

Goalsearch

What is a goal?

A goal is the basic unit of life design. It's easy to dream; with just a little encouragement you can close your eyes and conjure up a whole new life for yourself. But if you want to make that life come true, you will have to start by choosing one piece of it and deciding that that's the one you're going to go for first. Then you may still have to do a little work on that piece to turn it into something that's really reachable—not a mirage that keeps on receding ahead of you. A true goal—the kind that will hold still and let you catch it—lives up to two basic rules.

Rule No. 1: A goal is *concrete*. It is a matter of facts, not feelings. You will know beyond a doubt when you've arrived, because you will have something in your hands that you can look at, touch, and show off to other people. I'll give you an example.

Suppose you think your goal is “to be a doctor.” In fact, that's still a dream. Your actual goal is, “To get my M.D. degree.” Why? Because on the day when they hand you that piece of paper, you and society will agree that you are now a doctor. You may not feel much like a doctor. Or you may feel like a doctor one day and a terrified fake in a white coat the next. The process of growing into the healer's role is gradual, complex, and uncertain; you cannot predict the exact date when you will at last feel unshakably sure that “I am a doctor.” But there's nothing uncertain about an M.D. Either you've got it or you haven't—and you can take concrete steps to get it by a specific date.

That's a key point. Your true goal, or *target*, has to be a *concrete action or event*, not only so you'll know for sure when you get there, but so that you can make that date with success in advance! Setting a *target date* is the beginning of all effective planning—the antidote to both procrastination (“Oh, I’ll get there someday”) and despair (“I’ll never get there”). If you know you’ve committed yourself to write three short stories by April, or to get your M.D. degree by June 1985, then *time* suddenly becomes a quantity you can work with—and had better start working with right now if you don’t want to miss that deadline. I’ll have more to say about target dates later on. Right now it’s enough simply to recognize that you won’t be able to set a target date unless you have a target. Nobody has ever succeeded in designing and building a bridge to a cloud.

Becoming a doctor is an easy example, because the target—getting an M.D.—is ready-made. But suppose your goal—like the goal of two young actresses I worked with—is something like “To be a movie star”? That’s still a dream, of course, because how are you going to know when you’re a movie star? The answer is, *only you can decide*. You can make your target any concrete, specific action or event that will satisfy you that you’ve arrived—but you must choose one, or you’ll never get on the road at all.

What would have to happen for you to be able to say, “Now I am a movie star” (or the best literary agent in New York, or a successful racing yacht designer, or famous, or rich)? Your answer won’t be the same as anybody else’s answer, because the “same” goal can mean completely different things to different people. (Remember how two people could look at the same color and call it “rust” and “rose”?) I know I’ll be rich when I have \$100,000 free and clear—and I know millionaires who aren’t there yet! For Carol, a Minneapolis secretary and part-time model, being a movie star means glamour and publicity—her name in all the gossip columns, her face in all the poster stores, furs, limousines, flashbulbs. June, an undergraduate student of theater, sees stardom as getting the best parts and the highest accolades for her acting. So when Carol and June both sit down to make a *target* out of “being a movie star,” Carol might say, “A poster of me in every poster store,” and June might say “Getting my first Oscar.” And they’d both be right. *The only person you have to satisfy is yourself.*

There are two guidelines you can use in the actual process of goal choice that will help you zero in on the right target for you. I call them your *touchstone* and your *role model*.

Your *touchstone* is the *emotional core of your goal*—what you want and need from it, what you love best about it. It’s the sweet center of that goal for you. Creative fulfillment . . . fame . . . money . . . the chance to help people . . . closeness to nature . . . love—if you can put *your* touchstone into one or a few words, it will not only help you pick a target that’s loaded with the kind of sweets that nourish *you*, it will also show you how to design the shortest, most direct and gratifying route to that goal, and it will get you to the essence of any goal that looks impossible.

A *role model* is someone you’d like to be, someone who’s actually done what you want to do—or the closest thing to it. You probably already have at least one role model. Whom do you particularly admire? Whose life and achievements do you covet? Role models are not only good for goal definition, but for inspiration, encouragement—and practical guidance. If anyone anywhere on Planet Earth has done what you want to do, it means that you can do it too. Put that person’s picture up on your wall. Go to the library, read about his or her life, and find out how s/he did it! You might get some ideas. Remember Peter, who wanted to be a dairy farmer, starting from scratch, but didn’t believe it was possible? I suggested he pick up local newspapers from the towns he drove through in dairy country, until he got to know something about the local people and saw how a lot of them made it through the yearly business of farming on sheer determination—not because they had a lot of money. He found an interesting role model. A young man from a nearby city who had never been on a farm, and moved into the area—onto a dairy farm which also served as an inn or hotel for hunters in hunting season—and who ran a snowmobile and “all-terrain vehicle” dealership from his garage.

Here’s how touchstone and role model can help you draw a bead on your target:

<i>Carol</i>	Dream:	movie or TV star
	Touchstone:	glamour and publicity
	Role Model:	Farrah Fawcett-Majors
	Target:	my face in every poster store

<i>June</i>	Dream:	movie star
	Touchstone:	acclaim for fine acting
	Role Model:	Anne Bancroft
	Target:	Get an Oscar

This process should give you a target that passes the second test for goals:

Rule No. 2: When you say “This is what I want,” *you’re not fooling*. If I could wave a magic wand and POOF! you’d have that goal right now, you honestly think you’d be delighted.

