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15 Tiny Actions to Strip Yourself Bare and Reveal Your Passion

“It is the soul’s duty to be loyal to its own desires. It must abandon itself to its master passion.”
~Rebecca West

In a recent survey, I asked my readers what they most worried about so that I could address those topics on Live Bold and Bloom. There were lots of different answers phrased in a variety of ways. But most of the worries boiled down to this: “I don’t feel passionate about anything. How do I find my passion?”

Is this you? Do you feel passionless—as though everything you do is a shade of dull gray?

- Is work boring or empty, or just plain awful?
- Do you lack adventure and fun in your life?
- Do you feel stuck but have no idea how to get unstuck?

This was me for a long time, and from all appearances I had (and have) a great life. A wonderful family, beautiful kids, a nice home, and a good
career. But something pivotal was missing for me, something that would make me want to jump out of bed in the morning rather than negotiating with myself for ten more minutes of sleep.

I felt empty because I wasn’t great at something, nor did I feel really enthusiastic about anything. I also felt like it might be too late for me—that I was too old to start something new.

In spite of those negative voices in my head, my spirit kept telling me that I did have something valuable to offer the world, something that was fulfilling and joyful which would give me a reason to jump out of bed. And guess what? I did find my passion. I became a coach, a writer, and a blogger. My passion has become helping others find their own! As a result of my own personal journey and work as a coach and passion expert, I created The Path to Passion Course.

I created the course because I know how daunting it can be to find something as elusive as “a passion in life.” A life passion isn’t something that drops on you from the heavens or appears from thin air. Discovering your passion is a process of self-discovery and detective work. It requires stripping yourself bare and examining the “real you.” This is the you without limiting beliefs, old wounds, ego-based pursuits, and fear.

If you want to begin today to bare your true self and reveal your own passion in life, here are 15 small actions you can take to get started:

1. Shift your thinking. If you believe, like I did, that you aren’t great at something, or you don’t feel excited about anything and therefore have no passion—then release that notion. If you believe that you are
too old, reject that falsehood. Those are excuses which will keep you stuck.

2. **Become aware of joy.** Get a small pocket notebook and keep it with you. Keep track of the times when you feel happy and fulfilled. What are you doing when you feel good? Write it down in your notebook. Pay attention to what feels good to you.

3. **Pinpoint the major drag.** What’s causing you the most frustration? Your job? A relationship? Your leisure time? A general lack of purpose? Isolate the primary cause and the elements of it that bring you down.

4. **What were your dreams?** When you were younger, or even now, what did you dream of being, doing, achieving, discovering? Write those down in your notebook. Dredge them up and reignite those dreams.

5. **Acknowledge your skills.** Maybe you aren’t a virtuoso at something, but you have many skills. You may not recognize them as skills, but others do. Ask your friends and family what you are good at—no matter how small. Make a list of your skills, and make note of the skills you really enjoy.

6. **Let go of shoulds.** Many people hold themselves back from happiness because of the word “should.” I should stay in this job because I can’t find a better one. I should become a teacher because my parents want me to. I should not try something new because I’ll look foolish. Dismiss this word from your vocabulary while on your passion search.

7. **Try something new.** Anything. Go for a weekend trip to a new location. Take a class on bird watching or painting or dancing. Strike up
a conversation with someone you don’t know well. Shake up your life a bit. Peep out past your current existence. It will broaden your perspective.

8. Be a voyeur. Investigate someone else who is living an amazing, passionate life. Check out Chris Guillebeau, Steve Chandler, Danielle LaPorte, Carolyn Rubenstein, Mary Jaksch, Leo Babauta, Gretchen Rubin, and Farnoosh Brock. These are all regular people who have learned how to live passionate, adventurous lives.

9. Unlock your past. If you have something holding you back, an old trauma or past anger, do something about it, or you will undermine your efforts at passionate living. How can you live with passion when you have a hole in your heart? Go to a counselor or other helping professional and heal the past so you can create your future.

10. Define your values. What is important to you? What values define you? Your passion must be centered around your primary values so that your life reflects who you are.

11. Sketch out a vision. It’s two years down the road. Who are you now? What are you doing? Start sketching a vision for yourself, as though you have no limitations on who you can be or what you can do. Just pretend for now.

12. Research. Start to create a little curiosity and interest in possibilities. Look online at other careers, or adventurous travel, or free classes. If you’re single, check out eHarmony or Match.com. What do you have to lose?

13. Consider an education boost. You don’t have to go back to get
your MBA to change careers. There are many certification programs that train you to begin something brand new. Check this list of programs. You can browse through more certificate programs here. If you have the time and money, then go for the MBA!

14. Weigh your priorities. Money is often the factor that holds people back from their dreams. If I had to choose between a lot of money but living in mediocrity or living with less money but feeling happy and fulfilled—I would choose the latter. How about you? If so, decide the least amount of money you and your family could live on, and work from there. You might have to move, scale back, live lean. Is it worth it to you?

15. Keep trying. The process of finding my passion took a couple of years. You may have to try a few and eliminate a few things before you discover what feels great. It may creep up on you rather than knocking you in the head. Have patience. Keep digging.

You do have a passion, but you can’t wait for it to come to you. You have to go find it. Actually, you have to uncover it because it’s already with you. If you need help on your journey of revealing your own passion consider my 8-Module course, The Path to Passion.
7 Remarkable Bloggers Reveal Their Passions

“Those who danced were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music.”
~Angela Monet

Editor’s Note: This is part one of a two part series of interviews with amazing bloggers living out their passions.

The notion of discovering one’s passion has plagued and intrigued me for many years. For a long time, I thought I didn’t have a passion—at least not the kind of consuming love of something that fills your days with joyful anticipation and meaning. Happily, I ultimately did discover my passion—a passion for writing, blogging, and coaching. I wake up every day excited about my work and eager to live each moment as though it is a priceless gift.

My journey toward finding my own life passions has been the catalyst for my Path to Passion eCourse. As I created this course, I have talked with some amazing people who are living extraordinary lives and doing things they love every single day.
Several of my blogging friends have been kind enough to share their life passions. I asked them what they were passionate about, and how they discovered their passion. Here’s what they had to say:

Carolyn Rubenstein, A Beautiful Ripple Effect—author, non-profit founder, psychologist, commentator, blogger

I am passionate about translating knowledge into action and action into change. I love dreaming big, coming up with grand ideas, and then determining how to make them possible.

As a teenager, I discovered this passion after visiting a camp for children with cancer. At this camp, I became close with many of my peers who were battling cancer. During that summer, I learned knowledge that changed me and my perspective on life forever. I yearned to help these children beyond that one experience. And while the odds were against me, I didn’t care—I was going to create change regardless of what others said. I was focused and passionate about creating a program that would begin to improve quality of life for children with life threatening illnesses. Within a year after that visit, I founded a non-profit organization focused on this very goal. And this passion has only grown stronger and more powerful. I am now a graduate student in clinical psychology focusing on research that stems from this very early experience.

Simply stated, I discovered my passion by trusting myself wholeheartedly, even when it felt foolhardy and “impossible.” There is a great Dr. Seuss quote that I heard when I was younger and still read to this day, as a reminder to remain open to discoveries and the possibilities within our everyday moments.
“You have brains in your head and feet in your shoes. 
You can steer yourself any direction you choose. 
You’re on your own and you know what you know 
And you are the one who’ll decide where to go.”

**Jules Clancy, Stone Soup—author, food scientist, photographer, runner, minimalist, and blogger**

Good food. I’ve always been excited by cooking and eating. Actually the older I get, I’m becoming more passionate about simple food and have recently pledged to only cook recipes with 5 ingredients or less for the rest of my life. And I’ve just planted a vegetable garden—can’t wait for my first tomatoes!

I went to boarding school at age 11 and had to eat the miserable meals prepared by the nuns. I couldn’t believe how soul destroying this food was compared to the lovingly prepared meals my mum always served. I realized that food was more than just fuel—there was a magic to it. Although I didn’t know where it would lead me, I decided back then to always seek out good food. Actually most of my life decisions have been food related, and I wouldn’t change a thing.

**Chris Guillebeau, The Art of Non-Conformity—world traveler, philanthropist, author, entrepreneur, runner, and blogger**

I have a lot of different passions and don’t like to choose just one. Among others, I like travel, writing, entrepreneurship, running, coffee... and the list goes on. The goal of my work is to help people live unconventional, remarkable lives. I try to tie in a number of topics and passions related to that mission, broadly speaking.
I learned to stop putting arbitrary limits on myself. Once I managed to overcome the expectation to conform to a typical life plan and started doing what I wanted, things got a lot easier. When you start thinking about passion for the first time, it’s always good to start by asking questions of yourself to uncover childhood dreams and so on. But I also think you have to go beyond that and ask things like, “What bothers you about the world?” That kind of thinking—and then looking to create solutions—brings you closer to a real life purpose, I think.

Annabel Candy, *Get In The Hot Spot—internet marketer, entrepreneur, author, speaker, and blogger*

People, writing and travel. I have a lot of passions, but those three things are the root of all of them. For example, I’m totally passionate about helping people succeed online because it combines my two passions for people and writing. The Internet is for people, and I see it is a huge equalizer which allows small business owners to compete equally with major corporations. That really excites me. I love web design and web copy writing, because I always focus 100% on the people who will be using the site or reading it. The technological side of the Internet and social media holds no interest for me. It’s all about the people who use it, and that’s what excites me.

As a child I knew I wanted to be a writer and live by the seaside. For me the problem was having the confidence to pursue my passions, because often our closest friends and family discourage us. For example, my parents told me not to become a writer because it was “too hard.” They could never have anticipated the Internet though. These days writers are in demand, and writing is a key skill in any area.

