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# Is the Economy Draining Us of Our Dreams?

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In an economy that has so many Americans scrambling just to make ends meet, it can be tempting to put our long-range dreams and aspirations on the back burner. Most of us have more pressing issues these days, especially when the headline news makes us feel as if all that's left is work and a stress-filled life.

Are we letting our dreams fade away? How are we supposed to keep our passions alive when we're unsure about being employed next month? While each of your situations are unique, perhaps my experience in turning my dreams into reality will help shed some light on the subject.

Since first learning to sail at age 13, I dreamed of navigating my own boat around the world. I held onto that dream into adulthood and my plan was in full stride while working in the meeting planning industry. Business was booming when suddenly, everything changed; the Gulf war broke out and nearly all of our international business disappeared as one group after another cancelled.

While our company struggled to redirect its focus, I was forced to question my lifelong ambition. There were days I wondered if our company was going to survive, let alone allow me to live my dream.

Still, I didn't give up.

I had a plan of action in place, I knew what steps to take for that plan, and I had faith in my tenacity. It may be difficult at times, but don't allow yourself to be discouraged. Keep your dreams, turn them into goals, and decide that you're going to stick to them.

Speaking of goals, I strongly urge you to write yours down. Putting your goals in writing triggers your brain into believing you really mean what you're promising yourself. I still have the piece of paper with the goal of going sailing that I wrote 10 years before gliding out the Golden Gate. Emerson knew this when he said, "Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen."

It's a matter of perception that we have to work incessantly, and therefore, can't put time and energy toward our dreams. Learn to filter the news and be selective in what economic information is important to you and your situation. A forecast may be pessimistic but does it apply to you?

In 2001, with just two months to go before departing on the journey of a lifetime, 9/11 happened and I was faced with another big decision; should I still go? With all of the negative news going on, friends and family called me crazy to leave the sanctuary of home. I was leaving a secure and stable life -- all for the chance to make a dream come true. But I was one of those people who listened to motivational speakers, and it was Dale Carnegie who said, "Take a chance! All life is a chance. The person who goes farthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare ... "

Not everyone is willing to exchange a secure life for their dreams because like it or not, there will be some sacrifice involved. You'll likely have to let go of something in order to achieve your biggest goals. If you want to be the top salesperson in your company, chances are you'll have to give up some evenings in favor of the office. If you want to start a coffee shop that's open on weekends, it's a good bet you'll no longer be attending your children's Saturday soccer games.

Ask yourself what your priorities are to determine what you're willing to put on the line. In the end, you get to decide what you're willing to sacrifice in order to see your dreams come true. Andre Gide said, "Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore." In other words, you can't run to second base unless you take your foot off of first.

It's often the good things in our lives that get in the way of great things. Even in the best of economic times, the trappings of success will tempt us to set aside our dreams in favor of the security we already enjoy.

Perhaps you would like to move abroad for a year to write, but your life here is really so good, comfortable and assured that you can't see leaving it all behind. You have kids, cars, a house, a job, club memberships and responsibilities that keep you evenly happy. If you can't see giving up some of

those things (perhaps you want to keep the kids), you might not experience living high on top of a hill in an Italian villa writing the great novel. It's your decision -- so decide -- because making no choice is a decision.

While some of you may be jobless at the moment, have fewer profits from investments, reduced work hours or forced furloughs, remember that the good times will return. In my case, diligence and patience resulted in an incredible six-year odyssey sailing around the world. While I spent most of my savings and now drive a Honda rather than an Audi, I feel as if I'm the richest man in the world, free to move forward to the next set of goals.

Keep your dreams alive and turn those aspirations into reality. You'll never know if it was a good idea until you try. Mark Twain said, "Twenty years from now, you'll be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than the things you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." By taking his advice, I lived my dream and am fulfilled. We are each given one great opportunity at life. What are you going to do with yours?

*Larry Jacobson is a motivational speaker, executive coach, sales trainer, circumnavigator, adventurer, and author of the best seller, "The Boy Behind the Gate: How his dream of sailing around the world became a six-year odyssey of adventure, fear, discovery, and love." For a free download of the first chapter, go to: <http://larryjacobsonauthor.com> and simply enter your email address.*

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