The purpose of this rule is to distinguish real, gut dreams from passing fancies. Many of us have daydreamed at one time or another of being a movie star, or a mountain climber, or even President of the United States. But if I waved my magic wand and POOF! you were halfway up Everest, would you be in your element—or would you long desperately to be home in your nice warm armchair daydreaming about it? There’s an easy way to find out. Use your own built-in magic wand—“real daydreaming”! Remember? First person, present tense, visual, and sequential. Like this:

“POOF! I am the President of the United States. I am sitting at my desk in the Oval Office. It is 9:30 in the morning. On my left is a stack of paper about two feet high, urgently requiring my decision on such matters as the energy crisis, the Middle East peace negotiations, the SALT talks, and the diplomatic status of the People’s Republic of China. On my right is a red telephone, ominously silent. I . . . I . . . Agghh!! Let me out of here!”

That, my friend, is the acid test for any goal. Try living it in imagination. How does it feel? Love it? Great. Hate it? Change the target. Not just whims, but also “shoulds” —the things you think you ought to want because your father, grandmother, wife, husband, or favorite teacher wanted them for you—will be unmasked by this “magic wand” test. When I say that you must have what you want, it’s equally important for you to know that *you must not work hard to get what you don’t want*. It will only give you

indigestion—and you won't be any good at it anyway. So try to rule it out from the start.

“But what if I'm not sure?” you may be saying. “I've come up with something I think I'd love, but supposing I get there—or even halfway there—and discover that I've made a terrible mistake and it's not what I want after all?”

Simple. You will take the piece of paper on which you wrote down that goal, tear it up into little pieces, and throw it out the window. And then you will take another piece of paper and write down another one. *No goal is written in blood.*

One of the most harmful misconceptions in our society is that you've got to figure out what you want and then you've got to *stick* to it. This attitude is one of the things that makes it so hard to get into action. We hesitate to commit ourselves to our choices because we're afraid they will be life sentences! That's nonsense. Goals exist only to serve you and make you happy. You don't exist to serve *them*. If a goal isn't serving you, you are free to change it. It's just that sometimes there's no way to find out whether or not a particular goal really suits you except by trying it. If it doesn't suit you, you will still have gained something priceless: *the experience of making real progress toward a goal—and the practical skills for doing it.* Those skills can be applied to any goal—just as your hands, one they've actually built a bookcase, can easily craft a kitchen cabinet.

CHOOSING A TARGET

The way you go about actually choosing your target will depend on what kind of dream you cherish—and that in turn depends on who you are and where you are in your life right now. You may be a single-minded achiever with burning ambition, or you may be an “artist of living” to whom the total quality of life is all-important. You may be basically happy with your life as it is, yet have one or more long-dormant interests you'd like to work into it for your own pleasure. You may be in one of the adolescences of life (I think there are at least two), when everything is up in the air and you aren't really sure what you want. You may be a “Renaissance person” who isn't happy unless you have two or three irons in the fire at a time. *And you may be any or all of the above at different times in your life.*

Wherever you start, you'll have a different set of design problems to grapple with. Your goal may seem too vague, too distant, or too broad to fit neatly into target form; you may feel you have no goal at all—or too many goals altogether. But in each case you can arrive at a target that is *carefully tailored to you* and *realizable in time*. Here's how some real people have done it.

The Naked Touchstone: Andrea

It took quite a bit of coaxing before Andrea, a 26-year-old New York Secretary, admitted with embarrassment that what she really wanted was *to be famous*—she wasn't even sure what for. “I think it's really kind of sick that I feel this way,” she said. “It keeps me from being able to just do things and enjoy doing them.”

The first thing I did was give Andrea a friendly little lecture to get her off the hook of her own guilt. I'll give it to you too, because this kind of apologetic attitude is so common and so crippling. *What you want is what you need—and you must have it*. I don't care what it is—short of blatantly destructive or self-destructive acts—and “Why do you want it?” is one question I never ask. If what you want is to marry a millionaire, fine! I've actually helped someone do that. If it's fame, great! Andrea doesn't have a guilty secret, *she has a touchstone in search of a goal*. Before it can find one, though, it needs to be more clearly defined.

I asked Andrea whether any kind of fame at all would satisfy her. What if she designed a new kind of shoelace, made five million dollars, and got written up in *Time* as one of “The New Millionaires”? Would that do it? She said, “No, money isn't that important to me.” Well, then how about going over Niagara Falls in a barrel? Another decisive “No.” So we were *not* simply talking about fame. I asked Andrea whether she could name some of the things she thought she might enjoy being famous for.

“Well . . . movie star or director, singer, photographer, fashion designer. It's fame for performance, for a kind of continual performance—not a one-shot deal. The trouble is, I don't know whether I'd really like to do those things, or whether I'd just like to be famous for them!”

I asked her whether she'd like to be *respected* for what she did—for the quality of her work. She said yes, that would be important. So Andrea's touchstone could now be defined: "Fame for continual, quality performance."

Now we had to figure out how she could get some of that flavor of fame into her life as quickly as possible.

That's a point I'm going to be driving home for the rest of this chapter—and the rest of this book. *The sooner you start getting some of what you really want, the more energy you'll have to go for the rest of it!* You'll also be happier, healthier, and nicer to be around. That's why it's so important to identify your touchstone—and to pick a target that gets at least a shining chip of it into your hands right away. I'm not a believer in "delayed gratification." Never take the long way around if you can get the essence of your goal by a shorter route.

Since fame itself was more important to Andrea than the field she got famous in, it would speed things along if she picked a field where she didn't have to start from scratch. So I asked her if she already had skills and experience in any of the things she thought she'd like to be famous for—filmmaking, photography, fashion design. She said she'd done some photography, and had even gotten so involved that she'd stayed up all night developing prints in a friend's darkroom! So photography it was. Now we needed to find out what kind of photography would bring Andrea the celebrity she wanted by the speediest route.

