



LIVING AS A CREATIVE VISIONARY: PART II

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*“We have no future except what we envision, and
what we envision will draw us toward itself.”
Rubinof-Jacobson*

This article is the second in a series on living our lives as creative visionaries. In the first article, written for the June 2004 issue of "Pathways", I described a creative visionary as someone who envisions possibilities, has inspired ideas and sees ways to bring creative visions into being. "It is someone who is a "seer" – someone who dreams of ways to express their creativity." I talked about how being a creative visionary helps us come "home" to our inner selves, our true Selves. I also described how this form of creativity comes from a place beyond our intellect -- beyond thought, knowledge or logical realization. It comes from a source deep within us that requires a conscious inner awareness.

I also differentiated between fantasy and creative envisioning. Fantasy is done for self-soothing or pleasure –seeking purposes, while envisioning is a centered, focused, purposeful endeavor, which helps us explore and expand our creative inspirations.

I concluded by saying that "Without our ability to be visionaries...there would be no hopes, dreams, goals, and no creativity." As Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream." To move beyond merely surviving life, to thriving, we must all be able to dream.

This second article in the series, describes more about the process of being a creative visionary. As in the first article, I have included exercises for you to try.

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Kate Maloy says in her book [A Stone Bridge North](#), "We need to go about our business with our eye to the immediate, and we need also to contemplate unreachable, unknowable mysteries. We need both our limits and a vision of limitlessness – and we need to connect the two..." How hard it is to be present in the moment and to be aware of the future at the same time. How hard it is to be aware of the limitations and have creative visions of the limitless. How impossible it seems to use our right and left brains at the same time. And yet, to be a creative visionary, this is an important part of the process.

If I have a creative vision of building a house, I must be able to hold in awareness the vision of the whole, completed project, while at the same time also realizing that brick by brick – each brick counts. And, not only does each brick count, but I must be aware that as I place in brick in place, it must be the right kind, centered properly, and well-cemented to the one before. If not, the whole building could crumble.

Many people think that it only counts as a success when the whole building is completed. Not so. Each brick counts. When we try to build our visions too quickly, with not enough thought about each small part of our larger vision, or when we try to ignore one brick – any brick, for each is important – the results will not be as long-lasting, or as satisfying. Just like the children’s tale about the “Big, Bad Wolf that blew the house down”, when we build our visions with straw, our vision is more likely to collapse.

It is the same way with every aspect of life. Once we create our visions we must be aware of the *potential in each moment* as we move toward the completion of our visions.

We must be able to hold the larger vision in our mind and hearts, as a focal point for the future, while simultaneously creating smaller daily visions that will lead us to the larger one. For example, the figure skaters had a vision of competing in the Olympics, but they also had creative visions of each choreographed step that would become a part of their performance. Just as one brick at a time can ultimately make a building, each day's, each week's vision is one step closer to constructing a larger one.

It seems as though I have a number of clients that have a vision of going back to college – for a first degree, or advanced degree. In order to do that, many steps are required. First they must have a large vision of the desired degree, and then they must break it down into many small steps. With each accomplished step – the resume, essays, recommendation letters, test etc. – I can feel their energy, their spirit rising. If any one of these steps were ignored, they would not succeed in achieving their goals. They are claiming who they are by claiming their visions. Ken Wilber, in his book, *The Eye of the Spirit*, titled one of his sub-chapters, “The Wonder of Being Me”. When I create my larger and smaller visions, I am “being me”. When I am true to whom I am, my spirit is raised, and my energy level soars.

Lance Armstrong is truly a man of creative visions, not only because he won the Tour de France four times, but because he beat – against all odds – cancer in his testicles, lungs and brain! *Then* he won the races. Without his ability to creatively envision becoming healthy (with only a 3% chance of survival, and given no chance to race again), this success never would have happened.

However, his recovery took a lot of time. Each step of his chemotherapy and his rehabilitation required being totally present with what was happening in every moment, and doing all he could do with each painful step. At the same time he had to “hold” an awareness of his greater vision. Then, once he began racing and decided to race in the Tour de France, a grueling race of miles and days, he had to break the race down into small components and train for each – one type of training for the mountains and another for the flat land. Each component became one brick in the construction of our creative vision.

We are not, nor do we need to be, Lance Amstrongs, but we can use the same positive pattern, and way of envisioning. Many of the individuals for whom I do personal coaching, want to jump to the broader, the bigger vision – wanting immediate results – and forget how important it is to break down their creative vision into manageable, achievable steps. Ronald was an exception. He knew he wanted to leave his current job with a large corporation and begin his own small consulting business. He needed help in putting together a plan of action, but he also knew he needed to first accumulate some capital, some more education, a marketing strategy and a reasonable time-frame. He did not rush the process. He took great pleasure in each step, knowing that it moved him ever closer to his goal – which he did achieve. He now has a very successful business making more money than every before, while also having the independence of being his own boss.

