



No Dream is Too Small

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“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

Mary Oliver, poet

No dream is too small! What is the smallest dream that you could bring about? A tiny dream can offer deep satisfaction, be enlivening, and rest your racing mind. There is something waiting right at the edge of our awareness. But we are looking for OUR LIFE'S PURPOSE! We are looking for that BIG and MEANINGFUL dream that will fulfill our DESTINY. Our dreams don't stand a chance in that environment. Dreams that get us moving come from our hearts.

Hearts whisper.

Egos scream.

When we look for small treasures, we enter our hearts. We tap into our vitality and essential selves. We drop away from the big impressive dreams of the ego. Dreaming small doesn't trivialize aspirations, it creates space by releasing the air created by pumped up plans. We relax. True satisfaction comes into view.

There is a huge difference between playing small, not engaging or acting with our full potential, and keeping our expectations in line with what really matters. Dreaming small means putting a mark on the canvas and trusting more will follow. It is typing the first word, paragraph, or page without expecting to write a breakaway bestseller. Dreaming small is making the first phone call about renting that office down the block without jumping into a lease. It is realizing you don't have to wow yourself, impress others, or get a standing ovation.

Keeping our expectation low allows us to surprise ourselves. Overblown perspectives with high demands for performance often leave us feeling scared and unable to act. Fear of failing is the number one barrier to taking action. It gets in the way of discovering our dreams. Anxiety sets off a biological response that shuts down creativity and intuition. It places us in a survival mode, leaving us scanning the horizon for potential pitfalls. It keeps us from exploring questions like... What would I pursue if there were nothing to lose?

What is the smallest step you could take towards discovering your dream?

- Create an idea notebook, clippings from magazines, quotes, job listings, classes offered...
- Make a Dream Board, pictures of people doing things that look good—don't try to make sense of it. Let it unfold. You can find a theme later.
- Journal 5-10 minutes each day about what you liked. Some days this will be hard, but it will get easier. The more aware you are of what you liked the more you'll notice it. Take time to observe what you enjoy.

It may sound strange but we don't listen to ourselves. Listening increases self-awareness. Self-awareness is what brings clarity to our dreams and direction. Get the focus on you. I know this makes many of us uncomfortable. But self-care is not self-ish. Thinking about what you want has emotional and physical benefits. You are looking for what enlivens you! Isn't that what we all want?

What would you do if you only considered yourself? Most women work from the other direction. First, they look at how it would affect others. That focus is why we get stuck. After you clarify your dream, you can respond to your current situation. Start from what you want. Later you can determine the alteration you need to make. If you start with a compromise, the energy to propel your actions diminishes.

Sometimes open-ended questions can release fear's icy fingers from your heart. You can't answer open-ended questions with "Yes" or "No" responses. They free up creativity and let us consider things that hadn't occurred to us.

- What would you begin if your life didn't depend on it?
- What might you choose if you didn't worry about being foolish or inappropriate?
- What dream would you select if success were certain?
- What would you pursue if it weren't too risky?
- What would you do if you didn't have to worry about money?
- What might you pursue if you could go in a completely new direction?
- What might you try if you couldn't make a mistake?

Maybe because I am an extravert; I naturally think of group support as essential. But, research bears this out; the support of a group can make the difference between achieving success and failing. Weight loss, addictions, investment clubs, and meditation groups are examples of how this can help. They keep us on track and increase the likelihood we'll stay motivated. You don't need to meet face to face—but I think that works best. And it doesn't have to be every week. I've found once a month in today's busy world is the right timing.

It takes a special group to keep from falling into the rut 'of this isn't going to work.' Your first gathering needs to spell out guidelines. Feedback should be encouraging and solution oriented. Participants need to ask for the support they need and want. Decide how long you'll meet, how large will the group be. Again, I think smaller is better. Six to eight participants is a manageable size for a two-hour meeting. Is whining all right? We all need a "poor baby" occasionally. The key word is "occasional." Keep the focus on clarifying what you want. Then look at what step will take you there.

We know valuable accomplishments ask us to grow. Secretly that it's why we like dreams—the growth potential and the good they can do. First, we need to build confidence by trusting the soft voice of our hearts. It's there throughout our day whispering -- *what if*. If we dare listen, we'll discover what brings us alive. Isn't that what we all long to know?