

Discover Your Destination

Cormac Noonan

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ISBN: 9781707023370

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my parents, Michael and Caitriona. Firstly for supporting me through my four years in college and secondly for not disowning me when I decided to throw it all away in search of something else. Without your continued belief in me (and financial support), I'm not sure where I'd be.

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INTRODUCTION

Why I wrote this book - My Career Story

I live a very happy, content and fulfilling life. I am both happy with my current position and excited about where I am going in the future. I have created a life that enables me to do the work that I am passionate about. Through writing, coaching and educating I am working to inspire and empower people to live the life of their dreams.

Not only do I have a passion for what I do, but the work I do helps improve other people's lives while also funding my ability to enjoy my own. On top of this, my current work also helps keep me moving towards my overarching long-term goal of transforming the educational system in Ireland.

But life wasn't always like this for me. I didn't always live a fulfilling life, working on things I'm passionate about and having amazing adventures along the way. Back in 2014, I had just finished my degree and I was deciding which direction to take after university. I had followed the path excellently so far. At least the path society told me to follow. I made it into Trinity College Dublin, which was the most recognized university in Ireland at the time. This was praised as a good achievement as not many students went there from my secondary school. Part of the reason for this may have been because people from Navan (my home town in Ireland) looked at it as a posh school and didn't want to go there. But I didn't care about whether it was upmarket or not. It was still the most recognized university in Ireland and I firmly believed, based on what I had been told up until that point, that going there would give me the best possible opportunity for my future career.

I looked on as my friends headed off to other universities in Dublin while I took the lonely road to the big, posh school to join the D4s (a name given to people living in a well-off area of Dublin). Growing up playing Gaelic Football in County Meath, I was bred to scorn people

from Dublin and to me, the D4s were the worst of a bad bunch. And despite the deterrent of having no friends there along with my perceived struggle to co-inhabit a space with the irritating D4s (some of them turned out to be ok in the end), I still decided to go to Trinity. That's how determined I was to succeed in my career.

Even since my secondary school days, I've had a drive to succeed in my career. Unlike many of my friends, my parents never had to push me to study for the Leaving Certificate (the final exam in Irish secondary school). In fact, it was quite the opposite. My mother would often come into my study area and plead with me "Cor have you not done enough work for the evening? Come out here and relax". "Just one more hour Mam" I'd tell her, "then I'll come out and watch TV?".

I also asked my mother to bring me to a good career counsellor to help steer me towards the right degree. I didn't want to waste years studying something that wasn't my true calling. I wanted to study something that gave me the best opportunity to do all the things I wanted to do in my future. From a young age, I always held a dream of starting my own company. The counsellor was good and she made me aware of a course called Management Science and Information Systems Studies. It was relatively unknown at the time but it covered a wide range of areas from Maths to Business to Statistics to IT. I was very Maths and Business focused and I was aware that the future was in IT so the course seemed the perfect fit. It would open up opportunities in many areas for me and give me a solid IT background.

Throughout my college years I actively sought out mentors. During a summer internship in my third year, I was assigned a mentor by the company I was working for. I would arrive at each meeting with a page full of questions, curious about what it was I should be looking for in a career. Where did family, friends, and hobbies such as football rank alongside work in the list of priorities? What were the trends of the future? Where was the money at? What skills did I need to work on to get there? What extra courses or things could I study now to get ahead of the rest?

Upon graduating I carved out my own role in a startup company with whom I had worked with for my Final Year Project. It was a Research and Analytics based role and it was a hot area at the time. I spent six months there before starting my graduate role in Accenture. Apparently, this was one of the best and highest-paid graduate roles you could land. I didn't know too much about all of the big companies before moving up to Dublin but I had listened to friends who all seemed to know the ins and outs. Many of them came from private schools and seemed to have a predetermined career path in their heads. Coming from "the country" in County Meath, I was never made aware of any of these career paths but I had the drive to go for the best jobs and I listened to the advice of my peers.

After spending almost three years working in Accenture as a Data Analyst, I realised I had made a big mistake. I had been fond of the problem-solving aspect of Data Analytics in college, but working in a large company turned out to be much less engaging than I had expected. I was only a small cog in a much bigger wheel and there was no room for any of my ideas or suggestions to be taken on board. My work was focused on one small area and I didn't see my role as one that was creating much value to other people. On top of this, my daily tasks were very routine and repetitive, leading to my biggest struggles in work being staying awake and looking busy.

I knew after only a few months that I was not suited to working in a large company such as Accenture. As a couple of more months passed, I was also struck with the realisation that IT wasn't really one of my passions. I liked problem-solving but not coding. I noticed that the majority of other people I worked with weren't passionate about their jobs either. We all complained about work yet we all stayed. We hadn't been made aware of any alternative paths we could take. We also stayed because the money and perks were good, the job was comfortable and the location was convenient. We didn't like our jobs but we also didn't hate them enough to quit.

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It took a long time for me to quit (two and a half years) and give up all the comforts but when I did, it was an immediate release. It had gotten to a stage where my work was hindering the person I wished to become. I knew if I wanted to do great things in my future I needed to escape the negative office environment and the narrow-minded opinions that surrounded me. I needed to quit and try my own thing. I needed to pursue work I was truly passionate about.

Looking back at my time in Accenture, I realise that I had been sucked into the mentality of the crowd. I had tricked myself into thinking I was searching for my own true path. Instead, I was listening to the advice of others on what they thought were the best careers.

I had failed to listen to my true authentic voice. The main reason for this is because nobody had shown me how. All I heard people talk about as I moved through school were the best subjects and courses I could do to earn the most money. Then in university people were talking about the fastest-growing industries and the best-paid jobs. Apart from a few outdated and misguiding aptitude tests in secondary school (mine said I should be a construction worker), there was no focus on digging deep to find what truly motivated each student as an individual.

Why you should read this book

This book will cover everything you need to know about choosing the *right* career path. Notice I used the word right instead of best. I'm here to help you discover the right path for you specifically. There are many people out there boasting that they have the best careers but just because they love it doesn't mean you will.

I don't want you to waste years of your life chasing other people's career goals like I did. Instead, I want to help you discover your own destination. This book will cut through all of the current noise and confusion about careers that currently surrounds most of you. The book will help you discover what your mission is, what your core values are and how you can incorporate these into the type of work you choose to do. This book will then give you the tools necessary to create a crystal-clear vision for the career and life you want to have.

I must stress, however, that simply reading the book will not manifest your dream career. It can serve as an excellent guide but only if you put in the work. Some of the exercises are difficult and take a lot of introspection. You must choose to be honest with yourself in the exercises and dig deep to find your true mission and your true values.

Your career is going to play a significant role in determining the type of person you become, the people with whom you spend most of your time and the impact you have on the world. We spend over one-third of our lives at work so if you want to look back on your life without regret, then I suggest you make sure it is a career of your choosing.

This book is not designed to give you specific advice on what career to pursue. I don't know you personally so I can't advise you on what you should do. This book is designed to get you to ask yourself the right questions rather than to try and give you the answers.

We've all grown up with unique experiences. We each have distinct fond

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memories of our pasts and we each have gone through different struggles. It follows that there is no one answer to what drives each of us. However, there are questions that can help us discover these deep motivations. I hope to help you articulate your unique drive so that you can create a vision for how you can positively channel it into the work that you do.

CHAPTER 1: REALISE YOUR MAP IS WRONG

“What we know is a drop, what we don’t know is an ocean” - Isaac Newton

One of the first presuppositions of Neuro-Linguistic Programming is to recognize that your beliefs about the world are true only from your perspective. Throughout your past life experiences, you have only been able to see a portion of the map. Nobody on earth has the entire map, showing how everything fits together, including all the bumps and undulations. The reason for almost every argument we have with someone is because our map differs from their map. Each person has experienced life differently thus we all see the world differently. Even if you had a twin with whom you grew up with and shared the same experiences with, you both would have created different meanings for each experience and thus you both would have different maps of how the world works.

Why is This Important?

At times we can all be quite stubborn in our views of the world. Oftentimes we find that we prefer to win arguments to back up our beliefs rather than to get to the truth. By understanding that our maps are flawed, as well as everyone else's, we can open ourselves up to viewing other people's maps with curiosity instead of judgement. This will improve our relationships and help to prevent misunderstandings which lead to arguments.

It is also important to realise that our maps have been strongly influenced by the place in which we grew up and by the people with whom we have been surrounded by since we were young. Creating our maps based on the people around us often leads us to believe that our potential is limited to that of those within our community. If we are driven, we might look at the "successful" members of our community and strive towards emulating them.

The most influential and rich man in your neighbourhood may be a doctor and you, therefore, develop the belief that to be wealthy and well-respected you should pursue the same path. The beliefs we develop at a young age are what often lead us towards our future careers. By being trapped in the mindset of the community we never really question our beliefs. Others within the same community only reinforce our beliefs that the path we are on is the right one. This is what often leads many people towards having mid-life crises in their 40s and 50s. They finally come to the realisation that they didn't actually choose their own path but instead followed the path laid out for them by those around them.

Today We Can See More of The Map

Nowadays, most of us are much more disconnected from our local communities than we would have been only 20 years ago. While I believe strongly in the importance of community, maybe one potential benefit of the disconnect is that we are no longer blinded by the common beliefs of the community members.

The internet has allowed us to look beyond our community for new role models and different ways of living and working. Through social media, we are beginning to see a bit more of the map and what the actual terrain looks like. This helps us realise there are more options out there for our future careers. We are no longer destined to take over the family farm and it is rare that we come under pressure to become the local doctor or parish priest.