To experiment with this process, try one of the following exercises:

Be aware of a creative vision you have for yourself for sometime in the future – i.e., loose five pounds, clean and sort out your bedroom closets, design a spring garden, go back to school, get a new job. Practice first with shorter-term goals, until you achieve some confidence in your ability to create your visions in this way. Begin by making a list of each small step necessary to achieve that goal. Then, divide these steps into time allotments and DO IT! As you do, cross off each step and notice how good it feels to move one step closer to your vision.

Each day, for one week, take five minutes after you wake up, to ask yourself, what could I do differently today that might move my life in a better direction? For example, eat a different food, take a different path to work, take a walk and really look at all of the plants and trees that you pass by, or do five minutes of stretching exercises each day. As you lie there in bed,

envision yourself doing this new thing and then follow through, with great awareness. Notice how it feels to follow your vision.

Often however, life's circumstances throw us off course. Our vision becomes cloudy because something unpredictable happens— a crisis, a sudden loss, ill health, or a catastrophic event like 9/11. We must be able to continually re-create our visions. Go back to my example of Lance Armstrong, he had to re-create his vision – constantly. He was very successful racer before he got cancer. The onset of cancer forced him to put his vision on hold – not forget it – while he focused on the new vision of becoming healthy. Once the cancer was in remission, he could focus on racing again. Yet, even that wasn't consistent, as there were a lot of setbacks until he re-created his vision. Before cancer he raced shorter distances. The cancer and subsequent treatment had changed his body, and therefore how he rode his bike. It also seemed to change how he mentally approached biking. Once he realized that his new vision was to race in the Tour de France, he began racing again in earnest. He had to re-create his vision.

Re-creating our vision does not mean we are giving up. When there is a crisis or an unexpected event, it at first seems as though the visions we have held for our lives, our future, have been erased. We grieve for that vision, for they have yet to be replaced – or at least not replaced with anything that feels anywhere near acceptable or comfortable. Therefore to emotionally and spiritually survive this crisis, we must re-create our visions. If we do not do so, we give our perceived “enemy” – a disease like cancer, the lover who betrays us, damage from a hurricane – all of the power. We, in turn, feel powerless and experience a loss of self.

One positive thought is that when a set-back occurs, it gives us time to re-evaluate our creative visions. It can be a time to intensely question, “Now that ----- has happened, what is most important”. (You fill in the blank.) From this questioning will come new answers and these new answers will bring new creative visions.

During times of crisis, people, ideas, and creations always emerge, inspiring us and giving us hope. Martin Luther King Jr. came to mind, because during a time of crisis he clearly had a dream and this dream, this vision, of this singular powerful, determined, individual made a gigantic

difference. We all have the power to make a difference in our lives and in turn in those lives around us. For when we work on fulfilling our create visions, others become inspired and energized by our pursuit of that vision.

Once I heard an NPR radio show with Bill Moyers interviewing a dancer/choreographer, and although I did not hear the dancer's name, what he said made an impact on me. Using dance as a metaphor, this dancer/choreographer said that in the face of crisis we need to dance, we need to move, and we need to express ourselves in anyway that we can. We need to feel the spirit of life come back into our beings. Even if, in the privacy of our own room, we move to the music of sadness, our hearts will open and we will begin to come back to life. No matter how powerful and overwhelming a crisis is, no matter how far it seems to take us off of our path, we need to use our power as creative visionaries to "come back to life" – to come back home to the fullness of the Self.

Even in the times of horrible crisis, like 9/11 or Lance Amstrong's cancer, we cannot sit still. Although we experience fear, anger, and a sense of injustice, this is not the time to crawl into a hole to feel safe. Although we need to allow ourselves the time to "be in the moment" and experience these feelings, we must also hold onto the hopes and dreams of the future and in our ability be fully creative and express ourselves in whatever form our creativity takes.

Try this exercise:

First allow yourself to be aware of any feelings of grief, fear, and anxiety that you might be holding within yourself. (These negative emotions tend to hold us back from pursuing our creative visions.) Take some meditative time to do this. Then, go to a private space and turn on some music that resonates with the feeling you are experiencing and do one of two things to help you work with and then release these emotions. Either move your body spontaneously to the music, expressing with each motion, you inner feelings. Or, take some magic markers, crayons or paints and make marks with colors representing your feelings. You may need to do this exercise several times, to creatively express all that you feel. (Remember, no one needs to see what you are doing).

Once you are done with the first exercise, meditate on the following questions: "If I had only one year to live, what would I change about my life?" "What would I like to create in the one year?" Then, take some time to write down

the answers to that question. We must hold onto our visions – no matter what. In a way we must have a feeling of ruthlessness about our visions.

