

CHAPTER 9

LIVING LIFE BY DESIGN NOT DEFAULT

I successfully ticked my box of being married by the time I was thirty. We were settled at Rosegarth Cottage, a stunning two-up, two-down property dating back to the 1800s with a postcard presence, delightful garden and pebbled pathway. We had great friends and thoroughly enjoyed the work we were doing. We really were living our best lives. Our beautiful rural home was set in a stunning village called North Dalton in the heart of Yorkshire, with a pub, pond, church, cricket grounds and stunning farmland within walking distance of our home.

It wasn't long before we decided to have children. We were extremely blessed to have conceived our first child straight away. Arthur was born in August 2002. He was such a delight and did exactly what the books say. He slept six hours at six weeks, eight hours at eight weeks and twelve hours at twelve weeks. He developed and grew in line with all the charts and recommendations too.

My life up until this point had all been about me. I had always been a dreamer and a planner, creating the life I wanted. I had a great life with all I wanted and more. Before I went on maternity leave, I had done my due diligence and found this gorgeous daycare that Arthur could go to after my year's maternity leave. With us both working full-time,

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we would then be able to buy a bigger house, travel back to NZ to visit family and do more with our children. Except after having this beautiful baby boy, I couldn't find peace in my heart to go back to work and pay someone else almost all my wages to bring him up. It seemed crazy to me. My husband was outstanding and said, "Don't go back to work; I have got this," and he had.

Between us, we made it work. I had been building my savings pot while I was at work, so this helped bridge the gap. We decided to sell Rosegarth and buy a bigger home. I sold my flat in Bedford, and this paid for most of our renovations, which included a gutting and full replacement of all the wiring, fixtures and fittings. As the property was not livable during this time we rented another one around the corner. Alexander used to take Arthur for a walk through the village most days to see the progress and project manage the work.

We decided to try again when Arthur was about twelve months, as we thought a two to two and a half year gap would be ideal. Once again, conception was immediate, and Martha was born in April 2004. She had her own charts and plans, not sleeping through at fifteen months. Her big blue eyes and cheeky smile had me wrapped around her little finger from day one. I had been blessed with two gorgeous children by the time I was thirty five, and to this day I would do anything for them.

There were half a dozen mums in the village, all with babies and toddlers around the same age. We started a mums and tots group, a music group, fundraised and built a children's playground for the village. This was such a blessed and beautiful time. Alexander enjoyed his cricket and all was well.

This was one of my richest times in life. I was literally living my dream. I honestly believed life couldn't get better. For the first time in my life, I fit together with the people around me. We had a common purpose. I believe we wanted the best for our marriages, our children and to make our homes real homes.

This season was all about playing to our strengths, valuing our differences and the part each one of us played to the whole. One of the

mums in the Village, Amy, had the most incredible gift of hospitality. She made chutneys, jams and fabulous food, bringing people together. She was also a key part in the development of the playground. Another one, Heather, made the best cakes ever. She was a true farmer's wife and looked after all those in her care. Lynne and Kim were both super creative. I was always in awe of their creations and homes. They also hosted the best parties for adults and kids. I was an organiser, bringing people together and encouraging connection. It was such a joy to catch up every week in each other's homes, to share, to be present, to live, laugh and love together.

I had fallen in love with NZ when we had visited. My plan was to have our children in the UK, where I would have the support of my family, and then emigrate before they started school. I foolishly thought this would be a time of connection with Mum. That she would want to be involved with her grandchildren.

We discussed the logistics of living in NZ, and despite my family's flaws, I knew the clincher for me would be whether I could do Christmas away from my family. Funny as every Christmas was a mission. There was always tension and usually a difference of opinion, yet it was the one time I got to be with those closest to my heart, those that really mattered in my life.

We booked the tickets to do Christmas with Alexander's family. Arthur was sixteen months, and I was five months pregnant with Martha. I distinctly recall having to crawl behind a row of seats on the plane to get to Arthur, who had walked through to the other aisle. He thought it was hilarious. Christmas in the summer was gold. Everyone brought a plate. The family all chipped in. People ate when they were ready and everyone got on. I was in! I remember having a few tears when I spoke to my dad that day, however this was the way to celebrate Christmas.

We flew back to the UK. We left Auckland Airport at twenty-six degrees and arrived back at Leeds/Bradford airport at two degrees. The snow was turning to grey/black sludge. Dad picked us up from the airport and dropped us home. We had left the oil heating running

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while we were away so the builder could boil a kettle on the Aga and stay warm. The oil tank ran out three days before our return home, so the house was freezing and we had no way of heating it or boiling a kettle. We both looked at each other and asked, "What are we doing here?"

