

# *Your Personal Dream Maker*



*"So many of our dreams at first seem impossible,  
then they seem improbable, and then when  
we summon the will they soon become inevitable."*

*Christopher Reeve*

## **Dreaming Dreams**

*One of the first steps to building your future is to figure out what you want your future to look like. One of the best ways to do that is to begin by dreaming.*

**Month #1**

### **Dreaming Dreams**

By Nan S. Russell

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*“That’s my dream,” I overheard her telling her friend in the dressing room next to mine. “But it will never happen,” her voice dropping as she softly added, “I might as well forget it.” But there it was. Unmistakable. Her words threaded together by a glimmer of hope.*

*The substance of her dream didn’t matter. What caught my heart was the ache in her voice. I knew that despair, clinging by a frayed tether to a dream of my own. At the time, I was close to giving up my dream of being a writer. The desire pulverized by roadblocks and rejection surpassed only by a growing fear. There’s a line from the movie, *Flashdance*, that captured it: “When you give up your dream, you die.”*

*I knew if I did give up, something in my soul would die. Still, I needed kernels of hope. When particularly discouraged, I even searched for scraps from the daily horoscope, which on a rational day I’d trust with the same certainty as paying the mortgage from Las Vegas slots. Yet sometimes crumbs appeared under Capricorn to keep me going. Like this one: “You have a strong sense of destiny. You intend to be someone. Think about your long range goals and the path you want for yourself.”*

*Gratefully, I’ve given up looking for hope from horoscopes these days, finding it from readers’ emails, supportive family and friends, and my literary agent’s enthusiasm. But along the way, I learned how hard it is to hold onto one’s dream. How hard it is to build momentum from the inside out, not the outside in.*

*We all have dreams. Some we keep sheltered, afraid to touch or share them for fear they might disintegrate when we speak the secret desires of our*

*heart. Others we test drive, putting them away when the road becomes difficult, long, or hard to follow. And then there are the dreams that once acknowledged, haunt us until we find a way to manifest them.*

*Some dreams hold the promise of new beginnings, the craziness of audacity, or the hope for a better world. Some dreams are about you; some about those you love; some about those you don't even know. But I realize that in my life, all my dreams matter. They help me navigate life, planting seeds of possibility, imagination and potential. They keep me alive, in the deepest sense of the word.*

*Risk of pain, disappointment and difficulties often keep us from our dreams. But in the scheme of things, I've learned there's more risk in not pursuing them. You see, dreaming dreams can help change the life I have, into the life I want. If I can long to become who I am capable of becoming, I can learn to trust who I am. If I can ache for a love-filled life, I can create one. And if I can dream of a better world, I can help make it that way. In the big scheme of things, I think George Leonard is right, "Not to dream boldly may turn out to be simply irresponsible."*



## ***Dreaming Dreams***

***What are your dreams? How do you want to live your life? What is the future you want to create?***

- *Spend time this month – dreaming.*
- *Make a list - to capture your dreams*
- *At the end of the month - choose one to work on*

*“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.” George Bernard Shaw*

## **Discovering Your Gifts**

*The future you want to create is up to you. It is a personal choice. You are the one responsible for the life you live.*

**Month #2**

## **Wanting What You Want**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*Pouring myself a bowl of soup from the buffet line, I noticed a teenage boy standing slightly behind a grandmotherly woman eyeing the last piece of chocolate cake. After a contemplative pause, she reached for apple cobbler, and the teenager swooped in on his prize. Turned out they didn't want the same dessert after all.*

*Watching them piqued my curiosity. I started noticing each diner emerging from the buffet line, eyeing their tray for choices. There were occasional similarities, but not surprisingly no two were identical. While my casual observations were far from scientific, they did get me thinking.*

*Often we believe we want the same things from life as other people, but we don't. We conjecture that everyone wants what we do and live our lives in competition, trying to achieve, acquire or get what we think everyone is after.*

*We search for meaning, purpose or connection because we think we're supposed to find it, versus make it. Or we imagine others know something we don't, so we follow their definitions and their desires.*

*We're influenced by advertising, celebrity stories and media hype transforming those messages into desires or needs we never knew we had. We confuse our wants with those others have for us, or ones we believe we're suppose to have. And we put pressure on others, unknowingly, as we assume spouses, family and friends should want what we do, imposing our thoughts, wants, wishes, and needs on them.*

