

3 Mighty Steps to Living Your Dream Life

Even With Chronic Illness

3 Mighty Steps to Living a Successful Life



I have struggled with a grocery list of illnesses for 4 decades.

I experimented with different types of doctors.

I experimented with food and diet.

I threw lots of spaghetti before it all came together. And it came from a most unexpected direction.

In 2017, dysfunctional relationships with family came to a head and I noticed interesting responses from my body. When I practiced self-compassion, I felt less fatigue and less brain fog. When I avoided my emotions by bingeing on food or TV, my pain levels intensified. Hmm...

I now started a new kind of experiment that led me to the intersection of my lifelong illnesses and a lifetime of toxic stress.

Now, jump ahead...

I've come a very long way in a relatively short time considering how many years I threw spaghetti.

My hopes and dreams have never been small. I never longed for simply a life of less pain and less fatigue. That is just the starting point. I have always dreamed big and my goal was to live big!

I have taken my lifetime of struggles and learnings and created a roadmap that will help you learn to dream big so that you can live big – even with chronic illness. Before you can do that, you have to get to the starting line.

Right now, you're feeling like your symptoms are out of control, unpredictable. Maybe you're feeling like your body is a prison. So, how can you live big when you never know when your symptoms are going to shut you down?

The following three steps are your first to gaining some agency so you may start to fully live your life.

Amy

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Step 1 - Get Your Mindset Straight

I once watched a paraplegic walk across a stage.

She was living proof that if you can dream it, you can live it.

The ability to dream starts with your mindset. And a good dose of curiosity. And a dollop of rebelliousness.

Have you ever driven through the mountains? My husband calls it 3-D driving. With hills and blind curves, there's a good bit of faith that the road will magically appear when you need it to. I've noticed that when I'm feeling more tense or anxious, I tend to focus on those hills and blind curves, which increases my nervousness, which makes me creep like a tourist.

However, when I'm in a better place in my head, I notice the vistas and sheer beauty while trucking along at full speed. That's the power of shifting perspective.

Mindset Muscles to Exercise

1. **Faith.** In God. In yourself. When you're sure of nothing else, be sure of this.
2. **Choice.** You may not be able to choose every circumstance, but you can always choose your reactions and behaviors.
3. **Envision.** See the reality you want to create, no matter how far fetched it may seem. Only when you know where you're going can you figure out how to get there.
4. **Focus.** Choose to give attention to the things that move you towards your goals.
5. **Gratitude.** Maintaining a grateful attitude is one of the highest markers for overcoming the seemingly impossible.

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Step 2 - Define Your Values

Now you know the mindset pieces to exercise daily. To help you put those budding muscles to action in an intentional way, we're going to develop your awareness of your values.

Think of your values as your personal compass. Once you get clear on what they are, it's easy to make decisions based on whether they take you closer to or further away from your values, a.k.a. the things that are most important to you. In the moment, you may really want that chocolate cake but if living a healthy lifestyle is a strong value, the decision becomes much clearer.

Actionable Values

1. Identify your top 5 values. Don't overthink it; choose first 5 that come to mind. (Ex. Creative)
2. Translate into Actionable Values by turning those nouns into verbs. Write an action statement for how you can live each actionable value. (Ex. Creativity. I choose to not let difficulty and obstacles shut me down by approaching each creatively.)
3. How does each actionable value intersect with your chronic illness? (Ex. I creatively research and experiment with methods to help support my mind and body in the healing process.)
4. What lifestyle changes can you make to better support each actionable value? (Ex. As I'm able, transform my home and office into a space that inspires creativity.)
5. How can you use each actionable value to inform decisions in the future? (Ex. I commit to only making decisions that infuse me with energy, making me feel more alive and creative, even when it's a more difficult solution.)

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Step 3 - Self-Compassion: Become Your Greatest Caregiver

We're going to dig into self-compassion a bit because this is where most people get the most stuck. I know I did!

