

# Your Simplest Life

The Tiny Book  
of To-Do  
Tricks

to  
Power Charge  
Your  
Productivity



LISA TURNER

Section III  
EXCERPT  
Your Simplest  
Life

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THE TINY BOOK OF TO-DO TRICKS TO  
POWER CHARGE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

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*“Stop wasting your time looking for the key to happiness...the door is open and unlocked...just walk through it.” — Steve Maraboli*

## Section III

# How to Reach Your Dream

There are some simple facts that prevent most people from figuring out how to reach big goals – and even small goals that seem within reach when you begin thinking about them.

Earlier in my business career I provided some coaching for CEOs of small businesses. My question to the top person in the organization was, “What’s the one thing you don’t have the answer to that is keeping you up at night?”

The answer was shocking.

“I don’t know what our mission is.”

That's the same as saying you do not understand what the company's purpose is. Why are we in business?

If you don't know why you're in business, then you won't understand your customers or your products.

So then I asked, "What are your values?"

The CEO answered, "I haven't thought about it."

I hid my surprise as best I could, saying, "Well, let's begin there. Let's establish the company's mission, based upon its values. These are the things that you customers care deeply about."

Several of these small companies decided to go out of business, and several more decided to change their direction, based on their newly minted mission statement, becoming profitable and reaching the goals they had set.

You may not be running a business, but you are certainly running your own life. Do you have a mission statement? Are your values clear and written down? Do you know what your goals are and where you are on the plan to get there?

If you don't, then don't despair. Most of us, over 95% in fact, have not written down our goals.



So, complete your journey through this tiny book, and get started. It's never too late.<sup>1</sup>

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## Where to Start

The ideas I am about to share are my own opinions based on what has worked for me and worked for my coaching clients. The caveat is that you will need to invest a small amount of dedicated time to go through the process.

We routinely spend large blocks of time in recreation, whether it is watching television, going to a sports event, or shopping. Yet, most people I have talked to do not have written goals.

If you decide to spend 4 or 5 hours over a weekend or two to work through my instructions, you will have a mission statement, your 5 top values, and your top five goals written out. You will have a timeline and a "how to get there" list for your top goal.

There are entire books written on achievement, defining your purpose, and establishing goals. This is not meant to replace the advice and techniques that are already out there, but to assemble the best ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Reader note: What follows is a version of my goal setting method in *Dream Take Flight*. If you've read that and gone through the entire sequence, then jump to "[Pulling it All Together](#)."

that worked for me and get you started. Most folks are not willing to work through an entire book to figure out their goals. While my instructions will take dedicated effort, they are a shortcut. You can decide.

Many of us fail at getting what we want because our fears overcome our willpower. We are afraid we will not get what we most want. We are afraid to dream, and we are afraid to risk what we already have. We gravitate toward comfort. To figure out what you really want, you will have to get out of your comfort zone and ask yourself some tough questions. You'll have to spend some dedicated time in soul searching.

Deciding what we want in life is zen-like. It's muddy but clear; it's complicated but it's simple. It's hard and it's easy. It's easy because what I'm asking you to do in the first phase can be done in four hours. It's not easy because after we have figured out what we want we have to figure out how to get it.

Here's the plan. You will spend four to six hours over two weekends to hammer this out. When you are done, you will have a plan written in your journal along with your life's mission and your core values. Marrying these two items together will give you the answer to what you want in life, and then (and only then) can we begin goal setting and then planning.

Plan on spending 2-4 hours on Saturday, 2-3 hours on Sunday, and finishing up the following weekend on Saturday or Sunday. There is no reason why you can't take longer than this, or allow more incubation time between the sessions.

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## Session 1. An Inner Journey

Sit down with a notebook or journal and a pen or pencil.

Answer the following questions. These are standard introspection questions that you will find in most books on goal setting and achievement. Answering them will help you discover what you care about most.

If your doctor told you that you had six months to live, and exactly six months, what would you do in that time? Assume good health. Take as much time as you need to ponder this and write out in your notebook.

If you had all of the resources and money that you wanted, what would you do differently? You might not do anything differently but if so, write that out in your notebook.

Finally, answer this question: What would you want others to say about you at your funeral service? Write out at least two things.