I recommend writing as a way for people to uncover their passions. I’ve always kept a journal and during tough times journaling has helped
me understand that I was unhappy because I wasn’t following my passions. For people who haven’t discovered their passion, I’d recommend writing and trying new things all the time so you can see what sets your world on fire.

**Katie Tallo, Momentum Gathering—writer, director, mother extraordinaire, blogger**

Writing is my true passion, something I have resisted, turned into a chore, and been lazy with at various times in my life. And yet, I know it’s where I’m most passionate. When I write from my heart, I feel such an intense feeling of joy and inspiration. I know that I’m alive and on this earth for a reason. I know that somehow, some way, through words I am meant to share, serve and honor that gift. I want to use words to inspire change, to insight goodness, to comfort, help and reach people who need words of encouragement and inspiration most.

I was encouraged by teachers and my parents when I wrote well as a child. That gave me the belief, true or not, that I could write. So, I never doubted it. I just wrote. I loved words and studied grammar. I read slowly, absorbing words and sentences. I was always inventing elaborate and dramatic stories. In high school, I was better at English than math, so again, I was told what I was good at and followed that. I received some writing awards in school, wrote screenplays in my twenties and had them made into films, but it took me until my forties to embrace myself fully as a writer.

Up until only very recently, I was writing as a means to an end—to direct and make films. I lost my voice somewhere in that craziness. Then one day, I began daily journal writing and found my voice again. I began a blog and discovered that my passion was writing from my
heart as a means to serve others. Yes, I’d heard the “follow your heart” advice many times, but I’d never felt quite like I deserved to, or could afford to, or knew how to. When I let go what I thought the world wanted me to be and turned what I had always been good at into a heartfelt venture—I discovered my passion.

**Leo Babauta, *Zen Habits*—author, entrepreneur, minimalist, runner, father of six, blogger**

I’m passionate about simplicity. It has made my life better in countless ways. I was inspired by the writings and lives of others—Thoreau, Elaine St. James, Gandhi, and others who I can’t recall but who inspired me nonetheless.

**Jeff Nickles, *My Super-Charged Life*—corporate IT director, consultant, world traveler, adventure lover, blogger**

My passion in life is the pursuit of excellence. It doesn’t matter whether I’m writing about good habits on my blog, parenting my kids, managing my personal finances or fulfilling my role as an IT Director. I want to do my absolute best at it and I want to help others to do the same. This passion in life propels me forward every day. It drives me to learn, grow and keep life exciting.

As Michelangelo said, “Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.” I firmly believe that inside all of us is a masterpiece waiting to be seen. For me, I think my passion has always been there, but I didn’t always recognize it. I think this was mainly because I looked at it all wrong. I always thought my passion needed to be something more specific, but now I embrace my passion for what it is because it helps me excel no matter what I’m trying to do.
What Gets You Out of Bed in the Morning?

“You’ve got a lot of choices. If getting out of bed in the morning is a chore and you’re not smiling on a regular basis, try another choice.”

~STEVEN D. WOODHULL

Editor’s Note: This is second part of my two-part post on remarkable bloggers and their passions.

There have been years in my life when the alarm clock and parental duty put a cold foot in my back and shoved me out of bed in the mornings. Don’t get me wrong, I love my kids and enjoy many parts of parenting. (Some parts, not so much.) But after the three breakfasts and three lunches were prepared, the teeth brushed, the coats buttoned and shoes tied, the next most exciting part of my day back then was emptying the dishwasher.

There are phases in life that involve more chunks of grunt work, struggle, or boredom than others. Child rearing is one of those. As are the times early in your career when you are low man on the totem pole. Or when you find
yourself in the wrong job, or with the wrong person, or just stuck in unhappiness for no apparent reason.

**But being in that phase doesn’t mean you have to stay there or accept that there are no alternatives, even when it appears you are deeply stuck.**

Even small changes and shifts in perspective can generate enough enthusiasm about life to get you out of bed before that cold foot pushes you. Those shifts are possible, but you need to allow yourself the space and time to make them happen.

Many of my blogging friends have found the reason to get out of bed in the morning. Not just get out, but bound out with enthusiasm and passion. They have discovered what makes them come alive. These are regular people who are doing remarkable things with their lives. They have made the shift.

**Perhaps you will see something in their stories that lights the fire of passion in you!**

**Steve Aitchison, Change Your Thoughts—addiction counselor, coach, author, writer, blogger**

My passion in life is writing. It’s a strange kind of passion as I am a reluctant writer, but ideas, articles, concepts, stories keep popping into my head, and they beg to be written. When I get an idea for something to write, I jot it down in a notebook or scrap piece of paper. Sometimes the idea lies dormant, but when I read my notebook, I find some of the ideas are quite good. I think ‘that’s actually quite a good article to
write,’ almost surprised that the idea came from me, which tells me that my mind is in another place when the ideas come to me.

I discovered this passion when I was around 14. At the time I was avidly reading my dad’s Harold Robbins books. When I finished each book, I would make up stories of my own, Harold Robbins style, and type up a synopsis and name the book, with the intention of writing it in full some day. From there I wrote poetry, then started writing short stories, wrote a book based on lucid dreaming adventures, and then discovered the mind. Nothing amazes me more than the human mind, and it’s amazing to write about the powers of the mind in new and different ways.

**Alex Blackwell, The Bridgemaker—Coach, motivator, writer, blogger**

My passion is to share my heart and to touch the hearts of others. I try to share my heart everyday with my wife, children, family, friends and the readers of my blog, by being sincere, honest, and kind. My passion is to improve their lives however I can, and to let them know they are loved and valued.

I discovered my passion when I realized how selfish I had become. On the brink of a divorce, alienated from my children, and generally miserable seven years ago, it took me reaching rock bottom before I could see what my choices were costing me. But with the grace of second chances and the will to become a better person, my passion to serve others was ignited.
Tammy Strobel, *Rowdy Kittens*— *Minimalist, author, freelance writer, designer, blogger*

Living my life to the fullest and following my dreams. Once I created my life list, something magical happened. I started to make my dreams a reality by completing once small task everyday. There is something powerful about the act of writing down your dreams on paper. They feel more tangible and real.

Everett Bogue, *Far Beyond The Stars*— *minimalist, author, coach, speaker, yoga teacher, writer, blogger*

I’m trying to save the world these days. You see, reality as we know it is very much broken. We’ve sitting at home on the couch, watching a television, eating chicken nuggets while popping antidepressants, and we wonder what the hell is wrong. My life right now is dedicated 100% to helping people figure out how to live a life of freedom. By that I mean opting-out of artificial and momentary happiness that’s caused by consumption. How do I do this? By living the life I want other people to live. I have less than 50 things, I can live anywhere in the world, I can travel whenever I want, I work less than 10 hours a week and entirely on the Internet. I show people how to live this life, that is my passion.

I jumped. One day the pain of sitting at a desk became too much. I was getting fat, I was unhappy, I had very little money. So I walked into my boss’s office I said that I was never coming back again. Then I burned bridges—I said I’d never work for anyone again doing anything I wasn’t 100% into. Then I threw away all of my stuff and hopping on a plane. I’ve been living this way ever since.
Cristina Coli, Positively Beauty—artist, interior designer, relaxed aesthete, writer, and blogger

If I look back to my childhood, my passions were already there, all lined up for me. I loved creating: cookies, imaginary worlds, doll’s houses, drawings, paintings, journals... I loved beauty. I was curious and passionate about learning, and enjoyed sharing my finds and knowledge with others. I’ve always had a gift for explaining complicated or abstract concepts in a simple way, and simply loved it when I could get my message through. A few decades later, I’m still passionate about the same things: The exploration & appreciation of creativity. The exploration and appreciation of beauty. The desire to learn and share what I know, to empower others and make a difference. I believe that sharing is key to evolution.

It took me many years to accept that I have multiple passions. For a long time, when I thought of passion, I thought of an artist—a painter, a writer, a dancer, an actor...someone consumed by one single flame, one single activity, who dedicated all her time pursuing this activity. This proved to be a notion that hindered me. No matter how many things I tried, I eventually got bored and moved on to something new. Through my constant search for the creative outlet that was to become “my true passion,” I realized that I couldn’t just pick one and stick with it. What was wrong with me? Once I let go of the limiting belief that I should have one single, immutable passion, I could finally embrace who I am, and all my passions. This led me to start a blog, and write about what I love. My blog is evolving with me, and it’s given me many ideas for new projects and new ways to explore creativity. It’s a beautiful journey, and it’s bringing me closer to many wonderful, diverse souls. And who knows, maybe it’ll also help me discover new passions!
Manal Ghosain, One With Now—financial analyst, simplicity enthusiast, composer, writer, and blogger

Currently I would describe my passion as follows: Inspiring others to live an authentic and peaceful life through music and writing. Being financially free and a successful investor.

From my personal experience, I learned that you need a combination of self-examination and action to uncover what brings you true joy in life. I worked with various programs and tests to determine what I am good at and what I enjoy doing. Then it was time for action or trial and error. I started doing things until I knew it was something I enjoyed doing or needed to give up. At the beginning, I had a hard time thinking of things I enjoyed doing that didn’t make a difference in other people’s lives like being financially free. Then I realized that the best way to inspire others is to live from your heart and do what you enjoy. I also learned that our passion may change over time and that is okay. Just listen to your own inner guidance. Go through another round of assessment if you feel the need, and follow your heart. But be careful not to fall into the trap of analysis paralysis and get stuck in self doubt. Take action no matter how unsure you are.
Stop Searching and Look In Your Hand

“Life is a succession of moments. To live each one is to succeed.”
~Coreta Kent

Have you ever lost your keys and searched the entire house only to realize you’ve been holding them all along? Or maybe your glasses have disappeared, until someone points out they are on the top of your head? There’s a mixture of relief and embarrassment when that happens. You might wonder, “How could I fail to see what is right in front of me?”

