

“What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?”

Your Life Plan To Find Your Answer

By: Hans Glint
Life Planning Coach

Your Name
Life Plan

“What Do Your Want To Do With Your Life?”

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This workbook is designed to be a ready made workbook or to be printed on standard letter size paper and placed in a standard ring binder. (Any print shop will do this for you.)

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This is the entire workbook for the “What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?” – Life Plan.

First Edition v 1.40 (check for updated version at www.HansGlint.com)

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Acknowledgements:

Great thanks and acknowledgements to all the people who have helped form the ideas and material for this book. The responsibility of the content and any errors of this book are, however, fully with the author.

Dedication:

To the men and women of times past whose pursuit has eased my pursuit of happiness.

To the men and women of the future whose happiness shall be eased by my pursuit.

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Preface

“Why do they always tell us that it’s easy and evil to do what we want, and that we need discipline to restrain ourselves? It’s the hardest thing in the world—to do what we want. And it takes the greatest kind of courage. I mean, what we really want.”

Ayn Rand

This workbook is about the most important life of all: YOURS. During our time together, we will look into your future to make sure you become clear on the kind of life you want to live.

Before we begin, I would like to congratulate you for starting to work on your life plan. At the end of this program, you will have decided on a clear written plan for your life, you will have written down the goals you want to achieve. Written goals are the key to reaching them. This workbook is designed to help you write your life plan as goals. You have a tool to master your life.

Many people spend more time planning their summer holiday than planning the rest of their life. No wonder the same people feel they do not live fulfilled lives. However, you are different. You are on your way to break away from the crowd; you are on your way to plan ahead and achieve the life of your dreams.

Therefore, congratulations on finding your way to this book. By reading it and carrying through with the exercises in this book, you demonstrate that you belong among the top achievers. You also demonstrate curiosity, and curiosity with imagination is what is needed to make a plan for a happy and successful life. Finally, you demonstrate that you can take action.

With imagination and action, you will create the life of your dreams.

Introduction

The History of the What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? - Life Plan

“What do you want to do with your life?”

“What do I want to do with my life?” It is the most important question to answer in any person’s life. It is “The Question.” Yet the way it is commonly asked today—“What should I do with my life?” — is disempowering, it is the wrong way to ask it. The right way is to place responsibility for the answer with yourself: “What do I want to do with my life?” with emphasis on the “I want.”

The word “should” smuggles in guilt; it implies there is some higher order that we must live up to other than our own happiness. It suggests that we have an obligation to something or someone other than ourselves. Don’t we all have something we “should” do with our life? The answer is “No!” There is nothing you should do with your life and there is nothing you must do with your life. Your life is just that—your life. You are free to decide what you want to do with it. You do not have to live up to any “other or higher order.” Your life here is everything you have and you are free to pursue your own happiness.

Realizing that your life is YOUR life is the most important step in your life plan. In fact, if you get only one thing from this book, let it be the message that your life is YOURS. That is why I have included the message here, right in the beginning.

How You Arrived Here

Before we really begin, let’s look at how you arrived where you are today. Think back to when you were a child, trying to make sense of the world. You were naturally curious about everything, from the immediate people around you to the world as a whole. The world is configured in such a way as to help children understand the world. Children ask questions and the grown-ups answer. You even spend your childhood days in formal schooling so you can better understand the world when you’re an adult.

It’s fascinating to see how children look at the world. They look at things objectively, without judgment or presumptions. They simply look at what is in front of them and gradually build their understanding of the world from what they see with little concept of self. You were once that little child.

As you grew older, your understanding of the world increased. You learned about countries in far off places, people living in circumstances that are very different from yours. You learned about the physical world we inhabit and about the language we use. You also became more aware about other people and about yourself. You noticed how people treated you and how they treated each other. As a teen, you became very aware about yourself in relation to the opposite sex. As you continued to mature, you became aware of your own future, your career, and your life as a whole.

During our childhood, other people condition us to think about our future. Family, friends, and even strangers usually ask, “What will you be when you grow up?” The people around us might even suggest some professions to us. I know I used to say that I wanted to be a baker. I probably figured I could eat as much cake as I wished. I also said I wanted to be a garbage collector; my reasoning was that they only had to work on Wednesdays. I only saw them collect our garbage on Wednesdays, so I figured they only worked that day. Naturally, children’s perceptions of available professions and life directions are very limited.

The way adults ask the question (“What will you be when you grow up?”) demands that the children answer. Children instinctively turn this question around and ask themselves, “What should I say I want to become when I grow up to make my parents happy?” or “What should I do when I grown up?” This is where the “should” comes from. Thus, as children we asked ourselves, “What should I do with my life?” Subconsciously, we identified a moral imperative to the question based on the way people asked us the question. For many the word “should” held, and still holds, imposed responsibility, guilt, possibly our parent’s unlive aspirations, and much more.

The right question to ask ourselves, and the question that children and adults need to ask themselves in their internal dialogue is, “What do you want to do with your life?” with emphasis on the “you want” and without the moral imperative.

As we mature and become independent, we are gradually able to change this dialogue from “What should I do with my life” to “What do I want to do with my life.” But the inherent conflict in the way we ask the two questions to ourselves can linger on throughout our life.

Why the Answer Matters

For many people, the “What should I do with my life” question is accompanied with an internal dialogue along these lines: “It all went so fast; I had all these ideas about myself and what I wanted to do with my life. Then woooooosshhhh...time flew by. Here I am now at age X. It all went so fast. What happened?”

To find out what happened, we’ll go back in time on a fascinating journey into your own history—your past experiences and the mental states you used to be in your past. We will take you back to your childhood to see how you became the person you are today. And we will take you back to the time when you embarked out into the world to form the person you have become.

After that, we are going to work on your future. We will change the question “What should I do with my life?” to “What do I want to do with my life?” Then we’ll develop some concrete answers you can relate to. We will address topics like the important difference between your professional career choice and your life plan.

To start, think back to the time when you ventured out and formed your professional identity. Your professional identity is your answer to “What do you do for a living?” Perhaps it was when you first settled into your profession as “a teacher,” “a carpenter,” “a lawyer,” “a doctor,” etc. If you have yet to create your professional identity, rest assured that it will happen sooner than you think.

In your professional identity, you are expressing a lot about your life plan. But your identity is not so much something you need as something society and the world at large needs. They need to put you in a box—a place to make relating to you uncomplicated and safe.

Do you sometimes feel that you got to where you are now way too fast? That at one point you were full of options, hopes, ideas, and aspirations, and that suddenly you ended up somewhere. Now you ask yourself, “How did this happen?”

Well, I’m going to let you in on a secret. This is what society wanted to happen to you. And yes, it did happen very fast, and you were only partially part of the process. The worst thing is that no one prepared you for it.

Your role in society can be seen in two dimensions. One is your internal dimension—how you look at yourself, how you look at the world, who you think you are, and where you are. The other dimension is how the world looks at you.

The world needs to relate to you somehow. The world is constantly in a hurry and it needs to put everything and everyone into concepts as soon as possible so that it can get on with business. When we are young, we are given the benefit of the doubt as to what we will be and do later in life. The benefit of the doubt can be recognized in certain roles and institutions. For example, school is a benefit of the doubt institution. When we are at school, people put us in a box called “at school.” This is still safe for society. Once you are out of school, you can become anything, but right now you are in school and this is easy and safe for others to relate to. But when you are grown up, society does not have time for nor does it care about your questions about yourself or your doubt about what you want to do.

Society has allowed a few people to enter into “unsettled” roles, like being an artist, writer, musician, eternal student, playboy, wanderer, etc. And in modern times, we have created semi-professional roles like, “I am re-educating myself. I used to be a taxi driver, but now I’m going back to school to become a doctor.” People will then tell you, “Oh, that’s great.” And for them, it is great because now they can put you in a new box. They think to themselves, “He is reeducating himself to become a doctor,” and then they evaluate you according to their value standards for this role.

However, if you were to say, “I am re-educating myself for five years, but I won’t tell anyone what my new profession will be until I am finished,” people would be scared of you. If you don’t believe me, try it. People and society need to put us into boxes.

You can’t blame the world for acting this way. The world has billions of agendas, and you are only one part of it. Therefore, the world needs to rationalize. After all, if you could not rely on the baker to be a baker tomorrow, or the dentist to be a dentist, then the world would be in chaos.

The problem is that we are not ready to be put into boxes. We are still in the midst of figuring out an answer to The Question, when BAM—the world demands An Answer. We then give whatever answer we happen to be trying out, and we become locked in that answer like a box. It requires a lot of effort to re-open the box and climb out. People will want to throw you back in the box, because this is most convenient for them. Why? The bank wants you to keep your

job in order to lend you money. Your family wants you to provide safety for them by being stable. Your friends don't want you to venture out as you might make a fool of yourself and ridicule them as well.

I have tried out a number of professions and a number of industries in my life. For a year, I was the president of a gold exploration company in the Philippines. When I got back to Norway, I started Runbox.com, a successful e-mail company. While raising money for Runbox.com, I encountered people who said, “You are the gold guy; you are not an IT guy. We would fund you if you had a gold venture, but not an IT venture.” They identified me as a “gold guy”—they put me in that box and were unable to see that I could do more than one thing. It would take a great deal of effort to convince them to pull me out of the gold box and into an IT box. I did not have that time, so I raised the money elsewhere.

Think about it. When we meet a stranger, how do we react? We often want to know something personal about that individual. Suppose we are told that we will spend considerable time with a person at work the next year. We are naturally very curious about this person. We wonder what the person is like and who he or she is. As we start getting answers to our questions, we form a picture of him or her. If we are told that the person is a 32-year-old man with a wife and two daughters, and that he used to be a professional football player who now wants to change careers, we can immediately start placing him in a box so we can more easily relate to him. When we meet him our impression is already colored by what we know.

As we grow up, we are all unsure to some degree about what we want to do with our life. This is perfectly natural. When we are young, society allows us time to think about The Answer to The Question. We all ask little children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” When kids start going to school, they are slowly asked to make some decisions about their lives.

At some time, you went from having the benefit of the doubt to being thrown into a box. This often happens very quickly, sometimes by just one word. Imagine yourself at the Christmas family party, someone asks you “I hear you are going to college. What will you be studying?”. You might respond “Law...” You are thrown from everyone giving you the benefit of the doubt to everyone placing you in a box called “law.” This is the turning point.

This turning point happens to everyone, but it happens at different times. For some it happens when they are born, as people assume the child will do whatever the parent does, like working the family farm. For others it happens when they have a defining moment, like receiving an award for excellence in some field at school, or becoming a parent at a young age. For most people in the western modern society, it happens sometime around when we leave school and start out on our professional career.

One person who had his role staked out early was the Norwegian Crown Prince Haakon. His professional role was decided the moment he was born—he is going to be The King of Norway one fine day. No one ever asked him “What will you be when you grow up?” or “What do you want to do with your life?” Everyone knew.

He gave a TV interview where this subject came up. He said that as he grew up and became aware of the “What do I want to do with my life” question,

he had to decide on the one alternative he was handed at birth. Although his career was staked out for him, and deciding otherwise would be almost impossible, he still had to decide on it to come to terms with it and to gain peace of mind.

Essentially, Prince Haakon moved himself back to an imaginary point before the turning point, even though this time had never existed. By going back to before the turning point and then making a decision on The Alternative, he made his destiny his own decision, and thus he came to terms with it.

This workbook is designed to take you back to the state you were in before the turning point. You will look at your life with fresh eyes, as if the turning point had not yet occurred. You will give yourself the benefit of the doubt again. You will be able to ask yourself, “Who am I really?” and “What do I want to do with my life?”

You’ll see that there is a big difference between the question “What do I want to do with my life?” before and after the turning point. Before the turning point, the question is full of promise and positive expectations. After the turning point, it can easily become full of doubt, sometimes with regret and wonder about what happened and how it could happen so fast.

This workbook will help you whether you are before or after the turning point. If you are still before the turning point, you will benefit greatly from knowing that it will come and that you can prepare for it. If you are after the turning point, we will travel together back to the time before your turning point so you can place yourself in the state of mind where the whole world is full of exciting alternatives for you to explore and decide on.

Allowing Ourselves to Ask the Question

Today we have more information and more opportunities than ever. We can, and most likely will, change our careers and our life plans several times. In fact, we want to allow ourselves to do that.

Since society has evolved to allow people to change directions, we want to all be allowed to go back to the time before the turning point and ask ourselves, “What do I want to do with my life?”

We need to go back. We need to reclaim the state we were in before the world put us in the box. This is a hard exercise and it will be very demanding for you to do it, but it is possible and rewarding. This workbook is designed to help you with that.

How This Book Came into Being

Like me, when you were young, you wondered how people view their lives, how they plan their lives, and how they achieve success with their plans. For as long as I can remember, I have asked people about their lives, ever curious to learn their perspectives.

For some reason, this questioning became an obsession for me. As I look back on it, I think the main reason was the pain I felt after my parents divorced. I became obsessed with not making the same mistakes my parents did.

As I got older, I was able to search for material on life planning in a systematic manner. I was convinced that somewhere “out there” was the material

I needed. I studied for six years at three universities. I took classes in philosophy, business, law, and other topics. I read hundreds of books and articles. I interviewed hundreds of people. I visited dozens of different political parties and belief groups. I lived and worked in four countries in three continents. I traveled around the globe in both directions in my twenties, ever searching for good life planning material so I could decide what I wanted to do with my life.

To some extent, I found some of the material. For example in the many coaching and motivational books that exist, but it was scattered, finding some pieces here and there. The most common approaches I found to life planning are the “indirect” approaches that society has created. These approaches are built into institutions like professional roles (I am a professor, a banker, a farmer), social roles (I am a mother, a father, I am married), political or religious convictions (I am a nun, a priest, a believer) and the like. Here the institutions define a life plan for you. Unfortunately, these institutions are as much limiting as they are defining, as very few institutions are open to all the possibilities we have today.

Even though some of the material I uncovered was good, it did not address the issues that we are really after. Most of the teachings are built on the formula: “You have to know what you want and then go for it, and here is how you go for it!” That’s great, but our problem is that we don’t know what we “want.” We don’t know what “it” to go for. How do you figure that out? How do you figure out what you want to do with your life? How do you figure out what to “just do”?

During my research, I did find some techniques, such as that of writing our own legacy. The good thing with this technique is that it changes your perspective. It makes you look at your life from a perspective of after having lived it fully. Changing the perspective increases your level of awareness about your life and makes you understand yourself on a deeper level, and this is the key. The more we increase our awareness about our life, the better we are able to handle it.

For my own sake, I started compiling and synthesizing the best models and the best techniques I found. As I always do when I begin a new company or project, I systematically put the ideas into binders as I was working with them. Making notes all the time, I have filled dozens of binders in the last few years. As I kept working on it, I saw the system emerge. It’s this system that I wish to share with you in this book.

The Approach of This Workbook

Make no mistake about it: Planning your life is a huge undertaking. So, the first question naturally is: “What approach do you want to use when planning your life?” First, you need to incorporate all aspects of your life, including health, people, personal, recreation, financial, and anything else that’s important to you. This means that no single-minded approach will do. If you were to follow a strictly financial (getting rich), psychological (don’t worry, be happy), health (is anything safe to eat these days?), religious or any other rigid approach in its own, you would be missing the mark. You need to cover all aspects and use common sense.

The main aspects of your life that we will cover in the life plan are:

- Health
- Spiritual
- Career
- Financial
- Emotional
- Relationships

We accomplish this complete approach in this workbook by first working on the hard facts of life, and then asking ourselves some of the more difficult, softer questions of life. For the hard facts part we will specify the Who, Where, Why, What, How, and When of your life alternatives. This workbook will help you describe your life to yourself no matter who you are, what spiritual path or religion you follow, or what life circumstances you are in. So the Glimpse Life Plan is very much a “hands on” approach to your life. Any life, for any person on earth, can be looked at using the tools in the life plan.

Why This Workbook

I am a businessman, and successful life planning is much like planning and managing a business. In business, you deal with the future. You deal with risks and rewards. You deal with goals. You deal not with winning or losing, but with levels of success. You work with a team, not alone. Being a businessman, I am a man of action. I want to do what works, and I want an approach that is workable. In this workbook, I will share with you experiences from my own personal life, my professional life, and from the people I have worked with.

In short, the skills you will use in this life plan workbook are your broadest general skills, not specific skills in psychology, education, or any other science. The workbook is designed so that you can add material and exercises from other programs as you find fitting. Think of it as a holistic approach to life planning.

During your life, you will have triumphs and setbacks. Some people pretend setbacks don't happen, but the reality is that setbacks happen to everyone. Therefore, I am not going to tell you that you will win in every situation in life; you won't. I am not going to tell you that life will be all sunshine and smiles; it won't. I will not tell you that there is a shortcut to an epiphany to what you want to do with your life; there isn't.

You are getting a serious, realistic tool to use for looking at your life and planning your life—a tool that will allow you to be reasonable in what to expect. By being reasonable, by being clear, and planning accordingly, you will increase your chances of reaching your goal of a happy life tremendously.

The Binder is the Key

As you work through the What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? program, keep a binder with all the material from the program.

The binder is important for several reasons:

1) It allows you to think on paper. Thinking on paper is absolutely critical to achieving your life plan. When you just plan in your head you are not able to master all the elements in your life plan, and the result is chaos.

2) It gets you organized, and getting organized is also critical to your life plan. Your life is a major enterprise. It is a “business” that will go on for decades; your legacy will live on for centuries through the people you influence. When successful entrepreneurs start new businesses they write organized business plans, often a hundred pages or more. Your life is an enterprise that demands at least the same effort and organization.

3) It allows you to integrate ideas. You may have several self-help books where you had to take notes and do exercises. Now the exercises are scattered around your home or office. This only makes you confused. Putting the main exercises and papers in the binder helps consolidate your thoughts and makes your life planning one integrated concept.

4) It helps our mind work better. Our mind is a fantastic tool, but it has its limits. The human brain can only hold a limited number of ideas at any one time. To deal with this limitation, we have formed single abstract concepts that deal with more than one idea at a time. For example, “food” is an abstract concept consisting of any kind of food, like apples, meat, corn, etc. “Home” is an abstract concept of any cave, house, or shelter. “Safety” is an abstract concept consisting of “no violence,” “a place to call home,” “ability to fend off attack,” etc. As human kind becomes more sophisticated, our concepts become more sophisticated. Hence, today the concepts of “peace,” “law and order,” and “the market” are actually very complex abstractions consisting of a huge number of underlying concepts and ideas. This is the way the mind rationalizes all the concepts it can hold.

You have hundreds, if not thousands, of ideas about who you are and what you want to do with your life. Some of these ideas are as simple as “I need to eat.” Others are abstractions like “I want to be safe.”, others again are like “I am a deeply spiritual being.” Even though you have hundreds or thousands of concepts about who you are, you are only able to hold a few of them consciously in your mind at any one time.

