

**THE  
MAGIC OF  
THINKING  
BIG**

Every morning at 4am, while the rest of the world is still asleep, I head out for my morning walk. And while that might sound like torture to many people, it's actually my favorite part of the whole day, the time where the whole world is just mine. It's my time to think and dream and listen to audio-books and make sense of the world, to get purpose and clarity on who I am and where I am going. And I wouldn't give it up for anything.

Lately I've been doing a lot of thinking about goals and motivation and why some people are able to achieve the things they want, and others seem to just sit there making excuses, worrying about all the things that could go wrong, or waiting for circumstances to be perfect.

And I think it comes down to how bad you really want it.

You see, when you want something, I mean really want it, you can feel it in every bone in your body, that drive, that hunger, that internal pressure to achieve. You don't need anyone else to push you—you're more than willing to do whatever it takes. And it doesn't feel like work, either. Oh sure, there might be hard days and annoying moments, but they are worth it because every step you take is getting you closer to that goal.

And if you don't feel that? Then maybe your goal isn't big enough.

When I first started this blog, *Living Well Spending Less*®, I set a goal for myself to make enough money blogging that my husband—an aerospace engineer—could quit his job and become a stay-at-home dad. At the time, it was a completely crazy goal that seemed utterly impossible, and my husband told me as much, insisting that I would never be able to make money from a blog.

But I wanted it so *bad*, I could almost taste it, and I was determined to do whatever it took to make that crazy dream a reality.

And so, with two toddlers at home, I started getting up at 3am every morning—and often even earlier—in order to work on my blog before anyone else was up. I took advantage of every naptime, every weekend, and every spare moment. And when I wasn't working on the blog itself, I was learning everything I could about the business of blogging, from SEO to social media to how to actually generate revenue.

I'm not going to lie, it was a pretty exhausting time. There were lots of downsides. My husband couldn't understand why on earth I was spending all my time on a blog that he was sure would never amount to anything. My real life friends laughed at me to my face and talked about me behind my back. My kids watched way too much Dora the Explorer and Wild Kratts. I didn't get nearly enough sleep. I had almost no life. And even though it was hard, to me the effort was worth every sacrifice, because I could see the vision of what this blog could be, even if no one else could at the time.

In 2013, nearly three years after starting this blog, that dream became a reality.

My husband was able to quit his job and we've never looked back. The blog—and the full-fledged business that has grown out of it—has continued to grow and flourish.

But that's not the end of the story.

You see, once I actually achieved that crazy big goal, the one everyone—even me—thought was totally impossible, I was left with two very clear choices. I could sit back and coast, or I could set some NEW crazy big goals, new dreams that would keep me hungry and keep me jumping out of bed before dawn every day.

You probably know which one I chose.

Whether you are a blogger or own your own business, or whether you are a working mom or a stay-at-home mom, you might think setting small, reasonable goals is the way to go. After all, small reasonable goals seem safe and, well, reasonable, right?

Wrong.

I am here to tell you that thinking small won't get you anywhere. For your dreams to motivate you to action, they have to be big enough to scare you a little, to ignite that spark of courage and determination that lives inside you.

## THE MAGIC OF THINKING BIG

Have you ever heard of a football coach named Lou Holtz? In 1966, when he was twenty-eight years old, Lou Holtz was going through a serious rough patch. His coaching career is going nowhere. He was broke and unemployed. And, to make matters even worse, his wife was expecting their third child.

Something had to give.

Hoping to motivate him, his wife bought him a book called *The Magic of Thinking Big* by David Schwartz. The book worked. Inspired by what he read, Holtz decided that the key to changing his life was to make a list of all the BIG things he really wanted to achieve in life.

His list included some pretty audacious goals, such as becoming the Notre Dame football coach, meeting the president, landing on an aircraft carrier, and appearing on *The Tonight Show*—CRAZY things that most people would have laughed at him for even considering.