A reader recently commented asking if I had any “unifying insight beyond all the topics I deal with.” Yes, and it’s this. We are all seekers for something we think is missing, but in reality, that something is right in our hands. Whatever it is that we think is “out there” to make our lives better and happier isn’t there. It’s right here, right now.

Your happiness is completely in your control by the way you choose to live this very moment.
Life is a series of “right now’s.” Think back on times that you looked forward to an event, a new relationship, a fancy new thing. Then you got it, whatever it was that you dreamed of and thought about constantly. Maybe it was wonderful for a while, but then it became old news. It let you down, it broke, it didn’t hold your interest any longer. And then you felt just like right now.

So you were off to the next thing that you thought would make you happy. You focused attention and energy on this new next thing until you did or didn’t get it. In this way, life becomes an endless cycle of seeking, acquiring, becoming dissatisfied, and seeking again. The only constant is the cycle. Happiness hinges on that brief time of acquisition, and unhappiness is certain if you don’t get it.

**But what if it were the other way around? What if the only constant were happiness,** and life events, good or bad, only moderately impacted your sense of joy and fulfillment in life? Imagine getting off the treadmill of seeking and simply *lived* in a state of happiness.

In her book, *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*, psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky reveals that we are in control of our state of happiness. She suggests that 50% of our happiness quota is genetic. Some people are just born happier than others. Only 10% is related to circumstances—our finances, relationships, careers, stuff, etc. But 40% is in our control. And that’s where we should put our time and attention. That’s enough to make a profound difference in how we feel right now.

Dr. Lyubomirsky discovered that three pursuits make the greatest difference in our feelings of happiness and fulfillment in life:
1. **Consistent positive thinking and focusing thoughts on pleasant memories or ideas.**

2. **Thinking about and expressing gratitude to yourself and to others.**

3. **Regularly performing acts of kindness and altruism.**

None of this should be a surprise. It sounds like advice your grandmother told you or that you see on bumper stickers. It’s something you’ve known all along—like lost keys in your hand. The real key is putting these things into practice and switching them up enough so that you exercise different parts of the mental happiness muscle.

**So what does this all mean specifically for you?**

It means using *this moment* to put these things into action. I’m not suggesting you stop working toward acquiring things or relationships or whatever. But I am suggesting that you spend less time focused on outcomes and more time focused on the moment. I’m also suggesting that you spend more of those moments in actions that support the three pursuits I mention above: positive thinking, gratitude and kindness. Here are some ideas to do just that:

**Exercise Mind Control**

- *Take five minutes to mentally re-live a wonderful memory. Visualize the entire scene in your head and feel the feelings that this event created. Do this often.*

- *Put a rubber band on your arm, and when your mind falls in a cycle of negative thinking, snap the rubber band. Force yourself to switch gears and think positively or focus on something else.*
• Start the practice of meditation, even for only five minutes a day.

• Stay focused on the task at hand, whatever it is. Snap the rubber band if you drift.

• Take small actions for change, and then savor and acknowledge the step forward. Write it down in an accomplishment book. Fill the pages with all of the beautiful small actions that comprise your life. It’s the actions, not the result, that bring the most joy.

• Stop worrying so much. The odds are greatly in your favor that you won’t have to beg, starve, suffer or die today, tomorrow or this year.

Start Your Day With Gratitude

• Wake up thankful for a new day. You are alive and have a fresh start.

• Be grateful for a warm shower, clean clothes, a comfortable home.

• Delight in the abundance of food you have. Savor the tastes of your meal.

• Acknowledge the love and support of your family and friends.

• Look out the window or walk outside and soak in the beauty all around you.

• Be happy for your work, paid or unpaid, that gives your life order and direction and hopefully fulfillment.
• Remind yourself that you have the intelligence and ability to make your life even better every day.

• Throughout the day, acknowledge all that you do have rather than focusing on what you don’t.

Be Kind and Give to Others

• Think less about your problems and look for ways to reach out to others.

• Do something kind anonymously. Pay for a stranger’s meal. Leave a nice note for someone. Put a flower in a friend’s mailbox.

• Listen.

• Sincerely thank the service workers who take care of your mail, groceries, yard, newspaper, garbage, etc.

• Speak the compliment when it comes to your mind.

• Be a mentor.

• Every day express your love to those you love. Find out what makes them happy and try to do that for them more often.

• If you live to be 90, you have a total of 32,850 days on Earth. How many days do you have left? Each moment is a gift. Don’t spend it worrying, hoping, wishing for a different future. Spend it in this moment, the one in your hand.
8 Great Thinkers Whose Words Have Changed My Life

“The hardest way of learning is that of easy reading; but a great book that comes from a great thinker is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth and beauty.” ~PABLO NERUDA

Inspiration appears in many forms, but for me it most often graces me from the pages of books. I am a seeker. Maybe you are too. I crave the “truth” about the nature of life and our human existence, whatever that truth may be.

This truth is constantly evolving and expanding as I read more, learn more, and open my mind and heart to all of the amazing and transformational ideas and insights that the world’s great thinkers offer to us through their writing.

There are some thinkers and authors whose words have had a profound impact on me, shifting the way I view the world and live my life. I’d like to share some of their words with you.
**Deepak Chopra—Doctor, public speaker, best-selling author on spirituality, mind-body medicine, and Ayurveda**

- If you want to reach a state of bliss, then go beyond your ego and the internal dialogue. Make a decision to relinquish the need to control, the need to be approved, and the need to judge. Those are the three things the ego is doing all the time. It’s very important to be aware of them every time they come up.

- Meditation is not a way of making your mind quiet. It is a way of entering into the quiet that is already there—buried under the 50,000 thoughts the average person thinks every day.

- Each of us is here to discover our true Self. . . that essentially we are spiritual beings who have taken manifestation in physical form. . . that we’re not human beings that have occasional spiritual experiences. . . that we’re spiritual beings that have occasional human experiences.

- Whatever relationships you have attracted in your life at this moment, are precisely the ones you need in your life at this moment. There is a hidden meaning behind all events, and this hidden meaning is serving your own evolution.

- You and I are essentially infinite choice-makers. In every moment of our existence, we are in that field of all possibilities where we have access to an infinity of choices.

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**Eckhart Tolle—best-selling writer, public speaker, and spiritual teacher**

- Some changes look negative on the surface but you will soon realize that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge.
• The whole essence of Zen consists in walking along the razor’s edge of NOW—to be so utterly, so completely present that no problem, no suffering, nothing that is not who you are in your essence, can survive in you.

• Give up defining yourself—to yourself or to others. You won’t die. You will come to life. And don’t be concerned with how others define you. When they define you, they are limiting themselves, so it’s their problem. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it.

• The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but thought about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking. Separate them from the situation, which is always neutral. It is as it is.

• A genuine relationship is one that is not dominated by the ego with its image-making and self-seeking. In a genuine relationship, there is an outward flow of open, alert attention toward the other person in which there is no wanting whatsoever.

• To offer no resistance to life is to be in a state of grace, ease, and lightness. This state is then no longer dependent upon things being in a certain way, good or bad. It seems almost paradoxical, yet when your inner dependency on form is gone, the general conditions of your life, the outer forms, tend to improve greatly.

**Kahlil Gibran—artist, poet, and writer**

• Your children are not your children.
  They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.
  They come through you but not from you,
  And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
  You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

- Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

**Wayne Dyer—counselor, best-selling author, speaker**

- Stop acting as if life is a rehearsal. Live this day as if it were your last. The past is over and gone. The future is not guaranteed.
- All blame is a waste of time. No matter how much fault you find with another, and regardless of how much you blame him, it will not change you. The only thing blame does is to keep the focus off you when you are looking for external reasons to explain your unhappiness or frustration. You may succeed in making another feel guilty about something by blaming him, but you won’t succeed in changing whatever it is about you that is making you unhappy.
- You are always a valuable, worthwhile human being—not because anybody says so, not because you’re successful, not because you make a lot of money—but because you decide to believe it and for no other reason.
- There is no scarcity of opportunity to make a living at what you love; there’s only scarcity of resolve to make it happen.

**Thich Nhat Hahn—Buddhist monk, author, poet, teacher, and peace advocate**

- When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers
deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. That’s the message he is sending.

- People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

- Through my love for you, I want to express my love for the whole cosmos, the whole of humanity, and all beings. By living with you, I want to learn to love everyone and all species. If I succeed in loving you, I will be able to love everyone and all species on Earth . . . This is the real message of love.

- Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the world earth revolves—slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future.

**Jack Kornfield**—Buddhist teacher, clinical psychologist, best-selling author

- This life is a test—it is only a test. If it had been an actual life, you would have received further instructions on where to go and what to do. Remember, this life is only a test.

- There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them, caused them suffering, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my pain, fear, anger, and confusion.

- As we encounter new experiences with a mindful and wise attention, we discover that one of three things will happen to our new experience: it will go away, it will stay the same, or it will get more intense. Whatever happens does not really matter.
Steve Chandler—coach, speaker, author, and teacher

• The best way to change your belief system is to change your belief about you. What you actually do is more important that what you say you’ll do.

• Therefore, from now on, I want to choose ONE THING from the list of things that need to be done, and then do that one thing as if that were the only thing. If it’s a phone call, then I need to slow down and relax and let myself be in a good, focused mood so that the phone call will be a complete experience, and the recipient and I can be upbeat afterward.

• Optimism is a tool for opening your thought and energy to new possibilities for action. It is NOT a result of outside circumstances and feeling empathy for others. Optimism is a tool for thinking that can be used any time. It is not a feeling. Most people think optimism is a feeling that comes and goes, and that’s why they never know how to use it. Optimism is an effective tool like a shovel is if you are going to dig a pool in your yard. You never ask, “How do I feel like a shovel?” You use one or you don’t.

