

The Creation List - A Science & Soul Self-Inquiry Journey

"The quality of your life is determined not by the answers you have, but by the questions you're willing to ask."

By Dr. Mike Van Thielen, PhD.

There comes a moment in many people's lives when they quietly ask themselves a question they never expected to ask.

"Is this really the life I want?"

Sometimes the question appears after a major loss. Sometimes after achieving a lifelong goal that somehow feels less satisfying than expected. Sometimes it arrives during an ordinary Tuesday afternoon, while sitting in traffic or staring at a computer screen, accompanied only by a subtle feeling that there must be more to life than simply repeating yesterday.

Most people dismiss that feeling. They become busier, work harder, set another goal, buy something new, or convince themselves that happiness is waiting just beyond the next achievement. Yet the question has already been planted, and once it appears, it rarely disappears completely.

Perhaps the problem isn't that we don't know how to succeed. Perhaps we've simply never paused long enough to ask ourselves what success truly means.

From the moment we're born, life begins handing us definitions. We learn what it means to be successful, attractive, intelligent, productive, responsible, wealthy, or important. Much of this guidance comes from people who genuinely love us and want the best for us. Parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, and friends all leave fingerprints on the way we see ourselves and the world around us. Slowly and almost invisibly, their beliefs become our beliefs, their expectations become our expectations, and before long we find ourselves pursuing goals that feel strangely familiar without ever remembering when we choose them.

Most of us never consciously design our lives.

We inherit them.

That isn't a criticism. It is simply how the human mind develops. Long before we have the capacity to think independently, our subconscious is already absorbing information about

THE CREATION LIST

A SCIENCE & SOUL SELF-INQUIRY JOURNEY

Discover. Awaken. Create.



1. **SUCCESS LIST**
Define success on your own terms.



2. **DREAM LIST**
Imagine without limits.
What do you truly want?



3. **LIFE DIMENSIONS LIST**
Explore what matters across all areas of your life.



4. **GRATITUDE LIST**
Recognize the abundance that already exists.



5. **HEART LIST**
Discover what your heart truly wants—beyond the things you think you want.



6. **IDENTITY LIST**
Explore the masks you wear and the truth beneath them.



7. **CREATE LIST**
How do you want to contribute and create meaning?



8. **INSPIRED ACTION LIST**
What aligned actions will move you forward?



9. **ALIGNMENT LIST**
Identify what aligns—or conflicts—with your vision.



10. **INTEGRATION LIST**
Bring it all together into your personal blueprint.

*You don't attract
what you want.*

*You attract what
you are becoming.*



THE R4 METHOD

REGULATE
Calm your body and mind.

RELEASE
Let go of what no longer serves you.

REWIRE
Align your thoughts, emotions, and identity.

RISE
Take inspired action and embody your creation.

*I choose
to create
a life aligned
with my soul's
truth and highest
expression.*



MY CREATION LIST

- Freedom
- Purpose
- Connection
- Growth
- Contribution
- Peace
- Adventure
- Love

YOUR LIFE. CONSCIOUSLY CREATED BY YOU.
REFINE. REALIGN. RECOMMIT. EVERY 60 DAYS.



what is safe, what is valuable, who we should become, and what we must do to be accepted. By the time we reach adulthood, many of those patterns feel so normal that we mistake them for our own authentic desires.

Then something interesting happens.

We achieve the promotion.

We bought the house.

We reach the financial goal.

We finally received the recognition we worked so hard for.

Yet after the excitement fades, an unexpected question quietly returns.

"Why doesn't this feel the way I thought it would?"

The answer is surprisingly simple.

Very often we have confused the tool with the destination.

Money is a wonderful tool, but very few people want money. They want the freedom they believe money can provide. They want peace of mind, security, experiences with the people they love, the ability to contribute, or simply the opportunity to wake each morning without fear.

