



BEING A HUMAN ... that's enough

Module 5 | CREATE MY FUTURE

The Handbook for the Programme Participants

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***“To follow your dreams costs a lot.
Not to follow them costs even more.”***

D. Conway Stone

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“The best way how to predict the future is creating it.”

Peter Drucker

MODULE 5 I CREATE MY FUTURE

Our lives are full of endless possibilities. Every day we make decisions which affect what direction our lives are going.

If we want to live the life we long for, we must take the responsibility and actively participate in shaping our future. Whether it is possible, we can see if we look at our past. When we realize who we were five or ten years ago, and how we have changed since then. Then what are we able to do in next ten years?

It is good to ask the questions: What do we want to be like? Where do we want to go? What do we want to achieve? With what do we want to fulfil our whole lives?

These are the challenging questions, but the answers to them help us to create the life plan that will guide us. Not having a plan for your life is like going on a journey without a map. With the map and knowing where we want to go, we have a good chance that we will succeed. But if we haven't got the map, we wonder, walk a lot, and we don't even have to come to the end. So it is also with our life. The sooner we give to it the right direction and make the plan which will lead us, the less we wonder and the better and more meaningfully we live our lives.

In this module we will write about how to create such a plan.

LESSON 5.1 My Life Plan



The human brain performed mainly spontaneous reactions at the beginning of evolution. If there was a quarry in sight, it had to be struck immediately, in danger, to climb right on the tree. We were able to change from nomads to settlers because we have started to recognize the context and plan ahead.

Sowing today and harvesting a few months later, was an important change in people's consciousness.

Also creating the own life plan will bring big changes into our lives. But you have to create your life plan so that its fulfilment becomes your priority and nothing discourages you from its realization.

In developing such a plan, it is important that our life goals create a harmony between our **dreams** (what we would want to do if we had unlimited possibilities) and **values** (what is important for us and what we confess).

It is necessary to formulate the goals, which we want to achieve, from our dreams. Until we set these goals and decide to realize them, everything remains a dream.

When we set the goals, we need to make the strategies that will help us to achieve them.

Our dreams

We all have some idea about how we want to live. Our dreams are a good foretaste of what would make us happy. They are a unique set of desires, motivations and inner concepts. They show us where we can look for our personal mission and direction. It is good to start realizing your dreams and not to let them go away. When we think about them more, they can become an important aid to us in the planning of our future.

Our Values

As we have mentioned in the first module, the values are the invisible basis of our decisions. They act within us as an inner compass which directs our actions and therefore also our goals have to be in harmony with them. Otherwise we will step undecided on the spot, and once we will want to achieve the goals and the other time we won't be sure whether it is important for us.



To think about

If you want to find out whether your dream will make you feel inner happiness and satisfaction after its realizing, you can try this exercise.

1. Describe your dream as detailed as possible. Do not leave out any detail.
2. Close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to achieve this dream. Imagine the course of a typical day. What are the feelings? What do you have to do? What activities are needed? What difficulties might arise?
3. If you can do this exercise for ten minutes and you still feel comfortable, you will probably be satisfied also with the dream's real fulfilment.

Lesson summary

In developing the life plan, it is important that our life goals create a harmony between our dreams and values. It is necessary to formulate the goals, which we want to achieve, from our dreams. Then we need to make the strategies that will help us to achieve the set goals.



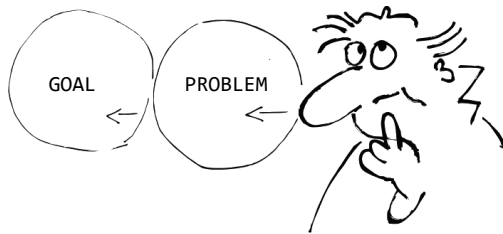
LESSON 5.2 I Set My Goals



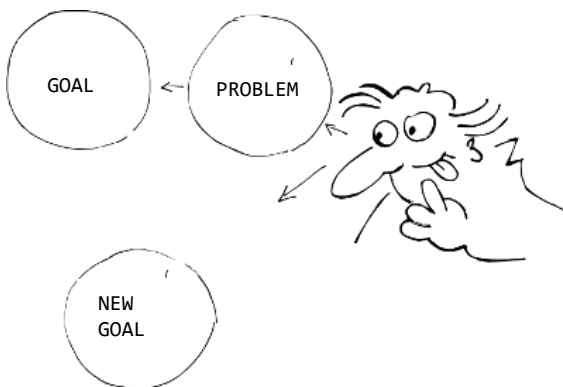
Whenever we feel good we tend to increase our dreams and goals. On the contrary, when we feel “deep down”, we cut our goals. We should change our long-term goal – our dream, only as a minimum.