*But life is like that buffet table. We want different things. Our tastes, interests, gifts and circumstances influence our dreams and desires. But many of us haven't defined what they are. We don't know what we want out of our life.*

*So, how can we draw into it what we want? How can we create the life we seek to live?*

*It took me decades to uncover that what I thought I wanted, I didn't; what I believed successful people were suppose to want was empty once I got there. The expected high wasn't. Still, I searched. It must be over the next mountain, in the next goal attainment, or down the next path. I didn't know exactly what "it" was, but I kept looking to the outside. Turns out, I should have been looking inside.*

*I've learned, I can decide much of my life. It's as individual as my buffet preferences. To do that, I need to define what I want, believe I can have it and visualize and evolve it into existence. You see, we help create the world we want. My life shouldn't be filled with what others think it should be. It shouldn't be filled with someone else's measurements for success or achievement or happiness. That yardstick is mine.*

*What I've discovered, in the scheme of things, is this: someone else's wants can't bring me happiness, contentment or delight even if I get them. For that kind of joy, I need to "hear" and act on the desires of my heart.*



## ***Discovering your Gifts***

***What do you want out of life? What is most important to you? What gifts do you have that can help you create the life you want? What are some things you need to learn?***

- *Spend time this month –discovering what you want and the gifts you have*
- *Brainstorm a list – Write down your ‘wants’ and ‘gifts’*
- *At the end of the month – Reconsider your list of dreams and your wants. Ask yourself: Is this the life I want to create?*

*“Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it.” – Buddha*

## **Living Your Dreams**

*Living your dreams takes determination and persistence. It is hard work. Your dreams will need to be nurtured and protected.*

**Month #3**

### **Building a Cabin**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*The dream was not about building a cabin in the wilderness overlooking the peaks of Glacier National Park, off the power-grid, where grizzly bear, mountain lions, elk, moose, and wolves share the land. The dream was about love.*

*The seed was planted thirty years ago when my husband and I fell in love, talking of someday living in a cabin in the mountains. The cabin dream became a symbol about what mattered to us; about spending more time together; about family and friends; about nurturing our love and awakening our spirits; about intangibles that called to our hearts when tangibles clogged our heads. It represented the future we wanted to create together.*

*So, nestled among the presents each year for twenty-five Christmases there was always a tribute to our cabin dream. Sometimes hand-made, sometimes store-bought, the cabin gift marked our continued commitment to that vision, as each year we further refined our dream.*

*We added dream parameters: a cabin in northwestern Montana; moving by the time we turned fifty; bringing meaningful work with us. We added dream dirt: twenty acres we couldn't quite afford to buy or pass up. We added dream fertilizer: trips to learn the community; financial goals; a finalized design. Along the way, we added dream magic: persistence, determination, and passion.*

*It took twenty-five years to build our cabin. Not the construction, which took three and a half, but weaving together the life-structure to enable us to live and work from this remote Rocky Mountain region. During that time, I learned the difference between dreaming and dream-doing.*

*I learned a dream must be nurtured, protected and grown despite setbacks, struggles, frustrations and naysayers. I learned how difficult it is to move a dream forward when life's challenges diminish time and energy, pulling*

*us like gnats against what feels like the status-quo-vacuum. I learned a dream happens by choice, not by chance. Unlike wishes that stay wishes, I learned a dream can be molded and developed by taking one tiny step, then another and another. And it can even be added to or modified without losing the dream's core.*

*But mostly, in the scheme of things, I learned it's not about building a cabin. You see, it's not the dream that matters, but its pursuit. It's the dream-doing that changes lives, builds confidence and opens a bigger dream box of possibility. It's the dream-doing that builds the life you want to live. So as we celebrate our second Christmas in a Montana cabin with a New Year beckoning, may this time of new beginnings inspire all of us to follow the dreams of our heart.*



## ***Living Your Dreams***

***Think about the dream you chose from month one. Picture it in your mind. Imagine what it looks like to be living your dream. Imagine where you are, what you are doing, who you are with, how it feels.***

- *Spend time this month – imagining what it would be like to living your dream*
- *Capture your dream – write ‘a day in your life’*
- *At the end of the month – think about how you feel living this dream*

*“The highest reward for man’s toils is not what he gets from it, but what he becomes by it.” – John Ruskin*

## **Taking Action**

*Taking action is often hard. You don't move mountains in a single day. The important thing is the doing.*