Mini-Me

The easiest way to gain clarity around your level of self-compassion is to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Think of a young child struggling with whatever you're struggling with. What would you say to that child? Say that to yourself.

It's important to use a young child because that is exactly who you are talking to! You see, as we go through life, parts of us get stuck at different places, even as the rest of us matures and moves on. How many times have you berated yourself, saying, "I don't know why I can't just get over _____!" A part of you got tripped up somehow at the time of that incident and is still there. In order to 'get over it', you have to go back to that time and figure out what you needed to hear or learn in order to move through it.

Patient Me

Notice the two definitions of patient. 1. able to accept or tolerate delays, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious. 2. a person receiving medical treatment. You are your own patient (receiving treatment) and you need to be met with patience.

Likely you've been met with a lack of patience from those who can't understand your experience. Perhaps you've been told it's in your head or accused of exaggerating for attention. You know how humiliating and belittling and incensing that feels. Don't do that to yourself!

Imagine instead a caregiver that gets you, tells you it's not your fault (because it's not, you know) and assures you that you're not alone. Be that to yourself!

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Obstacles and Options

This is tough work. Right now, you may see all the reasons you can't do this and little of the possibilities. Let's unpack some of that.

"I am too sick to do this work."

I know it feels that way. Let me be clear- this will be the hardest thing you ever do! AND you can do it. The trick is to start where you are. Let me give you an example.

A few months ago, I decided I'm going to lose weight and get in shape. I started at a pace that felt easy, setting myself up for success. Even then, I ended up with a bout of extreme fatigue that lasted 3 days. Fully expecting that, I allowed myself to enjoy the break, tapping into my patience and telling my little self that I had worked hard and now was time to take it easy. When I felt a little better, I went back to an even gentler pace. When it felt good, I bumped back up slightly.

Don't get sucked into the here and now hamster wheel. While I'm a huge proponent of mindfulness, right now you're going to focus on the long game. Imagine where you can be in one year if you do this work now!

"My symptoms and flare-ups are too unpredictable."

I get it! Mine are too! Consider your mini-me. Different parts of you are stuck in different ages, facing different struggles. Think of a flare-up as your little one having a tempter tantrum. Imagine you're babysitting and the kid has a meltdown. You recognize they are tired or hungry or disappointed and they don't have the tools to effectively express themselves or work through the overwhelming emotions welling up. You help them through that by meeting them where they are.

When you experience a flare-up, your body is saying, "No! I don't wanna." Exercise your self-compassion by recognizing that maybe you need extra rest or cleaner food or some extra support. Allow yourself to enjoy these nourishments, knowing they are what your body needs to heal and grow strong.

"I can't plan around my uncontrollable symptoms."

That is true only to a point. As you commit to this work, you'll start noticing triggers and patterns. Likely you're already aware of some. That is powerful knowledge that helps you plan by avoiding and mitigating known triggers.

No matter what challenge you are currently facing, always go back to your top values. They are your compass and will teach you how to grow into your big dreams so you can live your big life.

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Now What?

The above are the exact steps I started with. I did it on my own, but I feel no one should ever have to do that. Like working through a maze, there were lots of dead ends and frustration.

If you're ready to start living your Big Life, I have created a playbook just for you. The beauty of the above steps is that it's completely customized to each individual. That also means that you aren't always sure what the best way for you is.

In ***Living Big Playbook - Learn To Use Chronic Illness As Your Guide To Living Your Dream Life***, you will be guided through and beyond the above steps to learn:

How to make decisions that actually work for YOU

How to understand what your symptoms are telling you

How to achieve the goals you set for yourself

How to Dream Big so you can start Living Big

All in a way that supports your chronic illness and healing

This is also a resource you can return to again and again, taking your healing and growth deeper each time.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more and to purchase your copy.

Take the first big step into your Big Life.

Living Big Playbook - Learn To Use Chronic Illness As Your Guide To Living Your Dream Life