

COVISIONING
Getting What You Want, Together

by

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INTRODUCTION

I have too many more lives to live than
to spend any more time in that one.

--- Henry David Thoreau

CHAPTER 1

MOVING FROM "I" TO "WE"

In 1993, a senior manager of the company I worked for asked me to teach a team-building workshop to the employees in his division. Apparently, the members of the three departments were not working well together. They got along with their own team members, but communication between the departments was peppered with criticism, blame and accusations.

The program followed the normal agenda, beginning with defining what makes a team productive and diagnosing the stages of growth. During the discussion, we discovered that although the departments had a common destination—to deliver a quality product to their customers—their beliefs of how the product would perform and the expected reactions by the customers varied widely. With a better idea of what their problems were, I shifted the focus of the class to exploring, creating and agreeing to a common picture of what their work was all about. Using this new vision as a common target to align their energy, productivity in the division more than doubled.

After finding similar disconnections throughout the company, I created a Visioning workshop to bring teams, departments, and work groups together to develop what I called “covisions.” As in any workshop, the introduction included an exercise that related the course objectives to common life experiences. When scanning my life history for examples of successful partnerships, I drew a blank. I wanted to boast my own achievements. Yet my mastery of visioning was confined to the realm of my life and going after my dreams. My memories of cooperative ventures—planning a wedding; buying a house with my mate; being a good daughter; going on a vacation with friends; creating a capital budget with my boss—were laden with conflict and disappointment.

Looking back, I found my difficulties in working with others to achieve results mirrored that of the division’s. In every situation, I agreed with my partners to the desire of wanting a particular outcome. But our individual pictures of what that outcome would be were completely different and we never took the time to think through and display our personal visions to each other. To say it simply, we never moved from “I” to “we.”

I’m convinced that if we had taken the time to create the pictures together—of what the wedding should look like, of how much private space does each person need in a house, of what a good daughter or a good parent does—we would have been better able to settle our differences and focus our energies on achieving a satisfying relationship or result.

I have now facilitated Covisioning workshops in business for more than ten years. Not only do work groups report higher productivity, but individuals frequently call to tell me that they used the techniques to plan their family vacations and reinforce their marriages. Searching the shelves of self-help books to see if anyone had written on the technique, I found scores of manuals on dreaming and getting what I want out of life. None were on shared dreaming, or getting what we want, together.

Finding this gap, I expanded my workshops to teach people how to covision with the people they live and love. I've gathered scores of examples of how people have used covisioning to get what they want out of life personally and professionally. This book not only teaches the process I use in my workshop, but also shares examples so that you may find yourself in the pages and uncovers insights from other people's experiences. Starting with personal visioning because you must be clear with what you want before you vision with someone else, you'll learn how to navigate the rough terrain, moving out of the caves of "I" into the valley of "we."

IT'S NOT ALL TALK

To make the time spent reading this book worthwhile, you must be willing to go the extra mile. You can't covision over lunch. You may be able to openly talk with someone else about expectations and needs, but turning a covision into reality goes far beyond "you tell me your dreams and I'll tell you mine." The process requires discovering and understanding each others' values, negotiating details, drawing road

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maps with detours and bridges, and tending to the path along the way. It requires uncovering secrets, facing dragons and summoning elusive powers. In short, covisioning is an adventure. This book was intended to be used as a guide while you are in transit. The chapters provide specific directions as well as tips and resources to help you navigate through difficult times. You may read it through the first time alone, but don't forget to take it with you when you meet up with your partners. The power of the book is its use as a real-time reference manual, from packing your survival kit to crossing the finish line, together.

BEFORE YOU GO

"I always wanted to be somebody. In retrospect,
I should have been more specific."

— Lily Tomlin as Trudy the Bag Lady

In Search of Intelligent Life in the Universe

CHAPTER 2

DRAFTING YOUR DREAMS

"There is nothing like a dream to create the future."

--- Victor Hugo

Ten years ago, my mate and I set out to buy a house. After six months of living in his too-small-for-the-both-of-us condominium, we decided our relationship was strong enough to bear the stress of purchasing a house together. So we embarked on an excursion that turned into a four-month headache. Whenever I liked the brightness of a room, he hated the floor plan. When he liked the layout, I couldn't cope with the proximity of the neighbors. On the last Sunday of the year, we decided that drastic measures were needed to preserve our sanity. If we didn't find an acceptable house by the end of the day, we would postpone the search indefinitely. As happy endings go, we found the house that afternoon four bedrooms, big closets and no neighbors could spy on the backyard.

Less than two years later, I was looking through the newspaper again for another home. The current house no longer fit my needs. I wasn't surprised. In my experience, there was no such thing as a perfect-forever house. I was used to moving every few years.

As supportive as he is, every time my mate caught me reading the house ads in the classifieds, he offered to take me to the movies, to the mall, to see my sister, anywhere my heart desired. These were no small gestures of sacrifice. After my fervent interrogations and tickle tortures, he confessed to dreading another move and couldn't understand why I wasn't happy. The house had everything he needed and in his experience, moving was a once-a-decade event.

"But I want my own office," I said, "the backyard is ugly, and the noise from the exercise room makes it hard for me to write."

"Why didn't you tell me these things before we bought the house?" he asked.

"I don't know," was all I could say. I hadn't thought it through. Since I didn't think the perfect house existed, I never considered drawing the total picture. In short, my vision wasn't clear.

After long conversations and negotiations, I moved my office into the living room, he changed his workout schedule, and we re-landscaped the backyard. Our discussions led us to talking about our desires and needs and developing pictures of our lives in the future. There were times during the exploration that I was concerned about our relationship. Were we really compatible? Would we make it over the long run? But the worries were minor compared to the pain and stress of my previous two

divorces when I didn't even know what I needed until long after the marriages were over. In sharing our visions, my mate and I found that our personal desires and dreams didn't match completely. Yet there was enough common ground to create a life together that respects and nurtures each other's aspirations and requirements.

In my workshops, I always tell my house hunting story because I've found that covisioning any relationship is like building a house. The process begins with putting your own plans on paper, a blueprint detailed down to the faucets and the color of the tile grout. For example, in your personal vision, how much time every evening do you need your spouse's undivided attention? What chores must be done by someone else so you can go back to college to finish your degree? Then, after comparing your plans with those of your partner or family members, you may have to collaborate to draw a new blueprint of your dream together. The new sketch may not match your original picture but it should meet everyone's needs in a unique frame.

Building a structure without a blueprint would be difficult. Yet often we think we have a blueprint when all we have is a vague idea. Would a builder show the subcontractors a snapshot of a million dollar home and say, "Go to it."? Yet we say to our children, "Can't we act like a family?" to our subordinates, "You just aren't a team player," and to our spouses, "You don't give a damn about what I want," with no blueprint of how we expect these people to behave. Covisioning is about co-drawing the blueprints of relationships as well as results.

What parts of your life can be vision driven? Every part because each moment of your existence is affected by the picture you create in your mind. You may believe

that you have no control of outcome, and that your destiny is predetermined. True or not, you can smooth the crags and fill the potholes on the road by planning. Visions are means to plan for the future, not predict it. Anything that you can plan, you can vision.

CHAPTER 3

LIFE AREAS

"Life is a great big canvas;
you should throw all the paint on it you can."

— Danny Kaye

My covisioning workshops start with writing a Personal whole-life vision. Whether the participants are a family, a group of strangers or a corporate division, each person creates and reads aloud a vision of his or her perfect day. The range of difficulty in completing this task varies widely. Some people plunge right in, composing pages of wishful thinking. When finished, they are eager to share the results. More commonly, I have to convince the participants that I am not wasting their time, the exercise is a necessary step in the process, and they will not be ridiculed when they reveal aspects of their personal lives in public.

A particularly reluctant session I facilitated consisted of eight members of a facilities maintenance department. When I asked the men to include their perfect mornings and evenings in their visions, they stared at me blankly as if the words "life

beyond work” was not in their vocabularies. For fifteen minutes, we argued about the relevance of the exercise to their jobs. Finally, I said, "Trust me, and just do it."

They responded to my command. Nearly half an hour later, I had to ask them to wrap it up so we could end the workshop on time. Kevin, the first volunteer, read his vision in perfect monotone, yet there was no mistaking the magic he generated. He described scenes of spending time with his family, walking in the brisk morning air, and saying his prayers with his wife before they fell asleep at night. Kevin also mentioned having his own television room, replete with dead animal heads over the fireplace hearth. When he finished, he had a broad smile on his face, revealing his pleasure despite himself.

Dennis, who sat next to Kevin, slapped him on his back. Bob, director of the department, thanked Kevin for taking a risk. I gave the rest of the group a moment to add a few notes to their own visions before they, one by one, read their compositions. In the end, the men found out how similar their desires were, right down to the wood paneled rooms with dead animal heads. And they acknowledged that they were glad to know each other better. Creating a covision for their department would be much easier now that they each knew what each other wanted out of life.

As a whole person, your personal vision should include how you live your life from when you wake to bedtime. Whether you're visioning a new job, a new body or a new baby, you need to have a clear picture of how each endeavor will impact your daily life, especially where those life areas touch someone else. When you share the picture of what you want your life to look like, you allow your partners to picture how

their lives fit together with yours in a master plan. And, you may acquire a greater understanding and empathy for your cohorts, an improvement to any relationship.

I've found that men sometimes have difficulty writing a whole-life vision beyond work. Or they claim they don't care to discuss their private lives with each other. Yet, after coaxing and encouraging the men in my workshops to complete the exercise, the results prove enlightening. In fact, I've seen more men reap a greater benefit from writing and sharing a total life vision than women. Getting to the bottom line, most men instantly see what needs changing and they feel the energy, the "inspired" pleasure, that self-disclosure offers. Not that women experience less, but the women in my workshops don't need much goading to acknowledge that they have a life beyond work.

However the light blinks on for women when they create a whole-life vision and find that, for more than half the picture, they haven't even taken the first step toward achievement. Many women can't even come up with a vision beyond their current happenstance. Or they've taken the picture of their future verbatim from the mouths of their parents or spouses. Even if they can tell me what their hearts desire, they often punctuate the vision by saying, "I'll never have the time or the money," or "I'm too old to start."

Visioning the whole picture is the first step to getting what **you** really want. It has to be the whole picture since every aspect of your existence is interrelated. Even if some of your life areas seem inflexible to change, let yourself daydream the impossible. Make-believe can puncture the walls of "never" and "I can't." Many great

achievers people started with only a picture in their heads, believing words such as those of the poet Carl Sandburg, "Nothing happens unless first a dream."

So before you get down to the business of visioning, take some time to think about all your life areas. Remember, visions can include elements of your life as they exist today. You may be satisfied with parts of your life and accomplishments. Personal visions are about meshing all the elements, what exists today with the possibilities of tomorrow, into a collage you are able to display.