**Month # 4**

### **One Bite At a Time**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*Three hundred and twenty miles he traveled alone in the Arctic wilderness. It made the front page in the small Montana town where I live, heralding the winner of the Yukon Arctic Ultra Race as a member of our community. I found the article fascinating. Turns out Andrew Matulionis was so far ahead he never saw his competitors, enduring five days of below zero conditions to win. When asked how he managed to persevere, Andrew explained, "The checkpoints are your goals." He continued, "it's one bite at a time."*

*Whether you're in an Arctic race or a business endeavor that same winning strategy applies. Yet what I found in twenty years in management was something different. While people desire career achievements or the trappings that go with them (the title, higher pay or more flexibility), they flounder trying to figure out where to start, how to get there or what to do. Often they fail to optimize opportunities that come their way.*

*It's not that they aren't working hard. They are. But like hamsters on a wheel, they put in effort that takes them nowhere. They confuse working hard with making progress. You see, making progress requires gradual betterment, a forward movement or enhanced personal development. And if you want to be winning at working, you need to make progress.*

*But that's where it breaks down. The big project comes along, the large goal looms or the significant accomplishment hovers. Each can appear overwhelming when viewed in total. But the secret, as Mark Twain puts it, "is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one." I happen to call that "chunking." That's what I used to create a life dream to live and write from the mountains of Montana*

*before I turned fifty. It took twenty-five years, but chunking the dream made all the difference in actualizing it.*

*People who are winning at working know the way to achieve results, tackle big projects or accomplish their life dreams is to create them one bite at a time. They break big projects into next action steps, goals into bite-size segments and dreams into small increments. They understand that winning is a process. And just like the Yukon Arctic Ultra winner, they focus on the next checkpoint goal, and once they're there, they then focus on the next and then the next.*

*That's the secret people who are winning at working use to achieve results, build businesses and accomplish what others only talk about. They learn what they need to know in the current step in order to get to the next one. They develop their knowledge and skill-sets incrementally, building their pathways as they go and adding to their wisdom along the way. As long as they see progress in who they are becoming and what they can do, they know they're getting there.*

*No matter where you are or what you want to accomplish in your life, it's one bite at a time until the project is finished, the skill mastered, the dream realized or the aspirations met. It's one bite at a time to finish your degree, find a fulfilling job, reach financial solvency or buy your first house. And it's still one bite at a time to win the Yukon Arctic Ultra, write a best-selling book, make your first million or offer the best of who you are to the world. Want to be winning at working? Take it one bite at a time.*



## **Taking Action**

***How do I move my dream forward in the next six months? What are the significant milestones along the way? What are small next actions for each one?***

- *Spend time this month – creating your personal map to realizing your dream with tangible goals and next actions to move your dream forward*
- *Write it on paper – Make time to capture what is in your head and develop a well- defined plan you can refer to in the future to help move you forward, assess your progress and change as you go along.*
- *At the end of the month – Start doing your next actions and decide on a timeframe to assess progress.*

*“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.” – Vincent Van Gogh*

## **Finding Your Touchstones**

*Values, beliefs, special people and places are all vital touchstones that help in achieving your life's dreams. Finding your personal touchstones and tuning in often is one key to success.*

**Month #5**

### **Tuning In**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*One hundred and twenty channels and over half play music. In this age of technology I still find it amazing that I can tune into a satellite radio when driving the remote roads of Montana or nestled in our wilderness cabin, and find weather or news or music or sports or talk shows. But sometimes I can't find the signal. The satellite shifts, the alignment changes and I lose the connection.*

*My life is like that too. It seems I'm not always able to tune in. Sure, I'm going through the motions of life, like my radio looking for its signal, tired and overwhelmed at times. There's a routine. There's work. There's chores. There's TV. There's bills and pressures and worries. There's stuff piling up to do. But I can't seem to find the channel I'm looking for, and at times I don't even realize it because my doing fills the gaps.*

*Then, unexpectedly, I get a very strong signal reminding me of the connection. I find myself tuned into life, feeling and seeing and embracing its wonders. Recently it happened while vacationing in Hawaii – watching humpback whales breach; mesmerized by flowing lava creating new earth; hiking across the Kilauea caldera. But returning home, I couldn't keep my life-wonders station on for long and managed to lose the signal.*

