



A Guide to Restoring a Dream You Abandoned and Making It Work

Did you have a dream you always wanted to pursue, but never did because life got in the way? Was it going to graduate school? Was it traveling the world? Was it learning to fly a plane? Whatever it was, you can still attempt it. It is never too late.

My dream was to write my novel *Enchanted Silence*. I had always known since childhood, I wanted to do something creative with my life and couldn't bear doing an office job. How did I get focused on my dream? Read on and I hope these steps can help you attempt your dream once again.

- ❖ **Think About What Stopped You and Why You Want to Do It.** Why did you let go of your dream? Was it personal, family, or financial reasons? Was it fear? Think about the reasons why you let it go. And then think about your dream. What was it? What did you want to do? How does it make you feel at this very moment?

If you have a mirror in front of you, then observe your reactions. How does your body react? Chances are you will feel alive and feel this rush of energy swirl inside of you. A smile may be adorning your lips.

Beware that after the honey moon stage, fear and reasoning usually take over. *It's too late. It's not practical. How will I pay my bills? It doesn't make sense. Who does this anymore?* After these thoughts rush into your head like an avalanche, I want you to relax your body and take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and be still.

Still your mind and allow yourself to feel that magical energy you felt earlier. This leads me to the next step.

- ❖ **Do research and read books or check out websites that relate to your dream.** Maybe you do this the same day or wait a few days, but give yourself and your dream a chance. Tell yourself you just want to dip your foot into the water and do some research.

When I decided I did not want to do an office job and I wanted to write, the first thing I did was get on the Internet. I read dozens of interviews and articles on writers. I joined websites and online communities to surround myself with like-minded individuals.

Though I was a silent spectator where I read others comments and was too shy to participate, I developed some confidence and trust in myself. If the Internet is not your cup of tea, then buying books is another useful tool. I bought a book called *Writing Fiction for Dummies*.

I had no English degree and didn't even know if I could do this, but decided I could not lose anything if I gained knowledge in writing. After all, no one was holding a gun to my head. I felt safe and realized I could stop anytime I wanted.

- ❖ **Take baby steps.** Start small. Take tiny steps.

Don't think too far into the future, otherwise you will paralyze your growth by over thinking and overanalyzing. Have you ever hiked a mountain? If you kept thinking of how far the top was, would you make it to the top? You may instead freeze with fear and nervousness and may not complete the climb or be focused on all the effort instead of enjoying the hike.

But if you just keep focusing on taking one step at a time, you'll be more likely to complete your journey while enjoying it more! One of the first steps I took to write *Enchanted Silence* was to make a brief outline of the story. Sure, the story changed a lot over time, but each step led to the next step and soon enough, I had the final draft of my novel in my hands.

Sometimes, I go back and read the earlier outlines and I feel this pride and nostalgia at looking at what I created. Because pursuing a dream is much more than just reaching the destination, sometimes the more fulfilling aspect is living the journey.

- ❖ **Establish a solid support system, even if it means seeking support by writing in your diary.** In a world where we are constantly surrounded by negativity and anxiety, it's easy to get taken in by the tides. Like the ocean's waves that can overwhelm you, it is easy to get swayed into what other people say.

I would suggest being private and perhaps not telling anyone in the beginning. Sometimes, even if your family has your best interests at heart, they may not be supportive of your endeavor. In that situation, it is best to keep your dream to yourself.

But what if you are exploding and feel you have to confide to someone, so what do you do then? Tell a friend or someone you trust who you know is not judgmental and will support you. I confided in my best friend whose ambition was to become a doctor. Her passion fueled mine and vice-versa. We both cheered each other on and it was like she was my personal cheerleader/therapist all rolled into one!

What if you don't have a friend or someone you feel ready to trust or you're too shy to confide? Then, join an online community as I mentioned earlier. You can even be a silent spectator and watch from the sidelines, all the while still finding support.

Or my personal favorite and something that I still do, get a journal out and express yourself and capture your days and moments.

- ❖ **Set a schedule, but be flexible.** After doing the steps I mentioned earlier, I had by then developed a rhythm. I knew how and when I could complete *Enchanted Silence* if I allocated a reasonable amount of time to it on a daily basis.

Even with a full-time job, socializing, dating, and family commitments, I knew if I took out thirty minutes to one hour about five times a week, I could complete the rough draft in four months. I set my schedule to complete scenes or chapters by certain time frames. I had Excel spreadsheets tracking my progress.

While it is extremely crucial to be well organized and possess a long-term vision, it is just as important to remain flexible. Sometimes, you may not be in the mood. Maybe you're down with a cold. Or you just need a break.

Whatever it is, be flexible and learn to listen to your needs. If it takes extra time, it is perfectly okay. You are human and sometimes life happens.

The point of having a schedule is to be accountable to yourself, track your progress, and ultimately reach your goals.

- ❖ **Be gentle and kind to yourself.** I cannot stress this enough. As I mentioned earlier, sometimes life happens. Maybe you had a fight with your boyfriend. Or you're working long hours at your job and need a break and want to just kick your legs up on the coffee table and watch an episode of *How I Met Your Mother*. Well then, do just that! Don't knock yourself down.

Sometimes, taking a break will rejuvenate you and provide a fresh perspective to restoring your dream. Remember, this is supposed to be a satisfying, exciting, and most of all, joyous journey.

And if things are not turning out the way you want, be kind to yourself. You're doing your best, so nurture yourself and take the time to tell yourself that you are proud of yourself for pursuing your dream.

- ❖ **Evaluate your progress and feelings and celebrate milestones, however small.** This is one of the most essential steps. Track your progress and see exactly where you are in achieving your dream.

What other things do you need to do? Should you turn to someone for valuable advice and resources? Should you enroll in a course to learn about something that would help you in pursuing your dream?

When I found myself struggling to finish my first draft, I enrolled in an online writing course so I could surround myself with other writers so we could provide feedback on one another's writing while also driving me to finish my first draft. It was one of the best experiences of my life and I developed a wonderful, lasting relationship with the instructor with whom I still seek valuable input.

And most importantly, it's easy to get carried over and forget how you are feeling because you are too busy putting in the work. How do you feel now? Are you enjoying the journey? Do you feel excited? Every time, I completed a draft or a specific chapter for *Enchanted Silence*, I would find myself filling with this gigantic balloon of radiant energy.

It made me feel alive and even though I didn't know where exactly I was going, I felt fulfilled. And then I would go out and celebrate my milestones. When I completed my first draft, I confided in my close friend and we went out for dinner to celebrate.

So what if the novel wasn't fully complete at the time? And then when I finished the final draft, you bet I celebrated big!

As Shivani says to herself in *Enchanted Silence*: "Silly girl, this is what happiness is. Being happy means creating as many moments as possible where you feel wholly alive."

- ❖ **Repeat.** Keep repeating all of the above steps. How was the perfect iPhone created? How did Bill Gates form Microsoft Corporation? How was *The Help* written by Kathryn Stockett? Because they kept working towards their dream, honing their craft, and being disciplined.

The journey won't be perfect and sometimes there will be exasperating moments where you will want to pull your hair out and wonder why you are restoring your dream in the first place, but then that is exactly why the moments you feel alive will feel even more enchanting and rewarding.

After being equipped with this knowledge, go out there and restore a dream you had abandoned! Life may have gotten in the way earlier, but this time, you won't let it. This time, you won't even let YOU get in the way.

And please do tell me all about it! I would love to hear about your experiences. Happy Restoring Your Dream!

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