But guess what? Not only did Lou Holtz become the head football coach at Notre Dame, but he also led his team to a National Championship. Among other things, he enjoyed dinner with Ronald Regan at the White House, was a guest on *The Tonight Show*, met the pope, shot not one but two holes-in-one at golf, jumped out of an airplane, went on a safari in Africa, and yes, he even landed on an aircraft carrier.

To date, Lou Holtz has crossed off 102 of his 107 lifetime goals.

But what people often forget is that as awe-inspiring as Lou Holtz turned out to be, he didn't start out that way. He was just an ordinary guy full of the same frustrations and failures and self-doubt that we ALL experience sometimes. In fact, at one point his poor pregnant wife was wringing her hands just wondering how to get him off the couch!

But ultimately the difference between Lou Holtz and so many others was that he became not only willing to *imagine* a better life for himself in the biggest possible ways, he was also willing to *write those goals down and make them real*. Once they were real to him, he was able to take the steps necessary to make those goals happen.

## WHY YOU NEED A STRETCH GOAL

In his most recent book, "**Smarter, Faster, Better**," bestselling author Charles Duhigg explains that while we often hear about the importance of setting "SMART" goals—goals that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-Bound," there is an even more critical piece of effective goal-setting—that often gets forgotten.

So what is this critical element?

According to Duhigg, it is starting with what he calls a "stretch goal." In other words? It is thinking BIG. "The problem with many to do lists," he explains, "is that when we write down nothing but a series of short term objectives we are only working to satisfy the immediate need for closure."

He goes on to explain that without a BIG goal to reach for and tell us what to focus on, we will spend hours on unimportant tasks simply because it feels good to check them off our list.

But here's the thing--the true secret of productivity is **being able to focus 100% of your attention on your biggest, most important tasks at any given time.**

And while that sounds so simple, I've discovered that for most of us, it's not. There are a few big obstacles that get in our way. We don't know what the most important task is. We are too distracted. We are afraid we might miss something.

But all these obstacles point to one larger problem, and that is that we don't have a BIG plan for success. Instead of thinking BIG and allowing ourselves to consider—and shoot for—the wildest possibilities, we think small, allowing ourselves to get mired down in the day-to-day grind.

We tell ourselves there is too much to do to worry about pie-in-the-sky ideals; that it is more important to worry about where our next paycheck is going to come from than what our retirement plan will be.

**But being busy is not the same as being productive.**

And so before we can figure out how to focus 100% of our attention on our biggest, most important tasks, we need to give ourselves permission to think BIG.

The reality is that big goals get big results, while small goals get small results. What you will become is what you believe you can become, and the bigger and scarier your goal, the more chance you will have for big success.

Big goals are the road map for our lives that tell us what direction we need to go. They are the compass that keep us on the right path. They are the filter that lets us know what is important and what is not worth our time. Big goals are the key to success.

## **OVERCOMING YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS**

So what holds us back from setting—and therefore achieving—these big goals? Almost always, it is something known as a limiting belief—a thought or belief we have about ourselves that holds us back from achieving our full potential.

These limiting beliefs can come in all shapes and sizes, and appear in all different areas of our lives. They are also shape shifters—re-emerging in a new way each time we think we’ve overcome one. Most of us have many limiting beliefs, but I believe that all of us have at least a few.

It might be that we don’t believe that we actually have anything valuable to offer the world, or that we aren’t as talented or witty or well-spoken as so-and-so. It might be that we don’t believe we can actually accomplish those things that we’ve thought about doing, or that we’re not smart enough to be successful. It might be that we don’t want to invest in ourselves because we might fail. It might be that we don’t want to reach out and ask for help because we might get rejected. It might be that we don’t want to put 100 percent of our energy and efforts into a new project because we’re not sure what the people around us will say. What if they don’t understand? What if they make fun of us?

Whatever your limiting beliefs may be, I guarantee they are there. And while we can’t always stop those limiting beliefs from popping up, we CAN refuse to listen to them. Because once we’ve recognized a limiting belief for what it is—just a thought that is holding us back—we can take away the power it has over us and move past it.

