

THE POWER OF

*A
Practice
for
Engaging
Your
Voice
of
Wisdom*

THE POWER OF 10

THE POWER OF 10

*A practice for engaging your voice of wisdom
to be the greatest you—the you who is meant to be.*

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*Wisdom tells me I'm nothing. Love tells me I'm everything.
Between the two flows the river of my life. —Nisargadatta
Maharaj*

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CHAPTER 8. PLAN AHEAD

From intention springs the deed, from the deed springs the habits. From the habits grow the character, from character develops destiny. —Chinese Buddhist text

On April 12, 1961 Yuri Gagarin orbited the earth for 108 minutes before his spacecraft, *Vostok 1*, reentered the atmosphere over his homeland, the Soviet Union. He'd made history, the first man to enter outer space, and his flight was celebrated around the world as a great triumph for mankind. The Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev declared Gagarin a hero. Meanwhile, political and military leaders in the United States were shocked and embarrassed as a nation grew uneasy. The Soviets were winning the contest for supremacy in space.

The two countries were engaged in a cold war of propaganda campaigns, systematic espionage, and weapons stockpiling that had begun not long after the end of World War II. While an uneasy *détente* kept either side from confronting the other directly, tensions flared as East and West squared off in military skirmishes throughout Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Closer to home, men on both sides of the Atlantic stood ready in closely guarded bunkers, awaiting a provocation that would set them in motion on a moment's notice. Meanwhile, children performed drills on how to survive the initial wave of a nuclear blast, although anyone of school age already knew the truth: the first to press a red button would destine the launch of nuclear warheads

in a response counter-response of mutual annihilation. The rivalry escalated across all fields of competition, from the Olympics to political proselytization in the Third World, reaching its zenith in a winner-take-all space race between the two superpowers.

Six weeks after Gagarin orbited the earth, President John F. Kennedy addressed a special joint session of Congress to announce his support for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and its Apollo program for manned spaceflight: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." His declaration redefined the ultimate goal of the Space Race with an objective that most in the science community believed impossible. Neither the technology nor the intellectual or financial capital was available to support it.

In the wake of his directive, Kennedy was called on to give a speech at Rice University in Houston. At the time, the Apollo program was fraught with controversy following the Soviet Union's accomplishment, compounded by the mounting costs of funding the program itself. This marked a key moment in the trajectory of the United States' commitment to going to space. On September 12, 1962, Kennedy stood before the gathered crowd to express the reasoning behind his directive to Congress and make a declaration of his own ideals:

We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that goal is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.

Kennedy believed humanity's exploration of space was inexorable and that the world would be better off with the United States leading the way. The expression of his vision not only reaffirmed his commitment to the space program but shaped policy objectives and budgetary priorities, sparking unprecedented increases in spending on education, research, and scientific advancement.

The year after his "We Choose the Moon" speech moved a nation into action, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was shot dead.

As flags flew at half-mast, the men and women working at NASA pressed onward. In 1968, Apollo 8 launched and became the first manned spacecraft to leave Earth's orbit, circling the moon ten times. Apollo 9 and Apollo 10 followed. Then on July 16th, 1969, nine years after Kennedy's declaration and six years after his death, astronauts Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins, the crew of Apollo 11, launched skyward into space toward that bright orb in the evening sky with one aim: to set foot on the moon. Four days later, Armstrong and Aldrin stepped onto the lunar surface as Collins manned the command center in orbit above them. History was forever changed; for the first time, the reach of humankind extended beyond our own world.

To mark their achievement, Armstrong and Aldrin planted an American flag on the moon's surface as a symbol of victory over the Soviets. Although Kennedy did not live to see it, his dream was fully realized four days later when the three astronauts returned safely to earth.

Our third inquiry, "How will I spend this day?" challenges us to envision our future and the way we shape it. Specifically, it confronts us with the implications of structuring a life around a plan—or of allowing life to happen to us.

Humanity's greatest achievements, from building the Giza Pyramids to landing a man on the moon, all have one thing in common: all are products of well-executed plans. Planning touches all aspects of life, from the mundane coordination of our personal schedules to financial arrangements on every scale to the milestones that define the missions of institutions as different as universities and the armed forces. What is true for mankind collectively is also true for individuals: absent a well-conceived plan, we are destined to flounder.