A beautiful home is rarely about bricks and walls. More often it represents safety, belonging, family, or a place where life can unfold in a meaningful way. Recognition is seldom about applause. It is usually about feeling seen, valued, or appreciated. Even success itself often becomes a symbol for something much deeper than achievement.

The heart almost never longs for the object. It longs for the experience the object represents.

Unfortunately, very few of us are ever taught to look beyond our desires. We spend years chasing symbols while overlooking what our hearts have been quietly asking for all along.

Modern neuroscience offers an interesting perspective on this. Every second your brain receives an extraordinary amount of information, far more than your conscious mind could ever process. To prevent overload, it continuously filters reality, deciding what deserves your attention and what can safely remain unnoticed. In other words, your experience of life is shaped not only by what exists around you, but by what your brain has learned to notice.

The question then becomes, *who taught your brain what was important?*

For many of us, those answers were written long before we ever questioned them. Childhood experiences, family beliefs, education, culture, painful memories, and moments of success all quietly shaped the lens through which we now experience reality. Without realizing it, we continue paying attention to the same things, thinking similar thoughts, making familiar choices, and creating familiar outcomes. We call it life, when it is often simply repetition.

The wisdom traditions of the world have been pointing toward this truth for thousands of years. They remind us that awareness always comes before transformation. Before we can consciously create our lives, we must first become conscious of ourselves.

That is the purpose of the journey you are about to begin.

The pages that follow are intentionally simple. You won't find personality assessments, complicated scoring systems, or elaborate exercises. Instead, you'll discover a series of questions that gently invite you inward. At first, they may seem almost too simple. Trust them anyway. Like a skilled guide leading someone through an unfamiliar forest, each question has been carefully placed. Alone, each one offers a glimpse. Together, they reveal an entirely different landscape.

By the time you reach the final page, you will hold something far more valuable than a collection of answers. You will have created a living reflection of what truly matters to you—a document that will guide your attention, your decisions, your breathwork, your meditation, your visualizations, and ultimately the direction of your life.

Because we don't create our future only through action.

We create it first through awareness.

And awareness always begins with a single, honest question.

PHASE 1 - DISCOVER WHAT MATTERS

Every meaningful creation begins long before anything appears in the physical world.

An architect doesn't begin by pouring concrete. An artist doesn't begin with the final painting. A composer doesn't begin with the finished symphony. Every creation starts with a vision, even if that vision is still blurry and incomplete.

The same is true for our lives.

Yet most of us have never been encouraged to pause and consciously explore that vision. We spend years responding to circumstances, solving problems, meeting expectations, and

moving from one responsibility to the next. In doing so, we become remarkably good at reacting to life, while rarely taking the time to imagine the life we truly wish to create.

For the moment, don't worry about whether your answers are realistic. This isn't about making plans or setting goals. It's about opening the door to curiosity again. Like dust settling in still water, clarity often appears when we stop trying so hard to force it.

The next few pages invite you to simply notice what naturally comes forward.

There is no right answer. Only your answer.

And with that, begin by asking yourself one of the simplest questions in the world.

What does success truly mean to you?

LIST 1 - The Success List

What does success mean to you?

If no one else's opinion mattered, not your parents', your friends', societies', or social media's, how would you define a successful life?

Don't overthink the question. Simply write.

There is no minimum. There is no maximum.

Whatever comes to mind belongs on the page.

LIST 2 - The Possibility List

Success is an interesting word.

For some people it means financial freedom. For others it means raising kind children, living peacefully, exploring the world, building a business, writing a book, or simply waking each morning excited to begin another day.

Whatever you wrote is perfect, because it reflects where you are at this moment.

Now let's widen the lens.

Rather than defining success, imagine there were no limitations at all.

No fear. No judgment. No need to explain yourself. What would you simply want?

LIST 3 - The Dimensions List

You may have noticed something while writing.

Some ideas flowed effortlessly onto the page, while others took a little more time to emerge. That is completely natural. The mind tends to revisit familiar dreams first before wandering toward possibilities it hasn't considered in years.

