

The Map to Buried Treasure

Everyone dreams. The one thing that all in our mosaic culture have in common is this elusive pursuit of Neverland, the place where we dream all things in our life are possible. Sadly this magic place, erodes too quickly, and with it goes dreaming and belief in these dreams. As children, we dream of success as we make plans to be a rock star, travel the world, marry the prince or princess, or walk on the moon. As we sail through our life, somewhere we fumble the dream or merely settle into the known--what we call "real life" happens. Despite the awareness and the busyness of life, we never give up on the idea of success. It's like the treasure that sits heavy at the bottom of very deep and dark water. This is when we adopt some model of success that we see around us, and we pursue that--a high-paying job, a beautifully-decorated home, friends and family who care about us, a romantic marriage, maybe even kids. We consider having influence in our community, leaving a legacy to our children, or myriad other pursuits. Then, if by some miraculous aligning of the cosmos, we by chance finally get what we sought and yet, we identify with the timeless lyric of Bono, "Yes, I'm still running' . . . 'cause I still haven't found what I'm looking for." The Question of Success: Maybe I chose the wrong model of success? Should I choose another one? Questions like these are ubiquitous. According to more than 40 Gallup studies, about 75% of us feel disengaged from our jobs and according to the New American Dream Survey, about 83% of us wish we had more of what really matters in life. It seems apparent that a substantial majority of us are experiencing a disconnect between what we do from day to day and the true success that our hearts long for. Why is success so elusive? Why is accomplishment by itself not enough? And for that matter--what is success, anyway? There are many sources that tell us to follow their program and you will find success. What they often mean, and usually say, is that you will make millions of dollars and experience financial freedom. Too often we equate success with making money. How sad it is, then, when we observe individuals who have been "successful," meaning that they have made the money and received the accolades, and still have no personal fulfillment. Something still nags at their hearts. The truth still remains that everyone wants real success but very few find it. There are two reasons for this. First, we believe the lie that real success is a fairy tale or only for the exceptional. I believe that is a big fat lie. Everyone comes into existence with a specific design knitted into the very fabric of their strengths and passions. This design is as specific as every other wild and wooly creature in our world. It is only when we live according to that design that we know the map to our real success; but we can know it! Secondly, we get caught in the cycle of going after other people's models of success. Once we settle, we still can't shake this innate desire for success. Therefore, we spend our lives trying to adopt these other models of success. Then, when we achieve them we still feel unsuccessful. The answer does not lie in pursuing a model of success that either belongs to somebody else or in just going with the crowd as we follow some generic model of success. What if true success was unique to you and your design and had little to do with what others may impose on you? The truth is you will never be successful until you are living the unique design with which you were born. We may not be born with instructions, but we do have a direction written on our hearts. It is that direction, fueled by the natural strengths of our design, which takes us to true success. The Answer to Success: So ask yourself, do you have the eyes to see your success? Are your ears attuned to the rhythm of your unique design? Chances are your honest answer is no. We stop listening to our heart once we come face to face with what I call the reality principle. The reality principle comes into play when the pirate DOUBT comes to haunt us. He has a variety of messages that he tells us. He tells some of us that we are not worth real success. He tells others that the risk is too great to listen to their heart and so they should find the sure thing instead. He leads us all to settle for what seems secure and safe, and he plants doubt in us by telling us horror stories of the REAL world. Doubt becomes the enemy of your success. You must learn to trust your design. Faith is the opposite of doubt. This is stepping out into the fear and even riding the fear as you journey to your true success. It has often been said that, to find new lands you have to leave the shore. Soren Kiekegaard said, "To dare is to lose one's footing momentarily. Not to dare is to lose oneself." How many of us have lost ourselves long ago? We sell out way too quickly. We have settled for good and lost belief that there will ever be anything great. Fear takes our wrists and guides us more than we want. So how do you start this journey of following your true design? To start with, you have to come to grips with the truth that in today's culture we are conditioned for peak experiences. We want to jump straight from sitting on the ground to soaring in the air, enjoying the view. Our lives are filled with gadgets and programs that have sped up our lives and provided what seems to be an easy way to enjoy the view without the work of the journey. However following your true design is an adventure and adventures are always filled with struggle and sweat and time. We have spoiled ourselves to the point that we are often conditioned to give up way too quickly. But real success doesn't come that way. We must prepare for the realities of adventure. And if you have ever been on a real adventure you know that the pain and sweat don't compare to the sweet exhilaration of the journey. The truth is, we must be willing to let go of our securities. The drive to find true success must be greater than the drive to be comfortable. I talk to people all the time who are bored with merely existing and think that they are ready to find fulfillment, but they still have too much stock in the securities that they have built into their lives to protect themselves from insecurity. Once our motivation for adventure surpasses our desire for comfort, we are ready to begin the journey. What follows is a brief outline of key stages in the journey that I use in my personal coaching and in my workshops to help people find their true success. I model it after a treasure hunt where you are looking for the underwater treasure that is your true success. Stage one: Getting Wet! This is where you begin to acclimate yourself to the process of hearing your heart. This includes reframing how you see things like work, career, goals, and a job. It is re-learning to connect with your dreams and confronting the abstractions that take over your life. Finally, it includes beginning to generate ideas for what your true success looks like. This is a fun time of essentially getting used to the water and the idea of an adventure. Stage two: Exploration. Once you are acclimated, it is time to get down to work and start searching for where your treasure might be and what it might look like. This is basically exploring all around your life to find clues to what your treasure looks like and where it might be. Once you find it, you are ready to see what is inside. Stage three: Designing the right key. Only one key will fit your treasure chest, and only you can design it. During this stage of the journey, you narrow the focus of your life to your true success and the strengths with which you

were designed. Then you create goals to achieve your design and a map to guide you once you start living it. This is an important stage because, without it, you will eventually get lost or give up. Stage four: Turning the lock. This is where you create the supports necessary to live your design and start following the map you designed. After this, you are in the middle of the journey, and, as Dory said in the movie, Finding Nemo, "you just keep swimming". We are all born with Neverland in our hearts. It is the rhythm that we were designed to dance to. The pirates of our lives work diligently to capture our hearts. When we lose our hearts we lose Neverland. We settle for an okay life, believing honestly that this is as good as it gets and that Neverland is just a dream for children. We must believe that it isn't a fairytale. Time is chasing after all of us, don't wait for Neverland to find you. It won't happen.

About the Author

Craig Miller is a life designer, nationally known speaker, and experience creator. He has helped thousands learn to dream again, get unstuck, and successfully make the leap to the next level of abundant living. Read more of Craig's work at <http://www.neverlandlifedesign.com>.

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