Fine art photography was out. Andrea would undoubtedly find the artist's route to fame far too slow, hard, and chancy; she'd give up in frustration long before she got her first taste. That's what I mean by not going the long way around. Both fashion photography and photojournalism looked more promising, but Andrea thought fashion was too technical and competitive and news photography too anonymous and dull. At this point, I told her to try naming a *role model*; it might jell the process of goalsearch for her.

Andrea chose two: Richard Avedon, the controversial portrait artist who started out as a fashion photographer, and Annie Leibowitz, the young Rolling Stone photojournalist whose pictures of rock stars have been collected in two books. Her choices were inspired—because *celebrity is contagious!* Celebrities are vain. They *love* to have their pictures taken. And some of their stardust is bound to rub off on anyone who makes it her

business to take their pictures. Andrea's quickest route to fame with quality might very well be taking good pictures of famous people.

From there it was a short step to defining Andrea's *target* "To have one or more photographs of celebrities published in a quality national magazine." It was beautifully tailored to Andrea's needs, it could be planned for a target date—and she knew she'd love it. Of course, she came up with all kinds of problems. I told her to put them down on her Problems List:

"I can't afford to quit my job—too little time to work on this;"

"Big magazines won't take unknown photographers;"

"I'm afraid I'm not good enough;"

"I'm too shy to approach famous people."

Don't forget to compile a Problems List of your own as you define *your* target.

The Long Haul: June

What had always stopped Andrea from thinking clearly about her goals before was the feeling, "I know what I want, but I think I shouldn't want it!" For June, the theater student whose target was "Getting my first Oscar," the problem was different: "I know exactly what I want, but it's so far away—how will I ever get there?"

June was a senior at a large state university who had fallen in love with acting in student productions and had gotten rave reviews in the school paper. She was bravely aiming high, but she didn't even know whether to move to New York or Los Angeles after graduation, much less how to put her new ambition on the shortest road to success.

When you have a long-range target like June's, it's still, in a way, a dream. You can and should set a date to it—that will help to make it real—but it isn't a goal you can plot your path to, reach out and grab . . . at least not soon enough to give you joy and hope. So you will need to set yourself a *first target*: a smaller goal that's both a step on the road to your ultimate destination and a little triumph in its own right. And once again, the most important factor to keep in mind is your touchstone. Since June's touchstone was "recognition for fine acting," it would make little sense for her to move

to L.A. and try to get her first TV commercial—a first target that might be perfect for Carol, the other aspiring star I knew whose touchstone was “glamour and publicity.” June will get more of her kind of satisfaction sooner if she makes her first target something like, “To star in my first Off-Off-Broadway workshop.” Once she’s reached that, she might make it her next target to land a major part in a low-budget or student movie.

Touchstone planning is high-energy planning. By designing her path so that she gets the kind of experience and recognition she wants right up front, June may find that she reaches her goal—that Oscar—much sooner than she ever dreamt possible. On the other hand, she’ll also have plenty of chances to decide on the basis of *experience, not fantasy*, that yes, this flavor of success really is for her . . . or it really isn’t . . . or it was, but she’s had enough now and is ready for something else—like teaching or painting or a year in Spain.

Remember: long-term goals especially are never written in blood. Because we change. And one of the things that changes us most is getting what we want. Sometimes your touchstone is like a stone in the middle of the road: until you get it, you can’t get past it. When you do get it, it may whet your appetite for more of the same . . . or a part of you may be at peace for the first time, so that you can suddenly hear the voices of your other loves. So if you think you have a long-range goal, a first target is a handy *unit of commitment*—a sort of trial marriage! It’s also just the right size for learning and practicing the planning techniques in the second half of this book.

The Ideal Day: Peter, Aline, and Julia

You may have another kind of trouble arriving at a first target if the goal you want is a broad one—a vision of a total lifestyle. Suppose you’re a city mouse with a tidy little apartment and a tidy little salary, and what you really long to be is a country squire living on a vast estate? Or suppose that like Peter, the would-be dairy-farmer, you’ve made your actual target “To live my ideal day in every detail”? (That, by the way, is something you *can* put a date on.) When you look at the gap between where you are and where you want to be and the thousand things that have to be done to cross it, your question is going to be, “Where on earth do I start?”

Again, setting a first target—one that both makes you happy *now* and leads toward the rest of your dream—is the key to action and the antidote to despair. But in this case the process of choosing that first target is a little different. Instead of using your touchstone, you’ll use the breakdown of your ideal day.

In each of the three categories—*what, where, and who*—you decided which elements of your fantasy day you’ve really got to have, which are optional but desirable, and which ones are just the sugar roses on the cake. The most important question you can ask yourself now is: *What is the highest-priority item that is missing from my life right now?* If you can give a single resounding answer to this question, you’ve got your first target.

For example, if you live in the city and you’ve just got to be down on the farm, your first target is a “where”: to get yourself into a house with at least a few acres and a few chickens around it. (If you think that’s impossible, just write down all the reasons why it’s impossible on your Problems List and put them aside for later.) If you’re like Aline, the executive secretary who wanted to be an executive, then a “what” —a promotion or change of job—will be your first target. Or you may be like my 32-year-old lawyer friend Miriam, who has “everything but”—she has a good job with an insurance law firm, a beautiful apartment, nice clothes, friends she loves—and has calmly decided to find the one piece that’s missing for her: a husband.

But what if more than one crucial piece of your dream is missing? You may remember that Peter had almost none of the elements of his ideal day—and he wanted all of them! If you’re in that bind, there’s a second question that will help you get out of it: *Of the essential elements that are missing, which one can I get most quickly, cheaply, and easily?* That’s where you’ll start—because my objective is to get you on your path without more delay. That first target will lead you toward the next element of your dream . . . and the next . . . and the next.

