avoid them. If they are family and avoiding them is impossible, learn other ways to cope. It might be as simple as a conversation or sending them thoughts of love every time you are in their presence. It might be you say "no" more often. If your job is draining you, work on getting a new job or changing careers. If it's your diet or lifestyle, make adjustments. The first step is recognizing and accepting where you are. The next step is taking action or making changes.

1/14/97

*I'm still struggling to figure it all out. I hope that I find some relief soon. I read all the books and I'm stuck. Stuck again. What now? I have an unfulfilling job that doesn't pay much. I keep doing it. Get a job, hate the job and hate the lack of control and freedom. The other option for me is not working and well, that is **not** an option.*

## **Talents...**

A singer's sad tale

A young lady dreamed of being a professional singer. She loved singing. Her Daddy called her his little Songbird. She fretted, though, and questioned her talent. With her sights on Broadway, she often said, "When I grow up I will sing before the best producers in the country! They will tell me whether or not I have talent."

The young lady worked and worked on her craft. All who heard her recognized her talent, even if she didn't. Finally the hard work paid off and she was granted an audition for Broadway. Not wanting to miss her opportunity, she practiced and rehearsed until she was sure that her performance was stellar. The time arrived and she was ready. As the last note was sung and with her head bowed, she waited for the producer to speak. Her path was now in the hands of this powerful man.

The man cleared his throat and said, "Sorry, you don't have what it takes."

Broken hearted, the songbird vowed to never sing again. Saddened by the evaluation, she couldn't stand the thought of teaching others—especially, if she was setting them up for failure. Not many would be as good or dedicated as she was.

Many months later and ready to move forward, the young lady pursued a career in fashion writing. Her mother, recognizing another talent, had directed her toward fashion for years. The songbird somberly accepted that the world of fashion was where she belonged. As a result, she became a successful fashion writer. On one particular assignment, she got the opportunity to talk to the producer again—the one who had told her she wasn't good enough. Older and wiser now, she looked forward to talking to him and expressing her gratitude. As they greeted one another she said, "You are the reason I quit singing and instead became a writer."

"I am? Did you audition for me or something?" asked the producer.

"Yes, many years ago I tried out for a show on Broadway," said the former singer.

"When you tried out did you have any professional experience?"

"Well, no. That was my first 'real' audition and my first shot at Broadway," she explained.

"Too bad for you," the producer nonchalantly said, "I say that to all first timers. It's how we weed out the weak from the strong. If you doubted yourself that much, you were *never* going to be any use to me."

### **God-given Talents**

This is not a discussion about your skills or experience. Think about your God-given talents. Consider the compliments people give you. What are you doing when recognized by others? Reflect on the things you do well that you are able to do without much effort or any preparation. You can also think about what others tease you about. Sometimes, people mock your best skills. For example, while I was in high school, a buddy tormented me unmercifully about my presentation abilities during speech class.

Why not classify your talents like a singer would? Think about it. Someone who can sing knows that they are meant to sing for a living. It is so simple. However, those of us who have other talents that are not so easily classified usually struggle.

I can sing. I will be a singer.

I can play baseball. I will be a professional baseball player.

I can negotiate. I will be a negotiator.

I can persuade others. I will be a persuader.

I can teach. I will be a teacher.

### **Talents Exercise**

*What are your God-given talents?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2/4/97

*My main goal is to start having fun. I've always had jobs that I didn't like, and continually felt trapped while my husband was off having all the fun. Yes, I want my husband to have fun, but I want to have fun too. Women in general, I think, rely on their husbands to make them happy. Similar to the preacher I heard speak at my grandmother's church on Sunday, I, too believe we all have to find happiness within ourselves. We cannot depend on others (spouses in particular) to live for us. My relationship with my husband is another positive in my life, but not my complete source of happiness. I am happier when we're together, but it is important to be happy no matter where I am.*

*I've always heard or been told that when the student is ready a teacher will appear. I guess I've never been ready or it isn't true because I always ask for guidance or a mentor or something and never, I repeat never, have I recognized such a person. I use the term, "recognize" because I might have met many such people and am too stupid to spot them.*

### **What lights you up?**

I love how Gail Blanke puts it in her book *In My Wildest Dreams*. She asks, "What lights you up?" Isn't that a great way to describe it? If what you are considering doing doesn't "light you up!" by all means don't do it. Marianne Williamson author of *A Return to Love* said it best: "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you!"

### **What Lights You Up? Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### **All I Need Is Air To Breathe**

Did you know that other people do not have the same loves as you? Really. I like to write and read. I had no idea that others did not feel the same way. I cannot imagine life without those two things. What about you? What are two things that you couldn't do without?

Think about this scenario. You have been wrongly accused of committing a crime and as a result have been sentenced to life in prison. The judge has also awarded you the right to continue to do two of your favorite pastimes or hobbies. What are two activities you would request? Don't say watching TV. There is already one in the prison.

**For example, I could not do without...**

1. writing
2. reading

**I Could Not Live Without Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.

**The Child In You Knows**

What about when you were a child? What did you want to be when you grew up?

Answer the following questions:

1. What did you enjoy doing as a child?
2. What did you tell people you were going to be?

When my daughter was four, she decided she was going to be a photographer. Recognizing her love for jungle animals, she put together a plan: “Mom, I’m going to take pictures of wild animals in the jungle.” Although, happy with her discovery, she looked a little worried, “But, there’s just one problem,” she shook her head, “I’m afraid of jungle animals.” Trying not to laugh, I told her we could work out those details later and the people who did that used really strong camera lens. I also promised I would drive her! Now, a little older, she’s decided she will be an artist and a soccer coach. I’m taking notes, because when she hits college age I want to be able to remind her of her childhood dreams.

Think about the interests or passions you had as a child. I always wanted to create and perform plays for my parents. My sister, cousin and I were always making up stories and acting them out. Unfortunately, no one can remember (including me) what I wanted to do. So, I must—like many of you—rely on my memory.

Not too long ago, I was talking to my sister about her interests and brought up the idea of thinking about what you enjoyed doing as a child. I mentioned our plays. My sister informed me that the plays were my passion, not hers. She enjoyed doing them with me, but would have rather been doing something else. I thought my sister and cousin liked performing as much as I did. They didn’t. My sister would have rather been playing basketball and my cousin would have rather been messing with her horses.

Return to memories of your childhood and write down activities you enjoyed or careers that interested you at that time.

**Again, I'll give you my own examples.**

1. entertaining (performing plays—singing, dancing and speaking)
2. writing (creating the story line for the plays)
3. creating (painting, crafting)
4. being a caregiver (helping others)

**Childhood Memories Exercises**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now, look at the two exercises you recently completed (**I Could Not Live Without** and **Childhood Memories Exercises**). Evaluate your answers and combine them to come up with a list of things that light you up? For me it was:

1. writing
2. entertaining
3. persuading

**I Pick You!**

Think about your favorite subjects. What books, magazines or articles do you constantly seek out? Here's another scenario.

You are in your favorite bookstore. You are alone and therefore, can go to any section of the store you wish. In this particular store the sections are clearly labeled and exhaustive. The books are divided according to your wishes! Where do you go? After you've been to your favorite section, where would you go after that? Continue until you exhaust your interests.

For example, I enjoyed reading, learning or talking about...

1. Self-improvement/Personal Triumph
2. Behavior/Psychology
3. Career/Life's Work
4. Women's Issues

**Bookstore Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

6/6/97

*Well, it happened. We're moving again. So, the self-torture in the old place now turns into self-torture in a new place. Always, always though, a new place brings with it a new sense of hope. I do have more skills and experience now. If only I could figure out how to make it without a regular job, next I would finally find happiness. Ha! Damn. Life. As a former coworker used to say to me: life sucks and then you die.*

### **Issues or Interests, Skills, Traits and Temperament...**

Benjamin Disraeli said, "Most people go to their graves with their music still in them."

### **Burning Issues**

Make a list of issues that have been a part of your life. For example, the person who started MADD lost her daughter because of a drunk driver. Overweight for many years, a slimmer Richard Simmons created his career helping others lose weight. Wouldn't you agree that he struggled with this himself before sharing his "cure" with others? Are there any burning "issues" in your life?

### **Burning Issues Exercise**

*List your issues. If can't think of any, that's okay.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### **Interests**

Maybe you don't have something that you feel is a "burning" issue, but instead you have interests you'd like to explore. List those here.

### **Interests Exercise**

*List your interests.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## **Skills**

Skills are good to have. With each promotion or new experience, you gain new ones. Depending on your career path, you might be highly skilled in a limited realm or you might have a wide-based skill set. One of the problems with focusing exclusively on skills for career choice is that people tend to go back to their skills when maybe they shouldn't. Simply because you have a skill doesn't mean you are limited to careers that allow you to use that skill. However, don't instantly discard your skills because you might also have abilities that are transferable—meaning you can use them in a new career. Here list the skills you have that you'd like to continue using or that might be transferable to a new career.

## **Skills Exercise**

*List your skills and abilities.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*7/17/97*

*I'm terribly confused about what I am to do. Damn! Never fails, I always seem to have my back against the wall.*

## Chapter Three

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*How can you be satisfied with the status quo, the current state of things, when the world is filled with abundance and you have talents to be used?*

Jo Condrill

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8/30/97

*I was thinking today how ironic it is that I feel deprived of money, but continually seek low-paying jobs. What am I being prepared to do? That is the question.*

### **Fleeting Thing...Happiness Is**

Ask yourself how you can be a more fulfilled person. What does happiness mean to you? You might feel that you need to investigate your options or you might wish to stay put a little longer in your current situation. But, as I learned ten years too late, it's not something that has to be so big that you can't even make the first step. Yes, I want you to dream big, but I also want you to have the ability to move forward incrementally.

