

9. LIFE PLANNING PROGRAM

9.1 LIFE PLANNING: A goal without a plan is just a wish. *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

To be successful in your life, you need to have a life plan. Without a plan, many of your dreams will only be dreams. A life plan, on the other hand, will help you turn your dreams into reality. It works because it gives you not a just a destination, but also a way to get there.

A life plan doesn't have to be complicated. It should answer just two questions:

1. *What is your destination?*
2. *How will you get there?*

Let's look at them one by one.

What is Your Destination?

You should know where you are going. Not knowing your destination is a mistake because you may end up in the wrong place. You need to know where you want to go so that you don't waste your time and effort.

Here are some tips related to finding your destination:

1. Create your life map

To see how your life will be in the future, it's helpful to see how your life has been in the past. By creating a life map, you can see patterns in your life that help you find out where you should go. Look backward, connect the dots in your life, and project them into the future.

2. Find your life purpose

Your life purpose gives you meaning in everything you do. It helps you do what matters to you and makes your life fulfilling. Without a purpose, you may achieve much but feel empty inside. Take the time to find your purpose in life.

3. Discover your big dreams

The size of your dreams has a lot to do with living in mediocrity. If your dreams are small, there is no reason for you to move past mediocrity. It's easier to just live a comfortable life. On the other hand, if your dreams are big, you have to move past mediocrity to make your dreams come true. So discover the big dreams in you.

4. Make short-term goals

You should know what your final destination is, but you should also have milestones along the way. These milestones help you stay on track. They help you know whether or not you are on the right path to reach your destination.

You create the milestones by breaking your long-term goals into short-term ones. What do you want to achieve this year? What do you want to achieve this month? What do you want to achieve today?

5. Keep refining

Knowing your destination is a process. If you are like me, you will refine your destination over time. It's like zooming in a picture. At first you see the big picture, but after zooming it in you can see its details. Similarly, perhaps you can only see the big picture of your destination now. That's fine. Follow it. Along the way, you will find clues that make the picture clearer.

HOW WILL YOU GET THERE?

After knowing your destination, you need to know how to get there. Here are some tips related to it:

1. Find and communicate your personal brand

To achieve your goals, you need to market yourself. You need to find the unique value you can provide to others and communicate it. This way people know that they can come to you to meet their needs.

2. Have some guiding principles

There are a lot of distractions along the way to your destination. To prevent yourself from being distracted, you need to have some guiding principles. You need to identify the value you believe in. These principles help you stay true to yourself in everything you do.

3. Find your deliberate practice

Doing deliberate practice is important if you want to be remarkable. Deliberate practice is the kind of practice that stretches the boundaries of your capabilities. A good rule of thumb is you need about 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to become a world-class expert in a field. Find out where you should invest that 10,000 hours.

4. Use tacking strategy

The world constantly changes so you need to constantly adapt. You should set a short-term objective, work hard to achieve it, evaluate your performance, and adjust accordingly.

Executing Your Life Plan

After knowing your destination and how to get there, you need to execute your plan. Here are some tips on executing your life plan:

1. Focus

There is no question that focus is essential to achieve your goals. Without focus, you will spread your effort and attention too thin and eventually achieve nothing. Be careful though. You should be focused but not obsessed.

2. Be persistent

You should be persistent because failure is inevitable on your way to success. Without persistence, it's easy to get discouraged in the face of failure and stop before reaching your destination. Have faith and keep pushing forward.

3. Build relationships

Nobody can succeed alone. You need the support of other people to succeed. So build your network before you need it.

4. Start now

A good plan vigorously executed right now is far better than a perfect plan executed next week.

George S. Patton

Don't wait until your plan is perfect before you start. Don't wait for the perfect time. Start now. You will learn more by doing than by waiting.

FIVE LEVELS OF FOCUS : there are five levels of mental focus based on the time frame:

1. Lifetime
2. Yearly
3. Weekly
4. Daily
5. Currently

Of course, you can add other levels like quarterly or monthly if they work for you, but for me these five levels are enough since having too many levels is confusing.

If you want to succeed, you should be focused at all five levels. Lacking focus at any of them will decrease the performance of the rest. In addition, you should also be careful not to be obsessed. The art of maintaining the balance without falling to the *lacking focus* or *being obsessed* states is an art that will take time to master.

How to Focus at All Five Levels

Let's look at the five levels of focus and see how to focus at each of them:

1. Lifetime

Being focused at the lifetime level means that you should have a *purpose* for your life. What is your life purpose? Have you followed it?

Finding your life purpose is perhaps the most difficult thing to do in all five levels, but it is also the most rewarding. It sets the directions of the other levels. If you have this level wrong, you may end up making many wrong decisions in your life.

Here are some things you can do to find your life purpose:

1. *Find what matters to you*

This is the starting point to finding your life purpose. There is one question that can help you find what matters to you:

“What is the thing that you care so much about that you are willing to do it *for free*?”

2. *Explore your passions*

I believe everyone has multiple passions that are waiting to be explored.

Don't limit yourself to only one passion. Build your portfolio of passions.

3. *Find the intersection between your passions and the things that matter to you*

The intersections between the things you are passionate about and the things you care about are clear signs of what your life purpose could be.

4. *Make a mission statement*

After you have an idea of what your life purpose is, you should write it in a mission statement. Ideally, it should be a one-liner: ten words or less.

5. *Keep refining*

Finding your life purpose is not something you can do in one day or even

one year. Just start with what you have and keep refining it. Over time, the direction of your life will be clearer and clearer.

2. Yearly

After dealing with the lifetime level, you should then go down to the yearly level. Here you should have a goal for the year related to your life purpose. Your goal should be both specific and measurable. To ensure that you are focused at the yearly level, you should have only one goal for the year (or two if you must).

One thing to remember is your yearly goal should be related to your life mission. Otherwise, there is a missing link between the lifetime and yearly levels.

3. Weekly

To have focus at weekly level, you should set a goal for the week ahead. What do you want to achieve in the following week to help you achieve your yearly goal?

4. Daily

The next level is daily in which you set your goals for the day. What are the things that you want to achieve today? You can start by setting your Most Important Task (MIT) for the day. Your MIT should be the thing that will make the most difference if you accomplish it today.

Here is a question to help you set your MIT:

“If I can only finish one task today, what will that be?”

You can then set other goals using a variant of the same question:

“If I can only finish one more task today, what will that be?”

By asking this question repeatedly you will get a list of the tasks based on priority.

5. Currently

After setting your goals for the day, the next level is the *present*. To get optimum result, you should be focused in whatever you are doing. It means that:

1. You should not multitask
2. You should prevent distraction

3. You should use ultradian sprint to accomplish as much as possible within the working session

Where is Your Weakness?

Being focused at all five levels is important to get the most out of your life. I realize this when I look at my own life. I'm focused at some levels but not at the others and as a result I do not get the results I want. Understanding these five levels help me see the levels which need improvement. In my case, my weakness is the *weekly* and *currently* levels. While there is still room for improvements at the other levels, those two levels are where I lack most.

There is one thing to remember though: while being focused at all levels is good, we should stay flexible if we want to avoid falling to *being obsessed* state. Perhaps you have set some goals for the day, but you should be flexible enough to adapt to changes that happen during the day. Your heart is often the best guide since it somehow knows what is right.