*Yet as children we seemed able to stay tuned in. We stopped to watch the caterpillars, butterflies and spiders; saw dust flecks in the sunbeams streaming through the window; splashed through puddles; rode bikes; woke with new-day excitement; got lost in the learning. We were like a four year old I overheard at Disney World telling his father, "Daddy, see the music!" As children, we both saw and heard the music in life. We got a stronger signal somehow.*

*When's the last time you walked outside on a clear night to watch the stars? When's the last time you walked barefoot in the grass or got lost in the touch of your partner's lips? When's the last time you watched a baby sleeping or forgot yourself in a book? I bet you did more often before the mortgage and the kids and pressures at work.*

*I ran across a greeting card awhile back, but it wasn't the message which intrigued me. Five women, varying in age from maybe thirty to eighty were pictured arm in arm, dancing. I framed it for my office as a reminder that it's never too late to dance; to do what you want to do; to try new things; to say I love you; to savor the now; to tune into life.*

*I've realized in the scheme of things, life should be a verb not a noun. To make it one, I need to tune into the wonders playing on my life's channels, connect to the music in the world, and open my eyes to the magic around me. I've been working on getting back a strong signal connection to my life. And I've found that growing up doesn't mean giving up the excitement, the wonder, and the magic that comes with each new day.*



## ***Finding your Touchstones***

***What are your anchors? What do you believe in? What inspires your greatness? Who do you admire? Where do draw your strength?***

- *Spend time this month – identifying the people, places and things that are your 'lifelines' to help you on your life's journey.*
- *Capture your touchstones on paper*
- *At the end of the month – Make a commitment to rely on these touchstones to help move your dream forward.*

*"Never believe that the limit of your present view is the limit of your possibility." – Guy Finley*

## **Listening to Your Inner Voice**

*What you tell yourself about yourself influences your decisions and how you live your life. Listening and being aware of your thoughts is a critical factor in living your life's dreams.*

**Month #6**

### **Taming Voices**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*I hated Halloween. Even the lure of Milk Duds, Good 'n Plenty, and Sugar Babies wasn't enough to make this shy seven-year-old decide it was fun to dress up, knock on doors, and speak to neighbors. An inner kaleidoscope of voices agonized for weeks over what I should "be" that night: "Stupid idea" ... "Boring" ... "Not scary". What if no one understood my costume and I had to explain it? How awful! What if someone made fun of me? What if someone had a costume like mine? What if no one had a costume like mine? I knew it was going to be the worst one. I didn't want to go trick-or-treating that year. It was the year I first heard the voices.*

*Now familiar after decades of mental lashing, the voices of Judge, Critic, Analyzer, Derailed, Unlovable, Fear, and Not Enough are part of an arsenal that ambushes my confidence, kills my ideas, and pushes me to shadowy places. Judge and Critic visit more frequently. Others, like Unlovable and Not Enough, wait like cats ready to pounce when least expected. A few rarely visit, yet have power to overwhelm me as my imperfections and mistakes are illuminated with a force that brings self-doubt, and feelings of guilt and unworthiness.*

*Several years ago, when fighting bouts of depression and welling anger, I was prodded to consider that no one was thinking the things I ascribed them to be thinking. No one was judging me as harshly as I was. And, no one saw me as imperfect as I saw myself. With negative self-talk, I had become an enemy to my own interests. In an act of self-protection, it was then that I added the new voices: Cheerleader, Believer, and Real Person.*

*Now I control and ignore the negative voices. At least, most of the time. I have fun labeling them, talking back to them, and replacing them. Still, there are*

*days I struggle with taming them. Recently, Not Enough challenged me, “You’re kidding yourself trying to be a columnist. No one will want to read what you have to say!” I ignored her, and she went away.*

*I’ve learned in the scheme of things, I’m in charge of what I put in my head. I’m in charge of what I believe about myself. And if I don’t like the thoughts that pop in, I’m in charge of creating the ones I do like. Self-talk makes a difference in how I view myself. It also makes a difference in how I experience my life, others and the world around me. In working to tame the negative voices and adding positive ones ... I’ve changed more than my thoughts. I’ve changed my life.*



## ***Listening to Your Inner Voice***

***What thoughts make you feel happy, sad, inspired, confident? How do you react to those feelings? What can you do when you have negative or not constructive thinking?***

