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The Personal Mission Statement

Success in life or in the classroom is not a matter of luck, fate, or circumstance. It is a matter of clarity, vision, and desire. Therefore, to lead a successful life, one must clarify the vision of their future to the degree that it motivates and gives them the desire to achieve it. The document that captures your vision is called a personal mission statement.

The foundation of all inspirational teachers is a well designed personal mission statement. The mission statement is a self proclaimed set of guidelines by which you will lead your life. By investing the energy to create a personal mission statement, you are “predeciding” on many of the choices that you will face throughout your life.

If you’ve ever watched children try to bowl, it is quite humorous. If it weren’t for the lane bumpers, only a few of the kids would even make contact with the pins. The bumpers are there to keep the ball out of the gutter. Your mission statement is like bumpers for your life. Without the bumpers, you may end up veering off course, and even in the gutter.

Your mission statement should encompass your values and beliefs and give motivation to future goals. A well designed personal mission statement is the foundation upon which your dreams and goals will be formed. At the conclusion of the mission statement process you will have a document that will act as fuel for future. The greater your clarity of mission, the more potent the fuel for your future. Consider the clarity of individuals like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Gates, or Amelia Earhart. It’s their clarity and passion that fueled their motivation and perseverance to accomplish their goals.

**Do You Live
by DESIGN or by DEFAULT?**

Have you taken the time to plan your life? Are you in your current position, both personally and professionally, due to your own design?

Or have you defaulted into your current position?

Take the time to develop a Personal Mission Statement. Reward yourself by spending time in deep thought. Do the research required to find your passion and *design* your life.

Default vs. Design

The process of developing a mission statement will challenge you to think about things rarely thought about by the average person. Many people view their future through a lens that only extends a few days or weeks into the future; beyond that, life become less clear. Without a solid vision of your future you will be prone to allowing yourself to be influenced in ways that you may regret later. In other words, you may begin to live your life by default, rather than by design.

The Qualities of a Personal Mission Statement

- ◆ It inspires you
- ◆ It states what principles you value
- ◆ It defines your purpose

Your mission statement should capture what is truly important to you. Your values, your priorities and vision of your future are just under the surface of your written mission statement. Many people may choose to express everything in writing, while others may create a mission statement as a symbol or motto for their life.

*Destiny is a not a matter of chance,
it is a matter of choice.*

Sample Personal Mission Statements

I will live a life true to my values and beliefs. I will not allow the outside influences of others to pull me down. I will constantly strive to learn and enrich my body, mind and spirit.

At the end of my life I will look back with a clear conscience. I will have not regrets and no “what if’s.”

Let the first act of every morning be to make the following resolve for the day:

I shall not fear anyone on earth.

I shall fear only God.

I shall not bear ill toward anyone.

I shall not submit to injustice from anyone.

I shall conquer untruth by truth.

And in resisting untruth, I shall put up with all suffering.

Mahatma Ghandi

In my everyday life I will strive to make a difference with both my family and my students.

I will leave everything a little better than I found it.

Benefits of a Personal Mission Statement

After genuinely completing this process, you will have:

- ◆ greater clarity
- ◆ less stress
- ◆ renewed focus and motivation
- ◆ a renewed sense of inner peace and security
- ◆ greater confidence in yourself and less reliant on others approval
- ◆ greater motivation to maintain physical, social, mental, and spiritual balance
- ◆ happy and healthy relationships
- ◆ confidence to say “no” to things not in alignment with your personal mission statement.

How to Create a Personal Mission Statement

The development of a personal mission statement is not a simple process and should not be completed quickly. Time, effort, and deep contemplation are required in this process. It is said that you do not invent your personal mission statement you detect it. You must reach deep within your “core” to pull out this powerful, life-guiding statement.

As you contemplate the questions on the next few pages, it is important that you find a quiet place to work. You should dedicate several hours and shield yourself from distractions or interruptions. The depth and quality of your mission statement will be proportionate to the quality of effort that you invest in the process.

Most people are too busy living to take the time to consider their direction in life. When asked, “What are you willing to die for?” The most common answer is “family.” However, these same people admit that they do not live every day as if family is the most important thing in their life. In fact, those that matter most to us tend to receive the brunt of our frustration. This is perhaps the greatest irony of life. Those that we love the most, often receive the least.

In High-Trust Schools...

Teachers constantly spoke about the importance of *respecting* parents, regardless of their background or education achievement. Although many students came from troubled homes, teachers did not attempt to distance themselves from their students or families. (Bryk & Schneider, *Trust in Schools*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002, p. 84)

Teachers' active encouragement of parents, coupled with their demonstrated personal regard for the children, opened up possibilities for teachers and parents to negotiate complementary roles in the children's education. (Bryk & Schneider, *Trust in Schools*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002, p. 86)

As Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasize, under condition of power asymmetry with poor parents, vulnerable and unconfident in their relationship to schools, it is incumbent on principals and teachers to reach out, be empathetic, and create possibilities for parent involvement. When they do, as Bryk and Schneider found, greater connection is made with parents and students, and achievement goes up.

Fullan, Michael (2005). *Leadership and Sustainability, System Thinkers in Action*, Corwin Press, pp. 60–61

Mission Statement Questionnaire

The following questions will assist in detecting and drawing out your talents, goals, beliefs, and values. The final assignment in this process will be the creation of your personal mission statement.

Question 1: Identify strengths:

Create a list of your skills or gifts. (Example: artist, speaking, writing, humor, leading others, analytical thinking, athletic, technological, etc.)

Strength 1: _____

Strength 2: _____

Strength 3: _____

Strength 4: _____

Strength 5: _____

Question 2: Identify areas of passion or desire to impact:

Create a list of things you are passionate about and would like to make an impact on. (Example: education of young children, community service, school leadership, personal fitness, relationships, and personal growth, reading, poetry, etc)

“In a great teacher’s classroom, every student feels like the favorite.”

***Dr. Todd Whitaker, former teacher,
principal, and professor at Indiana State
University***

Question 3: Clarify Values/Set boundaries:

Create a list of your values. This should serve as a set of rules or personal promises by which you will guide your life. Values could include words such as: honesty, trust, hard work, love, integrity, fun, togetherness, helpful, etc

Question 4: If money were not an issue, what would you choose to do?

Question 5: Who has had the most impact on your growth and development?

Why?

“The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.”

O. W. Holmes

Question 6: List the most important people in your life.

Question 7: At your retirement dinner, what would you want people to say about you and your teaching career?

Question 8: What is your ultimate goal in life?

Don't worry that children never listen to you. Worry that they are always watching you.

Robert Fulghum

Question 9: What is the greatest obstacle to achieving your ultimate life goal?

Question 10: What are your attributes that will allow you to overcome your obstacles?

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You cannot blow an uncertain trumpet.”

***Theodore Hesburgh, president,
University of Notre Dame (1952–1987)***

**The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.**

William Arthur Ward (1921–1994)

Congratulations!

If you have honestly challenged yourself and answered the questions on the previous pages, we would like to say “Congratulations!” With this foundation you are on your way to becoming an inspirational teacher. This powerful tool defines your purpose and helps keep you focused on what matters most.

Your completed mission statement should be visible to you. You may want to write it in your planner or place it where you will continually connect to it.