

**HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT WHEN
THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO GET IT**

**THE
UNDERCOVER
ROAD**

Ira Shapiro



Welcome to our conversation. If you have comments or questions to share about a particular chapter, send them to:

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After you finish reading the Introduction, you can delve into the other chapters in any order that appeals to you.

NO NEED TO READ

CHAPTERS IN SEQUENCE.

FOREWORD

THE UNDERCOVER ROAD is an insightful and unusual guide to creating the various components of a successful, balanced life: money, health, relationships, career, happiness, and personal satisfaction.

It begins with the premise that the culture, media, government, corporations and even educational institutions dispense fraudulent, misleading or unrealistic suggestions for achieving most people's goals in a Western, developed country.

After years of dead ends, frustration and unimpressive progress, the author, Ira Shapiro, discovered strategies and mental tools that turned his life around phenomenally. He succeeded to such a striking degree that he kept his approach hidden and under cover.

Now, Ira is revealing the attitudes, methods and observations that will unquestionably—with practice—bring readers closer to their individual life goals. This is a practical, frank offering replete with anecdotes about successes by other every day people as well.

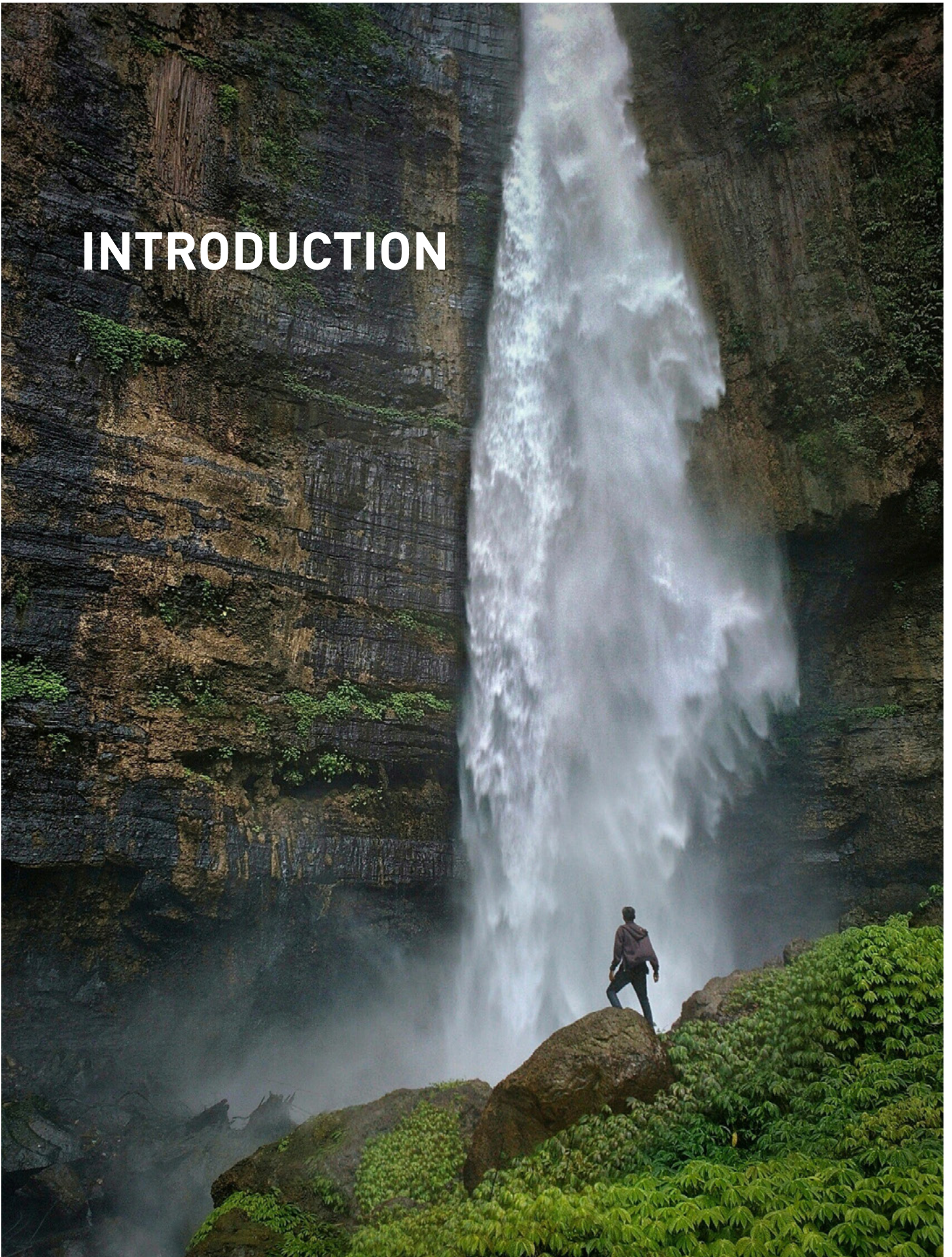
In down-to-earth chapters about less obvious ways to make big money and the details of reinventing yourself or starting up new businesses, the author also calls upon coincidence, intuition, and Asian thought. You will learn how your brain tricks you to avoid stress and discomfort in making major decisions involving your partner or your career. Ira shows you how to learn more about your likes and dislikes by examining the groups you have joined. You will discover the surprising benefits in traumatic setbacks. If you are out of step with most people, you will read how to exploit thinking out of the box to help reach your goals. If your views are more conventional, there are techniques to spur creativity.