- *Spend time this month – becoming familiar with your thoughts and feelings, listen to yourself.*
- *Make a record of them - take a moment to think about the dream you selected, how are your thoughts impacting achieving your dream? Positive? Negative?*
- *At the end of this month – decide what thoughts you are going to tell yourself so you can achieve your life's dreams.*

*“Change your thoughts and you change your world”. – Norman V. Peale*

## **Developing Self-Discipline**

*There will be challenges and stumbling blocks to achieving your life's dreams. The journey isn't an easy one. One of the skills that can help you is self-discipline.*

**Month #7**

### **Your Actions Today**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*Exhausted from a six day business trip and facing a five hour flight on a packed, late departing evening plane, my desire was to block out noise from twenty-two high school students seated nearby. Favorites off my play list, and a just purchased mystery by a favorite author, seemed the perfect remedy to soothe my weariness.*

*So, when the chime sounded to alert passengers we'd reached a cruising altitude where electronic devices could be used, I turned on my iPod. The pull to procrastinate flirted with my longing to relax, tempting me with its rewards. But that novel, tucked in the seat pocket, remain unopened as I reluctantly booted my computer to write the first draft of this column.*

*In this case, my long-term goal of book authoring trumped my short-term desire of book reading. With the manuscript for my new book, *Hitting Your Stride*, due to the publisher in weeks, my writing schedule is a self-imposed, non-negotiable discipline. Column writing happens on certain days, manuscript writing and client work on others.*

*It's true that it's easier to procrastinate; to move today's work to tomorrow's to-do list, and to focus on short-term impulses instead of long-term goals. But people who are winning at working understand that easier doesn't build the habits and self-discipline needed to reach objectives, actualize dreams and live their life's potential.*

*This concept is crystallized in the words of a Chinese proverb: "If you want to know your past, look into your present conditions. If you want to know your future, look into your present actions."*

*Still, we rarely pause to consider that it's present day actions that may be hijacking our dreams. For example, credit card splurges on feel-good, non-essential items might give immediate pleasure. Yet those mounting financial obligations can preclude reaching the financial security, freedom, or work flexibility we desire.*

*Today's actions impact tomorrow's results at work, too. Procrastination and mediocre self-discipline keep people languishing with less than stellar results year after year. Turning on the TV before preparing for tomorrow's presentation may seem a good choice at the time, but it depends on whether you want to indulge yourself now, or increase your chances of winning that assignment later.*

*Are you content with your work results? Are you happy with your responsibilities, income, or goal achievement? Do you desire something different, or envy people with greater influence or success? If so, perhaps you're trading your short-term gratification for your long-term dream attainment.*

*Harry Truman summarized the bottom line when he said, "In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. Self-discipline with all of them came first."*

*Olympic athletes dreaming of gold make it to practice even when they're tired, overworked or not in the mood, because their bigger passion drives their behavior. People who are winning at working understand the power in their every day actions, too. They manage themselves to do the work, acquire the skill, or obtain the knowledge. Understanding that the tomorrow they get is contained in their actions today, they select those actions wisely.*



## ***Developing Self-Discipline***

***What actions have you taken this month to move forward on 'living your dream?' Do you schedule time regularly to work on your dream? What actions are you doing that are stopping you from achieving your dream?***

- *Spend time this month – Thinking what are you doing to move your dream forward, what should you be doing and what things should you stop doing*
- *Make a list of those actions*
- *At the end of the month – Select those actions and practices that you want to keep doing and others that you need to start doing*

*“You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do.” – Henry Ford*

## **Trusting Yourself**

*Trusting yourself is a precious gift to give yourself. You are a special and unique person in this world. Trust your greatness.*

**Month # 8**

### **Developing a Friendship**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*I have several good traits, but technical savvy is not among them. So when attempts at using the new wireless printer continued to fail, I was delighted I managed to entice the printer to finally print. Expectantly, I went to retrieve my queued pages, discovering instead only one sheet in the printer tray. On that sheet was an error message: "Unsupported Personality." It could have been an error message about my life.*

*Don't get me wrong, I've had enormous support and love from family and friends all my life. The unsupported personality part is about me-to-me. I've had an inconsistent, often unsupportive relationship with myself. Sometimes I like me; sometimes I don't. Sometimes I'm happy with what I've done and who I am, only to be disappointed and discouraged when I don't live up to my expectations of what I think I should have accomplished or who I think I'm suppose to be. Sometimes I'm helpful and self-encouraging only to sabotage my best efforts in an ongoing love-hate battle.*

