

CHAPTER 1

Visualizing Your Dreams

Tell everyone what you want to do and someone will want to help you do it.

— W. Clement Stone²

People who are successful in all areas of life—in their faith, family, business, sports—share a common trait: the ability to look into the future and visualize exactly what they want to accomplish. Here’s what St. Augustine said about visualization:

“Faith is believing what you do not see.
The reward of faith is to see what we believe.”³

Why is vision so important? Being able to visualize what it is that you want to do or accomplish paints a mental picture in your mind. Ever heard of the phrase, “Seeing is believing”? I’m sure you have. When we can “see” something, even in our minds, we’re much more likely to make it happen. Another way to think of this is by what author Alex Morrison once said:

“You must clearly see a thing in
your mind before you can do it.”⁴

Let me tell you one way how visualization has changed my life: I grew up the fourth of five kids in Owosso, Michigan, 90 miles northwest of Detroit. My father was a teacher; my mother a nurse. I was blessed with a loving childhood. I also was encouraged to pursue any worthy goal that I wanted.

Well, at an early age I decided I wanted to play professional football! I can remember as a young child watching the Pittsburgh Steelers win multiple Super Bowls. I used to put my number-32 Franco Harris jersey on my black lab, Bear, and then practice my tackling techniques—although mostly what I did was chase Bear around our backyard in the snow!

I was always small for my age but that didn't stop me. I quickly began to live by former Alabama football coach Bear Bryant's words (which I still believe to this day):

“It's not the size of the dog in the fight
but the size of the fight in the dog.”⁵

I went out for the football team in the fourth grade and was very lucky to receive some great coaching all the way through high school. Even though most of the time our high school had very average teams, my senior year I led the team in tackles, interceptions, and fumble recoveries; was named Most Valuable Player; and also was selected as first-team all-league linebacker.

Looking back on this time, I must say that this was no honorable feat since my senior year we sucked and finished 0–9. To make matters worse, on Halloween night in 1986, both our team and the opposing team had the same dismal record: winless at 0–8. Well, not only did we lose this game (named the “toilet bowl” by our few loyal fans), we lost in double overtime. Talk about a humbling experience. I learned that night that life is not fair and it never has been. I am sure that you can think of times in your life when you worked really hard for something and still fell short of your goal. The point is that we need to learn from our disappointments and move on by developing a “next” philosophy. In sales, I refer to it as, “Some will, some won't, so what, next.”

My high school football earned me financial assistance to Albion College, a small Division III school in Southern Michigan, between Detroit and Chicago. It wasn't the University of Michigan or Notre Dame, but I was convinced that I could continue to

develop my football abilities and eventually make it to the pros. I could see it in my mind, so I knew that it could happen. But something happened during my freshman year at Albion, something that would change the course of my life forever.

Before training camp, I was so eager to make a good impression on the coaches that I over-trained. Several of my rib heads would “slip out,” that is, become dislocated from my spine. A trainer would easily pop them back in, so I continued to practice with the team for almost ten days. But things got worse as training camp progressed. We were practicing four times a day. At times I thought I couldn’t breathe, the pain was so bad. Also, I couldn’t raise my arms above my head. But I kept on, because football was my life.

And then, just like that, my football career was over. I finally listened to the team doctors who said that no amount of rehabilitation could prevent the injury from recurring. At first I was devastated. My dream since the fourth grade was gone, dissolved in an injury that couldn’t be stopped from happening again and again.

Fortunately, I was taking a philosophy class. One of the assigned books in particular fascinated me: *Man’s Search for Himself*, by Rollo May. The plot of this book, in a nutshell, is very similar to the William Wallace quote in this introduction: “We are all born free.” However, if we don’t act upon this freedom by cutting the psychological umbilical cord to our parents early in life, we will only go so far. To think of this another way, we’ll be tied like a dog on a chain in the front yard, only being able to go as far as the length of the chain allows us.