Reflect and Reframe

I have always been a woman on a mission. And to be fair, one driven by my heart and connection. I love to live life by design. I was driven by my love: love for my children, love for my home, love for the people around me. However, the old "not good enough" and performance culture were still hanging around in the background, driving me to compare and compete. While I was working in my gifting and was extremely happy with the life I had, there was still an emptiness.

I lived my life to the full. I didn't end up going back to the team of beautiful people I loved at Racing Green, I did put family first, which was exactly the right order. I was at peace with making that decision, and that is one of the keys to happiness, to make decisions from a place of rest (not in the heat of the moment or when under pressure). It is so important to think things through.

So many people let life happen to them. Because of the vision I have and the future I create, I am a big believer in life happening for and because of me (not to me). I live every day, future-present, which is how I believe the most successful people live. I believe ninety percent of the population lives past-present. So if you want to live life by design and be in the top ten percent of the population, come and join us on the journey of discovery and adventure we call L.I.F.E.

Dear Reader

Back in Chapter Three, we looked at "dreaming BIG." It's now time to dig deep and really consider what life would look like, feel like and be

like if you were there right now. This is part of a process I coach, just as we have done here, we have cleared most of the lies, or limiting beliefs, using some of the tools and systems to enable “The Great Exchange.” Now it is time to start to look ahead and live a future-present life, full of all the goodness, love, joy and peace that is ours, if we choose it.

I’d love you to go deeper with your “dreaming BIG”, so you can make it a reality. Here are my five habits to help make that dream become a reality:

Fast Five Tips

1. Add inspiration to your bullet points. To be inspired is to be living your dreams, to be aligned with your own inner values and loves—living ‘true to your heart’. Think about that intrinsic motivation. What is it that really fires you up from the inside? What do you get heated about?
2. Add good, uplifting emotions to your bullet points. Emotions are energy for motion, as your life will tell you. Good emotions lift you up and move you forward while bad emotions take you down and make you withdraw. So add in those real firestarter emotions.
3. Write your vision as if you have already achieved it. Write it as if you are looking back, celebrating it, as if it had been done. For example: “Wow, what an amazing year I have had. My book was published, and I have sold more copies than I thought possible. Believers have loved it and have passed it onto their friends. It has been a real joy to get so many messages around how the chapters spoke into people’s lives and have brought healing.”
4. Put a date on it by when you think you are going to achieve it.
5. Just do it.

Have fun with this process. It will probably be one of the most challenging things you will do and one of the most rewarding. It’s time

for you to really start to believe in your brilliance, and your place in this world.

Call to Adventure: My Vision. Hope and a Future

This inner game work will manifest until you be-do-have all that you have written. In the words of Tony Robbins, "It's what you practice in private that you will be rewarded for in public."

Lynette Breen, Life Coach, introduced me to the acronym S.M.E.R.T.I.E. (Specific. Measurable. Evidence. Responsible. Timeline. Inspiring. Emotions), which is the best structure I have seen to help make your dreams become a reality. It is a more structured approach to my fast five, listed above. It has massively upgraded the traditional S.M.A.R.T. goal system and is now commonly used.

The first three of the seven parts are inextricably linked:.

Specific has to be an event or a number, something tangible. So many people live in fear of this, as they are afraid of failing to achieve it, and their past experience will often show them that. However, we are not interested in the past, we are writing your future and if we aim for the moon, we will often reach the stars.

Measurable are the steps we take towards the specific number or event. I often find the more we can chunk these steps down into smaller pieces, the more confidence we gain along the way.

Evidence is the tracking and ticking off of each step along the way, showing us we are making progress.

Now the fun starts:

Responsibility is all about leaving the keys to happiness in your hands. While most of our lives are lived in conjunction with others, this is about taking ownership for your part and stewarding it well.

Timeline is always powerful. It tells your subconscious you are serious about making it happen and is a powerful driving force, especially as you get nearer to the line.

Inspiring is the gold for me. It's what fires up from the inside, out into the world. It's your driving force, your true why, your intrinsic motivation. It will keep you being persistent, insistent and consistent throughout.

Emotions drive real motion. Adding those positive, uplifting emotions give your vision a double-portion of motivation, focus and drive.

Note: When putting your future into writing, you look ahead to what you would love to happen, and write it down as if it has actually happened. When I coach people in this space, the timeline is often a year from now. And I love how most people achieve it sooner or achieve more than they set out to do, even though this was already way out of what they thought was possible. This is so much fun and really helps grow the "all things are possible" muscle.

I encourage you to record it and listen to it every day for the next sixty three days and guess what? You'll be there before you know it

Many of my clients love creating visual images of this too, so feel free to create a vision board or collage to represent all these wonderful things you are going to do and achieve in this coming season. Enjoy.

"When there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but the one who keeps the law, blessed is he!" (Proverbs 29:18, NIV)