
FINDING YOUR DREAMS

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Finding one's dreams mean connecting with one's needs, values and aspirations, which requires granting oneself a high level of internal freedom. Every dream has meaningful information which just needs to be decoded. This, however, requires some practice in working with communication patterns and structures.

What one aspires to should be in sync with one's values and true wants and needs. If these own basic parameters are not known, it is difficult to identify a dream as a helpful vision or a potential nightmare. Many people are afraid of their own needs and aspirations, but this is usually the result of a disconnect from oneself and the world.

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It Starts with a Dream ...

It starts with a dream. If we would not dream up or envision things we would never get them. But this also means that what we dream up should have a positive effect on oneself and the world. Many people are afraid of their own needs and aspirations, but this is usually the result of a disconnect from oneself and the world. Communication is the most important tool to get this, or any, information. This includes internal communication, exploring oneself, and external communication, interactions with others and the wider world around.

Compatibility

What one aspires to should be in sync with one's values and true wants and needs. If these own basic parameters are not known, it is difficult to identify a dream as a helpful vision or a potential nightmare.

The first step is thus to establish more clarity about one's needs and values, which requires a cooperation between the emotional and the rational mind. One might think of events in the past, how one interacted with others and with oneself, to listen in to what they felt like. Since the emotions are produced from large volumes of information reaching the body or produced within it, reading their signals and using that information in turn is usually helpful in discovering more about oneself. One can also investigate how imagined situations feel. One's fantasy is an important source of information about oneself. (Haverkamp, 2018)

Looking for Depth

Looking beneath the surface of needs, values and aspirations. Dreaming primarily of money does not mean that money is an end in itself because money stands for the things we buy with it. Paper or numbers in themselves are not very fulfilling in the long-run. A nice home for the family, for example, can be motivating if this is something one values and truly aspires to, or it could be an adventure of a life time. Money may be one of the things needed to realize these aspirations, which makes it relevant but not necessarily in itself meaningful. It may even be possible to achieve these dreams without money, or with less of it. Finding and being aware of the different options or alternative pathways that can help one to fulfil one's needs, dreams and aspirations is facilitated by both, a deeper understanding of one's needs, values and aspirations and the openness to learn about the different options and the flexibility to explore different places.

Happiness

What makes us happy? When we live and act according to our values and needs may be one explanation. Our basic values are the fundamental beliefs in what we see as the common characteristics underlying better choices. These values change little over time, because they are determined by all the biological and psychological information in a person. They give rise to your long-term interests, desires and aspirations.

When Life Makes Sense

When you live according to your basic values, life makes sense. It is meaningful in itself because it creates more meaningful information from the information that is available in the world. Just smiling at a friend is the communication of meaning from one place to another. The person smiling transforms information, such as a thought or an emotional signal, into a behaviour which transmits a message to the other. One's friend then decodes the images and all other perceptions of the smile using thoughts, memories and past experiences. To experience happiness and to share it are thus closely intertwined. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin. Connecting with oneself and others can lead to greater feelings of happiness, as well as other emotional content, which can provide the direction and decisiveness to turn dreams into reality.

From Values to People

Following your values and basic interests you get to the people or things that will be important to you, because they will support you in living in sync with your values and basic interests. Finding them may seem difficult, but when you are aware of your values and aspirations, you will notice them once they cross your path.

Exploring one's values and aspirations is a life-long process. The older we get, the more information we have about our values and basic aspirations. However, this is more about seeing things in detail, while the overall directions are usually quite clear early in one's life. Traumatic experiences can change these overall parameters on the surface, but the key to one's happiness is still in the pre-existing values and aspirations.

Dreams as Self-Regulation

Dreams, whether at night or fleeting images during the day, are how the brain regulates itself, which can also include experimenting with new information dynamics and new content. (Haverkamp, 2010a, 2010b, 2017) By letting the information gained from the current reality flow or by even actively going through it, new information is generated, which has its own effects on the existing information and state of the brain. Dreams are thus a creative process, while using the information that is already available in the brain. New

experiences can then give rise to new insights. Life is a constant communication of information, and dreams whether by day or by night are a product of this.

Interpreting Dreams

A vision of a desired future may not make much sense or even feel 'incorrect'. At night, one may even dream of the opposite what one really wants. It may not be so easy to make sense of a conscious or a nightly dream, but what they have in common is that they convey meaningful information. They bring on a thought or emotion, or lead to any other change in state, because otherwise they would not appear relevant and 'memorable'. It is thus possible to sense a relevance in a daydream without knowing what the relevant content is. Asking the right questions can lead to more information about the content of a dream, whether by day or by night. Often, when it comes to interpreting dreams people look for answers without having formulated helpful questions.

Positive Feelings

Since doing things that are in sync with one's values, make one happy, screening one's dreams according how one feels about them can be useful. The feeling to look for should be one of genuine happiness, not simply for a relief of tension or anxiety. Doing more of these things can also be quite helpful in cases of depression and anxiety.

Discovering Values, True Needs and Wants

Discovering what one values and truly wants and needs for is not so difficult. Often it helps to look at the moments that made you happy and fulfilled you in the past. Something in them was important, relevant and meaningful to you. These attributes usually change little over one's life.

