

MASTER OF YOU

A Five-Point System to
Synchronize Your Body,
Your Home, and Your Time
with Your Ambition

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UNEARTH YOUR DEEPER DREAM TO AWAKEN YOUR AMBITION

Take a moment to complete this sentence: “I can’t wait until _____.”

You might first fill in the blank with your urgent wants and desires. Perhaps you can’t wait until a certain project is complete or your work week is done. Perhaps you dream of how your life might be when an event or a phase of your life is behind you. If you keep asking the question, you’ll uncover deeper dreams you might wish you had already escorted to fruition. Your deeper dreams are revealed through your big desires, and these indicate your true ambitions, which lead to your deeper purpose. Your deeper dreams might be buried, dormant, or at the top of your mind. Any way you slice it, you’re in the right place. Escorting your deeper dreams or next ambitions to the surface, to the front and center of your life, is the focus of this chapter.

Naming, acknowledging, and noting your wants and desires is a step toward action. Aligned action is what propels dreams into reality. Yet, often deeper dreams are submerged in layers of frustration, regret, fear, doubt, skepticism, or depression. As modern life gets busier, dreams get buried in the everyday whirlwind (see Figure 1.1). Days can get packed with activities that don’t line up with our desires or priorities. Global culture today is on this trajectory: fast paced; hyperstimulated; undernurtured; overfed; overwhelmed; and inundated with activities,

mental input, and physical stuff to process and organize. Our culture threatens our ability and sensibility to align our daily rhythms with our deeper dreams, ultimately preventing us from generating a healthier, more meaningful, thriving future.



Figure 1.1 Buried dream

When you track and strategize your desires, your deeper dreams emerge. If you don't, you sacrifice your ability to create the life you want next. Over time, if you surrender to the whirlwind, you lose your connection to a possible future, to an even better version of yourself. Slowly and eventually, you can lose your faith in yourself, hope in your dreams, and belief in your potential and purpose. Self-doubt takes over. Therefore, with your dreams, much is at stake.

Ask yourself without self-denigration: Have you sacrificed your dreams to the whirlwind? Have you sacrificed your potential to the demands of the moment? If so, you're not alone. And you're reading this book, which will help you cultivate your power to design the next chapters of your life by showing you how to align your actions with your deeper dreams. Authorizing yourself to be self-authoring—to have the life you uniquely want and become the person you want to become—is part of the process. Activating your dreams leads to the desire to do something great, to live a life of greater purpose and impact, or at least to do something better than you have already done.

This self-determining creative power is *shakti*, which in Sanskrit, the language of yoga, is often translated as energy, power, or force. As you likely already know, yoga is the path of transformation, a union between your *self* and your ultimate potential. You can activate your creative power and transform or evolve your self. When you awaken this power already within—your *shakti*—you incrementally expand your potential for the possible in your life. (Note: Throughout this book, I'll use the words *power* and *shakti* interchangeably. I'll also exclusively use Sanskrit for terms that impart meaning diluted during their translation to English. The Sanskrit terms are defined in the glossary at the back of this book.)

Yogis believe humans contain levels of potentiality of which we are not ordinarily aware, and through specific habits and practices, we can activate these just as yeast activates flour and water to make dough rise. Shakti is the yeast that sets these new levels of potentiality into motion, allowing us to become conscious of them. Through cultivating your body, heart, mind, and relationships, you cultivate your shakti. In the process, you evolve your consciousness.

Developmental psychologists have identified stages of human consciousness. Within these stages, the three features that develop are: (1) cognition (what one is aware of), (2) values (what one considers most important), and (3) self-identity (what one identifies with).¹ This means that as we develop our awareness, what we're aware of transforms, what we value transforms, and who we are transforms. As we develop these features and advance our consciousness—what I refer to as *personal evolution*, *becoming*, and *identity evolution*—even

greater desires, possibilities, and priorities emerge. Humans evolve from being self-serving to being community-serving and eventually to being life-serving. At higher levels of Buddhism and yoga, adepts vow to guide others into their spiritual potential and in the process are themselves transformed by serving.² Deeper levels of compassion and communication emerge on this universal trajectory of awakened, conscious, creative power—this is humanity’s collective potential. Of course, you might have come to *Master of You* wanting a better personal reality—more time on your hands, more inspired and aligned people in your life, and more money in the bank. And that is a fine place to begin. Inevitably in the process your creative power will be systematically unlocked, and that will eventually lead to deeper purposes that serve the collective potential, ultimately resulting in your personal evolution.

