



Getting Clear: Starting with the End in Mind

We must look at our life without sentimentality, exaggeration or idealism. Does what we are choosing reflect what we most deeply value?
- Jack Kornfield

We live in an action-oriented culture surrounded by messages to “just do it”. But as the caterpillar famously told Alice, “if you don’t know where you’re going, any way will do.”

Consciously or unconsciously, we are always creating our future. Our attention is constantly filtered through our intention. Getting clear about what is most important is a powerful strategy for creating the future and the results you want.

This tool can bring discipline to the process of getting clear. Before you take action on an important task – big or small, set aside time to ask yourself the questions below.

WHEN IS IT IMPORTANT TO GET CLEAR?

1. when you need to make a significant decision
2. before negotiating with another person to clarify your expectations
3. at the start of a new project to define what success looks like
4. at a life transition time when trying to articulate what’s important
5. setting limits for your children when you have to know your bottom line

Three Steps for Getting Clear: *Simple but not Easy*

1) Clarify your intention and your desired outcomes:

- What do you want? *Describe what you want as opposed to what you don’t want.*
- How is that different from what you have now? *Compare what you want in the future to what currently exists in the present. This can generate useful tension.*
- When you get what you want, what will having that do for you? *Ask this question several times to get at the core of what’s really important.*
- How will you know when you have it? *What is your evidence of success? Imagine yourself having achieved what you really want: What does it look like, sound like, feel like?*
- WHAT STOPS YOU from having what you want? *What blocks you? Are these real blocks, perceived blocks, or limiting beliefs?*

2) Check to see if what you want is realistic and practical:

- Is your outcome possible?
- Is it stated in the positive vs. what you don't want?
- Is getting what you want in your control? Can it be initiated and sustained by you or does it require another person's commitment, participation, or action?
- Is it specific...what will you see/hear/feel when you achieve it?
- Imagine having what you want. How will this affect the other people and areas of your life? *Are there downsides? What would be lost or gained? Are there any violations or conflicts with your values? By saying "yes" to what you want, what else are you saying "yes" to? What might you be saying "no" to?*
- Given what it will take to get what you want...is it worth doing? *A last (gut) check for commitment. All choices have consequences. Are you up for the work?*

3) Define next steps and take action:

- What resources do you already have that will help you get what you want?
- What additional resources do you need in order to get your outcome? *(Resources may include advice, expertise, information, emotional support, money, space, time, etc.)*
- What are your first steps to help you get what you want? *What can you do right away? What will you stop doing?*

HARD WON WISDOM – WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

- The questions we use matter: notice that the questions above focus on the future and on what we want to create, not on what is broken and needs fixing.
- To increase the chance of getting what you want, write it down and verbalize it to others.
- If you find that you have decided *not* to move forward with a plan of action because you got clear that it failed the "congruence" test, congratulations—you are staying in integrity, saving yourself time and minimizing frustration and disappointment.
- Practice, practice, practice. At first, it may seem tedious but with practice, these questions can accelerate your ability to get what you most desire, make better decisions, and negotiate for what matters.