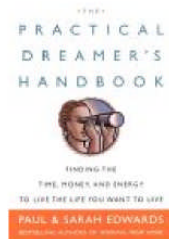


# The Practical Dreamer's Handbook

FINDING THE TIME, MONEY, AND ENERGY TO LIVE  
THE LIFE YOU WANT TO LIVE



**Print**



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## Sample Chapter

### Introduction: Walking Between Two Worlds – The Path of the Practical Dreamer

“Aim for the ideal; understand the real.”

Jean Jaures

It's so easy. We have a desire. We do something to fulfill it. And once we do, we feel satisfied ... until we have another desire. Then the cycle begins again, and again and again. Desire, action, satisfaction. We go through this cycle every time we take a breath. We do it every time we get hungry, or thirsty, or want to get up from a chair, or need to

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go to the store, or decide to look out the window. It's such a natural cycle, so much apart of who we are, that we don't even think about it. We've been doing it since the moment we were born.

But when we have to dream up some way to fulfill a desire, it's not so easy. The process is the same: we have a desire, we imagine how we might fulfill it, we take whatever action is needed, and once the desire is met we feel satisfied. But when it comes to fulfilling a dream, there's usually nothing automatic about it, because dreams are from another world. They come from our imagination. Taking a breath or getting a drink of water, walking over to the door or opening the blinds to let in some light are part of the world that already exists. No one questions whether it's practical to get a drink of water or whether we should get thirsty in the first place. But dreaming up something that doesn't exist anywhere except in our own minds is quite another matter.

Dreams are, by nature, not practical. Practical has to do with what is; dreams have to do with what could be but isn't yet. So we do question them, we question ourselves and so does the world. Should we have such a desire? Why aren't we satisfied with what we have? Is it appropriate? Is it possible? Realistic? Dreaming about a return to simpler times, for example, may be understandable when three out of four people report feeling stressed out, but do we dare think we could actually live a simpler life with time for family, personal fulfillment, nature and meaningful work? To many that seems impractical, unrealistic and even impossible.

Yet bridging these two worlds, the actual and the desirable, is the practical dreamer's challenge. The practical dreamer is both the architect and the builder, creating what could be from the reality of what is. So the practical dreamer must walk with one foot in the world of imagination, hopes, wishes, dreams, and possibilities and the other firmly planted in the world of physical reality with all its limitations; like time, money, space, form, material and the needs of other people. While our imagination is limitless, reality is not.

Many people choose not to walk the path of the practical dreamer, disliking the inconvenience and discomfort of having to straddle two very different, seemingly incompatible worlds. Some people prefer to live in the comfortable, imaginary world of their dreams, always talking and thinking, wondering and planning about what they will do, could do or should do ...someday ... but never actually acting on their ideas. Without using some type of mind-altering substance, however, those who only dream are never truly satisfied with this choice. "Reality" has a perverse way of intruding into our awareness whether we want it to or not, reminding us again and again, often at the most unexpected moments, in the most unexpected ways, that our lives don't match our fantasies. So, as the Everly brothers song bemoaned in the 50's, inevitably we realize,

“Only trouble is, ghee wiz, I’m dreamin’ my life away.”

Others prefer to live strictly in the world of practical reality; they choose not to wander into the “unrealistic” and impractical realm of dreams. “It’s never been done before,” they say; or “That’s not the way we do things here.” But those who never dream rarely feel truly satisfied with life either. They become enslaved to what is, and sooner or later sense that there could be more, especially when someone else attains what they would have enjoyed but never dreamt possible. It’s a tedious, gray and gloomy world that’s never lit by glimpses of a treasured dream.

How about you? Are you comfortable in both worlds? Can you dream? Do you dream? Can you accept and use reality as it is or would you prefer to ignore or fight it? Can you bring your dreams into reality and reality to your dreams?

Trying to walk between these two worlds can also put us at war with ourselves. The dreamer in us may thwart our efforts to be practical, realistic and disciplined. The practical side of ourselves may squelch our dreams, declaring them impossible before we even have a chance to explore their potential. Thus it’s easy to get stuck at some point in the cycle that turns desire into action and action into satisfaction. We can become disillusioned, stop dreaming and bury our desires. We can fail to act or become consumed with action and lose our dreams in the busyness of always having to be doing something. We can dream or work our lives away without stopping to savor or feel the satisfaction we crave. Who hasn’t done some or all of these at some point in their lives? But we may tend to get stuck more often at one place in the cycle than another. I know for me it’s in doing. I can literally “do myself in.”

Where do you get stuck? Can you hold on to your dreams through thick and thin? Do you get down to work on them or let them sit on the back burners of your mind? Can you stick to business and persevere? Do you allow yourself to savor the satisfaction of what you accomplish, each step along the way?

Practical dreamers embrace both the dreamer and the practical taskmaster within themselves, welcoming and encouraging their imagination while honoring their ability to face and live within the practicalities of reality. Their inner dreamer and their inner taskmaster become allies, working as a team toward a shared vision, drawing equally upon the unique perspectives and tools of their two worlds.

Bridging between What Has Been, What Is and What Could Be

“If you want to get ahead in this world,” my boss and would-be-mentor advised me, “figure out which way the wind is blowing and go stand in it.” I was babbled by this advice since the prevailing winds I saw weren’t blowing in any direction I

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wanted to go.

The prevailing winds said “Get a good job, come in early, work late, invest wisely and thirty years later you can retire and do whatever you want.” Of course, by then our son would have grown up and we would have missed his childhood. We would have had so little time to spend together as a couple that we would probably have grown apart and could possibly have divorced. At least, we would may have found ourselves married to someone we hardly knew and might not have wanted to know. Our bodies would most likely have become so run down and worn out that much of whatever money we’d acquired would have had to go for medical expenses.

