

Make Your Dreams Come True (*)

By Jeanne Loehnis

What is it that you've always wanted to do or create ... and promised yourself that you would do ... when you had the time? What dreams have you stacked on the highest shelf in the basement storage room? What's in that pile that has grown larger over the years as time and energy were consumed by other obligations? When was the last time you invested in a personal dream?

Yes, you do have dreams! Yes, somewhere buried inside there is passion, there is a desire to grow that talent or build that business or take that vacation. But buried deep, underneath years of neglect and mountains of to-dos and responsibilities, "shoulds" and commitments, personal dreams and passion have long since been deemed unrealistic. They've been shelved and forgotten.

Take a moment. Look back. What filled your days when you were a child? A grade school student? What dreams developed in high school that became the vision for your college years? What was it that you were going to do before starting a family? Maybe there is something more recent, a short-term project intended as a wedding gift last year which sits unfinished on the sewing machine.

Whatever your dream, you **can** reclaim it! Come with your dream. Come and journey down a path to discover why it has remained elusive and what steps you can take now to make forward progress and see it fulfilled. Bring along a journal and pen -- or that half-used spiral notebook from your son's history class last year and the colored pencil your daughter left on the living room carpet. Set aside an hour just for you ... open to the possibility ... and come.

First, let's get some clarity around your dream. Poised with writing equipment ready, answer these questions:

- Write, draw, or describe in detail your dream or goal. What will signify completion for you?
- What skills or talents will it take to complete this goal?
- What personal traits will it take to complete this goal?
- When would you like to see this goal realized: next week, month, year, 5 years?
- Be with your dream. Embrace it fully at the core of your being. What does it mean to have fulfilled this dream?

Are you ready to move on?

Whether you know it or not, there are reasons we've abandoned our dreams and that part of ourselves that is the dreamer. Often, something very painful happened and though we learned to cope with the ensuing loss, we didn't truly acknowledge, release, and move on from it. Some message that sidetracked us from our dream got lodged deep inside, and has since blocked us from our dream's fulfillment. Consider these questions:

- When you have attempted forward progress on this dream or a similar one in the past, what disappointments did you encounter from other people, situations, or the world at large?
- What messages did you receive specifically about *this* dream that put a damper on it?
- What criticism have you received *and internalized* around your dream or around the skills and talents that you will require in order to complete this dream?
- Do you still hear messages, now buried within you, that say: "You can't do that." or "How silly!" or "So and so already did that and she's a professional! Stop dreaming!"?
- How do you feel now when you contemplate those messages?

Unfortunately, some of our dreams have been thwarted by persons or organizations that we trusted. Perhaps you went to college to become a writer and poured out your heart and soul in that first poetry assignment. Proud and delighted, excited and hopeful, you turned in your work and instead of praise and encouraging words, you received nothing but a big fat C and mountains of red ink. Momentarily stopped in your tracks, you moved on. Yet, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, and even if dealt with long ago, messages like that C could be the block preventing a next step forward toward your dream today.

- Are there any teachers, parents, spiritual leaders, or significant others in your life who have discounted:
 - your talents and skills – the ones that you need in order to complete this dream?
 - your efforts at developing needed skills and talents?
 - the dream itself?

List each person and the message you heard. Keep in mind that what matters is **what you heard**, not what **you think they intended** or the help that you **want to believe** they were offering.

- Now imagine who you were at the time these damaging messages were delivered. How have you grown in personal, healthy ego strength since then? What do you know now about yourself that would cause you to react differently to the same messages today?

Often we give up on our dreams way too early. We take “no” as the definitive answer from the Universe when something we planned, a step we thought critical, doesn’t work out. Instead of viewing the situation with an attitude of “What can I learn from this?” and “What next step is mine to take?” we quit, sometimes with feelings of intense anger and resentment: “Why does this always happen to me?” And we forget that we are always at choice. The key is to connect with our personal power, release our negativity around the external message, and “take the next step”.

- List anything you believe today is a “closed door” around this dream. What have you tried and now believe is impossible? Around what are you still saying “Why me?”
- Look at your list. Next to each negative, each closed door or impossibility, write one small step that you can take to counteract that message.
- Look at your list of small steps. Which can be done today? This week? This month? By next year?

A word of warning, now, about dreams and goals: if we put all our focus on the end product, we run the risk of missing out on the journey. And, if our focus is on the product, the achievement *in the eyes of the world*, we might find ourselves wallowing in prior successes or focusing only on the “product” that holds value in others’ eyes. We might stop listening to the voice within that encourages us to play and instead listen to outer voices that tell us how silly our dreams are. Focused on process, our creative life retains a sense of adventure. Focused on product, that same creative life can feel foolish or barren.

- List any accomplishments you have already achieved around your goal which you are reliving in order to avoid taking the next “first” step.
- Imagine taking the “next” step and identify and own any fear around it.
- List any people in your life who will laugh at each next beginning step that you take. Are there any? If so, are these people you care about? Are you one of these people?
- If needed, get very specific about some of the steps that you refuse to take. Complete this sentence as often as you need to: If I didn’t think _____ I would try _____.

Finally, everything we ever complete is the result of a series of steps. Everything! Take, for example, the emergency information form you need to complete for your child's school. There's the easy section – parent names and addresses. Then there's the section that requires digging out the medical records and finding the date of that last immunization. And perhaps you need to check in with the neighbor to see if she is willing to be listed as a contact in the event that you are unavailable. As a whole, this form can be daunting. Broken down, each individual piece is manageable. Focus on the whole form, and it's easy to procrastinate. Focus on one section, and it's easy to make progress.

Back to your dream:

- Quickly, create a list of all the steps it will take to fulfill this dream. The list might include: buy this, do that, learn how to do this, advertise, clear a place in the house to make room to do this, throw that away, etc.
- Review your list. Have you missed any steps? Do you need to put your list of steps in a particular order? Can some of them be done at any time or even concurrently?
- Are some of the steps things that you will need to do repeatedly over a period of time: practice daily or write the next page?
- Can you attach a rough time estimate for how long it will take to complete each task? Include the likes of 10 minutes/day or 1 hour/day if that's appropriate.
- What step can you take today?
- What step can you commit to take this week?
- Which steps can be completed yet this year?
- When do you vision completion of this goal or dream?

Everything – EVERYTHING – is accomplished as a series of small steps. Everything we capably do today from reading and writing, to driving or artistic creation, is only doable because, at some point in our lives, we took the small steps to learn a new skill, to begin. Each day represents a new opportunity to “take that next step”. Over time that series of steps amounts to an amazing journey and to completion of a goal. Consider this lyric:

You need only know the first step
then reach out in faith.
The longest journey has a first step ...
each and every day!

from *It Dwells Within*
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Yes, you DO have a dream and your dream is POSSIBLE! What steps will you take *today*?

() This article was based on the work of Julia Cameron in “The Artist’s Way”. The guidance she offers in unblocking creativity is amazing! Be sure to check out the book and consider participating in a 13 week study of its lessons with other like-minded folks. Courses offered through www.SongsForYourSpirit.com.*

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