Here's also the place where resistance first will show itself. Actually resistance will surface many times. It's important that you recognize what this is so that you can ignore it or deal with it. Never fails, resistance will whisper in your ear. She'll say things like: "Why do this to yourself again? Are you crazy? You are only going to get hurt. Stay put. Be safe. Don't move." Remember my journal entries. After quitting the "perfect job", I finally had the courage to start a résumé writing and career coaching business. But, do you realize it took me many, many years to actually make it happen. Resistance stopped me every time. At first I thought that my inability to implement my plans was a sign that the business wasn't the path for me. In hindsight, that wasn't it at all.

Since 1987, I had been tortured by the fact that I couldn't live closer to my family in Mississippi. I mean tortured. Sometime in early 2000 it hit me: *I didn't have to have all or nothing.* I could take steps that allowed me to spend more time in Mississippi while still maintaining a household in Texas. When I made this discovery, I wondered how to make my solution a reality. First, it was important to share my plan. Amazingly, many people were willing and able to help me. Subsequently, I had to change how I earned money. My job kept me in Texas year around, and I needed to find something that would give me more flexibility. Thank goodness I had already started building my résumé writing and career coaching business. Talk about a complete turnaround in my perception. Almost overnight, my longing disappeared.

Start where you are at this very moment. Complete the exercises, understanding that you can always change them to fit your fluctuating needs and desires. For example, you might think you have a clear grasp of what you should be doing next, only to do it and absolutely hate it. That's okay. That's what is so wonderful about the process. It's self discovery and will always be unfolding. But, in order to get closer to where you want to be, you've got to take action. You need to move.

So, with that in mind, let's take the next step.

### **Putting It All Together**

Now it is time to summarize your answers. When I took my turn at this little exercise, I actually had to stop. I hesitated and ended up putting it off. Yes, resistance got in the way yet again.

If you are like me, there is probably some fear involved. It's okay to be fearful. I don't know anyone that goes through life without confronting fear. What are you afraid of? Do you worry you will create less than you truly deserve? Afraid you will not get what you desire? Or, maybe you actually *will* get what you want? Quite possibly, you are scared the ability to create the life you want is not going to be your reality? Or, are you afraid that you will discover the true secret to happiness is settling and accepting what you have? As difficult as it may be, it's time to move pass your fears. It's time to put them aside.

So, here goes nothing. Really, and trust me on this one, you have absolutely nothing to lose. Create your own summary after reviewing my examples. Carefully review my earlier illustrations in addition to your previous answers before proceeding.

Below see how I summarized the preceding exercises to create a new direction.

#### *Values*

1. The ability to have a spiritual relationship with God and to remain close to my immediate family and friends.
2. A healthy, peaceful, balanced and fulfilling life that allows me to do the things I love like writing, reading, speaking, entertaining and sharing.
3. The ability to change my environment often and not to be tied down to a routine schedule, job or life.

#### *Themes*

4. Freedom to run my life and be where I want to be at the moment.
5. Control over my day-to-day activities.

*Talents, skills and interests*

6. The ability to use my God-given talents that are: writing, speaking in public and sharing information in my subjects of interest in an entertaining performance-based manner.

**Use the space below to compile your information in a workable fashion. Look carefully at my example. Notice how I gathered information from all the exercises to complete my summary.**

**SUMMARIZE**

**Values**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Themes**

- 4.
- 5.

**Talents, Skills and Interests**

- 6.

An exercise I've found to be most useful is starting with what you don't want. Interestingly, thinking about what you don't want is sometimes easier than thinking about what you *do* want. We're used to talking about the negatives and what we don't like about someone or a situation, so why not start with what we don't like about our lives. First, answer the following question:

*What do you **not** like about your life right now?*

Please note that I'm not talking about the past or the future, I'm asking you to focus on today. What is not right today? Hint: You can return to earlier exercises and locate the ***Your Life Exercise*** as a starting point.

Here's how I answered the question:

1. *I don't want to be 15 pounds overweight anymore.*
2. *I don't want to be tired.*
3. *I don't want to struggle to make ends meet.*
4. *I don't want to deal with difficult clients.*
5. *I don't want anyone dictating my schedule or restricting my flexibility.*

### **Don't Wants Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Next reverse the process and turn the *don't wants* into wants. Writing your wants as the opposites of your negatives or *don't wants* makes it easier to get to the bottom of what it is that you do desire. Don't worry about whether or not you've included everything; instead, write down every single idea that comes to mind. Stop now and complete the exercise.

Done? Return to the *don't wants* exercise. Look at what you don't want and ask yourself, "If I got rid of this *don't want*, what would I put in its place?" For example, say you are sick and tired of your old clothes and want to get rid of them. What would you replace them with? New clothes, of course, but what would they look like? What style or color would you buy? You get the picture. Here's a scenario to consider. You've figured out that you don't want to work at your current job that requires you to report from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. It's an inflexible structure and you are only allowed 30 minutes for lunch. Plus, you are monitored constantly while you work and only given a two-week vacation. What would you rather have instead? Maybe it's not the office job that bothers you, but the fact that you have to get there at 8:00 a.m. every day. Or, maybe you'd like more vacation time? Maybe, you want more freedom? The 30-minute lunch thing might not bother you because you don't eat lunch anyway. Look at what you don't like about a situation and examine the reverse of it.

So, let's try reversing the statements you wrote. Here are my examples:

1. *I want to lose 15 pounds.*
2. *I want more energy and to be energized by my work and life.*
3. *I want to make money effortlessly doing something I enjoy.*
4. *I want to avoid working with difficult clients while maintaining the privacy I desire.*
5. *I want to make money without having to be supervised by another. Basically, I want to run my own company and make the money that I desire through my own activities.*

Reversing your negatives gets you started in the process, but this is not truly where the *wants* are. First of all, write about specific desires as I did. Visually create a mental picture of your perfect life and describe it in writing. Observe how I reviewed and expanded my reversed statements. Notice, the process led me to determine what else I wanted in my life.

### **Wants Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### **Needing Something Else**

It's worth mentioning here that even though people figure out what it is they want and pursue it, that's not always the final piece. And, I'll admit that this has perplexed me for years. I really had a difficult time understanding how someone achieving all they claimed they wanted could still be so unhappy. We see it played out all the time in Hollywood. I mean, come on, you have a talent, you are recognized for having the talent, you make big money and you become famous. What else is there? Obviously, for some folks that is not enough.

Talents are clues, and so for the most part, a talented singer who eventually creates a singing career is fulfilling a destiny. The problem arises when the person doesn't understand the true essence of what they are seeking; thereby feeling emptiness versus fulfillment once the destination is reached. The key is to determine what you desire and why you desire it. What are you seeking? That's what must be understood.

### **One Genie...Coming Right Up!**

It's time now to introduce you to my dear friend, Genie. You'll love this woman! She's magical and truly wants you to be happy, satisfied and fulfilled. This Genie believes that life is fun, exciting and easy. Today, Genie is yours. There's even better news. You are not limited to three wishes! You get to have whatever it is that you truly desire. She'll even help you figure out why you want something, and will make absolutely sure before you get your wishes granted that you truly desire what you think you do.

### **Genie, I Want...**

Here's what I answered:

1. *More money*
2. *Freedom*
3. *Live closer to family*
4. *Find meaningful work*

## **GENIE, I want...**

*Here list the words or phrases that describe what you want. Work through your list with the Genie.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Okay, so pretending is fun. Right? The truth is, there is no Genie. Play along anyway, okay. Try to analyze what it is you are seeking and make sure you are going after the “right” things. For example, if you wrote something like “to be famous or rich,” try to understand why you want those things.

My Genie asks, “What would being ‘famous’ give you?”

You respond, “Money.”

My Genie says, “Replace the phrase ‘to be famous’ with your new word, ‘money’.”

You play along, “Okay, I want to have money.”

My Genie looks at you, “Really? That’s all you want? Come on. You know lots of people that have lots of money—well, not personally, of course—and it’s obvious simply having money doesn’t satisfy them. What do you *really* want?”

You get a little flustered, but you continue, “Okay, okay, I want fans!”

My Genie looks at you again. She’s kind, so it’s with a smile and inquisitive spirit. “Really? Only having fans—basically your own cheering section following you around—would make you happy?”

You smirk, “Yes, it definitely would!” Then, you get serious. It’s obvious you are thinking about your next answer.

My Genie says, “What can those fans give you?”

You say with a smile, “They can adore me and who doesn’t want to be adored?”

My Genie hides her grin, “Let me get this straight. You want to be adored. Being adored would be the answer to your puzzle? Think again. What do you *really* want?”

Suddenly the light bulb flashes. You know what you mean by being famous. You turn to my Genie and you say, “I guess I’m saying I want to be loved.”

My Genie says, “Now, that’s more like it.”

When asking the genie for your ideal life, try to incorporate your lists. The more of yourself you can include in your dream world, the happier you will be with the result.

No, I’m not trying to set you up for failure. This isn’t the dream of the perfect spouse with two-point-five children living in a house surrounded by a white picket fence. Going after what you want doesn’t set you up for heartache. The catch, however, is that

you must understand why you want something. Remember our Genie? For example, if you want more money in your life, why? Do you want money because you want to live in a nice house? Do you want a nice house because you want to live in a nice neighborhood? Do you want nice neighbors because you are lonely? Are you lonely because you have no friends or live in a dangerous place? Return to the *wants* you've recently listed and ask yourself questions similar to the scenario I introduced. To the best of your ability, try to understand why you might desire something. Why do we want the perfect spouse with two-point-five children? Why do we want to live in the big house with a white picket fence? It depends. Commonly, a dream turns into a nightmare because we don't understand what we desire in the first place.