• Love operates in the universe in a very mathematical way. Whatever gets put in to one side of the equation shows up on the other. Maybe not right away and maybe not in the same place you put it, but love always comes back. People who have great relationships in life have a relationship to the idea of love that’s very pro-active. They experience love as something they can create. Something that they can build into their lives to whatever degree they wish.
Eric Butterworth—Unity minister, best-selling author, lecturer

• Prosperity is a way of living and thinking, and not just money or things. Poverty is a way of living and thinking, and not just a lack of money or things.

• Real life isn’t made up of great success and great failure, but of an infinite number of levels of living in between. And true greatness depends more on inner overcomings than on outer achievements.

• Life for the whole person is a giving process. We are not talking specifically about church giving, giving to charity, etc. There are many channels through which your giving may be funneled. We are talking about attitudes toward life, the basic awareness that life is a matter of developing or unfolding from within. It is knowing that life is not something to get but something to express.

• Prosperity books use as examples tycoons such as Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie to illustrate how you too can become a millionaire. The fact is, these people did not set out to make money at all. In each case there was the sudden or progressive unfoldment of an idea, which in turn was translated into automobile plants and steel mills. The real substance that made it all possible was ideas. Ideas are the flowing forth into mind of the wealth of the Universe.

If you would like recommendations for some of my favorite books and authors, please check out this page for a complete list.
Want More Love In Your Life? Find Your Passion First

“You don’t have to go looking for love when it’s where you come from.” ~Werner Erhard

What would you do to find more love in your life? Here’s a little story about the power of love that has led us to our annual February celebration of love and passion—Valentine’s Day.

In the heyday of the Roman Empire, the Lupercian Festival was held every February to honor the god of fertility. It was a passionate month in which young men would choose their marriage mates. The Emperor Claudius, fearing men would abandon their military duty to pursue their passions, outlawed marriage.

The Catholic Bishop Valentine, who had untapped passions of his own, began to secretly marry young couples in love. Claudius arrested him and sentenced him to be beheaded. While in prison, Valentine fell in love with the jailer’s daughter. On the day of his execution, he wrote her one last note and signed it: “from your Valentine.” He literally lost his head over love.

You don’t have to lose your head for love. But you do need to find your
passion. I’m not referring to that kind of passion. You need to discover your passion for life, for yourself, for the world around you.

A person who has discovered their passion is irresistibly attractive to others. You have met them before—people who exude a sense of joie de vivre. They have a natural joy and enthusiasm that permeates their entire being and impacts everyone around them.

The art of being irresistibly attractive to others requires that we do something which can be quite difficult. It requires us to love and respect ourselves enough to live to our fullest potential—to discover and live our passion.

Only when we see ourselves as lovable and embrace our own authentic qualities, needs, ideas, values, and personality traits, do we release the pheromones of attractiveness to others. Although not everyone will be intrigued by your authenticity, those who are attracted to you will generally be emotionally intelligent, mature individuals who value genuine and unaffected relationships.

The quality of the relationships and love we attract is a reflection of the quality of life we choose for ourselves. So ask yourself, are you living to your fullest potential? Have you discovered your passion in life?

If not, or if you feel there is more to life than what you are living right now, then I invite you to try this brief exercise from the comfort of your chair.

As you are reading this post, step outside of yourself for a moment, and become the detached observer of your life. Mentally view the various aspects of your life—your career, your relationships, your finances, your health, your lifestyle, your home, and your life balance. As you
do this mental review, become aware of the places where your life is deeply fulfilling and joyful.

Then become aware of areas of ambivalence and mediocrity—not bad, but not great. And finally, take a look at the areas in which your life is depleting you and making you restless and unhappy.

As you begin to craft a life that has more of what is deeply fulfilling and joyful, and less of the mediocre and depleting, you will not only attract, but demand, relationships in your life that equally fulfilling and joyful. So how does one go about discovering a passion and living it daily? From my own experience, I see this as a very strategic process. It is not always a linear process, but by following specific steps, you will be able to make enough small change for the better to generate the momentum to make the really big changes. Here’s an outline of what’s involved:

**Know Thyself.** You need to understand what makes you tick, what motivates you, where you get your energy, how you perceive the world and others. Most of us don’t take the time to learn more about our personalities and why we behave and operate in the world the way we do. When you have that clarity about yourself, it helps you focus on what is natural and right for who you really are—not who you wish you were or who others want you to be. One of the best ways to start this process is through personality assessments, like the Myers Briggs test.

**Define Your Qualities.** You might have a general idea of your skills, values and interests, but have you really dug deep to determine which of those are imperative in your life? Determining the values that define you, the skills that enjoy (not just those that you are good at), and the interests that are fulfilling and fun, allows you to be creative and focused in how and where you spend your time and energy.
Create Your Roadmap. Once you’ve gotten to know yourself better and defined what is really important to you, then you can begin to create a vision for your life. By outlining a rough life vision, based on your personality, values, skills, and interests, you will begin to feel your life has a purpose and mission. As you explore the many possible details of this vision, your purpose and mission will become more and more clear to you.

Remove the Roadblocks. As you work toward defining the specific elements of your life vision, you may encounter emotional roadblocks that prevent you from taking the actions you need to take to make your vision real. Limiting beliefs, life imbalance, unresolved issues, and emotional reactions can prevent you from discovering your passion if you don’t address them.

Shift Your Mind. The more you learn about yourself, you will begin having profound “ah ha” moments. Previous ways of thinking will be challenged. Things that you once accepted will no longer be acceptable. You will want to address unmet needs and remove tolerations from your life that have been sapping your energy and attention. Your perspective on what is good and right for you will open up.

Create Your Plan. The last part of the process of discovering your passion is creating an action plan based on all you have learned about yourself. Based on all of the information you have gathered, there may be several options. You may have to travel down a few paths before you find the perfect road. That is normal and part of the learning experience. But armed with the self awareness and growth you have experienced, you will find your way and live a passionate life. Be patient and kind to yourself.
The One Question.  
Do You Have The Answer?

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”  
~Henry David Thoreau

When it all boils down to our deepest longing, our most fervent desires, and our greatest fears, we all seek the answer to one question.

What is my purpose in life?

This isn’t something we think about daily, but it’s in our daily actions nevertheless. Everything we do, every decision we make is a striving, a hope to have the answer to this unspoken question. Even the most faithful, the most optimistic, the happiest among us has at some point wondered if the bumper sticker, “Life is hard and then we die,” actually proclaims the truth.

We work to survive, but we also work to express our creativity, to find fulfillment, to serve others, to create a lifestyle, to have power, to impress others, to buy more stuff. And thus we seek purpose.
We have relationships to procreate, but we also form bonds for affection, sex, companionship, prestige, intimacy, obligation, stability, love, happiness. And thus we seek purpose.

We embrace religion because our parents guided us, but we also seek it because of longing, comfort, faith, hope, connection, peace, obligation, fear, desperation, love, confusion. And thus we seek purpose.

In all that we do, whether or not we are aware of it, we are trying to carve out a meaningful existence in a world of confusion.

The awareness of the certainty of death, the lack of physical evidence of an afterlife, the reality of human suffering, the contradictions and hypocrisies of world religions, the randomness of life events—these all conspire to pull the rug out from under us and shake our faith in human superiority and divine intelligence. What makes us different from the lowly ant? We are born. We live. We die.

I have been thinking about these things for most of my adult life. I am a seeker. I have had faith, and it has been shaken. I have sought truths, only to learn that my truth isn’t The Truth. I have plunged my stake in the ground of certain knowledge, only to watch the earth move and rumble and the stake give way into the abyss.

I now admit, I “know” nothing, but I cannot give up on seeking. I no longer seek for The Answer. I seek for the pleasure of seeking. I have learned to embrace mystery, ambiguity, uncertainty. I accept that it may be, it may not be. It is real, it is an illusion. There are nuggets of truth and beauty even in allegories and fairy tales. I can be happy with that. In fact, I think I like it.
So I come back to the question—what is my purpose in life?

My purpose is to use this very moment, this “right now”—
- to serve
- to grow
- to create
- to learn
- to love
- to connect
- to seek
- to explore
- to sow peace
- to simply be

**My purpose is to love this moment so much that everything I do is an expression of that love.** If I can do this most of the time, if I can just remember—“this is your moment, this is your purpose right now, so don’t let it slip by,” then I will have lived a meaningful life.
12 Pampery Indulgent Things That Are So Worth It, Even If You’re Simplifying

“If you obey all the rules you miss all the fun.”
~KATHERINE HEPBURN

I don’t know anyone who hasn’t at least thought about scaling back and simplifying their lives. In fact, most folks have been forced to cut back because of this unnerving economy. In my own community, I’ve watched as some of my favorite boutique stores and restaurants have shut their doors. Car dealers for luxury vehicles are now standing on street corners wearing clown suits and sandwich signs to entice us to buy bling that is no longer a status symbol.

People who once had lives of excess now must prioritize their spending and rethink their life purpose. There are others who always lived on the financial edge and are now truly suffering. Most of us are somewhere in between. For myself, I no longer find much enjoyment from spending money on unnecessary stuff. It almost feels tawdry.

All of us have had to re-frame our thinking about what’s important in life.
If you spent the 80’s and 90’s chasing your tail and accumulating glittery things, you have probably smacked up against an existential wall in recent years. At least once, haven’t you thought, “There’s got to be more than this?” Hence, all of the blogs and articles about simplicity, personal growth, minimalism, and economizing.

As I have given away my padded-shoulder power suits, simplified my home, and cleared away a lot of the physical clutter of my life, I’ve also reclaimed parts of my lifestyle that are really worth salvaging. Scaling back is essential, but we don’t want to throw away the baby with the bath water.

I embrace the reality that sustained happiness comes from within. But if we are honest, there are some indulgences that do bring enough pleasure to justify the expense (if it’s within your budget).