Numerous sayings remind us of the importance of planning: "Begin with the end in mind," or "Failure to plan is planning to fail," or "Plan as if you will live forever, but live as if this is your last day." All these reflect various aspects of the truth that a blueprint for success is consistently setting and achieving goals that build on each other and lead to a desired objective or state. This is what is meant by *planning ahead*.

Even though the chaos that inevitably erupts when we fail to plan is obvious, many (most?) of us find planning our *lives* to be unappealing. Why is this? Why do we so often resist planning for the future? Sometimes we claim we don't have the time or that our vision is not yet clear enough. Both excuses are hollow; "having no time" simply means we don't consider it important enough, and "having no clear vision" simply means we haven't planned. Or maybe there is some notion that having a plan is constraining, requires commitment, or will eliminate the possibility of something extraordinary. But how often does life give us what we want if we don't first envision it?

In our hearts we always know what we desire, at least in broad strokes. But we are nevertheless afraid to embrace

the *truth* of what we want and to seek it directly. Does this paralysis arise as a result of the fear of commitment and its close relative, the fear of failure? We cannot be unmoving like a mountain, but we need not be dust in the wind. Which is to say, some of the forces that shape our lives are obviously beyond our control, but the habits we develop have undeniable consequences.

Think of your last weeklong vacation. Consider how you made it happen: first dreaming about the possible places you might go; then selecting the destination, perhaps based on maximizing some enjoyment-to-expense ratio; and finally putting it in motion by making reservations, booking a flight, finding someone to watch Superdog, and so on. At the end of this planning process, as you marked the days on your calendar, there was a real sense the vacation had already begun. In the days and weeks leading up to your departure, you found a simmering pleasure in contemplating the events to come. If you didn't get around to planning your vacation, however, you might have ended up sitting around at home wishing you were somewhere else.

Now compare your vacation planning experiences to your efforts to solidify your career, support your family, or secure your financial independence, concerns that will perhaps affect you as long as you live. How much thought and planning have you devoted to the most important areas of your life? But none of these goals will be realized unless you first connect to whatever is most meaningful to you, and then lay out a sequence of short- and long-term objectives that will bring your vision to life. Everybody knows this. Very few do it.

In taking charge of the direction of your life, one of the first things to consider is how you define the future. Is it ten

minutes from now, ten days from now, or ten years from now? Consider that the future is the approaching now shaped by the choices we make today.

The importance of planning is directly proportional to the scale of the dream. While one man pointing skyward in 1961 inspired a voyage to the moon, realizing the dream required the coordinated efforts of thousands of people over many years. Even so, President Kennedy's declaration of his vision and his commitment to the space program were essential. They not only brought his own plans (if not purpose) to life but pointed the way forward for others to lead as well.

Planning not only helps us envision and refine our goals but determines the steps required to reach them. Effective plans clearly and simply describe the results we seek (the what) along with the intentions behind them (the why) together with the methods for achieving those results (the how). Planning helps us make the wisest use of time and resources. In determining a direction for our lives and monitoring our course, we assume responsibility for our own happiness.

To avoid planning is an invitation for unhappiness. In large part, this is because living reactively becomes a cycle repeated over and over. When we resist planning, we neglect the genuine opportunity of embracing our purpose, undermining our capacity to appreciate everything the world offers us. If it is within our power to influence the future, why would we spend one more day in a job that is uninspiring or a relationship that lacks real connection? Absent a plan based on what we stand for and want, we get swept along in cycles of reactivity, preoccupied with what is urgent rather than devoting ourselves to what is important, all the while distracted from any path.

Every day, we contend with a thousand petty distractions that potentially deflect attention from our true objectives. Without a plan, we're vulnerable to being hijacked by trivial, time-consuming activities that displace what is truly important. Accomplishing one task that advances our goals is better than completing twenty that lead to none.

In effect, your plans serve to create a call from the future you desire while marking the path toward your destination. An effective plan braids your intentions with your thoughts, words, and actions. With clear vision, you are better able to avoid crises, as well as overcome your fears of the unknown.

As you connect to your purpose in life (by responding to *who am I?*), it becomes clear that your reason for living is not merely to succeed but to realize your greatest potential, a task that requires dreaming, declaring, and then doing. It begins with dreaming of the future you desire, then declaring it into being—and having once declared your dream, resolving to sustain its growth. Continuing to align your thoughts, words, and actions with your intentions, you begin to create the future today. George Neil reminds us, “It is never too late to be what you might have been.”