## **CONQUERING THE FEAR OF FAILURE**

I think that the biggest limiting belief that most people have is the fear that they might fail. Because let’s face it—none of us want to fail! And often that fear that we might make a mistake or a misstep, that we might fall flat on our face or lose all the time or money that we’ve invested becomes completely paralyzing.

And our response to that fear is to pull in, to get smaller, to try to mitigate the potential risk by not doing too much in any one area. We dabble a little here

and a little there, ever dipping our toes into the water, never wanting to go all in.

The results from this strategy range from minimal to moderate success. There is no big failure, but there is also no big success.

Here's the thing—it is really easy to look at the most successful people and assume that they have always been successful, or that everything they touch turns to gold, or even that they were just born lucky and happened to be in the right place at the right time. But in reality, this is very rarely the case.

Even the most successful people have experienced—and continue to experience—failure. That is the nature of entrepreneurship—some risks will pan out and others won't. The key is usually to learn from your missteps and to not let a few setbacks stand in your way.

Michael Jordan once famously said, "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Likewise, Thomas Edison had to try 10,000 versions of the light bulb before he finally figured out what would work.

Steve Jobs was actually fired by the board at Apple at one point. He later said that it was the best thing that ever happened to him, because it spurred more creativity and more ideas than he had ever had before.

Most people don't know that Henry Ford actually founded two failed motor companies before finding huge success with the Ford Motor company and the Model T.

Bill Gates' first startup company, Traf-O-Data, was an abject failure. The product barely even worked & the endeavor was a complete disaster. However, that failure taught him some very valuable lessons that he was able to apply when he started his new company, Microsoft, a few years later.

One of my favorite quotes of all time is from Winston Churchill who said, **"success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is only the courage to continue that matters."**

While failure isn't fun to think about, I don't want that fear of failing to be what holds you back from thinking big. The reality is that you will make mistakes. Everyone does. Think big anyway.

In my own life, I have certainly experienced my share of failures, mistakes, bombs, and missteps. My first marriage ended in divorce. I dropped out of law school. I got fired. I filed for bankruptcy. I trusted someone I shouldn't have, only to have the situation blow up in my face. Even in my business, I have hired the wrong people, made giant mistakes, and invested in projects that have

been nothing but big money losers.

But I've also learned that this is just part of life. If I spend my time beating myself for the mistakes I make, I wouldn't have any time to focus on the things that are going well. Being successful in life is all about learning to think BIG in order to maximize your success.

## SETTING YOUR BIG GOALS

When setting your big goals, don't be afraid to start with a grand vision—a life list, similar to the one that Lou Holtz came up with after reading *The Magic of Thinking Big*. To help you focus, try dividing it into different categories---family, financial, professional, and personal.

As you let yourself dream about the future in these different areas, be conscious of the limiting beliefs that begin creeping into your thoughts. Recognize them for what they are—limiting beliefs—and allow yourself to write down even the craziest, most audacious goals and dreams without judgment or self-editing. Don't worry either about setting time limits or making them perfect—just write whatever comes to mind.

In other words? Think BIG.

And so, my question for you today is this: **how bad do you want it?** Are you reaching for a dream so big it scares you? And if not, why not? Push yourself to make it bigger until you feel that spark, that hunger, and then you will know you're on the right track.

**HOW TO FIND  
A WHY THAT  
IS BIGGER  
THAN YOUR  
FEAR**

There's nothing worse than seeing your spouse be unhappy, and my husband Chuck was *miserable*.

Every day I would watch him come home a little more defeated, and a little more despondent from his job as an aerospace engineer. He hated every minute, and I hated that he hated it.

And so, soon after starting my blog in 2010, I set a goal to make enough money that Chuck could quit his job.

That was my WHY. It was the purpose that I needed. It drove me to wake up at 3am—and sometimes earlier—every single day for more than 3 years, to work while the kids were still asleep. It was that WHY that kept me going, even when it was hard and confusing and frustrating.