Here’s my list of indulgences, and maybe you share some of these. I’d love to hear from you about the pampery things that you treasure, even as you practice the art of simplifying your life.

1. **Massage**
   If you have ever had a massage from a really good massage therapist, this will probably be on your list too. At $60-$80 a pop, I don’t do this often, but it is such a delectable treat. I leave the office like a boneless woman. Usually there is drool on my face and massage oil in my hair. I don’t care. Ahhh. It’s the best.

2. **Coaching/Mentoring/Counseling**
   If you are trying to overcome something, deal with something, or make your life better, hiring a professional will get you there faster—no doubt
about it. Asking for help to improve your life is one of the best ways you
can spend your money. Do you research and find someone who has a
strong track record with people you respect.

3. A Really Good Meal Out
When my children were small, we suffered through many mediocre
meals at fast food restaurants or kid friendly places like Chiles or Ap-
plebees. I’d rather eat out less often, but enjoy an outstanding meal
where the cuisine is something I couldn’t or wouldn’t prepare at home.
The ambiance has to be right too. And the wine. And the service. (Not
picky, am I ?)

4. Tickets To Your All-Time Favorite Band or Performance
My 16-year-old son loves the musician called Deadmau5 (pronounced
Dead Mouse). He talked about a recent concert for months prior to
the event, and saved his money to buy the ticket. He even spent weeks
creating a paper mache mouse head to wear to the concert. If you have
that kind of passion about a group or performer, by all means, buy a
ticket and see a performance. You won’t forget it. There’s nothing like
a live performance.

5. Travel
This one is way up there for me. I love going to new places, seeing new
scenery and the way other people live. I also crave natural beauty and
impressive landscapes. I would start selling items of furniture in order
to travel if I had to. Not only is travel just plain thrilling, but also it ex-
pands you as a person and makes you far more interesting!

6. Expensive Shoes
I’m not talking about a fetish here. You don’t have to be Imelda Marcos,
but owning one or two pair of really good shoes is eye-opening. If you’ve
ever spent the day with your feet crammed into a pair of cheap heels or heavy oxfords, you know precisely what I mean. A well-constructed pair of shoes is like liberating your feet from tortuous bondage.

7. Good Equipment For Your Hobby
If you have a hobby or activity that you are passionate about, then get the proper equipment so that you can enjoy the hobby to the fullest. I used to play a lot of tennis—badly. I told myself that I couldn’t have a new racket until I improved. I was using a wooden racket from the '70’s. I didn’t improve. Hmm. Once I got a racket that didn’t have a 3-inch string diameter, I was able to actually hit the ball.

8. Books
I know the Kindle and it’s newer cousins are the most convenient and least expensive way to purchase and read books. But I like books. Real books with covers and pages and inky words. I like holding them. I like the smell of them. I like the way they are stacked up next to my bed. Books make me happy.

9. Nice Sheets And A Great Pillow
I’m sorry, but polyester sheets feel like you are cocooned in a canvas bag. When the sheets make noise every time I move in bed, I know that natural fibers have left the room. Real cotton sheets and a squishy, down (or allergy-free fake downy stuff) pillow are just a little slice of heaven.

10. A Good Haircut
A couple of weeks after my first child was born, I went to a Super Cuts or Cuts Are Us (one of those drive-through hair places). I came out looking like a squirrel with one inch bangs. A fat, milky squirrel with raging hormones. If a haircut comes with a key chain or free car wash,
run for the hills. With cuts or color, most of the time you get what you pay for.

11. A Cushy Chair
Do you have that one piece of furniture that you can really sink into, throw your legs over, or better yet fall asleep in? I’ve seen lots of man chairs, usually a recliner of some kind. I prefer the female version—a club chair that swivels and has a tall back. An ottoman must accompany it.

12. A Laptop
For the longest time, I really resisted getting a laptop. I already have a computer on my desk, and I didn’t want to be tempted to work all the time. Plus, it seemed excessive. Well, I’m a blogger. So if I wanted to travel anywhere for more than a day or two, I was scrambling to find a computer to update my blog. My laptop gives me peace of mind and convenience.

Savor the small or big things that you allow yourself from time to time to add joy, fun, convenience, or comfort to your life. We all have them, even as we are trying to scale back. Sometimes it’s ok to break the rules a bit and treat yourself to a pampery indulgence. It’s the spice that gives flavor to the stew!
21 Secrets To Having The Life You Want

“Promise me you’ll always remember: You’re braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”

(Christopher Robin to Pooh) ~A. A. Milne

Who is in the driver’s seat of your life? Your job? Your family? The changing winds of life circumstances? Please stop what you are doing right now and ask yourself, “Is my life the way I want it to be?” If not, I invite you to jump in the driver’s seat of your life and take control.

Easier said than done, right? It feels impossible to take control when you are stuck in a job you hate but have to pay the bills. Or when you can’t find a job. Or when you know your friends or family will reject you if you choose your own path. Life can sometimes be like a sticky spider’s web—the more you struggle against it, the more stuck you become. As a coach, part of my work with clients is to help them find a way to get unstuck. Not only to get unstuck, but also to creatively design their own web of life. To hop in the driver’s seat, grab the wheel and take off. Yes, life does have limitations, some of which are unchangeable. But a very
large percentage of our lives is in our control—enough to profoundly impact how fulfilled and happy we feel on a daily basis. Just knowing that you have some control is enough to change your perspective from hopeless to optimistic.

**The very first step toward creating the life you want is to become a blank slate.** Allow yourself to be open to some new ways of thinking, a different perspective. When you begin to make small shifts in your thinking, you open big doors for ideas and opportunities.

**Here are 21 ideas to swirl around in your mind—ideas that might shift your thinking to begin creating the life you want!**

1. **Understand that sustained happiness rarely comes from outside circumstances.** Your wealth, beauty, power, or acquisitions have far less to do with happiness than your appreciation for what you have this very moment and your loving relationships with others.

2. **You can live your life by design,** but you must acknowledge your power in that, plan for it, and take the necessary actions.

3. **You can’t have it all, but you can have enough to be very happy.** Prioritize and focus on the top 3 or 4 most important areas of your life.

4. **Stop focusing on what you don’t have or don’t like.** Focus on what you do have and do like, and create a plan for what you think you can improve and change.

5. **Abandon perfectionism.** It is a useless pursuit with no end. It creates stress and unhappiness. Learn to find the balance point between good enough and peaceful living.
6. **Put your own deepest needs first.** If you are living for others before yourself and pushing your own needs aside, eventually you will crumble in some way—through depression, anger, anxiety or destructive behaviors.

7. **Your choices may disappoint or offend others.** That is sometimes necessary in order to grow and live authentically. Those who love you and want the best for you will accept and support you.

8. **Count your blessings.** You probably already have many of the things you want for your life. Don’t take them for granted.

9. **Address personal issues head-on.** Don’t use these as an excuse for not having what you want in life. If you have a wound, a personality or relationship problem, or an anxiety, go to a counselor and work on it. Resolve it.

10. **Pick one small problem or irritation and resolve it.** Feel how much personal power and energy that gives you. Imagine how it would feel to resolve one of your bigger problems or concerns.

11. **Consider disengaging from people who bring you down or drain your energy.** Build relationships with people who are positive, action-oriented, and supportive.

12. **Pick the one change that would make the biggest positive difference in your life.** Begin visualizing your life with this change implemented. Practice this regularly throughout the day.

13. **Take this one step further** and begin writing some specific action steps that might help make this change happen.
14. **Strengthen your strengths.** Make yourself indispensable in your area(s) of interest and expertise.

15. **Always leave time for fun.** Make fun happen in your life.

16. **Don’t neglect your relationships.** Don’t take them for granted. Find out what makes your loved ones happy, and do that for them.

17. **Learn to let it go.** Worry is the most fruitless expenditure of energy on the planet. Very little is worth worrying about. If you must do something, take action instead.

18. **Don’t assume that you can’t do something.** Prove that you can’t, and if so, try something else.

19. **More often than not, your fear is the culprit for inaction.** More often than not, your fears are unfounded or at least out of proportion. More often than not, your fear will go away once you take action.

20. **Focus on the task at hand.** When you feel overwhelmed and pulled in many directions, just pick an important thing and do it without distraction. Then do another one.

21. **Life is short.** You have a limited number of days on this Earth. There isn’t time to waste your days in worry, anger or frustration. Make the most of this moment and the next and the next and the next . . .

If you want to have a wonderful life, spend your days in positive, forward-moving action and thought. Dismiss your longings for what you don’t have. Enjoy the actions as much or more than the outcomes. **The real secret to having the life you want is learning to love the life that you have.**
Fake Your Way to Greatness: A Ten Step Plan

“Acting is all about honesty. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made.” ~George Burns

Do you have any idea how great you are? Have you shared your excellence with the rest of the world?

After 25 years as a public relations professional, I became pretty good at promoting other people to make them look good. But it took me a much longer time to figure out how to do that for myself.

Take a look at yourself and your feelings about your accomplishments. Do you undermine or devalue your abilities? Even worse, maybe you constantly question whether you have talent or could ever be successful.
Do you zero in on the things you don’t do well and compare yourself to all of the brilliant people who appear far more talented and successful?

We humans have a strangely counterproductive way of focusing on what we don’t have or can’t do. We tumble negative thoughts around in our brains, poking and prodding them until they swell and become gigantic brain boils that leech our energy and self-esteem. Dwelling on what we lack does not make us more successful. It drags us down and stifles creativity.

“All well and good,” you might think, “but telling me to stop thinking about it doesn’t change the way I feel.” I get that. And friend, I’ve been there too. You can have a million people telling you you’re brighter than a light bulb, but if you don’t feel it and believe it, success always seems elusive.

