

20. Vision Activity: The Ten-Year Grid

We've based this activity on one proposed by Alison and David Price in their book *Psychology of Success, A Practical Guide* (2011), which we thoroughly recommend! Have a look at the grid below. It's a 20 x 26 grid with 520 little boxes in it. Each box represents a week of your life for the next ten years.

Now ask yourself what you want your life to be like in ten years' time. You don't have to be super-specific. Try to make notes under the following headings:

» A job that involves ...

» Places I've enjoyed visiting, including ...

.....

» Friends and family I value because they ...

» A lifestyle that allows me to ...

This grid represents the weeks you've got to achieve all that.

[illegible]

January Activities

Looking at it this way, ten years doesn't seem quite as much time. And it gets more alarming ... Before you begin, shade out the following:

- » Sleep: six full columns. Assuming just under eight hours a night, that's all the time in the next ten years that you'll be asleep – about 33% of the time!
- » Leisure and 'trapped time': five full columns. We've gone to the Office of National Statistics for this one. After analysing lifestyles, they conclude that we spend about 6% of our time during mealtimes, about 11% of our time watching TV, 6% of our time travelling from one place to another and 2% of our time on 'personal care' (brushing teeth, make-up, shaving, etc.) That's about 25% of the next ten years you'll be using up.

So, in total you have to clear 11 of the 20 columns. That's over half your time!

Now how many weeks have you got left to build that life for yourself? 234. And that's assuming you want it to happen in ten years; secretly, you might really want it sooner. And there are other things that you haven't shaded off – school, family time and other commitments that remove blocks from the grid.

The conclusion: whatever it is you want to achieve, if you want it soon, *you need to get started*. What immediate actions could get your project underway? Make a note of the kind of things that could get you up and running here:

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The Power of Negative Visualisation

Think about your vision for a life ten years from now. Crazy as it sounds, the chances are that many of the obstacles you'll need to overcome won't come from external circumstances. They will come from *you*. You'll put obstacles in the way of your own potential happiness. In *Rethinking Positive Thinking* (2014), the psychologist Gabrielle Oettingen argues that we all have this tendency to sabotage our own success. But by confronting the obstacles we put in our own way – by visualising them blocking our progress – we get better at removing them.

Use the spaces below to try and tackle two questions:

Is there a part of your personality that might compromise your potential success?

Sometimes I can be ...

.....

.....

What are the obstacles you might actually put in your own way?

Sometimes I have a tendency to ...

.....

Now, imagine that, for one of the reasons you've thought about, you take no action towards your goal.

- » Let's imagine you've just visualised an exciting life for yourself ten years from now, put this book down, and you've found, after a busy week, that you've taken no action. Shade out one week of your grid.
- » Now imagine another month has passed – a busy month with lots going on – and you still haven't managed to get started. Shade out four more of your boxes. As you do this, try to put yourself in the shoes of the future you. With a month gone by, how is this feeling?
- » What if Christmas comes around and you haven't been able to find the time or energy to take any action? That's three months. Shade out 12 of your boxes. Again, try to connect with the feelings you might experience if this really happens.
- » A whole year is two full columns. Visualise a year having passed and, for whatever reason, you haven't yet managed to take any action. Scratch two columns. How would you be feeling if that really did happen?
- » Now look further ahead. How will you feel if three years on – that's six full columns – you haven't done anything?

This negative visualisation might help you. Whenever time passes without you taking action, return to this grid and watch the weeks disappearing.

Then get yourself back on track!

Final Thoughts

Some pupils we work with subdivide the weeks ahead and set mini goals. It seems to often work really well. Take a column – the equivalent of half a year – and set a goal for that six months. It can be smaller, more manageable, but a crucial step forward. Record it below:

A six month mini-goal

By (insert date) I will have (insert commitment)

If it works, you might want to build in some others too:

By (insert date) I will have (insert commitment)

By (insert date) I will have (insert commitment)

By (insert date) I will have (insert commitment)

By (insert date) I will have (insert commitment)

By (insert date) I will have (insert commitment)