

Where **am** I Going?

A roadmap for teenagers

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Illustrated by Beau Rowland



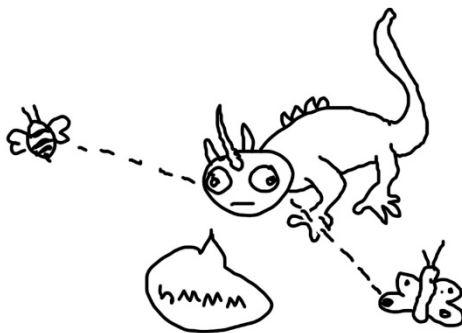
"If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably wind up somewhere else."

– David Campbell, PhD

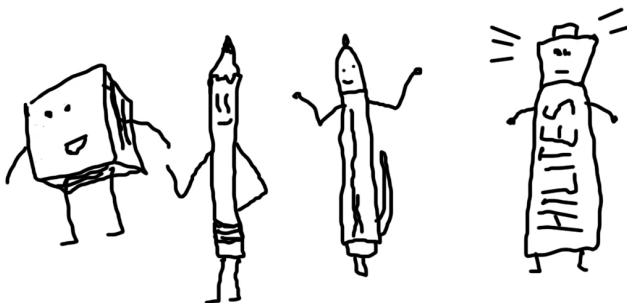
Where am I Going?

Dr. Campbell's quote is absolutely true: "If you don't know where you're going, you will probably wind up somewhere else." It's the difference between getting somewhere on purpose or winding up somewhere on accident. Only you have control over where you go. It's all a part of the decisions you make all along the way.

It's never too soon to not just make decisions, but to learn how to make good decisions. Like anything, it's a matter of practice, habit, and paying attention. Even though some of this comes with maturity, even that - maturity - is something that can be practiced. It's just a matter of accepting responsibility for the consequences, good and bad, that come with the decisions you make.



What follows is a simplified guideline to starting the process of figuring out how to get where you want to go. There are some things to think about, some things to write about, and some things to research. Yes, it will take a little time and effort, but then again, anything worthwhile in life is like that. Before going any further, you are going to need some sticky notes, some index cards, some pens & pencils, some paper, and probably some different colored high-lighters.



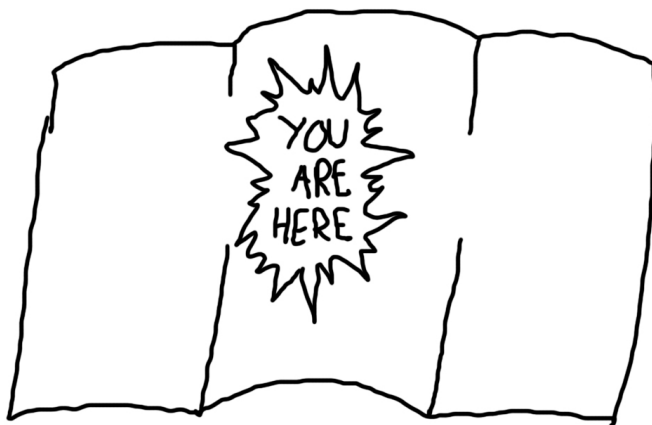
Something to know and accept: except for 1 in a million people (and sorry, you aren't one of them because if you were you wouldn't be reading this), there is **NOTHING AUTOMATIC** in life. Yes, some people are born with talent that others would die for. All the same, if they don't practice and

strengthen those talents, nothing will ever come from them.

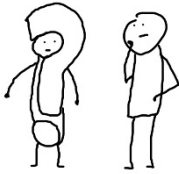
The 1st Step

Before you can get somewhere, you have to know where you are.

So, where are you?

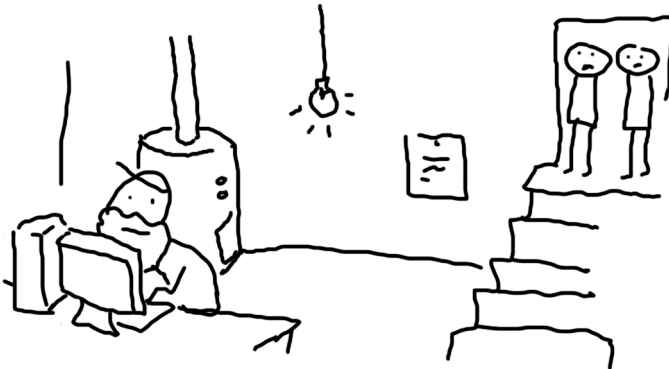


This is a big picture question. It needs to take into account everything about you.



What is going on in your life?
What challenges are you facing?
What consequences are you facing?
What do you enjoy doing?
What type of personal projects are
you working on?

Think about these things. Many people can't articulate challenges, consequences, or projects because they aren't doing anything. Fine for them, maybe, but the reality is that if you aren't doing anything, you aren't going anywhere. They might as well start cleaning out their parent's basement, because that probably as far as they're going to get.



Where are you going?

After you answered those questions above, you will start to have a sense of where you are. But where's that going to get you? It doesn't make much sense to spend a lot of time and effort doing something without there being any purpose to it.



Take each of your answers above and make some notes as to why they are in your life. Sure, some, maybe many, of them may be forced into your life, put upon you whether you want them or not. All the same, they are there. For better or worse, you have to deal with them. Either that or run away and join the circus.





Once you start thinking about why they are in your life, make some notes as to where you think they will get you. Here's the hard part: you actually need to think about this beyond where you are today. For example, if you want to be a doctor, you have to go to med school. To go to med school, you have to go to college. To go to college you have to get out of high school. To get out of high school you have to go to school and make the best grades you can.