Rate your satisfaction with the following Life Areas:

Physical Health -- Exercise

Diet

Relationships Spouse/Primary

Children

Friends

Parents

Siblings

Work/Career Job Responsibilities/Achievements

Communication with Boss/Co-Workers/Customers

Environment/Location

Available Tools/Resources

Living Space Environment

Location

Learning Career Development

Personal Growth

Emotional Health Self-Esteem

Optimism

	Spiritual/Religious
	Personal Caretaking (Relaxation & Reflection)
Finances	Expenses
	Savings
	Future Needs
Leisure Time	Hobbies
	Sports
	Vacations/Travel/Study
	Volunteering

You can compose a vision that details all the areas, or you can focus on one area at a time and build the picture around it. For instance, a vision of your perfect day might include details of your diet, how you exercise, time spent with your children and spouse, where you are working, what you are doing, how you relate to your boss, time to meditate for your spiritual health, time to read for your personal development and a long bath at the end of the day to end on a stress-free note. Or, you may choose to focus your vision on one area, such as your physical health, drawing a picture of yourself at your ideal weight and fitness level, doing the activities and eating the foods that helped you to achieve your vision.

However, since life areas often overlap, the starting point should always be with a comprehensive personal vision. For example, the time you spend exercising may effect the time you spend on your relationships, on the job, pursuing your hobbies, and even impact your finances and living space if you buy equipment or decide you must live in an area where it's safe to run outdoors. A change in one life area usually

disrupts another, creating new opportunities to covision with your companions how your jobs and lives will look. No matter how many or how few life areas you want to change, they must all be considered when creating your vision – a whole vision for a whole person.

CHAPTER 4

VIRTUAL REALITY

"Two shoe salesmen went to the Australian outback to explore marketing opportunities. When reporting their findings, one wrote, "No luck. They don't wear shoes here." The other wrote, "Great news! They don't wear shoes here."

--- Anonymous

The following interaction took place during a session held for manufacturing employees. Although the setting was business, I often use personal examples to help the participants understand the terminology.

I told the class that my girlfriend just had a baby and that she and her husband want to be good parents. Then I asked, "Do they have a covision?"

Sandy, a production supervisor and mother of two teenage children, said, "They probably created that vision since the moment she found out she was pregnant,

maybe even before. I've wanted to be a good parent since as far back as I can remember."

"Then tell me," I said, "what do good parents do?"

Sandy didn't hesitate with her reply. "They give love and show they care about their children."

"What does love look like? Paint me the picture."

This time Sandy took a moment to think about her answer. She drummed her lips with her fingertips and looked out the window as if the answer would fall from the sky. Finally, she said, "One thing would be to spend a certain amount of time together each day." She looked at me and shrugged. "Everyone knows I like to talk. I should probably listen more, especially to my sixteen-year-old daughter."

"Good," I said, acknowledging her revelation, "keep that picture of love in your mind. Now I have a picture of what a good parent does in my mind. Do you think it's the same as yours?"

"Maybe," Sandy said, then smiled as if she just got the punch line. "Probably not."

"Do you know what's in your husband's mind? Does his picture of showing love to a child match yours?"

"Not as much as I'd like."

"Consider this – does your picture match your daughter's? Or how about when you were a daughter – did you agree with your mother on what makes a parent good?"

"That would have been an interesting conversation."

"So when I tell you that my friends want to be good parents, am I communicating to you their covision?"

Sandy tapped her pencil on her forehead. "I guess all they have is a good idea."

You may have a picture in your mind of what a good parent does, but until you put the picture into words, into specifics, you'll have trouble communicating what you think is right to someone else. Without the stated image, agreements and goals are almost impossible to achieve. Thus, the prerequisite for covisioning is a clear personal vision. The statement, "We want to be good parents," only marks the beginning of the quest.

Our relationships are filled with assumptions and fragmented explanations. We tend to talk abstractly, not taking the time to lay out our pictures and ask to see the pictures of the people we live and work with. What do you mean when you say someone has a bad attitude? How would you describe a reliable friend? Just having a dialogue about our pictures can break down barriers and resolve differences, doing away with the need to fight for what we want.

The following rules constitute the briefing session, the necessary lecture of do's and don'ts before embarking on your journey. Following these guidelines will help you see the road before you drive it.

1. DO draw a visual description.

A personal vision is a three-dimensional picture of the life you want to create. It's putting on the glasses and walking into a virtual reality program of your own design. Can you imagine living a day where you have taken advantage of all the opportunities that lay before you? Your vision is a specific destination, a world of your making where everything you are working and wishing for today turns into reality.

2. DO NOT confuse a vision with a vague intention or a strategic direction.

A vision is something you want in your life, something specific that you may not possess today. Yet looking at the very essence of the word vision, we find that a vision is something you can see. To test if what you are thinking about is a vision, try communicating your ideas to someone else so that he or she can describe back to you the picture that you see.

In business, the word vision is tossed around carelessly and has lost much of its power. The president of a high tech corporation used the word vision twice in a speech to the employees. First, he said, "Our vision is to be a \$300 million dollar company in five years." Is this a vision? I asked a group of his vice presidents if they all had the same picture of what the company would be in five years. They answered my question with a resounding "no." They did say they knew the president had a clear picture in his

mind. Yet, without communicating the specifics to his staff, the vice presidents created pictures solely on their own priorities without the benefit of the larger view.

Second, the president said that he visioned a company where continuous improvement was a way of life. I've yet to find one group of employees draw the same picture of a continuously improving company that matches the picture held by upper management. The president was a wizard at defining strategic direction, but his company faltered around having a shared vision that all employees could see. And I wonder if they could have seen his vision, would they have bought in to the picture without the ability to add their ideas? As a result of the CEO's nebulous ambition, the company buzzed with energy, but lacking a clear focus, the efforts were often wasted or turned negative.

So that we can operate with the same terminology, I offer the following definitions:

A WISH, or in business, A STRATEGIC DIRECTION: A one-dimensional statement of a desired state of being. In terms of planning for the future, a wish or a direction is a brief statement of what you will look like at your best if all things go as planned. A wish, desire, or statement of direction is not a vision. Examples: A good parent; a company that cares about its customers; an organization that helps the homeless; a happy marriage; a healthy and lean body; satisfied with all aspects of life. Wishes and directions are important to initiating visions.

MISSION: A strategic direction for a team or organization that gives the reason for the group's existence. A mission often summarizes the desired end result. A clear mission serves to align all the people involved around a common purpose. It also communicates to others what the group is all about. Every member of a group should know its mission.

VISION and COVISION: A dynamic, multi-dimensional verbal picture of some point in time in the future. If a person with a video camera could follow you for the day, the vision is what you would want to be recorded. A vision should paint a clear and detailed picture of what the Wish/Direction /Mission will look like when it is achieved. A number of examples are given in the chapters on Building a Personal Vision and Covisioning.

GOAL: A statement of the method to be used to achieve a portion of a vision. A goal should include a quality assessment (how good you want the end result to be), a deadline and, if applicable, a measurable quantity or percentage of improvement. Goals should be observable; you should be able to tell precisely if you have or haven't achieved your goal. Examples: To weigh 130 pounds by June 30; To complete my master's degree with grades of B or above by December, 1997; to have gross revenues of \$300

million by FY98; to spend at least three hours a week with my children starting next week doing activities they enjoy.

ACTION STEPS: The specific activities required to achieve a goal.

3. **DO NOT** include in your vision how you got to your destination.

When you vision, pour your energy into picturing the dream. Do not stop to consider the hows and what ifs. Sidetracking into how causes "analysis paralysis," obstructing the flow of creativity. Once you realize a fully formed vision, then you can move on to how to get there through goal setting and action planning. The last three sections of this book, Making It Happen, Game Planning and Goal Tending, provide instruction and practice on how to reach your destination once you know what it is.

4. **DO NOT** create a vision that changes everyone's life around you but not your own.

The difference between a vision and a miracle is defined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL VERSUS PRAYING

"You can't have everything. Where would you put it?"

– Ann Landers

When I was young, I would hang upside down on the monkey bars for hours hoping to make myself taller. And I'd sleep on my nose hoping I'd wake up with it pug. Then I'd go to school and compare myself with the taller girls with button noses and declare myself a short, ugly failure. Nowhere in my vision did I have myself admired, respected and popular using the attributes I had. Therefore, I had created an impossible picture that only served to frustrate and depress me. Not until I could see me in my vision—short and attractive, strong and smart, funny and compassionate—could I begin the steps toward achievement.

The word "practical" is a double-edged sword. On one hand, you don't want to create a vision that is beyond your reach, a physical impossibility that frustrates and inhibits your efforts. On the other hand, it's too easy to use the word practical as an

excuse. We often allow others to build our visions for us in our heads. You can't vision with your mother telling you, "Don't be silly, you can't do that." You can't plan for your future carrying the memory of your boss saying, "You aren't tough enough to be a manager."

Personal visions should go beyond what you thought you should do or what someone said you can't do. I can't be tall, but I can be impressive. You may not have gone to college but you're smart enough to get ahead. You may be middle-aged but there's always enough time to start over. You can be healthy, travel the world, make enough money, even live without coffee. A personal vision should be a stretch, an idealized picture of you at your best, of your world where what was once possibility comes true.

The key word in determining limits to your vision is "control." Do you have any control over or influence on the situation? Even a low degree of influence is enough to inspire a change. The answer requires honesty and courage.

There is substantial evidence that suggests you can use your mind to control all aspects of our health and well-being. When faced with questions of control over a physical condition, remember that medical opinion is just that, opinion based on what someone knows at the moment; that nothing is incurable forever, just incurable at present. If you feel out of control emotionally, remember that loneliness and anger often mask the fear of letting other people in.

Be sure to differentiate control from influence. To help define this boundary, keep this rule in mind: You can't change anyone but yourself. You can't control someone else's health and well-being. You can't control someone else's desire to live in the mountains, dislike for eating breakfast, or sexual attraction to another person. You may be able to influence someone else's choices, but you can't control them. And you can't always control external events, like finding your covisioned house in a particular neighborhood or doubling your salary at your job in one year. Open yourself to possibilities, but be careful about expecting the world to change for you.

Another question you might ask is, "Will this part of the picture take winning the lottery or another act of God to come true?" If so, I suggest you keep it out of your vision. Stretch as far as you can but don't lose focus of what is in your grasp. You'll increase your odds of winning.

CHAPTER 6

YOUR TRIPTIK

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" asked Alice.

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where as long as I get somewhere."

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go."

– From *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

When planning a trip up the California coast, I paid a visit to my local American Automobile Association (AAA) to pick up a map. I walked out with a personalized Triptik, a spiral bound set of maps detailing the planned route for my journey. The Triptik highlighted the most direct route while noting scenic paths and places of interest along the way. Current construction spots and areas where driving may be hazardous were also indicated. It took a very intense covisioning session with the AAA travel agent to compose the Triptik. She had to understand my wants and needs, my

picture of a perfect trip, while explaining to me the realities, possibilities and difficulties of the path and time frames I'd chosen.