Finally, there are chapters on determining your goals, spotting trends, changing your attitude and extremely practical tips about life that will enhance your enthusiasm, zest for each day and perhaps joy to be alive.

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INTRODUCTION



We are raised with fraudulent promises. Our culture, schools, the media constantly fool us with false routes to happiness and money. We are inadequately informed about health and diet. We are rarely told to seek wisdom. We are misled about love. We are lied to by politicians and corporations.

At 78-years-old, I feel obliged to share some secrets - secrets that will motivate and inspire you. I will emphasize making money, which buys survival, security, and a better chance at happiness. I will tell you how to pivot from where you are, no matter your age or career stage. I will suggest ways to reinvent yourself, a process I have done six times, so far. But you must be willing to take some chances, because doing nothing will result in stagnation or possibly have change forced on you like downsizing or obsolescence - that is something you don't want.

In my early thirties, I hit a dead end. I was full of failures and frustrations. Like most people, I had not reached my objectives. I wasn't even on my way: middling income (\$26,000), unimpressive job, marriage ending, no prospects.

But by accident after a funeral, I was nudged onto a new path that made everything I wanted relatively easy to achieve. My life changed in a remarkable way. I didn't find a magic wand. I had to work at it and discover how to apply the principles I am going to teach you. In fact my successes were so phenomenal that I was embarrassed. The changes reached such a striking degree that I kept my methods hidden and under cover.

For decades, I have felt I was on the other side of a raging river, yet I crossed it. I looked back at all the people who were in the same place where I had been, who were struggling, and I knew that I needed to share how to cross that obstacle.

I am going to describe how I made millions of dollars, straightened out my life, and achieved my goals involving: careers, money, health, relationships, happiness, and personal satisfaction. It's an unconventional approach, takes effort to master, and is not for people who are afraid to deviate from the norm. My approach has not only worked well with regards to money, but it also works well in all aspects of life.

If your life is like mine was in my early thirties, you are struggling with

obstacles, are confused about what direction to take, been thwarted and met failures despite doing what you thought was right, then you have nothing to lose by hearing what I will say. Give it a shot.

There is no doubt that I had many lucky breaks. But despite any hurdles you might face or burdens you are carrying with you, I am convinced that your chances of success will improve if you do what I learned from my experiences and those of pioneers before me.

Since I crossed that imaginary river, I have made many blunders. I have screwed up so badly that, at times, I have astonished myself. *How could I know so much, do so well, and still not call upon past experience to avoid giant mistakes?* We screw up because we all have our limitations, our blind spots, our periods of denying the realities in front of us. On balance though, I am sure that I have bumped into an unusual and successful approach for living an upper middle class or better life in a developed country.

