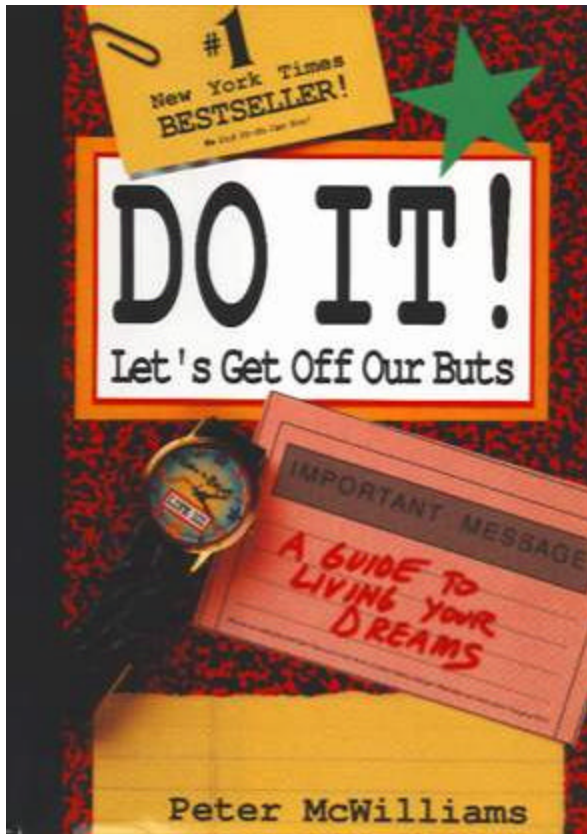


DO IT!
Let's Get Off Our Buts

BY PETER McWILLIAMS

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DO IT!
**Let's Get Off
Our Buts**



A Guide to Living Your
Dreams

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DO IT! Let's Get Off Our Buts

Part One: WHY WE'RE NOT LIVING OUR DREAMS

"Let's go."
"Yes, let's go."
STAGE DIRECTION: They do not move.

LAST LINES OF *WAITING FOR GODOT*
SAMUEL BECKETT

You may find this first part of the book depressing. I'm going to explain why most people aren't living their dreams--and I'm not going to pull any punches.

It's not a pretty picture.

The reason we aren't living our dreams is *inside ourselves*. We *pretend* it's people, things, and situations *outside ourselves* that are to blame. On the other hand, you may find this an uplifting section. You may say, "So *that's* why that happens!"

Further, when we know that the *cause* of something is in ourselves, and that we (ourselves) are one of the few things in this universe that we have the right and the ability to change, we begin to get a sense of the choices we really do have, an inkling of the power we have, a feeling of being in charge--of our lives, of our future, of our dreams.

This Was Going to Be a Truly Great Opening Chapter, But . . .

Pithy quote to come.

This was going to be the best opening chapter you could possibly imagine, but so many things got in the way.

I was going to spend lots of time writing it, but, well, you know how time goes!

note: find quote

I was going to get lots of touching and poignant and humorous examples of people not getting things done, but I never got around to interviewing the people.

I was going to gather lots of wonderful quotes to illustrate my points, but I left the quote book at home, and this chapter is being written at a lecture hall outside Carmel, California. (Besides, I think the dog ate it.)

If this page goes to press without a quote, it will be most embarrassing.

I was going to make sure that this chapter was so informative, so readable, and so wonderful that if you were reading it in a bookstore, you'd buy the book, or, if you were reading it in a library, you'd check it out, or, if you were reading it at home, you'd decide, "Boy, I'm certainly going to enjoy reading *this* book!" but I decided to watch this movie on TV last night, and I was going to work on the chapter afterward, but then I went out for ice cream, and I was tired, and decided to start fresh in the morning, but then I slept late, and then I went out for breakfast and took a drive past an aquarium and decided to stop in, then I went for lunch, and then thought I'd take a nap and start fresh in the evening, but then I started watching a documentary on TV, then, of course, it was time for dinner, then I was invited to the movies, and I don't want to be rude to my friends, and besides I sort-of wanted to see the movie anyway, then I was going to go right back and work on this chapter, but then I remembered how good the ice cream was the night before . . .

But

Do or do not. There is no try.

YODA

But. ———that three-letter, four-letter word. It permeates our language. It's a nasty little word. It allows us to lie to ourselves and to severely limit ourselves without even knowing it. Let's look at a typical sentence containing "but."

"I want to visit my sick grandmother, but it's too cold outside."

"But" usually means: "Ignore all that good-sounding stuff that went before—here comes the truth." You might even consider BUT as an acronym for Behold the Underlying Truth. (And Buts can be shortened to BS.)

The truth is that grandma is not getting a visit. The lie is that I *care* so much about my sick grandmother that I *really want to* pay her a visit. (Note my *sensitivity* to her need for visitation, and my *compassion* for wanting to visit her.)

At this point, entering stage right, are two of *but's* dearest friends--*if only* and *try*.

"*If only* it were a fine spring day, I'd be into the woods and on my way to Grandmother's house. *If only* it weren't so darn *cold*, I'd be at Granny's side right now. I'm going to *try* to get there tomorrow!"

Unless, of course, we are too busy, too poor, too tired, too _____ (please fill in the blank with one of your favorites), or perhaps not feeling all that good ourselves.

But even if we and everything else were fine and dandy, let's not forget the about the *wolves* . . .

Yes-But

Success is simply a matter of luck. Ask any failure.

EARL WILSON

The naked "but" is what we use when ignoring our own good advice. When ignoring the unbearably good advice of others, we use the hyphenated version: "yes-but."

"You really should pay your car insurance."

"Yes-but, I don't get paid until next week."

"You could get an advance on your credit card."

"Yes-but, I owe so much already."

"You have no insurance!"

"Yes-but, I'll drive real careful."

And on and on. When we argue for our limitations, we get to keep them. *Yes-but* means, "Here come the arguments for my limitations." Or, if you favor acronyms, YES-BUT = "Your Evaluation is Superb--Behold the Underlying Truth."

The only activity more foolish than a person pouring forth a stream of "yes-but" is the person who continues to give good advice in the face of obvious indifference.

"Yes-but, I thought if I tried *just once more*, it might be the bit of wisdom that would *make the difference*.

Uh huh. As Jesus of Nazareth said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew 7:6).

"Ouch."

Reasons or Results

Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work.

THOMAS A. EDISON

In life, we have either reasons or results--excuses or experiences, stories or successes. We either have what we want, or we have ironclad, airtight, impenetrable reasons why it was not even *marginally possible* to get it.

We use one of the most powerful tools *at* our disposal--the mind--*for* our disposal. Rather than dispose of the barriers to our dreams, the mind disposes of the *dreams*.

In the amount of time it takes for the mind to invent a good excuse, the mind could have created an alternate way of achieving the result--rendering excuse-making unnecessary.

But, alas, as John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out, "In the choice between changing one's mind and proving there's no need to do so, most people get busy on the proof."

While I'm on the subject of the mind, allow me to give the mind something to ponder--a premise I'll be considering throughout the book . . .

We Live the Life We Choose

It is hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head.

SALLY KEMPTON

Here's the premise: We are all, right now, living the life we choose.

This choice, of course, is not a single, monumental choice. No one decides, for example, "I'm going to move to L.A., and in five years I will be a waiter in a so-so restaurant, planning to get my 8-by-10's done real soon so that I can find an agent and become a star," or "I'm going to marry a dreadful person and we'll live together in a loveless marriage, staying together only for the kids, who I don't much like, either."

No. The choices I'm talking about here are made daily, hourly, moment by moment. Do we try something new, or stick to the tried-and-true? Do we take a risk, or eat what's already on our dish? Do we ponder a thrilling adventure, or contemplate what's on TV? Do we walk over and meet that interesting stranger, or do we play it safe? Do we indulge our heart, or cater to our fear?

The bottom-line question: Do we pursue what we want, or do we do what's comfortable?

For the most part, most people most often choose comfort--the familiar, the time-honored, the well-worn but well-known. After a lifetime of choosing between comfort and risk, we are left with the life we currently have. And it was all of our own choosing.

The Comfort Zone

The only thing I can't stand is discomfort.

