



2024_A Year to Unpack your Dreams

8 January 2024

Happy New Year to you all. At the start of this new year, I have one thing I want to say to you. And that is, “unpack your dreams”.

We have had a rough time over the past few years. Some people have had it worse than others and are still struggling to fully recover from the aftermath of the Covid pandemic; the physical, social, financial, and occupational challenges are not quite in the past yet. This is a new year though, and it is an opportunity for a new beginning. It is a time to deliberately decide to leave the past behind and move forward in hope.

.....a time for new beginnings

So, at the beginning of this January 2024 I am inviting you to recall your dreams, set some new ones if you haven't got any dreams, and start making them a reality. We all need dreams. Sometimes we are afraid to dream because we fear the disappointment of working towards something that does not come true. Lots of people had dreams and goals they were working towards before the pandemic hit, and found their dreams were turned to dust due to regulations around the pandemic. The shock and loss for many people was devastating as their hopes and dreams and the work they had put in towards achieving them came to nought.

Today however is a new day. And this is a new year. We cannot let what happened in the past hold us back. We cannot let the past define our lives and how we choose to act moving forward. We need to let go of what the past brought, and realise it is a new day and we can dream new dreams. You want to have dreams. Dreams give you

a sense of purpose in life and we all need a purpose, so we don't get bogged down with the drudgery of everyday chores and responsibilities.

.....my dream life looks like.....

I am inviting you to set aside an hour or two, with your thoughts and pen and paper. Once you have done this, preferably in a peaceful spot where you won't be disturbed, I want you to start by asking yourself some questions.

What do I want my life to be like in five years' time?

Ignore the fact that you don't know exactly what the next five years will bring. No matter what will happen in the world, you still have the capability to set and achieve goals that you want to. Don't leave everything to chance. Don't tell yourself that there is so much change in the world I must just go along with what is. Yes, there is a lot of change, there is also a lot of opportunity to define how you want your life to be that will not be impacted by the changes, or, could even be helped along by future changes. You don't want to be like a boat in the sea without a rudder or steering mechanism. That way you will float wherever the sea takes you. You want to be able to set your direction and move forward in that direction. Sometimes you will need to go with the flow, but a lot of times you will need to direct yourself and your life to get to where you want to go to.

When you think about your life in five years' time think about:

1. What do I want **vocationally**? This could be your career, your studies if you are a full-time student, your home and family if you are a full-time homemaker, or your charities if you are a full-time volunteer.
2. Where do I want to be **financially**? Do I want to reduce debt? Do I want more savings and investments? Do I want to be earning a bigger income and what do I want this to be?
3. What **relationships** do I want to have, and what do I want the quality of these relationships to be like?
4. What do I want my physical and mental **health** to be like?

Spend some time thinking about these questions and jot down your answers. Then leave this exercise for about a week.

Roughly one week later come back to your notes and read them. Add or change anything you want to. You are in fact setting a vision for your life for the near future. And in the same way that companies set a vision, you do want to set a vision for your life. You do want to proactively decide to have your life the way you want it to be. You don't want to just leave everything up to chance and do nothing.

After you have updated your comments with your dreams for your occupation, finances, health, and relationships, then leave your notes for another week.

....confirm your vision for your life....

In a week's time come back to them. If there is anything you want to change then do it. By now you should be fairly certain that what you have written down is what you do want to have in your life. Once you know that this is what you want your life to be like then you can start to set specific goals for each of these. Write down some goals you are going to achieve for this year so you can start realising your vision.

When you set goals don't set too many. If you have more than about three big goals for the year you are going to battle to achieve them. Then you will get fed up and decide that this whole process doesn't work. It does, you just can't do everything at once. Set a few goals, write them down in as much detail as you can, and commit to achieving these goals. To achieve these goals, write down a plan, listing each step you need to take to achieve the goal with a date next to it. Then follow this plan step by step. Your plan should be such that if you follow each step you have to end up achieving your goal. If you need help with deciding on steps then talk to someone who has already achieved your goal.

From this point on it is all about self-discipline and keeping yourself motivated. If you need to write your goals on a poster and stick this on the bedroom wall or fridge door, together with the plans, then do so. You want to have your goals and plans highly

visible where you can see them every day and you can check and monitor your actions.

Each of these actions is important. You need a vision so that you know where you are going. You need a vision because that is what keeps you going through the hard days when you would rather give up, or you wonder why you are doing this in the first place. You need goals because that is how you achieve anything in life. Nothing happens unless you set a goal and decide to go for it. And then you need a plan because that 1) guides your daily steps to achieving your goals, and 2) lets you see that you can indeed achieve the goal. You just need to follow the steps. If you want to do this for a time frame of 6 months rather than a year that is fine. You can even set quarterly goals. Goals are easier to achieve if they are not too far into the future.

.....make a commitment to taking daily action to achieve your goals

And if you ever get the feeling that this is too much work, and why would you want to do this, consider that you get one life. And this life is actually quite short. There are so many things you can be, do, and have on this planet, but none will jump into your life by magic. You can have most of what you would really like in life. You have to work for it though. And this is how you work for it and get it. This is how everyone who has achieved what they wanted to, did it. Know that you can too. It's not difficult, it's just about discipline and perseverance.