Once I understood this concept, I knew that my career-ending football injury wasn’t an ending at all—it was a beginning. I was free to go anywhere, to create a new vision for my life, to do new things. With the help of Rollo May, I learned that there were bigger things in life for me than the game of football.

My back injury gave me a chance to start over again; to pursue a new set of goals. Two of those goals were to become an inspirational speaker and published author while pursuing a

career in the field of personal growth and development to help others succeed.

EXERCISE

Can you think of a time in your life that seemed to be an “ending”? What were your thoughts, feelings, and emotions at that time?

Did this “ending” lead to a new beginning? What happened?

Of the current challenges you face, are any of them disguised as an opportunity?

A NEW BEGINNING

I knew that I had only decided on Albion College because of my dream to one day play professional football. Now that my college football career had ended, staying at Albion didn't make sense. I hadn't yet had time to think much about my future and what I wanted to do, but I knew that I loved the mountains and I wanted to explore the western part of the United States. So I sent an application to the University of Montana and was accepted.

On January 1, 1988, as an 18-year-old college freshman who didn't know a soul west of the Mississippi River, I jumped on a Greyhound bus with a \$69 ticket to Montana. I didn't know exactly where I was going with my life, but I was confident that I was moving in the right direction.

And do you know what? Transferring to the University of Montana was the best thing that ever happened to me. I not only graduated with a degree in political science, but, more importantly, I met a wonderful woman named Cheryl Monaghan—who later, I'm lucky to say, became my wife!

We now have two boys, Samuel and Jacob, and established careers: Cheryl as a prosecuting attorney for King County in Seattle, and myself with my speaking, coaching, writing pursuits, and a life dedicated to helping others succeed.

Let me say this: regardless of how exciting it would have been to play professional football and maybe even win a Super Bowl ring, it could *never* equal the love I have for my family. My experience also has led me to be a firm believer that people must never set their sights on only one goal. It's too limiting. Instead, each of us should create a destiny that we're moving toward, a series of people and places as well as milestones that we want to accomplish in our lives.

Since I can't play in the NFL, I have a new goal: to own my own NFL franchise by age 50. How is that for visualizing a dream? I will have to raise close to \$2 billion to achieve this

vision, but I have roughly ten years to do so. I will be awarded an NFL expansion team. My team will be called the Hawaii Tiger Sharks and will play its home games in Honolulu starting by the fall of 2018. If I can't get a fan base in Hawaii, then my other plan is to purchase the Seattle Seahawks or start an expansion NFL team in Los Angeles. If you are interested in being a part of this NFL franchise and ownership group, I am currently accepting investment capital at the address listed on my web site. Depending on your thought process, you are either roaring with laughter, or buying into my vision. Either way, these are the kinds of visions that you must develop in your life. Your visions are invisible and possibly unrealistic to others, but they must become visible in your mind and heart so that you can transform the impossible into the probable.

I also have a goal to sell one million copies of this book. I don't know exactly *how* I am going to accomplish these goals, but I will write about the *how* later in this chapter.

After reading these last few paragraphs, you may be thinking that I have an ego the size of Texas. I can assure you that this is not the case. I believe there is a big difference between having a big ego and being self-confident! My parents raised me to believe that I can accomplish anything in life, *if* I work hard enough at it. My attitude of eternal optimism can be blamed on them. As a result of being raised this way, I do not believe I have a large ego, but I may have the highest level of self-confidence of anyone you have ever known! There is a big difference between these two character traits.

If *you* further developed your level of self-confidence and stretched your mind to believe in the power of your visions, what could you achieve in life? Your vision may not include becoming a best-selling author or owning an NFL team, but your vision is uniquely important to you and that is why you are such a special person. Focus on your uniqueness instead of allowing societal pressures to have you conform to becoming like everyone else. To set yourself free, you must develop faith in yourself and believe in your visions like never before.

The point about my new beginning is that if I did not have the ability to dream big and envision what my future could be, then I never would have had the courage to board that bus to Montana. Because I was able to see the invisible, I achieved the impossible—a wonderful family, a successful career, and an exciting future.

