

The Importance of Deciding What You Want

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There's a short pamphlet which was written in 1926 called "It Works", which is often cited by self-development experts. The very first page of the pamphlet says the following: "If you know what you want, you can have it." The problem is, as incredible as it may sound, that most people don't really know what they want. The great American writer and humorist Mark Twain summed it up neatly when he said:

"I can teach anybody how to get what they want out of life. The problem is that I can't find anybody who can tell me what they want."

In "The Magic Lamp" Keith Ellis explains that it was rumored that a philosopher in Europe once recorded the following message on his voicemail: "This device is programmed to ask two simple questions: Who are you and what do you want? Most people live their entire lives without answering either one." In order to create your best life, you need to be able to answer both of these questions.

In the previous section we discussed the importance of shifting from being a Victim—of circumstances, of events, of other people—to being a Creator. Once you've identified yourself as a Creator the question then becomes: what are you going to create? You decide what to create by deciding what it is that you want.

Stephen Covey suggests in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" that you decide what you want by beginning with the end in mind. He recommends that you try the following exercise: See yourself walking into a funeral parlor and noticing that it's filled with people that you know. As you walk to the front of the room and look inside the casket, you realize that the funeral is for you. Ask yourself the following questions:

Who's there?

What does each of the speakers say about you as they take the podium?

How are they describing you?

What contributions and achievements would you like for them to mention?

What do you want to be remembered for?

What legacy are you leaving behind?

Have you made a positive difference in their lives?

Here are some more questions you should ask yourself to help you determine whether you begin with the end in mind:

Have I decided what I want?

Have I identified what's most important to me?

Do I know what success means to me? Is my ladder leaning against the right building?

Do I have long-term goals covering different areas of my life?

Do I have mid-term and short-term goals that will move me closer to achieving my long-term goals?

Where do I want to be a year from now? Five years from now? Ten years from now? Twenty years from now?

Do I devote my time to what matters most to me?

Who are the most important people in the world to me? Do I spend enough time with them?

Am I doing what I enjoy? Am I having fun?

Do I know where I'm headed?

Am I on the right path?

Am I being authentic?

Do I allow myself to be me?

Am I trying to be somebody I'm not?

Everything that you're experiencing in this moment is a result of all the decisions you've made up to this point in your life. You're living the consequences of your past actions and inactions. Use these questions to decide exactly what it is that you want, and to begin acting toward creating those results.

Before an architect builds a house, they create a blueprint. Before someone starts a business, they create a business plan; the business plan includes an exit strategy, as well as where they plan to be a year after the business is started, in two years, in three years, and so on. In much the same way, by creating a life list you'll be creating a blueprint so that you can live your best life.

The greater clarity you have about what you want, the more you'll be able to achieve, and the faster you'll be able to achieve it. Chapter Three of this eBook contains eight exercises which will help you decide exactly what it is that you want.

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