This is going to be true pretty much no matter what you want to do in life. You have to be able to prove to people that you are worth the risk they are going

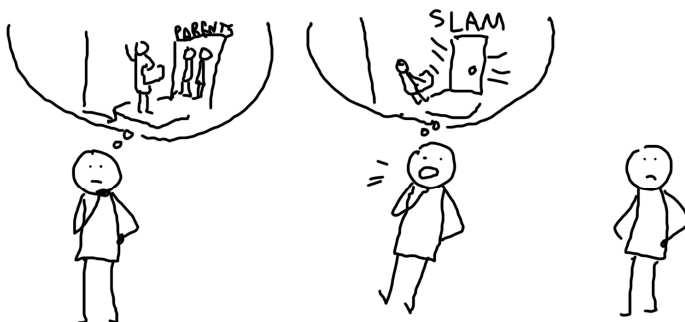
to take when they give you an opportunity. It's by consistently stepping up and getting the job done, be it little or small, that you build a track record



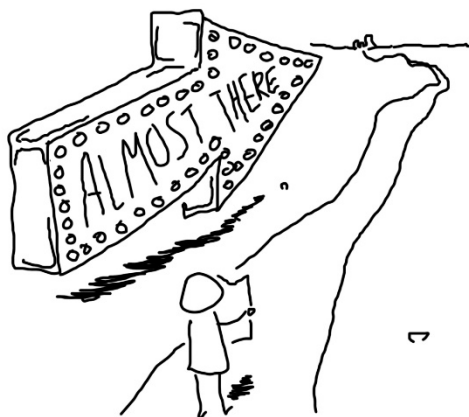
that gives you credibility. The more credibility you have, the more opportunities you get. More opportunities means more choices. Choice = FREEDOM!



On the other hand, if you blow everything off, you won't have credibility and you won't have many options. Except for the basement. Great option, that.



So, again, look at where you are and start thinking about where you want to go. Which of the things on your list do you absolutely have to do? Which



things are you doing that you don't have to do that aren't going to get you anywhere?

Here's the big question: Is there some place you'd like to wind up or something you'd like to be doing that you're not working towards? If so, add it to the answer of "where are you going?" Even if you're not yet heading in that direction, you shouldn't overlook planning for it!

At this point, you should have a couple lists: where you are and where you are going. Before going any further, take a moment to prioritize them. Rank them starting with 1 being most important. Then rewrite your list in order of importance.



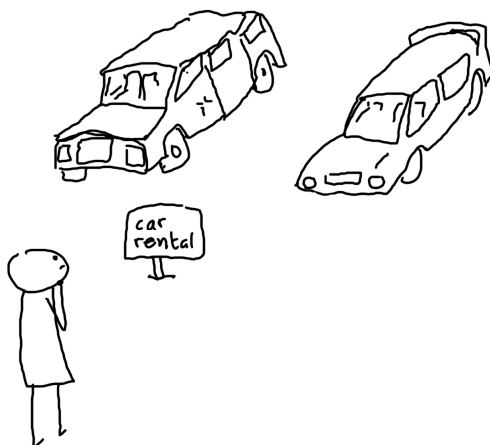
Now you're going to look at your lists in terms of immediate, shortly, down the road, way off, and

whenever. You can color code them or use symbols. However you want, just organize your lists between things that are going to happen in the next few months, next year, next few years, etc. Now you will want to rewrite the lists again based on when things are going to happen. Just be sure to keep them in order of priorities.



At this point, you should be getting a sense of what your life is looking like.

How are you going to get there?



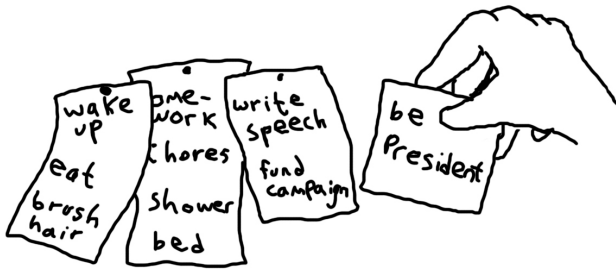
Ah, that's what it comes down to.

When you think about these things, you need to be thinking about what needs to be done to get them



done. For each answer to each question, make a list of what has to happen for you to be able to cross the big item off your list. These little things become your action list. These are the things you need to focus

your time and energies on.



When you're done, you should have a bunch of lists of things in your life, ranging from immediate to distant future, ordered in priority of what they mean to you. These lists should have both notes about what they mean to you, as well as action items that you have to do to accomplish something.



If you look at the whole stack, it probably looks a little intimidating. If so, don't look at it that way. Let's make one more list. This time, only include the most important action items for your immediate priorities. Keep it to

no more than 10-15 items. That's your starting point. Put today's date at the top and get started.



As you get things done, put a line through them. Once you've scratched off at least half the items, make another list that includes the things off this first list that aren't done, plus the more important actions from your bigger lists. Just keep plugging through your daily action list and you'll find that things are getting done.

Take a look at your "where are you going" lists and check off the action items on those lists as things get done. Sooner or later, you'll be crossing off the places you're going because YOU ARE THERE!



Summary

This is just a simple way of getting where you want to go. It's a habit. It's on purpose. It is not accidental. It is not automatic. It happens simply because you are doing the things that need to be done to get where you want to go. It's that simple. You, and you alone, are responsible for where you wind up. It's up to you as to whether it's some place really cool, or your parent's basement.