We often have conflicting ideas when we think about what we want to do with our lives. We might want a life of adventure, but at the same time may be afraid to take risks. No wonder we are confused, get tired, and even just want to scream, get out, and escape whenever we think about what we want do with our lives.

So what do we need to do?

We need to rationalize our ideas. We need to make enough abstractions about our lives so we can comfortably have a coherent idea about what we want to do within one, two, or three focus points like a “title” for our life. When we are able to do this, we will be able to have “peace of mind.”

We have to rationalize the thoughts/focus points we will have in our minds whenever we think about what we want to do with our lives. For example, many people like physical exercise because often when you're doing demanding sports, you must focus all your thoughts on the task at hand. You cannot be solving mathematical or life planning problems when you are intensely playing soccer or skydiving. For many people, this is liberating and gives us a sense of freedom. The task at hand replaces conflicting ideas about who we are and what we want to do. But as soon as we stop the exercise, our thoughts come back, including our worries and sorrows.

By making a binder containing your “life plan” you will be able to narrow down all your ideas about yourself to one concept. You will have peace of mind in the plan. Your thought process will be: “I have a life plan. It is contained within the Life Plan binder I have right here on my shelf. Within the life plan I have gone through my life in detail. I have sorted out the issues. I have analyzed the alternatives and I have made the decision that I will do so and so. I am confident that I am on the right track.”

This is why you need to make and decide on a written plan for your life. Your plan will be one concept, or one idea, in your mind.

The “Life Plan” concept is an abstract concept. Therefore, the next step is to manifest this “Life Plan” concept by putting it all into the binder. This way you can think of something physical (The What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? – Life Plan binder) when you think about your life. By doing this you can reduce all your hundreds or perhaps thousands of ideas, many of them internally inconsistent. This gives your brain a chance to deal with it.

One good example of something similar would be a concept like “the law.” Within the law are thousands upon thousands of ideas. Many times the ideas are vague and hard to understand; the law is often inconsistent. Yet we can all still relate to the law as one concept. When we say we live “by the law” or that we are law-abiding citizens, we incorporate all the inaccuracies, the inconsistencies, and the compromises of the law into one concept that we can relate to. When we think about the law we might also think about a physical object, like a book of laws. It would be impossible for us to relate to all the elements of the law one by one. So we rationalize it into one concept. The Bible and the Koran are other examples where an enormous number of ideas are incorporated into one concept that is possible to relate to as one idea, even as a physical object.

We will do the same thing with your life plan. We will make a physical object (the binder) manifest your life plan.

So, this is what you need to do. Get a nice binder—the nicest you can find. On the front of the binder, write in big, bold letters: [Your Name] – Life Plan.” You will then insert all the pages into your binder.

Once you have made the binder, take a good look at it, connect with the object, and create some feelings for it. This book will be the manifestation of your life plan. Help your brain form the concept that your life plan, the work you will do to arrive at your alternatives and then decide what you want to do with your life, is all contained within this very binder.

Chapter One **Introduction to Life Planning**

What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? That is The Question

“If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.”

Jim Rohn

“Four steps to achievement: Plan purposefully. Prepare prayerfully. Proceed positively. Pursue persistently.”

William A. Ward

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

Benjamin Franklin

“A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.”

George S. Patton

“Reduce your plan to writing. The moment you complete this, you will have definitely given concrete form to the intangible desire.”

Napoleon Hill

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now”

Alan Lakei

We are all unique and we all want different things. Therefore, no standard answer of life planning works for everyone. Yes, opportunities are endless, but at some point, we need to make up our mind where we want to go. People have so many choices that they do not know which way to look. This is one of the major challenges of people in our society today. New opportunities and new choices keep appearing. When and how are people supposed to stop and make a decision on what to pursue?

Have you ever seen a falcon attacking a flock of birds? To protect themselves, the birds flock together. The sheer number of birds makes the falcon so confused that he cannot catch them until he is able to focus on one single bird, zoom in, and catch that specific bird.

Like the falcon, most people today are dizzy from all the alternatives we have. They are dizzy just thinking about all the things they can do. Many escape into easy solutions, letting someone else decide for them, letting society decide for them, or even worse, just letting coincidences decide for them.

“Like the falcon, you will need to stop focusing on the flock of birds and zoom in on the one particular bird to catch.”

Hans Glint

Now you have the tool that will help you sort through this. This workbook will help you get your thoughts, ideas, and wishes organized in such a manner that you will be able to formulate the direction you want to go and how to get there. No matter what position you are in now, what your age, sex, nationality, etc., you want to make the most of your life.

“It is never too early nor too late to make a life plan.”

Hans Glint

The Method

The most important overall approach of the What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? program is to increase your awareness about yourself and your thoughts about life. As you increase your awareness about yourself, you will increase your ability to find an answer to The Question (What do I want to do with my life?). We will choose to be positive in our approach; for us the glass is half-full not half-empty. A basic positive outlook on life, where we expect good things to happen, is much more likely to produce the results we desire.

“In our age, being realistic equals being very positive.”

Hans Glint

It is easy to confuse career planning for life planning. However, they are not the same. Career planning is narrow compared to life planning. Sure, your career is an important part of your life plan, but your life plan is also much more. For example, life planning includes who you will spend your personal time with, your legacy, and what you will actually do in your retirement years, while career planning does not. You might be retired for more than one-third of your life, from 65 to 95, and those years deserve some careful consideration too!

The Model

“Plans are nothing; planning is everything.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

This book is a practical guide to your life plan. ANY life plan can fit into the model of this book. This means that this life plan workbook, in general, is descriptive and not prescriptive. The prescriptive part is that we will use reason; we will not base our thinking on whims or the supernatural. You can use this workbook to work out a plan for your life, but you will not find the specific answers to your life’s challenges. This book will simply help you uncover your own answers.

The What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? Life plan is built around a simple model that offers a systematic way to bring out and then organize our thoughts about ourselves. The model then enables you to identify and describe the different alternatives you can imagine for yourself, analyze them, come to a conclusion, and then make a decision. At the end of the What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? program, you will be able to decide your answer to The Question.

We will look at:

Your Past
Your Present
Your Future

You will work on each of these parts in its own right, but we will go back and forth a bit as we progress. The Alternatives you create will be supported by the hard facts the Who, Where, Why, What, How, and When.

We will use the following approach to find an answer to The Question:

1. Go through your background.
2. Go through your present.
3. Get ideas for the future by using the models and techniques for raising awareness.
4. List the alternatives.
5. Analyze the alternatives using The Checklist.
6. Mitigate the alternatives until you are satisfied.
7. Arrive at a conclusion.
8. Make The Decision and have the resolve to take action.
9. Execute the alternative.
10. Review.

Your life and your life plan is not something written in stone; it is a continuous work in progress. As you move along in your life, your values, your philosophy and your priorities will change. You will therefore come back to your life plan again and again to mitigate it and refine it. This is a natural part of your life plan. You can and will plan for change, risk, surprises, uncertainty, and your own development in a positive way. You want to expect serendipity.

About Awareness

How well are you aware about yourself and about your own life?

The What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? Life Plan works via models that are designed to assist you in raising your awareness about yourself and about your life. The models and exercises are developed to help you gain awareness about yourself. So throughout the program, please remember that the point is to make you more aware about yourself so that you can make better decisions. You gain awareness by being “brutally honest,” putting it in writing, and then working on it as you gain understanding.

Increasing our awareness is a never-ending process. You can never be done with this and become fully aware of all the aspects about yourself. We all have endless depth, and the more we gain understanding of the world around us, the more we will be able to see in ourselves. As human beings, we are always changing; the person you were yesterday is not exactly the same person you are today. You will embark on a quest that you can follow for as long as you like.

Alternatives: “An Answer”

We all have the ability to do anything we want, but we cannot do ALL the things we want. A vital key to understand why so many people are uncertain and confused about what they want to do with their lives is that they do not make this distinction clear.

You can become a sumo wrestler, or you can become an ice skating champion. But you cannot become both a sumo wrestler and an ice skating champion. Those are two inconsistent goals. Becoming a sumo wrestler is one goal or alternative, and becoming an ice skating champion is another goal or alternative. You can do either of them, but you cannot do both. Likewise you can spend most of your time in the USA or you can spend your life in Europe, but you have to choose. You cannot spend most of your time in the USA and most of your time in Europe.

With this in mind, you want to answer The Question with several alternatives that you would like to do. Sumo wrestler can be one alternative, and ice skater can be another. Sumo wrestler in the USA, Europe, or Japan is three different alternatives. The same applies to being an ice skater in the USA, Europe, or somewhere else.

So the good news is that you can do anything you want. But the bad news is that you cannot do all the things you want. You have to be clear on the alternatives and then decide.

The What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? program is therefore made so that you will be able to define your alternatives. You will then be able to analyze the alternatives, come to a conclusion, and decide on The Answer to The Question.

“You can do anything you want to do, but you can’t do everything you want to do.”

Hans Glint

An Alternative That We Choose as The Answer – Not an Epiphany

“What do I want to do with my life?” Many people look for epiphanies, but there is an important distinction between an epiphany and The Answer. If we tell ourselves that we need to have an epiphany to answer The Question, then we make it almost impossible for us to find peace of mind. We will never have the epiphany that will fully convince us; we will be forever searching. Looking for epiphanies is disempowering. It is giving up the power you have to decide over your own life. You need to claim this power over your life. You need to make a conscious decision and then be fully responsible for it.

So you do not want to look for an epiphany. You need a decision to answer The Question. Rephrasing The Question to demand a decision is liberating and empowering. It points to the fact that we are in control. It validates the fact that we have options and can make up our own minds.

Your Life Goals

“Happiness is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal or goal.”
Earl Nightingale

Goals are what we strive and work for. We need goals to make the right decisions at all the thousands of small and large crossroads we come to in our lives. Your life plan can be described as a number of goals that you would like to reach.

No matter what your life plan, your number one goal is always your own happiness. You want to live a happy life. But what brings you happiness will be different for all people.

Dynamic Goals Versus Static Goals

There are static goals and dynamic goals. Static Goals are often represented as endpoints, as in “I want to have a new house.” You can only reach this goal once you actually have the new house. As long as you don’t have the new house, you have not reached your goal. The goal is static.

A Dynamic Goal is more oriented around the process and the time involved, as in “I want to have a fulfilling career doing what I do best that will give me a substantial income so that I can afford a new house. I will enjoy pursuing this goal every step of the way.” This is a dynamic goal. The end result is the same, but the attitude you will have towards the two goals is very different.

You want to make your dynamic goal specific. So simply stating, “I want to have a fulfilling career doing what I do best that will give me a large income so that I easily can afford a new house” is a good start, but it’s not enough. Now you must define the fulfilling career, the definition of large income, the image of the new house, and the feelings you will get from this goal. Without putting specifics in your dynamic goal, all you have is a wish.

Why? Because the mind needs concrete images to pursue. And that is what life planning will help you create. You will be able to devise dynamic goals that are specific, measurable, and time oriented. This will keep you on track.

Working with the goal statement of “I want to have a fulfilling career doing what I do best that will give me a large income so that I easily can afford a new house,” you can make that more specific by inserting one of your alternatives in the career section, a money figure for the income section, a specific result in the house section, and an overall feeling. In this way, your new dynamic goal would be, “I want a career as a doctor, earning more than \$150,000 per year so I can afford a four bedroom house. I want to achieve this within ten years. This will give me and my family the safety and security we desire.” Do you see the difference? Now you have something concrete to pursue, both in the physical

sense and the emotional sense. You can change aspects of the goal as your life plan changes.

Good goals are dynamic goals of processes and feelings. The goals of career, money, and new house can more deeply be described as “the feeling of safety and comfort for myself and my loved ones by having a way to meet our needs and live happily.”

So work on making your goals dynamic to increase your understanding of why you want them. Good goal setting is vital to obtaining happiness.

“Your dynamic goals are goals that will make you appreciate the journey as well as the destination.”

Hans Glint

You can define your happiness any way you want. Realize that desiring happiness is not selfish in the negative way the word “selfish” is often used. Most likely, you will derive your happiness through what you do for and give to others. To be able to give to others, you will need to be happy yourself. If you are happy you will be much more able to give and share of your happiness. So by making sure you are happy, you will increase your ability to bring happiness to others.

Smart Goals

“It you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal – not to people or things.”

Albert Einstein

A great way to set up your goals is to use the time-tested SMART Goals method. The acronym SMART stands for:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time-Oriented

Let’s define each aspect.

Specific

“I’ve always wanted to be somebody, but I see now I should have been more specific”

Lily Tomlin

To reach your goal of a happy life you need to be specific about what brings you pleasure and happiness. You need specific goals to reach for in order for your conscious and subconscious mind to find ways to make your goals a reality. Specific goals enable you to measure if you are reaching your goals or not, and therefore if you need to adjust your approach to obtaining your goals.

Measurable

*"Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so."
Galileo Galilei*

When something is measurable, you have a clear indication whether you attained it. For example, simply saying, “I want to earn more money” is not measurable. However, saying, “I want to earn 30% more money this year than I did last year” is measurable. Additionally, you need to regularly monitor your progress along the way and measure it. At the 3-month mark, how much more money are you making than you did last year at this time? Or, if your goal is to have 5 extra days of time off each month, how many days off have you have last month?

Attainable

*"Persist and persevere, and you will find most things that are attainable, possible."
Lord Chesterfield*

Whatever your goal, make sure it is something you can indeed achieve. Saying that you want to be a professional football player or a prima ballerina by the years' end when you've never had training in these areas is not an attainable goal. When you have a realistic life plan that you absolutely commit to, you will set in motion an astonishing progression. In everything you do, you will send out a signal that will attract your goals to you just as much as you move towards your goals. At those thousands of crossroads in life you will get the extra guidance that will make you take the right road. Your subconscious will awaken to become your greatest ally. It will think for you, try thousands of combination of ideas, and give you the match that you were not able to see consciously. Having a clear plan for your life will help you, even if all you do is write the plan.

Realistic

*"Be optimistic and realistic at the same time."
Hans Glint*

You need to be realistic when setting goals. While you'd probably love to win the lottery one day, that's not a realistic goal. Disappointment and regret are often the result of unrealistic expectations. To avoid disappointment and regret, you need to align your expectations with what you will reasonably achieve. In fact, you might even want to take the careful route and expect a bit less than what you can reasonably expect. This way you will be positively surprised. “Promise less and deliver more,” even to yourself.

Time-Oriented

"Goals are dreams with deadlines."

Diana Scharf Hun

A goal without a deadline is merely a wish. Simply saying, “I want to be a professional ice skater one day” gives you nothing concrete and no real plan to follow. However, if you say, “I want to be a professional ice skater within 5 years,” you have a clear time horizon in mind and the goal becomes real. Give each goal an end time for completion. That’s the only way you’ll stay on track.

Who Are You?

One way to answer this question is to look at what has influenced you in your life. You are a product of the ideas and experiences that have come to your mind. Therefore, in a sense, what is “you” are the experiences you have had, the books you have read, the people you have met, and the conversations you have had. The life plan of each and every one of us will be unique, because no two people have ever walked down the same path of ideas and influences.

This life-planning workbook is a tool for incorporating your ideas about yourself into a meaningful system. This means that you will need to be conscious about your influences while using the workbook. If you have been heavily influenced by Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, you will want to be conscious about how this has influenced you and incorporate this into the exercises in this book.

Discovering or deciding what we want to do with our lives is a huge undertaking. In fact, the process can be so overwhelming that many people simply avoid the questions all together. They find it much easier to sit down and watch TV than to go deep inside themselves and decide what to do with their life.

The life planning process seems so difficult because we as people are such a complex sum of ideas, wants, desires, dreams, and influences. Many of the ideas we have are internally inconsistent, and we cannot achieve them all.

The problem is that we have so many ideas in our mind that it is hard to know where to start. Just thinking about these questions is so daunting that our natural desire can be to leave it alone and avoid the entire process. The trick to get some progress on this field and to get started is to slice the problem down into bite size chunks that you can manage one by one.

Fortunately, you can utilize various techniques to make the process easier. I have synthesized some of the best techniques I have found over the years, developed new ones and put them into a system for you.

As you do the exercises in this workbook, make sure you go back and forth and review your answers. Some questions you will find easy to answer, others more difficult, but for every one you do, you move closer towards your decision. Every exercise you complete makes it easier for you to do another. Each answer supports and lifts up the previous and releases ideas like a chain reaction. All you need might be just one technique or idea to get you clear on your alternatives and release the decision.

We all know the old Chinese fable states that if you give a man a fish, he has food for one day. But if you teach a man how to fish, he has food for the rest of his life. The goal of this workbook is to work on how to fish. I cannot give you a fish by telling you what to do with your life. Who am I, or anyone, to tell you what to do? The only person who can figure out what you want to do with your life is you, The What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? – Life Plan is but your systematic workbook on how to figure it out for yourself.

Positive Mental Attitude

"There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative."

W. Clement Stone

Being in a resourceful state with a positive mental attitude is crucial for developing a good life plan. You need to be in a good positive state when you finally make your decisions on your life. Getting into a resourceful state can be learned and controlled consciously; we all know this as even simple things like listening to our favorite music immediately alters our state positively. Work on mastering your own psychology and getting yourself into a resourceful, positive frame of mind. Get a good coach either in person or through books and tapes. A good coach will show you that you are in control of your own mind and will teach you how to get into a resourceful positive state at will.

Volition and Determinism

"A person with half volition goes backwards and forwards, but makes no progress on even the smoothest of roads."

Thomas Carlyle

You have free will, and therefore you are in control of and have full responsibility over your own decisions. This is a crucial conviction for you to have in order to take control of your life.

Some people are determinists. They say that since every action causes reaction, the movement of the world and everything in it is predetermined. They believe that they cannot affect what is going to happen. It is the will of nature, some god, or the Universe.

The idea of determinism is a philosophical glitch that has been haunting society, and it can only be eradicated by a realization and acknowledgement of volition. Volition is the ability to think and to make choices. You and I have this faculty as human beings. We are prime movers. We can make choices with our minds; we do not need proof of this. The fact is apparent to anyone who reflects upon it. Right now you can choose whether you want to read on and work out your life plan or go watch TV. Planning your life is hard work and demands a lot of you, but you still choose to do it. You could choose to let distractions lead you

in some other direction. But you don't. You use your faculty of volition to decide to carry on with your life plan.

What You Want are Feelings

We might not always realize this, but what we are constantly after are not things, people, or other manifestations of our goals, but the feelings that go with them. Let me illustrate with the example of someone who wants to buy a big expensive boat. The person wants the boat, but if you break down the real desire this person has into its components, we see that what the person really wants is the sound of the sea, the feeling of the sun on the skin, and the wonderful atmosphere of the family being together. If you show a person that he or she can have those same feelings by renting a small cabin by the sea for a week (at a fraction of the cost) the person might be just as content. The point is that there is always more than one way of bringing about the desired feelings. We first have to realize that we are after feelings, and then we can stop and think if the way we are pursuing to get those feelings is actually the best.