There is a principle that the bigger the goal, the less we need to change it. Maybe you have heard somewhere that it is better to use to set smaller, more realistic goals rather than to dream about “the air castles”. However, successful people are the proof of the fact that big dreams are much more realistic than small ones. Why is it?

Imagine the small goal. When a problem gets in our way, it obscures the view of the goal.

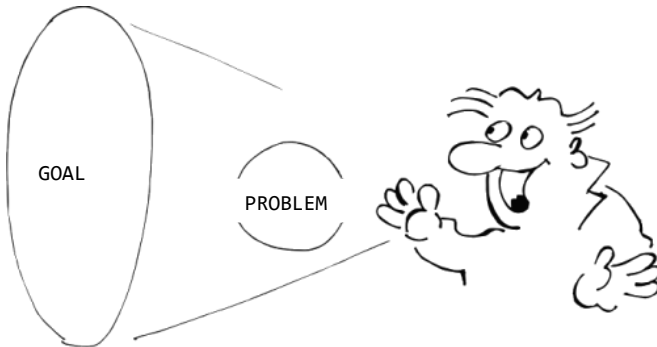


All we can see when we look towards the goal, is just the problem. We have lost a sight of our goal and that is where doubts and fear arise. Then it happens that we find a new goal and “forgot” about the original one.



Of course, the another problem will arise between us and the new goal over time. If we want to avoid this problem, we may find a new goal again. And this will happen again and again, and we will be disappointed that we have achieved nothing and it makes no sense to plan something.

But let's imagine that we have a big goal.



The problem does not completely cover the view of our goal and we can keep it in sight. Therefore, it is important not to lose the sight of your long-term goal and on its basis, to set the short-term goals that will lead us to it¹.



To think about

You will not achieve your dreams just out of nowhere. You must start to act, to set a plan of partial activities and rules and be disciplined in their compliance.

Sitting and waiting for a miracle is similar to the situation when a sportsman sits at home to a TV, watches the Olympic Games and hopes to win a gold medal.

The miracles do not come to us but we have to cause them ourselves.

*Frank Sinatra became a star overnight. One live performance on television and people celebrated him all over the country. When they asked him how did it happen that he was incredibly lucky, he reportedly answered: "The first, I haven't slept this night, and the second, I have been preparing for that night for ten years."*²

Lesson summary

The bigger we set our goal, the less we need to change it. For a big goal, the incoming problems won't obscure the view of our goal and we will keep it in sight. It is important not to lose the sight of your long-term goal and on its basis, to set the short-term goals that will lead us to it.



LESSON 5.3 I Choose My Strategy



In order to achieve goals, it is necessary to choose the strategy that will help us to achieve them. We need to determine which knowledge, qualities and skills we need to develop and how we will work on our development.

Everybody has some skills. Doing the activities, where we use these skills, is nice because we control them. We call this area of our lives **a comfort zone**. The comfort zone represents the activities or way of doing and deciding which we have established and do them with routine. The comfort zone grows throughout the life as a result of acquiring new knowledge and abilities.

However, we must give up our comfort when acquiring them, and we must move into an area where we are not sure. This zone we call **learning zone**, or personal development zone. In this zone we develop creativity, we are forced to use such abilities and skills that will help us to handle unforeseen situations successfully. Every new activity and every new way of doing needs three things: time, holding on and patience. Mastering the task then expands our comfort zone.

People like to stay only in their comfort zone and like to do just things they have already tried. They are afraid of the situations they have not experienced and could end in failure. Our life will be richer if we take courage and do also the things that are risky for us. The things that we long for, which for we are willing to give up our personal comfort for the sake of who I can become.



To think about

It is normal to make mistakes or eventually to experience some partial failures in learning. As one folk wisdom says: “It’s human to make mistakes.”

However, only few people want to make mistakes because the mistakes are associated with discomfort. Who wants to achieve a lot, he/she must get rid of the fear of the mistakes. It is not about the avoiding mistakes; we can even double the number. It is important to learn from them and not to be discouraged.

To invent a light bulb, Thomas Edison made more than 9 000 wrong tries. But they did not discourage him, because he believed he could do it. When his friends asked him whether he really wanted to fail 10 000 times, Edison answered: “I haven’t failed. I have only learnt the new way how we cannot make the light bulb. Every experiment brings me closer to the discovery.”³

Lesson summary

In order to achieve goals, it is necessary to choose the strategy that will help us to achieve them. We need to determine which knowledge, qualities and skills we need to develop and how we will work on our development.

The comfort zone represents automated activities that we do with the routine. Every new activity forces us to step out of the comfort zone and step into the area where we are not sure. This zone we call learning zone. It is normal to make mistakes or eventually to experience some partial failures in learning.

