

HOW TO

SLAY A PIRATE

**LESSONS ON SUCCESS
FROM SAILING THE PACIFIC**

Barbara E. Gottesman, LL.B., CPCC, ACC

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my husband and fearless captain, without whom this journey may never have happened, and to my courageous children, who remind me each and every day never to settle for less.

This book is also dedicated to dream seekers everywhere—and especially to those who are committed to taking the leap to make those dreams a reality.

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Lessons on Success from Sailing the Pacific

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Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

-Mark Twain

Sunday,
October 25,
2010

ONE YEAR AGO

The 2010 Baja Haha, an annual cruisers' rally from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas, is departing today, Monday, October 25, 2010. We were registered to leave with this rally in 2009, along with nearly 200 other boats, but because of some unexpected health issues, we decided to postpone our departure. Health issues, or the possibility of them, are one of the reasons for doing this trip. Michael and I both lost our fathers at very young ages (his dad was 61, mine was 54). But these new issues, which turned up only 10 days before our planned departure, put us into a new conundrum. What were we to do? Should we even go at all? A lifetime of dreams, painful decision making, grueling planning and preparations, and high expectations were all at stake.

After balancing out all the risks and worst-case scenarios, we decided to wait out only a couple of weeks, which put our departure only 3 days later than the rest of the HaHa fleet. Our crew members were flexible enough to leave late with us. We were still able to check in with the fleet every morning once we got started, and caught up at both stops before meeting again in time for the Big Party upon arrival in Cabo San Lucas.

But, of course, we questioned our actions every step of the way. Were we being irresponsible? Selfish? Foolish? Would we be able to forgive ourselves if something did happen?

And here we are, one year later. The health issues that delayed us in the first place have all but faded, while many incredible experiences are behind us. Did we do the right thing? Given how things turned out, we can easily say we did, but had it been different, who knows?

I guess that's the thing. Who's to say one decision is better than another? A decision just is. And then you go with it...

Should we be doing another year? Should we be going to Central America or to the South Pacific? Should we haul our boat in La Paz or in Mazatlan for a bottom paint? Should we meet guests in Zihuatenejo or in Huatulco? How long can we wait for a "weather window?" When should we be making our crossing to Mazatlan from La Paz? We consider our options, talk it through, make a decision and then go with it. We cannot look back. We must look ahead. And if changes need to be made, we make them as yet another decision in our path.

In fact, that's a huge lesson that cruising teaches you. You cannot get bogged down in the what-ifs, or you won't do anything. You consider your options, you make your decisions, you go with it until the next decision needs to get made. That's life, isn't it? Only in the cruising world, the decisions seem so exaggerated, somehow; perhaps because each one is so all-encompassing to your life at that moment, or perhaps it's that some have a real bearing on your personal safety, or maybe it's because they need to be made so often. Or am I forgetting what it's like to live on land?

I am grateful that we've been in good health for the last year. And we'll keep looking ahead.

-Barbara, signing off from La Paz, BCS, Mexico

INTRODUCTION:

Navigation to Adventure

You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.

-Andre Gide (1869-1951)
French Author, Nobel Prize in Literature 1947

On April 1, 2009, at the height of the global financial crisis, my husband, who had worked in the financial services industry for nearly 20 years, came home, helped me put the kids to bed, and unloaded his first bombshell of that year: He lost his job. Two weeks later, with a grim economic outlook, he came home with the second bombshell: We should rent out our house, buy a boat, and go sailing with the kids for a year. Just like that.

My immediate reaction: I don't know how to sail. I hate the water. I can't even help my kids with their homework without World War III breaking out, let alone homeschooling them. My kids, like most siblings, don't always get along, and I couldn't imagine how much more difficult it would be for all of us to get along in really small quarters.

Without a pause, my mind continued to protest. We had never been on an overnight passage. The longest sailing trip we had ever taken was four days and three nights from Santa Cruz to Monterey and back again. I'm prone to seasickness. I loved my work as a life, career, and executive coach, I loved my clients, and I couldn't imagine giving that up.

In other words, my answer was a resounding "NO."

So how was it that, within five months, my husband, Michael, and I found ourselves the owners of *Whatcha Gonna Do*, a 46-foot catamaran, and had rented out our home and moved aboard our first-ever boat at a shipyard in San Diego? It was just the four of us—me, my husband, and our two children, Danielle (then 11) and Harrison (then 8)—living at a dock in a *really* small space with *really* big plans for a sailing sabbatical. And, within six weeks of moving aboard, how did we get to setting sail for points south for a year of adventure in Mexico that turned into two-and-a-half years and included the longest ocean passage in the world and nearly 7,000 miles of cruising through the South Pacific to Australia?