You often read and hear about famous and successful people who are held up as inspirations and role models: Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, sports and movie stars, etc. These celebrities are exceptional, and copying their achievements is probably impossible. Their stories and journeys are definitely not yours or mine. If you could walk in their footsteps, you would already be on your way to fame and riches. Even if you are only in your teens or 20s. You wouldn't be frustrated enough to have picked up this book. You would have found the golden path long ago.

I didn't start on my road until I was 35. I was a late bloomer who was stymied for years by disappointment and fears of failure. Before that, I expended considerable effort trying to earn more money, but I could never "figure it out." I was terrified that I would be middle class all my life, constantly worrying about paying bills and providing a better life for my family.

I have since learned that sprinkled throughout the United States are huge numbers of people who have become millionaires. One report says that 10.1 million households have over \$1 million, and that doesn't include the value of their home. That is one out of every 13 (or 7.5%) of all U.S. households. Another report says there are 13,500,000 millionaires, totaling 4% of the entire population or 5.5% of the adults. Can you believe there are so many?

You rarely read about most of them, because they are not considered newsworthy by the media. Nevertheless, many exist privately, quietly and well below the radar. They are often hidden and camouflaged. Quite a few rich people live frugally and without show and big-boy toys.

I have been a millionaire for three decades and want to paint a methodology and philosophy that has worked for me in all areas that are part of a full and fulfilling life. Not just money-making. The relative ease with which I can make most of my decisions and choices is what leads partly to such sweeping success. I think just being able to select one action over another is a very big deal. The next challenge is to pick the right option. I will help you learn how.

I am certain that most other millionaires and happy people have achieved their results in different ways than I have. It's not a contest about whose ways are better. Whatever works. But most important is that my words give you a realistic, unbelievably pragmatic strategy and outlook for your own future. I promise you that if you practice my suggestions, you will be amazed how simple some of the difficult choices will become.

For example, my biggest financial success so far was (in 1993, at age 52) co-founding with a 21-year-old a company now called Take Two Interactive Software Inc. It is a publicly owned company best known for the Grand Theft Auto franchise (GTA), whose latest edition had the biggest launch in history of any video game, movie, or any other entertainment product: \$1 billion in sales in three days. GTA5 has so far sold over 100 million copies and generated sales over \$6 billion, much more than the highest-grossing films of all time.

My friends, business advisors and professionals, even family members, all told me that I was nuts to take this risk. "Games are for kids," they'd say. There is no future in the field. Some knew that the father of my partner had spent time in prison for tax issues, and that was reason enough to not move forward. With eyes wide open, my wife and I invested in the business. It felt so right I couldn't stop myself. Back then we were the only funders willing to take that chance with our young partner. As time went on people with hundreds of millions of dollars invested into the field. Even though we sold almost all our shares by 2003, I am proud that in 2018 the company was valued above \$15 billion, and video games are almost a \$100 billion a year

industry.

Take Two started as a CD-ROM company making travel discs, before most people had ever heard of a CD-ROM, and drives were not readily available. Even then, my young partner saw the future of games. I helped secure a team of game developers, long before they were plentiful.

Before Take Two, after being fired twice from salaried jobs, I co-founded, with just \$800, a visual book publishing company that I owned solely for 20 of 27 years until the internet killed it. My wife and I also started a real estate renovation and land preservation business. The 2008 housing bubble-bursting put that in a deep sleep, so I began my fifth career as an angel investor again with my wife helping entrepreneurs start their businesses, sometimes based only on a PowerPoint or an idea written on an envelope. I am writing a book in the hopes that I can help you learn how to accept and grow from change. Perhaps, I found a sixth career?

I know not everyone can—or wants to—change careers, particularly if you went to school for years to become a doctor, lawyer, artist or worked in one industry or factory for decades. But being adaptable to market changes, new styles or societal needs is important if you want to make money, especially when you have only your labor to offer and haven't yet saved funds for investment. Rolling with, and dodging, life's frequent setbacks and difficulties is also the best way to overcome the hard times that have nothing to do with financial wellbeing.

YOU MUST BE FLEXIBLE. In college, I knew a physics major who admitted he no longer liked physics. He was a junior and had decided not to change his major because he already 'invested' two-years in this field. He made the choice to continue to pursue it for the rest of his life although he didn't like what he was doing. How crazy is that? Life is too short to be miserable when you have so many opportunities to be happy, or at least happier.

