

Living the Dream

One coach's stories and tips on how to live a fulfilling, creative life.

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This is a free newsletter for people who are committed to living and working every moment with joy and creativity. If you enjoy "Living the Dream", then share the good energy! Please pass it on to your family and friends. Inspire others as you're inspired and we will all grow together.

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1. Welcome

Hello everyone. It's been a busy month--I made another trip to Los Angeles and, on July 19, I did my first book-related event here in Manhattan, the Harlem Book Fair. I sat at my publisher's booth and passed out fliers and talked about my upcoming novel. If you'd like to know more, I'll soon have a web site devoted to my fiction and info on how your book club can have me join the discussion should you choose to read "All I Need to Get By". Until then, I'll keep you posted.

This month I celebrated my 37th birthday. I spent some time being grateful for my life and reflecting on all that I have. Then I got an amazing gift that added even more: a friend who had been absent from my life for nearly two years.

He was someone I'd lost touch with, and indeed last October I'd tried to call and share some good news with him, but I discovered he had moved. I knew through mutual friends that a lot was going on in his life and, knowing what was going on in mine I began to feel overwhelmed by all that we had missed with each other. I didn't see how we could possibly catch up and re-connect. And, of course, the insecurity factor kicked in too. I thought, "Well, maybe I'm not that important to him. I'd probably be bugging him if I pursued this." So I decided to let the door close and think of this relationship as lost, and regrettably so.

Then a few weeks ago I ran into another mutual friend who, upon realizing that I hadn't spoken to our guy in about 18 months,

looked at me like I had my clothes on backwards. He said, "Are you crazy? Call him!" He immediately gave me the number. Okay, when I get a sign that clear, you don't have to tell me twice! I left a message on my friend's cell phone. Little did I know, he was flying back from a trip to the Pacific Northwest and thinking about how he hadn't spoken to me in ages and wondering what I was up to. Imagine his surprise when he got home and found me in his voicemail!

We got together last week to celebrate our birthdays (he's a July baby too) and to catch up. It took us nearly three hours, but we did it. I felt like someone was sprinkling sugar over my life--I didn't realize how much I had missed having this person and this love in my heart. We both laughed and I even shed a few tears, but I was absolutely elated. I can't believe I had allowed this relationship to slip away. He's one of those people who brings out the best in me, who makes me more of who I really am. I know I do the same for him. It makes no sense for us not to be friends, we see that now, and we're going to make sure that we don't lose touch again.

Why am I telling you this story? Because in honor of my birthday, this is the gift I want to give to you: go out and find that one friend whom you love but have misplaced along the way. Remember why you became friends in the first place and, either by phone or in person, get that person back in your life and relish their presence once again. It is a joyous thing, being able to have such friends and such love. Don't deny it to yourself. You deserve every moment of it, and so does your friend.

Best wishes,

Sophronia

2. Quote of Note

"My illness was humbling and starkly revealing, and it forced me to survey my life with an unforgiving eye. There are some shameful episodes in it: instances of meanness, unfinished tasks, weakness, and regrets. I had to ask myself, 'If I live, who is it that I intend to be?' I found that I had a lot of growing to do as a man." --Lance Armstrong, from "It's Not About the Bike"

3. Feature Article: The Bigger Game

I haven't been on my bike much this season. At first I wasn't sure why. I thought it was laziness or perhaps a lack of discipline. But in truth I was just bored with riding. I've ridden the six-mile loop in Central Park a zillion times and I've ridden most of the rides outside of New York City as well. As much as I love my bike, I couldn't find a way to put myself back in the saddle.

I thought I might get some inspiration, as I do every year, from watching the Tour de France bicycle race. The excitement is usually enough to get me off the couch and on the road. As always, I loved cheering on Lance Armstrong and Tyler Hamilton, another talented American cyclist. Then a thought occurred to me. I turned to my husband and said, "Next year or the year after, why don't we take off the month of July and follow the Tour around France?" Of course he said okay, he's always up for an adventure.