*The error message got me thinking. If someone treated me the way I've treated myself, I would consider her more of an enemy than a friend. I would recognize her professed love as conditional, not unconditional; her expectations self-fulfilling; her intentions untrustworthy. I would recognize that her controlling, limiting and fear-inciting methods were holding me suspended like a cocoon. I would know my best interests were not being served by such a person and would seek to distance myself and find a better friend. But I haven't. I've continued, as my mother reminds me, to be my own worst enemy.*

*At times, I'm harder on myself than on others, setting different standards for love, trust and forgiveness. It seems easier to be a friend to someone else than*

*to yourself and easier to love others than love yourself, and to trust and to forgive everyone but yourself. But how can you offer the best of who you are to the world if you're not offering the best of who you are to yourself?*

*At this time of my annual birthday reflection, I'm noticing more than aging skin and hints of grey. I'm noticing a strong calling to continue work on one of life's most profound relationships – the one with yourself. And I'm starting to understand why. We need a supported personality to unlock our life's music. When we are able to offer ourselves unconditional love and acceptance we will feel safe enough to live from our core.*

*In the scheme of things, developing a deep friendship takes time and vulnerability and trust. It's taken me fifty-five years to get this far on my inner journey and begin to trust who I am. In this second half of life I'm discovering how to offer myself the same love, forgiveness, compassion, friendship and gratitude I offer my best friends. I'm learning to evolve a profound friendship with myself. And I'm finally starting to become myself.*



## ***Trusting Yourself***

***Are you your own best friend? How do you treat yourself? Are you listening to your intuition?***

- *Spend time this month –Thinking of how you treat your best friend?*
- *Write a list of – things you can do to treat yourself like your best friend*
- *At the end of the month – Decide on two or three things to do next month*

*“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same”. – Marianne Williamson*

## **Being Happy**

*Sometimes you may think that certain people or a special place will make you happy or maybe eating a favorite food will make you happy when in fact happiness comes from inside of you.*

**Month #9**

### **Being Happy**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*Behind glass doors the turret shaped music box sits, protected from the nicks and bumps of traffic, vacuums, and curious fingers. Intricately hand-painted scenes decorate its teal blue surface, crowned with a gold cherub. Push the button and eight narrow doors open to the sound of Laura's Theme from Dr. Zhivago, revealing a miniature Versailles-like room with a harp playing in the center.*

*Like that box waiting for a button to be pushed to play the music and reveal its inner beauty, I've found myself waiting, at times, for the equivalent of a button push in my life. I call it my when button. Over the years that button included all sorts of when's: when I lose weight; when I get promoted; when I change jobs; when we move to Montana; when the house gets finished; when finances get resolved; when our son finishes college; when the book gets sold; when ... when ... when.*

*These are the times I see life in two pieces. One a place holder life filled with daily tasks of living; the other my real life that's out there waiting for the when button to be activated. You know, that's the life with music playing, where dreams, aspirations, and ideal concepts come together as beautifully as the airbrushed magazine cover. That's the magical life with roses and sunshine and wishes come true. At these times, I'm sure it's just down the road a bit, after the next pothole, when this crisis passes, when things settle down. Then, my real life will start. Then, I will be happy.*

*But over the years, I got to thinking about waiting. What if the when button is never activated? What if I don't get the promotion, lose weight, get a contract, pay off the debt, or reach the goal? What then? Do I remain like a music box on*

*the shelf, looking at the world as I wait for something to push the button that starts my life and makes me happy?*

*Of course not. But it struck me that I'm living the equivalent of that if I set up scenarios that when X happens, I will do this, be this, or feel this. Or thinking when Y appears, my life will be better. Or when Z comes about, things will be perfect. Things will never be perfect since everyone's life has hiccups.*

*So, I've stopped thinking my real life is coming. I've thankfully realized it's already here. I've learned, in the scheme of things, my happiness is not out there waiting for me to get to it. It is a mind-set; a way of being. I used to think you lived from the outside in, absorbing people and places and happenings into your life, and when you did you found happiness. Now, I think it works more from the inside out. And like the doors of that music box, you slowly open yourself to the world realizing that being happy is not something you find, but something you are.*



## ***Being Happy***

***Do you rely on external forces to make you happy? What does being happy feel like to you? What is stopping you from being happy?***