Sometimes the greatest limitation isn't that we dream too big.

It's that we don't dream broadly enough.

Life is wonderfully multidimensional, yet many of us unintentionally reduce it to only one or two areas. We become consumed by work and neglect adventure. We pursue financial success while postponing relationships. We care deeply for others while forgetting ourselves.

The next exercise simply invites you to look at your life through a wider lens.

Now explore each of the 5 Fs. Take your time. Allow each area to expand your thinking.

Finances

What would financial freedom look like for you?

Not simply how much money you have, but how you would live because of it.

Family

What relationships would make your heart feel full?

How would you love?

Serve?

Show up?

What memories would you create?

Fitness

How would your body feel?

How much energy would you have?

What adventures would your health make possible?

Fun

What would make you come alive?

What would you experience, explore, learn, celebrate, or create simply because it fills you with joy?

Faith

What would bring deeper meaning to your life?

How would you nurture your relationship with yourself, with others, with nature, or with something greater than yourself?

PHASE 2 – AWAKEN TO YOURSELF

Something subtle has probably happened by now.

Without realizing it, you've begun telling yourself a story.

Not an invented story. Your story.

The pages you've written reveal far more than dreams or ambitions. They reveal what currently feels important to you. Yet an interesting question naturally begins to emerge.

Why do we want what we want?

This question has fascinated philosophers, neuroscientists, and spiritual teachers for centuries.

Sometimes the answer is obvious. Sometimes it surprises us completely.

The next few pages invite you to look beneath the surface—not to judge anything you've written, but simply to understand it more deeply.

Because understanding ourselves is always the beginning of transformation.

LIST 4 - The Gratitude List

What are you grateful for that you would love to experience again tomorrow?

Notice how different this question feels.

Not simply, "What am I grateful for?" Instead ask, "What am I grateful for that I hope shows up in my life again tomorrow?"

Every answer tells your mind and heart, **"More of this."**

Write about the people, experiences, conversations, opportunities, places, feelings, and moments that make life beautiful.

Science tells us that the brain continually filters reality according to what it believes is important. Gratitude gently trains that filter to notice more beauty, more opportunity, and more possibility.

From the perspective of the soul, gratitude is simply love directed toward the present moment.

LIST 5 - The Heart List

There is a reason gratitude has appeared in nearly every wisdom tradition throughout history.

When we genuinely appreciate something, we naturally pay more attention to it. Modern neuroscience describes this as the brain strengthening pathways associated with what it repeatedly notices. Spiritual traditions have expressed the same truth in different languages for thousands of years, reminding us that where attention goes, energy flows.

Whether viewed through science or through the lens of the soul, gratitude gently changes the way we experience the world.

It also prepares us for the next question.

What does your heart truly desire?

This may become one of the most revealing moments of your journey.

Until now you've been writing about what you want.

Now we're going to look beyond those answers.

The heart rarely longs for things. It longs for experiences. It longs for ways of being.

Take money as an example. Your heart doesn't want money. Money is simply a tool.

The deeper question is, **what do you want money to allow you to experience?**

Perhaps freedom. Perhaps peace. Perhaps the ability to travel, spend more time with your family, contribute to meaningful causes, or wake up every morning without the weight of financial stress.

The same is true for nearly everything else. A beautiful home may really represent safety.

Success may represent significance. Recognition may represent feeling seen. A loving relationship may represent belonging. Travel may represent freedom or adventure.

Read through your earlier lists, but don't change a single word. Instead, begin a brand-new list. This time, write only what your heart truly longs to experience.

Not the tools. Not the possessions. Not the achievements.

The feelings. The qualities. The experiences.

Perhaps your list includes peace, joy, freedom, connection, love, creativity, purpose, laughter, wonder, contribution, adventure, presence, or something entirely unique to you.

This is the language of your heart.

LIST 6 - The Identity List

Perhaps one realization has already begun to emerge. Very few of our deepest desires are about the things themselves.

