

CHAPTER 3

LOST AND FOUND

My years in high school were lonely and empty. While I had good friends, got on with what needed to be done, excelled with my singing and had the highest conversion rate when showing prospective parents and students around the school, I felt deeply lost. I really didn't fit the mould. I had no idea what life was going to look like after school or how I was going to navigate it as my parents and teachers weren't there to help. I was out on my own.

I applied to do further education because that was the expected next step. I chose psychology at a university closer to home. I distinctly remember wishing there was someone who could help me make a sound decision on what would be best for me and help me see what the possibilities might be post studies.

I remember filling out a questionnaire to show me my skills, talents, qualities and characteristics which aligned with my heart and my chosen degree. What it didn't take into account was my poor subject choices and my struggle with one of them. I remember asking the teacher in the early days to explain things I didn't immediately grasp. She just said the same words, only louder, which did not enhance my learning or understanding. I had asked to go into another maths class

and change subjects, sadly this was not an option. I was banking on doing well in my other subjects to make it. I then spent the rest of the year writing letters to my best friend at Marlborough College in my maths classes.

Unsurprisingly, when my results came through for my final exams, I had failed that subject, so university was not going to be an option. I wasn't sure where to go from there. I knew I needed money and some skills, I now felt I was in a complete state of the unknown. I grasped at straws and enrolled in a secretarial course. I met a great friend there, and we went to work part-time in the local supermarket. We had a blast; although our typing and shorthand weren't that great and possibly not our calling, we did become the fastest and most efficient cashiers in the supermarket.

Once I graduated from secretarial college with a certificate in shorthand and typing, I went to work full-time at the supermarket and watched the managers. I decided to apply for the trainee management programme as I felt I could actually be quite good at managing people and getting stuff done. It was during this time I met my first boyfriend. He was such a cute young man who worked in the produce section. He spent a lot of his free time in the party scene. This was my introduction to that world. I learnt to roll joints and was often the sober driver for the all-nighters held in big warehouses, where drugs and loud music pumped.

It is so interesting looking back. There was no instruction manual, no parental support, no guidelines on how to navigate L.I.F.E. I just had to work it out as I went. I didn't want to be dependent on others as I felt my parents had been.

My dad had been reduced to living in a flat with no heating, and the only food he could afford was baked beans on toast while he paid maintenance to my mum for us. His only warm meal or house was once a week with my future stepmum. He arrived to their marriage with a suitcase of clothes, a warm heart and a whole heap of excess baggage.

Mum owned nothing. She was totally dependent on my godmother and her good friend. My godmother owned the house we had all lived in and had even paid all my school fees (not that I knew that at the time). Funny, when Mum got the payout from the divorce settlement, she spent the whole lot on a horse from Germany.

I didn't want to leave the keys to happiness in someone else's pocket. I felt this was exactly where they were. I was dependent on others for my survival at that time. I wanted to thrive, not survive. My perspective on their situations was a hard-wired motivating factor driving me to find my own way, stand on my own two feet and become independent.

I was stepping into my next season, as Stephen R. Covey states in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: "Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own effort. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success." (Covey, 2020)

Once I had left school, I was on my own. All my mates from school had gone to universities, and I was miles away from all of them. It was time to stand on my own two feet and get moving. Staying at home was not an option as it was out in the sticks and there were very few opportunities locally. I remember being so grateful for what I had fallen into. Opportunities were opening up in the management space, along with good money. This left me with more possibilities ahead, meaning I'd be earning more than my university counterparts when they graduated. It helped me to channel my energies into something positive rather than dwell on my failure to make the grade.