If committing to a course of action is difficult, it may be because life feels uncertain and unpredictable at times, or it may be difficult to trust oneself entirely for various reasons. One may not feel so sure about one's abilities and the wisdom of one's feelings. But if you do not trust the person you spend 24/7 with, yourself, who can you trust in the world? If one does something one values oneself, not what someone else values, this will be valuable to oneself, no matter what.

Openness and Flexibility

The first step in finding one's dreams is openness and flexibility. Openness can be scary, but without it is difficult to let in something that is more in sync with your values. Even if one has been hurt in the past, it is still better to do something enjoyable and risk temporary failure than not doing it at all. Openness and

flexibility can be trained by beginning with areas, activities or situations that may be easier and then increase the level of potentially anxiety inducing ones gradually.

Purpose

Openness and flexibility are required in the stage where one formulates a vision of the future or an aspiration, otherwise the vision will not be adapted to all the available options. When translating a dream into an activity there should be a purpose. Even when giving a presentation, the more one focuses on its purpose, the passing on of information, rather than on what it is not about, such as entertaining people or making them feel better in some way, the anxiety and the pressure of the own expectations decreases.

The Illusion of Certainty

The next step is to throw off the need for certainty, which may come from past experiences, traumatic or otherwise. Searching for your dreams is embarking on a new adventure, and this means finding one's own path, well-informed, people oriented, but independent. This does not have to mean changing one's life from one day to the next, but it means trying out new things with excitement and sensibly, not recklessly. Finding meaning in the world is the path ahead, daring for the sake of daring is foolish at best. Meaning is whatever is relevant to your values and true needs and wants, your aspirations, hopes and dreams.

Yielding control usually leads to actually gaining control in many situations. Has its uncertainties but relying on the inner parameters, such as values, needs, aspirations and what is truly important to a person can make a change because it imparts a sense of stability and certainty about the own person which can provide the sense of safety and connection with oneself and the world that can make it easier to pursue one's dreams in the world.

Dare with Others

Another important step is to associate with the people who can help you in finding your dreams. The reason is that they are more likely to have the information you need to get closer to your dreams. So, finding your dreams depends on how you interact with other people. A friendly and open nature can go a long way and being transparent with your feelings does the rest. It means seeing oneself as more than an autonomous, independent entity, but as someone who enjoys interacting with other people. In many cases the enjoyment comes from engaging more in the world. Knowing yourself better, appreciating yourself, your dreams, values, aspiration and dreams, makes you appreciate others more. You are one of them.

Committing to Your Dreams

The next step is to commit to your dreams once you feel you found them. This may mean dealing with old hurts and present fears. To fully commit to a dream requires seeing oneself as positive, likeable and not to take someone else's negativity personally. All people have issues and we need to see them as they are, 'issues', that need to be dealt with by the person who has them, and not by you if they are not yours. This is what drawing healthy boundaries is all about, identifying what is one's own issue, and what is someone else's. Own issues can be addressed in many different ways but being aware of them and identifying them is the first step. This can be facilitated in a therapeutic setting by looking at internal communication patterns, by focusing on and zooming in on how one communicates with oneself and allowing adjustments if necessary. Often, changes in external communication follow suit.

Commitment requires seeing a purpose in something, not because other people value it, but because one sees and feels the benefit in it, that the envisioned activity, thought or situation furthers one's own needs, values and aspirations. There may be times where one sees a purpose and commits to something but then loses the ability to see a purpose in it. Quite often there may still be the same or even more purpose in it, but one gets distracted or a shift in perspective occurs. It is important to remember that needs, values and aspirations, the basic parameters, change little over time in an individual.

Action

Once a dream has been identified as something that agrees with the own needs, values and aspirations, it can provide both a compass and the motivation to achieve something one feels good and strongly about, something that is relevant and meaningful at the same time. Formulating sets of behaviours, actions and interactions requires information, which can come from internal and external sources, mostly both. Seeking, finding, identifying and reading the information requires again internal and external communication.

Your Emotions are Your Friends

Our emotions are evolutionary programmed to help us survive. They are our friends and not our enemies, as long as we use the signals they contain in a way that benefits us. Emotions like fear or guilt should not interfere with our life in a way that does not help us, or anyone else on this planet. If we have done wrong and hurt someone, we should make it right, if that is possible, and refrain from doing it in the future, but if negative emotions begin interfering with one's life and happiness, they need to be looked at closely and critically.

It's about the Feelings

Once you have found your dream, whether in a job or a relationship or any other area of life, it will feel right. Quite simply. Rational thought should help you live and aspire to those dreams that really make you happy, but it cannot determine them. Unhappiness is a feeling and not a thought, so being connected with one's feelings is important. Our thoughts can help us get to the place of happiness, but ultimately it is the feeling of happiness we need to experience.

Pursuing a dream should be for the right reasons. This means connecting with one's needs, values and aspirations. But every dream also has meaningful information which just needs to be decoded. This, however, requires some practice in working with communication patterns and structures. To this ends, the author has developed communication-focused therapy (CFT), which focuses on work with communication patterns and structures, which are also instrumental in discovering more about the own needs, values and aspirations. (Haverkamp, 2017)



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