Julia, the freelance-writer, needed *space*: living space and working space. If she had both, she’d already be living her stripped-down ideal day—and making progress toward the full scenario. But she didn’t think she could afford both. Which should she make her first target? To move to a bigger apartment with an extra room to write in could solve the problem in one stroke, but it would more than double the rent of Julia’s little rent-controlled studio, and moving would take at least two months away from her work. She

realized that the quickest, cheapest, and easiest alternative was to keep her apartment and rent a separate work space for about \$100 a month. With a good place to work in, she'd get more done, earn more money—and be better able to afford an apartment she really loved.

One thing Peter could do right away, at no expense, was to pull his fiancée into the project and spend some time researching the whole project. That would get him on his path by providing two of the pleasures of his ideal day: working on solving problems that had to do with being a farmer, and doing it with someone he loved. Once the two of them find some likely locations and start visiting some of the farms, they'll be ready to think about the money details. In fact, it may very well be that some of the situations they want could be available without huge down payments or the need for Peter to give up his present job right away. Peter might even find a job as driver and mechanic in a farm-equipment dealership in the area of his choice. He could repair tractors and combines and get to know the local farmers and their farms, so although he won't be living on a farm, he'll be doing what he loves—and surrounding himself with country life, country thinking, and learning actual facts about the requirements of his dream. (By the way, if there's a lot of “who” missing from *your* life, I'll tell you a secret: *there's nothing like doing what you love to attract the people you need*. Get your show on the road, and you'll find that a lot of people want parts in it.)

Impossible Dreams: Adele

It happens at last once in every Success Teams seminar, when I make the outrageous statement that everyone—regardless of age, sex, income, or education— can get what she or he really wants. Somebody always raises a hand and says, “Oh, yeah? Not me.” Adele, a handsome woman in her early 50s, said, “What *I* want is to be prima diva in the Metropolitan Opera. And I've never sung a note in my life. Let's face it . . . there's no way.”

Some people say things like that just to prove that I'm wrong, that you can't get what you want in life. Those people usually flunk the magic-wand test. They don't really want to be President of the United States or the next Beverly Sills; they just want to protect their real dreams against hope and the pain of disappointment. But sometimes we're dealing with something much more serious: an old childhood dream that's refused to die. Remember the exercise where you thought about “What You Might Have Been” if your

childhood environment had been different? Well, what if you still secretly long to be that concert pianist, ballerina, heart surgeon, Chairman of the Board, astronaut, or famous novelist—and you're 30, 40, 50 or 60 years old?

I stick by my statement. If you really, really want that dream, *you can still have it*—unless it's a dream like Adele's. She really does have a problem, because she has chosen the pinnacle of one of the few professions—there are only a few—in which it's truly impossible to make it to the top from a late start. These are the physically demanding arts and sports in which the youthful capacities of the body, plus early training, are a must. A 45-year-old insurance salesman, however physically fit he is, cannot make it his goal to become a major-league ballplayer, a professional boxer, a principal tenor at the Met, or Rudolf Nureyev. (That's not to say he couldn't take up dance or singing or boxing or baseball and achieve considerable skill and pleasure.) And Adele cannot be Beverly Sills. She's right about that. But that doesn't mean she should give up her dream. She should take it very, very seriously, because it's telling her what she needs to be happy. And that is something she can and must get—*her touchstone*.

If you're deeply in love with a goal you're sure is impossible, don't become bitter about “what might have been” and consider your life wasted. Ask yourself, *what is the touchstone?* Why do I want this goal? If you came to me with Adele's dream, I'd try to find out what it is about being Beverly Sills that you'd love so much. Is it stardom—being rich, famous, adored? Or do you just love to sing and long to be able to make those wonderful sounds? Is it opera in particular that you love to sing? Have you always wanted to get on stage and sing in an operatic production? Or are you so crazy about professional opera that you'd do anything just to be around a top-flight opera company, even if you can't sing a note?

Now take that touchstone and design a goal around it!

If what you want is to be a star and get interviewed on every talk show from coast to coast, you can do it. I promise you, there is something unique in your style or your experience that you can parlay into stardom. People have achieved celebrity for everything from bridge to gardening, from a love of cats to the experience of motherhood. And everybody knows that once you are a star, you get the chance to do all kinds of things—even get up in front of people and sing!

<i>Useful:</i>	It gets a lot of attention <i>fast</i>
<i>Problems:</i>	Wrong kind of attention—too anonymous, short-lived, embarrassing, and you wind up in jail
<i>What I learned about myself:</i>	There's a little voice in me saying "Look at me—see me"
<i>Suggestions and lessons:</i>	A more dignified kind of publicity stunt? Street theater? Singing in the park? Speechmaking?

Then you go on from there. And sooner or later you're going to find a target that will get you the core satisfactions of your "impossible" dream in eminently possible form.

But I want you to know that most dreams are not impossible. We've just been brainwashed into thinking they are. A few limits to possibility are in the human body. A few. *The rest are in the mind, and those can be changed.* Look how drastically the rules about what women can and can't do have changed in the last ten years! We've got female executives, astronauts, truck drivers, West Point cadets, and jockeys. It's about time for another cruel set of myths to get their comeuppance—the myths of ageism, the ones that say "It's too late." Those myths don't only hurt "senior citizens" facing forced retirement. They do violence to our whole life cycle, lopping off another set of possibilities at each decade. If you're not studying ballet at 10, if you're not a concert pianist by 20, a promising scientist or novelist by 30, an up-and-coming young executive by 35, and at the top of your field by 45 . . . forget it!