My intention is to describe a different point of view and an accessible philosophy that you will not learn from teachers or other books. You will need faith, belief, intuition, insights, hunches, and synchronicity. However, it is not a flighty, New Age method. Utilizing logic and your previous practical experience are essential. It simply uses parts of your brain's potential that are

often overlooked in our sequential, rational, word-oriented society. Get ready to use your common sense!

I will also spell out some simple principles and basic strategies that I have acquired over the years, so that you don't have to re-invent the wheel and discover them on your own. These are lessons of life that have been useful for centuries, but never taught in school or by most parents. Why not take some shortcuts to your achievements? You can always try them out and discard the ones that don't work for you.

If you are a teenager, just considering what paths to choose, these ideas should be unbelievably useful. Those of you in your 20s and 30s already have many personal experiences to compare with what I am describing. You can look back and imagine how you might have applied my suggestions to your previous circumstances. You still have plenty of time to make major changes in how you make decisions and take action.

The older you are, the less likely you are to change and adjust your problem-solving, decision-making patterns. But even if you are over 40, I urge you to try to still move forward. As you will see, it is never too late to reach your goals.

Here are some of the subjects I will discuss in the following sections:

DISCOVERING GOALS, so you know where to go, and developing habits that will help you get there. It is a huge challenge. You have to know your strong and weak points to succeed. And the more specifically you can visualize your next set of goals, the better your odds of reaching that target.

EASIER WAYS TO MAKE MONEY than are taught in school and discussed with friends. Here is an area in which we are duped by bosses and society. There are so many ways to acquire money that you haven't thought of, so you'll find them spelled out. Many of these options will surprise you.

PIVOTING OR REINVENTING YOURSELF is scary but could be necessary. Where do you find the courage to make changes that might fail or lead to rejection? Millions of people have done it and are still doing it. Some aspects of this effort are obvious and basic. But maybe you haven't thought of them. You can do this at any age, whether to make more money, begin a

new career, or succeed at enjoying better health, deeper relationships, more wisdom.

NEVER GIVING UP is easy to say, but very hard to do, especially if you have failed already. You will find useful suggestions here to motivate you to keep plugging and training yourself to not become disheartened.

JOINING GROUPS is what we do without thinking, whether for business, pleasure, religious support or to help others. There are many benefits and confrontations in doing this. You will need to learn to compromise to be accepted and to get along. Most people don't realize how much you can learn about yourself through this process and interaction. It's a surprising opportunity to help determine your next directions.

EARNING THE RESPECT OF OTHERS is far more important than most people realize. Sometimes this need leads to life and death decisions. The more you appreciate how motivated you are by the opinions of others, the easier it will be for you to make ideal choices on your road to success.

CHECKING YOUR ATTITUDE is another challenge for you to examine. Changing your perspective to be more positive will alter everything you see and do in life. It will bring you more money, friends, peace and possibly joy. There are some techniques I have identified that will probably affect your outlook.

DISCIPLINE is essential, and I will describe easy ways to acquire it. Having plans that are never implemented will prevent you from reaching your goals. Execution is everything. You must give your dreams a chance to come alive, no matter how terrified you are of failing.

BEING DIFFERENT AND THINKING UNCONVENTIONALLY increases your odds at succeeding in many endeavors. If you have long felt out of step with your friends or peers, there are ways to take advantage of those distinctions. They can be blessings in disguise.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU AREN'T CREATIVE OR A VISIONARY and can't think any way but normally and conventionally. Learn techniques to boost you out of your ruts and grooves. You must take little steps to prime your creative pump. Some educators believe we are all creative and fearless as children but

that schooling and social mores beat it out of us. There are ways here to bring those sleeping talents to life again.

SPOTTING TRENDS is crucial if you are considering making major life changes and career moves. You want to enter growing industries, like information technology, healthcare/eldercare and private spaceflight, rather than dying fields, like coal mining or newspapers. There are social changes like the gig economy, fake news, fleeing refugees or gay rights that you must be aware of. Environmental changes like rising oceans and increased pollution that will impact your possibilities. And technological innovations that are affecting us enormously all the time. Being aware of what some of these trends are can help you decide which road to take in your search for more income and a better life.