So if you want a new car, for example, what you likely really want is the feeling of having the luxury, the feeling of people admiring your new car, and the feeling of safety from driving a new car. But if someone shows you that you can get even bigger feelings of admiration by donating money to the local school, and even better safety by using public transportation, you might be willing to reconsider the purchase of the new car and keep the old. Because what you were after was not really the new car, but the feelings that the new car would bring with it.

As you work on your life plan, begin by doing some “feelings management.”

List the feelings you want.

How do you typically get these feelings?

What other ways could you get these feelings?

What other feelings could you seek instead?

What feelings could you get rid of or do without?

What feelings do you absolutely not want to have?

Are you taking full advantage of your life here on earth so that you get all the great feelings to which you are entitled? How or how not?

Pleasure versus Pain

For every person on earth, two basic feelings exist: pleasure and pain. Hence, the driving forces of all people are:

- To gain feelings of pleasure.
- To avoid feelings of pain.

As human beings, we are either seeking pleasure or avoiding pain. Buying a new car is to seek pleasure or to avoid pain. Going on vacation is to seek pleasure or to avoid pain. At the fundamental level every action is to either gain pleasure or avoid pain.

Pleasure

You likely want to maximize the pleasure you are getting. To do so, maybe you can use your time and attention in different ways to get the pleasure you desire. For example, instead of buying a new car, maybe you can allow yourself to go on vacation multiple times during the next few years. Maybe the pleasure of the vacations will be more than the pleasure of buying the car. After all, the pleasure of owning a new car will wear off fast, while the pleasure of the vacations and looking forward to the next might not wear off as quickly.

You need to consciously do this sort of prioritization yourself, because everyone else is constantly telling you how to prioritize. In fact, messages where others tell you what to do take up a large part of most people’s lives. Since no one makes any money by telling you to go for a walk in the park, you’re likely not to hear that message too often. Yet you know that the best things in life are often free.

You want to put a lot of counterweight on the external and often commercial messages that are telling you what to do. Doing so requires you to be very much aware of who you are, what you want, what gives you pleasure, and how to get it. If you watch TV for any length of time, you are being exposed to numerous messages telling you to seek pleasure in buying the advertiser’s products. But how much time do you spend daily to contemplate on your life and what is meaningful and important to you? How much pleasure do you use to counter the influences thrown at you on a daily basis?

In addition to advertisers, you also get pressure from other sources, including the government, your employer, your family, and your friends. All these sources combined create a lot of stress in most people’s lives.

To a large degree, stress results when you're out of focus with the pressures in your life or when you don't see any way to get your life back in sync again. The stress people have today is to a large extent because there are so many people putting pressure on them, and it is hard for individuals to put in the counter pressure necessary to be able to live a balanced and comfortable life. The key to assembling the counter pressure necessary is to have balance in your life.

Pain

Everyone naturally wants to avoid pain. The drive to avoid pain is perhaps stronger than the drive to gain pleasure. Everyone will experience some level of pain; it is an inevitable part of life. Therefore, you need to be aware of what gives you pain. You can even decide now on what kind of pain you will be likely to feel. You need to evaluate your alternatives in the light of what gives you pain. And you want to decide on an alternative that minimizes the pain you expect.

Balance



[The oriental Yin and Yang figure is a good model for the need of balance.]

Life is a balancing act. It is not black or white. It is not winning or losing. Balance is when you have the pressures of life at a point within your comfort zone. Like it or not, you will always have all kinds of pressures trying to pull your life in different directions. The pressures we each experience will always be different— balance is managing these pressures. You might need to apply counter-pressure to get your life in balance. Finding the resources to assemble counter-pressure can be hard; it can require a lot of effort from us to assemble the counter-pressure. It demands that we be aware of ourselves, aware of what pressures we are exposed to, and aware of how we are using balancing them.

Happiness: When Are You Happy?

Your decision should be an alternative that makes you happy on a consistent basis. Therefore, you need to get very clear about what gives you the feeling of happiness. You need to be specific about this in order to be able to get it. As you go through the life planning process, you will rate your alternatives by what gives you happiness.

Where does happiness come from? Happiness comes from inside; it does not come from outside circumstances. One of the greatest discoveries in psychology during the last century is that you really can control your mind. You can, in fact, choose to be happy. The pursuit of happiness has been the proverbial Holy Grail of all time— the spiritual paths of the world all aim for happiness. What is new in our time is that science has shown us that it is possible to directly control your internal thoughts, your body language, and your body posture to control your feelings.

My readings and my travels around the world have convinced me that happiness is available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Happiness is not dependent on outer circumstances; it is readily available to us, and we can call upon it in an instant. We simply must learn how to call upon it. While this workbook is not a book about happiness per se, you need to get a good idea about your own pursuit of happiness. If you need help in this area, I recommend a good Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) coach.

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“People are about as happy as they make up their mind to be.”

Thomas Jefferson

Your Sense of Life

In this workbook we are going to discuss Sense of Life. Sense of life is a concept we will use to describe our mind and our awareness. We will use Sense of Life as a concept to describe the continuous state we are in.

Russian born author Ayn Rand formed the concept of Sense of Life. She described how the sum of all our thoughts and emotions about life forms the sum of the state we are in. This state is our Sense of Life. For example, two people can look at the same portrait painting. One person may see nothing more than an accurate representation of a person, and another person may be moved to tears by the expression in the face of the portrait. The difference may lie in the person’s Sense of Life. Neither perception is “true.” Both perceptions are based on previous experiences and how they are integrated in our personality to evoke our emotions.

A person’s Sense of Life is different from his or her pure emotions. Sense of Life is not an emotional evaluation of a person’s view of the world. A Sense of Life is not programmed by a single evaluation. It is an integration of countless evaluations. Over the course of one’s life, a person integrates emotions and value judgments related to all aspects of living. Therefore, a person’s Sense of Life is the sum of these emotions and value judgments.

Your Sense of Life is the perception you have of the world. It dictates the form of your internal dialogue, the ongoing conversation you have with yourself about the world. Your Sense of Life is the basis for your self-esteem. If your Sense of Life is that supernatural forces are controlling your life, then your self-esteem will suffer and you’ll feel that you lack control over your life.

For most people, their Sense of Life has been, and continues to be, formed from external influences, and it gradually shapes them without them having much control over the process. Few people take control of their Sense of Life. Taking control of your Sense of Life, influencing it with reason, and steering it in

a positive constructive direction is the most important thing you can do to arrive at a happy fulfilled life.

This is why we will work on Sense of Life and self-esteem in this workbook. Before we can make a good decision about our life plan we need to know that we have control over our Sense of Life.

"Thoughts lead on to purpose, purpose leads on to actions, actions form habits, habits decide character, and character fixes our destiny"
Tryon Edwards

"We are limited, not by our abilities, but by our vision."
Unknown

"Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity."
Viktor Frankl

"I have found no better expression than 'religious' for confidence in the rational nature of reality, insofar as it is accessible to human reason. Whenever this feeling is absent, science degenerates into uninspired empiricism."
Albert Einstein

"Rationality is the recognition of the fact that nothing can alter the truth and nothing can take precedence over that act of perceiving it."
Ayn Rand

Chapter Two Your Past

"Study the past if you would divine the future"
Confucius

"What is past is prologue."
William Shakespeare

"One faces the future with one's past."
Pearl S. Buck

"Losers live in the past. Winners learn from the past and enjoy working in the present toward the future."
Denis Waitle

“It does not matter where you are coming from. What matters is where you are going.” While this statement is true, it is more of a reflection of a good attitude towards the future rather than an accurate truth. We all know that it DOES matter where you are coming from, and the better you can understand where you are coming from the better you are equipped to move forward.

Therefore, we will look into your history to see the things, people, and events that have shaped your life and brought you this far. By looking into your past, we will get clues to the direction your life is currently following.

The experiences you have had, the things you have done, and the people you have met thus far will all be a part of you for the rest of your life. You have likely experienced both positive and negative people and circumstances. We will not dwell on the past more than necessary, but we will look at your past in an objective manner.

No matter what your past consists of, it is a part of who you are. The goal is to make it an asset for you—an asset of memories and experiences that will be useful to your future.

"Your past is an asset of experiences that you can use in your future."
Hans Glint

First, let's list some facts we can use as input later when you create your alternatives.

Who have you predominantly been with in your life so far?

Where have you lived?

What professional and/or social roles have you had?

Why have you done the things you have done? That is, what has been your motivation for the decisions and changes you have done in your life so far?

Now that we have a starting point based on your past experiences, let's look at the people who have influenced your life thus far.

Parents

The strongest influence we have is that from our parents. As children, we instinctively learn from them. We observe and absorb from our parents everything they say and do.

Like all people, our parents have good and not so good qualities. Unfortunately, we pick up both and are not able to distinguish between them when we are children. Only as adults are we able to analyze the legacy of what our

parents gave us. And we now have the ability to choose which qualities we want to cultivate and which qualities to discard.

Beware that observing, learning from, and imitating our parents is hardwired into our psyche. It takes conscious effort to identify and change these patterns.

Being able to look at your parents objectively demands maturity. As we grow up, we oftentimes catch ourselves reacting in ways where we see our parents reflected in ourselves. It is only natural that this happens, as we will then be the age we can remember our parents being.

Whether we want it or not, our parents’ aspirations for us are a major influence in forming who we are. At some point, we absorbed it, modified it, or perhaps rebelled against it.

The fact is that all people have good and bad qualities. If you can find no good qualities in your parents, then you may have a long way to go in raising your awareness. Realize that there is nothing wrong with needing more awareness. Take your own realization as a compliment.

There is so much baggage we have from our parents, including:

- The words we use.
- The gestures we use.
- The trust we put in others.
- Our reactions to major and minor events.

These are all things you observed and learned from your parents when you were growing up. Now as an adult you have the opportunity to reflect upon and analyze if what you learned from your parents was the right thing. You can even correct it, though this requires discipline and hard work.

Many people never reflect on what they learned from their parents. They never analyze if who they are, what they have, or what they believe is what they really want. They presume that what they know and what they have is right by default.

Let me illustrate by an example. For more than 70 years, parents in communist Russia taught their children that communism was right and good. So the children of Russia really believed that communist Russia was good and right. When communism finally collapsed, it became obvious that the system was wrong and evil. At that moment, people had to change their beliefs, at great cost.

In the same way your parents taught you things that you might now regard as true and right, which in reality might not be so.

Let’s further this example and show how parents’ beliefs can shape a child’s life. In communist Russia, a good career was to become a member of the communist party and work as a party secretary. After communism fell, most of the people who had a life plan including to become a party secretary had to change their career plan, and hence their life plan.

Your Parents’ Wishes and Hopes for You

All parents have wishes and hopes for their children. And they cannot help but project these wishes and hopes onto their children. So whether you want it or not, you have been influenced strongly by your parents’ wishes.

Fortunately, parents only want the best for their children. But as human beings, parents are limited by their belief system and their own experiences. I have found that it helps to be explicit about the parent’s projections, and they are always present. You can then reflect upon it and see it as something you consciously want to adopt or reject.

Please beware that your age can influence your judgment here. Generally, the younger you are when you read this, the more inclined you might be to distance yourself from your parents and reject their advice. This is a natural behavior and one that is necessary to become an independent adult. But this rejection can be counterproductive in that there is most likely a lot of wisdom in your parents’ wishes and advice. As you grow older, chances are that you will appreciate your parents’ advice more.

Again, it takes mental effort and discipline to understand that these processes are happening to you.

Exercise: Your Parents’ Wishes for You

What is your father’s education and profession?

What other things, both professionally and socially, has your father done in the past?

What would your father want you to do with your life?

What is your mother’s education and current profession?

What other things, both professionally and socially, has your mother done in the past?

What would your mother want you to do with your life?

Exercise: Your Father’s Influence

What is your father’s sense of life? (You may not be able to fully describe your father’s Sense of Life. Just write down some key words that will allow you to grasp it.)

Which of your father’s good qualities would you like to adopt?

Examples:

- I would like to adopt my father’s calmness in stressful situations.
- I would like to adopt my father’s good sense of humor.
- I would like to adopt my father’s way of always having some money in reserve for a rainy day.

(If you can’t name any good qualities, then think again. Everyone has good qualities.)

Which of your father’s qualities would you rather not adopt?

Examples:

- I do not want to adopt my father’s ill temper.
- I do not want to adopt my father’s smoking habit.
- I do not want to adopt my father’s depression.

When I was young, my father wanted me to be/do/become:

Examples:

I remember him saying that I should avoid heavy labor.

I remember him saying, “I wish I had become a lawyer.”

Exercise: Your Mother’s Influence

What is your mother’s sense of life? (You may not be able to fully describe your mother’s Sense of Life. Just write down some key words that will allow you to grasp it.)

Which of your mother’s good qualities would you like to adopt?

Examples:

- I would like to adopt my mother’s caring nature.
- I would like to adopt my mother’s sense of adventure.
- I would like to adopt my mother’s ability to balance work and family.

(If you can’t name any good qualities, then think again. Everyone has good qualities.)

Which of your mother’s qualities would you rather not adopt?

Examples:

- I do not want to adopt my mother’s lack of patience.
- I do not want to adopt my mother’s snappy responses.
- I do not want to adopt my mother’s perfectionism.

When I was young, my mother wanted me to be/do/become:

Examples:

I remember her saying that I should major in psychology.

I remember her praising my writing abilities.

Which parent do you mostly identify with? Your father or your mother? Why?

Chapter Three

The Influence Of Generations

*"If you want happiness for a lifetime, help the next generation."
Chinese Proverb*

*"No one man, however brilliant or well-informed, can come in one lifetime to such a fullness of understanding as to safely judge and dismiss the customs or institutions of his society, for these are the wisdom of the generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history."
Will Durant*

*"Bear in mind that the wonderful things you learn in your schools are the work of many generations. All this is put in your hands as your inheritance in order that you may receive it, honor it, add to it, and one day faithfully hand it on to your children."
Albert Einstein*

Who you are today has been influenced by several generations before you. Skeptical? Consider the following true story about a newlywed couple.

One evening soon before they married, the couple decided to make steak for dinner. The bride cut the steak into three pieces and cooked the meat in three parts. When the groom asked her why she did that, she said that she did not really know; she had simply seen her mother cook steak that way. So the groom asked his mother-in-law about it, and she did not know either; she had simply seen her mother cook steak that way. When the groom finally asked the grandmother-in-law, she told him that when she was young her family was poor and only had one small kettle for cooking. It was too small to cook the meat in one piece, so she had to slice it up and cook it in three pieces.

This is a cute story, but it has a lot of knowledge hidden in it. How many ideas do you carry in your mind that are passed down in the same manner? How many habits do you have from your parents? How many of your traits have been passed down previous generations, perhaps from circumstances that are no longer relevant?

Habits and influences travel many generations before they are washed away. How many generations past influence us today? It is impossible to say exactly but historic texts suggest that it might travel as much as seven generations. Let's assume that influences can travel seven generations, sins and vices. A generation is usually about thirty years, so seven generations makes 210 years. This means we carry influences from our forefathers perhaps as long as 210 years back.

These influences can include:

- The way we slice and cook our steak.
- The words/expressions we use.

- The thoughts we hold/have.
- Our sense of life. What we perceive as beautiful, ugly, peaceful, or threatening.
- What we consciously seek or avoid.
- Traditions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, etc.
- Where and what “home” is.
- How we look at family.

The list goes on and on. We are, to a very large degree, a product of the past.

Exercise: Trace Your Roots

What influences have your ancestors passed on down the generations, both good and bad?

It is well worth the time to visit your older relatives and ask them to talk about the lives and times of your ancestors. So much of you is passed on from them. Getting to know them is getting to know yourself.

How did you father’s parents influence him?

How did your mother’s parents influence her?

How far back are you influenced?

What influences did your great grandparents pass down to their children?

Action Items:

Seek your oldest living relatives and ask them about the past, as far back as they can remember. Realize that if you find someone in their 80s or 90s, his or her memories could bring you back about 150 years. How? Perhaps when he was younger, say in his late teens or 20s, he probably talked to his great grandmother who was 80 or 90 years old. Perhaps that great grandparent was able to talk about her own great grandparents. He is now carrying all that information with him. This is as far back as firsthand human memory can carry us without the help of the written word.

Getting a historic sense of where you come from can be a profound and deeply revealing experience. So do a bit of research into your ancestors and try to understand what of them is in you. These are people who have lived and breathed. They have hoped, worked, smiled, laughed, and dreamed. Something from them is in you—some of their hopes, dreams, love, anger, frustration, and wisdom are part of who you are.

It does not matter if you are adopted, if you do not know your biological parents, or if you simply don't have access to this data. You have likely been raised by someone who has filled the father and mother roles, and that is who has influenced you. Use the data you collect from those people.

Get pictures of your ancestors. Look closely at the pictures. What do you see in their faces? What facial features do you see in them that you also possess?

Realize that we have inherited much more from them than their genes. We have inherited how we think and act, how we react to things, how we perceive life, and our sense of life. They have influenced us in many ways.

As you continue looking at the pictures, think about the following:

- What kind of feelings or emotions do the pictures reveal?
- Who are the people in the photographs, really?
- What did they think about?
- What were their pleasures?
- What were their sorrows?
- What would they tell you and advise you if they were alive today?
- What could they tell you about who you are?

Also try to get an understanding of the society they lived in and how that influenced them. Life was tougher before. Life was often shorter and more painful.

Try to understand the culture they came from. How did that influence them?

You are the peak of their family tree. You are carrying the torch of life. They are all “watching” you.

You are the one blessed with being on the planet, alive and free to make things happen and to live life. “Carpe diem!”

Family Legacy

My parents divorced when I was eleven years old. My father moved out and went to live with another woman. This experience had a profound influence on me. I lost a close contact with my father, I felt betrayed by him. We all go through some sort of separation from our parents that can be more or less painful. As we mature, we can see things from a new perspective and understand our parents better.

I lost my connection to my father, and I felt I lost my father’s love. As I look back upon the things I have done so far in my life, I see that much of it has been an attempt to regain my father’s love, and to somehow make things good again. The truth is, of course, that my father never stopped loving me, but he was not resourceful enough to find ways to show his love. Also, he was too preoccupied with his own life to pay much attention to his family.

I learned that my father never had a deep connection to his father, my grandfather. Their relationship was one of acceptance, never any physical violence, but they were not close. I learned that they never spoke about feelings or the deeper meaning of life. My grandfather required that you should be a man, stand up for yourself, never cry, and never show emotions.

