

Dream Big

What's in it for me? Learn to pursue your dreams with confidence.

Are you coasting along in a job you've merely settled for? Perhaps you're in a relationship that's held together by fear, rather than any enduring love or passion. Or maybe you feel like you studied the wrong subject and want to start again. Whatever the case may be, your dreams may feel a long way away. These blinks will help you reconnect with your dreams. You'll learn how to understand what motivates you on a deep level and specify exactly what you want to achieve. You'll find out how to vet your ambitions so you can choose the ones that suit you best. Above all, you'll see that a more hopeful future awaits you. In these blinks, you'll discover

how to face up to your current situation with honesty; why a Lamborghini might not lead to lasting satisfaction; and that audacity can lead to big things.

To connect with your dreams, you have to dig right into who you are.

Many people get sidetracked on the way to achieving what they want in life. That's often because they've forgotten what it is they wanted in the first place. Don't be that person. You don't want to reach the end of your life never having started the things you used to dream about. So, how can you get back on track with your life goals? Start by figuring out who you are. The key message here is: To connect with your dreams, you have to discover who you are. There are many reasons why you might have forgotten who you are. Maybe you're lost in the wrong career or tangled up in a relationship that's not right for you. Maybe money worries consume your thoughts. If you've forgotten who you are, set aside some time to get to know yourself. You should approach this as if you're meeting yourself after a long absence, like reconnecting with an old friend. Understanding who you are requires that you set time aside to do only this. As getting this process right is so important, it's crucial that you take it as seriously as any doctor's appointment. In fact, the author has a friend who parks her car outside of a dialysis center each week – not to have dialysis, but just to make sure she takes this process of self-reflection seriously. Getting to know yourself can be scary. With self-examination, you'll have to face up to some difficult truths, feelings, and fears. Perhaps you'll find that you've always wanted to live abroad but have convinced yourself to stay put. Or, perhaps, you'll find that you've put off going to college because you're worried about financial stability. Maybe you'll learn that what you want, more than anything, is to be a parent – and to do that means ending your relationship. In order to understand what really motivates you, you'll have to dig below the surface. Imagine for a moment, that your mind is like a winter scene – large drifts of snow and swirling flurries. To get to the meaningful stuff, you need to reach the deep, silent ice cave underneath the snow. If you can enter that deep place in yourself, you can begin to get back to who you are – and pursue your dreams.

To get your life back on track, be honest about where you are right now.

According to the Bible, after disobeying God, Adam and Eve went into hiding and felt deep shame. God then asked them Where are you? Although God knew exactly where they were physically – hiding behind a bush – what God really wanted to know was where they were spiritually, mentally. If you're floundering, and want to get your life back on track, you need to ask yourself this same question. Where are you right now? The key message here is: To get your life back on track, be honest about where you are right now. This is a difficult task. Most people don't know exactly where they are in their lives. But if you want to move forward with your dreams, you have to know where you're moving forward from. To do this requires real courage. It means openly admitting some difficult truths about where you are. You may say something like, I'm stuck inside my addiction. I'm lost in my unhappy marriage. I'm muddling through my boring job without direction. I'm further than ever from the family I've always wanted. You could share your thoughts with yourself while alone, or meet a good friend at your local coffee shop and tell them. If you can't bear to say the words out loud, write them down on a piece of paper and hand it to someone you trust. Whatever it takes, say exactly where you are. And don't be discouraged from telling it exactly as it is. Life can be brutally unfair and complicated sometimes. Even if you're someone who tries to remain positive, it's healthy to acknowledge just how low you feel, or how lost you are. No matter how far from your ideal life you might be, be honest with yourself. It's OK to wish that you were somewhere else. Then, when you've admitted to yourself that you're not where you want to be, you'll begin to see a change. Rather than believing that where you are right now is your final destination, it'll become the starting line to where you want to go. Instead of letting your past and present define you, you can begin to look ahead. This acknowledgment should give you hope, and a new excitement about where your life is headed.