Now, let these thoughts and what you have written incubate overnight. They will percolate through your subconscious and you might be surprised at additional items that pop out in the next session.

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## Session 2. What You Care About

Look at your journal and read through what you wrote. Is it accurate? Is there anything else that you want to add? Go ahead and spend the time to do this.

The things that you wrote tell you about your most closely held values and principles. It is principles and values that provide the fuel or energy for your accomplishment and the pathway to your dreams.

List at least 10 values that resonate with you in your journal.

What are your values? Unless you have done this before, you may be confused. By values, I mean the noun, with a dictionary definition of:

*The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something. Synonyms include, [worth](#), [usefulness](#), [advantage](#), [benefit](#), [gain](#), [profit](#), [good](#), [help](#), [merit](#).*

Also:

*A person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.*

*Synonyms: principles, ethics, moral code, morals, standards, code of behavior.*

So, values are a combination of worth to us, and drive our behavior.

This combination is very powerful, as we will see in a moment.

Your list might look like this:

Acceptance

Accomplishment

Appreciation

Awareness

Challenge

Community

Confidence

Control

Decisiveness

Empathy

Energy  
Friendship  
Financial Security  
Harmony  
Humor  
Humility  
Imagination  
Intimacy  
Learning  
Neatness  
Optimism  
Patience  
Persistence  
Power  
Punctuality  
Perfection  
Reflection  
Responsibility  
Security  
Sharing  
Self-reliance  
Spirituality  
Teamwork  
Trust  
Vision  
Volunteering  
Wisdom

This is a fraction of what you can find in internet lists. Take your time in picking your favorites. Make up your own.

Circle 15 values that are most important to you. Take a 15-minute break. When you return to it, pick the top five to eight values and write these in your journal or someplace where it will be easy to find.

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### Session 3: Discover Your Mission

You can continue on from the values session or let things incubate.

After reviewing your values, write a mission statement. This is your very own, private statement that you alone can see. Of course you can share it, but right now it is yours to reflect upon. Use your top five to eight values.

Here's an example. The values may be:

Happiness  
Confidence  
Sharing; love  
Humor  
Challenge

The statement could be: “To live life in confidence and happiness, sharing my challenges with others with humor and love; to leave work of significance behind.”

This exercise will help you further define your values and determine what things in life really create passion, excitement, and enthusiasm. Your dreams will materialize in front of you. If you find yourself emotional at this phase then you are on the right track.

Some books on goal setting suggest categories for goal setting. While this is not necessary, it may provide additional structure for your goals list. Some of the categories you can use are Family, Career, Relationships, Health, Community, Recreation, Personal Growth, and Spirituality. Feel free to use these or any other categorizations that fit you.

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## Session 4: Find out what you want

In this next to last session, about two hours, you will stir values, principles, core beliefs, and wants into a mix that will produce powerful goals.

What dreams and visions materialized out of your previous sessions? Write these down.

It could be anything – from a walk in the woods, a challenging climb, learning to ski or play a sport,



write a book, learn photography, raise a family, write poetry, travel the world, learn to cook, retire early, perform community service, start a business, or build an airplane.

Once you've done this, rest for several days and let the ideas percolate. Your brain will work on them as you go about your day. You'll find them popping in to your mind at odd times. This is a good sign.

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## Session 5: Planning the dreams

You cannot do everything. In this phase you will need to evaluate the things you are doing now. So let's do that. Write down a list of *everything* you are doing in your life now. Draw a matrix or table. Start on the left with an item, then whether discretionary or not, then long term/short term, then rate 1-10 on whether it fits in with your values, then 1-10 on how passionate it makes you feel.

Right now we won't worry about money (what it costs).

Now look at the non-discretionary items. Are they really required? Is there a way you could rearrange your life to not do some of these things? Think about this. It's fine if you end up not dropping any of these, but do examine them carefully. If you have high

scores with these in fitting with your purpose and passion, then they should stay of course.

On to the discretionary items. Here is where your scores really help you differentiate between items. Pick off the top ten items and move them to a list. Reflect on the items and think about any other ways you could evaluate them. What will happen is that some of these items will jump out at you. Your emotional brain will pick out at least one and perhaps 2 that speak to you. Let the list incubate.