The leap from a definite "No!" to an intrepid "Yes" came because several things were gnawing at me right from the beginning. I was a life coach, helping people to live their dreams, and yet I was going to let my husband's dream of a sailing sabbatical wither away. How could I not do this with him? It wasn't like I was afraid of travel. I've been adventure traveling my whole life: Europe, Thailand, Turkey, Israel, Nepal, India, and Peru.

Through my own introspection, I soon realized that I, too, had a dream. Mine was to travel with my children

and show them that there is so much more out there in this vast and diverse world beyond the socio-economically middle-class privileged bubble they were living in. When Michael put a voice to his dreams, it made me see that I hadn't even allowed my own dream to enter my radar screen. How could that be?

As I watched my husband peruse the Boats for Sale websites, I decided I needed to examine what was really stopping *me*. I had to be sure the decision I was making at this point in my life was going to be one based on truths, not on fears. I had to figure out if my "No" was a result of my own dissonance or my fears.

One by one, I pulled apart my truths. I enrolled in a sailing course and realized I actually knew more than I thought I did from years of sailing with Michael, tacking, raising sails, hauling lines, and docking. While he continued to study the Boats for Sale websites, I started perusing the homeschooling sites. I saw that there were many families out there homeschooling and many cruising families doing it with programs that were either self-designed or not Internet-dependent (which would be necessary for when we were offshore or in places without Internet access). We planted the seed in our kids' minds and saw that they were so excited that they were able to hypothesize and dream *together* about what they'd see and do if they were to live on a boat. Plus, I knew there was medication available to alleviate sea sickness, and once you've lived on a boat for a few days, you'll get your sea legs and fend off sea sickness eventually. As for my life coaching practice, what better advertisement is there than really walking my talk?

So there I was, having pushed myself out of my comfort zone, my element, everything I knew, into something wholly different. What made it even more remarkable was *how far* I was out of my element. I wasn't used to pushing myself to that degree. I was scared to death, and excited and elated, all at the same time.

Undoubtedly, I feel at the top of my game and most alive when I successfully get through stretching myself beyond what even I thought possible. There aren't many who choose to take a sabbatical, and even fewer who do it by sailing into the sunset—with their families. Yes, stretching myself was putting it mildly. This was going far beyond routine. Was it going to be too much?

Sunday,
May 29, 2011

LIVING ON THE EDGE

It's not uncommon, based on my unscientific poll, for women to feel "on the edge" while cruising. It's not the adventure type of living on the edge, but rather the type that has you ridiculously happy and fulfilled one moment and then completely anxious or snappy or melancholy the next. There's no reason to feel low, and I'm sure it's tough for many to feel my pain. But it's still an interesting phenomenon from strictly a psychological perspective.

I do wonder why I am not on a constant "happy ride." After all, I'm in paradise, with my family, traveling and experiencing incredible things. As I've mentioned before,

though, it's hard work. Just going to the grocery store is a full day event. And things break. All the time. And there's dirt everywhere. All the time. And it's been raining—no, pouring torrentially—for the last few days, and the wind is gusting to such an extent that it has overturned dinghies in our anchorage. And I'm just plain tired of it. I have never felt like such an inadequate housekeeper as now.

One theory is that, as cruisers, we stretch ourselves beyond our comfort zones every day. At first, it's exhilarating, knowing you can get through it. But after a while, it's simply exhausting. I'd love to get off for just a few days—take a shower with hot water and not worry about how much I'm using, and not have to press the shower pump button to get the water to go down the drain. I'd like to live in a clean house without sunscreen fingerprints and oily salt. I'd like to be able to go for lunch with my girlfriends for something other than raw fish in coconut milk. I'd like to be able to wake up in the middle of the night in a storm and not worry about whether our anchor is dragging or our hatches are closed or if there's a leak somewhere that will cause ugly mold to appear. I'd like to be able to go to the grocery store and buy whatever I feel like eating, and for only a regular week's worth of produce—and not worry that it will have to last me for four weeks. I want a kitchen that fits more than one person in it. I want space. I'd like to be able to send my kids to school and let the teachers worry about whether they are developing academically as they should be. I want to feel dry and clean. I want to have all my laundry done at one time. I want to be able to relax. I want some familiarity. This newness is driving me, well, over the edge.