Be specific about what you want to achieve.

Now that you've been honest about where you are in life, look ahead at where you want to go. When doing this, don't hold back. Don't censor yourself. Get right to the heart of what you truly want from life. If that's a Lamborghini and a villa on the French Riviera, then say that. Don't pretend. Lying to yourself will only cause regret later. Make a list of all the things you dream about. Perhaps you want to become an engineer at Tesla, hike the Pyrenees, own a pet llama, renovate an old house, or be more generous. Whatever it is, you should write it down. When you've done that, get specific about those ambitions. If you leave them vague, they'll stay that way. The key message here is: Be specific about what you want to achieve. To get more specific about your goals, consider what achieving them actually looks like. Let's take, for instance, the dream to "be more generous." As it is, it's far too vague. What does "more generous" mean to you? More generous in spirit? Or more generous with time or money? Perhaps, you'd like to help the hungry in your neighborhood. Now you're getting somewhere. So, rather than saying "I'd like to be more generous," you could say, "I'd like to set up a food bank in my neighborhood and help those in need." That's a concrete and achievable ambition. Broken down into its parts, the ambition suddenly becomes a practical objective. However, you shouldn't let specificity limit your ambitions. Nor should you let limiting beliefs stop you from dreaming big. Just because something seems difficult to achieve, doesn't make it impossible. Take the ambition to win a Nobel Prize for physics. If being a world-renowned physicist is really your dream, then, step-by-step, you should walk down that path. It won't be easy; it might even defeat you. But if you're specific about

how you might achieve it, then it's certainly not beyond the realms of possibility. When you begin to name and specify your ambitions, you'll feel a new horizon opening up before you. Rather than feeling stuck and hopeless, you'll see a new life ahead, full of purpose and inspiration.

Before you get started on your dreams, vet them.

When sifting through your goals, you'll see that they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There'll be little ones, medium-sized ones, and big ones. Now that you have this ragbag of dreams, go through them and sort them in terms of their importance to you and their feasibility. Essentially, you need to vet your ambitions. The key message here is: Before you get started on your dreams, vet them. When it comes down to it, you'll want to focus on the big stuff, as that's what's most meaningful. But there's nothing wrong with achieving the lesser ambitions – like, say, learning to roller skate. These smaller achievements can spur you on to the grander ones. By bringing pleasure and a sense of gratification, they'll give you the boost you need to keep pursuing your dreams. Once you've selected a goal to focus on, ask yourself, Is this dream something that will last? Is it something that will still matter in ten years? Is it something that will matter in one hundred years? Many ambitions fade and seem meaningless in the distant future. Take the Lamborghini. Is a flashy sports car something that will mean something to you in later life, or will it just seem like an expensive lump of metal? Next, you should ask yourself if your dream helps other people or is it all about you. If it's all about you, then that's fine, but it might lack the richness and depth that comes with improving the lives of others. Generally, your deepest sense of fulfillment will come about through helping others. But it is possible to choose ambitions which help others and inspire you. As you vet your dreams, you should also ask yourself, What do I want to be remembered for? Imagine how you'll be remembered by the people you know. And, if your dreams are big enough, those you don't know, too. What kind of legacy would you like to leave? This might be a good way to choose the most important of your dreams. Finally, you should ask if your dream is possible. Of course, you shouldn't get rid of an ambitious dream just because it's difficult. But you should also be able to acknowledge that some dreams aren't really feasible, no matter how hard you try. For instance, it's very unlikely that you'll be able to do a round trip to Jupiter – for now, at least.

Confront and understand any limiting beliefs and fears.