Just as much as composing a covision is drawing a blueprint of what you want to achieve together, realizing a covision requires you create a Triptik of the journey between the present situation and your destination. What follows in this book is your guide for creating your Triptik. WHAT DO YOU WANT, SHARED VALUES and COVISIONING will walk you through the steps for creating a covision. But signing the covision and hanging it on your wall won't make it happen. Too many times the best laid plans don't materialize. Steps must be strategized and plotted with time lines and commitments to action. Therefore, to help you make your covisions come true, MAKING IT HAPPEN and GOAL TENDING will help you set goals and draw up action plans, and give you tips on how to review and renew, incorporating the ups and downs along the way.

My business associate, Bill Nipp, related a story to me where he learned what the entire covisioning process was all about. He was trying to convince a group of senior managers that they needed to do more than analyze the marketplace and set goals based on achieving revenue and market share. He wanted them to clearly define what they wanted their company to be. Once they agreed to a picture, he would help them assess how close their present situation to their destination was. Using the assessment, they could produce broader-based goals.

Generally, Bill took four hours to explain the need for the assessment and how it worked. This group asked that he shorten his presentation to two hours. When he arrived, the participants informed him that he had fifty minutes to make his pitch. Bill threw out his presentation, excused himself and ran out of the building to his car. An avid road traveler, Bill had a glove compartment bursting with maps. He grabbed a stack and returned to the meeting. After handing a map to each participant, he instructed them to plot a route between two major cities with four days of travel. Mutters and grumbles erupted, berating the trivial exercise, but the men stuck to their side of the bargain, giving Bill his fifty minutes.

After ten minutes of plotting and planning, Bill asked the participants what the items were that they had to consider in order to plan their journey. The list they brainstormed included:

- A specific destination

- A clear starting point

- Time frame

- Daily goals

- Desires of all passengers

- Roadblocks

- Detours

- Alternate routes

- Weather predictions

Condition of the vehicle

Alternate vehicles

Supplies available and to be acquired

In less than a half an hour, Bill made his case for the senior managers to take the time to create and agree on a vision and to complete an assessment of their present position and conditions before setting goals and planning for the journey.

The process of covisioning should be prerequisite to any journey we make in this life with someone else. Mark Twain said, "Inherently, each one of us has the substance within to achieve whatever our goals and dreams define. What is missing from each of us is the training, education, knowledge and insight to utilize what we already have." This book has been written as a training manual to guide you and your covisioning partners through a process of determining your destinations and drawing the maps to get there. The majority of the material is taken from workshops I have taught and groups I have facilitated, each one ending with a printed covision the participants committed to achieve. I've included examples and quotes so you can share in and learn from their insights and experiences. By reading the information in this book and doing the exercises, you'll find covisioning is truly a tool for getting what you want, together.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

"Our mental health is equal to the
amount of perceived options we have in our lives."

– George Leonard

CHAPTER 7

BUILDING A PERSONAL VISION

Many people will tell you that second marriages are always better. After living through the nightmares of the first, they know what they need the next time around. My question is, “Why must we experience what we don’t like in order to learn what we do?” More effort needs to be put into uncovering our requirements so we can shape the world around us instead of lying victim to its lessons.

Therefore, covisions must begin with personal visions. Only then will the end result include each person’s desires and needs, ensuring individual commitment to making it happen. It’s not enough to describe in your covision what you want as a static representation. Covisions include how the parties in the picture are behaving, what is important to them, and what considerations are foremost in their minds when they make decisions. Therefore, the second step in the process of covisioning is to explore values. With the building blocks on the table—personal visions and values—the third step, the covision, can then be constructed.

The exercises in this chapter will help you build personal visions. The depth of each vision will depend on whether the covision will be time-based or activity-based.

A time-based covision is where the participants select a date in the future as their destination. For example, you could covision what your marriage will look like in five years, or what accomplishments your department will be celebrating in one year. If the covision is time based, your personal vision needs to be "whole-life," looking at how you spend your day from when you awake to bedtime. Even if the focus is on work, the participants need to include the impact of work on their lives. Whole-life is for whole people. The exercises in the next chapter, *Assessing the Present*, will give you tips on writing your whole-life vision.

However, if you are covisioning a specific activity, such as a family vacation, a new home, a new product or process, you can limit your personal vision to the specific result. In other words, your personal vision will be confined to what you see yourself doing on your vacation, enjoying in your new home, or how you are involved in creating the new product. If your covision is activity-based, you may want to skip the following exercises and go directly to chapter nine, *Observing The Future*.

Again, the purpose for writing the personal vision before the covision is to make sure you know what you want before you start into the process. For some people, this can be an excruciating task. They have enough trouble deciding on what to eat for dinner, much less what they want to do with the rest of their lives. The exercises in the following two sections are designed to explore desires and open up possibilities.

On the other hand, many people think they know what they want when they really don't. These people sometimes follow a path to its end before they realize it was not where they wanted to go. How many times have you committed to a relationship, a job, or a purchase and then found you had bought into something that didn't make you happy? When working toward your private visions and goals, you may be able to change your mind and try something new. When working with others, change is not that easy. The result of not having a clear personal vision before developing and carrying out a covision is often anger, blame and bad feelings. The participant who faithfully stood by the covision often feels betrayed by the participant who changed his mind. This is true for both time-based and activity-based covisions. Therefore, even if you think you know exactly what you want, I urge you to perform the exercises in the next two sections. You may surprise yourself.

Most people I work with have difficulty writing a whole-life vision for three reasons: 1) their visions aren't visual, 2) their visions don't go beyond today's reality, and 3) they can't tell you what they want even if they tried.

First, as defined in the briefing session in chapter four, a vision is a picture, a specific destination, and a detailed painting of tomorrow's opportunities. Therefore, a personal vision must be a clear view of what you look like at your best on a particular day in the future. It's a picture you can draw with words and communicate to someone else so that they can see the same picture as you. A vision includes enough detail that you can access it easily at the beginning of each day and when you need it

as a guide to help you make decisions. A vision is anchored to a particular time to keep it in the realm of reality and to make it a tangible blueprint for setting goals and celebrations. Finally, the clearer the vision, the easier it is to modify to accommodate unexpected events and new input.

But the reality of a vision must go beyond the reality of today. Unless you are satisfied with your life as it is and would change nothing if someone told you that you had only three months to live, your visions should include elements that don't yet exist. Visions should help you stretch beyond your comfort zone, beyond the doubt and the feeling that something can't happen. Allow yourself to create the possibility before you tear it apart with your fears and negativity. Only then will your visions provide the impetus for movement, stir your excitement, and release your judgment and anger. By focusing your energy on achieving your ideals, your vision will ally your mind and spirit, producing a vibrant energy and a feeling of peace you've never known before.

How can you tell if you don't have a vision, or don't believe in the one you have? If you have to ask this question, your vision isn't complete or isn't truly yours, defined by someone else and not stemming from your own desires.

This leads to the third and most complex difficulty—when a person can't tell you what he wants if he tried. This person has lost a sense of what makes him happy. If dreams and aspirations are absent from someone's current existence, a look at the past can help.

In an effort to address all three difficulties, I chose the exercises in the next two chapters to help you determine what would make your life more meaningful and fulfilling. First, you'll assess the present to determine the areas of your life in which you would like to see improvement and to conceptualize how you would change the areas to make them more satisfying. These exercises will provide you with the ingredients for a vision with which you can live and grow.

CHAPTER 8

ASSESSING THE PRESENT—WHAT'S MISSING?

"It's not the years in a life that count;
it's the life in the years"

--- Adlai Stevenson

Too many people wait until they lay on their death bed to assess the quality of their lives. Then, when time has run out, they list their regrets for the things they did not do. "Shoulds" and "coulds" clutter their speeches. Little is mentioned about wasted effort and failures. Regrets mostly focus on the roads not taken.

In order to leave this world feeling fulfilled, life assessments and adjustments should be completed on a regular basis. The four exercises described in this chapter can help you evaluate your present life conditions and determine areas for change.

However, the appraisal alone doesn't constitute a personal vision. The answers you glean only provide a sense of direction. Use the insights gained from the exercises as a

precursor to developing your vision. Then leave at least a few days between doing the exercises and writing your vision so that your subconscious can percolate on your ideas.

Exercise #1 -- Life Areas

One of the easiest methods for gathering the ingredients for your personal vision is to assess your satisfaction with the life areas mentioned in the chapter three. Going down the list on the next page, ask yourself if you are satisfied with the life area mentioned as it is today. If you are not, answer the second question—Can I visualize a better picture? In other words, can you visualize this life area in a way that would be more satisfying to you?

Remember not to clog up your answer with doubt and negativity. You are working with possibilities. If you doubt your own ability to make a portion of the vision come true, let your doubts go for now. Facing reality and overcoming limitation will be addressed when you work on setting your goals and making your action plans.

To complete the assessment, answer the third question—Will I commit time and energy to this picture? Even if you aren't satisfied with the way a life area is today, you must ask yourself if you are willing to commit the time and energy to change this life area in the future. The law of nature states that if you won't commit time and energy to making a change, the change won't happen.

Be sure to ask yourself the third question even if you answered yes to being satisfied with a life area. If you are putting a lot of effort into an area today, you should assess if you are willing to commit the time and energy to sustain your level of satisfaction. You may only

be willing to work hard at your career, your exercise goals, or your personal relationships for a limited period of time. If you are expending a high level of energy at something today, try to project your threshold of burn-out. Determine where you draw the line on your commitment. Be honest with yourself. Particularly for over-achievers, watch out for any dangerously high expectations of yourself in your vision.

LIFE AREA ASSESSMENT

For each life area, write yes or no under each of the three questions.

	Am I satisfied with current conditions?	Can I visualize a better picture?	Will I commit time & energy to a new picture?
<i>Physical Health</i>			
Exercise			
Diet			
<i>Relationships</i>			
Primary/Spouse			
Children			
Friends			
Parents			
Siblings			
<i>Work/Career</i>			
Job Responsibilities			
Communication with Boss			
Co-Workers			
Environment/Location			
Available Tools/Resources			
<i>Living Space</i>			
Environment			
Location			
<i>Learning</i>			
Career Development			
Personal Growth			
<i>Emotional Health</i>			
Self-Esteem			
Optimism			
Spiritual/Religious			
Relaxation			
Reflection			
<i>Finances</i>			
Expenses			
Savings			
<i>Leisure Time</i>			
Hobbies			
Sports			
Vacations/Travel			
Volunteering			

Answering all three questions independently of each other—Am I satisfied? Can it be better? Am I willing to commit to making it better?—will help you determine what elements you desire in your vision. But when you write your vision, the composition will be a melting pot of all three columns. You will want to combine what you are satisfied with today with what you could improve, but only in those areas you are willing to commit your time and energy.

If you are not satisfied with a life area but can't create a better picture, then continue on with the next exercises. The activities in this chapter and the next chapter on exploring your past will help bring your picture into focus.

Exercise #2 -- Calling Up Your Heroes

One of the tragedies of becoming an adult is losing the right to declare our heroes. The idea of having a hero we admire and want to be like goes underground with our bedtime teddy bears and invisible friends. In my management workshops, when I ask the question, "Can you identify anyone in your past or present who you would call a leader?" I get blank stares and confused expressions. I have to give them examples of leaders—famous people, previous bosses, parents, fictional characters—before anyone offers an example. Then I have to give them plenty of time to come up with examples of why they think the person exemplifies leadership. Is this difficulty due to a lack of heroes and mentors in our adult world? Or does admitting to having a role model indicate the person is lacking in his own role?