### **GENIE, I Want It And, This Is Why...**

As I worked through each list of words, I expanded on them. What did I mean by "make more money"? What did I truly want here? Actually, I was looking for financial security. Okay, what does financial security look like? Freedom ranked second on my list. To me, freedom translated into traveling more. What did I mean by "living closer to my family" or "finding meaningful work"? Pretending to converse with my Genie, I continued to figure it out until I came up with a workable solution.

Using my example below, turn your general overview into specific wants.

#### 1. *Financial security*

A. I want an occupation or a means to make money that will provide the daily, weekly and monthly income needed to benefit my family.

B. I want additional monies left over to save, invest and build my retirement account.

#### 2. *To travel*

A. To travel once a month and give entertaining, persuasive speeches to large and small audiences.

B. To spend months at a time in various places, including international travel with the ability to change plans as my desires, intuition and/or curiosity guide me.

#### 3. *Be with family*

A. To spend summer months in Mississippi visiting family.

B. To spend holidays with family—make an annual ski trip a family tradition.

#### 4. *Find meaningful work*

A. To help other people reach their goals.

B. To consult one-on-one with individuals.

At the time I did this exercise, I hadn't yet formalized my "work" plan. That's okay. I intentionally showed you my results so that you can see you don't have to have it all figured out yet. I didn't!

It's time to write your own script. Do it now. If you start with something like "to be secure", next work through it with the imaginary Genie until you get to the real desire. For example, being secure might actually translate to owning your own home, having a retirement plan, living in a safer neighborhood. Expanding on the exercise will help you move closer to understanding why you want something. First, you will need to return to your former exercises and review them. By doing so, you will fully be aware of your ideas and desires before moving ahead.

### **GENIE, I Want and Why Exercise Script**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

So, there you have it. The life you desire. You now have the most important part of the plan. The vision. I hope that your vision is big!

*Make up your mind so firmly that the goal is a reality before you even begin.*

Author Unknown

Certainly, you can change your answers as you move through the process. Who knows? You might change your mind, or later come up with an even better idea. You might discover that once you get something, it actually wasn't what you wanted after all. It's okay to make a new goal. Taking a misstep is a lesson. That's how we learn.

At this stage, you need to state your desired outcome or rather, your intent. What do you wish to happen? Be as specific as possible? You will want to set a target date, but be flexible about it. Don't beat yourself up if you don't hit the exact date. Remember, things happen in their own time. Simply set a new date. To finish the exercise, return to your wants and write complete statements about the outcome you desire. What is your aim? What are you intending to happen? Basically, this is where you use the information gathered while doing the Genie exercises to create specific, targeted goal statements—statements that explicitly describe your plan—your intentions.

Below is an example of what your list should look like. For example sake, we'll introduce Mary.

### **Mary's List of Intentions**

1. *I will weigh 140 pounds within three months. In order to meet this objective, I will walk 2.0 miles three times weekly, play tennis two times weekly and avoid bad carbohydrates after 5:00 p.m.*
2. *I will make \$2,000 monthly allowing me to live, save, build capital and cover expenses as well as have money to spare. This income contributes to my household income. I plan to earn the stated amount via a contract basis with two major clients who will pay me \$1,000 a month (retainer).*
3. *Within one month, I will find a new best friend. My new friend will have teenagers and will like to play golf. We will have other similar interests and enjoy doing things together. In order to find this person, I will volunteer at my church, tell acquaintances and enroll in an intermediate golf class.*
4. *I will take my family on a vacation to a beach location by next summer. I have yet to work out the details, but will add them to my list when it's done.*

To improve your understanding, let's consider the answers from my own attempts. For example, I wrote down specific amounts with pre-determined revenue goals for myself, establishing weekly goals for gross income while including detailed amounts of money to be placed in savings and retirement accounts. It's important you do the same. Regarding my desire to spend more time in Mississippi, I had a clear picture in my mind about how it would work. To implement the idea, I contacted different family members in a timely manner to make arrangements. As I recorded every detail, I started the process of drawing my dreams to me.

If you've gotten this far, you have a powerful paragraph that describes your dream life. More than likely, you ended up with a nonspecific description. That's okay and it is a good place to start. The next step is to create a detailed picture of your goals and aspirations. This is where the true dreaming begins. Time to write out your plans.

### **List of Intentions Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now that you have your list of intentions, select one to three that you are most interested in pursuing first. You'll feel much more successful with the process (and less frustrated), if you focus on a small number, and after accomplishing something, add the next desire to your "active" list of wants. Initially, I tackled three of my five. However, I kept a complete list and daily looked at it while focusing primarily on my highest priorities.

After finally deciding to start a home-based business, I had no idea how to do it. None. I didn't know where the money would come from or if it would work. I stated my intention and focused solely on getting to the end of my plan. Keep reading to see how it all turned out!

### **Oh, But I Can't!**

I wouldn't be surprised if you are seeing resistance again. I mean, let's get real. Why in the world would you think you could create a life you love? What are you thinking? I'm here to tell you that you can! Now, the big question is: how do you get there? At this point, I am going to make what might sound like a totally ridiculous statement. That is, "don't worry about it!" Don't try to figure out *how* this is all going to happen yet. No, I mean it! Consider the following story.

Several members of an amateur rock-climbing group were going out on their first trip. It was time to try the real thing—a steep rock. Each member took turns traversing the rock—60-feet and straight as a brick wall. Frightened, one of the team members couldn't figure out "how" the other climbers were hoisting themselves up. From his point of view, he couldn't see any foot or hand holes. The ones he did see were tiny, at best. Petrified, he decided that rock climbing wasn't for him. After confessing this to his mentor, the rest of the group persuaded him to try anyway.

They could always drop him back down the minute he couldn't go any farther. Everyone uses ropes; so even if you fall, you actually don't fall. There is always someone to catch you. You might get a little bruised up, and your ego would definitely be a little injured, but that's about the biggest risk.

Gathering a little courage, he finally made his ascent. As he climbed up the rock, he found new spots to grab. The climber discovered that the ones that looked unusable were actually quite efficient. His rock climbing footwear allowed him to dig into places that would have been typically inaccessible. He slowly, but surely made progress and yes, he made it to the top. He climbed that rock one step at a time. Once he lost sight of *how* he was going to do it, he put one foot in front of the other until he reached his destination. By making that first step, he recognized opportunities as he progressed. He found having a different perspective (actually experiencing the wall) allowed him to effectively traverse the rock.

Hopefully, the story impacted you as it did me. Realize you don't have all the answers or details worked out. At this point, it's not about the "how". Gather your courage and move forward despite your fears.

*10/2/97*

*I know that it will all work out. I am an ultimate optimist. But, I'm sad. I'm very sad right now. I'm sad that I created my current reality. But, I know that something good will happen soon.*

## Chapter Four

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*Some people die at twenty-five and are not buried until they are seventy-five.*

Benjamin Franklin

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10/9/97

*The interview at the nonprofit went well. I felt good there. The pay is not as good as I had hoped. It will start below what I initially desire, but as early as November it could be more. Life is hitting us square in the face this week. Actually, it did last week when we couldn't pay our bills.*

Mary Williamson asked in *A Return To Love*, “Are you willing to do whatever it takes to remove the obstacles between yourself and your dream? In the movie *The Empire Strikes Back*, the Jedi master Yoda told Luke Skywalker, ‘No. Try not. There is no try. Do. Or do not.’ When we say, ‘I’m trying’ the truth is that we are participating at less than full commitment.”

One day I watched a bird as he tried to fly past a utility pole. The bird would hit the pole and fly up a little higher and hit the pole again until eventually he reached the top. Too bad he didn't fly to the right or left! I wonder how many times we do that? More times than not, we focus on one and only one way out of a stressful situation. We waste so much time, beating ourselves up in the process. Perhaps, all we had to do was fly to the right or left.

### Reality

What’s your reality like? Mary Williamson spent a couple of days in Bangkok and brought back a tiny brass elephant to remind her of how elephants are trained as beasts of burden. According to Mary, “The trainers capture the elephant and tether one of its legs to a giant tree.”

The elephant puts up a mighty struggle. It will do this for days, weeks. Typically, by the time a month has passed the elephant gives up. Next, the trainers transition to a rope. The same process is completed until finally the elephant will never again think of breaking free. By the time the training is completed, the elephant toils in the jungle while being “tethered” to a lotus flower. Simply feeling the tug on its ankle signifies to the animal that it is no longer free.

The Elephant and I are alike. I cannot tell you how many times I allowed myself to view my world through distorted lens. This warped view has meant that I backed away instead of stepping forward. Cowering down instead of standing tall, I took the

safe path instead of the right one. Every time I felt the tug of my tether (whether imagined or real), I turned away. There are more times than not that our perceived realities are wrong. That's why it's so important to double check—size things up and try to figure out what's real and what's not.

What about the misguided individuals who clearly don't have an accurate picture of their talents or skills? Someone obviously lacking talent in a specific area is more than likely driven by false motives. Maybe they are seeking fame or riches and latched on to the idea of singing or athletics. Quite possibly, they listen to the voices of well-meaning supporters. The supporters know the talent is not there, but can't stand the thought of hurting the passionate individual. Or, the supporter might be attempting to live out his or her own long-buried dream. In my experience, most people seem to err on the side of caution. Remember the singer story? She was actually more talented than she believed. Thanks to Reality TV, I've also seen the flipside. Have you ever watched *American Idol*? A dose of reality is badly needed by the majority of the contestants. Simon is mean, I'll grant you that, but he might be the only one that can steer them away from a self-destructive path. What about when the talent is clearly visible, but the person has no interest in developing it? That happens too.