GLORIA STEINEM

The comfort zone is our arena of thoughts and actions within which we feel comfortable--all the things we've done (or thought) often enough to feel comfortable doing (or thinking) again. Anything we haven't done (or thought) often enough to feel comfortable doing lies outside the parameters of the comfort zone. When we do (or think) these things (basically, anything new) we feel uncomfortable.

For example, most people reading this book find little difficulty reading English--it's within their comfort zone. But how comfortable are you at reading code? Here's a sentence in code:

Dpohsbuvmbujpot! Zpv'wf kvtu dsbdlfe uif dpef!

Can you crack the code? Each of the letters stands for another letter in the alphabet. They are arranged in a logical way so that when you know the code, you'll be able to decipher the sentence. What does the sentence say?

How do you feel? Uncomfortable? Overwhelmed? Have you given up? Did you give up before even starting? What if I told you there was \$100,000 riding on solving the puzzle? In addition to *money*, what if you had to solve it *on television*? And, in addition to that, what if there were a *time limit* imposed? Say, three minutes. What if something *really bad* were to happen to someone you love if you couldn't crack the code in three minutes? What if he or she were *really counting on you*?

How do you feel? If you played along with my questions, you probably felt some tinges of fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and/or anger--the feelings I lump into the general category of *uncomfortable*.

After feeling uncomfortable enough long enough, we tend to feel discouraged; we give up. Some people gave up before they even began. They were permanently discouraged about word puzzles. They told themselves, "I'm no good at this sort of thing," and skipped to the next paragraph. Unfortunately, there I was in the next paragraph--waiting for them--reminding them of the puzzle--making them feel uncomfortable.

Other people, who love puzzles, jumped right in. They weren't uncomfortable; they were *challenged*. They hung in there, and some of them solved it (and are now wondering how they can collect the \$100,000 prize). Perhaps the "doers" felt the same emotion the uncomfortable felt--that tingling we feel when rising to a challenge--and labeled it "excitement" instead of "fear." Maybe they *used* that energy to help solve the puzzle.

Okay. Try again. This time I'll give you a clue: The first letter is a C.

Dpohsbuvmbujpot! Zpv'wf kvtu dsbdlfe uif dpef!

Compare the relationship between C and the first letter of the puzzle (D) and see if you can see a pattern. If you see one, try it on the next several letters and see if something approaching a word emerges. If not, look for another pattern.

Some people are now actively involved in the process of figuring it out. Others are still saying, "I can't do these things." As Henry Ford said, "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right." If we say we can't do something, we don't spend any time on it; therefore we can't. A self-fulfilling prophecy.

We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief

*requirements of life, when all that we need to make us happy
is something to be enthusiastic about.*

CHARLES KINGSLEY

So, if you're still in the "can't" category, switch it around. Tell yourself, out loud, "I *can* solve this!" Become involved. Invest a little *time* in the process. "The willingness to do creates the ability to do." Give yourself the willingness. (A pencil might help, too.)

What is the relationship between C and D? Where have you seen them together before? Where are they *always* together, one right after the other?

Dpohsbuvmbujpot! Zpv'wf kvtu dsbdlfe uif dpel!

Another clue? ("I'd like to buy a vowel, please.") The second letter is O. What's the relationship between O and P? It's the same relationship as between C and D. ("Living together, no children.")

Most people have, of course, figured it out by now. (There. Does *that* make you feel uncomfortable? Those who haven't figured it out don't like to think they're *behind* most people, and those who have figured it out don't like to be thought of as "most people.")

My final clue: the alphabet. The alphabet looks like this:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Now, can you see the relationship between C and D and between O and P? Apply that to the other letters of the puzzle and see what you get. Congratulations! You've just cracked the code!

You'll note that when you move *past* your comfort zone you find adventure, excitement, satisfaction, and the answer to some questions you may never have known to ask before.

How often have you heard someone say, "I don't want to do that; I feel uncomfortable"? It is a *given*-- for most people an *accepted fact*--*that being uncomfortable is sufficient reason for not doing.*

*You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the
wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be
wonderful. What you'll discover will be yourself.*

ALAN ALDA

The primary sensations we encounter when approaching the "walls" of the comfort zone are fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and anger. When feeling any one--or, especially, a combination of them--we say we're uncomfortable. After tilting the windmills of our comfort zone for a time, we tend to feel discouraged--and discouragement is the primary barrier to living our dreams.

Let's take a closer look at fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, anger, and discouragement. (Just what you wanted, huh?)

DO IT! **Let's Get Off Our Buts**

Part Two: **BUILT FOR SUCCESS** **(programmed for failure, perhaps, but)** **BUILT FOR SUCCESS**

*I once complained to my father that I didn't seem to be able to do things the same way other people did. Dad's advice?
"Margo, don't be a sheep. People hate sheep. They eat sheep."*

MARGO KAUFMAN

The Good News about the Comfort Zone

The good news about the comfort zone is that all the energy that makes up the comfort zone is *yours* .

Life moves on, whether we act as cowards or heroes. Life has no other discipline to impose, if we would but realize it, than to accept life unquestioningly. Everything we shut our eyes to, everything we run away from, everything we deny, denigrate or despise, serves to defeat us in the end. What seems nasty, painful, evil, can become a source of beauty.

joy and strength, if faced with an open mind. Every moment is a golden one for him who has the vision to recognize it as such.

HENRY MILLER

People often want to "get rid of" a "negative" emotion before attempting something new. That's the same thing as saying, "I want to get rid of some of my energy."

Fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and anger are, in fact, *tools*. Tools are neutral--they can be used either for us or against us. A knife can be used to heal or to hurt. A hammer can be used to build or to destroy. It is not the tool itself, but *the way the tool is used* that determines its benefit or detriment.

The difficulty lies in a fundamental *misperception* of "limiting" emotions. The limitation is not in the emotions themselves, but in the way we've been taught to *perceive* these emotions. We've been programmed with certain attitudes about certain feelings, and in the *attitudes* lie the limitations, not in the feelings.

In a sense, we play isometrics with our feelings and our attitudes. A certain feeling arises. An attitude says we shouldn't have that feeling, and pushes it down. It's like arm wrestling with ourselves--we can expend a lot of energy and work diligently, but not much is accomplished.

When we see how little gets done, we wonder (a) why so little was accomplished ("I tried *so hard*"), (b) why we're so tired, or (c) both.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more..

ISAIAH 2:4

The energy pushing up and the energy pushing down is all *our* energy. Imagine moving toward a goal and not just *removing* the inner resistance to achieving that goal, but *adding* all the energy that was part of the resistance to the forward motion of achievement. Whew! Imagine if all the energy of fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and anger were available to help us achieve anything we wanted.

Well, it is.

Using fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and anger as allies in the journey toward our dreams is not difficult. It is a matter of *understanding* their true use and function--and *remembering* that we now know it. (The habit of treating them as "the enemies" to be "gotten rid of" can be strong.)

It's as though someone hung a large rock around our neck. "Oh, how heavy," we'd complain. Later we were told the rock was really a diamond in the rough. "Oh! How heavy!" we'd exclaim.

Fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and anger are diamonds in the rough. They're valuable now, and with a little cutting and polishing, they become priceless.

The next few chapters reveal these gems for what they are. The rest of this book suggests cutting and polishing techniques.

And neither shall we learn to war with ourselves any more.

Fear Is the Energy to Do Your Best in a New Situation

It's all right to have butterflies in your stomach. Just get them to fly in formation.

DR. ROB GILBERT

Think about entering a new situation. To meet the new situation, imagine you received an extra burst of energy, your senses sharpened, there was a tingling--an excitement--in your body, and you became more sensitive and aware.

Doesn't that sound great? It seems to be the very thing we need in order to do our best in a new situation. Well, it's precisely what *does* happen each time we enter a new situation. Most of the time, however, we call it "fear" and we don't like it.

Contrary to popular belief, our parents didn't teach us to feel fear. Our parents *did* teach us to use fear as a reason *not* to do something. As I explained earlier, they did this from love. Children cannot logically determine whether their physical well-being is or is not endangered when attempting a new activity.