The Opportunities are Limitless

It is important that we realise how we are a product of the people around us. Our beliefs about what constitutes a “good career” have been shaped by the area in which we grew up. This encourages us to stop focusing on our narrow, limited section of the map. It enables us to take a step back and look at the map through a wider lens.

The truth is, there are unlimited possibilities out there for you to decide what you want to do with your life and career. I say both life and career as I believe they go hand-in-hand. I believe your career should complement your life rather than be separate from it. Working in a career that doesn't align with your core values and what you believe is right will eventually eat away at your integrity and self-worth.

Don't Settle For Something You Don't Believe In

If honesty is one of your core values and you work for a company that promotes health-damaging products to unsuspecting customers, what will happen to your integrity and self-worth after contributing to thousands of illnesses throughout your years working for the company?

You might say you are just doing it for the money but you must ask yourself if that amount of money is enough compensation for living in constant conflict with your beliefs. Maybe it is worth it. Maybe the money you make from the job that you don't like gives you the free time and resources to do the things you do like. If so, that's great. But you must ask yourself what you are sacrificing while you are at work. For example, being a lawyer is the best-paid job in the USA but lawyers are 3.6 times more likely to be depressed

A 2017 Gallup poll studying people from over 200 countries, revealed that 85% of people hated their jobs. Overall, they found that only 15% of workers feel engaged in their jobs and feel a sense of “passion” for and “deep connection” to their work.

I firmly believe we don't need to choose between making good money and doing engaging work. We spend too much of our lives working to not enjoy what we do. I believe we can do work that we're passionate about, while helping others and still being well-compensated so that we can enjoy our lives outside of work.

CHAPTER 2: LET YOUR HEART LEAD THE WAY

“Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” - Steve Jobs

If I was to give you only one piece of advice from this book, it would probably be this quote from Steve Jobs.

Learning to listen to our intuition is a skill we can all develop. With time and practice, we can start to understand the difference between our true heart’s desires and our brain’s pre-programmed expectations. We can see the difference in feeling what it is we *know* we must do versus forming logical conclusions about what we *think* we should do.

Decisions made from the heart and intuition come from a place of love and abundance whereas “head decisions” often come from a place of fear and scarcity. My own decision to move into IT was very logically thought out.

My fear of failure and looking stupid held me back from trying something I wasn’t already good at. I was more concerned about doing work that I was sure to be good at rather than risk doing something I truly loved and enjoyed but maybe needed more time to learn how to do.

I had also adopted a scarcity mindset from my childhood so I was more focused on whether I could get a job where I could make enough money to support myself versus thinking about what the world actually needed.

We’ll see in the Ikagai diagram below that by first using our intuition and focusing on What We Love and What the World Needs we’ll also find What We’re Good At and What We Can Be Paid For.

Ikigai Technique

The Japanese technique known as Ikigai (meaning ‘reason for being’) consists of four key elements that must come together in order to discover the type of work you should do:

- What you love
- What the world needs
- What you are good at
- What you can be paid for



This is a simple yet effective tool to use in order to evaluate the type of work that will bring joy and fulfilment to your life. Putting all of my career paths or ‘reasons for being’ through the Ikigai diagram yield positive results for each element.

Writing, Coaching, and Transforming Education are all things I love to do and things I believe I am good at (and will get better at with continued learning and practice). I also believe honest expression through writing, empowering lives through coaching, and expanding minds through education are what the world needs more of. Lastly, I believe I can provide enough value to the lives of others in order to be compensated for all these things.

Focus on Passion and Mission

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.” - Steve Jobs

The Ikigai diagram outlines four key elements to finding the work you should do but luckily you only need to focus on discovering two of these elements and once you do, the other two will look after themselves.

The only two aspects you must focus on discovering are *What You Love* and *What the World Needs*.

What You Love = What You Are Good At

The reason you should focus on what you love is that once you find what it is, you will be naturally compelled to do it. Over time, you won't just become good at it, you will become great at it. Once you become great at something you love it becomes a passion.

What the World Needs = What You Can Be Paid For

If the world was exactly the way you thought it should be, what would be different?

If you can imagine what the world looks like in your ideal version of it, then you can start to see what it is you want to bring into the world. If you can discover what you believe the world needs that is of importance to you, it will enable you to use your passions towards a higher purpose.

If you can do this successfully, you will be greatly rewarded for your contributions to solving some of the world's problems. People are always looking for others to solve their problems and they happily give them money if they do. Almost every business you can think of is solving some sort of problem for someone. The bigger the problem you solve, the more you will be compensated for it.

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So there is not only more meaning to be found in solving big problems such as developing sustainable practices to reverse climate change, revolutionising healthcare, eliminating homelessness, or transforming education, but there is also more money to be gained by solving these massive issues.

Let's Define Passion

In order to find what we're passionate about it is important that we understand exactly what passion is. Many misinterpret passion as something they love to do. Passion is more than that. If you look at the Ikigai diagram above, you will notice that passion is the intersection between what you love **and** what you are good at. So in order for something you love to turn into a passion you must work at it.

Examples

1. Construction

Construction work is something I'm not passionate about. While I've done plenty of construction work in the past, I still struggle to bang a nail in straight on my first go. I neither love it nor am I good at it (despite what my 5th-year aptitude test said!). Therefore, it is missing the two core ingredients that define a passion.

2. Surfing

I love surfing but I wouldn't say I'm passionate about surfing. I love going to the beach, renting a board, and getting out in the water. It's fun trying to get up on the board and succeeding on occasion. But I've only gone surfing about five times over the past five years. I haven't done enough consistent practice to actually get good at it. Therefore I might pick up a surfboard when the opportunity arises but until I get good at it, I don't see myself jumping out of bed at 5 am in November and driving two hours to Sligo to catch the morning waves.

3. Maths

I've always been good at maths but I don't love maths. I thought that because I was good at it, I should do a maths and statistics-based course in college. While I found maths easy in college, I never grew to love it. Therefore maths doesn't make it onto my list of passions either.

4. Writing

I love writing and I'm good at writing (at least I think so). When I was in primary school I used to enjoy writing essays but I was never the best writer in my class. I was better at maths and business type subjects and that's what I pursued in secondary school and college. It was only years later that I picked up writing again. I wanted to try and express myself and I chose to do this in the form of poetry. I realised I really enjoyed it and after a lot of practice, I started to get quite good. Now writing has turned into one of my main passions.

Passion Exercise

Write down 10 things you love to do in less than 60 seconds (time yourself):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

If you struggle to come up with 10, think of things you loved doing when you were younger. Or are there things you haven't tried yet but you think you will enjoy doing?

People Pay for World-Class

If you find something that you'd do even if nobody was paying you, then that is what you must pursue. Ironically, this will likely lead to people paying you for it. Once you reach a certain level of mastery in any skill, people will start throwing money at you - even if it's just to teach them what you know.

You will rarely reach a level of mastery in something you are good at but do not love. If you do manage to pull this off however, the journey to get to mastery will involve lots of struggle and suffering and leave you feeling unfulfilled in the end. The famous example of this is the former tennis player André Agassi whose father forced him to play tennis every day from the age of 2. André hated playing tennis but he became one of the best players in the world and eventually won Wimbledon. He finally achieved the goal that he thought would make all those years of suffering worth it but as soon as he won the trophy he fell into a deep depression.

As Tony Robbins says "Success without fulfilment is the ultimate failure" so make sure you are not trying to achieve someone else's dream.

You Don't Need to Get Paid for All of Your Passions

Throughout your life you will develop many passions at different stages. It is important that you create a life for yourself that allows you to spend time on your passions.

For example, I know some very successful life coaches that work less than 10 hours per week. They make enough money in this period to spend time doing other things they enjoy such as travelling, writing, and playing golf. That is why it is important to think of how your career can complement your life so you can spend more time doing what you love with the people that are most important to you.

Try Things

‘Just do it’ - Nike

Your passions won't always find you, it's up to you to go out and find them. Finding your passions starts with curiosity. Try different things you are curious about or you think you might have an interest in. Try to stick with them until you get relatively good. Once you develop an interest you may start to love it.

Write down five things you're curious about or interested in:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

If you get good at something and you still don't like it then ditch it and try something else. Remember, passion is what you love and what you're good at.

Don't worry about failing at things when you are searching for your passions. Look at it as a process of elimination. For everything you're good at there will be something else you're fairly bad at. So don't worry about trying something and being useless. I did a lot of construction work during my travels but I wouldn't recommend hiring me to do any work on your house.

Trust Your Intuition

“At the centre of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want.” - Lao Tzu

Sometimes the more we try to grasp at something, the further away we get from catching it. Take the time to sit quietly and listen to your intuition. Often your subconscious mind will already know what you truly want, you just have to get your overthinking brain out of the way. This is why it's better to write down your passions quickly without thinking about them too much.

Let's assume for a moment that you don't know what you want to do for your future. Now imagine that you did know. What would the answer be? Take three wild guesses and remember they don't have to be right!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Your subconscious mind has been gathering information your whole life. It holds all of your experiences and deep-rooted beliefs about the world. If you can learn to access and listen to your subconscious you will see what it is you truly want to do.

The subconscious mind works best when we allow ourselves a break from thinking. This is why we often get ideas when we're asleep or when we're doing something like having a shower or taking a walk. Our mind isn't as active during these activities and the quiet space allows intuitive ideas to pop up.