Then there are the individuals driven to go for the gold, but receive silver instead? Remember *Apollo 13*? Ken Mattingly, played by Gary Sinise, dedicated himself to being an astronaut. He dreamed of repeating Neil Armstrong's feat of walking on the moon. A pre-flight blood test altered his fate and forced him to miss the attempt. Turns out, all the education and training combined with his innate talents and abilities made him the *best* person to save three lives—the three men on Apollo 13. Without Ken's knowledge and creativity, these men probably would have died instead of returning home. Something inside of Mr. Mattingly pushed him to excel and to be the best in his field. He accepted his mission and worked hard to complete it. The prize, however, turned out to be counter to his wishes.

## **Reality is Good**

Now it is time to give you a splash of reality. Yes, reality is good. Or, rather, it is wise to start thinking about practical matters. However, do not let your rules about life, and how life should be, erase your dreams.

There's a fable about a fisherman. Next to him stood a bucket and a ruler snapped off at the ten-inch point. After catching each fish, and he caught many, he would measure his fish with the ruler. On this particular day, he seemed to be catching only small fish. They weren't measuring up, and so he threw each one in his bucket. Later in the day, he noticed a big tug on his line and worked hard to reel it in. Once on the dock, he laid the big fish beside the ruler. It was about two inches over the mark. He abruptly threw the fish back in the water. Another fisherman noted that the man threw back the biggest fish that he

had caught the entire day, “What are you doing,” he asked. “Why did you throw the fish back?”

The fisherman replied, “My skillet is only ten inches wide. Anything that is too big for my pan, I throw back.”

The moral of this tale is that we allow our rules to determine how big our life is.

You have the freedom to create your own life, but likewise, you have the responsibility to temper it with reality. Do not, on the other hand, buy into the rules that others have created about how to live your life.

### **On the Road Again—Yikes! I Had a Flat**

I’m sure you’ll experience difficulties before you reach your destination. That’s the natural order of things.

The first way to deal with problems is to write down the reasons why you can’t do or have something. What is stopping you from having the good life you desire and deserve? Depending on your situation, you may have a variety of legitimate obstacles standing in your way. After identifying your barriers, figure out a way to overcome them. I learned this method of problem solving from Barbara Sher’s book, *Wishcraft*.

*They conquer who believe they can.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

First, evaluate the problems in your life.

Maybe it’s your job. Maybe your hang up is money. It definitely was mine as evidenced by my journal. Many people have an issue with money and it’s usually on the lack side. If they only had more, life would be wonderful. If money is one of your issues, describe your current situation.

Obstacles that stood in my way:

#### **My Obstacles**

1. Money
2. Fear
3. Lack of Mentor
4. Lack of Direction

Examine the past carefully and determine what’s always been in your way. Write it down.

#### **Your Obstacles**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Spend a little bit more time thinking about each obstacle and why *it* has stopped you in the past. Below, you'll find the answers I recorded the first time I completed this exercise.

### **My Obstacles Expanded**

1. *Money.* If only I had made more money, I could spend more time researching, investigating, writing, and reading. Why didn't I get a counseling degree? Quite possibly, I could have hung out a shingle and not worried about how many paying clients I had. Or, written my books and published them myself.
2. *Fear.* If only I wasn't so afraid to do things. I have never felt comfortable asking others for help.
3. *Lack of Mentor.* If only I had a mentor. Are there really people out there doing what I want to do? And, if there are, do they want to help? Prospective mentors seem to be far away—out of reach.
4. *Lack of Direction.* When it comes to ideas, mine are all over the map. Focusing on only one idea or path is extremely hard for me. So many things interest me. How do I remain focused on one goal—one job or career?

### **Your Obstacles Expanded**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Next, provide a solution to the problem.

### **Step 1**

For example, if you listed work, write down a solution to your problem.

**Challenge:** Work

**Solution:** Change jobs. Find a job that will allow you to have the flexibility you desire while still providing the income you need to meet your financial obligations.

## **Step 2**

To further expand on the challenge, create several solutions.

**Challenge:** Money.

**Solution:** Describe how you can increase your income. Provide more than one solution, if you have several ideas.

1. Change jobs.
2. Steal it!
3. Get a 2<sup>nd</sup> job.

## **Step 3**

Consider all the solutions and record the expected outcome of acting on it.

**Outcome:** What is the result of taking the above action?

### **My Solution to Challenge #1**

Money is a problem for me.

**Challenge:** I need to increase my income or lower my expenses. *Since, I'm not the type to restrict anything, I spent more time trying to increase my income.*

**Solution:** Get a job.

**Outcome:** I would be paid almost immediately, but typically when I get a job I make less than I'm worth and I hate the structure.

**Solution:** Steal it!

**Outcome:** I'd be arrested and it goes against my beliefs.

**Solution:** Get a part-time job that would cover my share of household expenses.

**Outcome:** I would be paid a regular salary with time to spend doing other things like writing or building a business.

Each obstacle needs to be well thought out. Initially you need to create many answers—even outrageous ones. Although not practical, outrageous ideas will get your creative juices flowing and might possibly lead to a very *real* solution for you. For now have fun. You can be more realistic later.

The next step in this process is to find or create a support team to help you meet your goals. There are many ways to do this. You might find that your family members are supportive and will help hold you accountable. Perhaps, you have a group of friends that could do this with you. There is also the option of creating a more formal group. At [www.queenpower.com](http://www.queenpower.com), we have Queen Teams, groups of women who join together for a common purpose. For example one of the pilot teams on the site banded together to promote books. From that association great things happened. For more information go to: [www.queenpower.com/CrownAttitude.html](http://www.queenpower.com/CrownAttitude.html).

For each challenge you list come up with solutions. Continue to work with this exercise until you feel you have at least a few great solutions.

### Challenges and Solutions

1. Challenge
  - A. Solution
  - A. Outcome
  
  - B. Solution
  - B. Outcome
  
  - C. Solution
  - C. Outcome
  
2. Challenge
  - A. Solution
  - A. Outcome
  
  - B. Solution
  - B. Outcome
  
  - C. Solution
  - C. Outcome

2/3/98

*The struggle continues. I don't know what is wrong with me, but I want out of my job!!! Today was terrible. I must remember that I don't have to keep a job at the expense of my self. My priorities are my family. Damn it. I want to have fun. I want to spend as much time as possible with my family. And, I want to be able to do other things too. I'm throwing a fit! My inner child is mad as hell and wants me to stop being so damned serious. The parent in me tells me to stop whining.*

## Chapter Five

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*Many of us have enough to live by, but nothing to live for; we have the means, but not the meaning.*

Viktor Frankel, A Search For Meaning

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### **A Little of This...A Little of That**

3/8/98

*Funny, I can sit here and try to talk myself out of being dissatisfied with my job. But, when I look back at earlier journal entries or think about specific incidences, I know I'm not crazy or being silly. It's sad that I even doubt myself for one, small second. The pursuit of peace...the screaming of my soul torments me. "It is not right. You're not in the right place. Move on. Get out. This isn't it." And how guilty that makes me feel. There are many things about what I do that I love, but my gut knows what the mind does not. My heart continues to whisper to me, "Why settle for what doesn't fit?"*

### **Clean Up and Out**

Before we finally move on, it is important to clean up the mess in our lives. Messes, unfinished projects and clutter, interfere with the ability to move forward and have peace of mind. I will call the culmination of it all an energy dump.

After you make a decision and decide that it is time to improve your life, set aside a weekend or take a day off from work. Clean out your house and work space. Be merciless! Get rid of the junk, the clothes that don't fit, the piles of paper and anything else that is a burden to you. My big clean up and clean out project takes place every January. By the end of the month, I have cleaned out closets, thrown away trash, filed away papers and discarded anything I can justify. Sometimes this ritual flows into the month of February, but by the second month of the New Year, I'm set to gather more information and stuff. I have new priorities and am ready to go.

### **Get Organized**

After the big clean up it is important to get organized. Again, start with your personal life. Hire someone to help you if you can't do it yourself. If you can't afford to hire someone or can't stand having a stranger go through your stuff, make it a family affair. Doing it by yourself is okay too. The bottom line is that you need to get it done. This isn't neurology, but takes time. There are many books and articles available on the subject. Take

a trip to your local library, if you need helpful hints on how to get everything straight. Of course if you have access to cable, there's always TV—reality TV to the rescue. Several shows on networks like HGTV, Discover, and TLC provide many helpful tips. The Internet is another useful source of information with sites such as Diane Armstrong's [www.cultivatelife.com](http://www.cultivatelife.com) and the FlyLady ([www.flylady.com](http://www.flylady.com)).

4/1/98

*I want. I want. I want. I have a case of the "I wants". I want a bigger place. I want new carpet. I want kitchen counters and cabinets that don't stain so easily. I want to have the freedom to visit family and the money to support myself comfortably. I want to take more vacations. I want to have more fun!*

### **Good Opinion of Others**

Some of us are very sensitive to the opinions of others. I used to be one of the worlds worst. I wanted everyone to like me. I wanted to be admired and liked; I hated to let others down. If you have this character flaw, this characteristic alone can cause you great harm. I cannot tell you how much wasted energy I spent worrying about what others thought about me. First, the good news—with age comes a thicker layering of your skin! If you are thin skinned, be sure and label it as such. Understanding your tendency to allow the opinions or even the feelings of others to influence you is a step forward. If you start having the sinking feeling that someone is disappointed in you or mad at you, understand that you are creating a lot of the negative or bad feelings yourself. Yes, someone could be upset with you, but you must not spend more time dwelling on it. Doing this will cause you more anxiety and bad feelings. And, bad feelings you do not need.