Here’s the secret to embracing your own greatness: fake it.

Remember that famous scene in the movie When Harry Met Sally when Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan are in the diner? Harry (Billy) doesn’t believe that Sally (Meg) could realistically fake a—well, you know. Sally gives the performance of a lifetime, then nonchalantly takes a bite of her sandwich, while one of the shocked onlookers tells the waitress, “I’ll have what she’s having!” Sally proved that you don’t have to actually feel it in order to be convincing.

You don’t have to re-create Sally’s performance, but you can fake feelings in a positive and ethical way to jump start energy and enthusiasm.
You can act “as if” until the ruse becomes the reality. And amazingly, with consistent practice, the ruse really will become reality.

Thoughts are the parents of feelings. And thoughts plus action dramatically reinforce those feelings. If you consistently focus your thoughts on what you can’t do or don’t have, you will surely feel like a loser. Now, reinforce those negative thoughts with actions, like avoiding people or resisting new challenges, and you might as well pour cement over your feet.

However, if you use that remarkable brain of yours to switch gears entirely and pretend to feel confident and successful, the real feelings will eventually follow. Back up the pretense with action, and you are strapping a Hemi engine to your potential for positive change and success.

With consistent practice, faking it actually tricks the brain into believing it.

Well, it actually starts re-routing neural pathways to the area of the brain that supports happiness and confidence. (Check out this article on the science of neuroplasticity.) The more you think about success and act successful, even if you don’t feel it, the more successful you will become.

Here are some kick-start ideas to support you in faking your way to greatness:

1. Start today. Make a commitment to yourself right now that you will begin implementing these actions, and work on them regularly for the next six weeks. It takes consistency and practice to turn your thinking around. What do you have to lose?
2. **Assess your strengths.** Get pen and paper and write down *everything* you can do relatively well. Can you cook? Are you a good listener? Are you well-read? Have you coached your kid’s team? Are you organized? What may seem meaningless to you could be something that others perceive as a real gift. Ask someone close to you to offer feedback on this. Just doing this writing exercise will shift your toward more positive thinking.

3. **Harness and re-frame negative thinking.** When you start to feel down about yourself and the negative thinking begins, drop a brick wall in your your flow of thoughts. Literally say, “stop” out loud, and use mental force to interrupt the negative thinking cycle. Then re-frame the thoughts to make them positive. Instead, focus on the can-do list you just created or other positive thoughts or memories.

4. **Separate your higher self from your ego self.** It’s your ego that wraps you up in negative and fearful thinking. Your higher self knows better. Your higher self knows that you are capable and worthy. Mentally step outside of your ego and become your own best friend. Listen to the kind and supportive words of your friend—not your ego. Your ego may try to tell you your friend is lying, but ignore that ego. He or she is bad news.

5. **Become your own publicist.** A publicist presents their client in the best and most positive light possible. They draw attention to the client’s abilities and successes in an interesting way. Pretend that you are your own client. If you were promoting this client, what would you say? How would you put your best foot forward? What skills and talents are you ignoring or downplaying that might be worthwhile to others?
6. **Write your bio and elevator speech.** While still pretending that you are your own publicist, **write your bio** and an **elevator speech.** Craft these so that your client (you) presents real abilities in an impressive style. But here’s a tip: write these from the perspective of service and passion. How can you reflect the passion you feel about providing something valuable to others? Then you infuse your self-promotion with real value and meaning. Begin memorizing and rehearsing these lines for your next gig—acting.

7. **Practice method acting.** Define the person you would like to be—perhaps someone confident, worthy, curious and courageous. Use your imagination to get into the mind of this character and adopt the emotions this character would have. Act “as if” until your thinking changes, and you begin to really feel these emotions. This may be draining at first, but as you practice, it will become the real you, not just an act.

8. **Step on to the stage.** While “in character,” take part in the play. Practice your acting in real-life situations. Go to the networking meeting. Ask for the job. Speak up in the meeting. Put yourself out there. Is it possible you might flop? Sure, but it’s also possible you will get rave reviews. Learn from the flops, and apply the knowledge to your next performance. Every flop is a stepping stone to success—unless you quit.
9. **Hone your skills.** If there are areas in your life or career where you truly do need more knowledge or experience, then do something about it. Ask for help, take a class, read, find a mentor. Constantly work to improve your skills—a tangible action that will support your efforts at positive thinking and acting “as if.”

10. **Focus energy on your passion.** If you enjoy what you do, you will naturally have more energy in doing it. If you have the choice, align your acting and learning efforts with the work or activities you most enjoy. Don’t fight against the flow. Go with it! If you are an accountant, but you really love teaching, then maybe it’s time to reassess your career. Or perhaps to find a way to combine your passion with your existing skills.

**If you want to skyrocket your success, start by faking your thoughts and actions.**

- access your strengths
- re-direct and re-frame your thinking
- promote yourself with passion and a spirit of service
- step into a confident character role
- keep learning
- live your passion

With practice, faking it will transform into feeling it, and you will discover that success is never far behind!
Most of us are just regular people. We live our lives in our little corner of the world. We go to work and do our jobs. We spend time with our families, enjoy our hobbies, and put our pants on one leg at a time. We do pretty much the same thing day in and day out, with a few bursts of excitement and drama.

Perhaps in our personal sphere of influence, we are viewed as someone special. We are loved and important to those around us. But we tend to view others who live bigger, bolder lives as the real stand-outs, the true originals.

You might look at these people and wonder how they do it. How did he come up with that great idea? How does she have so much style? How can he be so funny? We all want a dose of whatever these people are drinking, but we can’t seem to find the bar.
These unique people must belong to some special club with privileges and talents unavailable to the rest of us mere mortals.

When we meet these shiny, exceptional people, we tend to view ourselves as boring and prosaic in comparison. No spotlight here please. I have nothing special or interesting to offer the world. There is no way I could ever be that ingenious or brilliant or avant-garde. It must be some kind of fortuitous genetic anomaly that accounts for these abilities.

Yes, there are gifted people born with superior intelligence or incredible talent and abilities. There are those with the predisposition for magnetic personalities, a positive outlook on life, and creative expression. But is it their genetic gifts that make these people original and unique?

One of the dictionary definitions for the word original is this: “arising or proceeding independently of anything else.”

According to this idea, a true original means it’s the first and only. For example, the very first blade of grass that ever grew was an original. Or was it? That blade of grass was composed of molecules, cells and chemicals that already existed. The intelligence that created that blade envisioned a new way to combine those elements to create something different, something unique.

*Originality isn’t creating something from nothing. Originality is taking what exists and seeing it in a different way.*

You’ve heard the expression, “There is nothing new under the sun.”
Nothing is truly original. The tools for every new, fresh, bold idea are available to us right here and now. All we really need is vision, passion, and action. You can be gifted and talented, but you may never harness that vision. You can be quite average and make unbelievable contributions to the world.

Arthur Fry is the guy who came up with the idea for Post-It Notes, the yellow slips of paper with adhesive on one end. They are ubiquitous now—cultural icons. Fry received his early education in a one-room rural schoolhouse and had no special advantages growing up. As an adult, he worked for 3M as a researcher in new product development.

Fry was in church when he came up with the idea for sticky notes. He sang in his church choir, and he used slips of paper to mark the pages of his hymnal. When the book was opened, the makeshift bookmarks often moved around or fell out altogether.

On a Sunday in 1974, it occurred to him to use a new adhesive he learned about at work to create a better bookmark. The Post It Note was born. The amazing commercial success of this humble product is undeniable. (Here’s a great article about Arthur Fry and the Post It Note.)

You don’t have to have special talents to be unique. You just need to harness what you have at hand.

If you want some ideas to uncover your own uniqueness, give these a shot:

1. **What can you do?** What are the things you are good at doing? It doesn’t have to be something dramatic or earth shattering. Can you cook? Are you a good listener? Can you repair things? What seems simple to you may be complicated or overwhelming for someone else.
2. **What do you enjoy?** Having passion and enthusiasm about something provides energy. When you have that energy, you can accomplish much, much more because you aren’t struggling against yourself.

3. **Pick something and focus.** Being unique requires some time and effort. Don’t try to be astounding at everything. You’ll be exhausted. Pick one thing right now and focus like a laser on it.

4. **See things with new eyes.** We get into ruts and routines, even with the activities we love doing. Ask yourself frequently, “How can I do this differently?” How can I make it more interesting, fun, special, appealing, beautiful, useful, pertinent? Challenge and stretch yourself.

5. **Pounce on inspiration.** Just like Arthur Fry, you need to take advantage of inspired ideas. How many times have you said, “I could have done that?” Don’t let these ideas float in and out of your mind. Keep a notebook with you all the time. Write them down. Think them through. Put them into action.

6. **Copy ideas.** And then expound on them. Look at what other people have done that seems original and unique to you. How can you change it to make it better or bigger? Remember, nothing is really new. Build on existing material and create something different.

7. **Keep learning.** The more knowledge and information you have, the more raw material you accumulate for creativity and inspiration. Become an expert in your field of interest. Read, take classes, ask questions, observe other experts.

8. **Be sincere.** Uniqueness just for the sake of being unique is an exercise for the ego. Nothing more. Uniqueness and originality arise
from a sincere desire and passion to challenge the status quo, find a better way, express creativity, and satisfy curiosity. Feed the soul, not the ego.

9. **Embrace failure.** Before Arthur Fry’s Post It Notes ever made the big time, his idea was rejected several times by 3M and received initial lackluster response from consumers. He believed in the value of these little sticky papers and was persistent. It paid off. Experimentation and failure are part of stepping out of the box. Some things work, some don’t.