-Barb

*Still on 'Ua Pou, Iles de Marqueses, French Polynesia;
setting out this afternoon for Makemo Atoll, in the
Tuamotu Archipelago*

By the end of the adventure, after living on the edge, what I came out with was a belief that I could actually do it and an inspiration to keep going beyond what I thought was possible. I also quickly realized that the hardest thing of all was simply taking the leap, literally, throwing off the dock lines. Once we had jumped (or rather left the dock), the rest felt relatively easy. And while our change was perhaps close to being as radical as we could get for our family, once we had begun our journey, we felt refreshed and confident that we could actually take on much, much more. I have undoubtedly become far bolder.

Just as it was important for me, it was crucial that my kids recognized how enriching taking a leap can be and that they really understood that they could direct their lives to wherever their hearts (and compasses) were pointing.

Our family's journey before and during this sailing adventure led me to look closer at what it takes to make a leap such as this, a leap into doing what you really want to be doing, into living the ultimate dream that you've had on your mind for what seems like forever, but which somehow never felt attainable. I dissected the steps that are essential, first, to believing that it can be done, and then, to taking your own leap.

I realized that perhaps the most important obstacle that stands between you and living your dreams or making a leap toward living according to your purpose is actually your own mental barriers—the negative voices in your head that make up your personal “pirates” and that truly thrive on taking over your ship. In other words, you need to get out of your own way.

That’s not to say you will succeed without a plan, without support, and without making decisions that are well thought out and intentional. There’s a lot that goes into living your dreams, and that’s where the reality sets in. But make no mistake about it: The reality has no place inside your dreams. The reality only comes into the planning stage.

My experience has taught me that the concepts outlined in this book are not solely for a literal cutting of your bowlines, but for any figurative cutting and setting out on a course about which you’ve been dreaming and to which you’ve been aspiring. These principles can be applied to any goal or any leap you want to make, whether it’s a project you’ve wanted to take on, travel on which you’ve been wanting to embark, a career change you’ve been wanting to make, or an experience you’ve been seeking.

If you have a dream or have been wanting at your very core to do something, but you’ve been saying to yourself that it’s not realistic, you’re too old or too young, you’re not qualified or don’t have the experience, or you don’t have the money or the ability, think again.

My hope is that this book will provide you with the tools necessary to create a mind shift for you to take your

own leap, sail off into the sunset, or do whatever it is that you've always dreamed of doing.

Here's what I know to be true: The starting point is the dream. Everything else is simply the plan. And your plan can begin right here, by leaping first into this book.

*To young men contemplating a voyage,
I would say go.*

-Joshua Slocum (1844-1909):
First solo circumnavigator, bestselling author

Saturday,
May 7, 2011

FINDINGS, FAST FACTS, AND FIRST PHOTOS

Polynesian women really do wear flowers in their hair. Really. It's not just a touristy thing. In fact, there is little touristy about the island of Nuku Hiva in the Marquesan Islands of French Polynesia. It's also rather refreshing that there is little American about it. The cruising community here, as expected, is much more international. No, Barbara, you're not in Mexico anymore.

The Great and Mysterious Polynesian Migration is believed to have occurred somewhere around 3,500 years ago when the first settlers left Southeast Asia, Taiwan, or China in sailing/paddling canoes (the forerunners to our lovely catamaran) with chickens, dogs, pigs, veggies, and their kids. They used celestial navigation and read cloud reflections, bird flight patterns, and wave formations (ancient techniques long lost) to arrive who-knows-how-many-days-or-months-later to the western islands of Samoa and Tonga.

...

The French claimed what is now French Polynesia (made up of the Marquesas Islands, the Tuamotu Archipelago, and the Society Islands, including Tahiti, Bora Bora, and

Huahine) in 1838. While European settlement all but decimated the Polynesian culture with disease, alcohol, firearms, and evangelism, there has been a resurgence of national pride since the 1980's ...

The people are lovely. As we walk through the streets, they will stop to ask about where we come from and will readily tell us about their lives here. Almost everyone (men, women, and teens) is tattooed, an ancient Polynesian art that was adopted by sailors when Captain James Cook first arrived in French Polynesia in the late 1700's ... The artwork is spectacular.

I am loving speaking French. And I'm really speaking French, none of the tongue-tied stuff I attempt whenever I travel to Quebec. I've surprised my entire family with my skill, but not more than I've surprised myself. I haven't been in French conversations for nearly 35 years. And I'm doing my fair share as I act as the translator for most of our cruising friends here.

We have had to get over sticker shock since we've been here. There are only a handful of restaurants, which are very pricey. We did sample the local specialty of "poisson cru," which is raw fish marinated in lime juice and coconut milk – amazing, even if it was served without a vegetable. This should have been a foreshadow for us: While fruit is abundant on the island, vegetables are a bit more scarce.

