

Finding Life Harmony

by Will Marré

Do your pursuits really align with what truly makes you happy?

Nearly 25,000 Americans of all ages and walks of life have completed my Dream Life Assessment over the past five years. My quest has been to discover and articulate what The American Dream actually means for the 21st century. What I've found is that most people's definition of the American Dream still hearkens back to our country's founding and that most inspiring of phrases: *Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

Life means personal security, good health and economic opportunity.

Liberty promises us that where we start in life does not determine where we finish.

Happiness is internal. The architects of the original American Dream never equated the pursuit of happiness with the pursuit of self-indulgence. It wasn't about accumulating stuff. It was about quality of life. And quality of life comes from living a life that matters most to you: your Dream Life.

Living your Dream Life boils down to this. We can't know our real dreams until we're clear about who we are. If we have questions about our own identity, pursuing a false dream can get us in all kinds of trouble. False dreams are hopes of relief from our current pain, or desperate desires to be rich, famous or powerful.

Real dreams are something different. Real dreams lead to genuine happiness and fulfillment.

Find your Dream Life

So how do we become happy and fulfilled? By identifying a dream that is authentically ours, and then pursuing it with passion.

How will we know we're on the right track? The first and surest sign is that contentment begins to appear in our lives. We suddenly find ourselves in harmony with the deeper rhythms of our soul. Anxiety starts slipping away. Life starts to work for us rather than vice versa, perhaps for the first time ever.

Like a piece of a giant, 3D jigsaw puzzle, we snap into place and say, "Ah...so this is what life is supposed to feel like."

Secondly, we know we found our Dream Life when our goals and desires for our relationships, careers and lifestyle fit together and mutually support one another. The structure of our outer life generates a rich inner life. It's called life integrity. A life we both value and enjoy.

Lifestyle. The healthiest lifestyles naturally produce positive emotions and a general sense of contentment. Long commutes and overstuffed schedules increase stress. Pursuing personal interests and connecting with friends and family do just the opposite. People who live at a human pace rather than a digital pace are invariably more content in the long run than those who choose an aggressive, goal-driven, exhausting lifestyle.

Play is also vital. A playful lifestyle includes spontaneity, creativity, stimulation and

recreation. Real play is joyful. Watching our children or friends perform. Volunteering. Redecorating. Enrolling in a class. Reading a good book. These are all acts of play. Adult play should be our way of life.

Career. Your career is about pursuing your dream. Anything less is a waste. We all want careers that genuinely interest us and are not just the means to pay the interest on our loans. An ideal job stimulates us and requires wisdom and mastery. It is fun and rewarding and provides variety and opportunity for growth. It fruitfully applies our traits and talents.

A healthy, sane career offers a reasonable payoff for the amount of effort we put in. It gives us a solid opportunity to use our gifts but also to have time leftover for life and love.

Relationships. Healthy relationships are more than convenient living arrangements, and they are not just for whatever time is left over. They are our greatest sources of trust, intimacy and validation.

They require time, attention and nurturing. Time to communicate, to touch, to engage, to enjoy meaningful conversation. To develop enough rapport whereby support and honesty flow freely, even when there is no time to talk.

When we make the choice to live our Dream Life now, we create new solutions to old problems. We stop wrestling life and start dancing with it.

You will see what you haven't seen — possibilities that were there all along, but you didn't notice them because you were so preoccupied with pursuing a life that you really don't desire.

The secret to reigniting the American Dream lies not in changing the world, but in changing our world. Changing ourselves. Learning to listen to our souls. Learning to stand for something. Learning to be authentic. That's all you and I can do. But it is a lot.

Change yourself, change the world. It is that simple.

Take the first step toward finding your Dream Life by taking the Dream Life Assessment today: AmericanDreamProject.org



Will Marré is an acclaimed speaker and co-founder and former president of the Covey Leadership Center, where he translated the concepts of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People into leadership courses taught to millions of executives worldwide. He is currently CEO of the ReaLeadership Alliance, which helps organizations identify, adopt and communicate socially strategic business models for optimizing differentiation and value.

Marré received an Emmy Award® for his writing of the documentary, Reclaiming Your American Dream, aired on public television stations across the country.

Will's new book, Save the World and Still Be Home for Dinner: How to Create a Future of Sustainable Abundance for All, was released in September 2009 by Capital Books.

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