

PRINCIPLE-CENTERED: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

We are all on a journey and how we travel will determine where we find ourselves at the end of it. This journey we call life is not a dress rehearsal and we get only one chance to live it well.

Each day presents us with myriad choices and opportunities. When we know where we wish to end up, we make choices and embrace opportunities that bring us to the desired destination.

To begin with the end in mind, Habit 2 of Stephen Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," is based on the principle that all things are created twice. The first creation is mental; the second is physical. Before we can create something in the physical, we must be able to carefully create the vision of what we desire to see manifested. Visions are declarations of idealized purpose that we hope our practical actions will enable us to attain. Covey says that most endeavors fail with the first creation.

When we clearly *see* or envision our desired destination, we are able to plan the journey better. To begin with the end in mind is to begin with the image of the end of your life. That image becomes your frame of reference for the choices you make.

Whenever you are dreaming, awake or asleep, you are creating. Once you can articulate that dream clearly, you can create a map for the journey - a plan to achieve the desired end. It always begins with the first creation. You must begin with the end in mind.

Visions necessarily stretch us to imagine exciting possibilities. The distance you actually travel will be directly related to the size of your dreams and your belief in them. "Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul; the blueprints of your ultimate achievements." (Napoleon Hill)

To travel successfully we must also know where we're starting from. Who we are today is based on the choices we made in the past. Who we wish to become must be based on the choices we make in the present. It's the accumulation of those wise choices and continued efforts that will in time produce an extraordinary life. We have a force, an energy within us that is strong enough to sustain the persistent effort and focus necessary to produce that life, realizing the envisioned dreams and desires.

It's an inside-out approach. You will be the most fulfilled when what you do on the outside is congruent with what's going on in the inside. In other words, when you live out your values and make them the basis for your choices, you walk in integrity and remain true to yourself. Furthermore, you will like and respect yourself more when your life is consistent with your ideals. Eric Hoffer says, "To become different from what we are, we must have some awareness of what we are." As we begin to change, our world changes with us.

The most successful people in all areas of life know who they are, what they believe, and what they stand for - their values. Successful people also think about the future and what they want to accomplish. They decide where they want to arrive sometime down the road. Then, they plan what they can do to get there.

The willingness to diligently create a vision is a statement of your belief in your potential. If you don't believe you have vast resources of potential and aren't willing to work toward reaching it, you will find yourself stuck in the muck and mundane. Believe you can achieve; then endeavor to create a long-term perspective that enables you to think into the future while making decisions in the present.

We can rise to great heights when we passionately believe that our journey is leading to the fulfillment of purpose. With a strong sense of direction, inner strength, and confidence, our lives take on meaning and significance. We are less apt to make poor choices or waste valuable opportunities. Who we are triggers what we do. "There is one quality which one must possess to win, and that is definiteness of purpose, the knowledge of what one wants, and a burning desire to possess it." (Napoleon Hill)

Each of us has something in our heart that sets our soul on fire and speaks to our deepest thoughts and feelings. Some had a strong sense of it as children and others have spent a lifetime trying to discover it. What is it that you feel passionate about? What deep, intense, and powerful longings exist within you? What is it that you desire to accomplish with your life? What legacy do you wish to leave for those who will follow?

Passionate people are inspired with vision and excited by possibilities. When intensely motivated by deep, values-based desires, our lives become a reflection of our hearts. Every aspect of life (family, school, life, work, leisure, service) somehow mirrors what is important to us.

Those without passion cannot fully focus, enjoy or appreciate who they are. They are out of touch with their hearts and the world around them. They fail to recognize opportunities and wander aimlessly, destined to mediocrity and failure. They often feel empty, unfulfilled, and unproductive. The sense of something missing plagues them. There's a "disconnect" between who they are and what they do, between what they want and what they have, or between what they thought they would do and what they actually have achieved.

So, base your choices on what engages both your heart and your mind. Plan your journey to reflect your values and make the best use of your natural talents, personality, strengths, experience, and passion.

Michael Jordan once said "I have the desire to be the best person and player I can become, but I approach everything step by step. It's all mental for me. I never write anything down. I just concentrate on the next step. I envision what kind of person and player I want to become, and I approach it with that end in mind. I know exactly where I want to go, and I focus on getting there. As I reach that level, I gain a little more confidence. Each success leads to the next one."

Success begins with the first step, the first creation. Everything we do or fail to do counts. Perfect the first creation - vividly see it, passionately desire it, doggedly believe in it, and consummately pursue it. As you do so, you will exercise real initiative, resourcefulness, creativity and endurance – you will simply find a way to make it happen.

In the words of Andrew Carnegie, "There is a power under your control that is greater than poverty, greater than the lack of education, greater than all your fears and superstitions combined. It is the power to take possession of your own mind and direct it to whatever ends you may desire."

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