This deep purpose, to heed the call of duty to your own divine ambition, is what the yogis call *dharma*. Medieval translations of dharma—such as duty, law, and right action, which can be connected to relationship, caste, and vocation—arise from dharma’s ancient meaning in India. More ancient than that, the root of dharma is to uphold an obligation, or to support firmly. New-age words such as *soul purpose*, *life purpose*, and *raison d’être* describe the modern interpretation of dharma. Clearly, dharma has levels of meaning. American Trappist monk Thomas Merton succinctly wrote this about dharma: “Every man has a vocation to *be* someone: but he must understand clearly that in order to fulfill this vocation, he can only be one person: himself.”³ In *Master of You*, you’ll explore where heeding your call, your duty to participate fully in your life, is leading you next.

Dharma points you to a life only *you* can fulfill and uphold. With fewer cultural roles and rules than our ancestors had, our freedom to manifest our dharma is more accessible, unleashed, and tangible than ever. Dharma also points the way to your singular evolutionary impact as part of a living system, a larger cosmos. As Stephen Cope writes in *The Great Work of Your Life*, “Yogis believe that our greatest responsibility in life is to this inner possibility—this dharma—and they believe that every human being’s duty is to utterly, fully, and completely embody his own idiosyncratic dharma.”⁴ Your duty to uphold

your best potentiality, authentically and practically, while being part of transformational experiences that add connection and meaning to those whose lives you touch, is your dharma.

In my experience, your dharma, like a book, reveals itself in chapters, all of which stay true to your book's theme. If you've buried your desires and, with them, your powerful purpose, it's time to dig out that book, dust it off, and treat it like the exquisite jewel it is at the root of your being. You can learn how to listen to your dharma and to give it the gravitas it deserves in the conversation of what is next for you to become. In the process, you make the shift from feeling like life is on top of you to feeling that you are on top of life (see Figure 1.2).

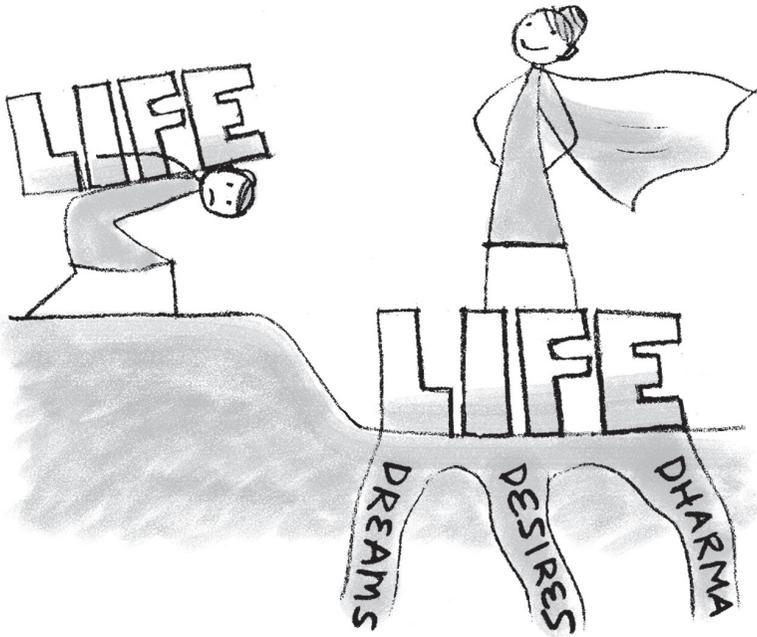


Figure 1.2 Are you on top of life?

Discover the Next Purpose Hidden in the Root of Your Self

Take a moment to pause. In your imagination, wipe the slate clean of today, tomorrow, and yesterday. It's blank and uncarved. To jump-start this conversation between you and your next purpose, set a timer for twenty minutes. Write or sketch in a journal using the sentence stems below. Trust your inner voice. Don't edit it.

1. "I can't wait until _____."
2. "Who I'd like to become next is _____."
3. "The next purpose hidden at the very root of my self might be _____."