You will often find clues in these quiet moments as to who you want to be and what you really want to do.

Travel

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page” - Saint Augustine

Travel is a great way to discover more about yourself and what you want to do with your life. It also helps you grow as an individual and become the person you wish to be.

Travel has the ability to throw you right out of your comfort zone by placing you in exciting new environments and unique situations. This gives you the opportunity to grow and adapt to the new environment. Testing situations also help to reveal strengths and flaws in your character. These awkward situations should not be feared or avoided. Growth is on the other side of fear. If you wish to learn about yourself in order to develop and strengthen your character, then you must seek uncomfortable situations. During my two years in Canada, I purposely worked in jobs I knew would be difficult for me. I was always quiet growing up so I worked as a bartender to push me out of my comfort zone and force me to develop more charisma.

Travel not only allows you to see different places, it allows you to see the world through different eyes. Travelling (especially solo travelling) forces you to meet new people. The people you meet will often expose you to views on the world you have never considered. By spending time with people from different cultures you will experience new ways of thinking, living, and interacting with others.

Travel will give you a more well-rounded view of the world. It will expose you to new ideas for things you could do when you return home. You may even find a calling to work abroad for a while. Travel opens you up to a world of possibilities and when you return you will be much clearer on what you want from your life as well as the type of people you want to spend your time with.

“There is no greater education than travel” - Jon Butcher

Look Out for Certain Moments

“Follow your bliss” - Joseph Campbell

In order to figure out what drives you, you also need to become more aware of how you act in certain situations and environments. There are some moments, in particular, you should pay attention to as they often hold a clue to where your passion lies. These moments include:

Crying

Whether it is tears of sadness or joy, take note of when you cry. It is usually because of something that deeply moved you. Your passions can lie in your pain as well as your joy. I recently watched Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru on Netflix and I had to stop halfway through because I kept breaking out in tears. Because helping people change their lives is what I'm passionate about, watching it happen evokes strong emotions in me.

Selflessness

Notice times when you let go of your ego and forget about yourself. This is one of four feelings we experience when we are in a state of flow. Flow is often linked with action and adventure sports but it can also be achieved when doing something you are extremely passionate about.

Timelessness

The second element of flow is timelessness. Notice moments where you lose all concept of time. Time may either move slower or faster but you are usually left wondering what just happened and how you got where you are.

Effortlessness

Notice moments when things become effortless. This is the third characteristic of flow and it often feels like creativity is flowing naturally through you.

Richness

The final characteristic of flow is when you notice your senses are heightened. Your environment, people and things seem to become brighter and more full of life.

A State of Flow

I often get into a flow state while writing. In this state I become completely oblivious to anything that is going on around me, I lose all concept of time, words flow effortlessly from my fingertips and my intuitive sense is heightened.

CHAPTER 3: FIND A REASON TO MOVE FORWARD

“Those who have a why to live can bear almost any how” - Friedrich Nietzsche

Finding Your Mission

Now that you’ve hopefully discovered some of your passions, we’re going to take a look at the next step. Finding your mission.

Doing what you love and making a living from it is great but real fulfilment comes from having a mission that you can strive towards. Your mission is the thing you were put on this earth to do and it is your job to uncover what that is.

A study which was undertaken by the Institute for The Future (ITF) in 2017 along with 20 tech, business and academic experts from around the world, estimated that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven’t even been invented yet. So even if you are lucky enough to find a job that you feel is right for you, that job will probably no longer exist in ten years time.

Instead of focusing on finding the right job, you first need to search for your mission. While your jobs and passions may change throughout the course of your life, your mission won’t. Your mission will act as the guiding light that helps you choose the type of work you can do to advance towards your ultimate goal.

In the next few chapters, we will dive deep into trying to articulate what it is you are destined to do in the world. Once you discover what this is, you can use your passions to help you get there and you will inevitably develop new passions along the way that you may have never even thought of.

A Journey to My Why

*“Those who achieve greatness are driven by either a great love or a great mission” -
Napoleon Hill*

After over two years of actively searching, I eventually discovered a clear vision of my *why*. Your why is your reason for doing everything you do. It is what gets you out of bed in the morning to pursue your dreams.

I found my why at the bottom of a mountain in New Brunswick, Canada. In August of 2019, I decided to undertake an 1800 km cycle from Montréal, Quebec to St John's, Newfoundland. I didn't even like cycling at the time and despite getting good at it, I still wouldn't put it in the passion category! But I chose to undertake the journey because I wanted to do something that pushed me past my mental, physical and emotional limits. My two years in Canada were coming to an end and I was still uncertain as to what I really wanted for my future. I saw the cycle as a chance to get away from all the distractions and noise around me. I hoped it would give me an opportunity to listen to what my heart truly wanted (my authentic voice) so that I could begin to get some real clarity on my direction for the future.

Luckily for me, I got just what I asked for and coming up on two weeks into the cycle, I reached my lowest point. After three days of cycling through New Brunswick's unforgiving mountains, I had become physically and emotionally drained. As I approached the bottom of yet another steep climb, rain began to pour and in my exhaustion, I suddenly became overwhelmed with emotion.

Every part of me wanted to quit. Tears streamed down my face and I began to question the whole journey. “Why the hell am I doing this? What am I trying to prove to myself?”.

But that's when it hit me. A wave of sadness swiftly followed by a crystal-clear vision for what I really wanted. One part of that vision was my family. I longed to be back home with my brothers and my parents.

The only other thing I could see was the woman I still loved. The woman who changed everything for me. The one who saw in me what I always wished to see in myself. The one who gave me the courage to truly live and chase my dreams. I imagined her at the top of the mountain waiting for me.

Once I could see her there, the pain became more bearable. My suffering had a purpose. If I wanted to be with her someday I knew I first needed to become the man I believed I could be. This cycle was part of that process. It was a test to see how far I'd come and how far I still needed to go. Giving up was no longer an option. A smile crossed my face and my tears subsided. I made it to the top.

Why Your Why is Important

In his book, *Start With Why*, Simon Sinek discusses the importance for individuals and companies to have one crystal-clear why statement. An individual's why statement should consist of one sentence that describes the reason behind everything they do.

Any decision you wish to make about your career should be first filtered through your why statement. Before making a decision, you should ask yourself, "Will this decision move me closer to my why?"

The Golden Circle

Simon Sinek did a famous Ted Talk in which he outlined the Golden Circle and how it worked. In his talk, he refers to how nearly all companies know *what* they do, some know *how* they do it, but very few know *why* they do it.

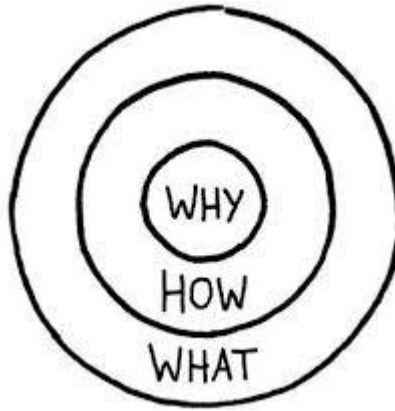
Most companies focus on building around what they are doing (i.e. the products or services they are selling). He explains the importance for companies to go back and remember the core why that is driving everything they do. The founders of a company often have a clear why for setting it up, but as the company grows in size, this deeper purpose tends to get lost among the ongoing day-to-day activities.

Simon discusses how companies who start with the "why" build greater relationships of trust with customers. Customers who can see why a company does something can relate much easier with them. He uses Apple as an example of a company with a very strong and clear why for doing what they do. For the purpose of understanding how the Golden Circle applies to individuals however, I'll use myself as an example.

Separating Life and Work

While Simon argues that we should have only one why, I have an Individual Why Statement for how I live my life and I also have a Life Mission Statement which is specific to the work I do. My work is only a

part of my life and therefore I believe it is important to separate how I approach my work versus how I spend my time outside of work. When I am enjoying myself or being with the important people in my life, my focus is different from when I am at work. I will show you how to create both of these statements in the following pages. For the purpose of this example, I will use my Life Mission Statement.



Why (The motivation for the work I do)

To use my Authenticity, Wisdom and Creativity to Inspire and Empower others so that they live lives full of Love, Joy and Fulfilment

How (The methods I use to achieve my why)

- Expressing myself honestly and leading by example
- Connecting with people on a deep level
- Continually learning and investing in my own knowledge
- Bringing people together to create enhanced learning experiences
- Being open to new ideas and finding creative solutions to problems

What (The products and services I provide to achieve my why)

- Writing books

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- Coaching
- Doing Talks and Workshops
- Developing New Models and Courses for Education
- Building and Investing in Social Enterprises

Breaking Down My Why

I chose **love**, **joy** and **fulfilment** as the three things I want to inspire and empower people to have more of in their lives because they are what have been the most important things in my life.

As you can see from the story of my cycle, **love** was what got me up that mountain. I want to give others the opportunity to experience the beauty and power of love by firstly helping them to fully love and accept themselves.

I want to empower others with the ability to bring **joy** to their lives. Joy comes from an inner state of mind, rather than as a result of external circumstances. Joy can be experienced while sitting alone in a quiet room as much as it can be experienced at a party surrounded by your closest friends. I want to give people the tools to understand and regulate their emotions so they can move away from mental suffering and bring joy to any moment of their lives.

Once people have an abundance of love and joy in their lives, I want them to find **fulfilment**. I believe we find fulfilment in how we grow and how we give. Once love and joy are present, we naturally feel more free to grow into our true, authentic selves and we experience a sincere urge to want to give back to others. The more we learn and grow, the more capable we become of giving and serving others and thus the better compensated we become for the great work we do.

