

2.

Why am I here; what's the purpose of my life?

Relaxed? Good. Now, think deeply. Dream a bit. Do you remember when you were young? Did you ever play “pretend” or “make believe?” You used to have no problem dreaming up adventures or places to go or people to be. Somewhere, however, between being a child and an adult, we forgot how to dream.

Bills. Deadlines. Arguments. Failures. Dashed hopes. Frustrations. All these “real world” experiences crushed our spirit; we had the ability to dream “beat out of us.” By now, all we can see is the immediate task before us and we forget about our dreams. That is a pity and we must change our own perspective.

As we go deeply into our ability to embrace our “now,” we can find ourselves better able to return the ability to dream. Finding our way back to our dreams gives us the major clue to knowing what to do with our lives. Dreams are the pathway to our next steps.

All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible.

– Thomas Edward Lawrence (of Arabia)

To take the next step, plan to spend a little time with yourself. Answer in writing the following questions to aid your thoughts.

- Think of a person you admire, who has impacted your life—what are their character traits that you wish you had?
- What are some special talents that you possess?
- What are some special interpersonal strengths you possess (maybe honesty? enthusiasm? joy?)
- What are things you enjoy doing (things you would do for free)?
- If you could be doing anything 15 years from now, what would it be?

These bits of information provide you the starting point in crafting your dream. Some people will call this a mission statement or a purpose statement. Don't get too locked up now into worrying about some perfect sentence or idea to “guide you.” For now, just become more comfortable with the idea of dreaming again. With that, you can begin to follow your dream and allow your own vision for you to direct you.

3.

What if what I want to do doesn't make me rich; will I not be successful?

Answer this question: How do you define success?

Is it money? Fame? Glory? Others worshipping the ground you walk on?

None of these concepts actually gets to the point of what success is. Perhaps what you're really asking is, "Will I have enough money to put food on my table?" That is a fair question and a hard one to answer without knowing lots of other details.

True success however is a deep issue that deals with many things, but money and fame are rarely part of that equation. Success is you knowing that you invested in others. Success is hearing "I love you" from a child. Success is knowing that each second of the day was lived with passion and purpose.

Many people have what I call "destination disease." They believe that if they can arrive somewhere—attain a position, accomplish a goal, or have a relationship with the right person—they will be successful...over time I realized that definition fell short of the mark.

– John Maxwell

I call that same idea the "Next Big Thing" syndrome. We look ahead to the "Next Big Thing." We focus on it; we dream about it. Then it arrives, but we don't enjoy it. We're already looking at the "Next Big Thing."

Live in "the now." It's all we really have. As you do that, share your life with others as you live boldly. That's the only success you need to worry about.

Sports Illustrated recently touched on this topic in their September 24, 2007 issue. The article was about the death of baseball coach Mike Coolbaugh. He was hit by a random foul ball and then subsequently passed away. His death was the first in Major League Baseball since 1920. He left his pregnant wife and two children searching for answers and wondering how to move forward. The randomness of the event had her and other friends confident that a larger plan was in the works. By all accounts Coolbaugh was a wonderful man who greatly impacted many.

The writer of the article concluded with this powerful thought, going to the heart of what real success is. He wrote, “Who can say why [Coolbaugh died]? It will have to be enough to know that in the most obscure corners, compassion lives and success has nothing to do with fame or money or even greatness. It will have to be enough to understand that such a notion is easy to forget, until a good man’s dying forces the world to pay attention at last.”

If you live each day well, seek to put good into the world around you, especially into the lives of others. That is success. Coolbaugh was not a perfect man (only one person in history has been), but he was someone who touched the lives of others. The history books are full of stories of people who made lots of money and yet were neither successful nor happy. Build your life on a spiritual foundation, working with a true definition of success, investing in others, and you will be happy.

Try not to become a man of success but rather to become a man of value.

– Albert Einstein

4.

How can I make a living following my heart and the things I am passionate about?

In one sense, all of the questions in this section get to the core of who we are, where we are going, and what does it mean to get there. I want to stress my desire for you to reevaluate how you define success and understand that a healthy self-awareness is the start of the journey. I am not, however, in a dreamy state of mind that ignores the need and reality for goals, for paying the bills, for taking care of the normal issues of life. Living in the “now” won’t really help you if you fail to pay your mortgage.

So this question is a perfect place to explain my philosophy of life. I have not really worked a day in my life, though I have had all manner of jobs. I have had the good fortune to pursue real wisdom that connects to the Eternal One of the Universe, what some consider merely a higher power and what many of our Founders called “The Almighty Being” or “that Infinite Power” or “the Hand of Providence.” As a Christian, I believe that God does care about the path we trod and will lend guidance to those who ask. With that guidance, I have continued to strive to understand how to live more focused on the now of life, self-aware and conscious.

However, at some point, you have to start actually doing something. In no way does “live in the now” mean you will not work hard. Though I do not see myself as having to “go to work,” some drudgery that saps my spirit, I still put in diligent effort over long hours to accomplish my goals and plans. So, the next question you ask yourself is, “what do you want do?” A great place to start is with your dream, with “following your heart.” Did you take time yet to answer those questions related to dreams? Please take time to do that.

Understand that some things a person may hold as their passion cannot create income, but many things can. Do you realize there are people who make 6 figure incomes playing video games? Did you know there is a 16 year old young lady who runs a very successful website that brings in millions that she started to provide skins for Myspace? There are people who make very good incomes running Ebay auctions. It’s not so much that we can’t make an income out of something, but that we are not willing to pay the price to get there or be creative in the execution.

It is also true that how we define “a livable income” should be examined. Later in the book we’ll deal with money, so check that chapter out if you need the answer now, but suffice it to say that I have a family of 5 and have rarely ever made more than \$40k a year, yet I own my own home, have both my cars paid off and have a ton of stuff in my house. When I talk to most people, how I define a livable income and how they do it is different.

So, start with your dream. Write it down. Believe in your ability to succeed. Keep your mind positive as you move forward and be open to the possibilities that come your way. Surround yourself with positive people who are encouraging and supportive, not naysayers who continue to bring you down. Invest in other people (you never know who those people will become years later, people who can further your dreams). Live boldly in the now, allowing for your dream to morph some as your life moves forward. Set clear goals to guide you (more on this later). Be honest about your abilities. Be willing to take risks. Be willing to stare down issues and use momentary failures as stepping-stones up to your next level.

You can do this.