After a day of leaving your list alone, at least one of your items will grow on you. This is the time for you to sit down again in some reflective time. You will know if this is the top goal. If it is, then spend some time figuring out HOW you will achieve it. Not all of this information will appear right now, which is fine.

Write the goal down along with ideas for achievement and a timeline.

Constantly reflect on and evaluate your goals; write them in a journal and review every day. This sounds hokey but it works.

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## Session 6: Six Sigma Meets the Secret

Your brain on goals - sometimes I refer to this concept as “Six Sigma meets The Secret.” Six Sigma is a rational and logical method of problem-solving using data and objective experiments to remove variation from a process, typically in a manufacturing environment. But humans do not make decisions based on logic. Humans make nearly all decisions based on emotion. Then we rationalize our decision if it does not align with the data. “I decided based on my gut feel,” is a reflection of this decision-making method. We are saying, it’s ok, the gut is smarter than the brain.”

In fact, our emotional brain made the decision and in the moment of that decision the rest of our conscious resources make the case for its logic – an emotional logic. This is fine as long as we realize that this is what is happening.

So, when we choose our top goal after going through both the values analysis and the emotional “jumps out at you” review, we end up harnessing the highly powerful emotional brain to drive accomplishment. The brain goes to work for us, and in a series of complex reviews and judgements, figures out how to get what we want.

This interplay and balance between logic and the law of attraction are crucial to an achievement plan. A cycle develops and alternates in a natural rhythm between the two of them. All of the logic in the world will not convince the subconscious mind to believe something; it is the power of emotions – the fuel if you will – that drives achievement. Then values, belief, self-knowledge, and the data have to be lined up in the same direction to produce the spark and then the ignition of your deepest passion.

Values drive beliefs; beliefs drive emotions; emotions drive goals; goals drive achievement.

What to do next: take about an hour to review your work in your journal. If you see any disconnects, think them through. Review your top 5 goals and decide which one you will pursue. If you've followed the directions, you will find a powerful magnet drawing you in.

Pick one to begin. You've done enough work to know that the five goals are achievable and ignite excitement. Now what you will do is figure out how to get what you want.

Ask yourself, "What do you need to do to reach the first goal on your list?"

List out what things have to be accomplished.

Ask yourself, "What other things must I give up to get what I want?"

List these items.

Pull out or print out a long-range calendar. List the subtasks you'll need to accomplish and put them into the calendar. Important: the dates are mileposts. They are flexible. Your brain will reject hard and fast dates. Your passion and excitement will drive task completion.

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## Session 7: Happiness and Reducing Stress

The following tips can make a difference in how fast you reach your goals.

**Attitude.** Think about what you want, not about what you don't want. Sometimes this is not easy, but developing goal setting habits will help. It's fine to be realistic, but never allow yourself to fall into negativity. It will only impede your progress.

**Personal Power.** You have the power to decide how you will react to life events. I was well into my thirties before I realized this fact, and when I saw it, an entirely new world opened up for me. Because of the range of human personality types, this basic and important principle may not be evident to everyone. Those who have not discovered it yet tend to blame misfortune on others instead of taking action to create positive and transformative responses to view events with a different perspective.

This personal power will allow you to control and enjoy your own life with great enthusiasm. In accepting personal responsibility for where you are and what you are doing, you will find that your world opens up to others.

Stress is energy. “Being stressed” is thought of as bad. If we think it is bad, then it IS bad, and the effects will manifest as fatigue, impatience, avoidance, and unhappiness. Knowing that you have the power to view life events through your very own filter, why not view stress as positive energy?

Acceptance. Accept the situation you are in fully and allow the energy to fuel your own awareness and patience. Over time this habit will drive positive mental and bodily responses to pressure, and help you stay focused and positive. The more open minded we are to our ability to do this, the better it will work.

Habits. Perhaps the most powerful tool on this list, habits guide everything we do. Our brains are wired in to habits with specific rewards and reinforcements. We go through each day rarely thinking about habits. But changing our habits can be a powerful way to getting more of what we want, and less of what we don’t want.

To modify your habits, try listing at least three or four of them out on your paper. Have a column for the good ones (“Exercise in the morning”) and for the

ones you want to eliminate (“snacking after dinner”). Pick one habit you want to change. Write down ways you could change your unwanted habit. Figure out how to make it both unattractive and difficult, then enlist willpower. Then reward yourself every time you succeed.