Evaluate the situation. Did you actually do something that was inconsiderate or inappropriate to cause someone to be upset with you? Fix it. Go apologize. Simply do what you can reasonably do to put the situation behind you. Don't know what you did? Contact the person and find out. Try to determine why they are they upset. You might discover that it was all in your imagination. However, if they are mad and you know that you haven't done anything, then move on. If it's a person that is typically negative and upset, don't invite them to be in your life anymore. Maybe, you don't have that choice because it's a relative or co-worker. Recognize that they are simply being themselves and the situation has nothing to do with you. You will discover, as I have, that people who no longer serve you or who are against you, will fade out of your life. As you increase your positive feelings, you attract people more like yourself.

### **It's All About You!**

Now is the time to mention how important it is to focus on yourself. Okay, I know it's not all about you, but one of the fastest roads to happiness *is* to focus on yourself. The

first thing to understand is that you can't change others. Psychologists and other professionals have told us this for years. So, believe them! You aren't going to change anyone by your actions. You are not going to alter your circumstances or situation by trying to get others to change first. It simply doesn't happen that way. Believe differently and you will be completely frustrated.

Maybe you are constantly angry and fight with the person who is disappointing you. Well, stop that right now. Instead, change your focus—figure out what makes you happy without involving the other person. I don't mean that you should drop your spouse or significant other. I'm suggesting that you accept the people currently in your life whether by marriage, commitment or blood, and after that return the focus to yourself. What will make you happy whether this person is in your life or not? What do you want that doesn't involve this person?

Understand, I am an advocate for the family, and am not instructing you to dump the people currently in your life. Instead, I am advising you to simply forget about what you want from them. Determine what you need to make yourself happy and satisfied. Sometimes folks think that as long as they have children, they can't even begin to think this way. In my opinion, that's too bad. Yes, you have a giant responsibility and do not have the same freedoms as those with grown children or no children, but you do not have to sacrifice yourself. In hopes that I will not offend anyone, particularly men, women accept this burden and do sacrifice themselves for the good of the family.

Our children are our future, and are a serious responsibility. However, if a child is raised by a frustrated, worn out, depressed, angry person, what future are you creating? What happens when you come to the end of the long road of self-sacrifice? What the heck do you do at that moment? Talk about a challenge. Would one even have the strength or courage to move forward after all those years of denial and anger? Maybe you would, but with great effort. Why go there in the first place? Isn't it possible that the child observing a happy, satisfied adult will gain so much more than the one witnessing all the self-destruction?

Return to what will make you happy without someone else having to do something or change. That's how you discover true happiness. I'll share a personal example with you. Immediately following my marriage, I was intent on my new husband doing all these things to make *me* happy. Instead, all I ended up with was disappointment. As already mentioned, the desire to be near my family tortured me for years. I often begged and pleaded to God to stop my pain. My husband's job obviously wasn't going to move us closer—he didn't have the contacts or the desire to return. Finally, after realizing the situation wasn't going to change, I decided to alter my approach.

After more than a decade of trying to "control the uncontrollable," my plan changed to "fixing the fixable". Remember, my answer was to spend more time in Mississippi and figure out a way to make money while working at home. Creating an answer that allowed me to travel more frequently to Mississippi provided instant relief. Now, I spend at least one month in Mississippi each summer. There's been another

positive from all this. I'm not so eager to leave my current town anymore. I've always wanted to move from wherever we landed because it was interfering with my lifelong dream of being in my home state. Now that I'm not begging or pleading to leave anymore, I'm actually taking time to build relationships and learn more about the place I currently reside. I wish I had given myself permission to spend long periods of time in Mississippi a long time ago.

### **Others in Your Life**

Do you find when you are interacting with others that some times you are so focused on yourself that you miss the point or can't fully enjoy the moment? *Do I have stuff in my teeth? Does she really like me? Oh, did I say something stupid again?* Or, whatever your self-focused thought might be. Ever tried focusing intently on the other person instead? I make every attempt to turn my attention to the other person. I sometimes forget and other times I am unable to divert my attention.

Just remember, for the most part, people want to experience appreciation, love and kindness. A close friend once said she tried to focus on how the other person could help her. To keep her mind focused on the good in others, she continually asked those she met to volunteer to help her favorite nonprofit organization. Simply changing the way you interact with others takes the focus off of yourself—the typically negative focus—and, you almost always move away from judging them.

### **That's Who I Am**

Recently while listening to a song by Jessica Andrews, *Who I Am*, I had an inspirational thought. The song moved me because the words explained very explicitly that the writer of this song accepted herself unconditionally. Her heritage, genes and experiences shaped her. Her true friends loved her anyway. As the song goes...she's a person that has good and bad in her. Bottom line, that is who she is. And, if you think about it, that's who I am. And, that's who you are. You are human. Learn to love and forgive yourself. Seriously, if we cannot love ourselves, how can we truly love others? Together let's take one of the biggest steps in our lives. *Let's be who we are.*

### **Maintaining Focus**

*Take a stand. You cannot be everything you might have been if you are always keeping your options open.*

Carol Adrienne

For years, I struggled with my inability to improve my circumstances and now, I understand why. Minus the knack to focus, I couldn't manifest my desires into my life. Constantly changing my mind, I continually sought the wrong things and attracted a

hodge-podge of outcomes with mediocre results. I turned things around by completely changing my way of thinking. Finally believing I could produce something I loved and make money while doing it, I started the résumé writing business. That's what started the prosperity ball rolling for me. After taking that inaugural leap of faith, I made it into my first year of business remaining debt free. What a marvelous feeling.

### **Building Your Community—Your Helping Hands**

Building your community is the most important part of the magic formula. This lesson was the most difficult for me to learn. If I had grasped the significance of this lesson years ago, I could have saved myself much misery. I don't know what made me declare to myself one day that I didn't need anybody to help me. But, I did. I clung to this belief for longer than it served me. Only in my mid 30's, did I finally get it. It takes people to create the life of your dreams. If you don't learn anything else from my experiences, please take seriously the need to have people in your life. People are the key to overcoming any obstacles you could ever imagine. People have encouragement, resources, love and support to offer you.

Need to build your own community? Join a professional association, volunteer, go to church, pick a sport to learn and play, or attend a class in a favorite subject.

### **Money—The Biggest Hurdle of All**

Before we finalize your plan, I would first like to address the issue of money. Unfortunately, money is one of the primary reasons we are stuck working in jobs or careers that aren't very rewarding. Most of us didn't learn how to create our right vocation, but instead allowed a vocation to take hold as our experiences and skills dictated. At this point, it's very important to take a closer look at your finances. Figure out where you are. If you are heavily in debt, jumping from a stable long-term job to a start-up venture might not be the thing to do.

Keep in mind, that you are trying to move into a life that you love and that it might take some time. If you are stressed about finances (remember my diary entries), you are less likely to be able to move forward. In many ways your hands will be tied and the stress of trying to generate enough money to live might create even more hardship than you had previously experienced. I'm not a financial advisor, but I do know that you must look at how much money is coming in and how much money is going out. If you are seeking to slow down and take an interim job while you create or recreate your life, take into account the minimum amount required for you to live and meet your needs. If you are heavily in debt, the first step would be to focus all your attention on handling that situation.

Find a financial consultant to help you sort out the mess. Those not able to afford counsel can contact local nonprofit organizations that offer such assistance. Once your financial house is in order, start creating your plan. Of course, there are many things you

can do while turning around your finances. So, don't stop dreaming or planning in the process.

Here are some of my favorite books on improving one's financial situation. By the way, you don't have to buy these. Instead, go to your local library. If they don't carry these books, then ask them to order them for you.

*The Courage to Be Rich* by Suze Orman (Any book or column by Suze is a great read.)

*The Wealthy Barber* by David Chilton

*Smart Women Finish Rich: 7 Steps to Achieving Financial Security and Funding Your Dreams* by David Bach

If you don't know what compound interest is and aren't using it to expand your riches, by all means hurry up and read the books. Don't let the fact that you don't have any money stop you from reading them. Knowledge is power. I suggest reading David Chilton's book first because it's told in a "story-telling" format that makes it easy for you to understand. Second read David Bach's book before jumping into Suze Orman's winning advice. It's all good stuff, and will definitely help you make progress in the right direction.

7/10/98

*I was selected for the Placement/Vocational Counselor job. I found out unofficially on Thursday and then was officially, unofficially told today, with the official news scheduled to be delivered next week.*

*Author's note: After getting the "career counseling" job, I quickly became dissatisfied again. Like most of my jobs, there were many aspects I liked, but the overall package simply didn't work. In that job, though, I was closer than I had ever been to getting it right. After about nine months, I decided it was time to go for bigger things. That's when I took the job with the big title and nice paycheck. Hoping it would cover up the sounds of my inner voice, I jumped right in.*

### **More Stupid Ideas and The Acts of Desperate People...**

When it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. During my searching years, I fell prey to a few "get-rich-quick" schemes. In the early 90's, I even ordered one of those real estate "no money down" audio courses. I tried many different forms of the multi-marketing business. Buying into the promotions, I was suckered in at great expense to myself—money and pride. When you talk yourself into taking a job or trying the latest "get-rich" scheme, you are definitely on the wrong track. The strong desire for money can make us do really stupid things and try terrible, risky ideas. I'm going to forgive myself for all the times I've tried crazy ideas—same with all the crazy diets I've tried. It's over. Live and learn! If nothing else, the experience taught me I had to find a better way. My experiences showed me what I didn't want anymore.

1/30/99

*I had a "come to Jesus meeting" with myself, and thought about what I truly wanted to do. I'm going to return to what I believe to be true. Do what you love and the money stuff will work out. I doubted that statement recently and it led me astray.*

### **Desire is God**

I love this statement made by Dr. Emilie Cady in *Lessons in the Truth*, published in 1894. "Desire is God tapping at the door of your mind, trying to give you greater good." The same can be said about the ideas that are *given*. Not all of the inspiration you receive will be practical, doable or the *perfect* answer to your prayers. But, I guarantee you that if you keep respecting the ideas and ask questions about implementing them, you will stumble upon the idea that does indeed turn your life around.