When I got on the internet and started researching tour companies I learned something else: many of these groups offered the chance to ride stages of the tour, including the mountain stages in the Alps and the Pyrenees. Suddenly my heart started thumping. I could ride past those fields of sunflowers I've been seeing all these years? I could churn my bike up into the clouds on a miles-long ascent? Could I??? How strong would I have to be? How much would I have to train? I realized I wouldn't mind spinning around Central Park a zillion more times if it meant I could ride through the beautiful French countryside.

Okay, this example may seem extreme (especially to non-athletes!) but it is a great example of what can happen when you seek a bigger goal. For so many of us, our goals are too general and mundane: save money, lose weight, switch jobs. Then we wonder why we have so little success with them. How can you focus on something so uninteresting? Goals like these ask very little of you.

But what if instead of saving money, your goal was to get enough money to build your own house? Or achieve financial independence? What if instead of losing weight, your goal was to be fit enough to run a marathon? What if instead of just changing jobs, your goal was to go after your dream job, the one you never thought you could have because of training or timing or status? Doesn't the very thought of taking it up a notch get your blood bubbling? Now we're getting somewhere. Thinking this way is so much more exciting.

The right goals push you to be more of who you are and then some. They make you ask, "Who do I have to be to accomplish this?" Suddenly there's more than a mere goal involved-there's your growth, your change at stake. The goals will make you stretch to get where you need to go.

How do you know if the goal is too big? Well, if it scares the bejeebers out of you, maybe it's too big. But if you're feeling a good kind of scary, the kind where you're just really excited, then you know you've hit upon the right goal.

When I first read the quote above from Lance Armstrong pertaining to his cancer diagnosis in 1996, I realized that for Lance, the bigger game and the bigger goal had come to him. He had no choice. But still he asked himself all the same questions, rethinking who he was and who he had to be in order to fight cancer. As everyone knows now, he came through it with major changes in his body and soul. I have always admired his strength and courage, but this year as I cheered him on in the Tour de France I found myself

cheering the strength of his soul more than the strength of his body. Perhaps because of all that I've learned in recent years, I'm more aware of how making change in that realm is indeed the bigger battle.

Fortunately, we don't have to wait for a calamity to befall us in order to get opportunities to change and grow. The chances are right in front of us, every single day, and you can start with adjusting your goals. Think big, dream big. The worst that can happen is you fall back to your ordinary goals and you already know what that place looks like. So go for it. Be bold. I plan to be. And when the time comes, I'll send you a postcard from Paris.

4. Pump It Up!

How do you feel about the goals you're now working on? Make a list of them and go over each one and think about how they make you feel. Are you dizzy at the mere thought of this one, but find that one dull as dirt? Do you want to throw the whole list out?

Don't do that just yet. Figure out a way to make each goal bigger, but make sure it's something you really want. If I didn't love my bike and the thought of the Tour de France so much, the trip would be just another long boring bike ride. Remember, there will still be a lot of hard work involved to attain your goal. Don't make it harder by going for goals that aren't yours.

Here's another way to do it. First ask yourself, "What do I want to be true for myself for the rest of my life?" In other words, have a vision for yourself. Do you want to be creative, productive, independent, a present friend, an attentive spouse? Then create goals that will move you towards being what you want to be. Any goal that doesn't get you where you want to go, gets the boot.

5. Coaching Offer

Is thinking big a little too big to do on your own? Then contact me for a FREE 30-minute sample session. We'll do some brainstorming and come up with one or two goals that will really get you going. I'm here to help. E-mail me at CoachSoph@CreativeCoachingPlans.com to set up an appointment. Until then, be well and be creative!

Sophronia is a writer and a career and personal development coach affiliated with Coach U., the internationally renowned institution of personal and professional mentorship. Her first novel, "All I Need to Get By" will be published by St. Martin's Press in March

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