In Times of Pain

“Your life is not about you” - Neale Donald Walsch

Not only does your why determine what you do and how you do it, but it also helps to keep you going when you hit the low points. Unless you choose to travel a well-trodden path, going after your dream life is not always going to be easy. There will be moments when you want to give up and you must be able to push past those moments when they arrive. To do that you need to remember and refer back to your why.

When I'm struggling to bring my ideas for education to reality, I think of all the children who might experience unnecessary mental and emotional suffering if I don't succeed.

Remembering that my mission is greater than me and my individual problems, helps me to keep working through any struggle I am experiencing.

It's important to remember that your life is not about you. Your life is about everyone else whose life you touch. The purpose of your life is to use the gifts you've been given to help others.

Falling in love with someone changed my life. For the first time it allowed me to step out of my own ego and focus on others. I forgot about myself and my own problems for a while. This made me realise how I'd been so caught up in thinking about myself all of my life. I was so worried about what others thought of me and how I could make life better or easier for myself. Ironically by switching my focus to seeing how I could help others my life became much easier. When you stop focusing so intently on yourself and look at what you can do for others, life opens up to an abundance of love, joy and fulfilment.

How to Find Your Why

“The farther back you can look the farther forward you are likely to see” - Philip McKernan

You’ll be glad to know that there is a method to finding your why. There is a whole book on it in fact. The exercise the book runs you through is based on recounting stories from your past. The stories you will be looking to extract are memories of some of the great highs and extreme lows you have experienced.

In the book *Find Your Why*, Simon Sinek and his team suggest that the Why Discovery exercise is best done in pairs. The purpose of having a partner is so they can help to dig out the main themes from your stories and spot the underlying emotions behind them that may not be obvious to you.

While I agree that it is best done in pairs, I’ve altered the method in this book so that you can do it by yourself. When I read their book for the first time I did it by myself and I’m guessing you might prefer to do the same at this point. If you have a high-level of self-awareness and you can be honest with yourself, I’m sure the solo approach will work well for you too. Otherwise, I’d suggest finding a partner to help.

Method - Individual Why Discovery

Examples

Before you start, I will outline two of my memories (one good and one bad) to help you understand the process. Keep in mind I used these along with 5 or 6 other memories in order to extract the main patterns from my stories and create my why statements.

1. Brainstorming ideas (High)

Details: One of the best feelings I had at work was during my time working in a startup. I was sitting around a table with my work colleagues and we were brainstorming ideas for the next

version of the app.

Emotions: Excitement, Satisfaction, Pride, Belonging

Themes: Generating ideas, Working as part of a team, Being listened to

Contributions: Unique ideas, Positive energy and feedback, Engaged listening

Impacts: Strong feelings of connection with others, Made others feel heard, I felt valued through my contributions

2. Bullying Someone (Low)

Details: One of the worst memories I have is when I bullied someone in my school because he was gay. I didn't have the courage to stand up for him and instead I joined in the bullying in my desperation to fit in.

Emotions: Worthlessness, Shame, Fear

Themes: Wanting to belong, Lack of confidence to be myself

Contributions: Physically and verbally hurting someone

Impacts: Made someone feel worthless, ashamed and separate from the group

Step 1: Gather Stories

Preparation

In preparation for your Why Discovery process, you will use the following page to plot out your memories.

Highs

Think back to your past and try to remember times when you felt at your happiest. Try to come up with at least three happy memories. Each time you come up with a memory, draw a dot representing the happy memory above the horizontal line. Write one or two words beside the dot that represent that memory. Rank your happy memories by placing the happiest memories higher above the line and label each dot so you know which memory it is.

Lows

Do the same for the times you felt most unhappy. Try to come up with at least three of your worst memories. Rank them by putting the unhappiest memories further below the line and label them as before.

Highs

_____ *Neutral*

Lows

Step 2: Record Details and Identify Emotions

For each good and bad memory, write down answers to all of the following questions:

- What specific event was going on when you felt this way?
- Who was there?
- What happened?
- What was said?
- What specific emotions did you experience? Write them all down
- For happy memories was it love, joy, contentment, pride, confidence, satisfaction or something else?
- For unhappy memories was it rejection, sadness, loss, worthlessness, depression, shame or something else?

Questions to help jog memories for stories

If you are struggling to come up with stories, you can fill out the template on the following pages which brings you through Step 2.

Happiest memories

- 1. What is one of your happiest memories?** (Hint: Choose the first one that comes to mind)

Where were you?

Who was there?

What were you doing?

What were you saying?

How were you feeling?

What emotions did you experience?

2. What is your happiest memory at school or at work?

What were you working on?

Who were you working with?

What were you doing?

What were you saying?

How were you feeling?

What emotions did you experience?

3. When was a time you felt good for helping someone else?

Where were you?

Who was there?

What were you doing?

What were you saying?

How were you feeling?

What emotions did you experience?

How did you make the other person feel?

Worst memories

4. What is one of your worst memories?

Where were you?

Who was there?

What were you doing?

What were you saying?

How were you feeling?

What emotions did you experience?

5. What is your worst memory at school or at work?

What were you working on?

Who were you working with?

What were you doing?

What were you saying?

How were you feeling?

What emotions did you experience?

6. When was a time you felt bad for hurting someone?

Where were you?

Who was there?

What were you doing?

What were you saying?

How were you feeling?

How did you make someone else feel?

What emotions do you feel looking back on this experience?

Step 3: Look for Themes, Emotions, Contributions and Impacts

Themes and Emotions

You want to find the common threads and themes in your stories. The recurring themes and emotions will be what your why is based on.

Examples:

Positive Emotions: Excitement, Satisfaction, Pride, Belonging, Love

Negative Emotions: Fear, Jealousy, Anger, Sadness

Themes: Generating ideas, Working as part of a team, Confidence, Friendship, Family, Nature

Contributions and Impacts

What qualities or character traits did you contribute in your story? How do you impact others through expressing those qualities?

The following are some of the personal qualities and traits I believe myself to contribute to others and the resulting impacts they make in the lives of others:

<i>Positive Contributions</i>		<i>Positive Impacts</i>
Authenticity	→	Inspired
Creativity	→	Thinking Bigger
Wisdom	→	Empowered
Empathy	→	Understood

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<i>Negative Contributions</i>		<i>Negative Impacts</i>
People Pleasing	→	Uneasy
Certainty	→	Not listened to
Judgement	→	Unworthy
Perfectionism	→	Not good enough

Now fill out your own lists from your own stories:

Themes and Emotions (choose 1 or 2 for each story)

Story 1 _____
 Story 2 _____
 Story 3 _____
 Story 4 _____
 Story 5 _____
 Story 6 _____

Contributions (choose 1 or 2 for each story)

Story 1 _____
 Story 2 _____
 Story 3 _____
 Story 4 _____
 Story 5 _____
 Story 6 _____

Impacts (choose 1 or 2 for each story)

Story 1	_____	_____
Story 2	_____	_____
Story 3	_____	_____
Story 4	_____	_____
Story 5	_____	_____
Story 6	_____	_____

Ideal world vision

Assume the world is perfect right now. What does this world look like?
What does everyone have in your ideal world? How is everyone
interacting with everyone else? What does it feel like?

Step 4: Draft an Individual Why Statement or Life Mission Statement

When it comes to drafting your statement you have two choices on how to approach it.

Option A: Create an Individual Why Statement

You can choose to create an Individual Why Statement which is what Simon Sinek talks about being the reason behind everything you do.

If so, your Individual Why Statement will read as follows:

To <*contribution*> so that <*impact*>

Examples:

“To live a life that is true to myself and to live each moment fully so that I experience love, joy and contentment.”

“To optimise every moment so that I live a joy-filled life full of adventure, laughter and no regrets.”

“To live a life full of honesty, effort and friendship so that I can prosper alongside those I care about and live without regret.”

“To use my humour and empathy to connect with others so that I bring joy and laughter to their lives”

Notice from the above examples that the sentence structure is only a guideline. You can also add important Themes and Emotions from your stories to personalise your statement. It can be as simple or complicated as you want to make it but make sure it is memorable and rings true to you.

Option B: Create a Life Mission Statement

Your other option is to create what I call a Life Mission Statement. This approach comes from the work of Jack Canfield, one of the world's leading success coaches. It is specifically catered towards *the work* you wish to do.

The general structure for this is:

To use my *<insert 2 or 3 contributions here>*
to *<insert 2 or 3 impacts here>* others
so that *<insert ideal world vision here>*

Examples:

“To use my Authenticity, Caring and Empathy
to Inspire and Uplift others
so that they live lives full of Love, Purpose and Passion”

“To use my Knowledge, Experiences and Energy
to Motivate and Excite others
so that they can Become their True Selves and Achieve their Ultimate Vision”

“To use my Passion, Wisdom and Tenacity
to Empower and Educate others
so that they can live lives full of Love, Purpose and Freedom”

“To use my Loving and Supportive nature
to Encourage others
so that they find Self-Acceptance, Peace, and the Freedom to see their True Potential”

“To use my Positivity, Openness and Authenticity
to Connect and Empower others
so that they live lives full of Love and Equality”

Step 5: Refining the Statements

Once you have your draft Individual Why Statement or Life Mission Statement you can continue to refine it until it sounds right to you. You need to love the words enough to almost want them tattooed on your arm (don't worry, I haven't got mine tattooed yet).

