

Reconnect: 5 Steps for Staying on Track with Your Lifework (or Any) Vision

By Leonard Lang

Ever felt so impassioned about your lifework vision and plan that it seemed nothing could get in your way?

Then something did.

Maybe you were committed to a big career leap, such as heading up a company division, running a travel agency, being a writer, or teaching scuba diving. But then, the boss threw up a roadblock, the bank turned down your loan, the college eliminated the course you needed.

Sound familiar?

We all feel blocked in our plans at some time or other. The question is what to do. Fortunately, there are many good ways to get moving again. Without knowing at least some of them, even the best lifework plans can evaporate. Here are 5 reliable ways to *reconnect* with your dream career or any vision you have.

1. Reconnect with your self.

Try meditating, praying, walking through the woods, journaling—whatever refreshes you and leaves you whole and centered. If your favorite activity doesn't work, try another.

For instance, a woman in one of my workshops rebelled against a guided imagery exercise I was leading because it took us through a warm and beautiful forest. Sounds great to most people, but it left her cold and uncomfortable. She was a city person who connected with her source by being in crowds of active, energized people. In other words she went downtown to connect with her authentic self. So be imaginative and choose whatever works for you.

2. Reconnect with your core passions and vision.

Recall your original goal and how you felt about it. Visualize it becoming real. For now, don't question if it's still possible. When you are discouraged, nothing may look possible. Even getting out of bed can look overwhelming! Instead, find that deep desire in yourself where you would love to open a flower shop, travel the world, or become more creative in your work. That passion doesn't change just because you haven't achieved it. Think of how much you love the passion or vision. Be revitalized by its energy.

Often in my lifework classes, people begin speaking without energy, slumped in their chairs, embarrassed to admit their dreams because of how big they seem or because of their "failures." But as soon as they connect with their passions instead of their doubts, everything begins to change. One participant who had barely spoken suddenly electrified the room with her vision for a retreat center. Someone coming into the room then might have thought she had told everyone they'd get a million dollars if they helped her. People were barely able to contain themselves, wanting to tell her their suggestions. If she could

have opened up that center that night I think all of us would have signed up immediately. She had connected with her passion and dreams and helped everyone believe in themselves.

3. Reconnect with (or establish) a support community.

Talk with your community of support. Don't just gripe. Tell them exactly what you want now—advice, information, emotional support. Don't look to your community to solve your problems, but to stimulate you to meet your own challenges. Also be a good listener for others. Supporting others can be even more revitalizing than receiving support.

Actually the whole world can be seen as your support community. Remember the idea of six degrees of separation: you're no more than 6 people away from any other person anywhere. When I first heard this, I told a friend that it wasn't a practical idea. For instance, I didn't know where to begin to contact someone famous such as Hillary Clinton. I had known this friend for 20 years, but he completely surprised me by saying, "I can get you to her. In fact, I know two people who can get you directly to her if you need to." Since then I've tested this out many times and continue to be amazed. So don't assume you don't have the help you need. It's out there waiting to connect with you.

4. Reconnect with success.

Act as if--as if you're happy, as if you're successful, as if you are energized. It's not inauthentic. Just because you are feeling sad, angry, or hopeless doesn't mean you must act in a sad, angry or hopeless manner. Acknowledge your feelings, and certainly resolve issues behind them, but don't wait until you feel better before taking positive steps. Ask what you would do if you were feeling wonderful about your situation. Ask others what they might do. Then do something, anything that moves you forward. Remember, while feelings affect how we act, actions can also affect how we feel.

One person acted "as if" at a conference where he believed he didn't know how to meet new people, let alone make fruitful business contacts. He decided to act as if he was the most sought after person at the conference. He began introducing himself to everyone, speaking more confidently, not worrying about having a good pitch or message. Soon he found people coming up to talk with him too. He may not have been the most sought after person, but he transformed the conference from a frightening challenge into an exciting adventure. He had fun, learned something and made new contacts for his consulting work.

5. Reconnect with reality. Watch your thinking.

When we are hit with adversity, many of us turn to negative thinking, making one mistake or two into a major problem with our personalities or our lives. Psychologist Martin Seligman has 40 years of solid research showing that this kind of thinking creates a state of learned helplessness which only generates depression and failure. His advice is to notice when you start thinking any of the following types of thoughts after a mistake or apparent failure: "I messed up--I'm such a jerk" (thinking it's about who you are). Or, "I messed up--nothing is going right" (thinking one or two bad things represent your whole

life) Or, “Another mess-up--nothing ever changes” (thinking what happened is what must always happen). Catch your thoughts the next time you mess up, even if it is only spilling a cup of coffee. Argue with the thought by presenting a more realistic one (“Yes, I did mess up, but I hardly do this all the time and now I know how to handle this kind of situation better”). Or just witness it and let it go by. In short, reconnect with what you know to be real, rather than letting temporary emotions and thoughts take over your life.

Lifework seminar participants almost always recognize themselves in one or more of these unhelpful thought patterns when I present them. Later, they tell me that just being aware of their thinking has helped them stay calm and clear where they had previously become upset, angry or depressed. Even more fun, months later, participants tell me they have begun laughing at the thoughts when they arise rather than being victims of them. So laugh at your silliness and deflate the power of negative thinking.

If you follow these 5 steps, or even a few of them, you will find it faster and easier to get back on track. You will better prepared to find your way to a state of mind which will allow you to creatively move ahead toward achieving your lifework vision.

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