James Clear, the author of *Atomic Habits*, blows away the myth that it takes 21 days to create a habit. Clear says that it takes 66 days. So start with the 21, and then pat yourself on the back, and then get another 21! And so on.

Give Some Time Away. By now you are thinking about every opportunity to work on and enjoy your goal. Your brain is figuring out how to create more time to achieve the steps necessary to achieve your biggest dream. Your planner is full. “I wish I had some time,” you say to yourself. If you’re like me, you are crow-barring every moment you can in to get things done.

Although counterintuitive, the best way to find time is to share and give time. Get out of your goal zone now and then and spend time with others in some capacity. Volunteer, teach, visit someone, or invite others to see your projects.

Sharing yourself with others from time to time opens up your own perspective and will drive creativity and a renewed enjoyment of your own goals.





*“You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, non-apologetically, to say “no” to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger “yes” burning inside.”* — Stephen R. Covey

## Goal Setting Myths

You now know that achieving a dream does not start with goals. To reinforce the concept, here are the central misconceptions of goal setting.

Conventional wisdom in the goal setting arena is very clear: goals should be brainstormed, prioritized, time bound, written down, and adhered to rigorously or we won't achieve them.

Not so.

In my experience, using these principles without an intelligent framework dooms us to failure and disappointment. It is no wonder that so many people have an aversion to the phrase “goal setting” or “New Year’s Resolutions.” These feelings come from repeated failures in trying to get a goal system to work for us. We would rather not think about it and

skim along hoping that we will get some of what we want in life and not have to deal with the process.

As a result, most people do not achieve the level of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure that they could otherwise have in their personal lives and in their careers and businesses. Understanding the myths of goal setting is the first step in learning how to discover the power and ease of goal achievement.

**Myth #1: Start your goal setting by brainstorming a list of things to work on (goals)**

No. This idea presupposes that you already know what you should be working on. Most people do not even have a good understanding of themselves and their motivations, much less their goals in life. Nearly 95% of the population cannot succinctly answer the question “What do you want out of life?” If we cannot answer this question, and we do not know what we want, how can we set life goals? There is certainly a place for brainstorming in the goal setting process, but it is not at the beginning. Without alignment between self-knowledge, beliefs and values, and your passions, your subconscious mind will reject most efforts at goal setting.

**Myth #2: All goals must be time bound**

No. Desperation and depression follow from putting dates on goals and then not meeting them. What is the worst thing that could happen? There are goals that have dates and must be accomplished (buy gas for the car), however, goal setting is more complicated than this, and without constant adjusting of deadlines, if you have deadlines at all, our minds will not embrace them.

While we certainly spend time looking at the long-range picture of what we want in life, we have to be flexible in assigning timeframes. An example would be “getting fit.” Does this have an end goal? Yes, and it has interim goals, but it’s a moving target. If we get sick and interrupt our schedule, are we failures because we did not reach the interim goal? No, because we adjust the times out to accommodate circumstances. To be rigid about deadlines will damage self-esteem, and produce discouragement and fatigue. This is a major contributor to stress and the feeling of overload, especially in the workplace. Self-esteem and confidence are critical to achievement, balance, and happiness.

### **Myth #3: “Just Do It”**

This is a fun saying that Nike invented, and it’s been used everywhere to mean anything and everything . . . but in the goal setting arena what does this

tell us? It tells us to just pick something and then pursue it, no matter what.

No.

While it is not a bad thing to pursue something important with passion and energy, to be spending all that energy on something that is not going to get you where you want to go will be a waste of time. The supposition here is that we simply settle on something, and go for it. In the book (and movie) Alice In Wonderland, Alice finds the Cheshire Cat perched up in a tree. “Oh Puss, could you please tell me which way to go?”

“Well, that depends on where you want to get to,” said the cat.

“Oh, it really doesn’t matter, as long as I get somewhere,” said Alice.

“Then it really doesn’t matter which way you go!” said the cat.

The point here is if we have not figured out the best route, if we don’t have a map, and we run off in any direction, we may end up in a place where we do not want to be.

