

## **MAKE YOUR WILDEST DREAM COME TRUE**

### **STEPHEN B. KARPMAN**

From time to time we have a fantasy about a wildest dream, an escape to a new life style or new persona, or the acquiring of possessions beyond our wildest dream. Then, with the business of everyday life, the dream fades away. There are people who seem to have no dream, there are people who have a dream but talk themselves out of it, and there are people who have a dream and can make it come true. How is it that one person drops everything and follows their dream while others seem unable to maintain the inspiration and commitment to change? This paper will present a listing of the usual blocks to success that arise in the Parent, Adult, and Child ego states.

What are the unfulfilled wishes that people back away from? At the presentation to the Eric Berne Seminar on December 3rd, we listed on the board examples of people's wildest dreams and script aspirations:

- Be super rich
- Have a baby on your own
- Change careers
- Be a trailblazer, invent something new
- Be the best
- Buy something big
- Take up art, singing, dancing, or music
- Go to Hollywood to become an actress
- Be gorgeous with plastic surgery and wardrobe consultation
- Run away and change your name to Joe Waterhouse
- Redecorate and remodel
- Invest wisely and retire by age fifty
- Travel to far away places with strange sounding names
- Get healthy and athletic
- Live to be 100
- Marry for love
- Live in a cabin in the woods
- Work in another country

For most of these changes, the audience could talk real life contemporary "heroes" who made the above breakthroughs and were inspiring reminders that anything was possible.

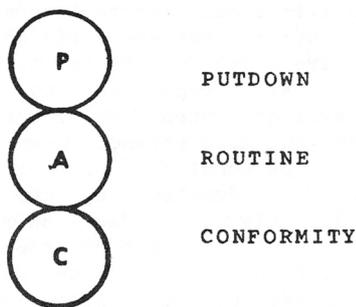
Then, for a demonstration of personal resistance to change, an empty chair was placed at the front of the room. The audience was asked to imagine each of their parents sitting there, to tell them that they were going to follow their wildest dream, and to note the parent's reaction. Then they were instructed to place their negative self in the chair, to do the same thing, and to note their own reaction. The negative reactions from parents

and self included "It's a pipe dream," "You're wasting your time," "You don't deserve it," "Yes, but...I can't" and other forms of ridicule, discount and fearful caution. Many people could see that they had an automatic resistance to taking big risks and bettering themselves. They were asked to make an inspired decision by the end of the meeting.

The personal and social blocks to self-fulfillment were then listed and fell into three groupings:

## 1. NO DREAM

For people who cannot think of a dream, have never had a liberating dream or have forgotten the one they once had, the blocks usually are:



Putdowns are discouraging and can lead to feelings of hopelessness and unworthiness. The oppressed mind sinks to thoughts at the "survival" level and not at the "self-actualizing" level where dreams are common. Putdowns generally come from three sources: friends, self and parents.

The putdowns by your friends may be (a) of you ("You're too old," "You'll never do it," "Who do you think you are?"), (b) of your ideas ("It won't work," "You'll go broke," "That's impossible"), (c) of success qualities (calling pride "braggadocio," problem solving "overanalyzing," and risk-taking "foolhardy"), and (d) of life ("Life is hard," "It's all rigged," "It's a dog eat dog world").

Putdowns come from friends who are negative people or people with friendly advice passing along their own loser scripting (episcrpting a "Don't Make It" injunction from home). A friend may unknowingly harbor jealous and competitive feelings toward you, and fear that your success will leave them alone without your friendship and feeling their own inferiority. The "Lobster Pit" has been described as a ghetto game where the lobster tries to crawl out of the pit but all the other lobsters climb on his back, pulling him back down to their level and he can't get out.

Putdowns from self include putdowns by the Critical Parent to the Adapted child ("You're lazy, crazy, sick, stupid, bad and ugly"), putdowns of the Adult (discounting thinking and the solvability of problems), and from the

Child's self-indulgent feeling rackets (fear of failure, fear of people, guilt over success, collecting mad stamps).

Putdowns by parents include the twelve script injunctions:

- Don't...don't act, don't risk, don't gamble, be careful
- Don't Be...don't be around, you're not OK, why bother?
- Don't Be You...follow another person's dream, not yours
- Don't Feel...don't take your intuitions seriously
- Don't Think...don't plan the steps to get to your dream
- Don't Be Well...you're not sane or well enough to risk it
- Don't be important...it's not in your stars to be famous
- Don't Make It...almost make it, don't outdo your parents
- Don't Be Close...don't trust people, do it alone
- Don't Belong...no room for you in the winners' circle
- Don't Be a Child...it's childish to have silly thoughts
- Don't Grow Up...stay helpless and avoid adult worries

Most people have a few of these injunctions to some degree, and many are supported by cultural myths. Injunctions gain strength when the Adapted Child is the dominant ego state, and lose strength when the Adult and Free Child control the personality. The injunction can be reversed and turned to advantage by the Rebel Child, or treated by T.A. directly with Redecision Therapy, or reduced in importance by strengthening the other ego states.

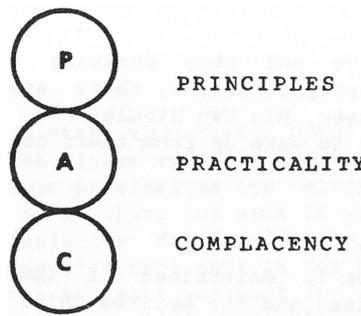
Routine can keep the Adult so busy with daily chores, long work hours, money worries, lists of things to do, keeping others happy and staying out of trouble that free time is mostly used for resting an overworked mind and body. There is very little thinking time left for imaginative reflection and soul-searching about who you really are and what you really want. Dreams never seem to surface in an overworked mind. Many breakthroughs in history have come from individuals who have gone off by themselves for long periods of meditation and solitude to find the inspiration they needed.