My grandfather worked in a shipyard all his life. He worked hard, struggled, and was able to build his own house. When I, in my search, asked him about some career advice, he looked at me and said, “You are tall; never work on a bench.” Apparently, he was concerned about my back. When I asked him about moving to America, he said, “If you have money, America is good. But then again,

if you have money, anywhere is good.” He was a simple, straightforward man with little theoretical education. Yet, he stayed all his life in marriage, had two kids, and enjoyed his late years sitting on his own lawn just enjoying his freedom.

My grandfather’s father was a dam overseer. Apparently he was a violent man. He beat his wife and kids. He eventually left his wife with whom he had seven kids and started a new life. The family felt little love and much resentment towards him. His father again was also a dam overseer and a firefighter. He too was a violent man with little love. His father again was a sailor. All I know of him is that he brought home Canary birds from his travels at sea. The birds would die from the cold and lack of sunshine in the winter, so the attic of his house was filled with the empty cages from all the birds he brought home over the years. Though I do not know his inner thoughts, I have a suspicion his feelings resonate in my own longing for the sun.

Here my search ends. I do not have any information about his father again. From asking my oldest relatives I have gone five or six generations back in history. When I tell these stories to my nephews, children, or grandchildren that will make it seven generations. It is not a coincidence that historic texts suggests influences travel seven generations.

What is the wisdom from this story?

Well, the reason why my father never connected much with me and never showed much love was most likely because his father never connected with him or showed much love to him. Why did my grandfather not show much love? He never received love himself; he was beaten, left and betrayed by his father, who in turn had a violent father, who again had a father that perhaps was struggling with winter depressions.

Why did my father leave my mother and three kids to move and settle with a new woman? You can never have proof of these things but I am sure that the legacy of his grandfather doing the same thing had something to do with it. Do you see the pattern here?

Fortunately I have the ability to become conscious about the influences I have from the past. I can decide to learn from them and make sure I learn from history.

Exercise: Other Influential People

"You don't have to be a "person of influence" to be influential. In fact, the most influential people in my life are probably not even aware of the things they've taught me."

Scott Adams

"The most influential of all educational factors is the conversation in a child's home."

Sr. William Temple

“What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?”

Other people have influenced you too. Friends, teachers, bosses, neighbors, and other people you have encountered have influenced you. This is a good thing, because while we can't choose family, we can choose non-family.

Write down the names of the five people who have influenced you the most.

How has each person specifically influenced you?

You can cite more than five people if you wish. If you do, make more sheets of paper and insert them into the binder.

Exercise: Defining Moments/Turning Points

In your past you have had moments that stand out—moments that formed you into the person you are today. Identify these moments; write down what happened and how this shaped you.

Identify the major defining moments or turning points. What makes these moments stand out?

Add additional sheets of paper as necessary.

Exercise: Defining Decisions

In your past, you have made some critical decisions that have formed you. Identify these critical decisions and what they have meant for you.

Add additional sheets of paper as necessary.

Exercise: Things That Have Given You Pleasure

Human beings are designed to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Throughout our life, our brain carefully registers which behaviors have given pleasure and which have given pain. For every new experience we have, our brain subconsciously runs it against the memory of similar situations and presses for a similar behavior that has given pleasure (or at least less pain) in the past. Sometimes we need to override this push by our subconscious brain. We need our conscious brain to display more long-term behaviors that might not give the instant relief our brain calls for, such as doing exercise and avoiding unhealthy food.

What gives pleasure is unique for each person; it is an intricate part of our personality and what makes us who we are. You want to be aware about what gives you pleasure so that you may consciously work to expose yourself to this.

Write down the things, events, and circumstances that give you pleasure in your life. Write down things big and small. Most likely, many of your entries will be interpersonal like relationships to family, friends, and loved ones.

The more things you have, the better.

Some examples could be:

- Family dinners.
- Walking the dog.
- Professional recognition.
- Driving my new car.
- Watching TV.

Add additional sheets of paper as necessary.

Exercise: Things That Have Given You Pain

Write down the things, events, and circumstances that give you pain in your life. Write down things big and small.

Do not spend too much time on this, as this is the dark side of life. But you want to be conscious about this aspect of life as well. If you don't confront it, you will have things in the dark that you will be constantly uneasy about.

Write down the pain source and where it came from. Write it down in a “matter of fact way.” There is no limit to how many to list.

Some examples could be:

- Poverty or fear of poverty.
- Ill health.
- The year I spent at company x doing y.
- Being alone during the holidays.

We have done these exercises so that you will have some specific input to use when defining your life alternative later in the workbook. We want to break all the information down to the Who, Where, Why, What, How, and When of our life plan. For example, your father's profession is a very specific “What” that you might or might not want to use as input as you formulate your alternatives. Likewise, your defining moments and decisions can give you some specifics to your “Why” in your alternatives.

Chapter Four Your Present

"The reason people find it so hard to be happy is that they always see the past better than it was, the present worse than it is, and the future less resolved than it will be."

Marcel Pagnol

The people and events of your past influence who you are today. This does not mean you are a product of the past; this does not mean that your life is predetermined. As a human being, you have the faculty of volition. You have free will. This means that you have the power to decide. You have the power to use your faculty of volition going forward to choose which parts of you to use when making decisions for the future.

Whatever you choose, whatever your decisions will be, it is based on the enormously complex sum that is best summed up as your sense of life. The sum that is you are so complex that no one can ever describe it accurately—the only adequate description is your actual physical person. “You” is also a sum in constant flux; every second that passes changes you in some way.

Some of the things that are you can be easily identified and described. For example, your sex, height, weight, hair and eye color, etc. are objective facts that you can easily verify.

But in order to fully understand who you are, we must dig deeper than that. A mere description of what you do is not enough, nor is a description of your history. To simply say that you are a carpenter, that you eat fish, and that you pay your bills on time is not enough. To gain an understanding of who you are we will have to find out why you do what you do.

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize you with you. Who are you today? How do you look at life? What is your lifestyle? How fulfilled are you in the major areas of your life? We will later come back to this material and use it as potential alternatives.

Finally, it does not matter where we have been; what matters is where we are going. We all have unique experiences in life, and we all have empowering positive experiences and negative experiences. So be a little humble as you do this. Above all else, be sympathetic to the person you are.

Exercise: The Major Areas of Your Life

A good way see where you are in your life today is to assess how satisfied you are with the major areas of your life on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being high and 1 being low.

The major areas of your life are:

- Health – your physical well being.
- Spiritual – your beliefs about the world and yourself.
- Career – your livelihood or profession.
- Financial – your monetary worth or well-being.
- Emotional – your mental health.
- Relationships – your thoughts, feelings, and interactions with other people.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where are you in each of the following areas today?

Health	1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9–10
Spiritual	1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9–10
Career	1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9–10
Financial	1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9–10
Emotional	1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9–10
Relationships	1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9–10

Clearly mark with one color pen where you are today. Then, with another color pen, mark where you want to be within a certain timeframe. You will see where you need to improve.

The model enables you to keep balance in your life and in your progress. An unbalanced life will not run smoothly. You want to keep pushing the limits of your life quality outwards. When one part takes off and others get left behind, you want to focus on that part to bring it up to speed with the others. Otherwise that part will hold you back.

When we later come to your alternatives for your future you will want to come back to this exercise. By describing each of your alternatives you will get a better understanding of the implications of your alternatives.

Exercise: You are what you constantly think.

What do you think about?
You are constantly in an internal dialogue with yourself. You are asking yourself questions and producing answers. This form of internal dialogue is “you.” The dialogue never stops; it goes on consciously and subconsciously. One of the great discoveries in psychology of the last century is that we consciously can take control over this dialogue and use it for positive change.

If you are in a negative disempowering dialogue, you may be having an internal dialogue something like this:

“How could I be so stupid as to...?”
“Why does this always happen to me?”
“Why can’t I ever learn?”
“The glass is half empty.”

With dialogue like this, you will only dig yourself deeper and deeper into a negative state.

However, you can consciously change this dialogue. The change requires diligent effort, but is definitely worthwhile. If you have the dialogue above, you can consciously change this by asking or saying to yourself:

“What did I learn from doing ...?”
“I am in control of my life.”
“I have learned and I am now prepared for new challenges.”
“The glass is half full.”

You will need to repeat the new positive empowering question pattern to yourself many times before it becomes automatic, sinking into the unconscious mind and replacing the current pattern. You might say that you are “brainwashing” yourself. This brainwashing can be a positive change when you have consciously chosen it and are in control of it.

If your subconscious mind is telling you that the glass is half empty, you might need to tell yourself hundreds of times that the glass is half full before your subconscious mind will accept it.

For this next exercise, you will identify the thoughts that are constantly in your mind, the questions you ask yourself and the answers that you produce. List any generalities you make about yourself, the ideas you have about yourself, your life, and how you see yourself.

“What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?”

Examples:

“I need to solve my financial problems.”

“Why did my wife not kiss me this morning?”

“I hope Sarah does not get into trouble.”

Add additional sheets of paper as necessary.

Interests

"My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there."

Charles F. Kettering

Luckily, we are all interested in different things. We don't know why people have different interests, but what an exciting place the world has become because of it. Try getting explicit about your interests; this will enable you to incorporate your interests into your life plan. One great and fun way to uncover your interests is to visit a big bookstore.

Spend some time just browsing the titles. Walk up and down the aisles. Pay attention to what you find interesting. Let yourself free. Take notes (or even take photographs) of books and pictures that grab your interest. Do an inventory and write down the things that you found interesting.

My interests:

Exercise: Level of Awareness

"What is a demanding pleasure that demands the use of ones mind! Not in the sense of problem solving, but in the sense of exercising discrimination, judgment, awareness."

Ayn Rand

"I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Neither can I nor would I want to conceive of an individual that survives his physical death; let feeble souls, from fear or absurd egoism, cherish such thoughts. I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and with the awareness and a glimpse of the marvellous structure of the existing world, together with the devoted striving to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny, of the Reason that manifests itself in nature."

Albert Einstein

"What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself."
Abraham Maslow

Awareness is a key factor to understanding ourselves. It enables us to create good alternatives for the future and to decide on the right one. The first important step in awareness is to have awareness about our awareness.

Awareness is a never-ending process; you can never become fully aware of all the things that are you.

What areas of your life are you very aware of?

Examples:

“I am aware of my need to sleep at least seven hours per night.”

“I am aware that I need to feel financial safety.”

What areas of your life could you be more aware of?

Examples:

“I am aware that I have never been really ill, so I do not fully appreciate my health.”

“I am aware that I am going to retire in nine years and that this will change my life dramatically.”

Look back at the mother and father exercises from earlier. If you found few good qualities in your parents, you likely have low awareness about them. Use the earlier exercise answers as a guide to the above questions.

How can I increase my awareness about myself?

Example:

I have lately increased my awareness about where I come from and my family history.

I am very much aware about my financial situation; after all I am an accountant.

I am not fully aware about the importance of children. I do not have any children, so my level of awareness is low on this aspect of life.

Realize that we all have areas where we are highly aware and others where we can increase our awareness.

Exercise: What Are Your Current Goals?

Examples:

“I am going to buy a new home next summer.”

“I am going to work less and spend more time with my family, this Christmas we are going to really talk to each other.”

“I am going to quit my current job and start as a teacher.”

What goals do you have today?

How do you currently formulate your goals? (Analyze how you use tense, your own person, and certainty on your formulation.)

What timeframe do you have on your goals?

Exercise: Roles You Play

What roles do you play today, in both your professional and private life?

Examples:

Friend

Parent

Student

Employee

Employer

Exercise: Role Models and People You Admire

"I think it's an honour to be a role model to one person or maybe more than that. If you are given a chance to be a role model, I think you should always take it because you can influence a person's life in a positive light, and that's what I want to do. That's what it's all about."

Tiger Woods

People you identify in this exercise may be the same people you previously mentioned in earlier exercises. The main difference is that the people in the previous exercise are the people you have actually been influenced by in the past. The people in this exercise are the people you consciously want to be influenced by and emulate going forward.

Examples:

Grandma, for being so loving and forgiving.

The man in front of the tank on Tiananmen Square for his courage.

My friend John, for the dignity he shows in fighting his cancer.

Celebrities, authors, of public persons.

Who are your role models and why?

Who do you admire and why?

What traits in these persons do you admire?

Giving and Contribution

“What goes around comes around.”

What you get is closely related to what you give. What you give comes back to you many times over. Therefore, you want to focus on giving as much as possible. Don't be concerned in advance about the getting. Trust that once you give, the getting takes care of itself.

When I say giving, I am not talking about parting with your financial or other means in a careless way. By giving, I am talking about contributing value to other people. The more value you can contribute to other people, the more you give and the more you will get back. The sum of your giving is what you give times the people who receive it. So your challenge is to give as much as possible to as many people as possible.

Why do pop and rock stars have such rich lives? Because they give a lot. My life, for example, is better because of the work that Elvis Presley did and the songs he “gave” me. I have spent a few hundred U.S. dollars buying Elvis records, CDs, and DVDs over the years. I have worked a number of hours for those dollars, so in effect I have given Elvis (or his heirs) those hours of my time. The same has been done by millions of people. Combined, this has sent millions and millions of hours of work to the Presley family, which translates into a huge fortune. In the same way, people have given us inventions, media, culture, medicines, email and workbooks on life planning to the world and received great rewards for it.

Giving is so powerful because we live in an interconnected world. Your life can be connected to millions of others. What you want out of life, to a very large extent, you need other people to give you.

Exercise: What Do You Give?

Examples:

- I give my time and my labor to my workplace.
- I give my love to my family.
- As a heart surgeon, I give dozens of people new hearts and life every year.
- I give my time to the community by being on the board of the local school.
- I give people a tool to better plan their life.
- I give tens of thousands of people around the world a better e-mail service.

Describe what you give and whom you give it to, both privately and professionally. (Do not look at giving in the narrow sense. Think of giving in the broadest terms.) Be specific. What do you give?

What do you make or produce professionally?

How many lives do you touch by your professional work?

How profoundly do you touch other people’s lives?

Getting and Receiving

“Get the giving right and the getting will take care of itself.”

Hans Glint

As described in the Giving and Contribution exercise, what you receive is a product of what you give. You get and receive something in every area of your life.

Exercise: What Are You Getting And Receiving?

Describe what you are receiving or “getting” today. Be specific.

Examples:

I receive love from other people.

I receive USD \$80,000 every year from the corporation I work for.

I receive fame and glory.

I get a smile from the lady in the office every day.

I receive friendship.

Exercise: Values

*"When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier."
Roy Disney*

*"Values provide perspective in the best of times and the worst."
Charles Garfield*

*"Your outlook upon life, your estimate of yourself, your estimate of your value are largely colored by your environment. Your whole career will be modified, shaped, molded by your surroundings, by the character of the people with whom you come in contact every day..."
Orison Sweet Marden*

This exercise will help you write your purpose later. To be clear on your purpose you will need to have your values clear.

Don't be superficial about this exercise. You do not want to use "honor words" too lightly, such as "love," "truthful," "honesty," "fairness," etc. Work your way beneath the superficial and specify what you mean by your values.

Examples:

Fairness: I will contribute to a level playing field in society.

Nature conservation: I will not insist on pristine conditions, but on sustainable use of resources.

Love for everyone: I will be positive and express affection.

What are your values?

What are the values that you currently live by?

What are the things you do not want to compromise?

Exercise: Happiness

“Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of ones values.”

Ayn Rand

“When are you happy?”

Do this next exercise to get clear on when you are happy. Having concrete examples of when you are happy will help you define the elements of your happiness and to re-create these moments.

Examples:

I am happy...

When I have worked a full day and I am resting at home.

When I am on vacation.

When I am with my family.

When I do something good for other people.

When I drive my new car.

I, for example, get happy whenever I am out in the sunshine. And I find that I am always happy when I can play with dogs, especially puppies. I do not know why playing with puppies makes me happy, but I know it does. It is therefore evident that I would want to work to consciously re-create moments when I do this. This will require conscious effort on my part.

When are you happy?

List at least three moments when you have been happy. Describe the moments in detail.

Where were you? Who where? With you? Describe what you smelled, felt, tasted, or touched. Describe the feelings and the circumstances.

Exercise: Philosophy

“It is not a question of whether man chooses to be guided by philosophy; he is not equipped to live without it.”

Ayn Rand

Your philosophy is the sum of your beliefs.

Philosophy concerns everybody. Everyone lives by a philosophy of life. Our philosophy answers questions such as what is right and what is wrong. Our philosophy dictates what qualities and virtues we see in other people and even our preferences in music and art. It thus dictates the way we act with others and with society.

You want to be explicitly aware of your philosophy, as it will determine your ability to obtain happiness. The more rational your philosophy is, the more likely you are to choose good long-term goals that will make you happy.

Examples of elements of a good rational philosophy are:

“Through the faculty of reason men can have control and make good decisions.”

“Alone or in groups, people will do good if they are rational and have the right incentives.”

“People can change and improve.”

“Man is created free so we want to allow for maximum freedom in life.”

Examples of elements of a non-rational philosophy are:

“Women are less worthy than men because they are physically weaker.”

“I am unworthy because I did something stupid in the past.”

“My quality of health is determined entirely by outside factors.”

“The earth is flat so sailing in one direction will eventually make you fall off.”

Your philosophy is different from your sense of life, and they can contradict each other. For example, someone might have a philosophy that people are good and can improve in general, but that same person may have a sense of life based on numerous betrayals, creating a sense of loss and a sense that he or she is unworthy and unable to improve. Therefore, you need to have a philosophy that will support your sense of life and thus your self-esteem.

What is your philosophy or your beliefs about yourself?

What is your philosophy or your beliefs about the world?

Do you have reason to believe that your philosophy is rational? Why or why not?

Would you be willing to change your philosophy and your beliefs if they proved to be non-rational? (Many people refused to believe the earth is round, even after it was proven.)

The point of this exercise is to raise your awareness about your own philosophy and your own beliefs about the world.

In ancient times, savages believed there were gods everywhere. They had a god for mountains, a god for the skies, a god for everything. They also had gods for disease and sickness. So if you got a serious infection, there was not much to do about it, as “god so-and-so of sickness decided that you should be sick.” Some of this fatalism can still be found in the world.

We now know that such a philosophy or belief is non-rational. We now know that diseases and sicknesses do not have gods, and that you can treat an infection with antibiotics. So the old belief was non-rational and the new belief is rational.

“What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?”

Thousands of years from now people will look back on our times and smile at some of the beliefs we now hold. Be conscious about this. Some of your beliefs, your convictions, and your philosophy of life might not be right.