One good method to further refine your statement is to ask your close friends *why they are friends with you*. They will probably reply with generic qualities that most people expect in a friendship. You must insist that they tell you what specifically it is about you that made them choose to be friends with you. When they start to talk about how you make them feel, that is the answer you are looking for. This will hit you as they are describing the value you have in their life which will often be your why. You can work to incorporate the input from your friends into your statement.

Tip: *If you find it hard to do this face-to-face, try asking them in a text message. It will save you both the awkwardness and it will give your friend time to really think about it before responding.*

Alternative Option: Partner Why Discovery

Choosing a partner

It's recommended to do your why discovery process with someone who doesn't know you too well. Close friends or family members may tend to be more subjective when asking you questions due to the beliefs they hold about you already. This may lead them to think they already know what themes to expect instead of keeping an open mind while listening. Some of the stories you want to share may also include close friends or family members and you may not want to hurt their feelings by sharing those particular stories.

If you don't know someone who fits the criteria for an appropriate partner, a good option is to try and source a life coach. They will be perfectly trained to help you dig into your stories and pull out what's important.

How it works

Step 1: Choose a Time and place

The time it takes for people to complete a Partner Why Discover varies, but it is recommended you set aside two or three hours. Choose somewhere where you won't be disturbed and due to the intimacy of the conversation, it is best to do it out of public view.

Step 2: Share stories

Now it's time to begin sharing your stories with your partner. Try to focus on recounting specific memories. Try to include details, such as the feelings you experienced and the conversations you had. Out of the stories you wrote down in preparation, try to detail 5 or 6 stories in full.

Step 3: Identify themes

It is your partner's job to listen intently and objectively to your stories to try to extract the main recurring themes and patterns of behaviour. For each story, your partner should pull out the main feelings you experienced as well as any qualities you showed, contributions you made and any impacts you had.

Step 4: Draft an Individual Why Statement or Life Mission Statement

This process is the same as in the individual why discovery except you and your partner will both be creating your statement.

Once you have both settled on the important contributions, impacts and themes, you should both write independent first drafts for five minutes. Share the drafts and choose which one you like best - maybe you can combine them.

Remember the formulas are:

Individual Why Statement

To *<contribution>* so that *<impact>*

Life Mission Statement

To use my *<insert qualities or contributions here>*
to *<insert impacts here>* others
so that *<insert ideal world vision here>*

Step 5: Refining the Statement

This is the same as for the individual method

Tips For Your Partner

- Your goal is to have a draft of their statement at the end
- This is who they are at their natural best
- You must remain unbiased and fully present. This is not a therapy or mentoring session
- Engage in active listening. Hear more than just the words being said. Take note of body language, tone and pauses
- Make sure to get specific examples
- Dig deeper than the facts, get to the underlying meaning
- Look for person's contribution and impact for each story
- Avoid leading questions
- Avoid why questions (use what instead)
- Be silent and let them struggle for words. When they are struggling it is often because they are processing difficult emotions. It could often lead to an important insight

My Life and My Work

After doing my Individual Why Discovery, the main themes I found in my stories were:

- Love
- Joy
- Friendship
- Helping others
- Low Confidence

From my stories, I crafted an Individual Why Statement which now helps guide me in the way I live my life. **My Individual Why Statement is:**

To make the most of every moment so that I live a life full of love, joy and fulfilment

I also created a Life Mission Statement that helps guide me in the work I do to help others. **My Life Mission statement is:**

To use my Authenticity, Wisdom and Creativity to Inspire and Empower others so that they can live lives full of Love, Joy and Fulfilment

This statement fits into why I'm writing this book. It fits with why I choose to coach people. It's why I want to change the education system. I want to inspire and empower people. I want to show people how they can become the heroes of their own lives. To show them they can become who they want to be and that they can find love, joy, and fulfilment. If I can, anybody can. For years I suffered from extremely low confidence and I never believed myself worthy of love. I did things I knew were wrong in order to be accepted by others. It took me a long time to build my confidence, listen to my inner-voice and believe I was worthy. Now I want to show others how to do the same.

CHAPTER 4: DETERMINE THE RULES OF YOUR ROAD

“It’s not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are” - Roy Disney

When I started off on my cycle I didn’t plan much. I don’t like trying to plan things when there are too many unknowns. I had my final destination in mind and on the day I set off, I commanded Google Maps to guide me towards a town that was a reasonable 80km away.

While I believe planning isn’t needed in certain areas, one area I should’ve put more thought into before my departure was the rules of the road I was going to live by. Without rules and ethics to live by, making everyday decisions on the bike became more difficult. What constitutes a successful cycle to St Johns? Was I allowed to stop for a day or two to rest? Did I need to cycle every mile or could I walk very steep parts? Was I allowed to get a lift with a passing car if I broke down? Was there a time limit?

While I contemplated a few of these questions before departing, I never made any strict rules about them. I thought I would just figure it out on the road but this laid back attitude led to a moment of poor decision-making that still disappoints me looking back now.

A Moment of Poor Decision Making

After cycling through the mountains of New Brunswick for three days, I arrived at the house where I was staying that night, a broken man. I was physically and mentally drained. After a good feed and a good sleep, I awoke to a lovely breakfast to set me up for another day of cycling. As I ate my breakfast and sipped on my coffee I looked out the kitchen window as rain lashed down from the heavens. “I don’t fancy cycling in that” I thought to myself.

I began chatting with the other girl who was staying in the house and she told me she was driving to Miramichi after breakfast. “That’s where I plan to cycle to today!” I said excitedly. “It’s about 100 km from here right?” She nodded in agreement. “Do you want a lift?” Suddenly my mind descended into an internal battle.

Weak Cormac: “Could I get a lift with her to Miramichi?”

Strong Cormac: “No, I can’t. I better cycle all of the 1800 km. That’s what I set out to do.”

Weak Cormac: “Yeah but it’s pissing rain outside and your legs are wrecked. Plus you have that e-book revision due today and you could do with saving time by driving there”

Weak Cormac disguised as Strong Cormac: “Wait a second, this is my trip. I make the rules. It just makes sense to get a lift, especially when it’s laid in front of me like this. It must just be a sign to take it. Plus, I love meeting new people and it will be good to get to chat in the car”

The day before I reached my final destination at Cape Spear lighthouse, I calculated how many kilometres I had covered. I hoped I would have gained some extra kilometres due to the need to go off route to stay in different places along the way. Unfortunately, I hadn’t realised that by cycling along a few highways in my last week, I was cutting into my kilometres (I had calculated 1800 km using the bicycle trails). When I finally reached Cape Spear after a month on the road, I was just over

100km short of the 1800 km I said it would take to get there.

This made reaching Cape Spear somewhat of a hollow victory for me as I felt I had cheated myself. I wanted to cycle an extra 150 km the day after finishing to make up for it but by the time I reached Cape Spear, my back tire had no rubber tube left and was ready to fall off at any moment. In the end, I just had to admit that I fell 100km short. That one moment of weakness in week two came back to bite me in the end.

Why Your Rules Are Important

The rules of your road are the core values and principles you live by. You must have your values clear in your mind if you wish to live in alignment with the person you wish to become. If you don't have clearly defined values from which you can develop solid principles, moving towards your destination will be filled with lots of difficult decisions and lots of resentment for decisions made at weak moments.

Having said this, try not to be too hard on yourself when you do break your own rules. You will inevitably steer off the road every now and again. The important thing is to have your rules in place so they can keep you on track for the majority of the journey. Initially, I felt very disappointed in myself for my moment of weakness but afterward, I realised that reaching Cape Spear was still a great achievement overall.

Values vs Principles

Values are the qualities and personal characteristics that we believe are most important to us. We often develop our values at a young age by modelling people we look up to. For example, we may have taken values from our parents, siblings, teachers or friends.

Principles are the rules that govern our behaviour. They are developed based on our values in order to keep us in alignment with them. For example, if respect is one of your core values, you may develop a principle to always say thank you to the bus driver as you get off the bus.

Once you have your values and principles predetermined, making decisions becomes much easier. You simply know the best course of action to take. If I had predetermined a principle that I had to cycle all of the 1800 km in order to keep in line with my value of integrity, then I wouldn't have even entertained the option of getting a lift. I would have simply said "Thanks, but I can't".

All of the great leaders throughout history seemed to possess a unique ability to make important decisions when the pressure was on. Their power didn't always come from an increased intellect, however, it often came from their ability to process any situation through their very clear set of values and principles.

"Once I make a decision, I never think about it again." - Michael Jordan

Method - The Eulogy

This method is taken from Stephen Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. For this exercise, I would suggest you find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. I would also suggest you have a pen and piece of paper beside you.

Clear your mind of everything else. Don't worry about your current schedule, your exams, your job, your family, your friends. Just relax and open your mind to what I will suggest you do.

Imagine yourself walking into your local church. As you enter you can hear soft organ music playing and you notice flowers distributed around the seats. As you walk along the aisle you see your neighbours and work colleagues. They look sad and dejected. Then as you walk further up the aisle you see your family and close friends. Many of their eyes are filled with tears. You wish to console them but then you notice a casket in front of the altar.

You make your way towards it and take a look inside. You jump back in horror when you notice it is you who is in the coffin. This is your funeral, five years from today. Everyone in the crowd has come to pay their respects and say goodbye.

As you take your seat at the front, you look at the program in your hand and see that there are going to be four groups of speakers. One group is your immediate family and extended family - your mother, father, brothers, sisters, as well as your partner and children. The extended family includes speeches from your grandparents, nieces, nephews, uncles, aunties and cousins.