- *Spend time this month – thinking about being happy*
- *Capture on paper – what it feels like when you are happy*
- *At the end of the month – commit to embracing a mind-set of being happy*

*“There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.” – Edith Wharton*

## **Facing your Fears**

*Sitting on the sidelines doesn't help you live your life's dreams. Experiencing life to the fullest helps get you there. Carpe Diem, Seize the day!*

**Month #10**

### **Feeling Afraid**

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*When I was small, we couldn't afford a television. My first experience with anything "on screen" was the day my mother took my brother and me by bus, downtown, to see *The Wizard of Oz* for what she thought would be a memorable experience. It was. The movie was real to me, and I was with Dorothy on the yellow brick road. Terrified, I had to be removed from the theater part way through the movie.*

*Thinking it funny that I was afraid of *The Wizard of Oz*, my son gave me a little *Wicked-Witch-of-the-West* figurine as a joke. I keep it in my office as a reminder to embrace the T-shirt slogan: "feel the fear, and do it anyway." Sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn't.*

*You see, I come from a long line of worriers, so maybe it's in my genes. In a moment I can create enough mental "what ifs" to bring back that frightened child-in-the-theater feeling. What if the plane crashes? What if a grizzly bear is on the trail? What if someone breaks in? What if I fail? What if ... what if ... what if?*

*In our second year of marriage, pregnant with our son, Ian, I'd stay awake imagining the bad things that could happen to my husband. Consumed by worry anytime he was traveling, which was almost every week, the more I focused on what I was afraid might happen, the more I turned myself into a frightened, frozen, needy worrywart.*

*At times in my life, feeling afraid has caused me to pass up opportunities and hesitate to embrace new experiences, new surroundings, new people, or new ideas. It has caused me to instantly answer "no" to my teenage son's desire for more freedom, and offer obstacles instead of enthusiasm to my husband's ideas*

*for adventure. And at times, fears have kept me on the sidelines watching, instead of actively living my life.*

*Bad things can happen and living can be hazardous to life. But that's true whether I'm on an airplane, a mountain trail, or a sidewalk. Gradually, I've learned to keep most imagined fears in check by adjusting my thinking and visualizing only what I want to happen. Directing my mind-movies, the plane always lands safely, the hike always ends happily, and the outcome always finishes positively.*

*Today, I continue to work at controlling and differentiating my rational fears from my irrational ones. I should be afraid if the grizzly is on the trail in front of me, but, if I don't go hiking because it could be, I risk more than a bear encounter. I risk allowing feeling afraid to relegate me to a life spectator, rather than a life participant. And in the scheme of things, I've come to realize that is not a risk I'm willing to take.*



## ***Facing Your Fears***

***When you think of your dream, what are you most afraid of? What will happen if you face your fear(s)? What will happen if you don't?***

- *This month spend time – thinking of your fears, what you are most afraid of?*
- *Make a list of - your fears and your reactions to them*
- *At the end of the month –choose a fear and imagine yourself to doing it, what does it look like, what does it feel like?*

*“You must do the thing you think you cannot do.” – Eleanor Roosevelt*

## Accepting Mistakes

*Mistakes happen all the time. Being accountable for your mistakes and what you learn from them can make all the difference in achieving your life's dreams.*

Month #11

### So You Were Wrong

By Nan S. Russell  
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*I once worked for a boss who was never wrong, never made a mistake or a bad decision. All you had to do was ask him. To his staff he was Teflon-man. Nothing stuck to him and everything came sliding toward us.*

*Accountability was not a concept he practiced unless things turned out well and then, he claimed the credit. But if they didn't, he immediately embarked on endeavors to identify someone responsible. Being called to his office typically meant he was looking for information and trying to decide whom to blame.*

*Justify. Justify. Justify. Like a battle cry, he commissioned reports, graphs, charts and enhanced documentation whenever his boss questioned him. He found it easier to dig his heels into a position than admit he might have been wrong or change his mind. Working for someone I couldn't respect eventually led me to transfer departments.*

*But it still baffles me. People do make mistakes, they do trip up sometimes and they do, on occasion, speak or act in error. And while there's nothing that says we should be happy about it when we do it ourselves, trying to act like it didn't happen, covering up our mistakes, or trying to justify inaccurate positions leads nowhere.*

*You see, unlike that early boss of mine, people who are winning at working speak up and admit when they've made a mistake. They take accountability for fixing resulting problems. And even if they have to gather their courage and swallow hard, they acknowledge when they're wrong.*