Alas, at eighteen-or-so, when we *do* know the difference between the truly dangerous and the merely new and untried, no one draws us aside and says, "That fear you've been using as a reason *not* to do things--it's *really* part of the energy to get things done."

The first thing we need when entering a new situation (whether physically or in our imagination) is more energy. A new situation, by definition, will be *different*, and extra energy will help us meet the challenges of whatever "different" may hold.

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I've lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along." You

must do the thing you think you cannot do.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

When we feel fear, adrenaline, glucose, and other energy-producing chemicals are released into the bloodstream. This physiological energy is available to support our thoughts and actions.

In a new situation, naturally we want to get all the information we can. This is where the sharpened senses, sensitivity, and heightened awareness associated with fear are useful--they help us absorb and more quickly process the new information.

Fear also forces us to *let go of irrelevancies* . We automatically focus on what's most important, "and let the rest of the world go by." When in a new situation, we want to focus on what's central, what's significant. Fear drives thoughts about whether or not grapefruit will be on sale right out of our awareness.

Part of doing our best in a new situation involves learning. There is so much to learn from a new experience--so much to learn about the experience and, more importantly, so much to learn about ourselves. Fear provides a good environment for learning--not an *ideal* environment (fear is not known for its abundance of patience)--but a *good* environment nonetheless. Energy, clarity of mind, and ability to focus are excellent tools for learning.

With enough work (doing), we will eventually--without even thinking about it--use fear as the energy to do our best. In the interim--as we break the habit of thinking this energy is a reason not to do anything new--the suggestion is: feel the fear and do it anyway.

Once you know something is not physically dangerous, go ahead and *do* the thing. It may feel uncomfortable (count on it), but keep moving one step after another in the direction of doing it. As you move--as you *use it*-- the energy will transform from barrier to blessing. You'll have *energy*, not limitation.

Feeling the fear and doing it anyway reprograms our attitude from, "Fear means, `Don't'" to "Fear means, `All systems go!'"

Guilt Is the Energy for Personal Change

My parents have been visiting me for a few days. I just dropped them off at the airport. They leave tomorrow.

MARGARET SMITH

Guilt is anger directed toward ourselves, and anger is the energy for *change* .

Alas, few of us were trained to use anger for change (except, perhaps, in athletics). Mostly, we use anger for *blame* and *feeling bad*. As we will explore in a later chapter, the gift of anger is the physical, mental, and emotional strength to make change.

When we feel guilty and want to use the anger for change (for a change), we have two options: we can either change our *actions*, or change our *beliefs* about those actions. If we feel guilty about something that hasn't yet happened (that twinge of guilt we feel when premeditating a "wicked" action), we can use the anger in the guilt to *not* do it (or, if it's an act of omission, to do it).

If we feel guilty about something that's already taken place, we can use the anger to make amends, to clean things up. (Atonement leads to at-one-ment.)

If there's nothing we can do, then we can use the energy of guilt to change the *belief* about how bad, wicked, terrible, immoral, despicable, disgusting, and downright slug-like our action was.

Most people use guilt (a) to make half-hearted (but often heated) promises to "never do it again," which they don't really believe any more than any of their close acquaintances do, and/or (b) to feel bad.

Feeling bad is an important part in the *mis* use of guilt. Part of the "contract" for violating our beliefs is that we must feel bad. We tell ourselves, "Good people are _____ (fill in the perfect human behavior violated by the guilt-producing action), *and when they're not, they feel guilty*."

In this limiting system, feeling guilty *proves* our goodness. Good people feel bad when they do something bad. (After all, bad people feel *good* when they do something bad.) So, guilt allows us to maintain a mistaken (but admirable-sounding) *belief* about ourselves while *acting* in a way that violates the belief.

A more productive use of guilt's energy is to *change the belief*. Once the belief is changed, the self-judgments stop--the energy is no longer directed toward feeling bad when doing (or failing to do) certain activities.

*When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows
into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.*

W. B. YEATS

I'm not saying change your belief about yourself from "I am a good person . . ." to "I am a bad person . . ." I'm suggesting, add a qualifier to the too-rigid ("perfect") beliefs you have about yourself. "Good people are kind to others . . .and sometimes they're not." "Good people stick to their diet . . .and sometimes they don't." "Good people don't yell in public . . .and sometimes they do."

Making these changes is not easy. The habit of using the energy of guilt in a limiting rather than expansive way is deep seated. As B. F. Skinner pointed out, "Society attacks early, when the individual is helpless." It takes enormous energy and perseverance to change our response to guilt.

Fortunately, there's a lot of energy available in the anger of guilt. It's a matter of remembering to redirect it from *blame* to *change--over and over*.

You may be wondering, "When do I use the energy to change the *action*, and when do I use it to change the *belief* about the action?"

It's an important question. Here are some thoughts.

1. If you change the *belief* first, changing the *action* is easier. Taking the pressure off by changing the belief allows for the freedom of movement necessary to change the action.
2. Realize you're not going to change all the actions about which you currently feel guilty. We're not perfect, we're human. Nonetheless, in our childhood we are given a seemingly infinite number of perfect images to live up to. We add to these the perfect images we have as adults. I'll discuss this perfection syndrome later, but for now realize that you can change *anything* you want, but you can't change *everything* you want.
3. Change first the actions that *physically harm* others. I'm not talking about hurting someone's *feelings*; I'm talking about activities such as hitting people, stealing, child abuse, drunk driving, in which another is or is very likely to be *physically* harmed by your actions.
4. Change next the actions that *physically harm* you--smoking, extreme overeating, high-risk sexual activities, drug or alcohol abuse, and so on. Again, these are not the things that might *emotionally* harm you (that's quite often the comfort zone), but things that do significant physical harm.

The wages of sin are death, but by the time taxes are taken out, it's just sort of a tired feeling.

PAULA POUNDSTONE

5. Later in the book, you'll have the opportunity to make a list of your wants, desires, and dreams, then to prioritize them in such a way that you'll know which you have time to pursue, and which you (for now) do not. Work next on changing the actions that go against your primary goals.
6. If you've handled *all those* and are *still* looking for more, well, you're a far better person than I am, Gunga Din!

When used to produce guilt, the statement, "I could have done better!" is false. If we *knew* better, we'd *do* better. I don't just mean *intellectually* knowing better. I'm talking about *knowing* in the full sense of the word--the way you *know* to walk, speak, and breathe.

A more accurate statement when we *intellectually* know better (and do it anyway) is to say, "This will remind me to do better next time--I'm still learning."

Because, of course, we are.

DO IT! Let's Get Off Our Buts

Part Three: DISCOVERING AND CHOOSING OUR DREAMS

*Everything I did in my life that was worthwhile I caught hell
for.*

EARL WARREN

Often, what we *really* want is hidden beneath what we've settled for. When the comfort zone doesn't allow the expanded behavior necessary to fulfill our dream, we tend to forget the dream.

It's too painful otherwise.

When we know we *can* have what we want--that the comfort zone is under our control--we can remember what we truly want.

This section will explore the idea that we can have *anything* we want (though not *everything* we want) and offer suggestions for discovering our heart's desire.

On Purpose

The only true happiness comes from squandering ourselves

for a purpose.

WILLIAM COWPER
1731-1800

People often confuse "goal" and "purpose."

A goal is something tangible; a purpose is a direction. A goal can be achieved; a purpose is fulfilled in each moment. We can set and achieve many goals; a purpose remains constant for life.

If the purpose were "west," for example, the goals while heading west (from New York, say) might include Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Hawaii, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, China, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Boston, and New York. Many goals, same purpose.

From there, although we had already traveled 25,000 miles, we would still have as much "west" to go (as much of our purpose to fulfill) as when we first began.

A second journey toward the west, again from New York, might include these goals: Detroit, St. Louis, Denver, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Midway Islands, Mongolia, Greece, Italy, France, Ireland, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and New York. Even after another 25,000 miles, there is still as much west to go as there was in the beginning. At any point in the journey, in fact, there was (and is) always an infinite amount of movement--and goals--available while living "on purpose."

You'll note that, even though the goals are numerous, there can be many goals within a goal, and lots of freedom within each. While in France, for example, one could travel north, south, east, and west. As long as Ireland were the next major goal, even traveling east could be a fulfillment of the purpose "west."