Seed Sown

I look back now and can see how this chapter in my life fuelled my passion to help people navigate the unknown when leaving school and stepping out into the big wide world of opportunity. Now I have the honour of helping students in their final years of high school identify

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their runway, their flight path and their chosen destination, as well as showing them how to navigate the turbulence along the way. I get the joy of working with students from all over the country as well as working with the year 13s in one of the top boys' schools in NZ. The blessing is opening the doors to the life of prosperity and abundance each one of us has been uniquely designed for. They leave school, knowing their unique gifting, the lane they are designed to win in, being clear on their skills, talents, qualities and characteristics as well as their why, purpose and intrinsic motivation. They step out in faith with hope, confidence, passion, clear direction, commitment and a future.

The writing was on the wall for me all the way through my school years and subsequent career choice. I am a great spark and motivator. There has always been something about me that allowed me to connect at a deep level with people and get them fired up for their lives. It's funny, I now realise, I was never meant to go to university and be filled with 'head knowledge' I may never use again. This was a time to grow my 'heart knowledge', my experiential learning. My heart has always been to enhance, encourage and bring out the best in the other person. It is as clear as day looking back, I had no idea at the time.

I believe it is super important to have your own house in order before you go out and start advising others. All three of our children are carving their own pathways in life with outstanding results. They have all had to work hard and put the effort in, be flexible and adaptable, keeping their eyes on what is ahead of them.

Both of my children are heart and then head led. Their innate gifting is taking them on pathways to success. I came into my stepson's life as he was 'dropping out' of school, disillusioned and lost. It was a delight to help open the doors to his zone of genius at this time. To see him now, in his final year of his degree and going into his chosen career of teaching, where his natural gifting is, brings me so much joy. He will have completed his degree by the time I publish this book. The odds were against each one of them and yet in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, "When your why is strong enough, you'll find any how."

I was recently listening to the most amazing teaching from Myles Munroe where he talks about our purpose. It was a delight to have someone so well read and researched on the same page. I believe each one of us has a mandate, each one of us has a key part to play in making the world a better place, whether it is to be a farmer, a teacher or in animal welfare. We all have a deep desire to be good at something, to add value and make a real difference. Myles was encouraging adults to go back and remember what it was they dreamed of being when they were younger, to go out and ignite that fire within and get on with it. I am now doing exactly what I was created to do, having gone round the houses to get there. Each of our children have saved themselves thirty plus years by stepping out into their chosen career paths soon after school. They are successfully living their dreams of yesterday and enjoying the journey of discovery as they achieve their own milestones along the way.

Reflect and Reframe

I was lost after leaving home, trying to fit in and find my way. I followed everyone else, drinking heavily at weekends, going to parties, trying to find connection through sex. Looking to find my way in this big wide world. I watched many get wasted and end up vomiting and passing out, all to fill the void. Trying to find that high and to feel good, even if it was only for a short period of time. I gathered with others in warehouses for events, organised parties or raves; we were all looking for a sense of belonging, to have fun and to feel like there was a purpose to life. I wanted to fit in, to feel that I had it all together and this was the trail. Sound familiar?

I was desperately looking out, when the treasure was within. It wasn't until thirty years later that I understood what I had been searching for and how to fill that empty void. It was inside me, not outside of me. It was never going to be through external factors. External factors may well confirm whether I was on the right path or not. However, following others, trying to be everyone's best friend, searching

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externally for a place to fit in was not the answer. All this stuff did was grow my insecurities about myself. I felt even more “less than”, even more unworthy and inadequate. I pushed harder to prove myself and achieve more. The more I pushed, the less fulfilled I felt. I was desperate to be seen, heard and valued by someone, somewhere. Little did I know the answer to all of this was within.

And here I am, having turned my upside-down world the right-way-up, completely at peace with myself and my life, having fun and living my life by design not by default. Having fun, creating and growing healthy relationships, opening doors I never thought would be open to me and living my best life with no regrets every day.

I was so lost at this time. The safety of school, structure, knowing what was coming up next, was all gone. And I had no idea what my North Star was, or what my why or purpose in L.I.F.E. was. I was falling into my life rather than carving it out.