It's just not true—not a word of it. A former concert pianist in her 60s has told me that some of her best and most serious pupils are people in their 40s. What they may have lost in agility, they more than make up in drive and concentration. Unlike so many young people, they know what they want, they know how to work, and they know the value of time. And the same is

true of older people in pursuit of any goal. There are examples all around us of people who've started a whole new activity or career in the second half of life and been resoundingly successful—like English professor Norman MacLean, who published his first book to rave reviews at the age of 72. Or like Grace Bloom, who got her Master's degree at the age of 86. Or like Catherine Zirpolo, who “always wanted to be in the theater. ‘When I was about nine, I wanted to be like Theda Bara or someone like that. I would practice in front of the mirror.’ Although Zirpolo's family discouraged her theatrical ambitions, and marriage at eighteen and children soon after further postponed her plans, she never lost her love for the theater. . . . ‘And at the age of seventy-five I began!’ she marvels.” She is a featured player with the New Wrinkle Theater of Greater Boston, a performing troupe made up entirely of players over 60.* So it's hardly “too late” for a 28-year-old to take up the cello, or a 54-year-old to get into politics!

Short of total impossibility, there's only one question to ask yourself about an ambitious goal like “What You Might Have Been.” And that is: *Am I willing to work for it?* Are you willing to spend the ten or fifteen years building a political career that it would take to run for the Senate? Do you have the competitive passion for the corporate climb? Are you willing to be the only 40-year-old woman in your medical school class, and to be 45 before you start your practice?

I don't mean, “Are you too scared to do it?” If your goal is worthy of you, if it really challenges you, you're bound to be scared. That fear is natural, and it's no reason to give up on a dream you crave. The real question here is, *How badly do I want it?* If the answer is, “Badly enough to go all the way,” then more power to you, and I'll show you how to deal with the fear. But what if you decide that the price in time and work simply outweighs the satisfactions of the goal?

You have an alternative—an alternative both, to giving up that dream and to enslaving yourself to it. *Find the touchstone and design another goal around it*—one you would be willing to work for. Get the same satisfactions in quicker, simpler form. If the heart of doctoring for you is helping people, you might choose nursing, physical therapy, counseling, midwifery, massage, dance-exercise, or nutrition. If your touchstone is fascination with the scientific aspects of health and disease, you could go into medical

* Nancy DuVergne Smith, “New Wrinkle Theater,” *New Age* 4 (February 1979): 48.

pathology, scientific writing, or medical illustration. It's up to you. The real kicker is that you may come up with something better suited to you than the original goal!

When we think about what we want to do and be, our imaginations often get stuck with the standard roles available in society's costume closet: doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief. We choose one that sort of vaguely approximately fits us, and then we try to fit ourselves into *it*—instead of finding or making up something that's perfect for who *we* are. For example, when I was a little girl I wanted to grow up and star in Broadway musicals. My role model was Judy Garland. I couldn't have told you why, but I can tell you now: I craved attention and admiration and love. I wanted to get up on stage and sing my heart out for an audience and have them pour their love out for me.

As it happened, what I grabbed and got was being a therapist. And every time I walked into Group Laboratories, of which I was the president, I got looked at as if I were important. I was very famous on Ninety-first Street and Broadway. Nobody else had ever heard of me, but I felt like a star. I was giving everything I had, and I was getting all the love and respect I'd ever needed—not from a far-off audience, but from people I could love and touch. It gave me the strength to go on and invent the Women's Success Teams Seminars, where I can get up and perform in front of forty to three hundred people and even go on TV.

The reason it all happened is that life tricked me into discovering my touchstone. If I *had* become a Broadway star, I might have loved it, but I doubt it. I think I would have hated it. I tried acting, when I was thirty and divorced and alone in New York with my kids. I scraped together a little money, enrolled in acting classes at HB Studio, and got a few parts in small showcases. And you know what? The only thing I liked about it was getting up onstage, turning people on, and basking in their love. I didn't like acting classes, I didn't like rehearsals, I didn't like theaters, I didn't like other actors—and I didn't much care for pretending to be someone other than myself. (That's how I'm different from a born actor.) If I hadn't had my kids, who kept me from traveling in summer stock productions, I might have gone on with it anyway, but I like to think that by now I'd have gotten tired of it and gone on to do exactly what I'm doing!

I designed the touchstone concept to encourage you to be just as inventive on purpose as I was by necessity and inspired accident. You can have the

most fun of all designing a goal if you're in one of those "adolescences" I mentioned—the periods of change and self-discovery when you aren't at all sure what you want, and the world is wide open.

There are two "official" adolescences. One is the late teens and early twenties, when so many kids knock around trying out different jobs in different places in an unhurried search for something that feels right. The other is mid-life, when a man or woman I has met the goals of the first half of life—raising kids, economic security, success in a profession—and may be free and ready for something totally new. But you really reenter adolescence whenever you go through a major life transition, like marriage, divorce, widowhood, your kids starting school—or meeting a long-held goal! Even losing a job, with its financial anxieties, can give you an opportunity to re-examine and redesign your life. Even early motherhood, with its heavy demands on time and restricted freedom of movement, changes your image of yourself and opens up new possibilities. Just reading this book may have pitched you headlong into an adolescence! (The root meaning of the word is "being nourished to grow.") If so, you may be having a lot of fascinating but confusing second thoughts about what you want in life. You may not even be able to define your touchstone—or to choose one out of all the possibilities that are calling to you.

You're in luck. The genius child in you is getting a fresh chance. You get to play around with *all* the talents and qualities you discovered in your Stylesearch, combining and recombining them like pieces of a puzzle until they click into a goal design that's uniquely yours.

