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# Are you doing what **YOU** want?

Like to alter the course of your life? Our experts give some guidelines and ideas to help you work out what you want, without destroying what you have

## OUR EXPERT

Dr Nicola Bunting, life coach and author of *Who Do You Want to Be?* (Piatkus), has recently launched a group coaching programme to help people stuck in a rut build the life they want. See [starpowerresults.com](http://starpowerresults.com)

## STEP ONE: Set the stage

A common mistake is to rush into planning your “dream life” without first clearing a space where you can think. If you’re feeling unhappy or uninspired, you’re not in the best place – physically or mentally – to set new goals. For clarity and vision, you need to feel positive and energised, which means doing a little housekeeping and overhauling your old life first. In the process, you might just discover that the changes you need are different or not quite as drastic as you first thought.

+ **ELIMINATE ENERGY DRAINS** Most of us live with a lot of them. Together, they drag us down and distract us from living the life we want.

+ **PHYSICAL ENERGY DRAINS** That’s clutter! Your wardrobe, kitchen cabinets, office drawer... if it wastes your time, then tackle it!

+ **FINANCIAL ENERGY DRAINS** Do you have a financial plan for the year ahead? It might seem odd to begin with looking at your bank balance but it’s all about eliminating nagging worries and feeling stronger. Be on top of your money before you start laying plans.

*Think about the things you most enjoy, the people you love to see, the activities that make you feel good*





✦ **HEALTH ENERGY DRAINS** This includes diet, exercise and sleep but also any routine screenings you've missed or niggling worries to sort out at the GP.

✦ **RELATIONSHIP ENERGY DRAINS** Sometimes, this yearning for a "new life" can spring from a feeling of being fed up with everyone else – but running away is never the answer. Only you know if there is a big issue to be addressed, in your marriage for example, but in other areas – forgiving people, letting go of grudges or deciding to see more of some people and less of others – will free you of mental clutter.

## STEP TWO: Maximise your "feel good" energy

### NOW YOU'RE READY FOR CHANGE

We all know there's nothing more important than feeling good yet few of us act on it. Think about the things you most enjoy, the people and activities that make you feel good. How much time is given over to them? If the answer is "not much", make an effort to build in the things you love. When you consciously focus on what makes you feel good, you've begun to make change happen.

## STEP THREE: Build your vision

Now you're ready to look further ahead. Imagine your ideal life in three years' time. What would you like to be doing? Does it have to be something you earn an income from? Can you use existing skills or acquire new ones? Where would you love to be living? If it's somewhere different, could you test-run that idea by renting? Whatever feels pertinent to you.

## 'Ten years ago I'd never have believed my life could be so different'



Joanna Miller, 46, decided not to return to her career in education after the birth of her third child. Instead, she followed her lifelong love of

verse to launch poetry print company [bespokeverse.co.uk](http://bespokeverse.co.uk). She won Not On The High Street's Partner of the Year 2015 Award and now employs a team of eight part-timers. Joanna lives near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire with her husband and three children, age 11, ten and seven.

I'd started as an English teacher in secondary schools, which I did enjoy but became quite burnt out – education was really changing. I then become an English advisor, going into schools, but the meetings all took place out of school hours so it wasn't conducive to family life.

When our third child was one, my husband was telling me I needed to go back to work – we were a two-income family – but I was sort of in denial, putting it off, not wanting to go. I've always loved verse – spoken word performance poetry. That goes back to childhood and at our wedding, christenings and parties, I'd always made rhyming speeches.

On my 40th birthday party, I gave a rhyming speech about turning 40 – cheeky, a little bit rude, what happens

to men and women as we start to droop! At the end, lots of people told me I should do it for a living, that they'd pay me to write a speech for them. I'd never given my poems much value, but my husband loves a project and he decided to build me a very basic website. I could try it out and if it didn't work, I needed to go back to my old career. It started from there.

At first, kind friends asked me to write poems for weddings and christenings, or grandparents' funerals. After each event, more people would contact me, having heard the speech. The business

built up. I was selling my writing – something I'd never dreamt possible.