10. **Become a salesman.** Learn what people want and need. Find the people who share your interests, passions and ideas. Then present your unique ideas and solutions to them. I doubt Sara Blakely, the woman who created Spanx body shapers, sent out an e-blast to a bunch of men. She thought about a real problem (visible panty lines) that is bothersome to a real group of people (all women with butts), and she worked to promote it in front of the largest possible audience of these people (The Oprah Winfrey Show). From panty line problems to a multi-million dollar business.

What’s so unique about that?
25 Mind Shifts Toward a Bold and Glorious Life

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find ways in which you yourself have altered.” ~Nelson Mandela

Try this little exercise for a moment. Think about your current life painted by a particular color. The color reflects the tone and tenor of your days and moods. So what color is your life? Is it a neutral shade, maybe tan or grey? Or is it bold and vibrant like royal blue or bright yellow?

When we were babies and small children, I think we all had brilliantly hued lives. The world was one exciting new moment after another.

Everything was an adventure, a treasure, or something to be explored. We had occasional bumps in the road. We’d fall or get scared or need comfort, but if we were parented properly, we generally felt safe enough to absorb every moment with unabashed joy and wonder. Life was bright and sparkly and extraordinary.

Sadly, we don’t stay babies forever. We grow up and life changes us. We react and adapt to our circumstances and experiences, and
the bright colors of childhood begin to fade into the tans and grays of the grown-up world. That pure joy of the moment that defined us as small children is buried under the pains, needs, desires and responsibilities of our daily lives.

I am becoming increasingly convinced that it’s possible to re-claim childhood joy and wonder. It is possible to live a bold and extraordinary life.

Think about this. When we were babies, we didn’t care how much money we had, how we looked, who approved of us, or how successful we were. We were happy in the moment and took pleasure in whatever life presented to us. Now life is much more complicated and challenging, but we are capable of change.

By shifting our thinking and beliefs about what is essential and real, we can start infusing our lives with the brilliant color of bold and glorious living.

Would you like to try? Here are 25 mind shifts to think about for your own life:

1. **Recognize that the only real part of life is the present moment.** The past is over, the future is just the stuff of dreams. If you waste the present moment on either the past or the future, you have given away your only real opportunity for joy.

2. **Begin to see how perfect your life is right now, even if it doesn’t seem that way.** Choose to see perfection in the good and bad of life. Both provide us with opportunities for learning and growth.

3. **Proactively choose the kind of energy you want to use during your life.** Make a conscious decision about it. The en-
Energy you put out to the world is the same energy you will draw back in.

4. **See yourself as a creator instead of a reactor.** Stop waiting for anything and start initiating all of the time.

5. **Reorient your life around your values and gifts.** You will be in the flow if you do.

6. **Put your integrity first**, your needs second and your wants third.

7. Recognize that it is productive and positive to **take care of yourself and get your needs met**.

8. It is healthy to redefine or **let go of relationships with people who drain you or don’t support you**.

9. Address and **work toward healing hurts from the past** that are impeding your happiness and growth. Talking to a counselor is not shameful. It is a mature, healthy and strong decision for bettering your life.

10. **It is OK to say no.** You’re real friends will respect your boundaries and admire you for them. All others just see your “no” as an irritating inconvenience to them.

11. The moments of greatest growth and opportunity for huge leaps in happiness are when we **face a fear and deal with it**. Almost always, it is never as bad as we think it will be.

12. **Our opinion and perspective is not always the best**, even if we are totally convinced it is. Everyone feels that way, so if we listen we might learn something.

13. **Our deepest joy and fulfillment comes from experiences and relationships**, not from things. Spend less time with things or seeking things and more time doing things with people you care about.
14. **Simple is calmer, easier and more peaceful.** Any way that you can simplify your life will bring you peace.

15. **See the value in regular learning** and experimentation. Intellectual growth is exciting and rewarding.

16. **View failure as a gift,** not an embarrassment. The only way to prevent failure is to stop trying. Failure is a natural element of learning and growing.

17. **Recognize the beauty and divinity in all people.**

18. Embrace the idea that **gratitude fosters happiness** and should be practiced daily.

19. Whenever you feel doubt or anxiety, **the present moment will always save you.** Do whatever you can to refocus on this moment right now.

20. You can live a perfectly fine life just the way you are. **You can live a bold and glorious life by stretching yourself** and stepping out of your comfort zone as often as possible.

21. **Don’t accept boring.** Seek out adventure.

22. **You don’t have to react to anger.** It takes practice, but you can put up an invisible barrier between yourself and angry person and maintain peace of mind.

23. **What you think determines how you feel.** Change your thoughts and your feelings will follow.

24. **Live within or below your means.** Being in debt or always seeking money creates an energy of lack and need. As you begin to clean this up, you will feel lighter and more joyful.

25. **It really is fun to give.** Give kind words, a helping hand, a listening ear, your time, your positive thoughts. It feels great.
Do You Have A Mission Statement for Your Life?

“When you discover your mission, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it.”

~W. Clement Stone

Many years ago, I worked in public relations for the JCPenney Company. James Cash Penney, the founder of the now giant retailer, based his business philosophy on one simple notion: “do unto others as you would have others do unto you” –The Golden Rule. In fact, his first store was called The Golden Rule.

This philosophy permeated every aspect of how Mr. Penney ran his business. He asked for a “fair remuneration and not all the profits the traffic will bear.” He was the first to call employees “associates”, and he treated them like family. During the stock market crash in the 1920’s, he lost his personal fortune and took a loan against his life insurance in order to pay the associates’ salaries.

When I arrived at JCPenney in 1984, it was the fourth largest retailer in the nation with stores in every state. The
retail business was pretty cutthroat, but The Golden Rule remained the company philosophy almost ninety years after the store was founded. One of my favorite quotes from Mr. Penney is this: “Give me a stock clerk with a goal, and I’ll give you a man who will make history. Give me a man with no goals, and I’ll give you a stock clerk.” Mr. Penney understood the value of having a mission, a goal around which everything in your life centers.

So are you a stock clerk with a goal or just a stock clerk? Are you a man or a woman with a mission? It’s just my humble opinion, but I think it’s as vital for individuals to have a mission and a vision for themselves as it is for any business. Writing a mission statement for yourself forces clarity and helps you define purpose. Putting it on paper makes it real. A mission statement is like your own personal constitution. It is the basis for making major life-directing decisions as well as making daily choices that impact us and those around us.

So here are my thoughts on writing a personal mission statement:

1. **Think of a person in history or in your life whom you admire.** What are the qualities of that person that you would like to emulate. List those qualities.

2. **Define the type of person you want to become,** not just what you want to have or do.

3. **Define your life roles** (career, family, community, etc.), and write down how you would like to be described in each of those roles.

4. **Write down a goal or purpose for the four fundamental elements of who you are:** physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.
5. **List the talents and skills** you possess that are most important to you.

6. **Using the information you outlined above, begin crafting your mission statement.** Keep it simple, clear and brief—no more than 3-5 sentences long.

7. **Create a mission statement that will guide you in your day to day actions** and decisions, as well as your long term goals.

8. **Keep your words positive and affirmative.** Focus on what you want rather than what you don’t want.

9. **Review the mission statement regularly** and revise and update it as you continue to ponder your values and goals. It may take you weeks to refine your final statement.

10. **Keep your mission statement within view** so that you can read it regularly. Use it as your personal framework for your life. Every time you make an important decision, let your mission statement be your guide.
An 8 Step Guide to Creating Your Vision

“I can teach anybody how to get what they want out of life. The problem is that I can’t find anybody who can tell me what they want.” ~Mark Twain

Do you have any idea where you’re going? I used to wonder that all the time as I bobbled through life like a pinball, bouncing from one task to another. If my dream job was to be a Task Master, I’d become the expert in the field.

Routines, errands and other people’s schedules ran my life. This wasn’t intentional. It just enveloped me like slow growing kudzu. I was tangled up in a web of insidious activity leading nowhere. In fact, I used my tasks and to-do lists as an excuse for not consciously creating my life.

If I was busy with projects, cleaning, driving kids around, and generally chasing my tail like a crazed puppy, I didn’t have to think about finding a passion or accomplishing something meaningful. Frankly I was afraid if I focused on it, I might discover I had no vision or plan for my life at all. Well, I didn’t. But I was determined to create one, and here are the steps I took.
1. **Step Away from the Car.** You must step out of your routine to begin this process. Force yourself to carve time out of your schedule to work on this vision. Even if it’s just an hour a week, breaking the cycle of activity to focus on creating your life is the most important step on the path. Get a notebook and a folder to start gathering information.

2. **Become a Self Sleuth.** Start learning about yourself—your personality, motivations, strengths, and aptitudes. I love assessment tests. They are a great tool for starting this learning process. There are many free tests online and some that require a fee but provide you with more in-depth information. Here is a list of various assessment tools. A coach or counselor also can administer these assessments and provide feedback.

3. **Phone a Friend.** Ask those closest to you to give your their perceptions of your strengths and natural gifts. You might be surprised at what you hear. Sometimes the qualities we take for granted in ourselves are areas where others perceive us as gifted and valuable.

4. **Dig Deeper.** Here’s the part that assessment tools may not cover. Get pen and paper and write down everything you feel passionate about or that brings you joy, in your personal and professional life. Now write down all of the things you’d like less of in your life. If it’s a feeling (ie: stress), write down the root cause for the feeling (over-scheduled). Finally, write down a list of your values and pick the top 4 or 5 that are non-negotiable for your life and career. Here’s a great list of value words to help you.

5. **Outline Your Vision.** Now you should know a good bit more about yourself—your personality, your gifts, your motivations, your passions and your values. Using all of the information you’ve gathered about
yourself, you are going to begin to outline your life vision. Get your pen and six sheets of paper. Put the one of the following headlines on each sheet: Career; Relationship; Family; Physical Space/Home; Personal Growth/Learning/ Faith; Lifestyle/Fun. Now begin writing your ideal vision for each of these based on what you’ve learned about yourself.

