

SET 100 LIFE GOALS

In 1973 I sat in an organizational behavior class taught by Professor Steven R. Covey. It was years before the world would come to know him through his best-selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. He was a compelling teacher who made a major impact on my life. I admired him in many ways. He grew up in a home where education was stressed. He had an MBA from Harvard and was teaching university students from across the nation and having a tremendous influence in their lives. He owned his own company and was a successful and respected business consultant. It was clear to me that Professor Covey had figured out what his mission in life was.

My father was raised in a logging camp on the Texas-Louisiana border. His father was an alcoholic. My father was number eight of eleven children. Although he had only a sixth-grade education, he was very bright. My mother grew up in rural Alabama, the oldest of four living children. When she was a 13-year-old eighth grader, her mother left for the hospital to give birth to another child. My grandmother had lost four children in childbirth previously and, as fate would have it, she lost her fifth baby that day. This time it was different, however, because she died also — mother and child lost in one awful day. The family grieved and my mother was forced to drop out of school to care for her three younger siblings. Although my parents were wonderful examples, their existence was stripped down to its basics; we did not grow up talking about Plato or Shakespeare around the dinner table.

As I sat in Professor Covey's class, listening to him share insights into motivational techniques, I dreamed of what I might become, in spite of my humble beginnings. He encouraged the class members to be self disciplined, because we needed to win private victories before we could win public victories. He asked us to consider what we would be doing in 10 years. Other than the usual aspirations boys have to play in the NFL or the NBA, I had never seriously considered what my long range future would be.

That semester, for the first time in my life, I began to earnestly plan. On a 5 x 7 index card I wrote what I hoped I would be doing in 1983, exactly 10 years later. At the time, my dream was to teach college, just like Stephen Covey, but I believed that was only a pipe dream, like playing in the NBA. I wasn't even sure I would be able to get my bachelor's degree, much less the

graduate degrees required to teach at the college level. So, trying to be more realistic, I jotted down that in 10 years I would be living back in Texas, and I would own my own business. I added a few other modest goals, and then put the card in a file with my class notes. I promptly forgot about them, or so I thought.

In 1975 I graduated from college and moved home to Texas. The next eight years passed quickly. My wife and I added more children to our family and I started a business in the area where I grew up. One day in 1983, my mother showed me a 5 x 7 card she found in a box in one of her closets. It was the very card on which I had penciled my goals. I was stunned to read that I had fulfilled every goal that I had written down. And yet I didn't even remember writing some of them. I gained a new appreciation for the old saying that: "A goal not written is merely a wish."

For weeks I was on a high with the realization that I had accomplished everything I had set out to do. Over time, however, a new feeling set in. Yes, it was exciting that I had accomplished the things on my 10-year list. But what was next? I was still young and had no idea what I was supposed to do with the rest of my life.

During this time of turmoil, I read a newspaper article about a man named John Goddard. As a 15-year old boy he sat at his kitchen table and wrote at the top of a yellow pad, "My Life List." He then wrote 127 things he wanted to accomplish before he died. The list included:

- *Explore Rivers:* Nile, Amazon, Congo, Colorado, Yangtze, Niger, Orinoco, Rio Coco
- *Study Primitive Cultures:* The Congo, New Guinea, Brazil, Borneo, Sudan, Kenya
- *Climb Mountains:* Everest, McKinley, Kilimanjaro, Ararat, Cook, Matterhorn, Rainier, Fuji
- *Photograph:* Victoria Falls, Sutherland Falls, Yosemite Falls, Niagara Falls
- *Explore:* Coral Reefs of Florida, Great Barrier Reef, Red Sea, Fiji Islands, Bahamas
- *Visit:* North/South Pole, Great Wall of China, Panama - Suez Canals, Easter Island, Vatican
- *Swim in Lake:* Victoria, Superior, Tanganyika, Titicaca, Nicaragua

- *Other:* Visit every country; Eagle Scout; Play flute and violin; mission; write a book

The last time I checked, Goddard had accomplished 109 of his life goals, visiting 120 countries, climbing 12 of the world's tallest mountains, studying 260 primitive tribes, and traveling more than a million miles. He was the first person to ever explore the entire length of the Nile River, the world's longest at 4,160 miles. The *Los Angeles Times* called it "the most amazing adventure of this generation." He followed that by being the first person to explore the entire length of the Congo River.

Scanning his goals, I noted that there was not one thing on his list of 127 that I desired to accomplish. So, what *did* I want to do now that I had accomplished the things I set out to do 10 years earlier? As I read about John Goddard and his goals, a light went off in my head. I realized for the first time that I could actually dream big and set goals that seemed impossible to reach. I figured that even if I didn't reach them, it was better than having no goals at all. Goddard helped me realize that I was dissatisfied with where I was in life and where I was headed. I felt like I wasn't doing all I was meant to do, but I didn't know what that was.

For weeks I pondered what I was going to do with the rest of my life. Was there such a thing as a life mission and if so, did I have one? Finally I decided to write down some new goals. This time I would not just write a 10-year plan but a plan for the rest of my life. I thought if Goddard came up with 127 life goals, surely I could come up with several things I needed and wanted to do.

