

# THE LIFE BLUEPRINT

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# Chapter 1: Foundations of Self-Discovery

## Introduction

I'm Marsha Norman and I enjoy seeing the positive impact my life coaching work has had on numerous individuals and entities. I have been a life coach for the past fifteen years. Much of my experience has been with young adults as I have provided guidance to enhance their personal and professional development through my Get on the Bike (GOTB) Programme. I have also worked with adults to address their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Between 2020 and 2021, I had weekly voluntary Zoom Sessions under the theme, *Reset, Relaunch, and Retool*, and dealt with issues such as Managing Stress, Achieving Your Goals, and Being a Successful Entrepreneur. I'm also an author, having published four books: *A Love Like This*, *Managing People*, *Get on the Bike*, and *The Journey Continues*. My formal training is in human resources, and I have a master's degree in human resource development. One of my most rewarding experiences was sharing in an inner-city community with some young adults on topics such as Goal Setting, Structuring your Curriculum Vitae, Interview Tips, and Developing a Personal Brand. These sessions were quite effective as some of the participants were employed by one of the top hotels in Kingston, Jamaica. I felt elated when the young adults came by my workplace and told me of their

progress. It was a joyful occasion for me and strengthened my resolve to assist individuals in their personal and professional development.

## Unearthing Your Core Values

When people hear the term *core values*, they think of well-established companies. I would like to emphasize, however, that we as individuals also have core values. We tend to call them *our principles*. If we don't spend sufficient time thinking or considering what our core values are, we may end up in a compromising position or being forced to act in a rushed manner.

There are specific steps that are helpful in unearthing our values. Let us ask ourselves first though, what are values? Our core values can be described as ideals that we have of ourselves. Core values can be seen as cherished personal beliefs that should guide our behaviour. Many times, our core values have been passed on through our families. I can still remember as a child my late mother saying, "manners carry through the world", this meant that I should be polite to everyone I encountered, and it could also open a pathway to success. Our core values should impact our goals and the strategies that we use to implement these goals. To bridge the gap between values and behavior we can look at the three Ds: Discovery, Documenting, and Doing.

I think that everyone has core values, but these can be hidden. In order for self-discovery of our core values, we need to ask ourselves probing questions:

- If I am certain that I would die in the next six months, what would I be doing now?
- If I am offered a billion dollars with “strings” attached, what would I do?
- Are there some things that I will just not do?
- How do I react when there is a conflict?
- Is my self-talk positive or negative?
- How do I bounce back after failure?
- How do I deal with success? It may seem silly but there are persons who do not handle success well. Instead of being happy with their progress, they become distressed at the new responsibilities.

These questions, amongst others, will help us to unearth our core values. This calls for a time of sober reflection. Do not be afraid of quiet time! Self-discovery is an exciting route that I would encourage everyone to go through as we tend to find out new things about ourselves.

After we have asked ourselves probing questions, then we should begin the process of documenting or writing down our core values. Just as when we go to business places and see the mission and vision statements and core values in a central area, we should write ours as well. When we take this step to write down our core values, they become more concretized. They become “more real” to us. The written word is a powerful tool! Writing down goals and core values is not a new concept, it’s a biblical one! God told a prophet to write the vision down. When values, visions, and missions are written down they become a source of inspiration to us. Writing down our goals is similar to drawing a line in the sand. It’s our declaration that “it will be done!” Writing down my goals has been a source of inspiration to me. I smile when I come across old prayer and goal-setting books as when I flip the pages, I see goals that have been accomplished. I usually tick and date the goals and dreams as they are realized. I have seen the immediate achievement of goals; however, some goals took months and years to be fully realized. Some goals have not come through yet, but I feel better to know that I dared to try! My late husband and I tried several small businesses. Some were more successful than others but we made a go of it. We decided to simply enjoy the journey!

We ought not to wait until we are in a tight or uncomfortable spot to begin to wonder what our value system is. To write down our core values, we should have experienced a self-discovery journey so that these values become a fiber of our being. The self-discovery journey may come as we go through a challenging time. I rediscovered my love for writing when I was without a formal job for about six months. It was a very challenging time for me financially, but looking back now, I had to be caring for both parents and I really needed a break from the formal world of work. I needed the time to carry them to their respective doctors. During the lull from my formal workplace, I got an opportunity to write a human resource handbook, *Managing People*. Life happens and sometimes we are uncertain why we are experiencing specific challenges, but if we have the right attitude, it becomes a life lesson.