DEALING WITH TRAUMA is not always a bad thing, particularly if you are prepared for it. It's going to happen, but it can be incredibly beneficial. I will surprise you with how and why. But to go through your years without anticipating the hardships that you and those close to you are sure to encounter is naïve. It is always better to be prepared.

STARTUPS are not for everyone, although 20% of millionaires who earned their own money did it by beginning or owning their own business. If you don't take that route, you can use some of your savings to back another person's dream. I will spell out how it works and describe my own experiences in this risky area with huge potential rewards.

COINCIDENCE, INTUITION AND HUNCHES are with you all the time - if you don't tune them out. They can be the source of your success in any pursuit. Everyone has them, but most people ignore them, because they don't make sense. These are vastly more important than you can ever imagine. They will assist you through the morass of decision-making that confronts you every day. Sometimes you will be so sure of what to do, even when it defies all logic, that you will fear you're going nuts. You're not. I will guide you to this place of unorthodox benefit.

FINDING AND NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS with a lover, your child, neighbor and associates. Understanding people and what they want is a great talent. There are thousands of books and classes spewing advice about

how to do it better. I will distill what I have encountered to help you succeed in this area. No promises of perfect marriages, fame and crowds of admirers. But some less obvious insights that are sure to make interaction more enjoyable and positive. And I promise that suggestions here will be beneficial in business as well.

MAINTAINING GOOD HEALTH is more important than people imagine, until you lose it. Most folks have no idea how to be fit, lose weight, avoid illness. There is a limited benefit in being alive if you are sick or tired often. And you can't do your job well or advance your career ideally if you are distracted with health issues that could have been avoided. I think nothing is more important than health. Top of the priority list. Amazing that so many ignore it, until it is too late.

USING ASIAN PHILOSOPHIES AND MARTIAL ARTS STRATEGIES in your daily life to make you happier and better able to cope with the struggles of being alive. These are more useful in business than you could imagine. I built a successful publishing company using verbal aikido, when dealing with customers. They never had a chance, nor realized what was happening. Yet it was a win-win for all of us. You can learn much here, even if you never study martial arts or visit Asia and especially Japan.

PRACTICAL WISDOM and how to integrate it. No theoretical philosophy here, but savvy stories describing how to manage the real world. Good for acquiring money and reaching your other goals as well.

These tools and strategies above will be discussed and can be applied to everyday living and decision making: when you are shopping for clothes, cooking dinner, meeting with friends, making phone calls, wooing a lover. They can also help make you rich or affluent; or help you change how to earn a living and with a different group of people you enjoy being with.

I am no genius, no great brain, no intellect. However, I am reflective and think all the time about my goals, past actions, future possibilities. I react to my situation, I can change, and most importantly, I never give up and neither should you.

CHAPTER ONE

DISCOVERING GOALS IS DIFFICULT



I used to write speeches and help handle the financial public relations for a very controversial tycoon. Early in his rise to notoriety, he bought a software design company and concluded that: The biggest obstacle to solving a problem was: identifying the right problem. Corporations spend millions of dollars on R&D when they aren't even sure what they are trying to solve; as do individuals, bureaucrats and small business owners. Before you start on a journey, you need to know where you want to go.

However, it takes more than just knowing the problem you want to solve and how to solve it to become a tycoon—it takes sacrifice. I remember being in his limo, when his wife was due to have a baby. “She had the baby this morning,” he told us “...but I was at the birth of the previous kids, so I don't need to be there for this one. Let's focus on the business.”

I was stunned. Was that what it took to acquire hundreds of millions of dollars? Maybe. I knew right then, that was not how I was going to measure my success. To me there needed to be a balance of money and happiness to be successful. To me, life didn't have to be like that, although I never made hundreds of millions.

Identifying the exact goal comes into play if you are trying to save money. People can save more easily if they have a specific item or use for the money to be spent on like a house, car, or trip to Amsterdam. Saving for a 'rainy day' is much harder. However, maybe you can incentivize yourself by creating a pot of funds for your first investment, whether it be stocks, mutual funds or to back a startup. I am convinced, by the way, that you need to have funds to invest to make any advances toward affluence or wealth. It's too hard for the average person to reach that goal through money from labor alone. More on this later.