Strong lives are motivated by dynamic purposes.

KENNETH HILDEBRAND

Looking at the life of someone whose purpose is, say, "I am a grateful giver," the goals along that purpose might include nursing home attendant, school teacher, physical therapist, writer, and foundation president. These would, of course, only be *career* and *professional* goals. Marriage/family, social/political, and religious/spiritual goals might interweave that life, all aligned with the purpose, "I am a grateful giver."

While goals are *chosen*, a purpose is *discovered*. Our purpose is something we have been doing all along, and will continue to do, regardless of circumstances, until the day we die. When I refer to a "dream" in this book, I mean a goal--a significant goal that would, in a profound and vital way, fulfill one's purpose. As that dream is realized, another dream is chosen, and as that is

satisfied, another. When I refer to "living your dreams," I mean a life of movement from dream to dream, always on purpose.

People can misdefine a purpose (as something to get to) or misdefine a goal (as something one is always doing no matter where one is), and feel frustrated with both. When people confuse "purpose" with "goal," they often have trouble reaching a goal, which, in turn, can interfere with living on purpose.

Someone may think, for example, that his goal is to be "an actor." This is fine, except whenever he is acting--no matter what, where, how, or with whom--his goal is fulfilled. The automatic goal-fulfillment mechanism within him says, "That's done. What's next?"

"What's next?" the actor puzzles. "I want to be an actor."

*The great thing in this world is not so much where we are,
but in what direction we are moving.*

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

"You just acted," the inner goal-filler says, "in that class you took. And very well, too."

"No. I want to be *paid* for acting." So the goal-fulfillment mechanism rallies its considerable resources and finds the actor a job as an avocado in a supermarket Vegetable-of-the-Week promotion. Pay: \$250 for the week. The goal of being a paid actor having been met, the goal-fulfillment mechanism shuts down for a while.

"Hey," the actor complains, "Why aren't I getting work?"

"You got work," says the goal-fulfillment mechanism. "You acted. You got paid. Two goals, two goals fulfilled."

"I want *more* work."

"Want to try for carrot? Radishes are next week. You can go out for radish."

"No. Enough with the vegetables. Actors have agents. I want an agent."

So, the goal-fulfillment mechanism finds an agent, and the agent finds nothing.

"I want an agent who will get me work. Regular work. Performing."

An agent is found who also manages a restaurant, and the actor gets regular work performing as a singing waiter.

"No! I want to be an actor! A *big* actor!"

So, the actor puts on 100 pounds.

The actor's problem is that he is confusing purpose with goal. If he discovered that his purpose was, say, "I am a joyful entertainer," then the week as an avocado could have been a fun-filled, fulfilling one.

It would also free him to set clearly defined goals within his purpose: "I want a major role in a feature film," "I want to star on a network sitcom," "I want to make \$100,000 this year acting in commercials," and so on. These are the kinds of goals to which the goal-fulfillment mechanism within says, "Yes! Let's go!"

There'll be a lot more on goal setting later. For now, let's focus on the purpose. *Your* purpose.

What Is Your Purpose?

Nothing contributes so much to tranquilizing the mind as a steady purpose a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY
1797-1851

This is the first of several exercises in this book that involves *doing*-- in this case, writing. Please decide now if you're reading this book just for information, or if you're reading this book to make a significant improvement in your life. Although I'd like to flatter myself that I could write a book that would make indispensable advancements in the lives of everyone who even brushed past it, I know that change comes through involvement, and involvement means doing. My recommendation, then, is to *do* the exercises, starting with this one. If you read the book and later decide to do the exercises, please start with this one. It is the foundation of all the others.

To discover your purpose, get a piece of paper and start listing all your positive qualities. You might want to write each positive quality on a 3x5 card. This will make shuffling them easier later. If no 3x5 cards are handy, listing the qualities on paper will do.

(Do pick up 500-or-so 3x5 cards the next time you're out. We'll be using them later. If you're someone who tends to put off physical tasks until "later," and then never gets to them, you might want to put down this book and go get some 3x5 cards *now*. While you're out, consider your positive qualities. And have fun!)

Don't be shy listing your positive qualities. This is no time for false modesty. Are you kind? Considerate? Compassionate? Joyful? Loving? Loyal? Happy? Tender? Caring? Write them down.

One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.

ANDR GIDE

A purpose usually begins with "*I am*," followed by an attitude ("joyful" "happy" "caring") and an action ("giver" "explorer" "nurturer"). On another page (or another set of cards), start listing *actions* you find fulfilling--the positive things you like doing most. Giving? Sharing? Exploring? Teaching? Learning?

Take some time with this process. Reflect on your life. Explore its motivation.

If you get stuck, call a few friends and ask for suggestions. Tell them you're filling out an application for the Peace Corps. You need help with the questions, "What are your best qualities?" and "What activities give you the most satisfaction?"

You might also go to your sanctuary and ask your Master Teacher for some ideas. Or, go to the video screen and review some scenes of satisfaction, joy, or fulfillment from your life. What were the qualities you embodied in those situations?

Consider the people you admire most. What is it you admire about them? What qualities do they embody? Those same qualities are most likely true about you, too, so write them down.

Eventually, a pattern will emerge on the "Qualities" and the "Actions" lists. Begin grouping qualities and actions under general headings. For you, "Compassionate" might include "caring," "loving," and "kind" while, for another, "Kind" might encompass "compassionate," "loving," and "caring." The idea is not to discover which is "right" from Mr. Webster's or Mr. Roget's point of view, but which resonates most clearly within *you* .

Start to play around with the qualities and actions in a sentence that starts, "I am . . ." A purpose is short, pithy, and to the point. There's usually room for only one or two qualities and an action. "I am a cheerful giver," "I am a joyful explorer," "I am a compassionate friend."

Please consider my grammatical structure as a starting point. "I am a minstrel of God," "I sing the song of life," or "I serve the planet" are outstanding purposes that don't fit the "I am a [quality] [action]" format. Go to the *spirit* of what a purpose is--the *purpose* of a purpose, if you will--and find your purpose there.

Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't.

RICHARD BACH

After a while of rearranging qualities and actions, something will click. A voice inside will say, "Yes, this is what I've always done, and this is what I'll always be doing." January 10, 1996 (This

discovery can come with equal parts joy and resignation--joy at seeing that our life has had a direction all along; resignation in noticing it may not be as *glamorous* as we had secretly hoped.)

And that's your purpose.

You might want to place your purpose in a prominent place in your sanctuary--emblazoned on the wall in letters of fiery gold, or, perhaps, on a hand-sewn sampler.

I suggest you not tell your purpose to anyone. That's why I suggested--as a joke, of course--the Peace Corps ruse. (You didn't *really* tell your friends you were joining the Peace Corps, did you? Oh, dear. All right. Well, call them back, and tell them it wasn't the Peace Corps. It was really the Nobel Selection Committee. Yeah, that's it. The Nobel Selection Committee has been asking a lot of questions about you, and you wanted to have a few comments prepared, should you unexpectedly be invited to Stockholm.)

Keeping your purpose to yourself is not so much *secret* as it is *sacred*. Consider it a beautiful plant. Keep the roots (the essence of the purpose) deep within yourself, and let the world share in its fruits.

Please save your lists (stacks) of qualities and actions. We'll be using them later.

DO IT! Let's Get Off Our Buts

Part Four: **BECOMING PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR DREAM**

You can have anything you want if you want it desperately enough. You must want it with an inner exuberance that erupts through the skin and joins the energy that created the world.

SHEILA GRAHAM

I'm going to go faster. Now that you have your Dream and have committed to it, you're probably experiencing some Divine Impatience. A part of you is saying, "Let's get *on* with it!" And so we shall.

We move now from the mental realm--the world of discoveries, choices, goals, and commitments--into the emotional.

Although the mind can get the body jumping here or there, *emotion* is necessary for sustained activity. This section is about cultivating and channeling your emotional energy for consistent, persistent action.

There are a lot of different words for this emotional energy--*enthusiasm* (*en theos*, to be one with the energy of the divine), *desire*, and even *obsession*. The one I'm passionate about is *passion*.