Dream

*How many more times will you watch the full moon rise?*⁹ —
Paul Bowles

What was your vision of yesterday? Looking back a year ago, five years ago, or even ten years ago, who did you see yourself being today? What life did you imagine for yourself? The further back you look, the less likely today's reality will match your projection at the time. Indeed, it is often striking to

recognize how many aspects of your current life would have seemed improbable, or even impossible, five or ten years ago. Unless your development becomes arrested at some particular stage, you will never cease to evolve.

Reflecting on the past helps us see more clearly into the future. Reflection offers the opportunity to identify patterns, productive and unproductive, and to review the status of our dreams. Are they still really ours? Are they sufficiently farsighted? Have they led to real happiness? When we reflect on our evolution, we should not be surprised to discover that many of yesterday's dreams no longer serve us. They may feel like the clothes we wore ten years ago: too tight here, too loose there, and not at all the style we have come to prefer.

We all find ourselves out of step in this way at some time; sooner or later we have to stop, revisit our dreams and remember what they meant to us. If we remain open to what we discover, we often benefit when we look at our desired future anew. Start once more with a blank canvas. Dream *big*: How would you like to see your life five, ten, or twenty years from now? Envision a world in which we could all be whole and happy. How would such a world look? Allow the mind to wander, ignoring any limitations that present themselves as imaginary obstacles. If you could be granted any wish, what would you wish for?

Dream even *bigger* . . . dare to dream of a future unencumbered by the past. Be willing to conceive of something that might take longer than a lifetime, something greater than you alone can manifest. Write drunk, edit sober. Start by unburdening yourself of the goals of yesterday or the limitations you perceive today. Then, continue to expand

the boundaries of your imagination. Suspending disbelief, you're far more likely to be creative in ways that help to bring about what initially seemed impossible. For example:

Developing a vaccine that eradicates unhealthy viruses in humans.

Establishing a foundation that gives millions of dollars to charity every year.

Ensuring that girls in every developing country have equal access to education.

A good vision will memorialize your dreams, but a *great* vision inspires others to act. Such a vision not only galvanizes existing allies but emboldens stakeholders who may have been waiting to show up—stakeholders whose roles support your vision and feel pride in their connection to it. This is true on any scale, whether you're a student seeking to form a group committed to change or a leader asking a nation to launch an endeavor that will take years to accomplish.¹⁰

Document every idea, even if from your current vantage point it seems impossible. Consider the near and the more distant future and describe your desired attitudes: physical, social, and intellectual.

For example, building upon the vision of ensuring that girls in developing countries have equal access to education, one might expand upon the reasons underlying the need. Education is a critical means of instilling the knowledge, skills, and values that foster the culture of a peaceful and civil society. Eliminating barriers to education invites both girls and boys to participate in a shared language of equality, dignity, and nondiscrimination.

Too often we rush through the step of dreaming. In neglecting this exercise, we deprive ourselves of the chance to enlarge our vision and, as a result, sometimes find ourselves aiming for an easy target—or no real target at all. Begin from the vantage point of the future: If you were standing in the future and looking back, what would you want to see? What are the “trophies” on your wall of accomplishments and the memories in your heart? How will you feel? Who will you love? Where will you work? What places and sensations will you remember?

A well-conceived vision integrates purpose with a plan to achieve it. It is only to be expected that such a future will entail significant challenge and transformation. Be as sure as you can that the purpose and vision you fix on reflects your most authentic desires before you set your course and embark. But do set a course, and be bold. If your vision doesn't scare you a little, maybe it isn't big enough.

However grand the scale of our dreams, as we pass the milestones along the way, we feel the timeframe shrinking and the future coming, and we draw strength from it. An inspiring vision exerts a pull from the future, the way standing at the base of a mountain and looking to the peak draws us upward. From where we stand in the present, we trace our paths, recognizing that each step we take today advances us that much closer to the summit tomorrow.

An effective vision of the future energizes the present by connecting our daily activities to our long-term objectives. Admittedly, this exercise plays out very differently depending on our stage of life. But young or old, we profit from a review of our goals for the future and imagining our world as we would like to see it. What do we need to accomplish to

bring our vision to life? How can we prepare for the future we want? Dreaming of a desired future will not necessarily make it so, but *not* dreaming of it will definitely limit the possibilities of what will be.