The second speaker is one of your closest friends, somebody who knows how to describe the type of person you were. The third speaker is someone you worked with. The fourth is someone from the local community.

Think about each of these speeches. What would they all have to say? How would they describe the type of person you were? What kind of husband or wife were you? What kind of father or mother were you? What kind of son, daughter or friend were you? What were you like as a working associate or community member?

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What character traits would you like them to have seen in you? What kind of life will they say you have lived? What achievements and contributions would you hope they remember? Look closely at all of the people there. How would you have liked to have made a difference in their lives?

Before moving any further, take the time to write down your impressions for each of these people. If you don't have a piece of paper handy, you can also write your answers in the book:

Mother

Father

Brothers/Sisters

Partner

Children

DISCOVER YOUR DESTINATION

Closest Friends

Work Colleague

Community member

Extended family members (grandparents, auntie, uncles, cousins etc.)

Finding Core Values

If you took the time to do the exercise properly, you will have tapped into some of your core values. These are what drive you on a deep level.

- Look at what you've written and pick out all of the values people talked about you having
- Try to get a list of around ten values that are important to you.
- From this list, choose five values that you believe to be most important for you to represent.
- Try to rank these values in order of importance if you can. This will help you when making a difficult decision in the future.
- You can also try to write two or three principles for each of these values. Remember principles are rules you make for yourself in order to keep you in line with your own values

If you're struggling to think of values you want to embody, here's a list of common values you may want to choose from but try to think of your own too:

- Authenticity
- Accomplishment
- Belief in Others
- Caring
- Commitment
- Connection
- Courage
- Creativity
- Dedication
- Effort
- Empathy
- Freedom
- Forgiveness
- Friendship
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Hope

- Humour
- Integrity
- Joy
- Kindness
- Love
- Nature
- Open-mindedness
- Optimism
- Patience
- Playfulness
- Respect
- Spirituality
- Unity

My Values and Principles

If you're struggling to come up with principles for your values, here's my list of values and corresponding principles:

Authenticity:

- Always being who I really am
- Always being honest with others (honesty)
- Always sticking to my word and doing what I say (integrity)
- Always staying true to my mission and goals

Creativity:

- Constantly coming up with new ideas
- Using my imagination to solve problems
- Expressing myself freely and openly
- Collaborating with others in my work

Love:

- Always having love for myself

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- Taking time for my important relationships
- Focusing on what I can contribute to others instead of only myself

Wisdom:

- Continuously learning
- Always keeping an open mind
- Using and trusting my inner guidance

Joy:

- Making time for fun, play and laughter
- Spending enough time with my friends
- Always doing things I enjoy

Core Values and Principles In Practice

To show you how core values and principles come into play in everyday situations, I'll detail an example for you.

Two of my other values are *Friendship* and *Dedication*. While I am dedicated to looking after my health, I have no problem ditching the gym to go partying with my friends. This is because *Friendship* ranks higher on my list of values than *Dedication*.

I don't necessarily write down all of my principles. Skipping the gym to meet my good mates is just something I know I've no problem doing. While I believe it's important to write down your core values and have them clear in your mind, a lot of your principles will develop over time and through experience. My principles are always being tweaked and changed based on the feedback I receive as I journey through life.

CHAPTER 5: WRITE DOWN YOUR DESTINATION

“A goal is a dream with a deadline” - Napoleon Hill

Let's talk about goals. Another area of my life I've had plenty of struggles with. In the past, I had a tendency to set extremely audacious goals to be achieved within very short timelines. This often led to a lot of stress and beating myself up for not achieving them. As soon as I set my big goal, other things in life always seemed to get in the way. When setting my goals, I often didn't factor in the other areas of my life that I'd still have to contend with on a daily basis. Things such as work and sport, as well as family and social commitments didn't seem to care about whether I had set a new goal or not.

I think that's what turns a lot of people off goal-setting. They see aiming for something hard to achieve as an unnecessary form of hardship and stress.

Let me be clear: You don't *need* goals. You don't need to achieve or do anything in this life. All you have to do is be who you are and that's it.

But, if you *want* more from your life than what you currently have and you *want* to get clear on what exactly that is, then it is a good idea to set some goals to guide you.

There are plenty of Buddhist monks living happy lives without any goals because they do not want for anything. They are simply guided by God or the present moment as to what to do. Maybe you will reach the point someday where you want for nothing or where you're being completely guided by the universe but I'm guessing if you're reading this you're probably not at that stage just yet.

So let's take a look at how to set goals the enjoyable way!

Look Beyond the Short Term

When I used to set goals, I often tied my sense of self-worth to whether or not I achieved the goal in question. Most of the time, I failed to achieve my goals and it made me start to question if I wasn't good enough or if I just didn't want it enough.

In reality, I failed because I didn't have a strong enough *why* behind my goals. I didn't have a compelling enough reason to push me to achieve my goals. What I was missing was a longer-term vision to give my short-term goals meaning. Once I had a greater overall vision in place, I would be able to see how the short-term goals were necessary steps to getting there.

I came to this realisation after stumbling on an alternative goal-setting method created by Mindvalley Co-Founder, Vishen Lakhiani. It got me to move away from focusing on low-level goals with tight deadlines that acted only as a means to an end. Instead, I began looking towards higher-level, long-term goals with a greater end result in mind.

Think Bigger

The technique Vishen created is called *The Three Most Important Questions*. The difference with this technique compared with many other techniques is that it focuses on end goals rather than means goals.

Traditional goal setting would probably have you set means goals such as:

- Graduate from college
- Land a job in a big company
- Earn a €100,000 salary

Means Goals vs End Goals

A means goal is something that is a means to an end. Graduating from college is a means to a greater end. To discover whether a goal is a means goal or an end goal, you must keep asking yourself the purpose behind each goal.

I'll use a character named John as an example. Let's presume John is a student in his fourth year of college and he came to me to help him set goals for his future.

Me: Well, John. Tell me one of your goals

John: To graduate from college with a first-class degree

Me: Why?

John: What do you mean "why"?

Me: For what reason do you want to graduate from college with a first-class degree?

John: So that I can get a good job in a big company.

Me: Why?

John: So that I can get good experience for my career.

Me: Why?

John: So that I can get promoted after a few years and start to earn more money.

Me: Why?

John: So that I can keep working to save more money and buy a house someday.

Me: Why?

John: So that I can have a home for my wife and kids someday.

Me: Why?

John: What the hell is wrong with you? So we can live in a nice, loving home and have a happy life together I suppose.

Me: (Smiling) Well then, that's your end goal!

Method - The Three Most Important Questions

Now that you know the difference between means and end goals, I'll invite you to do the following exercise.

Take an A4 sheet of paper and draw two vertical lines down the page in order to split it into three separate columns. At the top of the first column, put the heading *Experiences*. At the top of the second column put the word *Growth*. At the top of the third column put the word *Contributions*.

Once you have your three columns it is time to start writing down your goals for each area for the next ten years. Again we have made some space for you in the book to do this also.

Experiences (To Do)

Take out a timer and spend two minutes writing down all of the experiences you wish to have in the next ten years.

- What memories would you like to have with people?
- What places would you love to visit?
- What adventures would you like to have?
- What feelings would you like to experience?

My examples: Travel to over 80 countries, do a road-trip across America with my best mates, live in the jungle, live in a house by the beach, have an amazing loving relationship with my partner, wake up grateful for my life every morning

Don't worry, there is no limit on the number of things you can write down and you can always come back to this later and add more if you wish.

The purpose of doing it within a two-minute window is to help you shut off the rational part of your brain that will start to overthink each goal. Allow yourself to write freely about what you really want and remember that no goal is out of reach.

Growth (To Be)

In the second column, you will repeat the two-minute exercise but this time you will be including all the ways in which you would like to grow in the next ten years.

- What new character traits would you like to embody?
- What hobbies, sports or languages would you like to learn?
- What new skills would you like to have?

My examples: Speak fluent Irish, speak fluent Spanish, become a blackbelt in jiu jitsu, become fully confident in myself, become a world-class writer and coach, be always continuing to learn

Again write freely and honestly for two minutes and then stop.

Contribution (To Give)

In the final column, you will include all the ways in which you want to give back to others.

- What problems do you see in the world that you'd like to help solve?
- What contribution would you like to make to your family and community?
- What way would you like to treat strangers you meet?
- What ways would you like to help others?

DISCOVER YOUR DESTINATION

My examples: Help my brothers when they need me, treat strangers I meet with respect, buy my parents a holiday home, inspire millions of young people to pursue their dreams, build schools in Africa and Asia, help the homeless in simple ways

Write down what comes to your mind for two minutes. Remember you can always add to these later.

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

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DISCOVER YOUR DESTINATION

Experiences (To Do)	Growth (To Be)	Contribution (To Give)

The Fourth Most Important Question

Look at your three goal lists. In order for you to have all of those experiences, create all of that growth and make all of the contributions you wish to make, what type of *Career* and *Income* would you want to have? This time, take 3 minutes to write it all down.