The emotions are, however, controlled by the mind. What we *think about* determines how we *feel*. So, even though the goal of this section is to produce passionate emotions, much of the time I'll be discussing the uses of the mind.

Put all your eggs in one basket and WATCH THAT BASKET!

MARK TWAIN

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to success is more important than any other one thing.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

To reach a dream, especially a Big Dream, we need an ally, something to counteract all the limiting emotions the comfort zone can dish out.

That ally is our passion. We must love and desire our Dream--and love and desire it *intently*-- for our Dream to come true.

To paraphrase Mark Twain: "Put all your eggs in one basket--and *LOVE THAT BASKET!*"

Or, as Elbert Hubbard said, "Do your work with your whole heart, and you will succeed--there's so little competition."

Visualization

Losers visualize the penalties of failure. Winners visualize the rewards of success.

DR. ROB GILBERT

To visualize is to see what is *not* there, what is *not* real--a *dream*. To visualize is, in fact, to make *visual lies*. Visual lies, however, have a way of coming true.

As I mentioned earlier, don't let the word *visual* throw you. I'm talking about the *imagination*. Some people primarily *see* in their imagination. Others primarily *feel*. Still others primarily *hear*. Whichever sense you use to access your imagination is fine.

How do *you* visualize? What does it look, feel, or sound like? The same way you remember things, that's how the imagination looks-feels-sounds. What's the shape of an apple? What color is a carrot? ("Why is a carrot more orange than an orange?" asked the Amboy Dukes. Does anybody remember the Amboy Dukes? It was back in the sixties. You had to be there.) What is your bathroom sink like? How clean is your car? However you saw, sensed, or heard those images, that's what it's like to *visualize* the future in your imagination.

But you know all this. You already have a sanctuary built in your imagination, and probably a few taco stands, too. With such advanced readers, it must be time for a *Pop Quiz!*

POP QUIZ: Although the brain is only 2% of the total body weight, it consumes 25% of the body's oxygen. What does this mean?

- A. If you feel short of breath, stop thinking.
- B. People without brains need 25% less oxygen.
- C. Our brains should be bigger.
- D. (D) The body considers thinking an important activity.
- E. We should spend 75% of our time doing something other than thinking.
- F. You shouldn't walk, think, and chew gum at the same time.
- G. Keep breathing.

Never give in. Never. Never. Never. Never.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

In our imagination, what we behold we can become. What we have beheld in the past has made us what we are and gotten us what we have. If we want something different--something greater--we must think greater thoughts.

We are not responsible for every thought that goes meandering through our mind. We *are*, however, responsible for the ones we *hold* there. We're *especially* responsible for the thoughts we *put* there.

It's time to plant a Dream crop of positive visions. It's time to focus on the positive; to hold an image of what we want; to see, view, play (*s'il vous plait*) our Dream.

Or, worded for our more negatively thinking friends: Don't think about what you don't want.

No matter what else you're doing, think about your Dream *all the time*. Live your Dream in your imagination. Become obsessed by it. Fall in love with it. Court it. Seduce it. Marry it. Become passionate about it.

To paraphrase Churchill: Never lose in your imagination. Never. Never. Never. Never.

It's *your* dream. *Your* imagination. Why on earth should you lose there? Don't. If you find yourself losing, turn it around. Call in a cavalry charge. Bring on your Fairy Godmother (one of your Master Teacher's many outfits). Whatever it takes.

In your imagination, always come out on top, always be victorious. Always win.

Affirmations

I used to work at The International House of Pancakes. It was a dream, and I made it happen.

PAULA POUNDSTONE

To affirm is to make firm. An affirmation is a statement of truth you make firm by repetition.

Like goals, affirmations work best when they are worded in the present tense. "*I am* a successful orchestral conductor, making \$100,000 per year" is how to state an affirmation, not "I'm going to be . . ." or "I really want to be . . ." or "If it's not too much trouble, I'd really like to be . . ."

Your purpose and your Big Dream (Goal) are already worded as affirmations--so, affirm them. Say each, out loud, for an hour without stopping.

Before starting, you might want to ask the white light to surround you for your highest good.

When you affirm, all that is between you and fulfilling that dream surfaces--in other words, the comfort zone. Expect fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, anger, and discouragement to do what they do to get you to stop. Keep going.

To bring up the limitations faster, look at yourself in the mirror while repeating your affirmation. It's a powerful process.

Additionally, you can record your affirmations on an endless-loop cassette (the kind used for outgoing messages in answering machines) and have them playing softly in the background while other things are going on.

You can get an earphone and play your tape on a portable stereo wherever you go. (Talk about your portable paradise!)

The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Some people like to make a treasure map. A treasure map is a large piece of foam core or a bulletin board that contains the keys to your inner and outer riches. Cut from magazines, newspapers, or make drawings of objects that represent portions of your Big Dream--words, pictures, people, anything.

Glue, paste, or pin them to your treasure map. (Some people use a bulletin board so that when one portion of the Dream is realized, they can take it down and replace it with another part of the Dream.)

Your treasure map becomes a colorful collage. Put it where you'll see it often (but not where the trolls hang out). It's a visual affirmation.

Practice turning the comfort zone's chattering into instant affirmations. Anytime you catch yourself saying something negative to yourself, take charge of the thought and rescue it. Turn it around. Make the most negative thought the most positive one--just like that. Consider it a lesson in creative writing, or a new quiz show--the grand prize of which is your Dream. If stuck, you can always add, "...up until now, and things are changing for the better," to whatever negative nonsense the comfort zone throws at you.

Affirmations help you believe in your Dream. Belief is essential. Your Dream must become more real than your doubt. Affirmations are like lifting weights--a mechanical process that helps build strength (belief) in your Dream.

"One person with belief," John Stuart Mill wrote more than a hundred years ago, "is equal to a force of ninety-nine who have only interests."

A Place to Practice Success

If you want a quality, act as if you already had it. Try the "as if" technique.

WILLIAM JAMES

I bet you already know the place I'm about to suggest. Yes, your *sanctuary*.

All the tools of the sanctuary--the light at the entryway, main room, people mover, information retrieval system, video screen, ability suits, ability suit practice area, health center, playroom, sacred room, and Master Teacher--are invaluable tools in visualizing and affirming your Dream.

Think of all the experts--past, present, and future--you can invite in on the people mover. ("Mark Twain told me today, `Courage is the mastery of fear--not absence of fear.'" Amaze your friends!)

Think of how much fun you can have wearing the ability suit of your Dream in the ability suit practice area. If that becomes too vigorous, you can sit down and *watch* yourself being successful on the video screen. The information retrieval system is the perfect place to go whenever you think, "I wish I knew about . . ."

And, of course, there's the Master Teacher--friend, guide, supporter, champion, *bon vivant*.

All this--and so much more--is only the close of an eyelid away. Use your sanctuary. Often.

Find a Hero

Have I ever told you you're my hero? You're everything I would like to be. I can climb higher than an eagle. You are the wind beneath my wings.

LARRY HENLEY & JEFF SILBAR

We all need a hero, a role model--someone who had a Dream as big as ours, and lived it. Your hero may be alive, or may "belong to the ages." Either way, he or she can live in your heart.

Kevin Kline met his hero, Sir John Gielgud. Kline was in awe. "Mr. Gielgud," he said, "Do you have any advice for a young actor about to make his first film in London?"

Gielgud stopped and pondered the question for some time. At last he spoke, "The really good restaurants are in Chelsea and the outlying regions--you want to avoid the restaurants in the big hotels."

Pianist Vladimir Horowitz asked the advice of the great conductor Arturo Toscanini. "If you want to please the critics," Toscanini told him, "don't play too loud, too soft, too fast, too slow."

"Meet the sun every morning as if it could cast a ballot," Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., told novice political campaigner Dwight D. Eisenhower. A few years later, President Eisenhower met another of his heroes, golfer Sam Snead. When Eisenhower asked him for some advice on how to improve his golf swing, Snead coached, "Put your ass into the ball, Mr. President!"

Eisenhower himself became a hero to millions. "This must have been how Eisenhower felt just before D-Day," Larry Appleton explained to Balki Bartoukamous. "All around him the troops sleeping; not Ike! He knew that one single mistake could change the course of world history." Balki had only one question: "Was this before or after Ike met Tina Turner?"