I challenge you to develop your own visualization skills and see your biggest dreams in your mind's eye. Later in this chapter, I will show you how to turn your dreams into a reality—but before you can do this, you must understand that visualization is the first step. When thinking of our futures, we need to learn to walk by faith, not by sight. Most people think vision is something that you exclusively do with your eyeballs. I believe that vision is also something you do with your heart.

EXERCISE

If you knew that you could not fail, what would your future look like? Dream big and fill in your visions below:

A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

One way I've found to help visualize my ultimate destiny is to create a personal mission statement. What is a personal mission statement? In the 1990s it became fashionable for companies to apply for and receive ISO (International Organization for Standardization) certification. This is a process that a company would go through to document everything it did, with the idea being that organizations with sound processes and quality products and services could be identified. Part of the ISO process is for a company to create a mission statement: what do we as a company want to do, and what do we as a company stand for?

I suggest you create something similar. What it is that you want to do here on earth during your lifetime? What do you want to focus your efforts on? Be remembered for? Work toward?

On the following page is my personal mission statement written in July 1997. I've since modified it slightly. It will give you a sense of what your mission statement could look like. I have also included the mission statement for my business, the Snow Group, on page 12.

As you can see, a personal mission statement is really about who you are and what you believe in. To help you get started thinking about your own personal mission statement, think of these things:

- What do you want to be remembered for in life?
- What do you want your grandchildren to say, think, or believe about you?
- What do you believe in?
- Why do you work?
- What is your higher calling in life?
- What changes do you need to make?

- What are your visions?
- What are your dreams?
- What is your destiny?

MY PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

I dedicate myself from this day on to improve the world as much as possible by being:

- A strong individual who is a man of God.
- A loving, faithful, and supportive husband to my wife.
- A positive role model, strong influence, and best friend to my children—by teaching them values, discipline, respect, self-esteem, confidence, and love; as well as giving them the freedom to explore the world.
- A grown child who will make my parents proud, and someday reward them for their love and for helping to teach me how to become successful.
- A positive influence to those who aspire to grow on a personal and career basis—through my motivational speaking, coaching, web site, tapes, books, and other written materials.
- A positive influence to young people who are beginning to make decisions about their own futures.
- A successful business owner.
- A philanthropist actively seeking to help those in need.
- A happy, positive person with a good sense of humor.
- A caring and forgiving human being.

MY BUSINESS MISSION STATEMENT

The Snow Group

My vision as a business-ownership advocate is to help millions of people become successful in life by showing them how to overcome their fears, transform their passions into their own businesses, and ultimately create their own destinies! These “destiny students” will break free from their dependence on their jobs, and experience more time, money, freedom, health, love, and happiness in life as a result of becoming successful business owners. I will give back to those in need by donating my time, money, and energy to help the youth of today become the leaders of tomorrow!



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EXERCISE

Create your own personal mission statement. This may eventually take up one full sheet of paper.

MY PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Name: _____ Date: _____

DETERMINE YOUR DESTINATION IN ADVANCE

You must know what you want to accomplish before you can begin taking specific steps to make your dreams and destiny a reality. This reminds me of our last flight to Hawaii. My family and I boarded the airplane in Seattle bound for Honolulu. After the flight had been airborne for some time, the pilot made an announcement: “Ladies and gentlemen, I have two pieces of news for you. One of them is good and the other is not so good. The good news is that we have a 200-mile-per-hour tailwind, so we’re making great time! The bad news is that we’re hopelessly lost somewhere over the Pacific, and we have no idea where we are.” The pilot tried to calm the passengers by adding, “We may not know where we’re going, but we sure are getting there awfully fast.”

Now in this case, we made it to Hawaii safely. But similar things happen to us all the time, don’t they? Does your life feel at times like a lost plane, hurtling through the sky (life) “awfully fast”

but also hopelessly lost? Many people are like this. Being able to visualize exactly what it is that you want to accomplish in life is a way to prevent this. Visualization gives your mind the ability to chart out your destination in advance (just as flight crews do every day).