Just as you're about to get started on your life's ambitions, a little voice speaks from deep inside your head. It says, You're not good enough to be a scientist. It says, You're not attractive enough. It says, You're going to be dirt poor for the rest of your life. You try to quiet this voice but it comes back louder and louder until it fills your ears. If you want to make your dreams a reality, you need to deal with this voice and silence it as much as possible. The key message here is: Confront and understand any limiting beliefs and fears. The first thing you need to do is identify these limiting beliefs and fears. If you don't do this, you could be held hostage by them for the rest of your life. Maybe every time you go into a meeting to pitch an idea, there's a little part of you that just doesn't trust yourself enough. Or perhaps you believe, deep down, that you've

missed your chance to pursue something you wanted. It's important that you take note of these fears – whatever they are. The next step is harder. You have to do a bit of self-analysis and try to understand where these beliefs come from. Often, it's not from you, but from an old teacher, parent, school bully, or partner. It might be something they said a long time ago that has made you more hesitant or caused you to doubt yourself. And sometimes, it's not one specific person, but a monstrous combination of them all. Sometimes, the limiting belief or fear that's been passed down to you was meant as good advice. For instance, the author's father used to warn him that there were rattlesnakes underneath every log in the Sierra Nevada mountains. So, when he went hiking and came across a log on the trail ahead, his father advised him to step on top of it, then leap as far away as he could, to avoid being bitten on the ankles. Now, the author has been on many hikes in those mountains and has never seen a single rattlesnake. But, even today, if he sees so much as a twig, he'll jump on top of it. You might have taken on a similar, and more limiting, belief or fear. Whatever it is, you need to identify it. Then, acknowledge that it's not you that's the problem, but the belief. When you've done that, you'll be ready to move on, lighter and freer. And you'll be better prepared to embrace your dreams.

Be audacious and persistent when you're exploring opportunities.

Now that you've narrowed down your dreams to the most meaningful ones, you need to take some action. You can't keep dreaming forever. There comes a time when you need to take some actual steps down the path you've chosen. Sure, those first steps might be very difficult. And they might be discouraging. But you've got to take them. And as you take these steps, be bold and persistent. The key message here is: Be audacious and persistent when you're exploring opportunities. So, you need to be audacious in the pursuit of your dreams. Sometimes, this means asking for advice and help from someone who's already got to where you want to go. Say that you're looking to become a novelist and want some tips on where to begin. Why not email your favorite writer? What's the worst that could happen? Sure, they might not reply, or maybe they'll tell you that they don't have the time to talk. But what's worse than that? Here's what – not even giving it a shot. When you do approach people for help, though, be prepared. If they've dropped what they're doing to read your email or take your call, get to the point. Don't tell them how much of a fan you are. Or, if you're calling them, don't ask, Is this really you? Ask for concrete advice. And when you don't get an email or call back, don't be discouraged. Keep at it. Take the author's example: every year, he writes a letter to the Pope asking for an appointment. And every year, he receives the same reply from an assistant bishop telling him no. But he keeps writing every year. Though this is a comic example, there's a serious point here. People who have big ambitions are persistent and aren't afraid of going for outlandish and unlikely opportunities. A real-life example where this persistence paid off comes from a man named Ryan Graves. One day, after a period of drifting from job to job, he saw a tweet from a start-up company looking for tips on how to get itself up and running. He sent the start-up a reply that said: "Here's a tip. Email me." That company was Uber. Ryan became one of its first employees, and then, eventually, the CEO. How about that for taking a risk and grabbing hold of an opportunity?

Final summary

The key message in these blinks is that: To learn to dream again, get reacquainted with yourself - and what motivates you - on a deep level. You'll have to look at your life with honesty and clarity before you can move on to better things, though. When you've done that, you can begin to specify exactly what you want to achieve and see which of your dreams are feasible. And don't be afraid to dream big. Leave your fears and limiting beliefs at the doorstep. And here's some more actionable advice: Make time for family and friends. Just because you're pursuing big dreams doesn't mean that you should neglect the meaningful relationships in your life. In fact, the opposite is true. Without those relationships, everything else will feel pretty empty, no matter how high you soar.