Starting From Style: Alan and Victoria

The most important exercises to work with here are "The Private-Eye Game" and "Twenty Things You Like to Do." Your Detective's Report and Life Quality Profile give you a rich and compact portrait of your own genius. Is there a unifying theme running through that portrait that you call your touchstone? Do different aspects of your style suggest some possible goal ideas? Can you invent ingenious combinations that get several of your qualities and interests into one package? Remember to use basic *brainstorming* to free your imagination. The wildest idea you come up with may be the one that gives you your goal.

Alan's Detective's Report revealed that he liked plenty of space, the textures of wood and stone, and natural foods. He lived in a small apartment in Chicago, but he'd taken the plaster off one wall to expose the brick, and painted the rest of his walls white to get as much light and spaciousness into the apartment as possible. He had lots of plants, and a big poster of a mountain view that was almost like a window into another world. The books on his shelves ran heavily to things like Thoreau and Rachel Carson and the Whole Earth Catalog.

Alan's Life Quality Profile told him first and foremost that, at 29, he wasn't living the kind of life he loved best. He lived in Chicago because he had gone to school there, and after school he'd gotten a job with an educational publisher, which he enjoyed. But he loved to be outdoors; he liked mountain climbing, though he hadn't done much of it (there isn't a decent-sized hill within 1000 miles of Chicago); he enjoyed doing things with his hands, but as a busy city person he hadn't had much time for that either, he liked to be alone. He loved to read. He didn't need a lot of money to be happy—and he'd save money on vacations if he lived out West. After looking over this portrait of himself, he summed up his touchstone as "Closeness to nature—in particular, the Rocky Mountains."

That didn't tell Alan anything he didn't already know—but *he'd never considered it a legitimate basis for designing his life!* Like so many of us, he'd assumed that the serious business of earning a living ruled out having what he loved most in the world for more than two or three weeks out of each year. He'd always figured he was lucky enough to have an interesting job. His Success Teams seminar convinced him of the importance of living a total life more in line with his genius. Challenged to design a goal, Alan said he thought he'd be happy as a national park ranger, fire lookout, forester, or tree planter. Even better, since it would work in his love for books, he could open a bookstore in a small mountain town—or start a small publishing firm specializing in field guides, backpacking manuals, and nature philosophy. Or, since he liked his job, he could explore the possibility of opening an office of his company in Denver, or transferring to the sales department and asking for the western territory.

Of course, no matter which of these potential goals Alan chose, there would be problems. He knew he'd have to face his father's disappointment if he chose a field like forest rangering that didn't make use of his education. Starting a bookstore or publishing firm required risk capital and entrepre-

neurial know-how he didn't have. And moving west for his own firm meant persuading his boss of the move's business value. But problems are not a reason to give up on having the life you want. *Choose the goal that sounds most exciting to you—even if it's the most "impossible."* Alan decided to start a small specialty publishing house. He made his target the incorporation of the venture with enough backing capital to survive for two years. (Always remember to state your goal in the form of a *target* that can be reached by a specific date.)

Victoria, the divorced, 42-year-old mother of four, loved to get her hands on fine antiques—which she couldn't afford. She'd inherited one beautiful old table from her aunt; otherwise, she'd decorated her house with the best things she could find in junk shops, a couple of which she had stripped and refinished herself. She loved to spend Sundays prowling around those shops among dusty old things that might turn out to be treasures. She was fascinated by the feel of living history old things gave her. Her favorite books were historical romances. She enjoyed giving parties with gourmet cooking, beautiful table settings, and good conversation—when she could get the younger kids into bed and find three matching plates that weren't chipped. She remembered her college years with nostalgia, because that was the only time in her life when she'd been surrounded by people active in the arts. She loved going to the theater.

Victoria had a lot of trouble and fun defining her touchstone. She finally expressed it as “Authentic historical atmosphere—the drama of the past in things, especially elegant things.” But she didn't have any trouble coming up with goal ideas—she found about fifteen! Some of them were: become an antique dealer or interior decorator; open her own second-hand shop so the dust-covered treasures would come to *her*; become an auctioneer and run estate sales; do professional refinishing in her garage; design “period” sets for productions in a local theater; lead tours of the great castles of Europe—or of the historic homes in her own town; start a local historical society.

Victoria's problems were time and money, and they loomed large. She supported her kids by working as personnel manager for a large insurance company. Her job was fairly routine but secure, and she couldn't afford to give it up. But she realized that an occasional wistful ramble through the antique shops near Hartford was just not enough of what she loved. So I advised her to make her first target something she could start doing or learning *now*, in the time she had free—weekends and an occasional evening.

Victoria happily set herself not one but two targets: to start doing refinishing jobs for friends and neighbors on weekends (which would bring her both pleasure and extra income), and to enroll in an interior decorating course in the city one evening a week, with an eye to a possible future change of career. On top of that, she's volunteering to design the set for her daughter's high-school Shakespeare Play!

Victoria's situation brings up a problem you're likely to run into, too. What if, after doing the exercises in the first half of this book, you've got *too many* things you want to do? You can't possibly fit them into one lifetime; you'd need at least five.

Congratulations! You haven't got a problem, you've got an embarrassment of riches. I'm not going to tell you to make up your mind and leave the lost possibilities for your next incarnation, because nobody's ever succeeded in proving to me that there's going to be one. What I'm going to do is *give* you five lives—in imagination—as a guide to getting the most out of the one you've got.

FIVE LIVES—AND HOW TO LIVE THEM ALL

Think about it: if you had five lives, what would you do with each one?

I don't mean if you were five different people. I mean if you could be *you* five times over, and explore a different talent, interest, or lifestyle to the fullest each time.

This is an exercise, and like all the exercises in this book, it's flexible—you're supposed to tailor it to you. If you could manage nicely with three lives, take three. If you need ten, help yourself. I just picked five because it's a nice round number.