Contributions

1. The different types of work I want to do to have all of the impact I wish to make with my Contributions

2. How much money I want to have each year to help all of the causes in my Contributions

Growth

1. The different types of work I want to do to achieve all of my Growth goals

2. The amount of money I want to be able to invest in my own Growth every year

Experiences

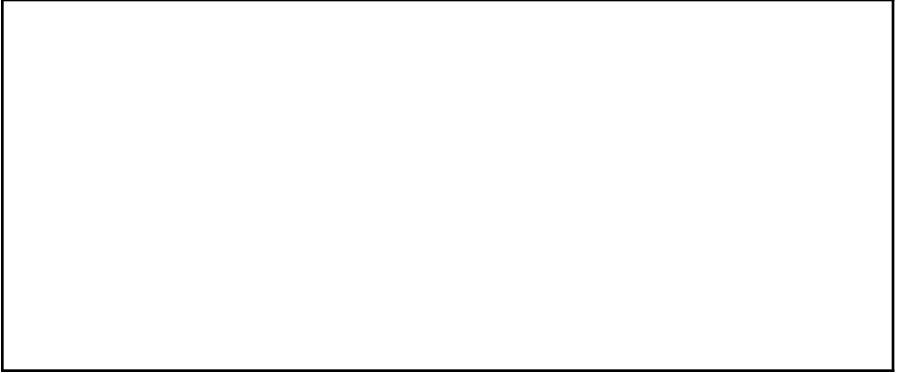
1. The amount of money I want to have each year to enjoy all the Experiences I want to have

2. The number of hours per week I want to work in order to have enough free time to undertake all of these amazing Experiences

3. The number of weeks or months I want to have off each year to enjoy all of these experiences

Other questions

- What else do you want from your *Career* and *Income*?
- What do you want your working environment to look like?
- Where do you want to work from?
- What types of people do you want to work with?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their answers to the questions listed above.

CHAPTER 6: LET THE RAS BEGIN

“Make a Choice. Just decide what it’s gonna be, who you’re gonna be, how you’re gonna do it. Just decide. And from that point, the universe will get out of your way”
- Will Smith

The Reticular Activating System

The reason the action of writing down your goals is so effective is that it engages the Reticular Activating System (RAS). The RAS is the part of your brain that is responsible for deciding what inputs from your environment it should focus on. We are constantly being bombarded with millions of bytes of information every second yet our brains can only process less than 1% of this information. The job of the RAS is to filter out all of the unimportant information so that our brains can take in what opportunities will most likely move us towards our goals.

By writing down your goals and reviewing them regularly, you are literally telling your RAS what destination you wish to go. The RAS acts like Google Maps. All it needs from you is the final destination and it will work in the background to figure out the best route. Even if you take the wrong route initially it will recalculate to get you back on track.

For example, years ago I used the three questions technique and one of my *Experience* goals was to write a book. I set that goal a few years before I even found writing enjoyable. Looking back now, it seems I wrote that goal as writing was a passion that lay deep inside me. And now here I am, writing a book!

I’m not saying the RAS will bring you exactly where you want to go. It’s Google Maps, not a self-driving car. It will guide you if you keep your goals close in mind and trust your instincts. You still have to be in the driver’s seat and try to avoid any potholes when they appear. And if Google Maps (your instinct) is trying to send you on a new route, trust it. The route you take to get there is irrelevant, it’s the destination that is important.

Make a Decision

Ok so if you're still reading this, I hope you've already decided that you do want it all. I hope you've realised you can find a career you're passionate about, make money doing it and have plenty of time to enjoy your life outside of work too.

You can set up your dream business helping millions of people, have amazing relationships with your friends and family and still take 3 months off every year to travel the world. Why not?

Remember you create your own map. Don't listen to other people's limiting views on what's possible. Many people believe sacrifice is necessary. They assume that if you want a successful career your relationships will inevitably suffer or that if you start a family you can no longer travel the world. Don't buy into these bullshit stories - it's ok if they believe it's not possible for them but that doesn't mean it's not possible for you.

Making the decision that you want it all is the first and hardest step to take. But you can only move forward once you make the decision. The Latin meaning of the word decision is "to cut off". By deciding you want it all you must cut off all possibilities of settling for a life you aren't completely happy with.

When I quit my job in IT I decided that I was going to pursue my dream life no matter how long it took me to get there. I decided I was going to have an amazing life and do great work that helped others. I decided I'm going to enjoy my life as much as possible, connecting deeply with the people around me, travelling the world, building my dream business, expressing myself freely and openly through writing and music and living fully in the present moment as much as possible.

Moonshots

Naveen Jain is currently the CEO of three companies - Viome, MoonExpress and Intelius and he has founded many more. Naveen works to set up companies in some of the most difficult and groundbreaking industries. With his company Viome, he is revolutionising healthcare and his company MoonExpress is competing with SpaceX and Virgin Galactic to provide affordable, commercial flights to the moon.

In his book, *Moonshots*, Naveen talks about how it is almost easier to achieve big, audacious goals (moonshots as he calls them) than it is to create a small business for yourself. By tackling huge problems such as global healthcare and space travel, Naveen finds it easier to draw people to help him with his audacious missions. When he decided to set up his companies, he knew nothing about healthcare or space travel but he thought it could be improved so he decided to give it a shot. Inspired by the boldness of his mission, people with the greatest knowledge in those areas wanted to work for him. Then people with extraordinary amounts of money wanted to invest in the business.

So if you intend on chasing your dream career, make it easier for yourself and think big. And if your dreams happen to benefit the lives of others, I'm sure plenty of people will be willing to join your cause.

Even if you never fully accomplish your moonshot it doesn't matter. By aiming that high you will probably achieve a lot more than most people ever do in their lives.

My mission is to transform education for young people. We initially plan to do this in Ireland and then we can look to help other countries do the same. By setting such a bold vision we have attracted help from numerous people who wouldn't have got involved had we been setting up a business just for ourselves.

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss you'll land among the stars" - Les Brown

No Thanks, I'm Happy Here On Earth

I'm aware that shooting for the moon isn't for everyone. Many of us just want to enjoy our lives while doing work we have a passion for. We don't all want to try and build spaceships and lead a team of astronauts on a mission into the unknown.

But that's the good part. For every person shooting for the moon there is a team joining them on the mission. So if you don't want to go out and be the ground-breaker, try to join the team of someone else who is pursuing a dream very similar to yours.

This can work well for you in the long term if the dreams of the person or company you are working for are aligned with yours at the core. Before joining another company or mission, however, make sure you are clear on their why and make sure it resonates with yours.

With our team at Wolf Academy, many of us had the same dream to transform education so young people lead happier and healthier lives and get to know who they truly are. We realised by coming together to help each other we could pool all of our strengths into one company instead of us all struggling to build our own individual businesses. This way we could make a much greater impact and also enjoy our work more as we get to focus on what we do best.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." --Helen Keller

You Don't Need to See the Whole Path

One of the big reasons holding people back from pursuing the work they love is that they cannot see the whole path. They don't know how all of the dots will connect to get them to where they want to go. But that's the beauty about discovering your destination. You don't need to see the whole path. Just like climbing a mountain, you often won't see the whole way to the top. You may only see a few hundred yards in front of you and in some cases where there's dense fog you may only be able to see the next step. But taking just one step is all you need to make it there. Even if you take some steps in the wrong direction you will probably get some form of feedback that you are drifting off the path and that allows you to re-adjust.

During my cycle I didn't know where I'd be sleeping each night. I also ran out of money at one point and wasn't even sure where I was going to get food the next day. For the first while I stressed about whether I'd find a spot to put up my tent in a town without being disturbed. I realised how this was affecting my ability to enjoy the trip as there was always another unknown waiting around the corner. I realised all I could do was focus on my next step - trying to figure out how I was going to find a place to sleep and food to eat for the next 3 weeks was inconceivable. I had to develop some important traits to be able to enjoy living like this. Those traits were *patience*, *gratitude* and *trust*.

Patience

I developed patience that I would eventually reach my destination if I just focused on getting by one moment at a time. When I woke up in the morning I focused on taking down my tent and patiently tying all of my gear on the back of the bike. It often took me over an hour to get all my belongings packed up and tied onto the bike properly. Then I focused on the next stop I'd cycle to and get a cup of coffee. I didn't allow my mind to start thinking about where I'd end up that night - all I focused on was reaching that next coffee shop and trying my best to enjoy the journey to get there.

Gratitude

The second important trait that I developed was gratitude. Now that I had accepted the journey was going to take a while, I decided I was going to enjoy as much of the small things as I could on my way. It's amazing how good a cup of coffee can taste when you wake up on a park bench at 5am in wet clothes and cycle 50 kilometres to reach a coffee shop. And don't even ask me how good it felt to have a hot shower on the handful of occasions I was lucky enough to get one! Being grateful for all the small achievements and little pleasures I had on my journey made it much more enjoyable and it gave me motivation to move towards the next little thing - even if it was as simple as rewarding myself with a short rest and a drink from my water bottle.

Trust

The most important quality (and probably the most difficult one for me to adopt) was trust. As someone who always loved to control the outcome of things and mentally plan ahead, I realised I had to let go of this urge. As I mentioned, trying to imagine where I'd be sleeping or where my food was coming from caused me nothing but stress. I eventually realised I had to surrender and trust that someone - whether it was God or the Universe or just random strangers - would look after me.

Once I let go of the need to always know the future it gave me a chance to really enjoy the present again. And needless to say I was looked after by so many strangers on my journey. Through websites like Couchsurfing and HelpExchange (as well as bumping into people on the side of the road), I was often taken into people's homes, given great food, a lovely warm shower and a cosy bed to sleep in.

"You don't have to see the whole path. Stay focused on your vision, and take the next steps" - Jesse Lyn Stoner

CHAPTER 7: ENJOY THE RIDE!