To borrow a phrase from Nike, "Just do it!" We should be living our core values on a daily basis. Do we fold up and whine when we have a challenge? No, we fight the good fight of faith as one of our core values is, "keep calm and carry on." How do we react when others encourage us to tell lies? Another core value is, "I will not lie" so there is no mental conflict as to what we should do; we already know the answer. I may be getting ready to start a business and the doubters say, "Why are you going to do that? I don't think it will work!" What should I do, stop my plans? No way! One of my core values is, "With God, all things are possible." My core value of always pushing ahead determines my level of success. I believe that I'm unstoppable and that my goals will be achieved.

My dear friend and sister (not biological), Marie Demetrius Baker, was re-diagnosed with cancer in 2013 and with the encouragement of one of her sisters, she started to keep a journal. We kept the faith, and, in our conversations, I promised Marie that I would turn her journal into a book and possibly a movie. She wanted others to know that in the midst of trouble and tears, we should still press on. She passed on her journals to me with the full expectation that I would honor the promise to get her story out. I remember visiting her one day (by this time she was confined to bed), and when I asked her what I should name her book, she smiled brightly and said, “The Journey Continues.” Marie passed in March of 2018. I made several attempts to get the book out, but I faced lots of challenges and felt low on energy. One day I heard very clearly in my spirit, “Just do it!” If we believe that we are called to do something, we should press ahead and get it done. The excuses may be legitimate, but we still need to get to the “doing” stage. After two years of delay, I was able to get Marie’s book, *The Journey Continues*, published. I felt so relieved! It was published in 2020, Marie would have been fifty that year. This fact made me smile as when we were teenagers we had great plans for our fiftieth birthday celebrations. Our current plans and seeds may take a lifetime, but we have an obligation to ourselves and the generation to come to excel in our current situation.

## **Crafting Your Personal Statement**

Do you have a mission statement? Perhaps it's best to start with a few definitions. We know that companies have vision and mission statements, but individuals can also have them. A vision statement can be described as our overall plan, while the mission statement is the vehicle that we use to achieve that plan or goal.

Let me use myself as an example. My vision statement is "to be a best-selling author and movie producer." I will need to construct a mission statement from my vision.

Let's use a personal acronym, DO IT, to formalize the mission statement.

- **D:** Distractions - Avoid distractions
- **O:** Opportunities - Make use of every opportunity
- **I:** Integrity - I'm an honest person
- **T:** Timelines - Implement timelines



My mission statement: “By 2027 I will produce five bestselling books on topics such motivational techniques, conflict resolution and dreaming big. I will also have three blockbuster movies.”

In terms of distractions, they can be fatal, in that, they have killed many personal dreams. The distraction may not be a bad thing but if used unwisely may have unintended consequences. Watching the news or keeping up with global events is not a negative thing, however, if half of the day is spent doing this, then it becomes very problematic as it can rob us of valuable time and limit our impact. To deal with distractions, it's best to identify them and then come up with a plan to eliminate their significance. Some persons can get rid of their distractions in a “cold turkey” manner, meaning, immediately stopping an activity. Others must diligently put a plan in place to address their distractions or addictions. If, for example, I currently spend five hours each day on social media or news reports, I can gradually reduce this and replace it with something more wholesome. If we are studying, we can study in blocks and give ourselves “mini” breaks when we can peek at social media. It's important that as we put aside distractions, we pick up new activities as replacements for these distractions. If we don't, then we would have a stronger possibility of regression into old habits.

At times we ask for opportunities to fulfill our vision but when those opportunities come, we are unprepared. It seems strange, but many of us are more prepared for failure than

we are for success. We have great goals, but instead of working purposely towards them, we start to doubt our abilities. Doubt and fear can make us miss an opportunity. If we are hoping for a promotion, then we should be prepared by possibly doing supervisory management and public speaking training courses. Young adults who are desirous of getting scholarships should ensure that in addition to their schoolwork, they are engaging in extracurricular activities. These activities not only ensure a fuller development of the student but also make the scholarship application process more fruitful.

