

# DESIGN A LIFE YOU LOVE

**4 SIMPLE WAYS  
TO CULTIVATE  
YOUR PASSION**

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It's a little ironic, truth be told, telling you how to design a life you love. I spent most of my life trying desperately to fit in to someone else's version of good enough. Understanding what made me, me and discovering what I loved seemed totally unimportant. For a girl far more bent to the perceptions of others - pleasing, performing and perfecting, this lesson was hard-won. But I guess that's how God works.

After writing and blogging for years I finally had enough. Enough trying to live out the gifts, talents and abilities of those I admired. Enough playing a part that wasn't me and feeling stuck. Enough pretending I knew what I was doing. Or even why I was doing it. I felt like a fraud. I was half a person in my very own life and I don't remember exactly when or why or how it happened, but something in me shifted. I was done. Disappointed and disillusioned with who I had become, I wanted to live a life I loved but I didn't have the first idea what that meant. Deep down I feared that whatever it was, it wouldn't be enough.

I'd been there before. Perpetually not enough. But something was different this time. In spite of my fear, I was willing to lose everything I had to discover who I was and become her. Even if that was a drastic departure from my present. Even if it seemed crazy, I wanted to live a life I loved.

*Do you want to design a life you love?* While most of us say it, and many of us strive for it, it's the reality of doing it that's hard. We can live a good life, but staring at a calendar trying to balance work, home, kids, marriage, exercise, dinner, friendships and laundry, is there margin for love?

Can you actually create a life you love?

I believe you can. Here's the rub: it won't happen by accident. It also won't happen while cruising on autopilot. And it won't feel all warm and fuzzy all of the time. Designing a life you love doesn't require a lot of money, a personal chef or a full-time nanny. One need only to look at the latest magazines to see that often the opposite is true.

The biggest, most powerful step to designing a life you love is action. **"The distance between dreams and reality is called action."** You've got to move. You've got to say yes. You've got to do the work. You've got to believe in yourself more than your doubt, and you have to actually get to know YOU. Designing a life you love requires you to be true to yourself. Not easy, I know. It's why I think loving ourselves better is our life's work.

To design anything, one must take into consideration a number of factors. The same is true of your life. To be completely honest, I fumbled through this quite disastrously and only discovered the process looking back. But as hard, embarrassing and raw as it felt at times, it got me there. Here. And while I don't know exactly where that is, I know it's different than anywhere I've been before and that it feels amazing and free and totally me. And I love it. I'm hoping that maybe, somehow, this process might also help you.

If you want to design a life you love, you must process through four main areas of your life.

## **PAST - EXPERIENCE & WISDOM:**

Look back on your past experiences and write down some of the most life-changing, transformational moments or memories in your life. Include moments of success, failure, joy, sorrow, happiness and pain. With each experience, write down a lesson you learned from it and the wisdom you now carry. Don't look back and get stuck. Remember: your past is a tool. So many times we want to leave our past completely behind. This is a mistake. Perhaps you're embarrassed, ashamed or simply want to be totally different from who you once were, I get it, but don't throw away your experience. Uncover, process and accept your whole story so you can harness it to propel you into your future.

## **PRESENT - PRESENCE & PASSION:**

What makes you feel present, alive, angry, focused, grateful or sad? Your emotions are powerful indicators of the places your heart beats strong. You have a perfect guide and chances are you've heard the whispers or felt the nervous pounding in your heart before. Listen to the still small voice inside you. No matter where you are, you have the power to write a better story. Being alive and awake in your present day, paying attention to what you think, feel, and know deep in your bones - helps you uncover some of the things you need to incorporate or eliminate to design a life you love.

## **POSSIBILITY - VISION & DREAMS:**

What inspires you? What magazines or books do you read? What writer, actor, song, place, color or activity activates your sense of passion and drive? Every one of those things is trying to tell or teach you something about who you are, how you're wired and how you can design a life you love. Use those words, role models and elements to create a vision board for where you're going. Surround yourself with thoughts and images that inspire you to reach forward, to pursue growth and transformation into the whole person you were created to be. When you set your sights ahead with a vision in mind, even if you don't know exactly what it means or where it's going, you will inevitably start moving in that direction.

## **POWER - PLAN & PURPOSE:**

Once you've processed these four areas on paper, look for connections. Circle themes you see repeating in multiple categories. Draw thread lines where, for example, one past experience led to a present passion. Begin to explore the uniquely beautiful landscape of your life where no experience, pain, joy or passion is wasted. Follow the guide inside, that still small voice who whispers to the deep places of your soul; ignites your heart to beat out of your chest or

brings goose pimples to your flesh. It knows the way. That doesn't mean it will be easy. It simply means you've started the beautiful life-long work of living with your whole heart. Everyone wants to live a life they love but, in a culture so accustomed to immediate gratification if we can't find meaning, we will settle for pleasure. It's a shallow substitute for a good life. If you want to design a life you love, the meaning has to go deep. It must have action. It must honor YOU. It must love others. Grab a sheet of paper and write some notes in each of these four areas. Connect the threads.

Remember: **A life you love honors all of who you are.** Designing it means that you invite your past to live in harmony with your present and your future. When that is balanced by a plan, purpose and power greater than yourself, you'll have the unique recipe for designing a life you love. So do the work, let go of your fear, your not-enoughs, and your copycat life; listen to that still small voice inside you and create one of your own. You can do it. You can design a life you love.