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When I finally get the managers to talk about leaders they have known and the traits a good leader demonstrates, the result is a summary of traits the managers would like to develop within themselves. In other words, by studying the people who have been outstanding leaders in a person's life—those who made a difference or their actions left a good impression—the person is able to draw a portrait of the type of leader he or she wants to be.

The same holds true for heroes. We each have our own Super Men or Women who embody characteristics we aspire to own. Therefore, in helping you piece together the elements in your personal vision, I challenge you to call up your heroes. Identify any hero you ever had, any person you admired, anyone you would give anything to have a chance to meet. You can select anyone in the world, from all of history, literature, movies or sports.

Next, write out the traits you admire in your heroes. Do you admire how they express themselves, what they did with their lives, how they dealt with adversity, or how they treated other people? Describe your heroes without using their names and professions.

Now, review your list and underline any traits that are similar to your view of yourself. These are the traits that you view as your strengths.

Next, circle the traits you don't feel you currently possess but would like develop within yourself. These traits represent your areas of growth.

When creating your personal vision, be sure to capitalize on your strengths while visualizing yourself as your own hero, demonstrating the traits you have now or want to develop. Of course, it may be a bit much to see yourself flying or lifting tall buildings, but you can include hang gliding as a sport and physical strength as a personal attribute.

I topped my list of heroes with Katherine Hepburn. The traits in myself I matched to hers are a strong sense of purpose, an ability to forge my own path in life, financially independent and a direct communication style. The traits in her I would like to incorporate into my repertoire are to be unafraid to say anything I believe in and to be a respected role model for women. I will never be Katherine Hepburn, but I can incorporate the qualities I admire in her into my personal vision and reality, becoming a heroine in my own right.

Gandhi seems to be a favorite choice among men I have worked with. His serenity and perseverance coupled with his commitment to a higher purpose is an attractive mix to strive for. Yet, few of the men who shared Gandhi as their hero told me that they practiced Gandhi-like behavior or possessed Gandhi-like characteristics. It's no wonder they live their lives feeling frustrated and unfulfilled when they see themselves acting the opposite as that of their hero. Even worse, these same men often have trouble visioning themselves out of their ruts, leaving Gandhi or any other hero as an icon in the ethers.

When I work with men who aren't satisfied with their lives but can't picture anything better, I try to help them see that by not visioning and moving out of their current life situation, they will remain angry animals stuck in their cages. I do this by telling the reluctant participants that if they can't envision a better life, they are accepting a life of powerlessness, which riles up most men, and many women, I know. I then challenge them to create a movie for themselves where they are the star and not a supporting actor in someone else's story.

Other heroes people have declared include John F. Kennedy, Albert Einstein, Clint Eastwood, Margaret Mead, Bette Davis, Hillary Clinton, Pelé, Charles Barkley, Sean Connery, James Bond, Deanna of Troy from Star Trek, Forrest Gump, and Bart Simpson. To Joe, a 38-year-old reliability engineer, Bart represented guilt-free mischievousness and loyalty to his friends and father. Personally, I would choose Marge over Bart as a model of loyalty. Kim, a marketing communications specialist, told me she chose her cat as her hero for his even temper, courageousness and independence. Each hero had at least one quality the admirer could identify with and hope to emulate.

Your head is full of clues of what you want your life to look like. Studying your heroes is only one exercise to uncover your desires. Be honest with yourself. As your desires become clear, the uncertainty and frustration you may feel with not knowing what you want in your life will melt away.

Exercise #3 -- What Will The Neighbors Say?

If you have trouble taking on the traits of others, try exploring "what if" scenarios for yourself. Picture yourself twenty years from now at a dinner party given in your behalf. The guests, including friends, relatives, and co-workers, take turns toasting your life that is full of accomplishments and interesting endeavors. In a sense, you are the hero they are celebrating.

Think big. Draw the dream you would attempt if everything in this life, or the next, worked out perfectly. Cast aside modesty and roadblocks, even financial need. Forget age, present circumstance or past history. Strap on your wings and fly through the realm of possibility.

While fantasizing, make a list of all the traits, accomplishments and behaviors the guests attribute to you. Then, as in the last exercise, review your list and underline anything that is true or likely to occur as things are today. These are the conditions that you view as your strengths. Next, circle anything which isn't yet true but you would like to happen. These circumstances represent your areas of growth. When creating your personal vision, be sure to capitalize on your strengths while visualizing your dreams. You can have what you want if you start today.

Exercise #4 -- More of, Less of

Here is an exercise I have used in my own career growth and to help my employees set their professional goals. It's a quick and easy four-step process.

Step 1: Log your activities during a typical work week. Be specific. Record the nature of your phone calls, the results as well as types of meetings, hallway conversations, projects, tasks and annoyances. If you don't work for a company, record all events in your day, even the trivial tasks that are minor but chew up time or activate your stress. Be sure you choose a typical week so that the picture drawn represents how you spend your time.

Step 2: Find a quiet space you can occupy undisturbed for at least an hour. Take your log, a pencil, two sheets of blank paper, and two markers of different colors such as two highlighters, two pens with different colored ink, or two crayons. Using the markers, highlight or circle the activities that make a difference to you. Use one color to indicate those that you like doing now and would possibly like to do more often. Use the other color to highlight or circle the activities you don't like doing and would love to do less often. Don't mark the tasks and interactions that arouse no particular reaction, meaning they occurred and you don't care either way if they increase or decrease.

Step 3: Using your pencil and the blank sheets of paper, write the words "MORE OF" on the first sheet. Under the title, list the activities you would like to continue and/or do more of in the future. When done, write the words "LESS OF" on the second sheet and draw a vertical line down the center of the paper. In the left-hand

column, list the activities you would like to stop or at least spend less time doing. In the right-hand column, see if you can turn each negative into a positive by finding an alternative, more satisfying way to accomplish what you don't like doing. For example, if you hate holding meetings in hallways at work, an alternative would be to carry your Daytimer with you so you can set a later meeting with the hall stopper on the spot. Or if you can't find the time to invite your mother over for a visit, invite her along the next time you go to a movie or go shopping.

Step 4: Write yourself a new job description, or life description, that includes your "More Of" list. If any of the items on your "Less Of" list is a necessary evil at this time, include the suitable alternative in your description. It's amazing how clear what you want to be doing will jump out at you. Twenty years ago, I completed a More of, Less of analysis of how I spent my Saturdays. Writing appeared on my More of list. Since time was at a premium, I scanned my Less of sheet for a suitable compromise. Cleaning house was at the top of the list. In the opposite column, I had written, "Get a maid." At the time, my salary was meager. But my anger with my husband for watching television while I scrubbed the kitchen floor was great. I hired someone to do the job for me. Not only was I able to

start writing my first book, but the return on investment concerning my improved mental health was well worth the sacrifice.

The activities and interactions included in your description help define the person you want to be in this lifetime. You will want to integrate the portions of your description into your vision. This is a good exercise to do any time you are contemplating a change in your life, whether you are looking for something new, perhaps a new job or relationship, or trying to improve what you have. This exercise will also help you focus your desires and goals before you enter into any planning activity such as writing New Year's resolutions, choosing a major in college, assessing your job for a performance review, or planning a complex project. Determining your More Ofs and Less Ofs is a good way to take your satisfaction pulse and to set your life back on track.

* * *

Remember to leave a space of at least a few days between doing the exercises in this chapter and writing your vision so that your subconscious can process the results. Understanding what is true for you is no easy task. There are years of clouds and filters layered on our perceptions. Give yourself the time to both sift through the haze and to let the dust settle before moving on.

You might find that none of the exercises in this chapter yielded satisfying results. Your effort was interesting but not exciting and you're not sure you can draw a picture of a future you can commit your time and energy to achieving. If so, the next section

will help you dig deeper by excavating what you've owned and lost, and filling in what you wished you owned but never had the opportunity to create. By matching up your past with your present, you'll find the pieces needed and discard the drek to create the optimum vision in which you can grow and flourish.

CHAPTER 9

OBSERVING THE FUTURE -- PERSONAL VISIONING

"When I am an old woman I shall wear purple. . ."

—Jenny Joseph

Jenny Joseph wisely titled her famous poem "Warning." On the surface, Ms. Joseph seems to be warning the reader that she will make full use of the freedom to be eccentric when she is old, a sort of "look out world, here I come" statement. Looking deeper, the warning is not about her behavior. The warning is meant for everyone to change their boring, disciplined, and anesthetized behavior today before they miss life. Why should it take getting old to sit when we are tired, run sticks along railings, or wear red hats that don't suit us? Although there's never enough time in the day to complete our work assignments, deathbed speeches never reflect this regret. The poem goes on to say:

"But now we must have clothes that keep us dry

And pay our rent and not swear in the street

And set a good example for the children.

We must have friends to dinner and read the papers."

How much of your day is spent doing routine tasks that gobble up your time such as reading the paper from front to back every morning, or cleaning the bathroom every Saturday, or driving the same old way to work day after day? Would it kill you to change your routine, find a moment to watch the sunset, leave the bathroom dirty for a day, or sit with your kids on the roof after their bedtime hoping to see a falling star?

After listing out the wonderfully senseless things she will do when she's old, Ms.

Joseph ends the poem with:

"But maybe I ought to practice a little now?

So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised

When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple."

There is no time better than now to assess your present life, review your past, and then draw a picture of your future that is fun and meaningful as well as prosperous.

The following two sections outline the steps for building personal visions using the bricks and mortar of your wishes and dreams. The first section focuses on building whole-life visions. Having a clear picture of how you want your life to look is important before you covision on broad-range plans. A whole-life vision is anchored to a specific

day in the future, such as what your marriage will look like on your fifth year anniversary or what your workday will look like on January 1 in the year 2000.

The second section outlines the steps for building a personal vision focused on a singular project or activity, what I call an activity-based vision, you will be completing with someone else, such as buying a house, raising a child, coordinating a reunion or developing a new product. If you are clear about your own picture and expectations before you go into the process with your partners, you can better ask for what you want and negotiate differences before they become disappointments.

Whole-Life Visions

I am not living my dream life. Yet I wake up every morning feeling excited about living through the day. Since I often jump into my writing without even brushing my teeth, some people label me obsessed. When not conversing with my computer, I'm meeting new people, trying new things, making new errors and thinking new thoughts, ending each day with enough energy to thank God for helping me get one step closer to my vision. I am not living my dream life, yet.

Vision is the fuel for living. Without vision, your tank nears empty with no reserve to face the hills. With vision, you have a running start. There is no confusion to slow you down, no indecision, and no constant battling with yourself. Like a child who keeps a wrinkled snapshot of the bike he wants for Christmas in his pocket, you keep a picture in your head of your destination. The road to your vision may not be clear or

you may be full of fear, but the picture sends messages to your feet. The picture acts like a magnet, pulling you through your fears and difficulties. You may resist, but the clearer the vision, the stronger the pull. When the focus of your actions and decisions are on a vision, there is no such thing as being still.