Over the next week, read it in bed every night before you go to sleep, and then read it again every morning when you wake up. At these times of day *liminal thinking*—that is, thinking beyond your normal threshold or your patterned mind—is most active. As you read your words or look at your sketch, edit them to *true* your words like a bike mechanic trues the spokes of a wheel to remove the wobble, align the spokes, and optimize efficiency. You are awakening the creative agent in your life, an identity you'll develop through mastering yourself. In this self-mastery process, you will honor your root, reawakening desires to guide your future and to steer yourself on your path. ■

BIG PROBLEMS FOR THE HEART, THE MIND, AND THE BODY

Big problems arise when your daily life is off course. You might notice it in your gut or heart first. Then you'll notice it in your mind and then in the rest of your body. For example, you might not love the pace of your life. You sense your gut or heart sinking when you look

at your calendar and feel like you have to go through the motions. As you go through the motions, your mind checks out, looking for distractions—coffee, sugar, weed, wine, an extra serving, social media or other sticky apps, online or brick-and-mortar shopping—any of which increases your whirlwind. If this downward cycle of disconnection continues, eventually your immune integrity—the unified field of your heart, mind, and body—follows suit into dis-integration, and a diagnosable mental or physical disease develops.

When the rhythm of your life is no longer in tune with circadian rhythm, you have a problem. The circadian rhythm—the twenty-four-hour cycle of all living beings—connects healthy body rhythms to healthy mind rhythms to healthy heart rhythms (both physically and metaphysically). Unfortunately, our culture is on fast forward without pause, out of rhythm. Perhaps there was a turn in your heart's desires, and you kept going straight. You might have ignored the desire to shift—*upshift* or *downshift*. Current culture is weak on winding down, reflection, and closure. Without reflection or tuning in, you can't recognize when a shift, a purpose-deep realignment in your life, is needed. Reflection is the part of a cycle that naturally realigns your inner desire to your outer life—your space, your time, your activities—into an even brighter future. Reflection asks you to re-collect your yearnings, your regrets, and even your skepticism.

UPDATE YOUR RECORDS

Your yearning and regret not only unlock the contemplative joy that comes from deliberate reflection but can be mined to reveal your intrinsic, perhaps hidden, dharmic desires. Your history of regrets and yearnings has been recorded in your memory bank. We are born with the power of recall. In Ayurveda this power is named *tarpaka kapha*—the internal record keeper or memory retriever. When we process our emotions regularly through reflection, they are fuel that gets digested and burned into light, generating empowering memories. The light is insight for the vision of who you might become next. As you process your yearnings and regrets, you actually rewrite your memories, updating your records by creating new neural pathways.

When you don't process your emotions, especially difficult emotions such as regret and fear, the mental records become ruts that slow your evolution, reinforcing neural pathways that lead to who you've already been. Updated records hasten your progress and ease your path forward.

As a human being, you were born with the most sacred technology in the known universe: emotions. Your emotions are an essential part of your intelligence, and they overlay your yearnings and regrets, which can guide you to transform your current experiences into your next chapter. If you own your distant and immediate past, you become more integrated—and in that integrity, you are able to design an even brighter future.

Unearthing your dreams starts with articulating your yearnings. Yearning is the voice of your becoming, leading you to do the hard work. Although it might seem paradoxical, by examining your yearnings and regrets, you unlock access to your next level of conscious becoming.

Empower Your Yearning

Over the next week, keep a yearning journal. Even if you aren't a "journaler," commit to this practice. Set a timer—two minutes will get you started. (Also, use your notebook or notetaking app throughout your day to capture insights.)

Record your desires and longings. Note your irritations and your frustrations. As you write, allow your stream-of-consciousness thoughts to take over. Ramble. In the rambling, you are unraveling. The threads you unravel will knit themselves into insights, into a vision of the way forward.

In your unraveling, you are unearthing buried dreams. Your rational mind is of little use here. For most of us, our rational minds are overdeveloped and get in the way. Your mind might even drown out the voice of your heart or your body. Be curious. Dig deep. You are unleashing your dharma by excavating unattended desires.

Next, imagine tomorrow as an uncarved block. What would a terrific day feel like? What would happen? What wouldn't happen?

If you are disconnected from your desire, if years of suppression have left you numb, don't sweat it. You might have been trained to fear your desire. Fear causes constriction, which blocks flow. To transmute your fear into curiosity, start with the small stuff. What do you want to eat tomorrow? What clothes in your closet are your current favorites? What lit you up today? Who brightens your day? What do you want to experience tomorrow?

