

## Introduction

*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”*

Mark Twain

Did you daydream as a child? Do you remember the magic of imagining you could fly like an eagle, or discover new lands like Christopher Columbus, or find a cure for cancer? Perhaps you pictured yourself standing on stage accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, hearing the thunder of applause or savoring the majestic silence from the peak of Mount Everest.

If you stop for a moment and remember what that felt like, chances are you’d describe a sensation of freedom, joy, and ease as well as a strong sense of accomplishment and a deep connection to who you truly are.

This is what it feels like to live our dreams. And, yes, we can experience that today, even if we’re all “grown up.” That’s what this book is all about—learning how to rekindle the magic of dreaming, creating a road map for the journey and moving past the obstacles along the way.

Eight years ago, my dream was to go to Costa Rica. For two years, I’d been setting aside ten percent from every cheque I received for work and putting it into my “dream account” at the bank. That money, saved a few dollars at a time, was enough to cover my flight and accommodation costs for two weeks.

By the end of November that year, I was ready to leave behind the wintry wind and snow-covered ground in Canada to get a new perspective on my life. I was between jobs, involved in a relationship that didn’t seem to be going anywhere and had no idea of what to do with my life. A friend invited me to visit her in a small Costa Rican village and, although I didn’t know her very well, I decided to take the plunge.

I booked a room at a little hotel on the beach near where my friend lived. Every morning I arose before the sun and took long walks, picking up shells, watching tiny crabs scurry and hide in the sand and enjoying the swooping flight of pelicans over the ocean.

One morning, it was particularly hot, and I really wanted to go swimming. I’d been walking along the edge of the water, feeling the strong pull of the ocean as it ebbed and flowed around my ankles. The water was warm and inviting, but I noticed there was one big wave that I’d need to get past if I wanted to reach the calm water farther out.

I studied the wave from every angle. About ten feet from shore, the seemingly flat water began to rise, gathering momentum and height until it peaked, hovered, and then came crashing down in a single, thunderous, frothing wave, racing toward shore. I watched how other swimmers approached the challenge. Some dove straight into it, emerging with arms

flailing in the calmer water on the other side. Others stayed closer to shore, content to paddle in the shallows. Still others tried to go with the flow—waiting for the right timing, jumping up with the wave, and propelling themselves forward with their legs madly kicking as the wave sped past them. However, there were also those who didn't quite make it and tumbled back into shore, only to be marooned on the beach as the water retreated.

As I ventured into the ocean, I was surprised by its powerful tug on my legs, pulling me back toward the shore, and then pushing me deeper out. I had little control over my balance. The water began to lift me off my feet and carry me back and forth. It was a bit scary, so I turned and headed back to the beach.

I didn't see the wave mounting behind me until just before it descended. Instinctively, I stretched out my arms in front of me, tucked my head in between them, and bodysurfed to shore. I flew like a bullet, landing on the beach with such force that my bathing suit was nearly ripped off my body. Lying face down on the sand, with the water rushing over my head, I struggled to get up on my knees and elbows and turn my face upward so I could breathe. The water pummeled me from behind and streamed over me as it ebbed, dragging me back into the ocean. Eyes covered in sand, I clawed my way farther up onto the beach and then rolled onto my back, gasping for air.

I lay there for a few moments wondering what to do. I felt battered and bruised. I wanted to give up, but I also wanted to go swimming. I wasn't going to let a mere wave defeat me. I needed a strategy.

Readjusting my swimsuit, I stood up and strode out into the water. I kept my eyes focused on the wave, allowed my body to float with the ebb and flow of the water, and used my hands to keep myself upright. After watching the wave for a moment, I decided to try and synchronize my movements with the water. As the wave began to build, I leaped forward and began to swim. The water descended, briefly engulfed my head, and then released me like a cork popping off a champagne bottle. I was floating in the stillness behind the wave. Delighted with my boldness, I played there for a while, drifting in the gentle motion of the salty water.

I often think back to that experience when life pulls my feet out from underneath me and brings me to my knees. Events like losing a job, unexpected expenses, health problems, divorce, or the death of a loved one wear us down like a series of tidal waves until we no longer have the strength to stand. It's tempting at that point to give up and let the water gradually bury us in sand so we don't have to face the pressures or stresses anymore. We become shell people—looking the same on the outside, but inside there's emptiness because we've simply disappeared.

Sometimes we find the strength to pull ourselves back up on our knees again, but no farther. Watching from the shore, we resign ourselves to living a half-life. We settle for less because we don't have the energy to try again. We convince ourselves that everything's okay. However, on the

inside there is a growing sense of dissatisfaction that never really goes away.

What if there was another way? Instead of giving up on our dreams, or settling for less, what if we stood up, brushed ourselves off, and dreamed bigger? What could happen then?

This book is the result of me dreaming bigger. It is my hope that you will find, within these pages, inspiration, motivation, and practical strategies for reclaiming the life of joy and ease that is your birthright.