I've described a vision as a painting of tomorrow's possibilities. But it has to be a deliberate painting; one clearly thought out and planned before put to canvas. You must have the words to describe the vision, with enough detail that when reading your vision to someone else, they will see the same picture as you.

You'll need a pencil and a stack of blank paper. You can write a vision anywhere as my students have demonstrated to me by writing wonderful visions in a crowded classroom. But your best bet is to choose a spot where you feel comfortable and can write with no interruptions. Ideally, the place should be one where you feel inspired such as in a special room, under a favorite tree, or if you can get there, in the woods by a stream.

First, pick a date. You need to anchor your vision to a specific day in the future so that parameters are defined. A date will inject some reality into your dreaming. Yet don't obsess about the realism of your date. You aren't defining the absolute moment when everything must come together. You are simply choosing a day to shoot toward, such as one year from today. Remember, even though you want to hold fast to your dreams, the actual picture of how your dreams play out will change with time. In fact,

you should do this exercise annually, giving yourself a chance to regularly recreate a picture that excites you into action.

I suggest you vision yourself as you want to be during the week as opposed to a weekend. Since most of your time is spent at work, drawing your vision of a perfect day that includes work is your challenge. We often have dreams of leisure, fun or physical achievement, such as sailing around the world, flying an airplane or running a marathon. But once we do these, what's next? We rarely dream about setting up an average day to be the type of day that brings pleasure and pride. Yet we live our lives in average days and our self-esteem depends on how well we manage the day-to-day. If we can make our daily life better, our whole life will improve.

You may choose to include two or more days to show both a workday and a weekend. And if you work a night shift, include a day off since you may want your vision to be more than getting a good day's sleep. Here are the steps:

1. Sit back and imagine the most perfect day possible for the date you chose. Review the results of the exercises from *Assessing the Present*. Include what you like now and what you would be doing if you were to be more satisfied with your life areas, were more like your heroes, did more of what you like to do and less of what you don't. Include how you are talking to and treating yourself. Include details such as the type of food you eat, the people you live and work with, the clothes you wear, and the car you

drive. Don't settle for what is happening today unless it is perfect as is. Picture your ideal. If you're not sure what a better way looks like, describe what you don't like and use opposing words. For example, if you think your boss is a control freak, picture what it would be like if your boss trusted and respected your knowledge and your ability by giving you complete control over a project. Or, if your mornings are too rushed, picture yourself waking up early enough to take a brisk walk, showering, and drinking a liquid breakfast while listening to soothing music in your car on the way to work. Maybe you see your kids helping with the chores so you have time every evening for a quiet bath or a Saturday golf game. Don't worry whether your vision is possible or get hung up on how you will make your vision happen. Let your dreams flow. Writing the goals and making the changes come later. Stick to the who's, what's, and where's. The how's will only muddy the stream of ideas.

2. When you're ready to write, start by recording random thoughts.

Brainstorm all ideas. Don't write complete sentences and paragraphs. It's more important to include all the elements. You don't want to forget an important item; include it now or you may not be able to fit it into your covision later.

3. When you're done with your list, reread the items and connect related statements with numbers or circles with lines and arrows. Take a look at the vision list written by Rose Marie, age 42, a recently divorced employee relations specialist:

Wake happy

Enjoy my ride to work, maybe bike there.

I'm promoted to project manager, taking on a particular enhancement to our benefits offering to employees.

Better relationship with my boss. He listens to me, asks for my ideas and helps me plan my future.

Spend more time with friends. Maybe lunches. Definitely by phone.

After work, do community work. Get Paul to help me get on a board, maybe for kids, or one that works with stopping gangs and drug abuse.

Keep a journal. Read more books, non-technical, especially mysteries.

Weigh 135 pounds - exercise when? Morning?

Read less of the newspaper.

Eat light breakfast at home or at work.

Rose Marie included a number of improvements to her Life Areas, including her diet and exercise, her responsibilities and communication with her boss, her career development, her level of emotional health, and her use of a portion of her leisure time for volunteering.

From her More of, Less of exercise, she increased her number of bike rides per week, took on the responsibility of project manager, and found more time to spend with her friends. She decreased her waste of time in the morning by cutting the time she spends reading the newspaper, fighting with her boss and her need to fix her friends' problems.

From the Calling Up Your Heroes exercise, she realized that one of the features she admired in a mentor from a previous job was that the woman sat on a number of boards of non-profit organizations. Rose Marie knew the director of a community mental health clinic whom she could enlist in her search for a board she could sit on that would help her to feel that she was giving of herself to her community. And, her participation on a board would be a good way to meet new people, providing opportunities for friendships and networking.

4. Now you're ready to write your vision. Your vision can be any length from one paragraph to multiple pages.

Write your vision in present tense. Let your day play out on paper as if you were writing a script for a television show. Describe exactly what you are doing

before you go to work, how you get to work, what you do at work, how you spend your lunchtime, who you talk to during the day, how and when you leave work, where you go and what you do. Include when you go to bed. Consider accomplishments or actions that make you feel good, fulfilled or proud. You should be able to look at your vision when you're done and say, "Yeah, a day like this will make me feel great."

The vision on the next page is the completed vision written from Rose Marie's list on the previous page. She wrote the vision in a workshop where she was covisioning with her peers in the Human Resources department. The date they chose to anchor both their personal visions and their covisions was one year out. Notice how the writer inserted all the desired elements of her vision list into her composition.

Rose Marie's Vision:

I wake up very early in the morning and find myself truly happy.

I start the day with a good cup of tea (now that I've broken the coffee habit), and only briefly scan the newspaper (instead of reading it front to back). Considering the weather, I decide if I'm going to exercise inside or take a walk outside. After I return, I leisurely shower and get ready for work, enjoying picking out what I'm going to wear to work since I'm at my ideal weight of 135.

I drive to work listening to relaxing music and take the time to enjoy the scenery. If it's Friday, I ride my bicycle to work.

At work, I'm anxious to begin the challenge of starting my new project now that I have been named project manager. We'll be defining a series of educational programs for employees on benefits-related issues. I draw up a preliminary draft of the project flow to present as a brainstorming starter to my team.

I spend lunch with a friend I haven't seen in a while, listening to her tell me about her life and only giving advice when asked.

I spend the afternoon fine-tuning my goals for the year in preparation for a meeting with my boss. At that meeting, we will plan my career ladder. As the day comes to an end, I'm shocked when I realize it's over.

I attend a dinner meeting of the Board of Directors of a non-profit organization for which I'm a member. After the meeting, I get home in time to unwind with a phone call from a good friend, read a chapter in a book, and complete my journal reflecting on my day.

To achieve her personal vision, Rose Marie must covision with her boss and, to a lesser extent, with her friend at the clinic to help her find a suitable agency to devote her limited spare time. The task on both cases rests on her shoulders to initiate.

Yet before she initiates the covisioning sessions, Rose Marie should do a more-detailed activity-based vision for each area—the project she wants to take on at work and her membership on a board of directors—so that she is clear with what she wants from both her boss and her friend. Instructions for completing activity-based visions are in the next section.

I've found that most whole-life visions start with the person waking up feeling good, feeling excited or feeling calm. Yet most of the authors admit this is not so today. Their lives are out of whack and definitely out of balance. Activities they enjoy doing barely overlap activities that occupy their time.

If you feel it would be impossible to vision an average day in the near future that would be totally satisfying and relaxing, then the trick is to balance your enjoyments with what is annoying. And don't forget to balance "doing" with time for thinking about what you're doing. Give yourself the time to plan at the beginning of a day and to reflect at the day's end.

When you finish your vision, summarize each section into a mission statement. In a sense, you are defining the life areas in which to focus your improvement. The life areas you define may be the ones you defined before you wrote your vision. In fact, it's possible to go directly from doing the Life Areas or the More of, Less of exercises

to writing a mission statement and goals. So why write a vision if you're clear on what you want to change? By writing a vision first, you are prioritizing your improvement areas and conceptualizing what the improvement will look like once it is achieved.

The clearer the vision, the easier it is to write and achieve your goals and action statements. Skipping the vision is a short cut you shouldn't take. It's like running down the alley to get home faster than crossing through the park on a beautiful spring day. You miss the beauty of your path and the intricacies that bare fresh opportunities and secrets.

Don't take your visions lightly. You aren't writing New Year's resolutions; you are trying to shape and form your life. Following these steps will help you write achievable goals as opposed to the grand statements most people write January 1st of every year then stuff into a drawer without further regard.

The following vision was written by Dan, a manager of a technical assistance group in a semiconductor corporation. Dan's vision was also set for one year out. The vision is followed by a mission statement. When you read the statement, try and determine what goals the author will set. Notice how easy this activity is when the vision and mission statement are clearly defined.

Dan's Vision

One year from today...

I wake up early in the morning and meditate for 15 minutes followed by a 30-minute bike ride enjoying my neighborhood. When I return, my wonderful wife Sarah has prepared some hot tea and a light breakfast. My kids, Loren and Rickie, are ready for pre-school.

I drop the kids off at pre-school and get to work before 8:00 a.m. I leisurely scan my day's itinerary and my to-do list, and notice that I have only one meeting to attend which lasts for one hour.

I meet with my team leaders for 30 minutes and we go through all the tasks for the day. I get back to the office and work uninterrupted on an application note until lunch.

At lunch, I go home and take my dogs Raja and Rani for a walk after which I eat a light lunch.

After lunch, I have a one-on-one with one of my team leaders for 30 minutes. Then I attend a design review meeting for one hour. Getting back, I continue to work on my application note until 4:30 pm. I take 30 minutes to go over my to-do list. I pat myself on the back for having put in a good day at work. I leave work promptly at 5 pm to pick up my kids and get home in time to watch the McNeil/Leherer Report.

My wife has prepared another wonderful dinner. We eat and do the dishes together, talking over the day. I read to the kids and put them to bed.

I spend an hour working on a home project before I go to bed by 10 pm.

Dan's vision was packed with covisioning opportunities, starting with his wife who wasn't into preparing breakfast. Additionally, Dan neither lived close enough to work to go home at lunch, nor was his neighborhood a pleasant place in which to take a morning bike ride. However, he did say that a move to a more suitable location was in the works. I urged him to covision his new home with his family before the final decisions were made.

At work, Dan will have to covision with both his boss and his subordinates to achieve his ideal day. The result may not be quite what he imagined in his personal vision, but he should be able to incorporate some of the major elements or get his needs met in a different way. Most important, he can at least verbalize his needs so that the people he works with will understand his frustrations with not having any alone time in his day and not take his requests for privacy as personal rejections.

Again, common areas of Dan's and Rose Marie's vision include waking up early, exercising, eating breakfast, not rushing, a moment for planning the day, increased communication with family, time to leisurely talk with colleagues, alone time at work, time for self-reflection and/or enjoyable activities, getting to bed on time. These are not big things, but they are significant to our happiness. More often than not, altering minor things in your life will make a big difference, such as taking a bubble bath at night, learning how to play the piano, and sharing the dishwashing. Improving the quality of your life is not that hard of a task if you take the time discover the little things that make life work for you then arrange your day to make them fit.