“You don’t go to a symphony to hear the last note” – Alan Watts

Why It’s Important

If you want to get somewhere, you obviously need to know your destination. Once you set off in the right direction, you will see your life as a journey towards that endpoint. The problem a lot of us have with setting goals and far away destinations is that we cannot get immediate pleasure from them. Your vision may be so far away that you may never actually achieve your ultimate goal. Because of this, it is important that we are enjoying the journey to get there. Again this sounds a bit cliché but if you know how to do it properly, it can make a big difference to your experience of life.

Halfway through my cycle, all I wanted to do was finish. I thought once I finish, I’ll be fulfilled and I’ll feel great. And yes, as I cycled uphill around the last bend and watched Cape Spear lighthouse come into view, I felt a wave of pride that I hadn’t known in years. I was euphoric for the evening and I celebrated with a big dinner and a nice glass of whiskey (courtesy of my wonderful HelpExchange hosts). But the next morning, my mind suddenly shifted towards the next task. Where would I go from here?

When moving towards your big goals and dreams, there is a tendency to put all your happiness in the future achievement of the goal or dream. It is important to realise that the purpose of the dream is not to actually reach the final destination. In fact, as soon as you begin to get close to reaching your destination, you should set another greater destination to strive towards. The point of the destination is to get you moving in the right direction towards what you want in life. There is no endpoint that you must get to. The entire reason for the journey is to enjoy who you become in the process. Setting a destination almost out of sight will help you to reach your true potential as a person, enjoy amazing experiences with the people you love and do great things along

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the way.

Tell People About Your Dream

Start telling people about your dreams for your career and your life. When you say it out loud it makes it more real and the chance that you actually achieve it becomes greater. Obviously, plenty of people will tell you you've lost it but if you can manage to push past caring what others think then you're already halfway there.

"If people aren't calling you crazy, you aren't thinking big enough." - Richard Branson

The other benefit of telling people about your dream is that they may refer you to resources or other opportunities that might help you or they may even join you on the journey. Instead of just your RAS working on it, others will be more tuned into it too. I often get messages from friends about books they think I should read or people I should meet.

Telling people about my dream to change education has also helped me attract allies to join me on my mission. These people didn't care that we had no money to pay them at the beginning because they could see the future potential we had in our mission and they felt compelled to be part of it.

You Don't Need to Quit Everything

We all love to fantasise about dropping everything we're doing, jumping off the boat and swimming to the island to where our dream career lies. But that's not often the best option for everyone (unless you're already a really good swimmer).

You don't need to jump out of the boat straight away. Instead, you can stay in the boat for now and start paddling each day to redirect your course. I tell my story as if I jumped from IT to writing but it was a much more gradual process of steadily drifting towards writing.

Yes, I quit my IT job but I took other jobs to make money while I was still honing my writing skills. I took jobs that would give me the time and money I needed to put my energy into writing. Eventually, I became good enough to know how to swim by myself and when I finally jumped I was only a few feet from the shore.

It Gets Easier As You Go

“Every day it gets a little easier... But you gotta do it every day — that's the hard part. But it does get easier.” - BoJack Horseman

Once you become really passionate about something it will not feel like a struggle anymore. When you get good enough at it and you love it enough, you will no longer need to push yourself to do it. There will be a point where your passion starts to pull you along. Some people say passion is that thing you can't not do. For example, if someone told me I couldn't write anymore, I think I'd go crazy.

You'll also know you are pursuing the right mission when you look forward to getting out of bed in the morning to go and get some work done to move you a step closer to that dream.

I no longer need to motivate myself to get things done. I have a deeper drive that continues pushing me on a daily basis. My main problem now is not about finding motivation to work but rather making sure I take time to relax and be with the important people in my life.

Create a Portfolio of Work Instead of One Painting

The most extraordinary people in the world don't have a career, they have a mission.
- Vishen Lakhiani

Don't get stuck with the belief that there is only one thing you are destined to do with your life. Discovering new passions at different periods of your life will lead you to do many different things. Once you have your destination clear, you can decide to try all of the weird and wonderful roads to get you there.

On my own journey of discovery I've tried many different jobs. Even if I didn't enjoy doing it, I learned something about myself from every job I tried.

Here's a look at some of the jobs I've had over the past few years:

- IT Consulting
- Travel writing
- Freelance web design
- Ebook Ghostwriting
- Beekeeping
- Farm work
- Painting (houses not artistically)
- Bartending
- Foodrunning
- Bouncing
- Waiting tables
- Gardening
- Construction
- Demolition
- Plumbing
- Furniture moving

I've also discovered many passions throughout my travels that I am happy to do whether or not I'm paid for them. They include things like writing poetry, singing, doing yoga and blogging to name a few.

Your Dreams May Change Over Time

Don't worry about choosing a dream now and needing to stick to it forever. If you lose interest in something or fall out of love with a particular passion, that's ok. We are constantly growing and evolving as humans and what you value now won't necessarily be the same as what you value in ten years' time. So chase what you desire now and if that changes down the line don't be afraid to change your direction too.

I thought that because I had a passion for writing and a passion for travelling that becoming a travel writer would be my dream job. I eventually got a travel writing gig and while I enjoyed it initially it started to get in the way of my enjoyment of travelling. When I travel I like to connect with the local people as much as possible. A lot of travel writing gigs only want you to write about the popular tourist sites that others can visit as opposed to hearing about your local encounters.

Another reason I didn't enjoy travel writing was that it took me out of the moment. I had to be conscious of always trying to get the right picture to go with the story, instead of just enjoying seeing things with my own two eyes. I also had to leave my friends and go and write in a café by myself on many occasions. This caused me to miss out on some amazing experiences too.

Your heart knows what you really want. Learn to listen to it and have the courage to follow it. Deep down I secretly knew travel writing wasn't the work I was meant to do but again I made the mistake of listening to my head too much.

Remember to come back to revisit and add to your long-term goals or adjust them when you feel you need to. As I said in the beginning, this is an art, not a science. Trust your gut and don't look back!

There Will Be Plenty of Time to Look Back

"I'll look back on my deathbed and smile, because it was life and I decided to live it"

- Anonymous

Looking back on the cycle, I remember the best moments as well as the bleakest moments. The best moments are the ones I feel most grateful for and the bleak moments are the ones I feel most proud of overcoming.

When you look back on your life, you won't remember all the mundane and mediocre moments. You'll remember the euphoria of your highs and the character you built in the pain of your lows. Chasing your dreams will likely be full of highs and lows. Settling for an average career will be a much more stable and smooth ride. Would I look back on my cycle with as much joy and pride if I didn't experience the rush of speeding down mountains and the pain of climbing up them? Would it have been even worth remembering if the terrain was all flat and smooth?

Choose a Life Without Regret

“IN THE END... We only regret the chances we didn't take, the relationships we were afraid to have, and the decisions we waited too long to make.” - Lewis Carroll

Many people believe their biggest and most audacious dreams are out of reach. The older they get, the more ‘realistic’ they become. They look around and realise no one else they know has achieved any of their great dreams either. They convince themselves that they are happy to settle with what they have too. Who are they to ask for more from life?

As the routine of work helps life speed by, their dreams slowly start to wither and die inside them. Maybe at the end, they'll look back and wonder where all the time went. They'll wonder what happened to those great dreams they had when they were young. They'll wonder what the hell they were so afraid of.

I'm going to end with this uplifting fact about death.

A study done on the most common regrets of the dying showed the number one regret to be:

“I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.”

I think about death almost every morning when I wake up. Many people may think this is depressing but I see it as freeing. Most people try to ignore the fact they will die and they go about their days as if they will live forever. Realising you will die someday gives you the courage to truly live today. You no longer need to worry about other people's expectations for you. You simply have to go out and discover what truly living looks and feels like to you.

CONCLUSION

To sum up:

- Everything on your list of **goals** is your destination
- Your **why** is the reason you embark on the journey
- Your **values** and **principles** are the rules of your road
- Your **passions** are your fuel
- **You** are the driver.

Once you are clear on all of these, you can begin to work on building a better car to get you there faster...

That will be what I cover in my next book, *Craft Your Character*.

P.S. Don't cheap out and build a bicycle

CONCLUSION 2

*“When writing the story of your own life, don’t let somebody else hold the pen.” -
Harley Davidson*

After coming this far, I think you should be able to come up with your own conclusion. So why don’t you write one yourself?

To help you get started, I’ll just ask one question.

“What are you going to do now?”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank *you* first of all for buying this book and taking the time to read it. I hope it gave you some form of clarity on your future. If it didn't, I'd be more than happy to hear your feedback on how you think the book could be improved. You can send your feedback to cormac@wolfacademy.ie and if you struggled with finding your life's mission statement, you can try out my free Uncover Your Life Purpose Course on Wolf Academy (check out wolfacademy.ie). You can also print off your 10 Year Life Vision document which you'll find in the course.

I'd like to thank all my friends who have helped me stay on track with my writing, especially at the moments I questioned myself and what I was doing. And a very special thanks to my team of editors who took the time to read over my messy first draft to bring the book to where it is now. I'm not going to name them but you know who you are.

I'd also like to thank everyone who has followed my blog for the last number of years. Your comments help keep me going too.

Until next time, go n-éirí an bóthar leat!

REFERENCES

[1] I always hated referencing stuff in college so I'm not going to force myself to do it here - if there are any facts in the book you're not sure about, just Google them. And if you find something that happens to be wrong, please send me a strongly-worded email to let me know about it :)