Money becomes freedom. Achievement becomes significance. Travel becomes adventure. Home becomes belonging.

The object changes. The feeling remains.

Once we begin recognizing that difference, another question naturally follows.

If so, much of what we pursue has been shaped by the stories we've believed, how many of those stories still belong to us?

Who am I not?

Perhaps the most difficult question isn't discovering who we are. Perhaps it's discovering who we've been pretending to be.

Throughout life we naturally develop roles that help us fit in, stay safe, gain approval, or protect ourselves from disappointment.

Some of those roles still serve us. Others quietly keep us from becoming ourselves.

Rather than asking, "Who am I?" ask, "Who am I not?"

What expectations no longer belong to you? What identities have you outgrown? What masks are becoming too heavy to carry?

Simply write. No explanations are needed.

Sometimes letting go is the beginning of becoming.

PHASE 3 – CREATE BY DESIGN

By now you've probably noticed something impossible to ignore. You are not reading these pages in quite the same way you were when you first began.

That isn't because the questions changed. It's because you did.

The person who wrote the first list has already become slightly more aware than the person who began this journey.

Which means it is time to revisit what you've already written, not to correct it, but to see it with new eyes.

LIST 7 - The Create List (Why?)

Return to your Possibility List. Read each answer slowly. Now ask a simple question.

And then what?

If I had this... Then what?

Continue asking until every desire leads you toward the experience beneath it. Only then begin refining your list.

LIST 8 - The Inspired Action List

Return to your original definition of success. Read it again. Does it still feel true? Or has your understanding evolved?

Rewrite your definition from this new place of awareness.

LIST 9 - The Alignment List

Visit your Life Dimensions List once more. Read every page. Expand what has become clearer. Release what no longer feels important.

Allow your vision to become more aligned with the person you are becoming.

LIST 10 - The Integration List = Creation List

Everything you've written has been preparing you for this final step. Your Creation List is not another goal list. It is not a bucket list. It is not a vision board. It is a declaration of the life you are consciously choosing to create.

Using the language of your Heart List, write your Creation List as though that life is already unfolding. Rather than focusing on what you hope to own, focusing on how you choose to live.

Rather than describing possessions, describe experiences. Rather than writing from fear, write from possibility. Let every sentence answer one simple question:

What kind of life am I consciously choosing to create?

Living Your Creation List

Your Creation List is not meant to be completed and forgotten. It becomes a living compass.

It is the document you return to before meditation, before breathwork, before visualization, and during the Rewire phase of the R4 Method. It becomes the emotional blueprint you bring into stillness, allowing your nervous system, subconscious mind, and conscious intention to begin moving in the same direction.

As your body becomes regulated and your mind grows quieter, read your Creation List slowly. Don't simply read the words, feel them. See yourself living them. Experience the emotions they awaken. Let them become familiar with your nervous system, because the body often learns through repeated experience long before circumstances change.

Your Creation List also becomes a guide for your attention. Throughout the day, ask yourself a simple question:

Is what I'm paying attention to helping me create the life on my Creation List?

Every conversation. Every habit. Every relationship. Every opportunity. Every thought.

Your attention is one of the most powerful creative forces you possess. Neuroscience shows that your brain continually filters reality according to what it expects and values, while timeless wisdom reminds us that where attention goes, energy flows. When those two perspectives come together, your daily attention becomes one of the greatest acts of creation.

Finally, remember that your Creation List is alive, just as you are. New experiences will change you. Breathwork journeys, meditation, meaningful conversations, quiet moments in nature, unexpected challenges, and moments of deep intuition may reveal desires that were invisible only weeks before. As old dreams are fulfilled, new ones will naturally emerge.

Return to your Creation List every sixty days. Read it with fresh eyes. Celebrate what has already become reality. Refine what no longer feels aligned. Add new insights, inspirations, and heartfelt desires as they arise. Allow the document to evolve as your consciousness evolves.

