

Make Your Dreams Come True

Take the first step in our yearlong guide to following your heart.

By **Chrystle Fiedler**

You're a wife, a mother, a sister and a friend. You're there to lend a helping hand, to cherish, encourage and nurture the dreams of your family and friends. But what about you? Women are the dream keepers for those we love, but too often we forget our own. Maybe you've always loved flowers and wanted to open your own florist shop; maybe you've longed to go back to school or travel around the world. Dreams are like fingerprints, each is as different as the dreamer. Whether you have a dream that's been burning inside you for decades or are just beginning to realize what you really want today, there's no better time than now to go for it.

MAKE SPACE IN YOUR LIFE

For many of us, dreams may seem like a luxury or something unattainable, but in the long run ignoring your needs and interests can lead to frustration and unhappiness. Going after your dreams means you are using your unique talents and gifts, and living life to the fullest. "Without our dreams, all we have is reality," says Marcia Wieder, author of *Making Your Dreams Come True*. "People with dreams live longer, healthier lives."

Starting today, make a promise to yourself that realizing your goal will top your to-do list. To achieve this, you'll have to clear your schedule of some unnecessary clutter. "You need to create space in your life for your dream," says Wieder. "Use passion as the barometer for deciding what to quit." Say no to something you don't need or want to do, and say yes to your dream.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR FREE?

What is it that puts you "in the zone" and makes you block out everything around you? Is it landscaping your garden, taking photographs or decorating wedding cakes? Is it your dream of writing a children's book, envisioning yourself as a college professor or traveling somewhere you've never been before?

It's the passion you have that really counts, says Cynthia Kersey, author of the forthcoming book, *Unstoppable Women*. "The size of the goal doesn't matter. But it should be something that, when achieved, will propel your life, career, relationships or lifestyle to the next level."

Cindy Harris has always had a passion for tea, and today she finds her life transformed because of it. After her son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, Cindy, 44, of Hercules, California, decided to leave her job as an elementary school teacher and become a stay-at-home mom. "I began inviting friends and family over for afternoon tea, just to stay

connected,” she recalls. “So it seemed natural for me to build a business around that. I began to tap into the creative part of myself.”

Today her online business, ComeForTea.com, has customers around the country. She’s even created a tea journal that tea drinkers can use to reflect on daily activities, along with a line of merchandise. “Starting my own business didn’t just change my life, it has given me the life that I think I was meant to have.”

REALITY CHECK

“Look at the truth of your life now in terms of budget, hours available and family needs and energy,” says Jennifer Loudon, author of *Comfort Secrets for Busy Women*. “Are you in debt? Do you have young children? The tension between what is true today and what you want to happen tomorrow will propel you forward because you know where you are now and where you want to be.”

The journey has to be almost as fun as the destination, adds Laura Berman Fortgang, author of *Living Your Best Life*. “It needs to be an outgrowth of what you love and want to do now. Otherwise you’re living for tomorrow.” That’s why it’s important to talk to women who are already doing what you want to do. “If your dream is owning a store, talk to store owners and get the inside track,” she says. “We often have the dream version of what it is to do something, but you want to get the real version and check your grit to see if you have it in you.”

For example, you may want to be an actress, but are you willing to live with financial uncertainty or to change your looks to please others? Can you deal with rejection? If the answer is no, maybe acting isn’t right for you, says Fortgang. “Just because you’re good at something doesn’t mean it’s a path you’re supposed to take.”

ACT ON IT

It’s essential to break down the pursuit of your dream into tasks and steps that you can accomplish on a daily or weekly basis. “Create a WOW (Within One Week) plan. That is a simple, measurable action you’re going to take, such as how many phone calls you’re going to make or how many times you’re going to go to the gym,” says Wieder. “You also need quick, easy wins.” If you plan to start your own business, a win might be going to a National Association of Women Business Owners meeting or registering your web site’s domain name.

Spend time on your dream every day, advises Suzanne Falter-Barns, author of *How Much Joy Can You Stand? A Creative Guide to Facing Your Fears and Making Your Dreams Come True*. “Keep track of ideas in a dream notebook or get a small tape recorder, so when you’re on the run, you can record ideas and things to do.”

FIND SUPPORT

It’s crucial to involve others in your dream, whether it’s a trusted friend, relative or a member of an online support group. “Those most successful in achieving their dreams have some support system,” says Wieder. “Be with like-minded people who will encourage you, help you, challenge you and, most importantly, hold you accountable.”

Online groups such as www.mydreamcoach.com include hotlines and message boards where you'll find support, inspiration and even help raising money. You'll also find practical advice by going to www.comfortqueen.com or www.howmuchjoy.com.

Also, look for role models. Maybe you're convinced you're too old to go back to college. "Overcome your fear by looking for evidence that it isn't true," says Fortgang. "That's how you shift your thinking from impossible to possible. The Internet is a great resource. Find stories that inspire you."

PUSH PAST OBSTACLES

Besides keeping you motivated, having a support network can also help you move past obstacles on the way to your goal. "A dream is a journey, and journeys do not always go smoothly," says Laura Day, author of *The Circle: How the Power of a Single Wish Can Change Your Life*. It's important to be flexible. "Pursuing your dream will not always feel good. You will have to confront some old habits and beliefs about yourself and deal with a new set of experiences."

Work on eliminating thoughts that aren't in harmony with your goal, i.e., what's wrong, what's missing, why you can't succeed, etc., adds Wayne W. Dyer, Ph.D., author of *The Power of Intention: Learning to Co-Create Your World Your Way*. Challenging all those no's isn't easy, but reading something inspirational or listening to tapes on the way to work or while you walk can be a big help. "Your goal is to saturate your mind with positive thoughts."

If you're feeling fearful, make a list of your fears and ask yourself if they are real. If they are, find ways to handle them. "Get specific so you know what you are dealing with," says Carol Adrienne, author of *Find Your Purpose, Change Your Life*. "Saying you don't have enough money or time are common excuses, but it's always masking a deeper fear that you don't have what it takes or it's not going to work." Change always brings fear, so get used to challenging yourself to keep taking small steps into new territory, she adds. "If you're committed to being fulfilled, you'll find a way."

But no matter how well you prepare, you'll still have to face roadblocks along the way. If you stop expecting perfection and start accepting twists and turns and different outcomes, you will liberate a tremendous amount of creative energy, adds Loudon. "You'll allow yourself to adapt to what is, and that's the most powerful place to create from. When your dream takes a U-turn or you get stuck, ask yourself, 'What can I learn from this?'"

GET A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

"Set aside a day each month to putter around and reflect on your success so far," says Adrienne. Sometimes it's helpful to take a weekend or a week off, says Falter-Barns. "You'll have a new perspective, inspiration and energy."

Think about ways you can reward yourself every day while you pursue your goals. Buy yourself flowers, treat yourself to a manicure or just a good soak in the tub. It'll make you feel good and encourage you to keep taking action. When Cynthia Kersey was training for a marathon, her training group held hour-long runs each Saturday. "I always

scheduled a massage immediately afterward," she says. "When I was running those seemingly endless miles, I knew that relief for my aching muscles was only hours away."

It's the journey that counts. "Your single greatest reward is often the person you become in the process. So many people have told me that the process is what changed their lives," she says. "For the first time, they knew what they wanted, developed a plan and took action to achieve their goals. Becoming more confident and self-aware as individuals has been their ultimate reward."