## Chapter Six

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*Remember, no thought is idle.*

Anonymous

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Without a clear intent, I started moving forward and made significant progress toward my goals. I woke up one day, about two years after I started the process, and realized I had made large leaps towards my overall objectives. Now, I'm on a mission. With very clear intentions and an obvious understanding of the process, I will move mountains. I invite you to do the same thing.

*Thought precedes emotion...*

It finally dawned on me why all the self-help books I've read never helped me make much progress. And, believe me, I've read tons of them. One author in particular grabbed my attention. Over the last two decades, I continually returned to her work. After each rereading of her materials, I would get fired up for a little while, but within a short period of time my interest or stamina would dissolve. She had great answers and even the "right" attitude, as far as I was concerned, but for some reason, I was never able to alter my external reality. So, what was lacking? What key piece of information was missing in the volumes of work produced by so many authors? It's a piece that I discovered rather serendipitously.

### **The Enemy Is Us**

James Allen said in his well known and often quoted book, *As A Man Thinketh*, "Through his thoughts man holds the key to every situation and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he wills."

There was a cartoon years ago in the funny papers, *Pogo*. Pogo was re-expressing a profound thought when he shared, "We have met the enemy and He is us!" Yep. Most of us hate ourselves. This became clear to me when I started focusing on my thoughts. I soon discovered that I beat myself up constantly. And, I wasn't only mean. I was vicious! The onslaught was constant. I admonished myself for saying the wrong thing or being too loud. I sent bullet after bullet at myself. Self-loathing is a very powerful emotion and a potentially dangerous tool. It's time here to remember what your mother always told you. If you can't say anything nice, then don't say it at all. Start being kind to yourself and stop the self-bashing as soon as it starts. A good tactic is to think about

the things you like about yourself and transition from self-bashing to self-admiration. Maybe you like your hands or your hair. Maybe it's your disposition or nose. Whatever it may be, find one or two things that you like about yourself—no, make that love about yourself.

The first step to altering your self-talk—inner dialogue—is to pay attention to it. Listen to your chatter for a couple of days. Don't do anything, but notice it. What are you saying? Are you kind or mean? Next, come up with solutions to alter your self-talk.

### **Self-talk Exercise**

In my own experience I found myself saying things like:

1. I'm fat.
2. I'm ugly.
3. I'm broke!
4. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. Why did I say that?

What does your self-chatter look like?

### **Self-talk Exercise**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

After figuring out what I said, I started paying attention to how many times I said it. I was shocked. Not only was I horrible to myself, but also chirped continually about my stupidity, looks and finances. It was bad.

Next in an attempt to alter my despicable habit, I created new statements. It's not necessary to understand why you say what you say. The solution is to change the messages you tell yourself.

### **Altered Self-talk**

Instead, when I found myself uttering those terrible messages, I would pay attention and quickly introduce a replacement message—an accepting or flattering message.

1. I'm fat.  
*1. I am losing weight effortlessly each and every day.*
2. I'm ugly.  
*2. I accept that I am a gift from God.*

3. I am broke!
3. *God is my substance, my supply and my support.\**
4. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. Why did I say that?
4. *I am divinely directed and speak only with good intentions.*

*\*Borrowed from John Randolph Price, author of the Abundance Book.*

Notice that I didn't change my messages by creating opposite statements. Telling myself I wasn't fat wasn't the answer. If I thought that I was overweight or ugly, creating a statement swearing the opposite wouldn't be believed by me. Instead, I created positive statements—affirmations—to redirect my thoughts.

Give yourself seven days to monitor your self-talk and to slowly make the shift. If you are naturally positive, and don't have much negative self talk to work on, you will move forward rather quickly. Those of you who are constantly beating yourself up with cruel words, need to continue practicing until you no longer have to think about being nice to yourself. If you would like to set a deadline, do it. If you reach the deadline, but still have work to do, by all means set a new one. For the person that has a tendency to fret and worry, altering your inner chatter will also be very beneficial. Remember, positive self-talk is going to be something that you will use for a lifetime. It doesn't mean that you'll constantly have to be thinking of this stuff on a daily basis, but it does mean that after you've altered your thoughts and feelings you'll need to return periodically to get back on track.

### **Back to Emotions...**

Your negative or positive energy repels or attracts, respectively, material things to and from you. Your thoughts are *not* the primary problem. Although do keep in mind that your thoughts generally lead to some type of emotion or feeling. Basically, your thoughts actually cause the emotional reaction. Consider the following thought: *How can I pay my bills?* If you are having trouble paying your bills, the above statement might elicit bad feelings—worry, anxiety, stress. Those emotions are sent out as energy and help you attract more of what you have—worry, anxiety, stress.

Fixing your inner dialogue, as you discovered, was a major step. Don't you feel so much better? The next lesson is *letting go*. You use your energy to bring things to you—your thoughts, your feelings and emotions. You give birth to your desires by creating plans and goals. You work hard, and pay attention to opportunities. You make progress, and then you see it—the carrot. It is dangling out there in front of you. Right there. But, you can't quite reach it. You swing at it. It is simply out of reach. The prize is not yours yet. Of all the steps, this might be the most difficult. Wayne Dyer, in *There's a Spiritual Solution To Every Problem*, shares: "Now remember, an attachment

is not a fact, it is a fantasy in your head.” Putting your desires out there—*I want a new house that meets certain specifications*—is a much healthier way to reach for something. Consider the opposite: *I want a new house. I’ve found it. It’s the one on the corner. If I don’t get that house I will die!* That’s an accident waiting to happen. Return to Dr. Dyer’s quote. The house that you are willing to die for might not be the best house for you. Yes, the cover meets all your expectations and some, but what about what you can’t see. I like to go on the assumption that all prayers are answered, but instead the answer might come differently than expected. It goes back to putting out there the essence of what you are seeking.

*Attitudes are more important than facts.*

Dr. Karl Menninger

Not too long ago, I recorded the following dream in my journal:

*I went to the store to buy a dog. Before arriving I had decided I wanted a small dog. I selected a Schnauzer because I knew from experience the breed didn’t shed. The dog had to be female, thereby avoiding a long and drawn out housebreaking ordeal. I was in luck. The breeder had the perfect dog for me. But, then I saw the yellow lab. It was a clumsy male puppy. I wanted it! I didn’t care if it would get hair all over my house, be harder to train, or knock decorations over with its tail. I wanted the warm, friendly and lovable puppy.*

My dream told me that my preconceived notions are fine, but that I must always be open to other possibilities—greater possibilities in order to get what I’m seeking. Return to the Apollo 13 story, Ken Mattingly had a preconceived notion of what he wanted—to walk on the moon. That preconceived notion made him train and with that training he became a topnotch astronaut. Not surprisingly, he had paid close attention to his inner guidance. However, Mattingly misread *why* he was preparing. His training and dedication wasn’t about walking on the moon. It was about saving three lives. In the dream, I wanted a dog to provide me companionship. Although the Schnauzer would meet all my expectations—a dog is a dog, right? The Lab would do a better job. The Lab would be messier and harder to handle, but he turned out to be the better choice. Not everything will come to you as you imagine. In the dream, I declared it had to be Schnauzer. However, a better answer to my prayer—a lovable companion—was a big, clumsy dog. To get what I truly wanted I had to be open to receiving it.

### **When Push Comes To Shove**

Many times in the past I tried to fix a situation or force something to happen according to my time schedule. Funny, how the harder you push and struggle, the more resistance that comes your way.

I cannot tell you how many times I pushed my way through circumstances or events trying to make something happen. There have been times in the past that I considered myself the master. But what I learned is things happen in their own time. Yes, there are steps you can take and things you can do, but there are so many variables outside of your control. I discovered that at those moments when I'm feeling most desperate, it probably means I am out of luck. It ain't happening. I'm trying to recognize these feelings and the moment I start begging, pushing or shoving, I question my motives while trying to evaluate them. Desperation is now *my* clue that I probably will not get what I think I want.

2/20/99

*I'm focusing again on wanting freedom and that includes financial freedom. My doors are wide open. God send something my way. Thanks!*

### **The Truth Doesn't Stop Being the Truth Simply Because You Can't See It.**

If you are feeling desperate about an outcome, you are doing more harm than good. Convincing yourself that you don't have to worry is easier said than done. When negative feelings start working their way into your consciousness, figure out a way to stop them. Experiment a little here to find the best way to counter attack. Remember the suggestions about complimenting yourself. I found a very effective method for me. Once, and with my mind racing about how we were going to pay all the bills, I suddenly thrust out my hand and sang the lyrics to a popular Supremes song: *Stop! In the Name of Love*. Well, it worked. Made me laugh out loud, actually. No matter, it turned my thoughts around immediately.

Seriously, you can change your reality by moving your thoughts away from fretting and worrying. Did you ever see the movie *Happy Gilmore* starring Adam Sandler? Adam's character, Happy Gilmore, was a down-and-out hockey player who ended up having the unique ability to also play golf. His raw talent was so good that he qualified for the tour. However, he had a nasty temper and would easily lose his concentration, making winning a major challenge. Thank goodness Happy had a mentor, Chubbs, who instructed him to find and go to his *happy place* whenever he was feeling bad. In the movie, Happy Gilmore created an image in his mind that made him "happy" every time he thought of it. After visiting the place, Happy was able to concentrate on his goals and achieve his dreams.

Personally, the minute I started to worry or feel uneasy about something, it appeared as a gnawing feeling twisting around in my gut. Everyone has different ways they feel badly. Keeping this in mind, the first exercise is to think about something that bothers you right now. Continue to think about it until you feel that terrible feeling. What does it feel like?