The goal is not to create the perfect list. The goal is to become the person who lives it.

Living Your Creation List

By now, you have done something few people ever take the time to do. You have slowed down long enough to listen.

You have questioned ideas that may have guided your life for decades. You have looked beneath goals to discover the experiences your heart truly longs for. You have explored success through your own eyes instead of someone else's, and in doing so you have created something far more valuable than a list of ambitions.

You have created a compass.

Most people think transformation begins when they decide what they want. Transformation begins when what they want becomes woven into the way they see themselves, the way they perceive the world, and ultimately the way they move through it each day.

That is why your Creation List should never be placed in a drawer and forgotten. It is not the destination of this journey. It is the beginning.

Read it often. Read it slowly. Read it not as a wish list for the future, but as a reflection of the life you are consciously choosing to create. Over time, the words will begin to feel familiar, and eventually they will become part of your identity. This is where the Science & Soul philosophy moves beyond inspiration and becomes embodied experience.

One of the most remarkable discoveries in neuroscience is that the brain is constantly changing. This ability, known as **neuroplasticity**, allows neural networks to strengthen, weaken, and reorganize throughout our lives. Every thought you repeatedly entertain, every emotion you consistently experience, and every action you practice reinforces certain pathways while allowing others to fade. In simple terms, your brain becomes more efficient at becoming whatever you repeatedly ask it to become.

Another important concept is the **Reticular Activating System (RAS)**, a network within the brainstem that acts as a filter for the millions of bits of sensory information entering your nervous system each second. Because your conscious mind can process only a tiny fraction of that information, the RAS decides what deserves your attention. Once something is labeled as important, your brain begins noticing it everywhere. Buy a new car and suddenly you see that model on every road. Learn a new word and it seems to appear in every conversation. The world has not changed, your attention has.

Your Creation List works in much the same way. As you revisit it regularly, you teach your brain what truly matters. Instead of unconsciously filtering life through old fears, outdated beliefs, or inherited expectations, you gradually train your attention to recognize opportunities, relationships, ideas, and experiences that align with the life you are intentionally creating.

Modern neuroscience also tells us that the brain is not merely reacting to reality, it is constantly predicting it. Based on past experiences, it creates expectations about what is likely to happen next, and those expectations influence what we notice, how we interpret events, and even how our bodies respond before anything has occurred. This process, often referred to as **predictive processing**, helps us navigate the world efficiently, but it can also keep us locked inside familiar patterns.

When you repeatedly immerse yourself in your Creation List, not only by reading the words but by vividly imagining the experiences they represent, you begin providing your brain with a different prediction of the future. Over time, the nervous system becomes less attached to old stories and more familiar with new possibilities. While this does not guarantee specific outcomes, it can profoundly influence your perceptions, choices, emotional responses, and behavior in ways that support the life you are intentionally building.

For thousands of years, contemplative traditions have arrived at remarkably similar conclusions using different languages. Yogic philosophy teaches that where awareness flows, life energy follows. Buddhist teachings emphasize that attention shapes experience. Christian contemplative practice speaks of renewing the mind. Indigenous traditions invite us to live in conscious relationship with creation rather than in unconscious reaction to it.

Though their language differs, they all point toward a shared understanding: transformation begins with awareness, is strengthened through attention, and is expressed through intentional living.

This is where your Creation List becomes more than exercise.

It becomes a daily practice.

Within the Science & Soul philosophy, this practice is brought to life through the R4 Method: **Regulate, Release, Rewire, and Rise**. Each phase supports a different aspect of conscious creation, allowing your mind, body, and heart to move in the same direction rather than working against one another.

Everything begins with **Regulate**. A dysregulated nervous system is designed for survival, not creation. When your body is locked in chronic stress, fear, or overwhelm, your attention narrows, your thinking becomes reactive, and your ability to imagine new possibilities diminishes. Through intentional breathing, vagal nerve activation, stillness, and other regulating practices, you create the physiological conditions for clarity. A calm nervous system is not simply more peaceful, it is more perceptive, more creative, and more capable of making conscious choices.