Let me give you another key to access the treasure within, so that you can live your life by design, not default. Living our best lives everyday is about living life with no regrets. Having a clear vision, hope and a future is another key to a life well lived.

I’d love you to come on a journey with me to “Dream BIG and achieve more,” as Cam Calkoen says. Cam was born with Cerebral Palsy and has never let his circumstances hold him back. As I go to print, he has delivered 971 speeches, inspired 530,238 people, of which I am one, and has had 449 standing ovations and one dream. I ask you: “What is your dream? What is your North Star?” “If money, location, circumstances or situations were not an issue, you had complete free reign to live your best life ever, what would it look like?”

Steven Covey shares in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, “Beginning with the end in mind is all about asking yourself questions to determine your objectives and the reasons behind wanting to achieve them.”

Dear Reader

I invite you to pause here, be still and give yourself permission to “dream BIG and achieve more”, as Cam Calkoen would say. Give yourself permission to let the creative, unstoppable, brilliant, “no holds barred,” “all things are possible” you bubble up from inside and flow through your pen onto the paper. I encourage you to leave all your current limitations behind. For example, voices in your head that tell you that’s not possible, it’s not for you, you can’t afford to do that or you have family commitments to consider. I appreciate all of these have to be taken into account AFTER you have given yourself permission to be free to dream BIG. I really want you to go back to your childhood, those times you dreamed or the thought of something which really brought you alive, or to the thing that has been sitting there nagging at you waiting for the right moment to be released. Impossible actually means “I’m possible.” It’s time to see what you are really capable of when you give yourself permission to really connect with the desires of your heart. No one is going to hold you to this. No one is going to see this. This is just for you.

I have put some crazy things on my dream BIG vision that were way out of my possibilities—running my own business, being completely at peace, becoming a published author, being happily married—all of these were once pipe dreams.

Have fun with this. You never know what might happen. All I will say is that every one of my clients who has written their vision down has achieved it and more. The possibilities are limitless. All I encourage you to do right now is to say “Yes, I’m in” and give it a go. Are you ready for your “I’m possible?”

Call to Adventure:

I have found that breaking this down into smaller steps helps many to focus and get more clarity. While we take ourselves wherever we go, these areas often overlap; I find it helps to focus on one area at a time.

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It also nails any procrastination brought on by the overwhelm of considering our whole lives at once.

Here's my "**High Five**" areas, considered in the order below:

Faith (spiritual, physical and mental health)

Family (my husband then my children and out from there)

Finance (work I choose to do)

Fun (lifestyle, hobbies, interests)

Friends (the family I choose, those I do life with)

Find a quiet space, get yourself comfortable with no distractions and give yourself permission to love on yourself and be present.

I have a question for you. Can you hear or see your name in your head, if you say it to yourself in your head? Yes? Great. Well, that's how I hear or see God's voice or words for me. I know it sounds weird to ask God and write down what you hear. I call it wired, as we are actually wired to hear His voice. The weird part is we have been listening to the "negative, break down, keep us small, play it safe" voice for so long we think that's normal. It's time to re-wire and hear/see the positive, building, keep learning and growing voice that takes you higher than you ever thought was possible.

It's time to start tuning in, as Graham Cooke and Dionne Van Zyl would say, time to go from FM (failure mode) to AM (abiding mode). Have fun, beautiful people, with this exercise. It may feel uncomfortable and crazy. It may be clunky and jerky to begin with, just like it was when you first learnt to drive a car. This is a life changing and life giving muscle you will be able to flex and use productively and positively for the rest of your L.I.F.E. Enjoy the journey of discovery and adventure.

Ask God/dream about what these areas would look or feel like if you really went for it and looked ahead ten years. If you achieved the "I'm possible" dream for you, what would that off-the-Richter-scale dream

look like? I encourage clients to write bullet points in these areas, to spend five-ten minutes a day over the coming week pondering this and let it flow. We'll revisit this and go deeper in Chapter Nine.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)