The one thing I do not want to be called is First Lady. It sounds like a saddle horse.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY

I wish I was Donna Reed she'd have something wonderful to say. Or Shirley Jones she'd have something wonderful to say, too, and maybe even some fresh-baked cookies. Or Loretta Young; of course, she wouldn't have anything wonderful to say, but she would make a stunning entrance.

JESSICA TATE

A young George Gershwin came to the already famous Irving Berlin, looking for a job as piano player. After hearing some of Gershwin's music, Berlin refused to hire him. "What the hell do you want to work for somebody else for?" Berlin asked, "Work for yourself!"

A playwright asked his hero, George Bernard Shaw, if he should continue with the profession of playwrighting. "Go on writing plays, my boy," Shaw encouraged, "One of these days one of these London producers will go into his office and say to his secretary, 'Is there a play from Shaw this morning?' and when she says, 'No,' he will say, 'Well, then we'll have a start on the rubbish.' And that's your chance, my boy."

Heroes don't have to be real. Some people find fictional characters more inspiring than real-life heroes. To this day, thousands of people write to Sherlock Holmes at 221-B Baker Street. There is currently a bank at that address. The bank dutifully responds to every letter, "Mr. Holmes thanks you for your letter. At the moment he is in retirement in Sussex, keeping bees."

One of the great things about heroes is they are *human*. There's hardly a hero you can name who doesn't have heroic flaws. (Even Holmes had his weaknesses--that seven-percent solution of cocaine, for example.) Judy Garland once said of another singer (Barbra Streisand, I think), "The first time I saw her perform she was so good I wanted to run up to the stage, put my arms around her--and wring her neck. She just has too much talent!"

That our heroes became heroes *flaws and all* gives us hope. "You mean I don't have to be perfect to fulfill my Dream, to make a contribution?" Hardly.

It takes commitment, courage, and passion to live a dream and make a contribution. Heroes had these qualities *along with* their flaws. And you have those qualities, too.

And, of course, when you find one, visit your hero often in your sanctuary.

Positive Focusing vs. Positive Thinking

*I was going to buy a copy of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, and then I thought: What the hell good would that do?*

RONNIE SHAKES

MARY RICHARDS: I quit. I'm going to Africa to work with Schweitzer.

LOU GRANT: Mary, Albert Schweitzer is dead.

MARY RICHARDS: You see what I mean, Mr. Grant? It's a lousy, lousy world.

THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

There is a myth that in order to reach our goal we must "think positive" all the time. No, we don't have to "think positive" all the time. We don't even have to think positively *any* of the time.

To succeed--to fulfill our Dream--all we have to do is keep focused on our goal and keep moving toward it.

Let's say person A, person B, and person C all set out for the same goal. They begin at the same place at the same time. Person A is a positive thinker; person B is a positive focuser; person C is both a positive thinker *and* a positive focuser.

At the "Go," person A decides to sit down and do a little positive thinking to help prepare for the journey. Person B focuses on the goal and gets moving. Person C gets moving, too.

Person A notices an area of unpositiveness within, and remains still, working hard to remove the "darkness" before moving on the journey. Person B does not like the road, does not like the rules, does not like the weather, does not like the planned lunch, does not like not liking any of it, but keeps moving toward the goal nonetheless. Person C keeps moving, too, while enjoying the flowers, waving at passersby, singing, and thinking what good exercise all this movement is.

Guess who gets to the goal first? It's a tie between B and C. Person A hasn't left the starting place--but is feeling much more positive now, thank you very much. Person B and person C arrived at the goal at the same time because they were equally focused on it and *moved* on it. So why bother to add the positive thinking?

Person C *enjoyed* the journey; person B did not. That's the only difference. As long as we stay focused on our goal and continue moving toward it, we can have all the negative thoughts we want.

Keep walking and keep smiling.

TINY TIM

In terms of goals, what's the difference? Well, if I were to ask C, "How would you like to go toward another goal?" C might respond, "Sure. That was fun." Person B, on the other hand, might reply, "I worked hard to get here. I want to rest for a while. Enjoy my victory."

What's the point? There are two. First, if your thoughts are not always sweetness and light as you move toward your Dream, don't worry. If you keep moving, you'll still get to your Dream.

Second, as you move toward your goal, you might like to practice focusing on good things along the way. You don't have to "make something up"--you already have; it's called your Dream. You need only look at *what's in front of you* and *find something there to appreciate*.

Our lives are a combination of good and bad, positive and negative. It's the best of times and the worst of times, all the time. When we focus on the good *that's already present*, we feel better. If not, we don't. Either way, life goes on.

Keeping your mind on the goal and moving toward the goal are the essence of positive focusing. All the rest is fun, entertaining, enjoyable--but not essential.

DO IT! Let's Get Off Our Buts

Part Five: DOING IT

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Just Do It!

ADVERTISEMENT FOR RUNNING SHOES

The mind and emotions (your passion) are now in alignment behind your Dream (or moving in that direction more and more).

Now it's time for action--to *DO IT!*

The Biggest Lie in Action

Laziness is nothing more than the habit of resting before you get tired.

JULES RENARD

The biggest lie we tell ourselves in the area of action is, "I'll do it later." As C. Northcote Parkinson said, "Delay is the deadliest form of denial."

Putting things off is known, of course, as procrastination. I know that "pro" means *for*, but I don't know what "crastination" means. Maybe it means *laziness*. Maybe it means *don't go after your Dream, but kid yourself into thinking that someday you will*. Whatever crastination means, I'm against it.

You could say I'm pro anticrastination.

(I looked it up: *crastination* comes from *crastinus*, Latin for pertaining to *tomorrow*. *Pro crastinus* is "putting things off till tomorrow." "Never put off till tomorrow," Mark Twain said, "what you can do the day after tomorrow." *Procrastinus-crastinus*?)

The interesting thing about "later" is that a statement containing it can never be proven false. One can never reproach us for not doing something. If confronted, we can always say, "I said I'd do it later. It's not later yet."

In this way, we can put off and put off and put off *indefinitely*. We only run out of lateres when we run out of breath. Death is nature's way of saying, "No more lateres left."

We know how many lateres we have stockpiled from the past. We know that adding another later to that pile is like adding a grain of sand to a beach. Somehow, we know we're probably never going to get back to that particular grain of sand. We know "later" is a lie.

If you tran the moment before it's rine The tears of

repentance you'll certainly wipe; But if once you let the ripe moment go You can never wipe off the tears of woe.

WILLIAM BLAKE 1791

He who hesitates is poor.

ZERO MOSTEL THE PRODUCERS

If you can do something now, do it. If it can't be done now, (a) decide if it is going to get done. If yes, (b) choose *when* it will get done.

If something doesn't get done, and you decide you will still do it, reschedule a *specific date and time* . Write it in your appointment book. If it's not worth the amount of time it takes to schedule it *now*, it's probably not going to get done "later."

When we put necessary activities off until some mythical Laterland, we drag the past into the future. The burden of yesterday's incompletions is a heavy load to carry. *Don't carry it.*

A Dream is an ephemeral thing. In traveling to it, you have to travel light. "I travel light;" Christopher Fry wrote, "as light, that is, as a man can travel who will still carry his body around because of its sentimental value." Getting in the habit of doing what needs to be done as it presents itself to be done--whether it *needs* to be done in that moment or not--creates an inner freedom for the next moment, the next activity. Such as pursuing your Dream.

We're Not Perfect--We're Human

Have no fear of perfection you'll never reach it.

SALVADOR DALI

How do we learn? By doing. As Aristotle said, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." Yes, *everything* is best learned by doing.

A primary reason people don't do new things is because they want to do them perfectly--first time. It's irrational, impractical, unworkable--and yet, it's how most people run their lives. It's called the Perfection Syndrome.

Whoever said we had to do it perfect?

Our parents. And if not our parents, there were those bastions of perfection--school teachers. (The ones who would point out that the last paragraph should read, "Whoever said we had to do it perfectly?" They would also point out that paragraphs should be more than one sentence long.)