And it was that WHY that ultimately built my business.

When we clarify what our WHY is, it gives us the purpose and the motivation we need to stick to our goals and start creating a life we love.

Make no mistake—going after big goals and dreams is HARD. It's scary and frustrating and sometimes even miserable. There will be so many times where you feel like giving up. And that's exactly why you need to be SO clear about your why.

This was definitely true for Jennifer Marx, a single mom who was desperate to find a new way to work from home so that she could be there for her son.

And then there's Caroline Vencil who unexpectedly became a teenage mom and wanted a chance to redeem herself and create a better life for her family.

Or Tasha Agruso, who you met in Episode 14 of The Do It Scared® podcast- a super-stressed out corporate lawyer who wanted a way to stay home with her 3-year old twins.

Each of these women found their WHY. And, they used their why to drive them to succeed beyond their imaginations.

Within a year, Jennifer was earning more than \$20,000 a month from her site and was able to pay off her debt and save her family in the process.

Caroline's big why drove her to put everything she had into creating a course. Within months, the revenue she generated had surpassed her husband's income. She single-handedly changed the trajectory of her family's life.

And Tasha, spent every spare moment she had working on her home decorating website and within 16 months was making enough money to walk away from law forever.

In the end, Jennifer, Caroline, and Tasha succeeded in creating successful businesses because their WHY was bigger than their fear.

The best way—maybe the only way—to motivate yourself to do hard things, to stretch outside your comfort zone and to persevere even when the going gets tough—is to get crystal clear about your why.

And so, when it comes to your goals, do you know your big why? Do you know what is driving you and bringing purpose to your life? Do you know what is worth fighting for? And how can you use that motivation to get you where you want to be?

Find your WHY, and the rest will fall into place.

Of course, that might be easier said than done, right?

Below is a quick recap of the three steps you can take to find a WHY that is bigger than yourself:

## **MANUFACTURE A CATALYST**

Without fail, every single person who overcomes adversity or conquers a fear has a WHY - a reason that motivates them to take action in the first place.

The thing is, we have more control than we think we do when it comes to finding reasons that motivate us to push past our fear. Not all of us have the willpower or the drive to just “decide” to overcome our fear, but we can intentionally seek out inspiration and accountability, and better opportunities.

If you are having trouble connecting with your bigger why or finding the motivation to follow through, it can be helpful to start by putting some safeguards in place that will keep you connected to that sense of purpose.

## **CONNECT WITH A LARGER PURPOSE**

I was deeply uncomfortable in my own skin and it was negatively impacting my life. For the first time ever, I realized that the way I felt about my physical self—was directly related to my bigger, far more important—and far more motivating—goals of having a great marriage and a successful business.

Once I connected my goal of losing weight and getting in better shape to a higher purpose, I was able to find the motivation to stick with it.

Whatever your goal is, connect it to a larger purpose.

## **KEEP YOUR WHY TOP OF MIND**

Once you’ve connected to your higher purpose, it is critically important to keep your WHY top of mind.

Because it is easy to forget, especially when things get hard. And make no mistake—things will get hard! Because anytime you are pursuing a big goal or pushing past your comfort zone, or facing a fear or about to do something really important or really great, that is exactly when things start to get difficult and awkward and painful and very, very real.

Keeping your WHY at the forefront might mean writing it out in a place that you can refer back to frequently. Creating a vision board or writing your WHY on your bathroom mirror, can also be helpful tools to remind you of your WHY.

The point is to make sure you are doing everything in your power to continually connect to your why and keep that higher purpose top of mind. That way, when the going gets tough, you'll find the motivation to keep moving forward, no matter what.

# HOW TO CREATE AN ACTION PLAN THAT WORKS

Do you want to know the biggest thing that holds us back from accomplishing our goals and dreams?

It's a lack of planning!

We will always fill our time and there will always be things to do, no matter what those things are. But, without planning ahead and managing our time well, it will be hard to achieve the kind of growth we want in business and life.