Take a look at Dan's mission statement:

My Personal Mission Statement: To improve my health through diet and exercise; to relax more; to manage my time at work, balancing managing and contributing; to spend more time with my wife and children; to pursue personal projects I enjoy in my spare time.

The steps for writing your mission statement are

1) For each paragraph, write one to three words characterizing the key improvement area, such as exercise and relaxation, communication with my boss, and time spent with my family.

2) Write a statement that lists these improvement areas as the key ideas of what you need to do to achieve your vision.

When you move into the section of this book entitled Making It Happen, you will use both your vision and your mission statement to develop your goals and action plans. The reason for writing your mission now is that this statement becomes your vehicle of communication.

Short of reading your entire vision to someone, you can identify your needs to them with your mission. The mission also serves to remind you that even if your vision is only a glimmer in the sky, you can begin on the intention today. You may never get your boss to treat you as his equal, but you can begin today to improve communications with him and control your reactions in spite of him. You may not have

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the money to start your catering business today, but you may begin by catering parties at cost for non-profit fundraisers in an effort to build a clientele and increase your opportunities of finding investors.

We'll explore how to jump start your dreams in the section on Action Planning. The point is that a mission statement is an important means of boiling down the essence of your vision into a direction you can convey.

If possible, don't pigeon-hole work or your hobbies as activities that occur separate from the rest of your life. All the events of the day should intertwine. Combine work goals with life goals, leisure goals with life goals, work goals with leisure goals. In doing so, you will see your life as a contained unit in which every action and accomplishment connects. The vision then is truly whole-life.

The vision and mission on the next page is an example of how a business executive is trying to weave his personal values and philosophies into his professional and leisure activities. His vision includes bringing his desire to learn more about people and about the wonders of life into his work, and to use his leisure activities, in this case golf, to help foster his self-growth and mastery. Yet, he never loses sight of his specific work goals, jumping into the technical jargon required by his peers.

Also, notice the two children he named at the beginning of the vision. Michael is the name of the son he and his wife had just adopted. Ema was part of their covision, to be adopted in the future. Four months after he wrote his vision, his wife got pregnant. How's that for covisioning?

Steve's Vision and Mission Statement

My wife and I wake up excited every morning, eager to start a day balanced with our loving family, challenging and meaningful work, and activities that enhance our personal development. With regular open and honest communication, we are living our lives the way we have agreed to with our son Michael and our daughter Ema.

I see myself continuing to develop my personal mastery, taking a few moments at the beginning of the day to remind myself that I am a student and that I can learn from every event in my day and aspects of my life. I am constantly improving how I relate to and function with my colleagues at work, my friends and my family.

I see myself as a significant contributor helping my department define and develop revolutionary core products, and evolutionary memory products that will grow revenues annually by 40% with 20 to 25 percent net profits. I see this \$75M product line advancing beyond the execution of P & L tasks to benchmarking P & L processes at the highest level of automation.

Leaving work in time to get in 9 holes, I see myself smile as a drive sails effortlessly down the fairway, then I confidently drop 3 foot par putts knowing I have practiced my psychology to advance me beyond a 5 handicap this spring.

Mission Statement: *To lead a balanced life between my home, work and personal development; to significantly contribute to the growth of revenue and profits in my department while implementing methods to continuously improve the processes; to be a calm and precise golfer; and above all, to never forget that I am a student of life.*

Now that you've taken the time to write your vision, take the time to share your picture, or at least your mission, with as many people as you can. You will use the vision as the basis of your covision, but you can also use it to let the significant players in your life know exactly who you are. Too often, people work together for years without knowing anything about each other beyond the ability to do a specific job.

Recently, I facilitated a visioning session with a group of managers where the most junior manager had worked in the department for more than two years. After reading their personal visions, two of the senior managers realized they had the same number of children and that they both were both pursuing graduate degrees. The director of the division sat back and said to his staff, "Now I know why you guys do what you do. I should have asked you long ago."

Let your co-workers know how important is your family, your search for a Tai Chi master, or your collection of model planes. By letting them know you, you open the door for them to reciprocate by expressing their dreams and desires with you. The more you know about each other, the more you will understand each other's choices and behaviors. This is what is meant when someone says, "I know where he's coming from."

Read people your visions. Send them out into the universe. Commit yourself to action. No vision is bad, or better than another. Visions are as individual as each person on this planet.

Activity-Based Visions

This section outlines the steps for building a personal vision focused on a singular project or activity, such as buying a house, raising a child, coordinating a reunion or developing a new product. Even if you completed a whole-life vision, you may want to go back and do an activity-based vision for each element. The more explicit you design your own picture before you go into the process with your partners, the better equipped you are to ask for what you want and negotiate suitable agreements.

There are two types of activity-based visions. You can either vision something you want to do, or someone you want to be. In preparation for covisioning a family with your spouse, you might vision what you both will be doing while you are pregnant and then vision what it looks like to be a good parent. Examples for both scenarios include:

Do

Earning an degree, mastering a sport such as golf, learning a new hobby such as playing the piano, reaching a maximum fitness level, owning a major item such as a first or second home, completing a specific project such as a developing a new product or redecorating a house, taking a vacation or owning your own business.

Be

To improve or add to any part of your existence. For example, you may strive to become a good parent, a supportive mate, more spiritually or civic-minded, a stronger team player at work, or a better friend.

The steps for completing an activity-based vision are the same for drawing a whole-life vision except that you are concentrating on one project or circumstance. You'll want to find a quiet place for undisturbed time. Ideally, your choice will be an inspiring location. Be sure to bring at least a couple of blank sheets of paper and pencils.

Once you are comfortable, close your eyes and visualize yourself doing your chosen activity or living as the model of the specific aspect of your life you want to develop. Give yourself a date when you want this to occur. Be practical with your selection by allowing enough time for realistic change while still creating a challenge that will eject you out of your comfort zone. The date is just for anchoring your thoughts; you may pull or push the date when you write your goals and action plan.

When you visualize, as well as write your vision, you will repeat the notion of living in your perfect day. However, this time, focus solely on the particular undertaking or personal improvement area. For instance, if you are visioning a new house, picture your perfect day living in your ideal house. What are you doing in the house? Who is with you, and where and when are you together? If the activity is more specific, such as earning a degree or playing the piano, visualize yourself as a master of the activity and how you have fit the activity into your life. For a vacation, what would an ideal vacation day look like? For a new job, describe an ideal day on the job. Make your aspirations come alive.

Use the same technique for visualizing what you want to be. What is a perfect day in the life a good parent? A spiritually or civic-minded person? A strong team player? A good friend? In order to write the script for yourself, you must first see the movie in your head.

Now that you know what it looks like to live your dream, list out all the elements. Again, follow good brainstorming rules by dumping all ideas onto paper without judgment. Don't try to make them relate. Record every detail and random thought on paper. Don't worry about writing complete sentences. Include the details now so it's not missing from your vision later.

The following list was compiled by Frank, a facility maintenance worker, on what he pictured a good team player to be:

Understands and accepts big picture and completes assigned tasks on time.

Respects territory of others, but willing to chip in to help on any task.

Communicates honestly, with direct communication (not talk behind backs).

Listens.

Compliments others' successes and achievements.

Open-minded to new ideas or ideas different from my own.

Willing to accept change and take risks.

Doesn't fight, argue or resist.

Holds fair discussions.

Shares knowledge but willing to learn from others.

Frank could have created a list without first finding a quiet moment to visualize the picture. But his list may have not been so visual. When asked, most people describe being a team player in abstract terms like cooperative, reliable, and flexible. Although these words may bring a picture to mind, it's harder to set goals and create covisions using concepts.

We need to see each others' pictures in order to effectively communicate. This includes speaking to yourself. Always speak in pictures. If you tell yourself to be more cooperative, what should you be doing? If you don't know, you can't change. A clear picture is required to set and assess progress on goals.

Next, connect and categorize your statements so you can write a vision statement. Using the team player list, Frank drew lines connecting his statement using the three major themes he identified: communication, respect for others, and flexibility. Writing in the present tense, Frank's vision of being a good team player read:

MY DAY AS A TEAM PLAYER

I arrive to work on time early enough to review my assignments for the day before going to the morning meeting. I have a cup of coffee, relax at my desk, and write a list of tasks that must be done and any issues I might want talk about in the meeting. I get to the meeting on time. During the meeting, I actively contribute ideas while curbing my criticism. I listen with an open mind, considering both sides of all ideas offered. I'm willing to accept change when agreements are reached. I ask for help, recognizing that my peers have expertise in areas that can help me do my job best. The meeting ends on time. I leave the meeting feeling like it was a worthwhile experience. During the day, I enjoy my relationship with my customers. I work to my schedule, but I jump in to help my co-workers when needed, recognizing we're all in this together with the same overall goal. I compliment my team members on how well they do their jobs. And when they help me, I say thank you. I use my lunch time to build my personal relationships with my co-workers and customers, and I have a quick beer after work with one of my co-workers. I review my accomplishments on my drive home. Relaxing at home with my wife, I tell her about the good things that happened in my day.

My Mission To Be A Good Team Player: *Not be rushed in the morning; Be open-minded to new ideas; Communicate respectfully with others; Use spare time to network; and Develop positive thinking habits.*

Using his vision, Frank can now do a gap analysis, comparing the difference between today's reality and his ideal day as a team player. From his analysis, he can set goals for his own improvement. And, he can determine the elements of his vision that must be covisioned with his boss and his team mates.

In fact, Frank chose to read his vision to his team in an effort to stimulate the desire for a covision before working on his own development. He felt that working in a vacuum was useless. The only way to implement permanent change for himself was to help the team change in a way that was in alignment with his goals. In effect, by helping to develop his team, Frank created the environment necessary for his personal growth. And the company benefited by the improved productivity of the team that included Frank instead of losing Frank to a better team in another company.

Another good example of activity-based visioning is to set to paper your picture of a good parent, mate or friend. Most people go about their day with a vague notion of what a good parent, partner or friend should be doing. They use this vague notion to judge themselves and others, creating rifts and damaging relationships. Yet, if asked to describe what a good parent, mate or friend does, they respond with, "You know . . . they show how much they care." Does showing how much you care mean the same to you as it does to your spouse, your best friend or your children? Rarely. Knowing, communicating and adapting your personal vision to a covision is vital to building healthy relationships.

The final example I want to share with you is visioning a purchase or an activity. I began this part of the book by comparing the lack of a personal vision when buying a

house to the lack of personal vision when entering into a relationship. Frank's example can be used as an example for visioning any relationship including marriages, sibling contracts, co-authoring agreements, custody arrangements, telecommuting plans, supplier commitments, babysitting deals, etc. Each party must first vision how they see themselves behaving in the ideal relationship. The same steps apply to visioning a purchase or participation in an activity. Before discussing the event with your partner, vision yourself living with or doing the activity.