That doesn't affect the cost of produce either way, however. We spent about US\$50 on a mere few pieces of produce when we first arrived, and have supplemented here and there with other very expensive pieces of fruit and vegetable. The various "magasins" (stores) are well stocked with canned goods, however, including "haricots

verts" (green beans) that I so desperately but unsuccessfully sought in Puerto Vallarta. Any items in the store with a red price label are subsidized by the French government, which apparently pours millions in to these islands ...

One way around the prices for fresh produce is to pick it yourself, which we've gotten really good at. There isn't much choice in the way of vegetables (although we've seen avocados growing – only too high or far for our reach). We've had incredible pamplemousse (grapefruit), starfruit, mangoes, papayas, bananas, and guavas, many right off the trees. We call it foraging. Simply luscious.

This place is pure paradise. No dangerous life-threatening animals to fear (other than sharks in the water – a story unto itself)—even the dogs take it slow. Lush green steep mountains rising up from the sea. Fertile volcanic soil. More fruit trees than one can imagine. Beautiful people. Beautiful singing. Beautiful dances (we were lucky enough to watch a practice one night passing the community center). It truly must have been the ideal life before the white man turned things around – although it is still pretty incredible.

It does rain a lot here, usually only for a few moments and usually only a few times a day, but we have gotten used to the drill. Close or vent all hatches whenever we leave the boat, even if it's clear sunshine. Sleep with hatches vented. If drying anything out, be ready to take it all in when it starts to rain, and then take it back out to finish drying – and then multiply this by a few times. We're also trying to dry out our heavy comforters and decorative pillows, so that we can store them in vacuum sealed bags. We're hoping to achieve this before mold sets in, which is a huge

problem here, and this has proven to be a multi-day task, as well.

We've been a bit relieved with the mostly overcast skies, given the alternative hot and humid sunshine. Because it's been so hot, we've been getting up with the sunrise around 6 a.m. or before, so that our boat projects and school are done by noon. The Saturday market begins at 4 or 5 (we're still not sure) – we got there at 5:30 a.m.—but we do know that all the good produce was gone by 6:08 a.m.

It took us a good five days to finally melt into normal sleeping patterns. We've been spending our days on boat projects, school, and exploring the island with a couple of hikes under our belts and some visits to some archeological sites. We've now had all three of our sails repaired—while the mainsail was the major job to have the headboard re-attached, we also had some tears in both our jib and our screecher. The sail repair here was well done, and at fairly reasonable prices, too. So far, so good.

...

Our days are full, and we are feeling very content.

*-Barb
Taiohae Bay, Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands, French
Polynesia*

LESSON 1:

Throwing Off Your Bowlines: Get Started

The person who goes farthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare. The sure-thing boat never gets far from shore.

-Dale Carnegie (1888-1955)
Bestselling author, lecturer

It is part of the human condition to want to feel that we matter in this world. What makes us feel like we matter is when we are living in line with who we are and who we were meant to be. Although many of us cannot articulate our life purpose, it is there and with some coaxing can be revealed. Either way, each one of us is a unique being, with unique talents so core to who we are that sometimes we don't even know that what we do is special and unique. We've been living with it so long that it's like the tip of our noses—because we don't notice it, we take it for granted. When we are seen for this specialness, we feel acknowledged and recognized for who we *really* are. We feel seen. We feel truly alive.

On the contrary, when we are not living according to who we really are, we feel dissonant, bored, aggravated, and misaligned.

Our dreams and aspirations—what we've always wanted to do but haven't yet achieved—are where our ultimate aliveness and resonance lives. Resonance describes the feeling of certainty we get in our gut that tells us we are doing the right thing, or are where we need to be, or the choice we are making is absolutely the right one.

Personal growth happens when we make changes, but only when the change comes from within, from that place of resonance. When we maintain the status quo, we get stale and live in a state of dissonance—that place of “there's got to be more.” In other words, change for the sake of change or one that has been imposed upon us may not get us to a state of resonance, but change that is aligned with who we are, whether big or small, keeps us fresh.

For many, making change feels uncomfortable. No matter, life does begin at the edge of your comfort zone.

While change is where personal growth happens, we also need it to keep us moving forward. Forward movement brings fulfillment and, in turn, allows us to move closer to achieving what we aspire to achieve. The movement forward could begin with little things, like starting an exercise class or saying “no” to something we've always said “yes” to. Momentum can get you to make bigger changes—like sailing with your family for two-and-a-half years.

Regardless of the size of the change, moving toward our dreams allows us to grow, and we begin to feel like we

are heading closer toward who we were meant to be. When we are living as we were meant to live, we realize the impact we were meant to be making in this world and contribute in a way we were meant to contribute.