Your Sense Of Life

Your sense of life is an endlessly complex sum of your interpretation of all the experiences you have had in your life. You can imagine your sense of life as a large punch bowl. The drink gets its taste not from the soda alone, nor the fruit alone, nor the alcoholic beverage, nor the syrup alone; the drink gets its taste from the mix of all the components. That’s what gives the drink its unique taste. In the same way, your sense of life is a complete sum that incorporates your experiences in childhood, the love or lack of love you have felt, your early attempts at independence, your successes, and your failures. Your sense of life is constantly being adjusted, or rather added to, by new experiences. It is therefore possible to change your sense of life by the new experiences and thoughts that you add to it. But like changing the main flavor of a drink from pineapple to apple requires a lot of apple juice to dilute out the pineapple, changing your sense of life will require a lot of conscious effort. If you have a sense of life that does not assist you in your pursuit of happiness, a sense of life that is non-rational, or a sense of life that is limiting you in your pursuit of your goals, then you will want to change your sense of life by consciously feeding your mind with new thoughts.

Exercise: Describe your sense of life

Are people basically good or bad? What makes you think that?

Are people worthy of trust or not? What makes you think that?

Is the best yet to come or are the good times in the past? What makes you think that?

Will the future be better or worse? What makes you think that?

Are your current problems solvable or unsolvable? What makes you think that?

Will you overcome any problems or worries you currently have? What makes you think that?

Are you able to forgive the sins of the past? What makes you think that?

Are you able to forgive yourself? What makes you think that?

How would you like your sense of life to develop in the years to come? What makes you think that?

Self-Esteem

”Self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. It consists of two components: 1) self-efficacy -- confidence in our ability to think, learn, choose, and make appropriate decisions; and 2) self-respect -- confidence in our right to be happy; and in the belief that achievement, success, friendship, respect, love and fulfilment are appropriate to us.”

Nathaniel Branden - definition of self-esteem

”Love is an expression and assertion of self-esteem, a response to one's own values in the person of another. One gains a profoundly personal, selfish joy from the mere existence of the person one loves. It is one's own personal, selfish happiness that one seeks, earns, and derives from love.”

Ayn Rand

Your self-esteem will determine your happiness. Self-esteem is fundamentally about your own dialogue with yourself. Self-esteem comes from the inside. Self-esteem is not to be found in anyone or anything but yourself. The path to improve your self-esteem is to cultivate yourself as a person you can love and respect.

Money, looks, plastic surgery, or success in public life will not by itself improve your self-esteem. Any attempt to gain self-esteem by reactions from other people is futile. People can give you the fuel for an ego trip. But if this ego trip is not accompanied by a growing respect for yourself as the person you are, it will not lead to self-esteem or happiness. Think of all the so-called successful people who are unhappy and even commit suicide.

Your self-esteem is not determined by your feelings on the catwalk or in the limelight. It is better understood as the relationship you have with yourself when you are alone, your relationship with the person you see in the mirror. If you can look that person in the mirror and see him or her with respect for the path this person is on in life and the way this person is walking this path, then that is self-esteem.

Describe your self-esteem:

Do you accept yourself for who you are? Why or why not?

Do you accept that you have a legitimate place in the world? Why or why not?

Do you accept that you are an individual who has the right to have a fulfilling life and to be happy? Why or why not?

Moving Forward

So far we have worked on who you are now. The exercises helped you identify the explicit ideas and thoughts you have about yourself and the world. The more explicit you can become about your own ideas, about yourself, and about the world, the better you are positioned to make an evaluation of where you are and to incorporate this into your life plan.

No one has a perfect understanding of himself or herself or of the world. Ideally you will be able to identify where you might need to improve or change. For example, if you had been a white person in South Africa 20 years ago you would have thought that Apartheid was right, when in fact it is wrong. Had you lived 600 years ago you might have believed that the world was flat. In some respect, we are still just entering the age of the enlightenment; in a private conversation I had with explorer Thor Heyerdahl he told me, “We are still in the middle ages.” That is, we all hold old ideas that are irrational and wrong, I know I do. If we can identify them we can do something about them and improve. Some of the wrongs I have realized in myself during the last few years have been:

- Thinking that I need certain outer circumstances to be happy.
- Thinking that I had to make money first and then tend to my happiness.
- Thinking that milk and other lactose products regularly in my diet were all good, while I am now convinced they are not.
- Thinking that peace in the world could be accomplished by means of agreement instead of insisting on the truth.

“We are still in the middle ages.”

Explorer Thor Heyerdahl in conversation with Hans Glint

We have focused so heavily on your thoughts up to this point because you need this information to make good alternatives for yourself. To be able to arrive at a good life plan decision you need to:

- Have a high level of awareness about yourself and your life.
- Have a good, rational, and coherent understanding about how the world works.
- Have a philosophy of life that allows you to integrate new thoughts and ideas into your understanding of the world in a rational way.
- Have a high level of self-esteem. You will need to believe that you deserve and are worthy of a good life. If you do not have a high level of self-esteem, you might make life plan decisions that do not give you the quality of life that you deserve.

If you are unsure of any of the points listed above, then this is where you have to begin to work on your life plan. You can do this in two ways.

1. You can use your current circumstances to work on increasing your level of awareness and understanding about yourself and the world until you are ready to make a decision on a life plan.

2. You can incorporate and integrate growth in awareness and understanding about yourself and the world in your life plan. This might mean that your life plan decision will have the form of a dynamic goal in order to be more flexible and more adaptable to change as you move up in your understanding of yourself and the world.

You do not have to have an extremely high or near perfect level of awareness and understanding to make a life plan decision. But to make a firm decision, one that is likely to be right and that you will be able to live with, you need to least have a high level of awareness and understanding.

In the next chapter we are going to get explicit about the Who, Where, Why, What, How, and When in our life. We will get very concrete and precise about our alternatives. This is exciting stuff; now your future is getting real.

Chapter Five Your Future

“We can do anything we want, but we can not do all the things we want. We must decide.”

Hans Glint

“Your mind, while blessed with permanent memory, is cursed with lousy recall. Written goals provide clarity. By documenting your dreams, you must think about the process of achieving them.”

Gary Ryan Blair

Our times are fantastic. More than at any previous time in history, these are the times when it’s truly possible to do anything. We can recall countless examples of people who have realized their dreams, and more will come. You will be one of them.

Manifesting our dreams takes consistent effort in the direction of our goals. We will always encounter roadblocks in the path to happiness, and we must overcome them. Only a well thought out, firmly decided on goal that you are passionate about will give you the energy and the drive to follow through and pass these blockings. With the right plan, you will be unstoppable in your forward momentum.

We all want many different things. Sometimes the things we want are coherent, and sometimes they are not. Sometimes the goals we have reinforce each other and drive us forward; sometimes they clash and cause you to lose momentum or even come to a standstill.

We must evaluate the pros and cons with the alternatives we devise and come to a conclusion. Then we must empower ourselves to make the decision. With the decision comes two things: 1) the things we are going to do, and 2) the things we will not do. Many people have dreams they do not want to give up. Do not fall into this trap. If you have inconsistent dreams you must let one go. When you have let one go, you are actually lighter and freer to pursue the one you decide to go for.

We usually overestimate what we can do in one year, and at the same time underestimate what we can do in 10 or 20 years. Why? Because of our impatience and lack of perspective. We can easily think one year ahead, but when we think 10 years ahead, we lose the vision, it is almost as if we don’t think we’ll get there. The only way around this is by raising our long-term awareness through writing and doing a life plan.

It has been proven again and again that in years one person—also you—can change the world! If we have 10-20-30-40 or more years left, then we could potentially change the world several times over in our lifetime. So there is plenty of time to do anything you want. Embrace this.

Consider this: In one year all of the below is hard to do:

- Build a fortune.
- Make people change their minds about something.
- Create a family.
- Start a revolution (like the French, the American, women’s liberation, etc. There is still plenty of injustice and wrongdoing for you to put your energy into.).

But if you allow yourself a ten-year timeframe you can do all of the above and much more.

Persistence

"Your mind, while blessed with permanent memory, is cursed with lousy recall. Written goals provide clarity. By documenting your dreams, you must think about the process of achieving them."

James Whitcomb Riley

How do you live up to your dreams and aspirations? The trick is to carry on despite everything that happens. We all experience setbacks and resistance in our lives, but we must press on. The objective is to press on no matter what the circumstances.

Here are a few good reasons to press on:

- Your situation improves when you keep working on it.
- Pressing on gives you strength.
- You find solutions you did not think of.
- Other people produce new technology and new solutions for you.

There is no “one way.” By pressing on you apply more pressure to your side in the “tug of war” of life. That’s right; life is not fair—it is an ongoing “tug of war” between different interests. Therefore, you want to apply as much pressure on your side as possible.

Often it is not correct to see a situation as a game where you have one clear winner and one clear loser. Most scenarios in life are a game that we play over and over. In this process, how much you win and lose depends on how much pressure you can apply to your side of the rope. So think in terms of applying pressure to your side of the rope as in a tug of war.

Some people and things that can help provide pressure to your side of the rope include:

Friends
Lawyers
Family
Public image

Exercise: Create the ideal day in the ideal life.

Now is the time to start building your own glimpse of your own life as it could be, as it deserves to be and as you will make it be.

Before we begin describing the parts of your life in detail, describe your ideal day briefly.

Where do you live?
When would you get up?
What would you do?
What would you eat?
What would you drink?
Would you work?
With what would you work?

By making careful notes you will be able to come back to this glimpse instantly. If you can draw, go ahead and draw a picture of your environment.

Where are you?
What do your surroundings look like?
What is the temperature?
Who is with you?
What is happening?

Here's my example of an ideal day.

I wake up in my bed on the second floor of a building facing southeast so the rays of the morning sun are flowing into the room. The doors to the outside balcony are open, with thin white curtains gently blowing in the breeze. It is early, 5:30 a.m., and birds are singing to greet the sun. I go down the stairs to the kitchen and put on some coffee. It is silent. I contemplate life. I am grateful for everything. I give my three black Labradors some affection. I sit down at my desk, open the window, and let the sun in on my face. I have my work and writing right in front of me, and I start working on it. I keep working for a few hours, being left alone to think and work until I come in for lunch at around 11:30 with my family. We sit and talk and have fun. Then we spend the day together, going places, shopping at the marketplace and making great healthy food. In the afternoon I exercise for one and a half hours. I spend a good part of the day outside in the sun. I do not watch any TV that I do not consciously choose to; there are no slander magazines in my house. I go to bed early, by 9:00 p.m.

“What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?”

Describe your ideal day in as much detail as you can:

Who, Where, Why, What, How and When

“Six friends have served me well: who, what, when, where, why, and how.”

Now is the time to describe your alternatives in detail. You want a clear understanding of what you hold true for the main areas of your life. You want to be specific in order to evaluate and make a conscious decision.

I have found that the best way to describe our different life alternatives is to use the six age-old helpers of who, where, why, what, how, and when. By answering these questions you are forcing yourself to go over the essential parts of your life and be clear and specific about them.

The order of the questions is very deliberate and reflects our psychology of what is important to us.

Who

“Who” is your answer to “Who are the people in my life?” The people in your life are vital to your pursuit of happiness. You can describe your life through the relations you have with other people. For most of us, our immediate family will be very important. We want to cultivate the relationship we have to them. Meaningful personal relationships take time to build. You want to be clear on whom you want to build your long-term growing relationships with. In my own experience I have learned that thinking about my nephews’ and nieces’ futures has increased my awareness of my own future. I have three nephews and two nieces. I want to be a part of their future. I want to be at their graduations and marriages, and I want to see their children. One day, perhaps a hundred years from now, they will sit with their great grandchildren on their lap and tell them stories from today, perhaps stories about my life. I have therefore in my alternatives incorporated spending more time and effort in my relationship with them.

In my younger years I thought it was possible to make people share my interests. I used to think that I could influence people to become interested in the same subjects I was. I now realize that changing people is futile; it is much better and much easier to seek out the people who share your beliefs. Today it is possible to keep in touch over the Internet and reach anywhere on the planet in one day, so we can associate with the people we want to.

Who are the people you absolutely want to share your life with? Describe the relationship you have with them, and the relationship you want to develop. Be very specific with names.

“What Do You Want To Do With Your Life?”

Examples include:

Spouse

Family members

Lifelong friends

Professional colleagues

Also list the people you would not mind sharing your life with. This list will be more general.

Finally, list the people you would not want to share your life with. Be brief, and don't focus on this question too much, as we get what we focus on.

Examples:

I do not want to share my life with:

Corrupt politicians.

Negative people.

People who like to slander.

Where

“Where” is your answer to “Where do I live?”

We all need a place to call home—a place we can relate to as the place where we live. This will be the place where we come back to rest and the place where we keep our belongings. It will also be the common ground we share with some of the important people in our life and the address where people know they can reach us. In your life plan you will need to define a specific place to call home. The place you call home will be your physical anchor point—the place where you wake up and the place you come back to for rest. If you do not have a clear sense of where you want to call home, you do not have clarity in your life plan.

During a conversation I had with psychologist Nathaniel Branden about life planning, he stopped, looked straight at me and asked, “Where do you want to live?” Since my alternatives at the time were based in different locations, my answer to this question automatically revealed the firmness of my life plan. My answer to Branden was, “New York City.” It is interesting to note that after having contemplated this alternative more, I have come to realize that this is not what I want after all. But it was the explicit expression of the specific location that led me into the awareness that this was not my desire after all.

It is always helpful to state your chosen alternative to someone before you actually commit. Getting your choices out in the open oftentimes brings out aspects of your alternatives you have not thought about.

Most likely, you will define “where” as some of the places you have lived already or that you have visited. You want to describe the geographical location like a city or a state. Then you want to describe, in as much detail as possible, the exact location. You want to describe the rooms, the views, the smell, and the atmosphere. Imagine the texture of your linens in your bed when you wake up in the morning; imagine the sound of the birds outside as you sit alone and rest peacefully in your own company.

List at least a few places you would want to live. If you find this question difficult, rephrase it to “some places I would not mind living.” Be creative.

Also list the places where you don’t want to live. Again, be brief and don’t dwell much on the negative side.

Why

“Why” is your answer to “Why did I choose this for my life?”

Your “why” is in essence your values, the principles you want to live by. It is your own personal reason for your decisions. These principles can be anything and will be unique to you. Your own unique whys is something only you can decide on. We all have our whys for all the decisions we make in our lives. If you ask yourself, “Why do I live where I do? Why do I do the things I do?” you will have answers to these questions.

In this why section we will be explicit about the reasons you have for deciding on the life you will decide upon. If you decide to move to Japan and become a sumo wrestler, you will need to have some very clear reasons why you want this to remind yourself of when you encounter roadblocks in your life.

Some of your whys will be your absolutes—the things you absolutely will not compromise or change. If you have children one of your whys will be that you want to spend time with them. Medical conditions or special personal circumstances might give you other absolutes that you do not want to compromise.

Your whys can be:

Principles you absolutely want to live by.

A personal mission that requires some very specific actions.

Medical, health related, or other personal reasons.

Some questions to consider are:

Why do you want to be with the people you have chosen?

Why do you want to live where you have chosen?

What are the specifics that make you want this?

What are your unique “whys”? They can be anything that makes your decision important for you. It is important to be clear and specific about the whys so that when you review your decisions later you will know why you made them.

In my own experience, I miss the sun every winter and I get the winter blues. Therefore, I have a very powerful “why” behind my choice of where to live. I have come to the conclusion that my happiness and my productivity are much higher if I am in the sun. Therefore, I have to set up my life to spend winters in the southern hemisphere. This has implications for my personal life and career. I will have to choose a job that I can do wherever I am and a personal life with people who understand and tolerate that I might be away for weeks or months in the winter.

Examples of some whys include (Why do I want the things that I want?):

Honesty

Integrity

Because I want to spend time in the sun during winter

Not polluting nature

Because I want to live close to my grandmother
Respecting other people

List some of your whys here:

What

“The verdict you pronounce upon the source of your livelihood is the verdict you pronounce upon your life.”

Ayn Rand

“Everyone has a talent. What is rare is the courage to nurture it in solitude and to follow the talent to the dark places where it leads.”

Erica Jong

“What” is your answer to “What do you do?”

Your “whats” are the professional and personal roles you play. We all play a number of roles in our lives. Our professional role is what we do for a living. Our personal roles can be as a mother, a father, a football coach, a housekeeper, a loving son, a spiritual person etc.

Describe your roles in as much detail as possible. If you want to have a child and be a parent, imagine having the child in your arms. If you want to win an Olympic gold medal, imagine yourself standing on the platform with the medal around your neck. The key is to vividly and in detail imagine yourself playing the roles you describe.

Professional roles.

What are the professional role or roles you would like to have? If you find this question difficult, rephrase it to the roles you would not mind doing.

What are the professional roles you know of first hand?

What roles do you know of second hand?

Personal roles.

What are the personal roles you would like to have?

Also list some ideas of things you would not like to do with your life. Taking choices away can be just as important as finding them. Often it's a relief to take choices away.

Examples:

- I do not want to do what my mother has done with her life.
- I do not want to be in the rat race.
- I do not want to work for others.

Exercise: If I Could Do Anything

What would you do if you knew you could not fail? What would you do if you knew that whatever you set out to do you would succeed? Write it here.

If you were terminally ill, what would you do?

Look at all the “what” answers you gave on the past few pages. You will be able to see patterns develop about your life and your future desires.

Use this information to start listing ideas for what you could do with your life. Be creative. Free-flow. Do not judge or analyze the ideas right now; just let it flow. Write down a number of things you could possibly do.

- Examples include:
- Be a firefighter.
- Be a like my father.
- Be a parent.
- Be a spiritual person.

Exercise: How can I give more?

Go back to part two and look at your list of what you currently give. Use your creativity to expand your giving.

Examples:

- I could offer my professional services to charities for free in my spare time.
- I could write and get published the manuscript I have on my computer.
- I could give away my overstock inventory to hospitals in my hometown.
- I could make extra copies of my family photos and send them to my cousins.
- I could mention to my grandchildren that they will inherit some money from me.
- I could bring along the child next-door when I go fishing.

How can you give more than what you give now?

How can you give in a better way?

What other things can you give?

How

"If you think you can do a thing or that you cannot do a thing, in either case you are right."

Henry Ford

How is your answer to the question: “How am I going to do it?”

When deciding on your life plan, you are left with the question of how to do it. The question of “how” will influence your decision, because often you will need an answer to the how question before you can believe in as an alternative and decide on it. You might not be able to decide on “becoming a sumo wrestler” if you have no idea how to become one. In this sense the “how” question can be circular.

Belief

“How” cannot always be answered rationally by examining the facts. A fact can be that a glass contains 50% of the water it can hold. But, is the glass half full or half empty? Your belief answers this question, not the reality of the matter. How you answer this question says a lot about you, but nothing about reality. You might need to work on your beliefs to be able to make the decision.

Believing It Is Possible

You want to believe that the glass is half-full. You want to have a positive outlook on life and its possibilities. This is where the whole area of motivation, motivational speakers, and positive outlook comes in. If you are not already immersed in this field you want to have a serious look at it. There are a whole range of motivational speakers and coaches that can help you get that little extra push to see the glass as half full and make it happen. You can find a list of good motivational speakers and coaches in the appendix of this workbook.