I've had the most reported success with covisioning when the concerned parties visioned their perfect house or their perfect vacation. The vacation exercise is generally an eye opener, with frequent reaction by covisioners with statements like, "You like doing what? I thought you hated buses." Or, "You never told me you didn't like it when I planned out our days." After getting over the surprises, and sometimes the hurt feelings, the parties can covision together a vacation that includes all desires whether shared or negotiated.

The following vision is an example of a personal vision of an ideal new house. Shelley wrote the vision after moving twice, both times after she decided she never really liked the house she had chosen to live in with her husband not less than three years before.

SATURDAY IN MY NEW HOUSE

I wake up with the sun streaming in on my toes. There's a window above me where I can see the sky, but it's high enough to keep the sun off my face. The three kids are in their play-room on the other end of the house. John is working out in his exercise room next to the play-room. I rise and go to my sitting room adjacent to our bedroom. I have a small wet bar in the sitting room equipped with an instant hot water dispenser. I make myself a cup of tea, sit back in my settee and write in my journal, recording my dreams or just the thoughts I want to remember to practice that day.

Feeling refreshed and ready, I join John for breakfast. The kitchen is in the middle of the house, off the dining room but not connected to the playroom. The kitchen table sits near two French doors that can be opened on sunny mornings to let in the warmth and fresh air. We make and clean up breakfast together.

After breakfast, we have a quick meeting around the dining room table with the kids to covision the day so there are no surprises or disappointments. During the meeting, we agree on who will do what chores and by when. The chores are easy since the house is fairly new and we have a cleaning service come twice a month to clean inside the cracks. Afterwards, I retreat to the living room, located in a private cove off the front door, where I practice my piano lessons.

Later, I take the girls shopping. When I return, we go swimming and complete the sets of exercises we learned to do in the YWCA aquabatics class. We eat an early dinner, cooked by John on the grill. We join the kids to watch a video on the big screen

TV in their playroom. Afterwards, John and I retreat to our private hot tub hidden in an alcove of trees and plants outside of our bathroom before going to bed.

* * *

Breaking down the picture, Shelley wanted a sitting room off her bedroom, a garden hot tub outside of her bathroom, a split floor plan with the kids, the kid's playroom and her husband's exercise room on the opposite end of the house from her bedroom, a kitchen that opened onto the patio, a formal dining room, a secluded formal living room with space for her piano, a backyard with a pool and a barbecue, and a big screen TV, all in a fairly new house. Can she have it all? At least she has a picture from which to start. She may have to negotiate location of the house, find a way to increase finances or decrease expenses, or agree to a house with some of her wishes with a timetable for add-ons such as the hot tub and big screen TV.

And, the previous picture was Shelley's vision, not John's. His vision may not conflict with hers, but before they can find a house they are both happy with, John will have to build and share his vision, too.

Often just the exercise of creating and reading a personal vision is enough for your partners to understand and support your effort or wishes. And certainly they can't support you if they don't know what you want. Never expect anyone to read your mind no matter how long you have lived or worked together. Too many marriages crumble over the statement, "Well, he should have known." or "I thought she knew me better."

Covisioning is often easier than you think if you know what you want, then state it in a way that shows how much you care.

A Final Note on Personal Visioning

Before you go on to sharing values and creating covisions, let your personal visions simmer for a while. After a few days, read your vision again. Ask yourself, "Is this what I want? Or is this something I thought I wanted to do ten years ago, but it's not right for me today? Or is this something that's never been a source of pleasure or excitement for me?" Many times we think we want things when, in reality, we only accepted the choices made for us by our parents or spouses, by the norms of our society, or even by our friends.

Attacking your visions is a rare opportunity. Most people live their lives never considering if they are on a path they chose for themselves. And those that take the time to reflect on their choices, often only do so following a major life event or crisis. Unfortunately, by the time they review their lives and visions, much of their lives if not all have been spent seeking happiness in the wrong direction.

The first time I made this discovery was while lying in a hospital bed at the age of 23. Recovering from surgery, I admitted to myself that I hated taking Journalism classes. Yet, the degree I was working on was a Bachelor degree in Mass Communications specializing in news writing. With only a year to go, I wouldn't allow myself to think about changing degrees.

Whether I caused my physical dilemma or not, my life had come to an abrupt stop. Yet with this stop came a new beginning. With little backtracking, I switched my specialty to Broadcasting and continued on with my degree with a new wave of enthusiasm. The change required I extend my time in school another year, but looking back, a year was a small payment for the degree of satisfaction I have had in my career. The broadcasting emphasis led to industrial television experience which led to training which led to my writing. Since the surgery, I have guided my life down a wonderful path that I might have missed if I hadn't looked.

Recently, a friend of mine made some major life shifts in his outlook, future planning, and use of spare time after a bout with hepatitis. Based on how stuck and angry he felt about his life prior to his illness, he told me he was lucky he hadn't had a heart attack.

I've heard similar stories about people making similar life shifts when recovering from cancer or major accidents. I've also heard stories of people who never recovered, dying young and unhappy. One woman told me her father had always wanted to be a jazz piano player. Yet in his family, all boys grew up to be lawyers. He died in his forties never realizing his dream.

Take the time to review your visions. Do you feel energized by the picture? Or do you have doubts and think you need to run it by a parent or spouse before you feel comfortable about your choices?

I worked with a woman for years who was stuck between her own desires, those of her husbands, and what she perceived to be valued by her peers. She worked for me part-time, from nine until three every day but Thursday. Mornings and afternoons she devoted to her children. Thursday she devoted to herself, spending time with her friends. Her income was adequate, her husband making enough money to support the family whether she worked or not. Yet, she took pride in her work and professional development. Her situation was perfect, she admitted to me many times.

Yet, when she wrote her vision, she drew a picture of herself in a full time position. I supported her vision, setting a date for her and I to covision her new position. The next day, she told me she wasn't comfortable with her vision. She read it to her husband. He verbalized his displeasure with her choices. He preferred she didn't work at all with two young children at home. But she knew I, as her boss and friend, would like her vision since I obviously valued a career and actively supported women in their achievements.

Was her vision of a full time position really hers? Or was it a rebellion against her husband's domination, or her need to be someone valued by society? When it came down to it, she was happy with her current status. I asked her to rewrite her vision leaving her hours as is, but expanding her responsibilities to instill challenge into her work. She came back with a vision that both inspired and satisfied her.

When working toward achieving your visions, set times to evaluate the path. At the end of the day, how do you feel? The following is a list of symptoms and indicators of when it's time to regroup and revision:

During your day, do you often feel:

Vengeful	Helpless	Overtired
Angry	Impatient	Disappointed
Jealous	Envious	Sad

Do you spend much of your time:

Judging Others	Pitying Yourself
Blaming Others	Giving Up

If the balance of your day is marked by these indicators, take a time out before your body does it for you. You can vision and create a new life even in the midst of despicable circumstances. The new life starts with your attitude, your state of mind, your choice of reactions and your spirit.

Once you build your vision, don't let anyone talk you out of it. Your vision belongs to you. It injects meaning and purpose into your life. Without a vision, it's difficult to move through the hours that flow into days that too soon become years.

Above all, don't let the enemy that lives in your head talk you out of your vision. Don't let the It-can-never-happen dragon stand in your way. If you have the power to take the first step, you have the power to make it happen.

Give yourself a chance. Set your goals. Plot your timelines. To borrow the words from the lottery promotion, "You can't win if you don't play."

CHAPTER 10

MINE, YOURS AND OURS

"I get by with a little help from my friends."

—John Lennon and Paul McCartney

DAN'S MISSION STATEMENT: To improve my health through diet and exercise; to relax more; to manage my time at work, balancing both managing responsibilities and personal contribution; to spend more time with my wife and children; to pursue personal projects I enjoy in my spare time.

Take another look at Dan's mission statement. Whose help will Dan need to accomplish his mission? To what extent does Dan need their participation?

If any part of your vision touches someone else, you must vision together. Whether the person is a full participant in your plan or you need the person to respect your space and privacy, agreeing to a common picture is vital to your success.

The chart on the following page is a tool to help you determine the level of support you need from your partners. For each segment of your mission, you need to:

1) List the people with whom you will need to share your vision. Include everyone with whom you need input, help or support. For any particular item, you may need to covision with different people. If the level of support differs with different people, list the names separately.

2) Check the level of support corresponding with the person's name. Ask yourself, "What do I need from this person to help me make my vision happen?" The definitions of your choices include:

Full participation: Without their assistance, you cannot reach your vision.

Partial participation: Without their cooperation, you cannot reach your vision.

Help: You could reach your vision without their assistance, but a helping hand would be nice.

Approval: Before you can proceed, their consent is needed.

Support: You need their emotional support in terms of being there to discuss

Respect: You need them to respect your space, allowing you time and distance to work on your goals.

Covisioning Opportunities

Mission Segment	Partner(s)	Full Participation	Partial Participation	Help	Approval	Support	Respect

You may find that some people overlap in the level of support categories. In addition to needing different people for different levels of support, you may need a person to support you differently at different times. Covision to the highest amount of participation you need from a person, asking for the various levels of support in the process. Regardless of the level, a certain amount of covisioning is necessary to clear the path for you to get what you want.

To demonstrate using the chart, look at the analysis of both Rose Marie's and Dan's visions on the following page. Rose Marie identified four items from her vision that have other people in the picture. First, she saw herself managing a project team at work. She identified her boss as the person she needs support from in order to make this happen. Looking at the chart, Rose Marie checked off both the Full Participation column and the Support column. In defining the project and selecting the team, she will need her boss's full participation. However, once her team starts meeting, she wants him to drop back to a supportive role, someone she can problem-solve with and ask for advice. Since Rose Marie initially needs his full participation, she will want to covision the activity with him. They both need to define how they see her successfully managing the team. Then they can compare pictures and negotiate plans.

Other covisioning opportunities for Rose Marie include: 1) having lunch with a friend—she needs to covision the situation with her friends to get their agreement. Also, she chose to share her vision with her boss to let him know her lunch times

Mission Segment	Partner(s)	Full Participation	Partial Participation	Help	Approval	Support	Respect
Rose Marie:							
Project Mgmt.	Boss	X				X	
Lunch with Friend	Friends	X					
	Boss						X
Career Planning	Boss		X		X	X	
Board Membership	Friends			X			
Dan:							
Meditate	Wife	X				X	
Exercise	Wife				X	X	
Breakfast	Wife, Kids	X					
Morning Prep	Team	X					X
Meetings	Team	X			X	X	X
Lunch at Home	Wife		X				
New Home	Wife, kids	X					
Evening activities	Wife, kids	X					
Sleeping More	Wife		X				

would not be available for work. 2) Career planning—Rose Marie wants to set her own goals but she needs her boss's approval and cooperation. She plans to meet with her boss to describe her goals and action plan. During the meeting, she will incorporate his ideas and advice. Once she drafts the final plan, she needs her boss's support in terms of his respect and pertinent suggestions to help her reach her goals. 3) Board membership—Rose Marie has a friend who can help her find a suitable board to sit on. She will want to create an activity-based vision to communicate her picture to her friend. Since she is pursuing an activity new to her experience, she may alter her vision using the knowledge and advice offered by her friend.