I then developed off-the-shelf products – prints, stationery, mugs, cards with poems about mothers or fathers or teachers or marriage. In January 2013, we were accepted with

Not On The High Street, and by Christmas, the orders were out of this world. We're now in their top selling band and I'm earning enough to put our oldest through private school.

Ten years ago, if someone had told me I'd one day be running a very successful business, writing poems that people wanted to pay for, I'd not have believed it in a million years. I think having children gives you confidence, helps you lose your inhibitions. My life constantly amazes me – I feel satisfied and fulfilled in a way I never did before.

*"I was selling my writing – something I'd never dreamt possible"*

## STEP FOUR: Create stepping stones

**WHEN YOUR VISION TAKES SHAPE, START BREAKING IT DOWN** To live this life, what would have to happen? Create steps that would take you from where you are to where you want to be. Now take the first step and break it down into its tiniest components until the moves aren't giant leaps but small moves. For example, the first step could be as small as researching gym membership or a walking holiday, or as big as investigating renting out your house or finding out about a house swap. Make short-term, manageable goals that steer your life in the right direction. If you get stuck or it seems too daunting, break it down even more or brainstorm with a friend. Then keep moving forward! >>



# What if you don't know what you want?

## OUR EXPERT

**Monica Castenetto, a life coach who retrained after changing her own life, is also author of *What's Your Excuse for not Living a Life You Love?* Visit [livealifeyoulove.co.uk](http://livealifeyoulove.co.uk). If you don't have a vision, her tips can help you create one.**

### + WORK FROM DISSATISFACTIONS

They indicate where your life isn't what you want, and can show what's lacking. Make a list of the areas you want to address, then start with the most urgent one. Work on changing this one area until you feel a benefit.

+ **BE FLEXIBLE** Regularly review where you're at. What has worked, what hasn't? There's no need to be overly goal-oriented – make sure you adjust along the way to ensure you end up with a life you want.

+ **BE HONEST** Do you have the talent, the personality, the values that fit the life you're dreaming about? If you value security and don't like living with

uncertainty, then freelancing or leaving your job may not work for you. Perhaps your life revolves around family while work is something you do for money – in which case, launching a business or "project you" may take you further from the family you love, so perhaps volunteering or a hobby would be a better solution. There's no such thing as a perfect life – we all have aspects we're not so keen on. The aim is to have enough of the things we love in it too.

**Make time:**  
Even a little time to consider your next steps is better than none. Make space around your other responsibilities. For some, this may mean one hour a week of guaranteed clear space to focus on planning new goals.

It's important to dedicate time to focus on your life plans



## 'It took a lot of trials before I found something I love'



**Monica Castenetto, 47, tells about her own voyage of discovery to a different life.**

My job in management consultancy didn't

leave much room for anything else. When the company was taken over, the values changed and I stopped enjoying it – but didn't have the space to think about what else I could do. I couldn't do the job and make plans at the same time – so in 2002, I took a leap and handed in my notice.

I don't have children and I'm not married so in that sense, I didn't have responsibilities to stop me. But money and security have always been important to me and career has always been the centre of my life, so it felt scary. I had six months of savings, and after that, I was able to work part-time

for my old company and contacts, writing reports to keep me going. When you come off the corporate roller coaster, you find you don't need all the money you thought you needed!

Having more time was like coming up for air and I started thinking about all the things I loved, which were gardening, photography and dance – in that order – and whether they could also be a way of earning a living. First, I studied garden design at Chelsea Physic Garden though once it got to November, it was too cold for me! Often you don't find these things out until you try. I then focused on photography, earning a National Certificate but still, I couldn't find a way of making a good living. I next explored my love of dance, training in contemporary dance at Trinity Laban,

the UK's only conservatoire of music and contemporary dance. It was an amazing time but you have to be honest with yourself – I'd started late and

couldn't see how it would make a career.

It was a friend who said I'd make the perfect life coach. I didn't know such a job existed but as I researched, I really felt it was ideal. I completed two

years' training then set up my business. It has felt like a homecoming.

There's no right or wrong way to change your life. Some people have a goal and a vision – they know exactly what they want. Others, like me, just know the next step, something they want to try. I still garden, photograph and dance. In fact, I've just started salsa dancing! But now I also have a career that I absolutely love. **w&h**

*"Having more time was like coming up for air"*