*I learned in twenty years in management that playing it safe, isn't. One of the biggest mistakes you can make if you want to be winning at working is pointing fingers, blaming others or offering excuses. Own your decisions, choices*

*and actions. Admit when you're wrong. Fix your mistakes. Then learn from them and move on. These are the signs of confident, accountable, initiative-filled people. And these are the people you want on your team.*

*There's a story I love about the famed British economist, John Maynard Keynes, who was confronted by a young man after one of his lectures. The man insisted Keynes give him an explanation of why he contradicted himself with something written years before. "Well," Keynes replied. "When I'm wrong, I change my mind." Seems to me, that's pretty good advice for work and for life.*



## ***Accepting Mistakes***

***Think about recent mistakes you've made, what did you do after you realized you had made a mistake? Is there a pattern to your mistakes? How do you react when others make mistakes?***

- *Spend time this month – Thinking about mistakes you've made*
- *Make a list – Write down your frequent reactions to your mistakes and when others make mistakes*
- *At the end of the month – Consciously decide 'how' you can react to mistakes*

*“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” - Mahatma Gandhi*

## **Progress Over Perfection**

*Remember living your life's dream isn't going to happen overnight. You can't always hit a home run and you can't wait for everything to be perfect. You can take incremental steps towards achieving your dream.*

**Month # 12**

## **Progress Trumps Perfection**

By Nan S. Russell  
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*In the late 17th century, Lord Chesterfield, an English writer and politician, wrote to his son, "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." Three hundred years later, we still heed this advice from the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. Yet doing it well doesn't mean doing it perfectly. The 21st century workplace requires more than doing something well.*

*More accurately, today's adage should be: "Whatever is worth doing, is worth doing." That's the secret people who are winning at working know. It's action, not inaction, practice not theory, and progress not perfection that builds success, achieves results and actualizes dreams.*

*After hearing me speak at a professional conference, a young woman sought me out. She was struggling with this concept of progress over perfection and asked for advice. "How do you do it?" she asked. "How do you accept something as finished when you know it could be better?" She proceeded to tell me that she was managing a project that was over budget and nine months past the deadline. Her boss had made his displeasure clear. Yet, she struggled. "If only I had more time to do it right," she pined.*

*Here's the thing. There's a difference between doing your best under the circumstances, and trying to achieve perfection. As a person who, at times, has perfectionist leanings, I understand doing things well. I know there is always more you can do to make it better, grandeur, niftier; always more to add, augment, or debug; more ideas, more tweaking, more revisions to make it close to the illusionary perfect status. But, I've learned in twenty years in management, in order to survive and thrive, progress trumps perfection.*

*If a toddler didn't walk until she could walk perfectly; the musician didn't play until he was accepted by the Philharmonic; or the inventor didn't invent until she had a multi-million dollar product, we'd think it crazy. And it's no crazier for us. Whatever our work, we must move it forward to get results. Our work is a work in progress. And so are we.*

*People who are winning at working test and pilot and risk and even fail sometimes. They evolve a process, an idea or a product bit by bit, laying elements to build a strong foundation. Perfect is not the goal. Results and progress are. As the saying goes, "Better is the enemy of done."*

*You see, sometimes the message is more important than the vehicle that delivers it; the idea more important than the packaging, the work-around more important than the ultimate fix to the problem. Sometimes it's not. But that's a judgment call.*

*So unlike many who spend their days trying to make something perfect, people who are winning at working spend their days making progress. Making progress, any progress, fuels their motivation, creativity and energy. It builds their momentum. And it ignites their results. Want to be winning at working? Hitting your stride and achieving your dreams? Make progress.*



## ***Assessing Your Progress***

***Think about what actions you took in the past year towards achieving your life's dream? What more do you know now than last year? What do you feel good about? Take a minute to pat yourself on the back.***

- *Spend time this month – Assessing where you are, determine where you want to go and identify where you are stuck and perhaps spending too much time on perfection.*
- *Write a list of – specific incremental goals for next year.*
- *At the end of the month – Pick one or two and decide on the next actions steps.*

*“Always expect the best and you’ll see that the outcome is spontaneously contained in the expectation.” Deepak Chopra*

If you found the DreamMaker Journal helpful you may want to continue using it as you keep working towards living your life's dreams.

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