#### **Myth #4: Always prioritize your goals**

No. Prioritization is used when brainstorming multiple goals, not after they are established. Prioritize what you are going to do RIGHT NOW, in this mo-

ment. Change is always going on around us, and we must have the flexibility in our schedule and in our stance to be able to respond to changing circumstances.

**Myth #5: Stick to your goals and don't quit**

No. Again, the hallmark of our world is change. If the underlying reasons for a certain goal change, you must adjust appropriately to that change. This is tough psychologically, as we normally hold on to stable environments and resist any changes. But doing this will really hold us back.

As for quitting, quitting can be a terrific strategy to get off the wrong track and on to the right one. There's a little book that you might have seen or heard about called, The Dip by Seth Godin that tells us quitting can be the best thing we can do if it gets us unstuck and in to a track where we can be the best at something – realizing and pursuing our passion.

**Myth #6: Share your goals with your family and friends so that you are committed to achieving them.**

No. And, it's fine if you disagree.

Self-esteem is critically important to the goal setting process and all you need are your friends telling you that you are a fool, or a dreamer, or “round the

bend” or plain crazy. This isn’t to say you shouldn’t share an important goal with a loved one or close friend, just be judicious about it. You’re not doing this for your friends; you are doing this for yourself.

The time to be secretive is in the beginning, as your plan emerges. Protect your ideas and excitement until you are clear about your journey. Be ready for ridicule and criticism, outright as well as veiled when it arrives. This will give you conviction and strength of purpose. I spent months planning my airplane purchase before letting anyone know – and then easily endured “You must be crazy” and “What are you thinking?”

Your passion is first a secret passion . . . and then there will be time to share it.

**Myth #7: Goal setting should be done in a logical way so that your emotions don’t steer you in the wrong direction.**

No. If your logical mind comes up with your goals plan, but your emotional brain, or heart, if you will, does not “like” the plan, then it will NEVER happen. I see this all the time at the end of the year when people set the goals that they “should” do . . . they “should” lose weight, stop smoking, save more money. We know that the results are usually less than what we hoped for. Without alignment between our

inner beliefs and our goals, we just can't get traction for accomplishment.

**Myth #8: A Goal Plan should drive Project Plans that are detailed, written down, and worked on every day.**

Don't make it complicated. Do the up front work. Once you understand that your goals have to be aligned with your values, your beliefs, and your passions, you can put the process on auto-pilot and find that things are being delivered to you. This is an important concoction of logic and emotion – establish the logic, allow the emotional alignment, and watch the Universe deliver what you want. Once you get good at the process, you no longer have to do the paperwork, so to speak, to get the deliveries.

You have probably seen the acronym for goal setting, called "SMART."

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Realistic

T = Time bound or Timely

One of the reasons I don't like acronyms is that someone made it up to be clever, and maybe the capital letters don't really do a good job of saying what the formula is. Let's look at this one. S is ok for

Specific. Your goals SHOULD be as specific as possible. M is ok for Measurable, we should be able to measure our goals. A for Attainable is redundant; why would we even list a goal if we did not think it was attainable? Let's replace this with Aligned Action. We know that if our goals are not aligned with our values and beliefs, we will not take action on it. The goal must be aligned. R for Realistic is redundant once again. If the goal was NOT realistic (in our own mind) we would not be attempting it, and many big goals are NOT realistic at the outset. Let's replace this with Reinforcing. If our goals are reinforced by our values and beliefs, then we can achieve them. And lastly, Timely. We already said that most goals should not have a specific hard and fast date assigned to them. So this won't work. Let's replace Timely with Tempting. If your goal is not tempting, if it is not interesting, fun, and something to look forward to, you won't do it, will you? So we now have:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Aligned Action

R = Reinforcing (values)

T = Tempting

Realize that accomplishing some of the tasks in your plan will require you to give up other things. Don't let this discourage you, and stay focused on



your goals. Your brain will work in tandem with your emotions to drive you to completion.

Your mind and all of the resources available to it are working in concert to accomplish your goal. You WILL achieve your goal, and it will bring lasting joy and self-confidence.

Congratulations. You are now one of less than 5% of the human population with a values list, mission statement, and written goals with a plan to achieve them. You know where you are going and how to get there. The dreams of the world are now yours.



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