Our life will be richer if we take courage and do the things that we long for, which for we are willing to give up our personal comfort for the sake of who I can become.

LESSON 5.4 Where to Look for Support in Meeting Our Goals



As we have already mentioned we have learnt most things by imitating since birth. We have been doing it as children and we do it also today. But we can do it consciously and choose who we imitate.

One of the options, which helps us in achieving our goals, is to find our own trainer, someone who is like we want to be or is where we want to get. He/she can be someone from the family, teacher, adviser, youth worker, or a neighbour you have a friendly relationship with. Having such a person is a great advantage.

It is like imagining you have just finished the theoretical studies as a forester, and you have found a job in your field – you get a beautiful 5000-hectare district in the Tatras. But you do not know what dangers are there, nor the animal habits, or peculiarities of plants, and you do not know how and where to get started.

And now imagine that there the old woodsman has lived for 50 years in this forest, we can call him Mr. Fir, and he knows all paths, all animals and plants. He knows where there is the floating sand and where there is the avalanche danger. He knows the possible pests and the nests of snakes. What do you think? Would it be advantageous to be trained by this Mr. Fir for half a year? Just imagine – 50 years of experience in 6 months! Having such a trainer is simply priceless.⁴



To think about

To achieve your goals, it can help you setting up the success diary (what you succeed in during the day, all praise and appreciation you get, tasks you accomplish, people you help to, etc.)

and the knowledge diary (lessons from your mistakes in order not to repeat them). Today's advantage is that books and the internet are parts of everyday life. You can read many years of experiences or research in few hours. You don't need to make all mistakes on your own, nor to discover what is discovered yet – all knowledge is written somewhere.

Lesson summary

One of the options, which helps us in achieving our goals, is to find our own trainer, someone who is like we want to be or is where we want to get. Having such a person is a great advantage.



LESSON 5.5 I Ask the Right Questions



Imagine you are walking in the forest and you come to the abyss. At the bottom, 5 metres deep, you can see the wallet with the banknotes sticking out. You carefully start to climb into the abyss. Suddenly you slip on a rock and at the last moment you get caught on some root. It is hard to stay on the wall and you probably decide that the risk of falling is too great and you will not go any further.

How would the situation change if a small, wounded and crying child was lying down there instead of the wallet? You won't ask then: "Should I go down there or not?" The new question is: "How could I pull the child out?" Helping the child becomes an absolute necessity.⁵

The quality of our questions fundamentally determines the quality of our lives. Why is it like that?

We are in the inner dialogue all the time. We still ask the questions which we also answer by ourselves. For example, when we ask: "Can I do it?", we do not exclude the possibility of failure. The question itself speaks of doubt. Better question is: "How can I do that?" This question excludes failure. I can definitely do it, but the question is – how. That "how" allows us to look for ways to achieve our goals.

Every question has also its right time for asking. At the beginning we ask: **What** do I want to do with my life? **What** do I want to achieve? When we are deciding, we ask "**what?**". We decide what we want and what we do not.

When we have already decided, we cannot ask at the very first problem: "Was my decision right?" We have to ask: "**How** can this problem be solved?" Otherwise we would return to deciding what we really want to achieve instead of approaching our desired goal.



To think about

Once, when Winston Churchill was very old, a university near his birthplace invited him to give a lecture there. It was a big event in England.

People came by far to see the greatest and the most famous living Englishman. It was said to be his greatest speech. He should have spoken with the words all accumulated wisdom of his long and fruitful life.

*Thousands of people were sitting crowded in the largest lecture hall of the university, and they were waiting for the great man and his great speech. Churchill stood up, came to the microphone and said: “**Never, never, never, never give up.**”*

Then he sat down. The end of the speech. He didn’t stand up more. Slowly the present people began to understand. Churchill said nothing more because nothing else was so much important to him. Not giving up was the content of his life.⁶

Lesson summary

The quality of our questions fundamentally determines the quality of our lives.

Every question has also its right time for asking. When we are deciding, we ask “what?”: “What do I want to achieve?” We decide what we want and what we do not.

When we have already decided, we cannot ask at the very first problem: “Was my decision right?” We have to ask: “How can this problem be solved?” Otherwise we would return to deciding what we really want to achieve.



LESSON 5.6 Live Your Mission



*“Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission...
Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus,
everyone’s task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.”*

Viktor E. Frankl

When we see the meaning of our lives we experience our own value and meaning. Therefore, it is important to ask the question about the meaning of our lives and to look for the answer.

Knowing that our life has a specific meaning, which we are trying to fulfil, we also have one important human need – need for happiness.

Who wouldn’t like to be happy? But how to achieve this?