How as a Process, Not as a Recipe

You do not always need to have the specifics of your “how” clear. Sometimes a path in the right direction is what you need. For example, if you want to become a master chef, you might not know anything about the cuts of the meat today, but you know that the “how” is to go into culinary school and learn the profession.

What is the path you need to follow to arrive at the how?

When

”There is time for everything.”

Thomas Edison

“I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.”

William Shakespeare

”The time for action is now. It's never too late to do something.”

Carl Sandburg Author

“The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot.”

Michael Althsuler

“Time is on my side, yes it is.”

Mick Jagger

Most things take longer than people expect. This is because in between the productive hours you have you will be bogged down with all kinds of distractions that you have to deal with. When you subtract from the time you have all the hours from necessary dealings, distractions, travel to and from, etc., the time left for the actual job or for your actual self-realization is but a fraction. Therefore, you need to make sure time is on your side.

Have you allowed time:

For yourself?

For your loved ones?

For relaxing?

Ask yourself, “Will time work for me, or against me?” Most athletic sports careers peak at a fairly young age. So if you are starting too ripe in your life, you might not want to have a goal of “being a professional football player.” You might want to modify that goal into “I want a life of football where I get a fulfilling football career and later will be able to pass on my knowledge to aspiring football players.”

For example, if you are 58 and want to be become a professional ballet dancer, time might be working against you. If you change your goal to become a ballet dance commentator in the media (and still dance on the side), then your interest in dancing is turned in to something where time can work for you as you build experience and a name for yourself.

In most intellectual jobs, time works for you as you gain experience. Try to incorporate an element of time working for you no matter what you do.

Whoever has the most long-term planning will often win. The tenant who rents his home might get along month by month, but the landlord who slowly pays down the mortgage on the property will end up owning it.

The same principle holds true for many other things in life, the longer your view the more you stand to gain. This is one of the main reasons why good life

planning is so important. If you have a good life plan you will be able to plan longer than most people and benefit greatly from it. For example, if you have decided and therefore know that you will live in Paris for the next 20 years, you probably want to buy a home there.

When we are young we generally think that we have all the time in the world. As we grow older we increasingly realize how long things often take. To get a better grasp of time, take a time management course. Also, buy and read some good time management books.

Creating Your Alternatives

"We have to learn to be our own best friends because we fall too easily into the trap of being our own worst enemies."

Roderick Thorp

"Man is the only kind of varmint sets his own trap, baits it, then steps in it."

John Steinbeck

Before you create your alternatives I want to share some insights based on the people I have coached in life planning. I will point out a few traps that I have seen over and over again.

Trap #1: Do something now for just a bit and then tend to the dream.

"Be careful what you do, because what you do is what you end up doing."

Hans Glint

Some people hold on to their dream and tell themselves they will only do what they are doing now for a short while, and THEN they will start living their life. But the truth is that whatever you are currently doing is shaping you. What you are doing now is getting at you, and there is no escape. The longer you keep doing what you are doing now, and the longer you stay in the place with the people you are staying with now, for better or for worse, the harder it will be to break out.

Trap #2: Acquire money first and then tend to the dream.

All experience tells us that money in itself will not make you happy. Why? Because when you focus on making money, you get stuck in the cycle of making money. This chase actually changes who you are. You get caught up in “What you do, you end up doing.” So be careful what you do, because that is what you end up doing. If you believe you want to make money first before doing what you really want to do, you will end up making money and not doing what you really want. Describe what you want to do with the money, the feelings you are after, and then go after the feelings.

Trap #3: Living glamorously; being cool and hip.

"Do not worry about holding high position; worry rather about playing your proper role."

Confucius

Watching TV and reading weekly magazines can leave you with the feeling that life is all about being glamorous and living the life of the rich and famous. Living the glamorous life, being in the media, living in Hollywood, and having the spotlight on certainly looks like fun. Yet, when you read the biographies of famous people who have actually lived this life they will tell you that this is by far NOT a sure path to happiness. Don't fall into the trap of believing glamour will make you happy. In fact, I advise restriction in watching TV and reading weekly magazines while making your life plan; it can and will distort your decision-making. Fame and money in itself will not make you happy.

Trap #4: Only do what you are good at.

Everyone has a talent. We are all good at something and it is easy to confuse a talent for a mission in life. Be careful before choosing your talent as your mission. Talent is often something you are interested in, and interests change over time.

Trap #5: Belief that you can change people or culture.

Many people find themselves in a job or a circumstance where they are constantly fighting the culture or the people they are working with. Yet they cling on, hoping that someday, somehow, they will be able to change things. People and culture are very inert. They do not want to change, and they most likely will not change. A much better approach to the problem is to find the kind of culture and people that enforce your own value system and grow with them.

Trap #6: Guilt.

Some people feel guilty for taking the question—What do I want to do to with my life—seriously. They feel guilt imposed by other people to take their dream seriously. As a result, they give up and leave it. Remember that nothing is too trivial to be worthy of your interest. No one but you can decide what you want to do with your life. You must come to terms with this. YOU, and only you, can, and will, decide on your life. If the goal is something that captures your imagination and that you would like to do, go for it. This is especially true for many children of ambitious and successful parents. For example, a daughter of a very successful businessman may feel she must live up to her father's ambition and desire for great success. She will feel that her interest for preserving the marshlands from pollution and development pales in comparison to a career in the city of London. She must come to terms that she is the one who has to live with the decision. The bottom line is that your decision is your decision. It is you that has to live with it.

Trap #7: Keeping your doors open.

Many people think that not committing is keeping the doors open and increasing their freedom, choices, and happiness. The fact is that when you have no focus or clarity, you have no freedom, choices, and happiness. The person who is all over the place and never seems to be able to decide is at a disadvantage. Today's culture glorifies specialization; the Renaissance people of a few hundred years ago are not in vogue today. You can overcome this by staying broad but specializing in one field. Another way to overcome it is to find or create a job that fits your seeking nature. Teachers, journalists, some scholars, life coaches, and many others are good at combining many disciplines.

Trap #8: Striving for the big goal.

Some people set a goal so big that they can never realistically attain it. Basing your happiness on a huge and very difficult goal makes life difficult. Improbable goals do not bring happiness. Consult your SMART goals and work on the “A” – for attainable. Perhaps you can redefine your goal as getting the world one step closer to your goal, instead of you going all the way?

Trap #9: Owning everything.

Many people feel that they have to own things to have a happy life. As a result, they chase after the second home, the cabin, the new car, and all the things they want to own. I once met a man who had a house, a summerhouse by the sea, a winter lodge in the mountains, a new car, and many, many things. But the bank financed it all, so he had to work all year round to pay off the mortgages on his possessions. Whenever he took a weekend off to go to one of his houses, he had to spend the whole time fixing things on them. He never had any quality time for relaxation. Clearly he would have been much happier had he used his money renting a place whenever he wanted to spend time by the sea or by the lake. I am sure his son would trade the houses for some quality time with his dad, sleeping in a tent, walking by the lake, or fishing. You can only be in one place at a time, you can only drive one car at a time and you can only have one good dinner at a time. The jewelry that adorns you adorns another in an instant. Don't feel you have to own everything, Lighten your load. Be lean. There might be another way that does not require you to own. Remember the old Chinese saying: If you own more than three things, the things own you.

Trap #10: Stacking commitments.

One small commitment can at first seem innocent and problem free. Then another commitment stacks upon it, and another on that. Before you know it, you have piled up commitments to a level where you can't break out. Some common commitments are mortgage, work contracts, family, kids, friends, community, etc. You can always turn your life around, but the more commitments you have, the more difficult it will be. Therefore, be very careful about taking on commitments. Taking on a commitment is a very serious matter. To live life at its fullest you will have to take on commitments at some point, but be careful not to start piling up commitments you don't really need. You want to be more careful about taking on commitments than you are using your money.

Trap #11: Going after the sure thing.

Going for the sure thing as opposed to what you want is a tempting path to follow. But going for the sure thing is actually much more risky than many think. The sure thing can lead you to the end of a road where you just don't want to go any further, and set you back considerably. The sure thing is what leads many people today into lives of “quiet desperation” where they are safe and successful, but doing something other than what they want.

Trap #12: Fear of success.

Your success can leave others behind. In very subtle ways it is communicated in every social group what is accepted and what is not. The social pressure can be tremendous. When you decide on your life plan and start to get momentum in your direction the people that are not getting ahead will be afraid and try to hold you back. You know this and as it happens you will feel it too, you will get feelings of guilt for leaving the others behind and this can inhibit you in your pursuit of success. You must overcome this, you must thrive and enjoy the success of others, and you must be prepared to stand up for your own success.

Trap #13: Staying on the wrong track.

It is never too late to quit and start afresh. If you realize that you have been on the wrong track, you can turn it all around at any time. In our society you do not have to do anything, you are free. This freedom is worth a king's ransom. So what if you might lose out on a career opportunity or lose some money. You have one life; the best career or all the money cannot make up for being on the right track. Making a million dollars per year as a stockbroker will not make you happy if what you really want to do is to raise dogs at a kennel.

Trap #14: Not being ready to make the decision.

Human beings are in a continual state of becoming. We are always moving from one state of mind and body to the next. Accept that you might need to grow more before you are ready to make your decision. For many, if not most, people the right alternative to decide on is an open ended one, one that allows for further growth until you are ready to make your firm decision. Allow your alternatives to lead you further down your road of mental or physical development. Be careful about firmly stating that you or the world is so and so. Be careful with committing yourself to strongly to anything at this stage.

Modern medicine has improved enormously during the last century. If you are reading this now you can expect to get well into your 80s and 90s, and to be healthy in your ripe age. This was not always so. In generations past people seldom got more than in the 50s or 60s, and they were usually sick late in life. This expansion of life has allowed us to extend the periods of our life. We can be children longer (unfortunately children today are under pressure to get into young adults way too soon; let's allow them to be children longer), we can be young adults longer, and we can be young longer. Today it is not uncommon to see people in their 50s appearing young in every way with tight jeans and a t-shirt. That would have been unthinkable a few generations back. This longevity also allows us to be seekers of our life plan for longer. Before, people settled into a

profession, married life and a life plan at the ripe age of around 18-23. Today it is common to have people seeking career counseling in their 40s and 50s. Isn't that great? So if you feel you need time, allow yourself to spend some extra time figuring out what you want to do. You can build this extra time into the life plan you decide on “I will travel for six months first.”

Trap #15: Letting a major change paralyze you.

A major change in your life has changed everything. Again allow yourself some time. It's much better to drift for some time and then be firm in a decision on a new direction and to decide and change several times. Work on setting up your life to allow you to drift. Release yourself from commitments in time, effort and money and free yourself for a period before you recommit to your new life plan.

Major life changing events can make you have to regenerate your goals. Sometimes the goals that used to keep you going are no longer worth pursuing. You will then need new goals to stretch for, you will need to work on defining these new goals, and with the right goals you will get you motivation and drive back.

Look at it as an opportunity to start afresh. Many people would beg to be in your shoes and start over. You might also have a period of time where you feel generally disinterested. This too will be solved when you have your new goals clearly set out before you.

Trap #16: Falling in love with The Question.

Perhaps you have fallen in love with The Question. Falling in love with The Question is the state of defining yourself as being continuously in The Question and being comfortable there. The artist Dido sings a song “My life is for rent” where she expresses how she never commits to anything but always tries things for a short or limited time. Many people today are in love with The Question, and their identity has become attached to not being able to answer The Question. If you are in love with The Question, the first step in breaking out is to acknowledge that you are.

I was in love with The Question for a long time. My love for The Question was part of the reason why I developed the What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? program and wrote this book. I did not gain momentum in the right direction until I realized that I have to make a decision. I decided that I had to work on helping people make The Decision.

Exercise: Today my father would want me to.

Go back to chapter two, where you wrote what you believed your father wanted for you while you were growing up.

Now, if you can, call or visit your father. Do it right now. Tell him that you are doing this life planning exercise and that you want to ask him a few things to better understand yourself. This exercise presupposes that you have a fairly good and trustful relationship with your father.

Ask him (and write down some key points about his answers):

What did you want for me when I was growing up? Why?

What is his advice on what I can do with my life now? Why?

What have you learned in your life?

After you have spoken to your father, answer the following:

Was I right about what I thought he wanted for me when I grew up?

If I was right, do I understand why?

If I was mistaken, do I understand why I was mistaken?

Do I understand why he is advising me what he is today?

What has he learned about life that I can use?

Exercise: Today my mother would want me to.

Go back to chapter two where you wrote what you believed your mother wanted for you while you were growing up.

Now, if you can, call or visit your mother. Do it right now. Tell her that you are doing this life planning exercise and that you want to ask her a few things to better understand yourself.

Ask her (and write down some key points about her answers):

What did you want for me when I was growing up? Why?

What is her advice on what I can do with my life now? Why?

What have you learned in your life?

After you have spoken to your mother, answer the following:

Was I right about what I thought she wanted for me when I grew up?

If I was right, do I understand why?

If I was mistaken, do I understand why I was mistaken?

Do I understand why she is advising me what she is today?

What has she learned about life that I can use?

Exercise: Today some significant others would want me to.

Do the same exercise that you just did for your father and mother with anyone you have a good and trustful relationship with.

Exercise: Write your own obituary/legacy.

"No legacy is so rich as honesty."

William Shakespeare

Some people suggest writing your own obituary as a good way to get a long-term perspective on your life. I prefer to call it writing your legacy.

Before you write, ask yourself: “What will people remember me for?” and “What will I have done that will be worthwhile remembering?”

Do this exercise twice. The first time write your obituary/legacy as if you were to pass away right this very moment. The second time write your obituary/legacy as if you have lived the life of your dreams.

Chapter Six Your Alternatives

*"Life is a choice - as is how you handle the pitfalls along its bumpy road."
Julie Donner Andersen*

*"The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously."
Henry Kissinger*

*"Your attitudes and the choices you make today will be your life tomorrow,
build it wisely."
Author Unknown*

*"You don't have to buy from anyone. You don't have to work at any particular
job. You don't have to participate in any given relationship. You can choose."
Harry Browne*

*"It is about choices we make. And how the direction of our lives comes down to
the choices we choose."
Catherine Pulsifer*

Your alternatives are the distillations of the exercises you have just completed. In making your alternatives you will get clear on the combination of the Who, Where, Why, What, How, and When of your life. Seeing them in combination, perhaps for the first time, will be revealing and will enable you to decide.

Alternative Answers to The Question

With the material you have completed thus far, you now have the ability to create some alternative answers to The Question. By combining your answers to the different questions you have answered, you can start to build different potential lives for yourself. This is great fun. You will be able to combine the different places you want to live with the different professions you can imagine doing—all while combining this with the people you want to share your life with and so on.

No ONE Answer

Several of your alternatives might be good. Remember there is no ONE Answer to The Question. You will likely find several viable answers to The Question. In fact, if you have done the exercises truthfully, you will have several alternatives in front of you that you would love to decide on. The question then becomes not what to do, but which alternative to choose.

You will eventually make a decision—The Decision. Look at the language here; you do not “arrive at the decision” or the decision does not “reveal itself.” Rather, you MAKE the decision. It is a conscious choice that you make.

Work with the alternatives to find An Answer to The Question that you want to go for with all your heart and soul, something you can be passionate about.

What Constitutes a Good Answer?

The different alternatives will offer different answers to The Question. In very broad general terms it is possible to say that:

- An Answer that is flexible is preferable to a rigid one.
- An Answer with high likelihood of success is preferable to one with a low likelihood of success. You make your own luck by setting yourself up for success.
- An Answer that uses your natural abilities and given premises might be preferable to one where you have to start from scratch.
- An Answer where you will still be happy if things don't work out exactly as you want might be preferable to one where you have to achieve a very specific goal to be happy.
- An answer where time works for you is preferable.

In the checklist section you will find many more questions to compare your answers to.

List the Alternatives

Now let's move to the next step and start listing your alternatives.

I have prepared five different alternatives for you here, but don't feel restrained by this number. Make more or less alternatives until you feel you have gone through them all; a minimum of three alternatives is advisable.

Play around with the alternatives. Move the answers around. Make combinations that surprise you. You are on the right track if you are able to make combinations you have never thought of before, or combinations that make you smile or outright laugh.

Give each alternative a compelling title and key points. Because the brain can only hold a certain amount of conscious thoughts at any one given time, you want to distill your alternatives and thereby your decision into one short compelling title and a few key points. Think of it like a hook that you can hang your decision on. You might have moments of doubt along the way; this is when you need to recall the title and one or two key points that will override the doubt and get you back on track.

If you have long and complicated reasons for making the decision, you will not be able to remember all of them. That's why you want to distill your decision into just a few ideas that appeal to your emotions. Saying “I am here in New York because in a weighted analysis of all my alternatives, I gave 843 points to New York, 839 points to California, and 803 points to Utah” is not convincing when doubts comes in.

You would be much better if you recall your decision as a positive title, such as: “Creative girl on her way up in the Big Apple” with key points of “I am here in New York because I love the big city life and my chance of making it in

show business is greater here than anywhere else on earth.” This will be a good title to recall with key points that will keep you on track.

I want to tell you there is one alternative you don't have to write down. I have done it for you. It is called The Default Alternative. This is the alternative you will get if you do not consciously decide on your own alternative.

The Default Alternative

If you do not decide what your life will be and move strongly and confidently in that direction, you will slip into the default life alternative, which is whatever life hands you, whatever comes your way, and always following the path of least resistance, like a piece of wood drifting in a river.

By contrast, deciding on a clear life plan, you will be like a rock in the river. The path of least resistance will not be pushing you to the side, but going around you. The same thing will happen in your life. As long as you are a drifting piece of wood in the river, the currents will toss you around in the path of least resistance. With a decision, you will stand firm no matter how hard the water pounds at you.

The point of describing the default alternative in this part is to have some fun so you realize this is what you will get if you don't take control.

The Default Alternative - Path of Least Resistance:

Who

Q: Who will I share my life with?

A: I will share my life with whoever happens to be around.

Where

Q: Where will I live?

A: I will keep living where I live now or wherever life tosses me.

Why

Q: Why will I do the things I will do?

A: To get by, day by day.

What

Q: What will I do?

A: I will keep doing what I do now or whatever life hands me.

Q: What will I give?

A: Giving? Hey, don't tell me about giving. I am concerned with the getting!

Q: What are my goals?

A: To get by, day by day. If I do have any others, they are other people's goals.

Q: What will be my obituary/legacy?

A: Life came and went, with some time in-between. Nothing much exciting really happened.

How

Q: How will you live your life?

A: Hey, I only know how to (fill in the blank).

Q: How are you going to do it?