As the body settles, the work naturally moves into **Release**. Throughout life we accumulate emotional residue, protective patterns, and unconscious beliefs that quietly influence our perceptions and decisions. Many of these patterns once served a purpose, but they no longer serve the person you are becoming. Through breathwork, somatic awareness, compassionate self-reflection, forgiveness, and embodied practices, you create space for these old stories to loosen their grip. You are not fighting the past; you are simply making room for something new.

Only then does **Rewire** become possible. This is where your Creation List becomes one of your most powerful tools. Read it before meditation. Reflect on it before breathwork. Return to it during moments of stillness. Visualize not only the circumstances you wish to create, but also the qualities you choose to embody. Don't simply imagine owning the home—experience the sense of peace it represents. Don't simply picture financial abundance—feel the freedom, generosity, and security that inspired it. The subconscious mind learns most effectively through repeated emotional experience. Every time your body experiences those emotions in a safe and regulated state, you reinforce pathways that support the identity you are consciously cultivating.

Finally comes **Rise**. Rising is not about becoming someone different. It is about expressing, through daily choices, the person you have been remembering all along. Every conversation,

every decision, every relationship, every challenge becomes an opportunity to ask a simple question:

"Is this aligned with the life I am consciously creating?"

Sometimes the answer will be yes. Sometimes it will not. Either response is valuable, because awareness always precedes meaningful change.

There is another practice that quietly transforms everything else.

Become the observer.

Throughout the Science & Soul book, you have been invited to look inward rather than outward. Continue that practice in everyday life. Observe your thoughts without immediately believing them. Notice emotional reactions without becoming consumed by them. Pay attention to recurring habits, familiar stories, and automatic behaviors with curiosity rather than judgment.

The observer creates a small but profound space between stimulus and response. Within that space lives freedom. Instead of reacting from old conditioning, you begin responding from conscious intention. That single shift may be one of the most transformative abilities any human being can develop.

Breathwork offers one of the most direct pathways into this state. As the breath slows and awareness deepens, the noise of the analytical mind often begins to soften. During moments of profound stillness, particularly in the quiet pause after a complete exhalation, many people experience a fleeting sense of spaciousness, a moment in which thought briefly gives way to presence. Across contemplative traditions, such moments have been described as doorways into deeper awareness. Whether understood spiritually, psychologically, or physiologically, they offer an opportunity to reconnect with the qualities described in your Creation List before habitual patterns reassert themselves. Use those moments not to force outcomes, but to reconnect with the life you are choosing to embody.

Perhaps the simplest way to think about manifestation is this: your outer world is continually influenced by the countless choices you make in your inner world. Every thought you nurture, every emotion you rehearse, every decision you make, and every action you take becomes part of the trajectory of your life. Your Creation List does not replace effort, responsibility, or meaningful action. Instead, it gives those actions direction. It reminds you what deserves your energy and gently calls your attention back whenever it begins to drift.

Above all, remember that your Creation List is a living document.

Just as your body changes, your understanding changes. Relationships evolve. Experiences deepen. Some dreams become reality, while others quietly fall away because they no longer reflect who you are. This is not failure. It is growth.

Return to your Creation List every sixty days. Read it slowly, without rushing. Celebrate what has already unfolded. Notice what no longer resonates. Refine your language. Add new insights. Remove goals that belong to an earlier version of yourself. Allow your vision to mature alongside your consciousness.

Over months and years, you may discover something beautiful.

The list changes less.

Not because you have stopped growing, but because you have stopped searching for yourself in places where you were never meant to be.

Eventually, the words on the page no longer describe the life you hope to create.

They describe the life you are living.

And perhaps that was the purpose of this journey all along—not to become someone new, but to remember who you have always been, and to live each day with the awareness, intention, and courage to bring that person fully into the world.