I often have the pleasure of going to the American Museum of Visionary Arts in Baltimore. The artwork, done by untrained, often totally uneducated, frequently very poor, mentally disabled or incarcerated individuals, is utterly magnificent and inspiring. The art is a wonderful example of the power of the human, creative spirit. It is a testimony to what happens when individuals allow themselves to follow their visions – be they visions of an artistic nature, or visions of action as expressed in one’s life – no matter what their circumstances. These individuals trusted their visions and did not use excuses to avoid them. Once again, this powerfully moving exhibit reminded me of the Energy and impact that is created when people trust and then respond to their visions. These visions can be small or grand, it doesn’t matter. The only thing that matters is that provide us with the energy and focal point necessary to move us on our path.

I hear many every-day common examples of people trusting their visions. One woman I knew, while just sitting quietly, saw a mental image of herself going to her trash, retrieving the Sunday paper and looking through the help-wanted section. Although she was not looking for a new job, she was not thrilled with her current job, yet she hadn’t looked through the paper in a year. She followed her vision, found an ad that met her qualifications exactly, immediately contacted the prospective employer, and within a week landed a job more perfect than she could have ever imagined. If she has discounted or not trusted her vision, or her intuition, she would have remained stuck.

So many times clients say to me “If only I had trusted my intuition.” They had a vision, an idea, or an intuition about the way something could be, and ignored it. Often we ignore our visions because we are afraid to go against someone else’s wishes, needs, or ideas or because they seem overwhelmingly huge. In these unsettling days, I see some people putting their visions on hold – usually out of fear. Often the fear is just about beginning a new venture or process.

Our inspirational visions may not begin in a grand way, but they can lead to grand things. A wonderful example of this is described in an inspirational book I highly recommend, *The Legacy of Luna* by Julia Butterfly Hill. This

is the memoir of a woman who lived in the top of a giant redwood in California for two years, in order to save it from destruction and to call attention to the savage demolition of our precious forests. Julia's vision began as a vague yearning, which evolved into a compelling force to do something to help. Spontaneously, she took a trip to California and offered to assist a group of environmental demonstrators by sitting in a tree -- for just a couple of days. From that point on, despite numerous tauntings, and very dangerous situations, she followed her vision one day at a time, and ended up making a huge, worldwide impact. Julia trusted that she could make a difference.

We all need to trust our visions and we all have the power to make a difference – in our personal lives, with our families, our friends, our community or, as Julia did, in the world community. Julia was just one twenty-four year old woman, who courageously and tenaciously believed enough in herself to follow her vision and she made a huge difference in the world community of environmental preservationists.

Following our creative visions takes courage. As Philip Rubinov-Jacobson says in his book, Drinking Lightning: Art, Creativity and Transformation, “The capacity of imagination increases with acts of courage that provide self-perpetuating nourishment”.

When we trust, as well as act, on our intuitive visions, they will increase in frequency, power and energy. They become a more and more important part of our lives. As we trust and utilize these visions, they also help define who we are and what we are about. When we ignore our own gut, our intuition, we loose. We loose ourselves.

When trying to access our inner visions, the hardest part is to learn to differentiate between what comes from the mind and/or the emotions, as opposed to what comes from creative inspiration. As you practice, you will learn that inspiration feels like it floats up from the core of your being. It seems to come from nowhere. I am sure all of you have had moments when an inspiration or an idea seems to “pop” into your awareness. It almost feels magical.

The only way to learn to access your inner creative visionary is to be still, to allow a space for something new to arise within you. I recommend

that you spend five to ten minutes, twice a day – once in the morning and once at night –sitting and focusing on the breath. Having these moments will calm the mind and emotions and in turn allow space for inspiration.

Try this exercise: *Please allow enough quiet time to complete it, with awareness. Sit in a quiet place and when you become peaceful, imagine that you are walking on a beautiful path. As your walk continues, you come upon a huge castle-like structure. You enter and realize that it's a library containing information about everyone's life. You find a book with your name on it, and as you open it, you see written in the book a description of the purpose of your life. As you look further, you also see an image, a vision of your future – what could be in one year and in five years, if you were to follow this purpose. When you are clear about what you are seeing, close the book, leave the building and walk back down the path. When you have fully completed this meditative exercise, write what you have discovered in a journal.*

This is the time to put forth our visions – without hesitation. If each one of us has one new creative vision about how to make our personal world a better place, and if only one other person is positively affected by that vision, the positive results will be exponentially magnified. It requires us to follow our intuition, our intention and not our impulse. Whenever we lose focus, whenever we are not true to ourselves, we risk becoming homesick.