A: It will work itself out.

When

Q: When will I do all this?

A: For the rest of my life.

Do not settle for the default alternative. Get some leverage to avoid this alternative by briefly imagining your life ending up as this alternative. Feel the pain of knowing your life could have been so much, but that you never took control. If you can imagine the pain of ending up with this alternative, you will have the determination to do something about it, formulate, and decide on your own life plan.

Keep Working On It – Refine and Mitigate

Keep on narrowing down your alternatives. Who knows, perhaps it IS possible to be both a sumo wrestler and an ice skating champion. Perhaps you can become a physician working six months per year in Japan with sumo wrestlers and six months in Switzerland with ice skaters, while you teach children the sport part-time. By using your creativity you can combine and re-combine your options until you arrive at an alternative you can decide upon.

When you have your alternatives ready you can make your decision and move on. You need to keep working on your alternatives until you are ready to make the decision. Remember, the alternatives are infinitely flexible; there is an alternative for everyone and for every circumstance. In fact, your life is going to turn out to be one kind of alternative anyway. If you feel you are unable to make the alternatives or see which one stands out, you need to keep working on it.

Ask yourself: “Can I be more creative?” and “Can I make other combinations?”

Alternative 1

Title

Who

Where

Why

What

How

When

My alternative as goals:

Major pros of this alternative:

Major cons of this alternative:

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

All of the above keeping in mind that:...
(Here write anything you want to add to this alternative.)

My life in five years:

My life in ten years:

My life in twenty years:

Alternative 2

Title

Who

Where

Why

What

How

When

My alternative as goals:

Major pros of this alternative:

Major cons of this alternative:

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

All of the above keeping in mind that:...
(Here write anything you want to add to this alternative.)

My life in five years:

My life in ten years:

My life in twenty years:

Alternative 3

Title

Who

Where

Why

What

How

When

My alternative as goals:

Major pros of this alternative:

Major cons of this alternative:

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

All of the above keeping in mind that:...
(Here write anything you want to add to this alternative.)

My life in five years:

My life in ten years:

My life in twenty years:

Alternative 4

Title

Who

Where

Why

What

How

When

My alternative as goals:

Major pros of this alternative:

Major cons of this alternative:

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

All of the above keeping in mind that:...
(Here write anything you want to add to this alternative.)

My life in five years:

My life in ten years:

My life in twenty years:

Alternative 5

Title

Who

Where

Why

What

How

When

My alternative as goals:

Major pros of this alternative:

Major cons of this alternative:

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

All of the above keeping in mind that:...
(Here write anything you want to add to this alternative.)

My life in five years:

My life in ten years:

My life in twenty years:

Example:

I have included two of my own alternatives as examples (you can skip the next four pages if you do not need to see an example). The decision I became confronted with was either having a career as a businessman in Oslo, Norway, or going for an international career as a writer and coach, as a promoter of life and liberty. I also had more alternatives, such as moving to the country to live a quiet life, but I finally reduced it down to the two alternatives below. I should say that I have worked extensively on these alternatives, twisting, tweaking, refining, and mitigating them into alternatives to decide on.

Hans’s decision – Decide between two alternatives.

Alternative 1:

Title:

Life as a businessman in Oslo, Norway.

Who:

Family, friends, and business acquaintances in Norway.
Work on expanding my circle of acquaintances.
Work on getting to know more people in the industries and interests I have.

Who not to:

Spend less time with negative people.
Show more discretion in my dealings with people and not allow relationships to be influenced by negativity.

Where:

Live in Oslo, Norway.
Travel for business and for holidays a few weeks per year.
Spend a few weeks in the sun most winters.

Why:

I know Norway.
I already am in Norway.
I master doing business there and I have a huge network in Norway.

What:

Being a businessman. Making a good living.
Expanding my business.
Being involved in domestic politics and writing.
Working on re-launching a classical liberal business magazine.

How:

Using my business skills and my contacts working with companies.

When:

Right now. I am already doing it.

Goals:

Become a successful businessman in Oslo.
Become financially independent ASAP.
Live a good life in Oslo.
Establish a family in Oslo.
Pursue my interests in Oslo with people in Oslo.
Relaunch classical business magazine Farmand in Norway.

Pros of this alternative:

I am already living this alternative.
I have good momentum in this alternative.
Right now this is the easy choice; it is the road most traveled by.
Oslo is safe; it's a good place to live and to raise a family.
Norway is prosperous because of the oil revenue; there will be economic opportunities here for the rest of my career.

Cons of this alternative:

Oslo is very transparent. Everyone knows everything about everyone.
Business in Oslo will demand my continued intense presence in Oslo.
I feel I need to develop more as a person before I settle. I do not think I can get the necessary influences to develop fully in Oslo alone.
Oslo is a small town. The opportunities and variety are limited.

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

The Oslo Daily

Hans – 114 years old.

Hans passed away today at age 114. He was born in Fredrikstad in 1971. He graduated from Lund University in Sweden in 1996 and worked two years abroad before he came back and settled in Oslo as a businessman. In his early thirties, he started several companies in what was then called the Internet sector. He published three books about life planning that were successful in several countries.

In 2007 he re-launched the classical liberal business magazine Farmand that to this day is perhaps regarded as the premier Norwegian business magazine. He remained publisher of Farmand until he retired at age 89. During the last 40 years of his life he spent a large part of the winters in his home in Provence, France. Three children, six grandchildren, and nine great grand children survive him.

Life in 5 years:

Making good money.
Working on exciting projects.

Having some success in business and some setbacks.
Experiencing winter blues every winter.

Life in 10 years:

Have a family and children.
Make more money.
Have some success in business and some setbacks.
Experience winter blues every winter.

Life in 20 years+.

Have a family and children.
Make more money.
To some degree struggling with the winter blues every winter.
Spending winters in Provence.
Eventually have grandchildren.
See my companies grow and mature.

Alternative 2:

Title:

International promoter of life and liberty.

Who:

I will stay in touch with friends and family and professional contacts in Norway and Sweden.
I will at times be closer to friends and family in the United States.
I will spend time with people who share my interest in personal development, self-help, life-planning, motivation, classical liberalism, and NLP. This will enforce my own pursuit.
I will reach out and create relationships to people through my work and build new friendships.

Who not to:

I will avoid spending time with negative people.
I will show more discretion in my dealings with people and not allow relationships to be influenced by negativity.
I will avoid spending much time with politicians and people promoting special interests by force instead of persuasion.

Where:

I will keep living officially in Norway.
I will stay in Norway during the sunny part of the year.
I will release myself from time commitments so I am free to travel.
I will follow the sun and stay in the sun during the winter.
I will find and build a base in the sun for the winter.
I will spend more time in the U.S.

Where not to:

I will not spend winter in Norway, Sweden, or anywhere in the northern hemisphere.
I will not move to the U.S. permanently.

Why:

I am a classical liberal. I truly believe in mankind’s ability and right to be happy and I believe in freedom.
I believe the What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? – Life Plan can contribute massively to many people’s happiness by giving people a plan for their lives.
I believe the promotion and revitalization of these values is the most important thing I can possibly do. By promoting these ideas I am not giving people fish, I am reminding people how to fish. Ideas rule the world, and with the wrong ideas, we are heading for disaster. What could I possibly do that would be more productive than to help people plan their life?
I will spend winters in the sun because I feel so much better in the sun. I get much more done. I will avoid the winter blues that comes every winter.

What:

I will write books and do tapes on self-help, life planning, and NLP.
I will write articles on business and economics.
I will work on the Internet to get leverage.
I will continue to provide better e-mail to the world through runbox.com.
I will get involved in more Internet ventures.
I will design an ever-improving system for people to decide what they want to do with their lives.
I will travel the world promoting the program.

What not to:

I will not spend a lot of time in an office.
I will not be tied down by tedious paperwork.
I will spend less time inside buildings.

When:

I have to release myself from my commitments before the winter starts.
I have to be free by October. I have to be out by December

How:

I will move my business online.

Goals:

Write the book.
Promote the book and the system. Reach 100 million people during my lifetime.

Build web sites and systems around them so I have a secure steady income.

Design a life where I live in the sun during the winter.

Continue to build the world’s best e-mail service in runbox.com.

Design a life with healthy, happy, positive, loving people around me.

Eventually ensure that the classical liberal business magazine Farmand is relaunched.

Legacy/Obituary if I decide on this alternative:

Hans’s obituary if he were to pass away right now:

Hans left us way too early. Hans loved his family and friends. His great ambitions in life were just getting started when he was suddenly ripped away. Hans had much energy, love, ideas, and project to give the world that we are unfortunate not to see. Hans created several companies; his e-mail company runbox.com continues its mission of creating the world’s best e-mail service.

Hans’s obituary after having lived the life of his dreams:

New York Times – December 4, 2085

Hans has passed away quietly, at age 114. Hans was an important figure in the movement that revitalized classical liberalism in the 21st century, and by doing so opened up the path to more happiness for millions of people. He was a central figure in what was to be known as the second wave of the Renaissance, the age that replaced postmodernism and that we are still in now. Through this involvement he relaunched the Farmand magazine in his home country Norway. In his work as a businessman, Hans started several companies in what was then known as the Internet sector and he was able to use the new technology to reach out to millions. His messaging company, runbox.com, pioneered the first fully secure email system in 2009, and went public in 2010. Hans’s greatest contribution, however, was his work in life planning. His What Do You Want To Do With Your Life? program on life planning has been translated into more than 20 languages and is estimated to have reached more than one hundred million people.

More than three hundred people came to his funeral, which was held at his home on the grounds of his life-planning institute in the Bahamas. His work on life planning and his charity for the promotion of liberty goes on. Hans lived to be 114 years old. Five children, twelve grandchildren, 36 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild survive him.

Life in 5 years:

Some success with book and life plan concept.

Some success with Internet business.

Avoid the winter blues by being in the sun during the winter.

Life in 10 years:

Life Plan concept and Internet business developed into sustainable businesses.

Avoiding the winter blues by being in the sun.

Having found a permanent place in the sun in the winter. Bahamas?

Life in 20 years+:

Legacy of career and contribution.

Home in the sunshine.

Being able to keep working at my own pace.

The Checklist

The time has now come to analyze the alternatives you have made against the checklist. This is a crucial step in your process of refining and mitigating your alternatives.

When test pilots take to the air in a new airplane they go through a long checklist. They are ready on the runway to fly. They have a clear goal for where they want to go and what they want to accomplish. They have years of training and experience, and the new airplane has been years in the making. Yet they still go over the checklist to make sure everything is okay to go.

The pilots did not make the checklist themselves. The aircraft manufacturer compiles and refines the checklist as new information becomes available. The checklist is the combined experience and wisdom of operating the plane. They go over every aspect of the plane and the plan to fly it. If they can't answer a crucial question, they go back and work in it before they take to the sky.

You want to do the same.

Your life plan is unique like a new airplane. There has never been and will never be someone like you or a life plan like yours. We are all on our own unique journey through life. Your test plane is still on the ground, but you are ready to decide to take to the air. Before you decide, you want to go over the checklist to check your plan against the experience of people before you. If there is something crucial that you have not thought over, go back and work on it instead of risking your plane and your life taking to the sky before you are ready.

You have your alternatives clear. Now you want to go over your alternatives with the checklist to see if you have good answers to the questions you find relevant. You do not need to answer all the questions; the point of the exercise is to initiate thoughts and ideas. If you don't have answers you are satisfied with you will want to keep working on your alternatives.

This checklist is not final or complete. The checklist is a compilation of questions I have found important to answer. You might find some of them useful and others not. If you have other dimensions and other questions you feel are important then add them to your checklist.

You will by now have at least a few alternatives of things you would like to do with your life. You want to use the checklist on all the alternatives that you find viable. You might want to adjust your alternatives as you work through the checklist.

Checklist

This is the checklist to alternative: # _____
(You might want to print or copy the checklist so you have one for each alternative.)

Title:

Answer the following about this alternative:

Do I get truly excited about these goals? Why or why not?

How does this goal excite both my brain and my heart?

Will I enjoy the journey towards the goal as well as the arrival at the goal? Why or why not?

Am I being realistic here? Why or why not?

Is this goal realistic or am I just hoping? What makes me say this?

When will I know if I have reached the goal?

If I reach it early, what is a natural next step?

What will I do if it fails?

Is this goal coherent with my values? Why or why not?

Do I have a backup plan?

Who

How can I share this alternative as a goal with other people?

Is this alternative something that other people can take part in as their own? Why or why not?

Will I be dependent on other people? Why or why not?

Do I need the support from someone to do this?

Will I get this support?

Have I asked?

Is there a risk of loneliness?

Do I have experience with loneliness?

Have I been able to tackle loneliness before?

Who has done this before me?

Have I consulted this person for advice? (If yes, that is a good sign. If no, you want to do so before making your decision. You can consult people in many ways not just by asking someone; you can study them, read their memoirs, etc.)

Is this alternative what my father would recommend? If not why am I choosing differently?

Is this alternative what my mother would recommend? If no why am I choosing differently?

Is this alternative what someone else I respect would recommend? If not why am I choosing differently?

Where

Do I actually know what it is like to live in the place I have decided on?

Have I been there?

If I will be new in that place, do I have a plan for making new friends?

Are the professional opportunities I want available for me in this place?

How can I afford to live in this place?

Have I considered just visiting this place instead of living there?

How long can I see myself living there?

Are people in general moving to or from this place? Why?

Is this a good place to for a family?

Do I want to live here with someone? Have I asked this someone if they want to live here with me?

Why?

Do I have a strong reason for this alternative? What is it?

Do I have more than one reason for this alternative? What are they?

What feelings is this answer going to give?

What feelings will this answer give along the way?

What feelings will this answer give at the arrival of the goals?

Is it likely that this decision will lead to happiness? Why or why not?

Will it lead to happiness once obtained, or will it also lead to happiness along the way? How? (Life is not so much the great pleasure of reaching the big goals, as it is the pleasure in all the small things along the way.)

Will I still be happy if I don't come in first? Why or why not? (In the Olympics, dozens of contenders compete; they are all great. But only one will win. If you want to be number one, that great, but it is important that you are able to enjoy life even if you do not come in first. No one will win in all the areas of life.)

Pleasure Why?

Do I have my values clear?

Do I have a good idea of where my values are going?

Will this alternative give pleasure? If not, why? If yes, what kind of pleasure?

Will the pleasure be lasting? Why or why not?

Am I ready to appreciate the pleasure this alternative will give? Why or why not?

Pain Why?

Will this alternative give pain? Why or why not?

What kind of pain can I expect from this alternative? (There will be some pain, so we might as well prepare for it. The question is not if there will be pain; the question is what pain and are we prepared to deal with it?)

Will there be pain when things take longer and cost more than expected (it almost always does)? How will I handle it?

Are my goals strong enough to enable me to carry through the pain? Why or why not?

What

Do I have experience doing the “what” in this alternative?

Do I have to learn new things to do this? What kind of things?

How can I go about learning these new things?

If I decide to change the “what” from what I do today, is that because I want to do the new thing or get away from doing what I have done in the past (escape)?

Giving/what

Will this alternative make it possible for me to give extensively? Why or why not?

Will I make it easy for myself to give? Why or why not?

Will I be able to amplify my giving? Why or why not?

Will I be able to adjust my giving? Why or why not?

How

Is this answer flexible or rigid? What makes me choose that answer?

Can I make this answer more flexible? Why or why not?

Am I burning my ships here? Is this wise?

Am I closing doors? How will this impact me?

Will there be new doors opened? Why or why not?

What new doors might be opened?

Have I allowed for later adjustments to The Answer? Why or why not?

What kind of commitments does this alternative need me to make?

Does this alternative need me to commit now to something that will be hard to change later?

The older you get the more risk averse you generally become. Have I taken this into account?

When

Have I carefully examined the time aspect? Why or why not?

Have I allowed for things to take more time than expected? Why or why not?

Will I lose my energy or drive if things take longer? Why or why not?

Can I adjust my goal if time demands so? Why or why not?

Have I looked at ways to save time? Why or why not?

Have I allowed time:

For myself?
For my loved ones?
For relaxing?

Will this alternative make time work for me or against me?

The pros

Do I have a good idea of the pros for this alternative? What are they?

Expect serendipity. Might there be unexpected pros? What could they be?

The cons

Do I have a good idea of the cons for this alternative? What are they?

Might there be unexpected cons? What are they?

What am I choosing away? Can I live with that? Why or why not?

Am I conscious of the things I cannot do in this alternative?

Can I live with that?

Interests/Why

Does this alternative involve working with at least some of the things that naturally interest me? If yes, which ones? If no, is that okay?

Health/How

Have I considered the health aspect of this alternative? Why or why not?

Will this alternative give good possibilities for having excellent health? Why or why not?

Will this alternative encourage me to live healthy? Why or why not?

Will this alternative help me to avoid poisons to my body? Why or why not?

Will this alternative help me to live a healthy lifestyle with adequate exercise?
Why or why not?

Will this alternative help me to live a healthy lifestyle with healthy food? Why or why not?

What I will do if I get ill for a while?

Is my goal adjustable if my health changes? Why or why not?

What I will do if I get ill or permanently disabled?

Spirituality

Does this alternative have a spiritual dimension? Why or why not?

Does this alternative allow for a spiritual development? Why or why not?

Financial

How much money will I need to pursue this alternative?

Have I made a budget for this alternative? Why or why not?

Does the budget add up? If no, why?

How will I have the financial means to do this?

Can I do this with less money?

How can I do this with what I already have?

Have I considered ways to increase my income?

Will I be able to save money along the way? Why or why not?

Who can help me financially?

Have I taken into consideration that things will take longer and cost more than planned?

Experience

You learn by trial and error. In testing something before you go full out, you will learn as you go. There is also great power in getting started. Get something started, however small, and you come into a feedback loop that will give you momentum.

How can I test this before I go flat out?

Is there a way I can get started now so I get some momentum?

Knowledge

Do I have the knowledge I need to do this?

What is my plan for increasing my knowledge?

Skills

Do I have the skills I need to do this? Why or why not?

What is my plan for increasing my skills?

Fulfillment

Is this alternative something I feel passionate about? Why or why not?

Is this alternative something that I am likely to remain passionate about? Why or why not?

Certainty/Risk/Likelihood

Is this alternative one that has a high or low likelihood of coming through?

Is this high risk or low risk?

What kind of risk am I willing to take to do this?

Is there alignment between the risk of the alternative and my willingness to take risk?

Will I still be happy if things do not go quite as planned?

Execution

What do I need to do to make this happen?

What will my to do list look like?

How will I have the energy and the drive to do this?

Do I have a plan for how to keep this energy and drive?

Your other checklist questions:

Chapter Seven Making The Decision

“Choose always the way that seems the best, however rough it may be. Custom will soon render it easy and agreeable.”