Conformity is so ingrained in certain people that it never occurs to them that they can be something other than what they see around them. They play the game of "Me Too," never realizing that they are playing a copycat game. They don't question the status quo. They are trained in the "What Will The Neighbors Think?" School of Conformity. Their first thought on a subject is, predictably, the first thought that others have had on the subject. It does not occur to them to program their subconscious to bring up original visions that break with tradition, or to hope for personal change beyond their current self-image.

## 2. DREAM, BUT

Unlike the people discussed above, these people know what their dream is but they play "Yes, but" and talk themselves out of it. They postpone the

stage of setting up a plan and following it. The aspiration and inspiration is not followed by perspiration.



**Principles** - A rigid misuse of principles, bordering on scrupulosity, functions as a "Yes, but" in disguise. The righteously dutiful daughter, playing the game of "If It Weren't For Mother" will not leave her mother behind and accept a fabulous job offer in another city. The Adapted Child could only use "one-step thinking" and not get beyond her family rules that say "The family is number one" and "It's wrong to be selfish." A man promised himself he would stay at his new job for one year, and passes up a once in a lifetime opportunity ("When a man makes up his mind, he should stick to it"). Another man strongly believes he should not begin meeting women until he has a car and a bachelor apartment ("You have to do things in their correct order"). The principles become more important than the priorities.

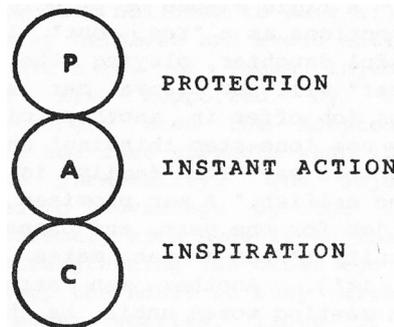
**Practicality** - Money is given as the reason for not embarking in a variety of adventures, but money is rarely the reason, because the people who really want it, find the money. An unmarried woman with an excellent income was nearing forty and wanted a baby as a single mother, but her Principled "Yes, but" was that the baby should have a father around, and her Practical "Yes, but" was that she should have a man support her, so she has no baby, while another woman in the same profession had a baby anyway and is delighted with her choice. A man wouldn't leave his job to go back to school to better his career because he said he couldn't afford it, while another man in a similar situation borrowed the money and found reasonable payment terms. Others go on spending sprees buying low priority items to stay broke so they can't follow their high priority goals.

**Complacency** - People can get too comfortable and conceited with their recent successes ("Got it made") and give up on their long term goals. It can affect people who have had their long term goals. It can affect people who have had their fill of excitement and proven what they had to prove... they did their wildest dream and now their script is open-ended...like rock stars who quit early. The movie "Rocky III" portrayed a comfortably married overstricken prizefighter who had to battle long and hard against his complacency in order to win against a hungry newcomer. Football Super Bowl winners rarely repeat the following year. Many people get part of what they want, hang on, and settle for what they have and stop pursuing their dream. In contrast to the steady producers, there are those who are

scripted like Ulysses, Rip Van Winkle, and Sleeping Beauty, to take many years to wake up from their complacent storybook sleep.

### 3. DREAM, YES

An inspiration is maintained if immediate action is started or visualized and the excited child is protected from hearing the inevitable "Yes, buts:"



Inspiration is the starting point for the wildest dream. The excited Child can visualize the dream in detail as well as all the steps to get there, which seem very easy. There is no doubt that it is possible, and commitment and permission seem unnecessary.

Often the moment of personal inspiration is preceded by a series of exciting events: the witnessing of inspiring examples by others; the completion of a longstanding project; a series of personal successes including recognition by others; or a shocking realization of the need to change. A personal commitment just to be open to change usually will set the stage for a fresh insight to emerge from within. Often creativity follows a period of dormancy and darkness, like the new buds of spring follow a long winter.

Instant action is fantasized by the inspired child who plays out all the fun moves and fun steps to realize the dream and to enjoy it. If the inspiration occurs at the right place, the plans can actually begin--a phone call, make some drawings, block out your schedule, begin a spring cleanup, etc. The Adult will know where to get the help and information. There are excellent books in the library on how to get rich, for example.

Protection from the Parent allows the Child to hold onto the excitement by keeping the "Yes, buts" from encroaching on the fun, and also watches silently in the background to make sure that nothing crazy or stupid is done. The prolonged exuberance without interference allows the child to play out the fantasies in detail to solidify the dream, much like the mind keeps a person asleep while they are enjoying a pleasant dream.

A key point is that the "Yes, buts" do not matter, because a person can figure everything out if they have the inspiration. Certain permissions are already available in society: "You can do anything you want if you set your

mind to it," "The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer," "Don't save it for a rainy day," "If it doesn't work out, at least you went for it." Eric Berne talked about the three permissions people need: permission to love, change and do things well. And as children we got the permission from Disney's Pinocchio who followed a dream and went from a puppet (dependent on parents) to a puppet-boy (illusion of autonomy) to a real boy (autonomous). The permissions are found in the lyrics of the theme song:

When you wish upon a star  
Makes no difference who you are  
Anything your heart desires  
Will come to you

If your heart is in your dream  
No request is too extreme  
When you wish upon a star  
As dreamers do.

Stephen B. Karpman, M.D., is an Assistant Clinical Professor at UCSF and in private practice in San Francisco. He is a former editor of the Transactional Analysis Journal, twice winner of the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award for the "Drama Triangle" and "Options," and twice Vice President of the International Transactional Analysis Association.