I began writing, and soon I had compiled 100 life goals. Many seemed nearly impossible, but I wrote them down anyway. Below are 12 of the 100 things I recorded:

Publish in national magazine	Teach at college level
Become expert in media effects	Write 10 books
Obtain masters degree	Go snow skiing
Obtain Ph.D. degree	Visit the Middle East
Teach family seminars	Go to all 50 states
Travel to Hawaii w/wife	Buy a 1970 Olds 442

It has been many years since I wrote down those 100 life goals. Looking back, I am amazed at the opportunities that have come to me and continue to come to me as I check off each completed goal.

You have strengths, talents and inborn desires that are different from any other person on earth. This makes you uniquely qualified for a specific life mission. One way to discover that mission is to put your goals on paper. Your list will be very different from John Goddard's or mine, because we are all unique. While teaching at a university (one of my goals), I gave students an assignment to write their own 100 life goals. There is nothing magical about the number. Having students assigned such a high number forced them to think more deeply. Out of the hundreds of students who completed the assignment, almost none shared the same goals. Thousands of different goals were mentioned by the combined classes.

Eighteenth-Century clergyman Joel Hawes said, "Aim at the sun, and you may not reach it; but your arrow will fly far higher than if aimed at an object on a level with yourself." (*The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, 1969, 26, J.G. Ferguson Publishing Co. Chicago)

I challenge you to begin today to write your 100 life goals. That number should keep you busy. Included on the following pages are a worksheet for your goals and a sample page from the 100 life goals of a single male college student.

Don't worry about how long it takes you to get 100. There is no rush. Spend some time in quiet meditation. Dig deep into your soul while asking what you are supposed to do with your life. Write down the thoughts that come, even the ones that you are not likely to accomplish. Dramatically, your life will steer toward those goals, and opportunities will present themselves to help you accomplish what you have written down.



Sample 100 Life Goals

Single Male College Student

01. Road Tour All 50 States	26. Coach a Soccer Team
02. Give Money to Charity Monthly	27. Learn Russian
03. Grow a Garden	28. Write a Children's Story
04. Learn to Scuba Dive	29. Acquire a New Hobby or Skill Yearly
05. At Christmas Secretly Help Someone	30. Volunteer at a Homeless Shelter
06. Start a Successful Business	31. Go to an Opera
07. Land An Airplane	32. Learn to Make Bread
08. Go River Rafting	33. Go to all the National Parks
09. Pray Daily	34. Memorize 25 Poems
10. Go on a 50 Mile Hike	35. Be in a Bowling League
11. Tell Family I Love Them Daily	36. Play in a Golf Tournament
12. Take My Wife on a Weekly Date	37. Publish My Journal For Posterity
13. Teach Children to Read	38. Build a Green House
14. Run a Marathon	39. Become Black Belt in Karate
15. Take Vocal Lessons	40. Recognize 20 Artist and Their Works
16. Have Book Published	41. Have Collection of Best Movies Ever
17. Write in a Journal Every Day	42. Have Collection of Best Books Ever
18. Run for Public Office	43. Have Collection of Best Music Ever
19. Build a Cabin	44. Send My Parents On Paid Vacation
20. Stay Under 190 Pounds	45. See a Theater Production on Broadway
21. Exercise 5 Times a Week	46. Keep Scrapbook Journal of My Travels
22. Invent Something	47. Be in a Singing Group
23. Bicycle Down The Pacific Coast	48. Publish an Article in a Magazine
24. Read a Good Book Monthly	49. Go to Top of the Eiffel Tower
25. Visit Rome, Italy	50. Learn a New Word Every Day

Sample 100 Life Goals

Single Male College Student

51. Take Gourmet Cooking Lessons	76. Eliminate A Bad Habit Every 6 Months
52. Go to One Winter Olympics	77. Host a Foreign Exchange Student
53. Have a Family Dog	78. Learn to Do My Own Taxes
54. Be My Own Boss	79. Learn to Type 60 Words a Minute
55. Write a Song and Perform It	80. Go On One Family Camp Out Yearly
56. Cliff Dive in Acapulco	81. Landscape My Home
57. Take a Photography Class	82. Never Raise Voice In Anger To Family
58. Remodel a Home	83. Own a Complete Set of Tools
59. Make Christmas Presents One Year	84. Learn to Do Electrical Wiring
60. Meet Someone New Every Day	85. Build a Tree House
61. Go Deep Sea Fishing	86. Fish For Alaskan Salmon
62. Make My Bed Every Morning	87. Obtain Ph.D. From Top 20 Program
63. Learn Sign Language	88. Draw a Portrait of My Wife
64. Spend 1st Anniversary in Hawaii	89. Save 10% of Each Paycheck
65. Make a File of Best Jokes I've Heard	90. Learn to Play the Guitar
66. Read Biographies of all U.S. Presidents	91. Have a Budget and Stick To It
67. Own a Horse	92. See the Statue of David in Rome
68. Learn to Latin Dance	93. Build a Nice Piece of Furniture
69. Express My Views to Political Leaders	94. Ride a Donkey Down Grand Canyon
70. Visit the Smithsonian Museums	95. Adopt a Child
71. Attend Church Weekly	96. Have a House on the Lake
72. Buy and Restore Classic Car	97. Go to Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island
73. Take Family On Big Trip Yearly	98. Discover What My Purpose in Life Is
74. Write a Movie Script	99. Give 10% of Income to Charity
75. Learn How to Paint With Oils	100. Live Every Day as if Last

My 100 Life Goals

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