Declare

Reduce your plan to writing. The moment you complete this, you will have definitely given concrete form to the intangible desire.
—Napoleon Hill

Whatever your vision, speak it—or even better, write it—to give it life. Making it explicit and concrete transforms a dream into a real possibility.

A declaration can be as practical as describing what you will do in the next hour or the next week, or as audacious as what you will accomplish over the next ten years or even in a lifetime. If, for example, one aspect of your dream is to become physically fit and healthy, you can focus on what you can do today to advance toward your goal. *Today* I will choose to eat healthy foods. *Today* I will walk for thirty minutes. *Today* I will go to bed early enough to get eight hours of sleep. Setting and achieving measurable daily goals not only builds the confidence that you can achieve the same goal tomorrow but maybe even a greater long-term goal.

Consider the Declaration of Independence: These 1,337 words announced that the thirteen American colonies, then at war with Great Britain, regarded themselves as independent states and no longer part of the British Empire. The Declaration justified the independence of the United States and offered the most potent words in American history:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

With these words, the United States of America was *declared into being*. And the people who read them were moved to take action. Even after more than two centuries, the words that united the men and women of those thirteen colonies continue to frame the daily lives of the citizens of the United States. Along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Declaration of Independence has had a profound impact on the identity and governance of nation states in the modern world.¹¹

Declaring your own vision—your own Declaration of Purpose or Declaration of Intentions—gives substance to your purpose. Moreover, if you can summon the courage to share it with others, it will serve as an invitation to potential collaborators to learn how their own skills and abilities might contribute to the possibility of what can be.

Describe the measure of your success

When we put our intentions into words, we objectify them and make them real. Dare to speak them, and the simple act of publicly declaring or privately dedicating ourselves to our guiding principles helps dissolve the limitations imposed by our self-conscious minds. An explicit, outward declaration aligns our choices just as a magnet aligns iron filings.

Be honest about your dedication to each goal. Consciously or unconsciously, we often make commitments that are weak or compete with a stronger, often unspoken desire

that give later events the appearance of being accidental. We enter into a project with less than total commitment to shield ourselves from the impact of potential failure—I *never really gave it my all*—and in doing so, sabotage our chances of success. Or we conflate authentic, proactive plans with competing, often reactionary commitments such as, *I will not be my father*—launching ourselves on a trajectory of avoidance rather than aiming for something we truly desire. Years or even decades can be consumed in pursuit of plans that are subverted by insecurities we don't fully recognize. Meanwhile, we continue on a mission toward a barren terrain when the smallest reassurance might have spared us years of devoting our lives to something our hearts know is untrue.

Maintaining a connection to the positive intentions associated with our goals sustains us, and we lose ourselves in the journey, doing what we do for its own sake.

Do

Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. —WH Murray, paraphrasing Goethe

Talking and brainstorming, endlessly evaluating every possible contingency, is easy. Without action, though, goals and intentions are nothing more than passing dreams. “Action” describes more than physical movement; yes, action can mean walking, writing, creating, destroying, building, healing, or protecting. But action also involves heart and mind—committing to a clear path toward accomplishing something important. Your vision declared, begin each day

by reflecting on your short- and long-term goals, and then commit to action through your words:

Today I will:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

This motivational ritual will keep you focused on what you need to accomplish in the day ahead.

Adding a simple preamble or frame will help reinforce the attitudes you wish to embody: “With focus and in furtherance of my intention to learn Italian, this day I will . . .” Any preamble or frame will do. Tailor it to whatever is important to you, such as “With perseverance and determination to meet my goal of climbing the seven summits, I will...” Threading together all your goals, you might gradually increase your commitments over time. “Body relaxed, heart connected, and mind alert, today I will

1. Learn ten new phrases from my Italian study guide.
2. Run or walk outside for thirty minutes.
3. Start planning the route for our trip.”

Maintain the rhythm of action. There are always reasons to give up. Greatness ignores all such reasons. On those days when you are struggling, it is comforting to know that people can endure almost anything one day at a time—even living the day with a broken heart. Remain focused on the *intent* rather than the *outcome*. Some of the most profound transformations in life happen in this way. Consider the people we look to as great leaders whose very struggles made their eventual success so inspirational.