6. **Find the Imbalances.** Now review the vision you’ve written for each category, and determine how your current life is out-of-balance with your vision. There may be big areas like being in the wrong job. And there may be small areas like you want to travel more. Go to your list of things you want less of in your life (see #4 above) and decide if you can make adjustments here to help you create your vision in each category.

7. **Begin Somewhere.** Pick one of these out-of-balance areas and begin to do something about it. If you are ready to tackle something big, then pick the area that is draining most of your energy. Write a list of everything that needs to be done to get you to that vision and start the work. If this is overwhelming, start small. Pick one action from any category and do that. Then another and another. You get the picture.

8. **Visit Your Vision Daily.** Every day, re-read your vision so that you build excitement and energy around it. Make adjustments as you create more awareness. Then keep working toward it. Every step, whether large or small, is moving you forward on the path to your wonderful new life. Don’t get overwhelmed. Just take it one piece at a time.

When you set aside just a small amount of time to create your vision, you are opening the door to an extraordinary new life for yourself. You are creating a roadmap for the life you’ve only dreamed about. Then take the steps that you’ve outlined for yourself. One day you will wake up and realize you haven’t just created your life vision. You are living it!
Be The Who You Want To Be

“I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be until finally I became that person. Or he became me.”

~Cary Grant

Who do you want to be? I’m not asking who you are now or what kind of life you want to have, but what kind of person do you want to be? One of my favorite literary characters of all time is Atticus Finch from *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Gregory Peck played the role in the movie, and he perfectly captured the character of the quintessential wise father and a man of compassion, honor, and integrity. I wanted to know him, and I wanted to be like him.

Role models are a good way to begin defining who we want to be. It may not be Atticus for you, but you probably know the people whose demeanor, behavior, and values are inspiring and motivating for you. You are a better person when you are around them.

Sometimes we look at those people and think, “I wish I could be like that.” They have their act together, but I’m too emotional, angry, sad, insecure—whatever the story happens to be.
• We feel stuck in our feelings, heartaches, and life events.
• We want to indulge our anger and feel glued to our pain.
• We feel incapable of becoming the who we want to be because life throws too much at us, so we must react.
• We believe that our personality is “set” and that substantial change isn’t really possible.

But is that really the highest vision we have for ourselves?
Living that vision of our highest self, the “who” we want to be, is not impossible to achieve. In fact, you can be that person today if you first take a moment to step back and sketch out a character study for the “who” you want to be.

Here are some very simple exercises to help you define this vision for your ideal self:

1. Sit down with paper and pen and write down the qualities of this person, this new you. For example, I want to be a person who is honest. I want to be a person who doesn’t yell at my children. I want to be a person who follows through on commitments. I want to be a person who solves conflicts without condemning or belittling. I want to be a person who lives simply.

2. Dig a little deeper and write some examples of how and when you will become this person. For example, as an honest person, I will be true to myself and my own needs, as well as being genuine and trustworthy with others. Even when my children push my most sensitive buttons, I will strive to remain calm and centered. In my effort to live simply, I will have fewer daily tasks so I can focus on them mindfully and completely. Find the places where you are farthest from your ideal, and specifically define the actions that you aspire to.
3. **Play the part of the character** until it becomes natural for you. If you must pretend at first, then do it. Act *as if*. In your next encounter with your misbehaving children, act *as if* you are the calm mother next door. The next conflict you have with your *spouse or another relationship*, act *as if* you are capable of giving unconditional love and support—and then give it, in spite of their reactions, comments, or misunderstandings. Yes, it will feel false at first, but with practice, you will transform.

4. **Rehearse daily and be a creator, not a reactor.** Now that you have a character study of your ideal self, continue to create this person every day. You are the *author of your life and your behavior*. Don’t give away your vision just to defend your ego. It’s never worth it. Don’t let your initial reactions undermine your new creation. Revisit your character study regularly as a reminder of the role model you have created for yourself.

5. **You can always revise and re-write your ideal self.** Because we are human, we fail and falter at being the who we want to be. But every day we have the *opportunity for a revision*. We can correct our course and step back into our ideal self. And along the way, we might want to adjust our vision to accommodate our personal evolution. As we change and grow, we may want to expand our self-character study, adding more dimension, subtlety, and flexibility.

So often we struggle to make everyone else conform to the “who” we want them to be. Think of the hours spent trying to script the behavior of others. But there is only one character in your life story whose behavior and reactions you can alter—your own. **Write the story of who you want to be.** Create a character who could be a role model to others. Define the actions, responses, and values of this person. Then go live it. Before you know it, that new who will be you.
Make A Ripple In The World

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I . . . I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” ~Robert Frost

How would the world be different without you?

Think about it for a moment. The lives of all of the people you have ever known or touched in some way would be quite altered.

The world population is nearly 6,700,000,000. If everyone in the U.S. alone lined up single file, the line would stretch around the Earth almost seven times. That’s a lot of people. Why are we all here milling about on the planet for our 85 or so years?

In the scheme of things, you and I are infinitesimal drops in an enormous sea of humanity.

Do you ever wonder if your life makes any measurable impact in this big world? What makes one life (yours) exceptional and memorable?

For some people, faith and a belief in the afterlife provide the foundation for a meaningful life. But for the sake of discussion, let’s focus on
this particular life you are living right now and how you want the world to remember you.

What are you doing every day, every hour and every moment that serves the larger context of your religious or philosophical beliefs about a life worth living? It is those moments, hours and days that add up to a life well-spent—a meaningful life.

Unless you are a world leader or celebrity, you will directly impact only a small group of people during your lifetime. But through this small group, your decisions, behaviors, ideas and attitudes will spread ripples of action that touch unknown thousands, maybe millions of people. I think about this when I write posts for my blog. My readers may take something useful from what I say and pass it on through word or action.

**Knowing that you have the opportunity to impact change or positive action, you have a powerfully creative choice about your life.**

Decide what you value and love most, and then mindfully craft your life accordingly. Become a living example of the legacy you want to offer the world. As you create this legacy for others, you will discover a deep sense of meaning and purpose for yourself.

**A meaningful life doesn’t just happen. It is a willful act of creation every single day.** Uncover what you value most in life to find sustained happiness. It is in these value areas where you should spend most of your time and energy. Here are seven areas that support sustained joy and provide the fertile ground for making an impact on the world and living a life of real purpose.
1. Security and Comfort
How much time and energy should you put into achieving and acquiring? How many creature comforts and gadgets do you really need? There is a balance that can be achieved that allows you to live a comfortable life while still having time to pursue what you value and love the most. It’s usually not stuff.

2. Balance and Moderation
Americans work longer hours and take fewer vacations than other advanced economies. Why do we do this? Why do we fill up so many hours with work when there are so many other valuable and interesting ways to spend our time? We have become brainwashed into believing that work should take precedence over every other area of life—at the risk of our mental, emotional and physical health.

3. Contribution
Everyone wants to feel they leave this Earth having made some positive contribution. You can make contributions of excellence, encouragement, purpose, and love. A contribution to the world doesn’t have to be a dramatic gesture or sacrifice. It can be as mundane as helping a neighbor with groceries or reading a story to your child. When you give something of yourself, no matter how small, you have created that ripple of positive action.

4. Relationships
If you listed the things you value and love most in life, your close relationships probably rise to the top of the list. These relationships are not only vital to our sense of well-being and happiness, they also profoundly affect our health. People in supportive relationships are happier and healthier. They are so very important, and yet we often neglect them. Nurturing our connections with these people is the most valuable endeavor you can make.
5. **Beauty**
Beauty is the quality that thrills the soul and makes life vibrant. It elevates us beyond the mundane and connects us with something divine. Beauty provides fulfillment, awe and connectedness to the world around us. And it forces us to slow down long enough to savor it. By inviting beauty into your life, you open the door to a more profound and exquisite journey.

6. **Creativity**
Creativity is not the exclusive domain for those born with natural gifts and artistic leanings. Anyone in any discipline can be creative by applying the same learned skill set: dedication, hard work, seeking new challenges, boldness, and follow-through. The pursuit of creative endeavors is critical to the development of our personalities and our relationships. It also allows us to live in the moment.

7. **Personal Growth**
Introspection, seeking enlightenment, deepening spiritual awareness, understanding relationships, striving for emotional maturity, and defining our values and integrity—these are the very tools that assist us in the creation of a meaningful life. As we have a better understanding of our own needs and motivations, we can heal and grow in ways that make life an exciting adventure.

In the adventure of your own life, take the road less traveled by. Make a difference for yourself and those whose lives you touch. When you make mindful choices about your life, choices aligned with who you are and what you value, you will make a ripple in the world that will expand infinitely. Your one life will having meaning now and forever.
About Barrie Davenport

Barrie Davenport is the founder of BarrieDavenport.com and creator of the top-ranked personal development blog, Live Bold and Bloom. She is a certified life passion coach, helping others find and live their inner passions in a way that creates a fuller, happier, and more purpose-filled life.

She is the author of The 52-Week Life Passion Project and The Bold Living Guides and is the founder of The Path to Passion, a step-by-step course to help you uncover your life passion. She is also the co-creator of The Habit Course (with Leo Babauta and Katie Tallo).

Barrie spent over 20 years as a successful public relations executive in Atlanta and New York, helping her clients realize their own passions by positioning them for success. She worked for major retailers, a national public relations agency, and served as marketing and PR director for a network of career colleges, supporting students as they pursued their own career passions.

Barrie also had her own public relations consultancy working with The Carter Presidential Center, The Georgia World Congress Center and Georgia Dome, The Atlanta Community Food Bank, Encore Park for the Arts, Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, The Atlanta Ballet, The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and many other professional and non-profit organizations.

Barrie lives in Roswell, Georgia (a suburb of Atlanta) and has three nearly-grown children.