Now, let's concentrate on finding what good feels like. Start with the past. Refer back to a time in your life that was very special to you. It could be anything—your wedding day or the day you won an award. Maybe your *happy time* is during the holidays? Think about something that makes you feel good all over. Got it? Okay, now explore what that feels like. For me, it's almost a rush of peace and tranquility. I feel right with the world and absolutely radiant. My gut doesn't seem to be involved as much because the good feeling seems to spread all over my body. Find that good feeling. Recognize it. Remember what it feels like. That is the feeling you must experience when doing the daily *intent* exercises you'll be asked to do later.

There are more basic laws and rules of the Universe that beg to be respected. We will now incorporate them into your program.

### **Principle of the Love Chain**

The idea of passing on love is becoming increasingly popular. The Chain of Love basically means generosity. Share what you have with others. It doesn't have to be money. What about the movie *Pay It Forward*? Clearly demonstrated, it took only one simple act of kindness to impact many. Volunteering is one way to do this. Not too long ago, I wrote a résumé for a college student. Her notes indicated that she participated in the University's "Give Back" program. Through her participation, she and many other college students spent a weekend repainting a house. In the 1980's, my mother and her friends painted a house for a recently divorced friend of theirs. The friend squealed with delight when she saw what her friends had done. What fun they all had. I'm not sure who enjoyed it more—the ones giving or the one receiving. Make every effort to give to others and to continue the chain of love.

### **Principle of Change**

Maintaining the status quo means you are closer to death than life. You are either living or dying? Well, the only way to be living is to be changing and growing. I've also discovered that not making changes due to fear will cause you great harm. Many times, remaining on the same, worn out path is actually riskier than stepping out. Ignoring your intuition (meaning your need to expand and grow), literally takes you closer to the death. It is like a muscle. If you don't use or stretch the muscle, it will atrophy. The less we take risks, the more likely we are to move backwards. Maybe you've seen them on the talk shows—the people that claim to never leave their houses. They start making the backward motion slowly. Maybe, they only leave once a day. Then, they figure out it would be safer to stay put and only leave weekly. Ultimately, they find that they never leave at all—using friends to help them run their errands or step out into the big scary world.

The best way to look at the need to change is seen in the business world. The Chief Executive Officer or owner of the business can tell you immediately whether the business is growing or dying. Learn to recognize where you are. And, also understand that change is a friend.

### **Principle of Having Fun**

In my own personal experience, I wanted to have fun at work, but I couldn't figure out how to do it. I tried many times and always came up empty handed. My husband played at work everyday. My inability to have fun was based on a misinterpretation. I didn't understand what was meant by "doing what you love". In our early years, my husband had figured the fun part out, but was still struggling with earning money. I usually understood how to make money, but couldn't get the fun part going. To add to my confusion, well-meaning friends and advisors told me, I didn't have stick-to-it-ness. My problem, *they* said, was that I didn't stay around long enough and obviously didn't work hard enough to get the prize. Funny, but I rarely felt like a slacker. I knew how to be productive as well as proficient and had a good idea about what hard work meant. Thank goodness, I didn't believe their well-meaning advice and realized I didn't have to be a slave to my work to become prosperous.

However, it's important to remain focused on what your goals are and clearly understand that you are also trying to make money while doing what you love. Regarding, my husband—he stuck to the work he loved and eventually was rewarded. The end result is this: you are more likely to make *big* money if you truly enjoy what you are doing. Find the joy in your work and the work in your play.

2/11/99

*I simply don't understand what my problem is. Why can't I make a decision about my future? I'm looking at things that take away my freedom or maintain the status quo. I truly don't understand why this has been such a struggle ALL my life. I don't. I ask for guidance and help, but end up in the same place. Oh, I've gotten many jobs and as a result have many skills, but I'm back to a low paying job and frustration. I HATE the cycle, but don't seem to know how to get out of it. I'm asking, and have been asking for years. HELP.*

4/5/99

*You know, I'm really tired of struggling with my demons. My "what am I supposed to do with my life?" demons. Without question, that is my struggle.*

## Chapter Seven

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*What separates an ordinary woman from an extraordinary one? The belief that she is ordinary.*

Jody Williams

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8/6/99

*I'm exhausted and trying to figure out how in the hell I can keep a two-year commitment.*

8/17/99

*It's 4:30 a.m. And I'm wide-awake. Because I was tossing and turning I got out of bed. I thought I'd rest easier last night. No, I don't think I made a mistake. I jumped off the madness train. I made a choice for my family and me, without thinking about how we'd pay for it all. I guess at this point, I will let the cards fall where they may. All I feel right now is relief, though. It's done. I will stay until they transfer me back to the old part-time job or I'll continue through October. Wow. I can't believe that I did this. Now if I could only go to sleep.*

You may have noticed after following these exercises, not a whole lot has changed in your external world. I know. Wish it could happen a lot faster. But, I bet you've experienced a few little miracles or gotten some things recently that maybe you weren't expecting. If not, don't worry about that either. You're erasing a lifetime of bad habits, and in the process, are creating new habits to replace the ones that no longer serve you.

It's time now to complete the dream building process. My only request is that you work on one to three wishes at a time. Putting too much on your plate defuses your ability to focus.

10/6/99

*It's been awhile. I survived. I got my old part-time job back. Oh, I'm sure no one else has thought about this anymore—except my former boss, that is. I am so happy that I can't stand it. I know that I have not made a mistake. I don't want all that I was chasing. I want the simple things. Home, family and the ability to focus on what I truly enjoy doing. Ahhhh. The life. It's taken me a long time to work back to this, but I'm here and will be successful. I guess I had to experience "it" to understand I didn't want "it." I didn't want a high-pressured, energy-draining job. I did "it" and performed well. But, who cares.*

*I started my new (old) job Monday and so far so good. I'm singing all the time. Again, it feels too good to be wrong.*

## **Create the Plan**

This is the point where you pen the details of your new creation. For example, after going through the process, I decided to collaborate with a former co-worker to start a résumé writing and career consulting business. Together, we made the final decision in 1999. Officially opening for business in April 2000, we secured our first client in the summer of 2000. From 1999 to the contracting of the first client, we wrote a business plan, developed a budget, purchased equipment, obtained additional phone lines and created a marketing plan. We didn't generate solid revenues until November 2000, and I didn't quit my part-time job till February 2001. My point, it took planning and effort to launch phase one of my dream. The good news is that once we took steps, even small steps, the motion propelled us forward. How exciting that I didn't have to make everything happen on my own.

Together, my partner and I moved ahead by leaps and bounds. Remember, the piece I thought was missing from all the self-help books? It boiled down to not knowing how to name my intentions or how to express my desired outcomes, combined with negative emotions—fear, worry, stress and anxiety. So instead, I attracted more of what I didn't want in my life—lack. After changing my perceptions, I became much more focused on what needed to happen next.

Armed with passion more than courage, I decided to go for broke. Daily repeating my mantra, "I will make money effortlessly while doing what I love," I slowly marched towards my goals. I even stated the specific amount of money that was needed each month to replace the income from my former job. Well, guess what? That's exactly what happened. Give or take a few dollars, I consistently met the old salary with fewer headaches and much more freedom. Accomplishing my first round of goals of owning a profitable business, I suddenly wanted more. I wanted to be a published writer, for one thing. With each goal met, I expanded my horizons—continually seeking and obtaining more.

You, too, have the right to *catch your dreams*. It's your turn. I hope you will not get caught up in *how* all this is going to happen. Don't go there, okay? Instead, let your heart guide you. The good news is that you've already completed the hard part. If you finished the exercises that were required earlier, then it's done. Pull out your notebook and review what you've already written. Reach high and go for what you truly desire, not what you think you can get.

## **Time to Set Sail!**

It's time to move on to the process of creating your new reality. To pull in your dreams, you must turn your attention to them. Intending to create your desired outcomes is the next step. I encourage you to keep practicing what you've learned so that your rewards will come to you as soon as possible. It's my desire that you get exactly what you want from life.

### **Intention—The Missing Link**

One of my favorite stories describing intent is about Jim Carey. Before he was discovered, he actually wrote himself a check for millions of dollars. Jim Carey carried it around in his pocket and looked at it often. According to the story, his first movie deal actually paid him the exact amount written on that check. Now, that's getting results.

Another story I'd like to share involved a couple residing in California. Several years ago, I attended a business seminar. The couple, proudly displayed as one of the many success stories in the business, had discovered financial independence. For years, they had struggled to build their empire, and in the end, they built it according to their specifications and dreams. The woman explained that early in their careers while living in terrible conditions with hardly any money, she decided to start looking for a dream home. She bought four or five house magazines and carefully examined each home. Intrigued, her husband joined in the game and helped her pick what they believed to be the perfect home. The wife cut it out and posted the picture in the kitchen. The couple talked daily about the moving day that they had determined would be five years off.

During the seminar, the lady put a picture of this house on a transparency. The house was gorgeous and obviously cost over a million dollars. They continued to grow their business. Occasionally, she reported, they would get very frustrated because they were so far off from being able to afford such a place. Plus, even though they scoured the countryside, they weren't finding *the* house.

Well, as the years passed their business grew and about six months away from the projected date, the self-made entrepreneurs realized that they probably could afford the house of their dreams. Already, they had moved several times since setting the five-year goal—to bigger homes more suited for their growing family and incomes. She announced to her husband that it was time to go looking. They poured over the classified section and studied real estate brochures.

Finally, one day a house was listed that seemed most appealing. There was no picture of the house, but the description seemed to match everything that they were looking to find. The family piled in the car and headed to the location. As they rounded the corner, they were amazed. This house looked exactly like the one they had dreamed

about for all those years. The woman showed us the new house by placing the pictures side by side. The houses were practically identical.