Research shows that happiness cannot be gained by direct pursuit of it. Many people do so but they usually remain disappointed because they still do not find lasting true happiness. The happiness comes as a natural consequence of a person finding a meaningful goal, focusing on it and trying to achieve that goal with whole its being. Then the happiness appears as “a by-product” of a sense of meaningful life.

When life does not go according to our ideas

Sometimes there may be events in our lives that we do not have in our hands. We cannot change them much and they affect our lives as we would never want. Such an event may be the loss of a loved one, a presence of a bad disease or other adverse life condition. Sometimes these challenging events are very difficult to handle and it is difficult for us to accept them. Then we may feel that these circumstances tie our hands together and we cannot plan our lives “according to our ideas.”

It is a great challenge to accept in life everything that comes. But if once something is a part of us and we cannot change it, it is good to learn how to live with this situation or event in our life. If we make the plan also with that what has come to our life, although we have not decided for it, it can make us stronger.

However, it is important not only to accept difficult situations in our lives, but also to find support in coping with them. Such support can be a society of close people, organizations with the mission of helping others and so on.

Even precious stones become gemstones only by a demanding grinding process and the change that we find difficult can sharpen us into an even more beautiful human gem.

Receiving unexpected things in the life illustrates well the following story.

Imagine you are preparing for a fantastic journey to Italy. You buy tourist guides, learn some words in Italian and you have wonderful plans for visiting some places. The Colosseum. David by Michelangelo. Gondolas in Venice. And many other nice plans.

After a few months of exciting preparations, you finally see that big day. Pack your suitcase, get on the plane, head off to Italy. A few hours later the plane lands. The stewardess comes and says: "Welcome to the Netherlands!"

"The Netherlands??? What do you mean??? I have booked a holiday to Italy! I should be in Italy!!! All my life I have been dreaming of flying to Italy!!!"

But there was a change in the flight plane! The plane landed in the Netherlands and you must stay here some time. It is important that you have not landed in some nasty infested country. Here it is "just" different!

So you start again. You buy new tourist guides, learn a new language. And you meet a completely different group of people who you might never meet if everything was as you planned.

The Netherlands is different than Italy. The life seems to flow more slowly here and maybe it is not such sunny. But the longer you stay here you see that it has also its merits. You start to look around. There are wonderful windmills. There are tulips in the Netherlands, also even Rembrandt!!!

Maybe you will hear in the conversation with friends who have been to Italy what beautiful it is and what nice time they have spent there. And you may say:

"Yes, that is the holiday I have dreamt about. I wanted to go right there, too!"
And the pain of losing your dream will never disappear.

If you stopped and still were crying about the losing your vacation, you would never be able to see the beauty of the Netherlands, get to know it or even to like it. Because the Netherlands is just like Italy a great experience.

For you and also for the people who share their lives with you.



To think about

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing world of these times.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the increasing years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.

But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

Saint Paul's Church in Baltimore (1692)⁷

Lesson summary

The happiness cannot be gained by direct pursuit of it. The happiness comes as a natural consequence of a person finding a meaningful goal, focusing on it and trying to achieve that goal with whole its being. Then the happiness appears as “a by-product” of a sense of meaningful life. Each of us has its unique life mission. Let's fill it with pleasure.

MODULE 5 SUMMARY

Once upon a time, many years ago, there lived one old man in a far country, in a cottage on top of a hill. He dedicated his whole life to study and meditation. He was widely known for his intelligence, sensitivity and wisdom.

Some politicians, businessmen and dignitaries came to visit him and asked him different questions. His answers were always right. He seemed to have a special ability that allowed him always to get to the point of the matter or problem. When people followed his advice and solutions, the results were always excellent. His fame spread through the country.

A group of boys lived in a village bellow the hill, they used to play together. Sometimes they climbed the hill to visit the old man and to ask him the questions. He seemed to know always the right answer. It became a small game overtime – the boys were still trying to find the question that the old man couldn't answer. But they never succeeded.

One day, the leader of the group – the boy named Aram – called the others to himself and said: “I have finally found the way how to get the old man. Here in my hand I have got a little bird. We visit the old man and ask him whether the bird is alive or dead. If he says that dead, I will let him fly away. If he says that alive, I will clench my palm and the bird will die. One way or another, we will finally prove that he is wrong.”

Enthusiastic about the possibility of finally catching an old man in the wrong answer, the boys rushed up the hill. The old man was watching them coming and noticed the eager expression on their faces. Aram stood in front of him and asked: “The old man, I hold a little bird in my hand. Is it alive or dead?”

The old man looked at their naughty faces full of anticipation and said quietly: “Aram, it is in your hands.”⁸

Our destiny largely depends on ourselves, it is in our hands. We determine our future by our choices and decisions. What we achieve is the result of what we do or do not – day after day, year after year.

Let's take the responsibility for our future and give the meaning to our lives.

NOTES

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