What is it that you want? Ask yourself. Do you go for what you want? One night at the end of a first date, I said good night to a young woman after a drink in her apartment. I went down the elevator to the lobby. Then I realized I had left my umbrella upstairs. I had read enough books about psychology and behavior to realize that it was no accident. Even so, I went back up, knocked on her door, sheepishly said hello and retrieved my umbrella.

After saying goodnight for the second time, I went back to the elevator quite confused. I squatted down against the wall and spent the next 20 minutes at least attempting to identify what I wanted to do. Stay with her or leave? I had been so respectful so far. I had played it cool. Not too forward. This was in the late 70s, and women's liberation had not yet taken over.

This was a very difficult effort. I kept talking to myself, attempting to not 'figure it out' or imagine what I should or shouldn't do. I had to ignore anything to do with her reactions or preferences. No concern about embarrassment or rejections. What did I want?

Eventually I connected, knocked on her door, and with great precision, told her what I wanted: "I would like to spend the night with you." I hadn't put the decision on her shoulders by saying, "Could I...?" or "Would you like to...?"

She was already in her nightgown, looking quite lovely. She smiled and said, "Come in..."

That evening was a major turning point for me. I risked being a fool, but I took a first, baby step in discovering what I want, what the problem or the end result really was, and accepting whatever happened. It was important to be clear about what I felt and what the goal was. In this case, there was a happy ending, for we saw each other many months.

Most importantly, I realized how hard it was for me, and maybe you, to uncover what I wanted - not just in spending a night with a first date. I had to practice diligently to identify my true desires. It took a long time, but became easier and quicker over the next few years. I'll tell you in a later chapter how you can do it, too.

One way is to notice what you don't like to do, especially when society and others near you are telling you how great something is or should be and how enjoyable it is or it is supposed to be.

I met a woman once who loved dinner parties that had polite, predictable conversation. Nothing controversial. Exactly the kind of evening that I found tedious and avoided. Dorothy said she felt very comfortable at

those tables: she knew what to say, what others would say, didn't have to think about what to say, and wouldn't be put on the spot. Plus, she was able to dress up and be with her friends. Not for me...BORING!

Of course, there are gatherings around food that are pleasurable beyond the tastes for your tongue. Obviously, conversation can be stimulating, provocative and educational. You might like that kind of interaction. You may not be afraid of confrontational questions that put you on the spot and force you to respond publicly and quickly without reflective thought. If that is you, then you can accept it and move on. There is no right way. The goal is to find out who you are AT THIS POINT IN TIME, so that you can figure out what you want to do: what path in life you want to follow, where you might want to live, what kind of career you want, how much money you want, what kind of life partner appeals to you. These things will change over time and with experience, but at least get started along your road.

The one thing I knew in high school was that I didn't want to end up like so many of my father's deceased friends and acquaintances. He would read the weekly paper and frequently bump into obituaries of guys who passed in their 40s. Many were overweight and died of heart attacks. Too many pastrami sandwiches, cheesecakes and hard liquor. None of them exercised. They would sit and drink and play poker and gin rummy many nights a week.

I also knew that I didn't want to worry about money, but that I wasn't going to earn it by following my culture's tendency to become doctors, lawyers, accountants and retail merchants. None of those paths appealed to me. I was highly motivated to move on and out. I just didn't know where I was going.

I remember a 30-year-old co-worker in New York being stunned that I didn't yearn for a house in the suburbs with a white picket fence and rose bushes. She thought everyone wanted that life. I was just as flabbergasted that she could imagine such a set path was the preferred choice of everyone.

A few years later, when I lived in the suburbs, wore a three-piece suit,

carried my round-cornered attaché case and commuted daily by rail to work in Manhattan, I saw body parts on the track from a man who may have jumped in front of the train. I didn't want to become that man, even in a spiritual sense. Someone who hated his life so much that the fate of the oncoming train seemed more promising.

But as a close and well-meaning friend said...

Want to know how the story ends?

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