In one of my lives, I'd be exactly what I am. In one I'd be a nineteenth-century botanist and spend all my time painting flowers. In another I'd be a theoretical physicist. In my fourth, I'd still be Judy Garland—no, something a little less intense and tragic: a musical-comedy star! In my fifth, I'd be a hermit and live alone on an island and write.

My writer friend Julia says that she would be:

1. A writer
2. A professional musician (this was “What She Might Have Been”)
3. A linguist and world traveler
4. A naturalist or marine biologist
5. A wife/mother/farmer

Gene, a 47-year-old mortgage banker in a real estate firm, wanted four lives:

1. Head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development
2. A fishing guide
3. A novelist (“What He Might Have Been”)
4. A radio announcer for major league baseball

Harriet dropped out of college twenty years ago to marry Gene and have five kids. She said if she had it to do all over again five times, she’d be:

1. The mother of five
2. A scholar of English literature
3. A painter
4. A dancer (“What She Might Have Been”)
5. The boss of some large project or enterprise

Amanda, my editor, said she’d only need *two* lives. In one, she’d spend a lot of her time outdoors, riding, biking, gardening and “putting up,” surrounded by animals of all kinds. (As a little girl she wanted to be a racehorse trainer.) In the other life she’d live in New York City, go to museums, concerts, and theater, give wonderful parties, study ballet—and be an editor. “The only trouble is,” Amanda said, “whichever life I was in, I’d miss the other one!”

That’s just it. If you have to choose just one of your “lives,” even if it’s the one you love best, you’re going to long for all the rest of them. Because *they are all vital parts of you.* The saddest phrase we ever got drummed into our heads was “Make up your mind!” There are people in this world who seem to be born for one single purpose, but they’re the rare exceptions. Most genius is multifaceted. Even Einstein loved music as much as he loved physics. To ask him to choose between Bach and relativity would have been like asking, “Would you rather cut off your right hand or your left?” And it’s the same with you. In each of your “lives” is something you love very, very dearly and need to get into your one life—and you can.

I have not decided yet what I'm going to be when I grow up, and I promise you that when I'm 80 I still won't have decided. What I plan to do is as many things as I can. What I plan to get is whatever I can get my hands on. As far as I'm concerned, there's only one answer to the question, "What do you want?" and that is, "Everything!"

In Mexico they have a wonderful saying: "*La vida es corta, pero ancha.*" "Life is short, but it's wide." I'm not even so sure about the "short" part; have you really grasped the fact that you'll probably have twenty or thirty or forty more years to fill? In any case, there's a lot more room in your life than you think—room for everything in your "five lives" and then some. Finding that room is simply a matter of *making effective use of time*, and that means *planning*—the skills and techniques you'll learn in the second half of this book. Once you know how to use your days and weeks as the stepping stones to a goal, you will realize that time doesn't have to be a boat you're adrift in, or a treadmill you're running on. It's a raw material you can use the way a sculptor uses clay, and out of it you can shape not just one goal, but many.

So the first target you've chosen for yourself in this chapter is just that: the first. As your total life design unfolds, it will include *many* goals of different kinds, sizes, and shapes—from losing ten pounds by next month to traveling around the world ten years from now; from building your own dream house to block-printing this year's Christmas cards. *Anything you want can come true if you cast it in the form of a concrete goal.* And since the ultimate goal is a wonderful life, one that includes some of everything you love, I'd like you to try your hand at designing a *life plan*—a larger pattern of multiple goals that works in everything in your five (or three, or ten) "lives."

Before I show you some of the ways you can fit many goals into one life plan, I want to remind you again that you're not signing any contracts in blood. As you move through life, your perspective and priorities will change; new interests will appear on your horizon, and some of the old ones may fade. Your life plan five or ten years from now may not bear much resemblance to the one you draw up today. But it's always a good idea to have one. It's a way of reminding yourself that the time ahead of you is yours to create in your own image, however that image may change.

Sequential Goals: Switching Horses in Midstream

The most obvious way to fit more than one major interest into your life is to concentrate on one at a time and do them one after the other. People who change careers in mid-life—say, giving up an executive job to open a bookstore in Vermont—are following this kind of life plan. We are surprised and impressed when someone does that only because we’ve bought the fool notion that it is “normal” for people to make up their minds once and for a lifetime. There are many people for whom switching horses in midstream comes much more naturally. Like me: my lifestyle is to change goals every five or ten years. I can’t think of a better way to live than to do something till I’m satisfied or bored with it and then do something else.

Sequential planning is a good way for a woman or man to combine intense involvements with family and career, or for a couple to alternate bread-winning and nurturing responsibilities and periods of study or creative work. A woman might decide to have her children early, and go back to work or school when they have reached school age—like Harriet, the mother of five, who finished college and entered a master’s program in English when her youngest child was in junior high. Or, she might decide to achieve a certain level in her career before having her first child in her 30s. Travel is another goal it often makes sense to plan for after a professional or financial goal has been met. Julia’s life plan for the next ten years includes all three: to write a book of her own, travel for a year or two and learn languages (one of her five lives was “linguist and world traveler”), then settle in the country and have a child (“wife/ mother/ farmer”).

The advantage of sequential goals is that knowing the next juicy one is there and waiting spurs you on to meet the target date for your first goal. The pitfall of this kind of planning is that it can be used to postpone the goal you want—and fear—the most. And if you use it that way, it won’t work, because you can put that goal off indefinitely. So it’s a good rule of thumb to rank your Five Lives in order of importance to you—and then go for the most important one first, even if it’s not the one you’re living now.