Integrity is often described as “what we do when we think no one is watching.” When we write down our vision and then our mission statements, we ought to decide immediately that we will not be doing anything illegal or immoral to achieve our goal. Integrity is wider than legalities and moralities, it involves us being honest with ourselves. You can ask yourself, am I being the best version of myself right now? In what areas of my life can I do better? This step may involve us creating a checklist or a self-audit. We can use the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis to assess ourselves. We can list our strengths and weaknesses with the objective of enhancing our strengths and reducing our weaknesses. Here is a word of caution as some areas of weakness may not be worth eliminating in terms of time and cost. I may be about to start my own business but may also lack the proper accounting and mathematic skills. It would not make good business sense to suddenly enroll in accounting classes! It may

be better to hire a consultant to take care of my accounting needs while I concentrate on my strengths, such as team building and customer service.

Timelines are very important. In my example of producing books and movies, I placed a 2027 deadline. When we develop our vision and mission statements, it's crucial that they move out of the realm of wishful thinking and into realistic goals. One of the things that helps to transition from wishes to goals is timeline setting. When we set a timeline for our mission, it becomes a very powerful motivational tool. When I meet or exceed a timeline that I have put in place, it encourages me to keep moving.

## **The Power of Mind Mapping - Visualizing Your Goals**

God shared a very powerful statement with Abraham. He told him, "As far as you can see I will give it to you." If we can visualize our goals, we stand a greater chance of achieving them. When we "see" our goals it creates a sense of excitement and provides fuel for the fire. If you desire a house, then cultivate an atmosphere of home ownership. At times, I would buy glossy magazines and show my late husband, Christopher, and say, "This is how I want my kitchen to look." We can feed our mission, by looking at proto-types. During our house hunting season, we drove through areas with lovely houses and our girls would excitedly say, "We want a house like that!" When we can visualize our goals, we walk faster towards them. Sometimes when we visualize our goals it's as if we are actually tasting them, our brain is that powerful!

Mental mapping starts with a goal or an idea. Having a goal or idea is not enough, it must be fed. In addition to having a goal, mind mapping also involves developing strategies to achieve them. In terms of acquiring a home, I would have to think about which area I want the house to be in, the money I currently have, and if I qualify for a mortgage. The strategies would involve listing the lending agencies that I would want to borrow from. I would have to take the next step of identifying the house or land that I want to purchase. This may seem like a simple suggestion, but many people don't physically identify what they want. They simply go around saying, "I want a house." This at times is said for over twenty years and nothing happens. Creating a starting point is crucial. Some go around declaring positive statements, but that isn't good enough. Our speech must be backed by action. If I want to be a writer, then perhaps I can read articles that will help me sharpen my writing skills. Perhaps I'm interested in becoming a motivational speaker, then I can seek to listen to other motivational speakers whom I admire. I should be saying, "One of these days I will be giving speeches to a similar audience."

Mind Mapping involves preparation or practice. We see this very clearly in the sports arena. Jamaican superstar, Usain Bolt once said that he had "practiced for years to run under 10 seconds." The onlookers may see the end result, but they do not realize that

our achievements come with a dedicated mental and physical focus. If we believe in our goals, then we are going to move purposely toward it. Purpose drives passion.

We are encouraged to think about what we want to achieve, but we ought not to overthink it. Yes, we ought to strategize our goals and document how we want to pursue them, but there comes a time when action is required. It's not a large group of people who can move from the conceptual stage to that of implementation. If we get repeatedly stuck in the conceptual stage, then we become susceptible to discouragement and depression. What is the use of planning and engaging in mental mapping if we refuse to get up and go? If the enemy can't destroy you, he will seek to delay and distract you. Fight this feeling of forever planning and mapping without doing. It's said that cemeteries are the richest places on the earth. Why is this being said? It's because many people go to the grave with their goals and dreams within them.

## **Conclusion**

Remember that we can have multiple missions throughout our lifetime. My mission statements have changed; goal setting is not static. During my early twenties, my mission was to get married, raise well-adjusted children, get a car, and acquire a house. Now as I approach fifty, my mission statement is totally different. I aim to send both my

girls through university to complete their first degree by 2028. My mission also encompasses showcasing the artwork of my late husband, culminating in a book and a documentary or movie on his life by 2026. It's not strange that our mission statements change over the trajectory of our lives.

We should aim to enjoy the journey as we seek to fulfill our mission. Life is relatively short, we should enjoy our brief stay on this side.

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