But in past times that’s what most people did. So few options seemed possible at the time that most people weren’t motivated to take the world by its horns and turn their dreams into realities. You went along to get along, made do and put up with. Only a minority of people were willing to wrestle the world into compliance with their dreams. Clearly this mentor was not one of them, but I soon met someone who was.

He was from the “new school” of success that can be summarized briefly as decide what you want, visualize it in clear detail, set specific, measurable goals for accomplishing it, write down those goals, make a plan for carrying them out, commit to persistently implementing your plan, do this relentlessly and maintain an unshakably positive attitude in the process.

That sounded much better to me than standing in the prevailing wind, especially since it came with a guarantee. If you took this mentor’s course, followed that methodology and didn’t achieve your goals – whatever they might be – during the course of the program, you could continue taking the course until you did. Having left my job to start a home-based private psychotherapy practice, I was hosting a weekly radio show called Here’s to Your Success! To stay on the air I had to sell advertising, but not being a salesperson by nature, I needed to triple my income to keep the venture viable. So I enrolled.

This course delivered on its promise. I did triple my income, in six weeks! Others accomplished equally astounding feats. But I was miserable, and as far as I can tell, so were they. Achieving my goal required me to get right back on the treadmill of working morningnoon-and-night. The only difference was that this time I was doing it for myself instead of for an employer. There was no time for family, no time for fun, no time to relax, no time for anything other than meeting our weekly goals, with which we had all inevitably become obsessed. In the end, we were triumphant but exhausted, or worse. After meeting her goals, my partner throughout the course became critically ill and perilously close to death.

It was a great lesson. The mind-over-matter, conquer-the-world, winner-take-all approach alone will never get us to the kind of life so many of us are dreaming of today. It's modeled upon the behavior of yesterday's winners – those who got us to where we are now. Many people are still trying to use this approach to bring a sense of balance and control back into their lives, but it's a method at odds with the goals. We can't hammer reality into the shape of our dreams. We can't force ourselves to relax or drive ourselves relentlessly to greater happiness.

Forcefulness, drive and dominance were the tools used to build the world of today, just as standing in the prevailing provided security in past times for those who saw no other options but it couldn't take them to destinations of their own choosing. To create a tomorrow that includes the simplicity, civility and personal connectedness of the past without giving up the comfort, convenience and benefits of today's complex and rapidly changing world, we need to honor the truth of both the world of our dreams and the world as it is.

To balance the needs of the body, the mind, and the soul, the practical dreamer must be equally at home with yesterday's ruthlessly practical tools that built the wonders of today as with a wealth of new tools that will lay the foundation for the wonders of tomorrow. Whereas in the past we looked outward to find what we desired, now we must look inward to find ways to bring what we imagine and aspire to into the physical world. Whereas the past demanded that we use logic, set goals, plan and follow through on our plans step-by-step, today we must let our dreams unfold organically within the context of fast-changing complexities over which we have little control. So, the new tools we must master include listening to our desires, using our intuition, following our beliefs, reacting spontaneously and seizing upon fortuitous serendipity.

## **About This Handbook**

This is a handbook about mastering the tools of the practical dreamer and learning to walk comfortably between the world we want and the world we have. Because reclaiming what we've lost without losing what we've gained can not be a simple, logical step-by-step process, neither is the book. Instead, it unfolds as a series of queries, insights, discoveries, and reflections, along with specific steps to take; more like the process of practical dreaming itself. The threads of memories, our own experiences and those of others, research findings, facts and fantasies are all woven into an exploration of the creative cycle that is so intrinsic to our nature as artisans of our own life – the cycle that takes us from desire to action and from action to satisfaction.

**Part One, Desire**, is about awakening our new dreams of a world that encompasses the best of both the past and the present. It's about listening to what we're yearning for,

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imagining it as possible, believing in our ability to create it and committing to doing what we are intuitively guided to do.

**Part Two, Action**, is about finding and following the thread of truth that will take us from what is to what could be. It's about embracing the realities of space, money, time, and energy and using them in the service of our new dreams. It's about living spontaneously in the here and now as if it were the future we want and having the patience to allow the new realities we desire to unfold serendipitously.

**Part Three, Satisfaction**, is about finding pleasure in the creative process of crafting our lives. It's about appreciating this process and savoring our experiences moment by moment. It's about allowing ourselves to be fulfilled and renewed so we can go on to dream and create new dreams again and again.

Throughout the book you'll be presented with many of the questions each of us must answer in our own way if we are to reclaim the best of the past while retaining the best of all that modern life can offer. In each chapter, you'll read about our own experiences in the creative dreaming process, as well as those of our friends and neighbors in the village where we live and other colleagues from coast to coast, from all of whom we've learned so much. You'll also find sections called TRY THIS which suggest ways to start using the tools of Practical Dreaming in your own journey as you go through the book. At the conclusion of each of the three parts of the book, you'll find a section called REMEMBER THIS. It's filled with ideas and reminders we've collected and used over the past twenty years. You can turn to them, as we have, whenever you get stuck in your efforts to bridge the worlds of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Or you may want to select one each morning or evening.

It's an exciting time to be a Practical Dreamer because, you'll discover, as we have at the close of this book, you'll rarely need to dream alone. Our ranks are growing and the rewards of our journey are great. In bringing the best of the past into the best of today, we can create the future we long for, one that's filled with the peace, happiness and joy of serving others.



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