When reviewing Rose Marie's vision, it should be clear that the level of covisioning you will want to do directly correlate with the level of support you need. If you need someone's participation, full or partial, you will need to covision together. Beyond participation, you still need to share either your entire vision or the relevant portion with your partners, and then ask for their feedback and/or help. After completing the chart, use the following list as a guide for enlisting the cooperation you need:

Full participation:	Covision together.
Partial participation:	Covision together.
Help:	Share vision and ask for advice and help on the implementation.
Approval:	Share vision and ask for approval.
Support:	Share vision and ask for encouragement and the availability to listen.
Respect:	Share vision and ask to honor your need to work on your goals.

The difference in the amount of covisioning needed between Dan and Rose Marie's examples rests on the level of participation Dan needs from his wife and children. Due to her divorce and desire not to pursue a relationship, Rose Marie's vision remained a solo activity beyond work. The responsibility and freedom for realizing her vision rests on her shoulders. On the other hand, Dan's entire vision is a covisioning opportunity. Other than what he chooses to do with his quiet time—which he'll have to negotiate for when covisioning—and the time he goes to bed, everything he does must match someone else's picture.

However, before Dan approaches his wife, he may want to do a more in-depth activity-based vision on his perfect day with his family. A clear detailed picture will help his effort. Then, when he approaches his wife, he must determine whether he

wants to read his vision to her first or provide her with the opportunity to build their own vision without knowing what he wrote. Ideally, participants should write their own visions before hearing what their partners want so that there is no influence clouding the decisions. Everyone should have the chance to identify his or her own vision based on what he or she wants before covisioning.

Once the visions are written and read, the steps as outlined in the next two chapters are to explore and discuss the values that underlie the visions to ensure the final product is a picture everyone can live by. Then, it's time to covision.

When you approach your partners to ask them to covision with you, if their response is positive, you're home free. Or at least until you discover how different are your pictures. If their reaction is negative, you may need to set goals based on your vision alone. This alternative is not ideal. You may have to demonstrate the worth of the activity before you gain cooperation from your partners.

Asking for what you want can be a difficult experience. Yet you're better off asking up front than losing what you have worked hard for later on.

SHARED VALUES

"I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it."

—Harry Truman

CHAPTER 11

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

My ex-husband loved me. However, he didn't love my thirst for achievement at all costs, my bias for traveling alone and my need to spend regular quality time with my girlfriends. He didn't love these desires of mine, but he might have learned to live with them except for one detail—I couldn't have children. He knew this fact going into the marriage. However, to avoid being labeled insensitive, he chose to ignore the effect my condition had on his desire to be a father. No one could accuse him of holding his love of children higher than his love for me. Yet values have a funny way of arising and taking charge of our lives. It took him two years of denial before he admitted how much he wanted to be a father. Two more years passed before I accepted that I couldn't change his mind. After many arguments and tears, we went our separate ways. Today, my ex-husband is happily remarried and the father of four, one of which is his very own. God bless him.

Values are the standards you hold in your head against which you judge ideas, behavior and events. They dictate what you need to have and to be in order to feel fulfilled and happy. No matter how strongly your brain tells you to pursue a certain direction because it is the logical choice, the values you hold will dictate how much you

enjoy the ride. The same is true for illogical choices. Your values dictate the degree of happiness you feel about any decision whether you consciously admit to the value or not.

In addition to your happiness, values influence your ability to succeed. If your vision is not in alignment with your values, your picture is only an image of what you think you *should* be doing. Even if you start out enthusiastically, your vision will not motivate you over time. In fact, if you don't quit along the way, you may sabotage the effort through loss, illness or injury. Your mind will go to great lengths to escape a life, job or relationship that conflicts with what you value. This escape often manifests itself as an addiction. People often numb their minds when they have to endure situations that clash with what they believe is in their best interest.

Therefore, when covisioning, you need to understand and voice your personal values. At the same time, you need to honor the values of your partners. What may be a perfect package for you may be someone else's nightmare. This is true of every covisioned relationship or event including marriages and families, jobs and projects, going on vacations and buying houses.

In fact, a discussion of values can substitute for creating a personal vision when short on time or willingness. If you can't get your partners to draw you a personal vision of what they want, then ask them to tell you three things that are vital that they possess, they do, or they see themselves as being during the event or relationship. A statement of these desires form the essence of their vision. You cannot expect commitment from someone if the goal you are striving to achieve does not match their needs and beliefs.

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On the other hand, if the covision matches what the participants think is important, their dedication will provide the strength to overcome most difficulties.

When I first mention values to people, they often assume I'm speaking of obvious standards such as honesty, courage, service to others, hard work, faith and love. Yet, in terms of covisioning, a value is any condition that must exist for a person to feel good about what he or she is doing.

For example, if you are covisioning a vacation, your greatest value may be to have time to reflect on your life. No matter how much fun you're having with your friend on a ten-day spree around Europe, you may find yourself angry with her and feel out of control due to the lack of quiet time. If you carry this value with you to work, the more hectic your job, the greater you'll feel stressed and tense. Or, if you value social contact, a job in a secluded corner will bore and disappoint you. If you value autonomy, a nosy boss will drive you up the wall. At home, values of privacy may conflict with values of intimacy or a value of cleanliness may conflict with that of spontaneity. As has been found with gangs, the value of love or belonging can even drive a child to kill.

The root of the word value is valor, meaning to be strong. Values are the strongest motivators of your actions and emotions. You tend to act in alignment with your values or in reaction to having them blocked. Values guide your decisions from determining when to wake up in the morning to how you treat other people. Values influence perception and sway judgment. And values give meaning to reality, including your picture of yourself. If you studied people who have risen to the highest positions in life, you'll find their values are the spur of their inspiration.

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Yet the very strength that drives accomplishment also provokes resistance.

Values are the seeds of stubbornness. They are the source of most conflicts and a force in all failures. And like a weed, once a value takes root, it's practically impossible to kill.

One way of visualizing values is to imagine an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg, what is visible above water, is what you say and how you act. Yet below the water line is your set of values. You can't see your values, but they are the foundation of your thoughts, words and behavior.

The trick then is to discover your values, your "must haves," before you enter into a decision-making situation. If you're clear about your values, you will know if the decision is one you can commit to over time. If your values are vague, you might agree to act in a way that is in conflict with your core beliefs. If so, your values will eventually surface and either keep you from carrying out your promises or wreak havoc on your mental and physical well-being.

Values include *how* things get done as well as *what* is done. Figuring out *how* you and your partners will proceed together is just as important as deciding *what* you will achieve. In other words, you and I may agree on what we want as the outcome of a project. But if we don't agree on how we are going to accomplish the steps, the project will probably fail.

At the core of all frustrations and disappointment is an unrealized value. Something you felt was important failed to materialize. For instance, have you ever felt like those around you were working too slow, or that your partner was treating you like an imbecile or that your boss was withholding information from you? The shared goals

might have been the same, but the individual expectations of how to get there were different. If you asked, you might find that your “slow” colleague values accuracy over speed, your “demeaning” partner wants you to acknowledge his expertise and your “disrespectful” boss feels haste, not communication, is critical to the project at hand. When you judge others only against your values, you are not taking into account that they are operating under a different set of rules. Without discussing each other’s perspective, neither you nor your partners have the benefit of the opposing points of view. As a result, acting without this knowledge serves to weaken relationships and wear down motivation.

Therefore, whether covisioning a family vacation or a company culture, the next step in the covisioning process is to uncover and discuss values. When values are explored before the covision is created, commitments are more secure. And day-to-day, it’s easier to make choices and take actions that are right for everyone when the values are known. If you know I like quiet time in the evening after work, you won’t invite your brother and his family for dinner without calling me first. On the other hand, I know how much you like visiting with your nieces and nephews, so I suggest you first take your brother and his family for a ride to catch the sunset, giving me a chance to unwind before they arrive.

Be aware that a discussion of values may identify a core incompatibility. Some needs clash too much and can’t be reconciled. As you will see in the following exercise, prioritizing values so that you know what is indispensable and what you can live without will help when negotiating. Yet, when priorities conflict, goals may prove impossible to

reach. As painful as the decision may be, under these conditions, covisioning will be a waste of energy. Your values are too strong to allow you to commit to a contradictory plan. You may agree and step through the motions, but your heart will rebel and check out. Everyone gets hurt in the process. Exploring values honestly and without judgment before covisioning can save time, preserve egos and avoid heartache.

Yet calling it quits before any action is taken may be difficult. Ideally, instead of disbanding, you can negotiate and collaborate on alternative ways for your values to co-exist. In the next chapter, you'll learn how to create scenarios to test the tolerance levels of your values. Doing this activity with your partners may help you find ways of adapting without giving up what is important to you.

The problem with working with values is that they are hard to identify. Most of your values were coded into your brain long ago by your parents, communities, friends and teachers. Almost every action you make is guided by a value. Yet, you are rarely asked to take out and examine the reasons for your actions. Some may be easy to access, such as values of being open-minded, honest and thrifty. Others may be so buried under that they require years of self-exploration to exhume.

Cheryl, age 39, revealed to me that it took her three therapists and six years to discover how strongly she valued her freedom. For years, she made decisions based on her fears of being alone and on the expectations of others that she be married. She also had strong desires to raise a child and share her love. These needs crippled her ability to vision herself living happily outside of a family structure. Yet, her value of freedom was so strong, she killed two marriages by emotionally detaching within two years, then

physically pulling up stakes in four. After admitting to herself what was most important to her in life, she has found contentment living alone surrounded by her friends. She is active in the raising of her two nieces and is considering artificial insemination as an option for birthing a child. She told me that living true to her values has helped her to overcome her fears and enjoy living her life.

Yet, even if you understand your motivations, most people don't care to reveal the inner workings of their mind unless they feel utterly safe with whom they are speaking. If I fear that you will belittle what is important to me, I will never open up to you. My values are sacred. I must protect them. They form the base of my self-concept, the essence of who I am. When I reveal my values, I run the risk that you will label them wrong. When you discredit my values, I can't help but feel that you are ridiculing me. It's easier to keep on my armor.

Therefore, before ever starting a values discussion, I try to create a climate of safety by asking participants to agree to practice confidentiality and withhold judgments. Jennie, age 16, told me she had a friend who took the risk to tell her mother that she had sex with her boyfriend. The girl's mother screamed at her and called her names. "After something like that, no kid would want to tell her parent anything," Jennie said. If there is no sense of safety, there will be no communication.

Even if you are covisioning something you think is harmless such as your next vacation, you must promise confidentiality. You may not want your partner teasing you or telling strangers at parties that you refuse to visit countries where people eat snakes.

To set the right tone, everyone should state their intention to not repeat the statements made during the session to anyone else. Also, everyone needs give the following ground rules their best shot:

1. Suspend your judgment.
2. Listen and accept what you are told as the truth.
3. Exercise tolerance when you feel the urge to disagree.

These three rules are explained in more detail in the next chapter, including examples of how they can be applied and the consequences if they are ignored. Establishing a supportive environment for clarifying values and sorting priorities will help you create covisions that include what is important to everyone involved.