Wrapping up the ending in a very nice way, not only did the couple get the house, they moved in during the exact month and year detailed in their original plans.

Let's get you moving in the right direction. Below are instructions to help you finalize your plan.

### **The Intention Plan**

Following the suggestions, create your plan. I've briefly outlined the steps for your convenience:

1. Spend at least 15 minutes daily examining and thinking about your wants.
2. Repeat them and remind yourself why you want them.
3. Make every effort to find a *happy place*. However, if you can't make yourself feel better, think about your desires anyway. You'll find with time it will be easier to manage, and you will feel in control of your thoughts and emotions.
4. Look at your list (or plan) daily. Spend time evaluating and rewriting if necessary to ensure that you are going where you want to go.

I have a little secret to share with you. Making a plan is all well and good, but you will not turn your life around until you can execute the plan. Use it as a roadmap to mark your progress. For example, when my partner and I started our résumé writing business, we pulled out the business plan that I created many years ago and reworked it to meet our current needs. We tweaked it a little bit, and we moved forward one baby step at a time. Keep in mind that it is important to carefully prepare yourself for any endeavor you undertake. If you are going to start your own business, then be smart about it. Prepare, prepare, prepare. If you have decided to go to medical school, then find out what has to be done. Research, make plans and seek the advice of those that have gone before you.

Looking back, I can't think of one difficult step that we had to take. It flowed effortlessly. I'm not saying that we never faced a challenge, because we did. However, with a plan in our hands, the ability to move forward was much less painful. Moving from one destination to the next, using your map or goals, naturally propels you forward. The Universe will meet you more than halfway, if you'll simply step up to the plate. Focus on your desires—not the desires of others for you. The dreams of others are not your dreams. You are creating your plan and that's what you need to remember. Stick to your passions.

### **Where is My Ship?**

It is feasible that you've followed every instruction I provided and nothing has changed. So what's up? You are still waiting for all the gold, right? You have to

understand that it will take time to turn your negative feelings around. Not only that, but attracting some of the things you want might take more time. You've got years of training to overcome. Basically, you will have to alter your beliefs before changing what you attract. I must confess as I went through this process, I still had trouble steering my bad thoughts away, especially when it involved money. My mind constantly moved to fretting and worrying. Eventually, and for the most part, I succeeded because of my desire to build a different life. It takes time and effort to effectively create change, but if you do so, you will be successful.

I hope you haven't gone through this entire process and still don't know what you want. But, it is VERY possible. I did that for ten long years. I read every self-help and figure-your-life-out book that I could find. I'd gulp down the information, but never seemed to change anything. Remember my earlier confession? I was all over the map, sending out mixed messages about what I wanted, forever changing my mind and consistently focusing on what I didn't want. Persistently, I worried and fretted about what I was supposed to be doing and why I was somehow missing the boat. I call this fear-based living. My fear-based living gave me a decade of confusion and poor results that not only frustrated the heck out of me, but also made me very sad.

I have a little confession to make. Hopefully, it will make you feel better about this entire process. Some days I don't spend fifteen minutes thinking about what I want. I know. I'm falling down on the job. But, I'm sharing this because I want you to understand that you will have good results despite yourself! Having trouble? Simply force yourself to follow the ***Intention Plan*** without worrying about how you feel. I have bad days, too. Actually, there are days I literally have to force myself to go through the process. Truthfully, the biggest job is to counterattack the negative emotions that continually try to sneak out. That was my daily battle. As you gain control over your bad feelings and practically stop the fretting and worrying, the good feelings will come more naturally to you. You have specific desires in your life and you'll think about them whether it's during the 15-minute time or not. So, if you've started the process, keep on doing what you are doing. Eventually, you will find yourself in a totally different place—the place you've always dreamed about.

10/31/99

*Well, I'll be getting my first "little" paycheck this month and I'm a little stressed by the whole thing. I know. This is better. I feel too good for it not to be. I guess in early 2000 I'll be making my next move.*

## **Think Big**

Let's face it. We have a tendency to think small. Even when we create something that initially is way out of our comfort zone, such as our dream job or starting our own business, we still tend to think in very small terms. I challenge you to listen to yourself so

that you know when you need to expand your territory. How do you know when it is time to change, think bigger or move on? It is when you start feeling dissatisfied, frustrated or a little sad. That's your inner guide (intuition) sharing with you that it is time to make a change. The change might be small or it might be major. Possibly, you need only to tweak your current job or business to quiet your voice. Once you start paying attention to your feelings and emotions, you will be surprised at how often you are being urged to expand and do more. Many of us though, don't hear our inner directives anymore because we've buried our feelings so deeply, for so long. That's okay. Simply start paying attention. You could save yourself a lot of heartache by recognizing and honoring your need to change and grow.

2/6/2000

*There's a hopeful part of myself that recognizes my forward motion. I'm getting closer to the carrot. Aren't I?*

### **The Project Notebook**

Now it's time to create your project notebook. If a notebook doesn't work for you, read the material anyway, and create your own means for keeping track of your plans. Use a three-ring binder to organize your projects with dividers to further organize your notebook. Title each section and keep all the information pertinent to your objective. Refer to the worksheet pages in the appendix to help you get started.

For example, for several years I carried around my business plan for my home-based business in my notebook. I'm convinced that our unrelenting focus helped us manifest our résumé and career consulting business. The project notebook is an organized method to keep you on track—providing a visual representation as well as a written plan for attaining your dreams. An alternative method, and actually I used both, is to create your own dream board. I called mine *Dream Catcher*. Cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers or print off photos from the Internet. Arrange and glue your images on a poster board. Use colored markers to complete your visual illustration of your desired life. Hang it somewhere that you often go. I found my walk-in closet to be a private place, but one that allowed numerous viewings throughout the day.

### **The Next Step**

Life is too short to not pursue your dreams. I wasted so much time. Hopefully, after reading this, you are ready to take a step in the direction of your heart.

*What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I'd realized it sooner*

Colette, French writer

Mary Williamson in *A Return to Love* shared with her reading audience: “Do you recall Thoreau's lesson in the art of dream building? I learned this, at least, by my

experiment: ‘that is one who advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.’ As you move through each step of building your dream, you grow not only closer to achieving a harvest you can smell, taste, and feel, but into the eternal harvest of awakening.”

*The field is ready.*

*The seed is good.*

*Your life is willing.*

*Plant, my friend.*

*Your harvest is assured.*

Henry David Thoreau

I recall reading a story about the warring practices of a tribe located in the southwest Pacific. The story serves as a perfect ending to a new beginning. The members of this tribe would travel to islands that they were planning to conquer. After landing on the shore of the new territory, they would burn their boats. They had no ability to return to their home unless they were victorious. Thus, their commitment to meeting their objective was total. To build the life of your dreams, you must commit totally to your goal. Land, burn the boat and return home victorious.

I want you to remember that there is gold in “them thar” hills. Take that last sentence to heart and start to believe that everything you touch will turn to gold. Somewhere along the way, I read: “We need to believe that there *is* gold dust in the air—believing this will bring you much richness.”<sup>1</sup> I most certainly concur. *Yes, there’s gold dust in the air. Believe it!*

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1. Author Unknown

## **Creating Your Project Notebook:**

*My notebook held the projects that I consistently worked on to help me create the life that I desired. My notebook only contained the projects that interested me. Any project identified and placed in the notebook indicated that I would make a diligent effort to complete the project. If I changed my mind and decided that a project no longer interested me, I removed the information from my notebook. Some projects were more important to me than others. Keeping this in mind, I ordered them according to importance.*

## **Suggested Contents of Your “Catch Your Dream” Notebook**

*Page 1:*

List the things that you will eliminate from your life; allow room for the new.

*Page 2:*

Describe in detail your first project. Cut out pictures from magazines or draw your own. Use descriptive words to outline your intent.

*Page 3:*

Project #2

*Page 4:*

Project #3

*Page 5:*

Project #4

*Page 6:*

Project #5

*Page 7:*

Project #6

*Page 8:*

Acquisition Page

**On the final page of your notebook, list all the material things you desire. If possible, attach dates to your purchase goals. For example, I listed my desire for a second home on my acquisition list. I also listed much smaller items like a new laptop and a digital camera. Actually, this list should include anything that you want to buy in the near future. It's your wish list. By making your intentions known, you are one step closer to making a concerted effort to do what it takes to get what you desire.**

## About The Author



Allyn M. Evans is an entrepreneur and author residing in Oklahoma with her husband and seven-year-old daughter. Upon completion of her MBA, Evans worked in higher education and the nonprofit sectors. Later, she co-founded a résumé and career consulting business, which gave her the opportunity to stay at home with her daughter. Following her daughter's first day of school, Evans transitioned from résumé and career consulting to nonfiction writer and hasn't looked back. Currently chasing her next dream, Evans is working on her latest book—*Grab the Queen Power: Live Your Best Life!* (Thus, explaining the tiara she's wearing!)

The book is scheduled for release by Star Publish ([www.starpublish.com](http://www.starpublish.com)) in June 2005.

## Catch Your Dream: And Live it!

Want a sneak peek at what all the fuss is about? Sign up for the Queen-zine by emailing to: [info@queenpower.com](mailto:info@queenpower.com). If you are interested in knowing details (release date, content, or purchase price), please email me at your earliest convenience. Pre-orders are welcomed.

## Contact the Author

I would love to hear from you via email. To contact me or ask questions, please go to [www.queenpower.com](http://www.queenpower.com). Or, email me ([info@queenpower.com](mailto:info@queenpower.com)). For those of you with specific questions, there is a Q&A format.

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