Pythagoras

“Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Vacillating people seldom succeed. Successful men and women are very careful in reaching their decisions, and very persistent and determined in action thereafter.”

L.G. Elliott

“It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.”

Roy Disney

“Each indecision brings its own delays and days are lost lamenting over lost days ... What you can do or think you can do, begin it. For boldness has magic, power, and genius in it.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“When making a decision of minor importance, I have always found it advantageous to consider all the pros and cons. In vital matters, however, such as the choice of a mate or a profession, the decision should come from the unconscious, from somewhere within ourselves. In the important decisions of personal life, we should be governed, I think, by the deep inner needs of our nature.”

Sigmund Freud

“The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one.”

Elbert Hubbard

Your life is your decision. Only you can make the right decision. By now you have laid out your alternatives and refined them to make improved combinations. The time has come to decide on one alternative. It is one thing to realize that you have to make the decision; it is another challenge to actually make it. Deciding is hard.

“Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide.”

Napoleon Bonaparte

There is no surefire way to make decisions. Making decisions is an art, not a science. It involves the very core of who we are. Realizing this is liberating, as again it points to our ability to use our faculty of volition to decide. Realize that by making your decision, you are making a dent in the universe, a dent that only you can make. Destiny will notice your dent as a knock on the door, and open up. Since there is no absolute certain way to make decisions, it is easy to end up in an endless loop of uncertainty. The ability to decide is the ability to break out of the loop. No one can tell you how to make your decision; you can consult other people for advice, but at the crucial moment of actually deciding you are alone, staring your destiny in the eyes. Different people will make the decision differently. You want to find your way to make your decision. Making the decision is opening the gate to the rest of your life, I can only lead you to the gate; you will open it by making the decision. I wish I could tell you how to do it, but this is where you are left alone.

What we can do, and what we have done in this program, is to methodically prepare ourselves and to raise our consciousness about the nature of the decision we want to make. To help you in making your decision we will examine a number of decision-making techniques.

The word “decide” actually comes from Latin. It consists of “de” and “side,” which means “to cut off,” as in incision.

You will have to decide on one alternative and cut off the other alternatives. You want to overcome the resistance that lies in wanting to have all the information and make the perfect choice. There is no such thing as a perfect choice. At this point you have done the job of defining, examining, and refining your alternatives. You have gathered your thoughts and preferences, and you have weighed the pros and cons. This is when it is time to make the cut off—to make the decision.

If you still feel that you need more information or more time, you can incorporate this into your alternatives. You can refine your alternatives until you have a alternative you can decide on and that includes finding more information and using more time.

As you now are about to decide, realize that you will never arrive at absolute certainty. At some point you simply have to make a leap of faith and make the decision. The trick is to prepare well before making this leap of faith, like we have done in this workbook. Do not fall into the trap of working on your alternatives all your life. You have to make a cut off point and decide. This cut off point has now come as you have done this program.

Realize that all alternatives involve risk. Your job is not to avoid risk but to calculate the risks and make sure that the total of what you can expect is maximized within the risk level you are willing to take over time. There is a strong, positive self-enforcing momentum in making the decision and committing to it. Once you have made the decision, providence moves for you too.

*"Commitment unlocks the doors of imagination, allows vision, and gives us the "right stuff" to turn our dreams into reality."
James Womack*

So relieve yourself from thinking that you need to make a perfect decision. You can't. You come to a point where you have to decide.

Give yourself some time and sleep on it. Make important decisions after a thorough and conscious investigation of the facts, as well as allowing your subconscious to work on the problem. Involve both your heart and mind in this process.

Your subconscious mind can be your friend, as it will continuously work on solving the questions you present to it. Especially when we sleep, the subconscious processes all the input it has gotten and works on results. When your subconscious mind has produced an answer, this answer is awarded to you and will be “tested” in the real world while you are awake.

If, for example, your subconscious mind comes up with the idea that you need to quit your job, it will test this idea in various ways when you wake up. You will want to ask your spouse what she thinks. You will pay attention to articles in the newspaper about changes of career and ask yourself, “Do I want to quit my job?” In this way, both the conscious and the subconscious mind need some time to process the alternatives and the potential decisions that it is faced with.

You need time to test the alternative up against the ideas you have about who you are and your values. If, for example, one alternative you have is to “become a Buddhist monk and move to total solitary in a Tibetan monastery,” and your values are “spirituality, frugality, honesty, family, nature conservation, and generosity,” you will over some time process the alternatives against all your values. The first three will go fine, but when you come to “family” you will see that your alternative of living in solitary is in conflict with your family value. Perhaps you can mitigate your alternatives into spending just one summer as a monk, or testing it for a weekend in a Buddhist monastery in your own country.

The old saying, “To sleep on it,” makes a lot of sense since one good night's sleep will allow you to process a question. Ask your subconscious mind good questions, such as “What do I want to do with my life?” and “What are my alternatives?”

As you prepare and refine your alternatives you need to sleep on them again. Ask yourself “Do I want to.... (state your alternative)?” (You want to phrase your alternatives to your subconscious mind in a question form, like “Do I want to become a Buddhist monk?” or “Do I want to become an ice skater?” When you consciously have decided on your alternative you will also want to sleep on your decision and ask your subconscious mind “I have decided to give up professional basketball and establish a family. How does this feel?”

How long do you need? You want to allow yourself enough time to process your alternatives against your important values and your particular life circumstances. This means that you need enough time to go through these elements.

Here there is a lot of value in age-old institutions mankind has made. One such institution is the seven-day week. Our life is divided into weeks. This

division is arbitrary. We could just as well have arrived at a ten-day week or a five-day week. But the experience of generations have concluded that the seven-day week represents a cycle people need to devote enough time for work, sleep, rest, and contemplation, and then start over on a new cycle. Therefore, I recommend that after you have completed the exercises in this book and arrived at your alternatives, you use at least one week to evaluate the alternatives. Then you want to use at least one week to dwell on your preferred alternative before you finally decide on this alternative. Allow yourself another week after having decided on one alternative before making any irrevocable actions by committing and making your decision public. This means that the process of completing the program will be three to four weeks for most people.

Also, make this decision in a time of your life when you do not have too many other major things happening. If, for example, you try to make the decision in the same time as you start a new job, have your first child, or during a hectic business trip to New York City, you will have so much other information to process that neither your conscious nor subconscious mind will have time to reflect properly upon the questions.

Decision-Making Techniques

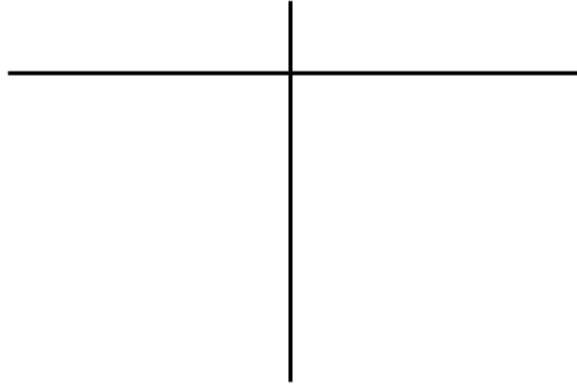
The following is a discussion of some decision-making techniques. This list is not all-inclusive. No one technique fits everyone for all circumstances. You will have to find and use a technique that fits you. You may want to go back in your own history to see if any decision-making techniques have worked for you in the past. If you were happy with the result, you might want to use that technique again.

Coin tossing

I am not advocating coin tossing as a good decision making technique. But it is a good example of one technique, among many, that we can use to make decisions.

The T-chart

This is writing the classic “T” with “pros” on the left side and “cons” on the right side. You then list all the pros and cons you can come up with. By having them all in writing you will see more clearly what the right decision will be.



Classic T-chart with pros on one side and cons on the other.

Measured criteria

You can use this technique in combination with the T-chart. With this technique, you list the criteria you want your decision to meet and assign points to each criterion based on its relative importance in the decision. Then, you give each alternative a certain number of points according to how fully it meets the criterion. For points you can use a scale of 1 to 10, 1 to 100, or any other range that makes sense to you. This technique can be made infinitely sophisticated; in the corporate world, I have seen several hundred page documents along this decision-making path. To make the decision you summarize the points so see which one comes out best.

Drifting into

This might be the most common decision making technique of all. It consists of having a few alternatives more or less vaguely in mind. It then consists of discussing the issue with family and friends, getting more or less good input. At some point outer circumstances open up an opportunity and we sort of drift into one of the options we were thinking about. This is not totally random; there is some direction in the drift, but neither is it fully conscious. By using this technique you can easily fall into traditional roles and decisions, to follow the path of least resistance.

Elimination

This technique consists of getting the alternatives clear and then starting to eliminate options and alternatives until you are left with only one alternative. This can be a great technique if you are certain about the things you choose away. You can then be certain you are left with the “best” alternative. The dynamic of the exercise demands that you work extensively on refining your alternatives as you eliminate. Ask yourself again and again, “Is there some other way this can be done?” Always remember to write down explicitly why you chose away one option. You might not remember why when you review your decisions in the future.

Setting two and two alternatives up against each other

This is a version of elimination where you just look at two alternatives in isolation and make a decision on the better of the two. California or Utah? Business executive or football player? Susanne or Julia? John or William? This method will fail to see all the alternatives as a whole, but you might gain some insight into your preferences with this technique, especially if you can strongly decide on a preference for some alternative over another.

The one question

If you can find one question that is so important that it overrides all the other questions, you might have your decision in the answer to that question alone. A well-formulated strong question takes you a long way towards the answer. I personally believe this is one of the better ways to make decision. A decision based on “I absolutely cannot do this anymore” is based on this technique.

Referring to a higher order – faith

A reference to a higher order combined with faith can be a good decision making technique. Decisions where people feel absolutely certainty because of a reference to a higher order can remove all doubt and launch them forward in the new direction.

Leave it up to others

You can decide to leave you decision up to others. I would not advocate this technique. But, if this other person or persons are people of integrity and experience, this can produce good results.

Using a committee

A version of leaving it up to others is to use a committee that in turn might use voting to decide. This is the way many major decisions in our society are made. It is generally based on the idea that several minds make better decisions than one. Political processes, most public companies, and much of civil society are based on this premise. You can tie your own life’s decisions to a committee and trust them to make the right decision for you. You can either be a part of the decision as one mind or you can have no say in the decisions.

Important Elements in Decision-Making:

Getting leverage – Force yourself to make the decision

The ancient Vikings had a great way to get leverage and make the Vikings decide to fight and win over the enemy. On arriving at the beach, the Viking lords would burn the ships on the beach. The Viking soldiers then had no way to escape; it was either fight to kill or be killed. This proved to be very motivating. I am sure the decision to fight was very easy to make upon seeing the ships burn. Find a way to get leverage on yourself.

Major pain

Associating major pain with not making the decision is a great way to force yourself to make the decision. Tell yourself, “If I do not decide I will end up with the default alternative.”

Share it – Make it public

Sharing your decision with someone or making your decision public will produce leverage, as you will be held accountable for your decision.

Self-discipline

Making the final decision requires most of all self-discipline. It is either stepping up or stepping down.

How I Made My decision

My two alternatives were:

Life as a businessman in Oslo.

Life as an international promoter of life and liberty.

Both alternatives are good, and both give me the potential to live a good happy life. How did I decide? I worked on this decision extensively over several months, and I want to share some of my notes and key points with you.

I worked a lot on imagining my future in five, ten, and twenty years with the exclusion method. I sat down and analyzed the coming two to five years with each plan.

In the first alternative I saw that life as a businessman in Oslo would mean continuing doing what I have been doing for the last few years, getting better at it and improving in performance and profits. I saw myself living in Oslo and going to the office. I saw myself moving into a new and better home as my business improved.

In the second alternative I saw myself traveling for large parts of the year. I saw myself in new places and getting excited about that.

People in general are afraid of change. To keep doing what you are doing usually seems safer than changing, I too struggled with this. My main concern is with the downside of the second alternative. Some important cons of the second international alternative are:

Financial uncertainty. I have a company in Oslo that is providing me with a good income.

Structural uncertainty. I needed an address, a bank account and a credit card, insurance, and some structure around me.

The mitigated solution is to stay in Norway formally and keeping some of my infrastructure here. This also allowed me to refine my second alternative so that I could at any time come back to Oslo and resume the full time business career again.

The Decision

I decided that I was going to start the international career promoting life and liberty. But I mitigated and refined it to include still living officially in Oslo, and keeping my business, my address, my insurance, and my bank account in Norway. So I was not cutting all ties and emigrating, but keeping that option open for later. I decided that I was going to move my efforts and my business totally online on to the Internet so I could manage it from anywhere in the world. I decided that I would settle down within three to ten years, and that I needed to find a place in the sun to do this. I came to the conclusion that this place is in Southern Europe, California, or in the Caribbean. If I lost the necessary drive or ran into challenges, I would always go back to Oslo to recommence my business career.

So I made my decision, while writing this book, to pursue the international career promoting life and liberty with my base being in Oslo.

What is the alternative you decide on for your life plan?

You have carefully made the different alternatives. You have weighted the issues. You are conscious of the pros and cons of the alternatives. After carefully going through all of this, you decide as your life plan (write down the title of your decided life plan):

The key points for deciding this life plan are: (Write down the key points in your reason for choosing this life plan. Usually this is between one and five key points. This is what you will train yourself to remember and recall whenever setbacks occur)

Make The Decision – The Commitment To Yourself

Write down The Decision! Your Decision must be firm. You must write it down explicitly.

Say out loud: “I have worked the alternatives. I have concluded that this alternative is the one that answers the question, “What do I want to do with my life?” Therefore, I hereby decide that I will...”

Make a Contract with Yourself

Read your decision out loud. Read it to a trusted friend. Write it out on paper, sign your name to it. Make yourself accountable.

Congratulations!

Now that you have come to this point, presuming that you have done the exercises and made The Decision, it is very appropriate you congratulate you. You have decided what you want to do with your life.

Now go out and live it!

**“CHOOSE TO LOVE . . . rather than hate.
CHOOSE TO SMILE . . . rather than frown.
CHOOSE TO BUILD . . . rather than destroy.
CHOOSE TO PERSEVERE . . . rather than quit.
CHOOSE TO PRAISE . . . rather than gossip.
CHOOSE TO HEAL . . . rather than wound.
CHOOSE TO GIVE . . . rather than grasp.
CHOOSE TO ACT . . . rather than delay.
CHOOSE TO FORGIVE . . . rather than curse.”**

Author Unknown

Appendix Authors

*“First say to yourself what you will be, and then do what you have to do.”
Epictetus*

*“First you must learn to love what you will do. What you sell is that love.”
Wayne Dyer*

Now that you have made the decision you will need to execute on it. You will be on your path, a path uniquely yours; influenced by the people and the events that will appear in your life.

My unique path has been strongly influenced by a number of authors. Some of them are listed here:

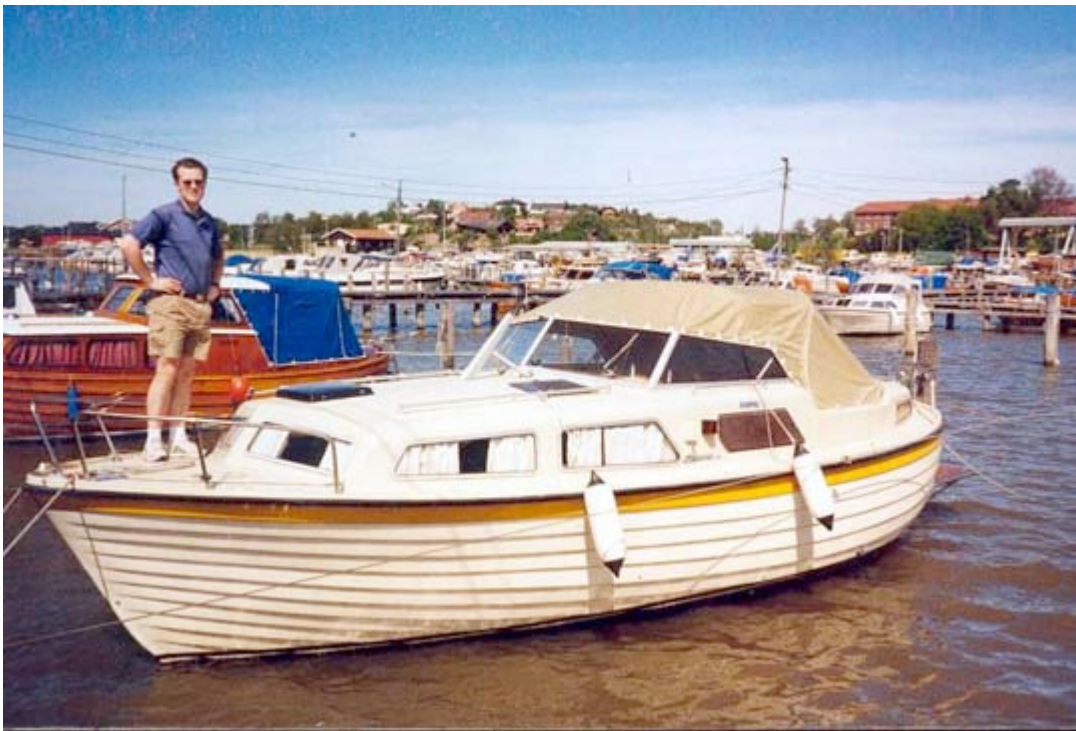
Ayn Rand
Brian Tracy
Anthony Robbins
Dale Carnegie
Nathaniel Branden
Phil McGraw
Wayne Dyer
Barbara Sher
Harry Browne
Po Bronson
Irene Kassorla
Stephen M. Pollan
Richard N. Bolles
Dave Ellis

See the website www.HansGlint.com for a wider list.

About The Author

I am a writer, life planning coach, internet entrepreneur, and businessman who share my time between Oslo, Norway; Park City, Utah; and San Francisco, California. I have been involved in the classical liberal (libertarian) movement for more than a decade, with a focus on personal development and individual pursuit of happiness. I love to travel and to conduct life-planning seminars as well as individual coaching. You can have me at your event to talk about life planning, contact me for details.

Apart from people, technology, business, and life coaching, my personal interests are boating, skiing, dogs, classical history, architecture and fine art. So if you want to invite me for boating, skiing or the enjoyment of some fresh air, feel free to send a note. I majored in business and economics at Lund University of Sweden and studied at University of California at Berkeley and at Oslo University.



On the deck of my boat in the Oslo Fjord.

Contact

My mission and my goal is to give of all ages a tool to help decide what to do with our lives. This is an ongoing work in progress.

Making this material is work for a lifetime, and I would love your assistance, I'd love to hear from you. I use a lot of the input and feedback I get in the development program. One day perhaps we will meet and share our knowledge and experiences about life. I would love to meet you in person and hear your life story.

Please send your ideas, suggestions, praise, or flack to hans@hansglint.com.

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Thank you.

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