Simultaneous Goals: Moonlighting

But what if two or more of your “lives” are equally important to you? Suppose you’re a happily split personality like Amanda, who is half Kentucky bluegrass racehorse breeder and half cosmopolitan New York editor?

Then you go for both at once! You become an editor moonlighting as a racehorse breeder, and vice versa.

Amanda has pictures of thoroughbreds all over her office bulletin board, including one of her “godchild” —a young filly owned by friends. She spends vacations and frequent weekends at the races in Saratoga or at Belmont. Like Clark Kent shucking his business suit for Superman leotards, she can switch from stockings and earrings to jeans and boots and back again with equal agility. The only way she feels she could improve on her double life is “more of both” —permanent dwellings in both city and country and an even deeper involvement in both her worlds.

My guess is that simultaneous goals work best when the two (or more) “lives” you’re living are very different—because then each provides a refreshing change from the other. The “moonlighting” plan can also be a way of resolving the conflict between two touchstones that are notoriously hard to get together: financial security and creative satisfaction. In New York City there’s a group of excellent jazz musicians who play club dates weekends and some evenings. On weekdays, they are. . .Wall Street stockbrokers!

Alternating Goals: The Patchwork Quilt

A variation on the “simultaneous” plan is to arrange your life so that you can devote alternating blocks of time to the pursuit of different goals. This comes very naturally to teachers, who have long summer vacations for traveling or mountain climbing or creative projects or leading student tours; university types even get a whole sabbatical year off for research or writing. But you don’t have to be an academic to plan your life in this pleasant patchwork fashion. Margaret, a nurse-midwife, works and saves money for two years at a stretch and then spends six months traveling through Europe or Asia. And Gene, the mortgage banker whose four lives included fishing, writing, and baseball, has invented what he calls a “businessman’s sabbatical.” Every few years he takes off from two to five months without pay and spends them tracking down fish in a quiet Florida backwater.

Multimedia Goals

Another way to have all your “lives” in one is to combine two or three interests into one goal. Amanda has published books on horseracing; Julia, who would have given me of her lives to marine biology, writes about

whales; Gene plans to devote his next sabbatical to writing (life No. 3) about baseball (life No. 4); and Margaret could combine her profession with her love for travel by offering her much-needed nursing skills in different parts of the world. A multimedia goal can make you extra happy, because two or more of your talents are active at once, and no really important part of you has to wait on the sidelines.

I'll go further, and say that if you want to get the maximum joy and energy out of your life, *nothing you love should ever be left sitting on the shelf*. Everything you put down in your imaginary "lives" should be actively present in your life at all times, because you put it on that list for a reason. A talent or interest is a living part of you—like a hand or an ear or an eye. It needs to be used, it needs to be fed, or it will atrophy and you'll be less than you're meant to be.

But how is it possible to keep five or six interests going at once? Many of us haven't even managed to develop one talent yet. We're fascinated and appalled by the spectacle of a "Renaissance person" like Buckminster Fuller or Margaret Mead—that's one of our definitions of "genius" as somebody different from the rest of us. What if you are the kind of person who needs to do one thing at a time? How on earth can you keep a love for horses alive while you're in law school, or learn to play the violin while you raise a child *and* write a novel? There just isn't that much time and energy to go around.

Main Meals and Side Dishes

The answer to the dilemma is: whichever interests are not included in your current main goal (or goals), make them "side dishes"—things you do every now and then just for pleasure. This is especially important when you're working toward a single goal that's a long haul. Don't say, "Oh, I'll own a horse someday when I'm a successful lawyer," or "I'll immerse myself in music *after* I finish writing this book." There will come moments when you just can't write or study or whatever any more—official or self-made vacations. Some of that time you are going to spend slumped in front of the TV set, or playing frisbee with the dog. All of us need time just to goof off. But some of it you can use to go horseback riding, or to sit and listen to music—whatever you've discovered you need in your life, even though it can't take first priority right now.

I'll give you an example: me. I'm operating at a very high energy level right now, going eighteen hours a day. I'm meeting my No. 1 goal with Success Teams; I have drive, designs, plans, and I love it. But I start crashing from dream deprivation if I don't also get some of the sweets in my other, secret "lives." So whenever I have some free time, I draw pictures of flowers! My walls are covered with them. I also like to read books about physics. I've found an island I can go to by myself when I really need to get away (my "hermit" life). And it is in my life plan within the next three years to be in an amateur musical comedy—something really silly, like *The Boy Friend*. I'm going to get up onstage and I'm going to tap dance and sing. There's no way to stop me, because I know it will make me happy.

An old childhood dream you've decided you don't want any more is almost always an indicator of something you still need in your life, because it goes very deep. Julia, for instance, said that under different circumstances she might have been a professional musician. As a small child she had a very exact musical ear, but nothing in her environment connected that talent with the fact that real, flesh-and-blood people make music. As a grown-up she would still like to learn to play the violin; she knows that with enough time and work she could get good enough to enjoy it. But full-time writing doesn't permit it.

What she can learn from this is that *she must have music in her life*—even if it's just to listen to. She'll feel happier and more alive if she listens to it a lot. She can always make it a future goal to study the violin when her current writing goals are met—but in the meantime, the musical part of her can be alive and singing even without an instrument.

"Side dishes" are delicious in their own right. They can also be the seeds of future goals, a way to keep something gently simmering on the back burner until you can move it up front. There's always room for them in your life, because they can be things you do once a week, once a month, once a year, or even just once. A "side dish" might be a weekly dance class, the history books you read in the evenings, a picture of a horse on your bulletin board, or even just the promise of a month on the beach compressed into one beautiful shell on your desk. It's a living reminder that life is not a miser, and you have the right to *everything* you love.