For the most part, we weren't taught to set our own goals and to achieve them. In addition, we had to achieve someone else's goal in "the right way." Merely *reaching* the goal was not enough. The goal had to be attained the way someone else (whoever was teaching us) thought was the "best way" (that is, *their* way).

I say, don't worry--just DO IT!

Don't worry about "right way"; don't even worry about doing it "my way." DO IT! When it's all said and done--when you've reached your goal--you can look back and discover what *your* way really was. As Margaret Mead said, "The best way to do field work is not to come up for air until you're done." Amen.

When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So what the hell, leap.

CYNTHIA HEIMEL

Most people have an ideal image of themselves. If they can't perform according to their own imaginary standards of perfection, they "take their ball and go home." As Cardinal Newman observed, "Nothing would be done at all if a man waited until he could do it so well that no one could find fault with it."

"Men would like to learn to love themselves, but they usually find they cannot," Gerald Brenan explained. "That is because they have built an ideal image of themselves which puts their real self in the shade."

This "ideal image" of ourselves--the one that's "perfect" and won't let anyone see us as other than perfect--we must send on a long field trip somewhere. Maybe Alpha Centauri.

The only way to even *approach* doing something perfectly is through experience, and experience, as Oscar Wilde observed, "is the name everyone gives to their mistakes."

Mistakes are excellent teachers. Sir Humphrey Davy wrote, "I have learned more from my mistakes than from my successes." Make as many mistakes as you can, as quickly as you can. "Show me a guy who's afraid to look bad," said Rene Auberjonois, "and I'll show you a guy you can beat every time." Set out each day to look foolish, stupid, blundering, awkward--anything you consider the perfect representation of *im* perfect. In this way, you shatter the false image of a "perfect self," and get used to being a stumble-through-it, catch-as-catch-can, make-do, seat-of-the-pants, mistake-making human being--just like every other successful dreamer.

After all, it's not perfect being perfect.

Be Prepared to Be Scared

The superior man thinks always of virtue; the common man thinks of comfort.

CONFUCIUS

When we put ourselves on the path of expansion by committing to a goal that's outside our comfort zone, we're going to be given a lot of opportunities to expand. We are *not* going to be able to choose all those opportunities for expansion.

Our choice is either "expand" or "contract." If we choose "expand," we will expand--and we'll *always* wish there were more comfortable ways of doing it.

Let's say someone's goal is to get her body in shape. The *way* this would happen, she imagines, is in a sparkling health club with chrome-plated barbells and Tom Cruise holding her feet while she does sit-ups. How, she wonders, will the money "materialize" so she can pay the queen's ransom of a membership?

Meanwhile, in the first week after committing to her goal, her car runs out of gas, and she has to walk five miles to the nearest phone; an emergency happens at work and she is asked to fill in, packing boxes in the warehouse; her freezer is accidentally unplugged and all her ice cream melts; and, on the weekend, she goes on a spiritual retreat, hoping to get some rest. All weekend, however, is devoted to what they call "dharma yoga," which sounds nice *in principle*, but in reality is digging ditches, cutting down trees, and helping a pair of not-so-busy beavers build a dam.

At the end of the first week, she has lost two pounds, taken an inch off her waist, and looks better--but feels sorer--than she has in years.

Minds, like bodies, will often fall into a pimpled, ill-conditioned state from mere excess of comfort.

CHARLES DICKENS

This is how it happens. We get the Dream, but we don't get to dictate every step toward the Dream.

We can, of course, refuse to do an uncomfortable activity placed before us. When we know something *might* move us a step closer to our goal and we choose not to do it "because it's uncomfortable," we are also choosing not to pursue our goal. It's that simple.

This refusal has two results. First, we are not one step closer to our goal. Second, the opportunities to expand--to reach the goal--will, in the future, be presented less frequently. When we *un* commit through inaction (honoring the comfort zone), the goal-fulfillment mechanism

backs off, too. Our goal-fulfillment mechanism is not there to *hurt* us; it's there to *help* us. If we indicate--through nonaction--that we aren't ready to take the steps necessary to reach the goal, it says, "Fine. Let me know when you're ready."

It's as though we went to a friend's house for the evening. After asking three or four times in the first hour if we wanted anything to drink, and receiving a "No, thank you" each time, our host would, naturally, ask less frequently, and, eventually, stop.

Whatever you find *most* uncomfortable in getting to your goal, be willing to do it. You may not *have* to do it, but be *willing* to. Your willingness will be tested. If you say, "I'm willing!" and the opportunity arises and you're *not*, then you're not being honest with yourself.

When a portion of the comfort zone is being expanded, it always *seems* as though expansion of *any other part* would be more tolerable, more acceptable. We want to put it off, postpone, and do it later, so some *other* part of the comfort zone can be challenged.

In fact, when that *other* part is challenged, it will seem as though *this* is the worst part of the comfort zone to expand, and *any other* area would be better than *this*. Discomfort always seems more tolerable anywhere other than the place in which it's being felt.

The solution? *Plan* to be uncomfortable. Understand that it's a necessary part of success. Learn to be comfortable with discomfort. Have compassion for the part of you that's growing. The first step is a *willingness* to be uncomfortable.

One of the best ways to properly evaluate and adapt to the many environmental stresses of life is to simply view them as normal. The adversity and failures in our lives, if adapted to and viewed as normal corrective feedback to use to get back on target, serve to develop in us an immunity against anxiety, depression, and the adverse responses to stress. Instead of tackling the most important priorities that would make us successful and effective in life, we prefer the path of least resistance and do things simply that will relieve our tension, such as shuffling papers and majoring in minors.

DENIS WAITLEY

The next step is to realize *which* emotion from the comfort zone you're feeling each time you feel "uncomfortable." Fear? Guilt? Unworthiness? Hurt feelings? Anger? Observe it. See if you can locate it in the body.

As I mentioned earlier, fear is probably the most frequently felt of the comfort zone's emotions. Not only do we feel fear, we also tend to fear every other comfort-zone emotion. Unworthiness, for example, seldom has to make an appearance. The *fear* of unworthiness is enough to keep most people in check. If you feel fear, ask yourself if you're fearing *something*, or if you're afraid of feeling some other *emotion*.

The final step is turning your *perception* of each "negative" emotion into its positive counterpart. Learn to see fear as excitement, guilt as the energy for personal change, unworthiness as the discipline to live your Dream, hurt feelings as caring, and anger as the energy for outer change.

This reprogramming can take some time. Do not, however, wait until you have the "conversion technique" mastered before moving--steadily and persistently--toward your Dream. Some people are past their first Dream and well on the way to their second before they can even locate the comfort zone's feelings in the body.

For now, be willing to be uncomfortable. Be comfortable being uncomfortable. It may get tough, but it's a small price to pay for living your Dream.

DO IT!
Let's Get Off Our Buts

Part Six:
LIVING YOUR DREAMS

When you get there, there is no there there. But there will be a pool.

DAVID ZUCKER

This section will make more sense when you've had a chance to live the first five sections for a while. In following the suggestions in those parts, you either have achieved your Dream, or are well on the way to achieving it.

The question arises, "What next?"

That's what this section is about. "There are two things to aim at in life: first, to get what you want; and after that, to enjoy it," wrote Logan Pearsall Smith.

"Only the wisest of mankind achieve the second."

Choose New Goals

As Miss America, my goal is to bring peace to the entire world and then to get my own apartment.

JAY LENO

When your Dream is *almost* realized--but not quite--it's time to choose another goal.

The goal may remain the same, but the quantifying factors are raised. The goal to conduct an orchestra remains intact, for example, but the yearly salary increases from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Or, the goal may change entirely.

"Life affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting difficulties," wrote Samuel Johnson, "passing from one step of success to another, forming new wishes and seeing them gratified."

Just as the comfort zone knows no limits in keeping you from fulfilling your Dreams, it also has no limits on how much it can expand. Our goals may move from one area of life to another, or they may stay in the same area. In 1980, Sting said, "Given the choice of friendship or success, I'd probably choose success." He got it. In 1990, he chose again: "Friendship's much more important to me [now] than what I thought success was."

Now that you know that all the techniques in this book work, you can be *truly* bold in following your Dreams. Reread the book from the beginning. It will make a lot more sense. Do the exercises. Choose another Dream. Dream on.