A willingness to step into the unknown is an invaluable skill. How dull it would be if you could predict and control everything. With your sights set on the horizon, you can bravely step forth, then take another step, and another. Lean in and explore, and as you do so, your territory will expand. You will know you are on the right path when you feel yourself being pulled forward by the attraction of the future you envision, coupled with the desire for the horizon to continue receding indefinitely.

In all things we do, it's important to make time to rest. Ritual breaks from *doing* can promote *getting things done*. Our bodies require rest to recover. Our hearts feed on absence to arouse affection. Our brains rely on sleep to rejuvenate and clear out the accumulated debris of the day. And if we don't provide a healthy expression for the need to rest, it will take on a life of its own.

Reclaiming a healthy balance in our way of being sometimes requires us to stop, sit down, and watch the waves roll in. Such periods of quiet reflection are no less important than physical rest and sleep. Taking time to reflect, we are better able to appreciate our accomplishments, the people who have helped us, and the real nature of the purpose we trade our time for. Moreover, when we do return to pursuing our dreams, we return with renewed energy, appreciation, and insight. An unmoored mind often drifts into new insights, sometimes in the shallows and often in the deep.

Chapter 8 Summary: *Plan Ahead* advocates that we be our best selves for the future

Planning is the launching pad for achieving something great. Planning addresses the future, however near or far—the distant now awaiting the choices we make today. While there are always distractions ready to deflect our attention, a well-conceived plan keeps us focused on what is truly important.

An effective plan combines the following elements:

- a vision of the ultimate goal and the reasons you desire it;
- an honest assessment of your capabilities so you can allocate resources;
- measurable milestones to gauge your progress along the way;
- contingency provisions to build in resilience for unexpected changes; and finally,
- elements of appreciation and celebration to make your achievement as much a joy as a success.

A life with no plan is a formula for dissatisfaction; reactivity is a vicious cycle, an endless melodrama of predictable calamities. Planning shepherds us through periods of transformation and channels the energy of change into creativity and innovation. Good plans lead to success; great plans integrate joy into the journey.

Creating a plan can be accomplished in three steps: *dream*, *declare*, and *do*.

Dream

- Dreaming is a necessary first step; write drunk, edit sober.
- Envision the legacy you want to create.

- Be bold: a great plan has power to unlock unforeseen potential.
- Inspire: an effective vision produces an energizing effect on the present.
- Remember that while no plan is perfect, the act of planning is invaluable.

Declare

- Writing goals makes them real; sharing them publicly acknowledges dedication to something beyond yourself.
- A declaration can be as mundane as a to-do list or as audacious as your life goals.
- An effective plan links intentions to clear, measurable objectives.
- Sharing inspires others to offer their talents in support of a common purpose.
- Be honest about dedication; less than total commitment points to underlying conflict.
- Fear-based goals extinguish potential; translate reactionary or negative goals (the “I will nevers”) into affirmative and inspiring goals.
- Finally, if goals are easily within reach, ask whether your sights are set high enough.

Do

- Take care of the present and the future will take care of itself.
- Start now! Without action, goals and objectives are no more than passing dreams.

THE POWER OF 10

- Focus on intentions rather than expectations—on the journey, not the destination.
- Don't let reason impede success; greatness sometimes demands being unreasonable.
- Rest and reflect. Rest increases performance; reflection invites gratitude and insight.

THE POWER OF 10 is a practice for engaging the *voice of wisdom* through inquiry and advocacy. Inquiry raises our awareness of *what is* through inviting us to examine our current state of being; advocacy prompts us to live into *what is possible*. Together, inquiry and advocacy evoke the voice of wisdom—the quiet, still voice inside us, the confluence of knowledge, experience, and insight flowing through all living beings that speaks through our bodies, hearts, and minds.

As we learn to listen to it closely, the voice of wisdom reveals our true nature and purpose, calls upon us to commit to something greater, and guides us toward being our best selves in every thought, word, and action. In aligning *what is* and *what is possible*, we realize our highest potential and begin to experience deep, abiding happiness.

At its heart, **THE POWER OF 10** sensitizes us to our own, unique purpose, and helps us discover that spark of the divine at the core of our being. Put simply, it is a practice for engaging your voice of wisdom to become the greatest you—the you who is meant to be.

**STAND TALL
BE KIND
PLAN AHEAD
LET GO
CHOOSE LOVE**

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