As you do this practice daily for the next few weeks or months, notice how small desires start to expose your bigger dharma. You can also use the questions at the end of this chapter to jump-start your yearning journal. ■

THE EVOLUTIONARY EFFICIENCY OF ALCHEMIZING REGRET

Have you ever met someone who says they have no regrets? Did you believe them? Does that perspective serve their evolution or encourage a level of complacency? I've found that when we deny or bury our regrets, we short-shrift digesting a regret into a lesson learned.

Your regrets hold wisdom. Befriend your regrets. When you mine your regrets, you refine ore into shiny gold insights that light your path. If you're blocked from your next purpose, your next identity evolution, you'll definitely want to mine your regrets.

You "digest" your regrets through reflection, which unearths the deep longing to fulfill your core needs of connection, intimacy, and personal evolution. This spurs self-compassion. When you mine your regrets, you can assimilate your prior ignorance in order to grow your wisdom. Digested regrets shine the light on smarter actions based on what you know now. By mining regrets, you get to see the common traps you might inadvertently, yet repetitively, set for yourself. You become less likely to regret the next chapter of your future as you hone your intuition, which might have sensed previous traps a mile away.

At the end of the day, after I turn out the light, I replay my day. As I'm celebrating the "good things" that happened, I also mine for regrets. When I replay a regret, even a small one, such as, "I wish I hadn't said that," I rewrite the memory with what would have been a better response, such as, "I could have said this." This small rewrite in my memory generates a better neural pathway that paves the way for a smarter future—a more integrated gut, mind, and heart. It dissolves regressed patterns such as emotional eating or drinking or smoking. This new pathway keeps me from dwelling on past regressions because I'm putting my hands on the steering wheel of tomorrow by digesting and learning from today. Taking a few moments at the end of the day to digest regret rewires the thinking patterns. For me, often the insights give way to actions I need to take the next day to live a more aligned life. Plus, the benefits of better neural pathways with this short end-of-day practice increase with time.

Neuroplasticity is the ability of your brain to change throughout your life. A *Psychology Today* article explains the connection between neuroplasticity and personal evolution: "It may be possible to carve out a fresh and unworn path for your thoughts to travel upon. One could speculate that this process opens up the possibility to reinvent yourself and move away from the status quo."⁵ It's possible to update your brain and nervous system to work smarter by being more informed about who you are becoming.

In the next exercise, you'll digest your past to generate power and direction for your future. The power comes from transforming regret into lessons learned. You'll write your yearning and regret history to discover your patterns and your common traps. Through assimilating yearnings and regrets, you'll uncover essential weaknesses you can transform by turning them into strengths. In the end, you'll have more insight into the direction you're heading. You will have alchemized your view of your past and rewired your memories so that your past becomes even more progressive and positive for your future. The point isn't to dwell on regret but rather to transform emotion-laden regrets into intelligent fuel for the fire of your growth. Marshall Goldsmith points out in his book *Triggers: Becoming the Person You Want to Be* that if we embrace regret, including the pain that comes with facing how

we've failed ourselves or hurt the people we love with our past choices, it becomes "one of the most powerful feelings guiding us to change." Goldsmith reminds us that no one is exempt from this humbling emotion.⁶ Within regret is a sacred opportunity to catalyze buried emotion into dynamic learning.

Digest Your Yearning and Regret History

Set your timer for thirty minutes. Sketch your history visually using stick figures, words, or icons. Start with your earliest childhood memories of regret. When did you first experience regret as a child or young adult? What choices led to this emotion? Assess what your circumstances were, and consider how you got there. Notice: Do you have compassion for yourself at that age? How does it feel to recognize, or re-cognize, your regret?

What were your deepest longings as a teenager? How did you fail yourself or someone else? What did you long for in relationships? What did you envision for your future? What was important to you that you didn't honor with your actions? Were there any buried treasures in there that later resurfaced? What regrets do you have from your teen years?

As you go through this exercise, you might feel your brain rewiring your history; you might notice an improved version or neural pathway of memory. Perhaps forgotten dreams are resurfacing. In reintegrating your history, you are becoming more whole, interconnected. You are maturing your cellular integrity and updating neural pathways, memory by memory, by processing your yearnings and regrets.

Keep going. What happened to you as a young adult? What were your great disappointments? Under disappointment, you can discover a gold mine of yearning. What did your family, friends, or coworkers not see in you? What did you hide? What do you regret about your own behaviors or decisions during that time?

Now, notice how owning your regret points the way to core personal lessons learned and triggers your desire to do better.