Wealth Is What You Can Live Without

A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.

THOREAU

When you tell most people, "Nothing outside yourself is going to make you happy; *you* must make yourself happy," they nod approvingly, and more often than not think, "I'll make myself happy when I have a new house, lover, job, meditation blanket, etc."

The shock that takes place when someone realizes, "I have my Dream and I'm still not happy," can be either depressing or enlightening. Depressing, if one thinks, "This was the *wrong dream*. I

need to find the *right dream* --then I'll be happy." Enlightening, if someone says, "Maybe my happiness *does* depend on me," and begins the journey.

"Not the fruit of experience," wrote Walter Pater, "but experience itself, is the end." Robert Townsend said it for our generation: "Getting there isn't half the fun--it's all the fun." Elizabeth Taylor has a needlepoint pillow in her living room. It reads: "It's not the having, it's the getting."

What's the true value of setting a goal and achieving it? It's not obtaining the goal, but what we learn about ourselves along the way. To get to our Dream we must be focused, disciplined, persevering, caring, worthy, excited, enthusiastic, and passionate.

What do we learn about ourselves? How to be more focused, disciplined, persevering, caring, worthy, excited, enthusiastic, and passionate. Goals come and go, dreams fade, but these qualities travel with us wherever we go.

"There is no end. There is no beginning," said Federico Fellini. "There is only the infinite passion of life."

This is our true wealth--the riches we take with us, the joy we carry inside, the support we learn to give ourselves, and the self-loving that flows as a natural by-product of that support.

There is only one success to be able to spend your life in your own way.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

To the degree we can live without the things of this world, we are wealthy. The key word in that sentence is "live." I'm not talking about austerity or sacrifice. I'm talking about *living*.

When we know how easy it is to fulfill a Dream (easy compared to how *impossible* most people believe it to be), we know we *can* take it. Once we are free to take it, we are also free to leave it. "You never know what is enough," wrote Blake, "until you know what is more than enough."

Do not, however, turn the idea that you can live without many things into just another wonderful-sounding excuse for not pursuing your Dream. "The comfort zone hath power to assume a pleasing shape."

Go fulfill a few Dreams. *Know* you can do it. Have fun. *Then* decide what you can live without.

Is this madness? Sure. "You have everything but one thing," Zorba the Greek told his young friend, "madness. A man needs a little madness or else--he never dares cut the rope and be free."

Give Others What You Know

Concerns for man and his fate must always form the chief interest of all technical endeavors. Never forget this in the midst of your diagrams and equations.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

On the way to your Dream, others helped you--others whom you couldn't possibly repay. The old saying comes to mind, "Don't repay a kindness; pass it on."

After fulfilling a Dream or two (or twenty), we will be called to pass on some of what we have learned to others. Just as, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears," so, too, "When the teacher is ready, the student appears."

Go out and *do*, learn from the doing, then teach from the knowing. If you just read a lot of books on a subject, memorize a lot of platitudes, and set yourself up as guru, that's not teaching; that's deception.

When you know from experience, others will recognize it, and they will know to ask the right questions. And, as busy as you might be, you will stop and give them the right answers. Why? Their intention pulls it from you. Also, you'll be an even nicer person.

"The common idea that success spoils people by making them vain, egotistic, and self-complacent is erroneous," wrote Somerset Maugham. "On the contrary, it makes them, for the most part, humble, tolerant and kind. Failure makes people bitter and cruel."

Cast not ye pearls before swine--but it's noble to pass on a few gems to properly eager pearl divers.

We are here on earth to do good to others. What the others are here for, I don't know.

W. H. AUDEN

When people give to themselves--when they fulfill their own Dreams--they are filled to overflowing. The overflow has two interesting characteristics: (1) it is abundant, and (2) it can't be stored. What can one do with the overflow?

There's only one thing to do with it--give it away.

"Giving it away" is not standing on a street corner dispensing hugs. One gives of what one has. Whatever ability one has developed--in whatever area one has developed it--that's what is given.

Robert Ingersoll wrote at the end of the last century:

My creed is that:
Happiness is the only good.
The place to be happy is here.

The time to be happy is now.
The way to be happy is to make others so.

And there we have one of the great open secrets of life: giving to others gives us more than we give away. When people discover this, there's no stopping them. The idea that doing for others is a duty to be done reluctantly--like paying taxes, or picking seeds out of a watermelon--vanishes.

Giving--like fear, guilt, unworthiness, and all the rest--was put here for our upliftment.

Doing for others feels good.

Don't take my word for it. See what you think. DO IT!

The Tools for Achieving Material Goals Can Be Used for Achieving Non-Material Goals

There is more to life than increasing its speed.

GANDHI

The inner reflects the outer; the outer reflects the inner. What we learn from fulfilling Dreams in the outer world can be used for pursuing Dreams within ourselves.

After obtaining several material Dreams, you may wonder, "Where are these Dreams coming from?"

Important question. Seeking the answer to that question may begin an important inner quest.

"Try not to become a man of success," wrote Albert Einstein, "but rather try to become a man of value."

Humor and Fun

Life is short. Live it up.

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV

Life is a game. Like all games, it's only fun when we "take it all seriously"--when we get lost in the illusion, when it seems devastatingly real.

If some butinsky stood over us while we were playing Monopoly, reminding us, "That's only paper; it's not real money. That's just plastic; those aren't real hotels. It's not a real jail they're going to send you to; it's just a square on a board," we'd throw him out of the room.

We want to believe the illusion is real, or else it wouldn't be any fun.

It wouldn't be any fun, either, if the competition weren't very good and the score weren't very close. Without challenges, life would be like playing tennis with a three-year-old. Lots of "victories," but little fun. George Leonard explains,

In terms of the game theory, we might say the universe is so constituted as to maximize the play.

The best games are not those in which all goes smoothly and steadily toward a certain conclusion, but those in which the outcome is always in doubt.

Similarly, the geometry of life is designed to keep us at the point of maximum tension between certainty and uncertainty, order and chaos. Every important call is a close one. We survive and evolve by the skin of our teeth.

We really wouldn't want it any other way.

He deserves Paradise who makes his companions laugh.

THE KORAN

Among those whom I like or admire, I can find no common denominator, but among those whom I love, I can: all of them make me laugh.

W. H. AUDEN

As we're playing this game of life, something occasionally reminds us not to take it all too seriously. "Enjoy yourself," it says, "you'll never get out of this alive."

It's called humor.

"Humor is something that thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations," explained Victor Borge. "There is more logic in humor than in anything else. Because, you see, humor is truth."

Alice-Leone Moats described Philadelphia society in this way: "The parties all reminded me of the Gay Nineties--all the men are gay and the women are in their nineties."

Humor is truth, truth is humor.

Humor is probably most refreshing when we use it to look at ourselves.

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"You grow up," said Ethel Barrymore, "the day you have your first good laugh--at yourself." Friederich Nietzsche wrote: "One is healthy when one can laugh at the earnestness and zeal with which one has been hypnotized by any single detail in one's life." (What other book in the *world* would have Ethel Barrymore and Friederich Nietzsche agreeing on something in the same paragraph?)

When things are going awful, terrible, horrible--it helps to remember that, in six months, you'll be telling this "tragedy" as an anecdote. You'll have your friends laughing hysterically about it. If it'll be funny then, it's funny now. By remembering that truth in the middle of the chaos, you can take a deep breath and say to yourself, "This is funny."

"Humor is emotional chaos," James Thurber explained, "remembered in emotional tranquility."

"Humor is an affirmation of dignity," said Romain Gary, "a declaration of man's superiority to all that befalls him."

The End

We're all in this alone.

LILY TOMLIN

And so we come to the end of *DO IT!* But not really. Come back often--review the tools of achieving Dreams. Renew your passion.

Allow me to close with this from Guillaume Apollinaire--

"Come to the edge," he said.

They said, "We are afraid."

"Come to the edge," he said.

They came.

He pushed them . . .

And they flew.

*'Tis God gives skill, But not without men's hands: He could not
make Antonio Stradivari's violins Without Antonio.*

STRADIVARIUS