In 2012, I got serious about setting goals, measuring progress, and planning my time. And, I don't think it was a coincidence that my business started to take off then.

You see, I used to approach my days and weeks with a "what's most urgent" mentality. I focused my energy and efforts on the things that felt important and critical right then. And, I didn't necessarily think about how those tasks fit into the larger picture. I was always busy, but not purposefully busy.

That's why I now believe planning is SO important. Truthfully, I can't imagine growing the business that I have WITHOUT being completely vigilant about setting goals, planning ahead, and managing my time well.

I get that planning is not for everyone. And that's okay. But I also know that if you want to actually accomplish all of your big goals and dreams, you are going to need a solid plan. And, it is pretty easy with the right kind of tools.

So how does it work, exactly, planning for your big goals? After all, it is one thing to dream about crazy ideas, but it is a whole other thing to follow through on them. Where do you even begin?

Below is a quick recap of the three steps I take to create an action plan that works:

## **BREAK BIG INTO BITE SIZE**

First, break down your big goals into bite size pieces. Start by breaking down your someday goals into something you can do THIS YEAR. Then break your THIS YEAR goal into something you can do THIS MONTH, and then from THIS MONTH to THIS WEEK. The biggest goals never happen in one fell swoop. It is always a matter of continual momentum in the right direction.

Our natural inclination is to put off our big goals in favor of what feels more important at the moment.

But, that is exactly why it's crucial to break down those big goals into smaller milestones. Then those milestones into even smaller, more manageable bites. In the end, you'll have a set of tasks that each feel doable. Completing these small tasks will give you a sense of accomplishment and the satisfaction of being one step closer to your big goal.

## TIME BLOCKING

This is where the rubber meets the road. Once you've broken down those big goals, start by planning out your week. Prioritize your time into must do, should do, and would like to do items.

**The Living Well Planner®** is the perfect tool to help you break down your big goals into actionables. In my planner, I start each week off by using the **Weekly Wizard™** page. This page helps me identify ONE big thing that is most important this week. I like to call it the big focus. It also helps me identify my top three tasks, starting with the "A" tasks, or the ones that absolutely must get done this week to get me closer to my goals.

Once you've filled out your Weekly Wizard, block out time on your schedule to make it happen. This is a process of making an appointment or meeting with yourself. Take this time as seriously as you would any other appointment. It is your focus time to complete your "big goal" task for that day.

Here are a couple more tips to keep in mind as you are time blocking:

First, always block out more time for an important task than you think you will need. Things almost always take longer than we think they will!

Second, if you can, try to block your time into 1-2 hour chunks. Research shows that this is the optimum amount of time to work in one stretch—long enough that you can really dig in, but not so long that your brain turns off.

Third, be sure to schedule in buffer blocks each day—chunks of unstructured time that you can use to catch up if you get behind or to handle any urgent matters that come up that day.

The key to success is practice. And, like anything else in life, the more you practice it, the easier time blocking will become.

## MAKE A DAILY DECISION TO STICK WITH IT.

After learning the entire process of turning your big dreams into baby steps and the secret to blocking out your time, the hard work is over, right? Not so much. You need to make the daily decision to follow through with your plan and actually do the work.

Each morning we start our day filled with a certain amount of self-discipline, and as we go about our day, that resolve tends to drain out. So, if you start your day by tackling your hardest, but most important tasks, you'll have already done a lot!

We must accept the truth that if we don't take the time to put our long-term goals first, there will never be enough time or energy for our dreams. The obligations of every day life will always take over.

The reality of life is that there will always be more to do than we have time for,

but that doesn't mean that we can't still make our big goals and dreams a priority. We absolutely **CAN**.

***Remember, small steps, taken over time, can lead to big things.***

# DESIGN A LIFE YOU LOVE

**4 SIMPLE WAYS  
TO CULTIVATE  
YOUR PASSION**

WRITTEN BY TAMMY STRAIT

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.