Think about it: how is it that planes from all over the world are able to traverse across the largest ocean on earth and land on a tiny speck of land in Hawaii? There are many correct answers, but the best answer for this example is that the pilots of all these planes have predetermined their destination in advance. I believe that we are also programmed with the ability to predetermine our destinations in advance. We do this by creating a vision in our minds, then taking daily action toward this vision, and never giving up, despite what everyone else says we can or cannot accomplish.

I urge you to tap into your inner visions and determine your destination in advance. What is your vision for your life and where are you going? It is never too late to change or adjust your course—even if you are already in mid-flight. These mid-flight adjustments are part of the reality of flying. The same holds true in life. What midlife adjustments are needed in your life?

Visualization (the ability to see the invisible) is what allows you to live out your dreams and become fulfilled in life. A lack of visualization steers you down a course that leads to nowhere. It takes you to a place where you are not in control and resentment is sure to set in, because you've ended up somewhere you never wanted to go. This reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Anthony Robbins:

“The road to someday leads to a
place called nowhere.”⁶

I challenge you to take action now and live, *on a daily basis*, by the personal mission statement you've created. Note the emphasis. Anyone can create a mission statement and then do nothing to make it a reality—their vision never becomes real because no

actions are taken. Successful people know that action—on a daily basis—must be taken in order to make your vision become a reality.

The ability to visualize your dreams will give you the confidence to pursue and fulfill your biggest goals in life. In fact, Toni Ann Robino, a friend and mentor of mine, has said:

“When your dreams direct your life,
your life reflects your dreams.”⁷

Simply ask yourself what you wanted to become when you were a child? Once you recall this memory, then ask yourself if your heart still wants to achieve this goal. If so, dream big and pursue this passion with all your heart. If not, soul-search for your new beginning, then pursue your current passion with all your energy and don’t let anyone’s ignorance or negative attitude stop you short of seeing your light at the end of the tunnel.

SUMMARY

To conclude this chapter, I will now share with you how to accomplish your visions. I want to share with you the knowledge of a man who helped me take visualization to a higher level: I first met Larry Olsen about three months after the first edition of his book *Get a Vision and Live It* was published. Larry’s expertise on vision has helped me answer the question of *how* we accomplish our visions. I am eternally grateful for his mentoring. Larry’s book is a must-read, as it teaches you how to create a vision for yourself three years out and then live that vision now. My favorite words from Larry Olsen are as follows:

“I have no right to work on the ‘how’ until I can taste, touch, smell, feel, hear, emotionalize, and ‘own the vision.’ The vision comes first and then I see ‘how’ to accomplish my dreams.”⁸

According to Larry, as soon as you own your vision, the “how” (in terms of how to turn your goals and dreams into a reality) will *always* appear.

For example, I had no idea *how* I was going to write this book, but the *how* presented itself slowly over time once I learned to own my vision and developed an unstoppable attitude. Similarly, today I have no idea how in the world I will become a football team owner or sell one million copies of this book, but as I learn to own these visions, the *how* will again present itself—just as it did with writing this book.

Most importantly, none of my visions will just happen for me, unless I first set them as goals. As a result of turning my dreams into goals, there is always a chance that my visions will come true. Without doing so, there is no chance at all. The same principle holds true with your dreams. *Someone* will attain your visions, why not you? Always remember this quote from Hillel:

“If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?”⁹

What are your visions? I encourage you to think about your visions day and night. If you can do this, you will eventually take ownership of your visions and the *how* will magically appear. If you follow this strategy, then you are destined to get exactly what you want out of life.

It is my belief that if you are to achieve your visions, then you must do as W. Clement Stone says in his quote at the beginning of this chapter. You must communicate your visions with the world, and then sooner or later someone will show up in your life and show you the *how*.