Think about it: When was the last time you made a change that resonated with you? I'm willing to bet that you felt accomplished, and as a result, inspired, and with that, you were able to walk a bit taller.

There's a sense of accomplishment in making changes that you choose for yourself. The freshness and growth that comes along with it keeps you inspired. When inspired, you can be so much more able to live in line with who you are and who you were meant to be. Inspiration is the best motivator to propel you forward toward things you otherwise wouldn't believe you could do—in other words, achieving your dream, creating the impact you want to have, and feeling so fully alive. All you need is to get started, and the momentum will continue to carry you forward as you continue to work on maintaining that momentum.

But I've already achieved a lot in my life and people around me already see me as successful. Why do I still feel that there's got to be more to life?

Through my work and life experiences, I've come across many high achievers who seem to be full of forward momentum. They've gone to college, had successful careers, built businesses, had families, and made a lot of money. According to the society that they live in, they look "successful." The truth for them, however, is they followed a path they thought they *should* be following and have stopped becoming conscious about what they

really want. After a while, they start asking, “Isn’t there more to all this?”

Many of us go down the path of life making decisions and choices based on what we think we should be doing, but not necessarily resonant in our fullest selves. In other words, the choices we make may be aligned with our need for accomplishment and success, but are not as aligned with our passions. Ultimately, sooner or later, we wake up and realize this. It’s unavoidable. We need to feel more fully alive, or we feel that we are starting to wither.

While I was coaching the CEO of a large technology company, he reflected that, although his successes seemed impressive, “truly if I died tomorrow, I don’t feel like I’ve accomplished what I was meant to do, or that I’ve had an impact that is meaningful to me, or that I’ve left a legacy worth leaving. And meanwhile, I feel life’s clock ticking away.”

It’s what I call the Big Deal Syndrome. For some, contributing to the technology industry, with its innovation and fast pace, might be the passion and legacy that my client was looking for, but everyone is different. Each individual must ask him or herself: If I were to die tomorrow, am I satisfied with the impact I’ve had? Do the things I’ve done fit in with my passions and dreams? Have I begun to create a legacy that I am proud of?

If the answer is no, it’s time to make a change. It’s time to go after those passions and dreams. Tomorrow will come no matter what you do, whether you go after your dreams or not. You might as well be spending the time effectively working toward doing what you were meant

to be doing. The alternative is to wake up tomorrow suffering from the same Big Deal Syndrome you are living today. And one day, you won't wake up at all.

There's a natural synergy to having everyone follow their passion. If everyone does whatever it is that they were meant to be doing—whether it is being a talented artist who creates beauty for the world, a passionate bridge builder who skillfully designs for efficient transportation, or a person in technology who is passionate about innovation and being on the cusp of what's new in the world—life for all falls into place. This natural synergy creates healthier communities and, ultimately, a healthier world. So you see, it's not just about you and me. It's far, far bigger than that.

What if I don't have a dream or a passion?

According to a survey I conducted about creating successful change, over one-quarter of the respondents did not have a big goal, dream, or passion, even though they wanted one.

Regardless of your spiritual leanings or whether you have any at all, everyone has unique gifts that are the result of their unique combination of their traits, personality, skills, passions, and interests. These strengths, or gifts, are so innate to who you are that you may not have realized that you have them. And it's key to understand that many of these gifts are not necessarily a "doing" thing, but rather a "being" thing—who you are as you show up in the world.

I took a class some years ago in which I crafted my own Life Purpose Statement to help me define my life's

mission. I came up with the following: “To help people live happy and healthy lives so they feel inspired to follow their dreams.” As I read it to my fellow classmates, I said, “This is a bit silly. It sounds like a greeting card. That’s how I sign my greeting cards. Don’t you all sign your greeting cards like this?” The response I got was blank stares. And that’s when I had an “aha” moment: Not everyone thinks this way; this isn’t everyone’s mission. I realized then that was one of the unique things about me because that’s where my natural inclinations lie—to help people feel good about themselves so they can then go out and live their dreams.

In my work, I’ve come across people who are very clear about their dreams and how those dreams fit in with their unique calling. Others really don’t know their calling at all, and still others seem to be on the right path without even knowing it, but aren’t aware of where they’re headed notwithstanding they are going in the right direction. For these last two groups, the choices they have made thus far in life have no context for them and, therefore, they feel disempowered.

Knowing your life purpose contextualizes the decisions you make in your life. When you are faced with a choice, and you know what you were meant to be doing, you will know whether your choice is in alignment with who you are. In other words, knowing your life purpose acts as a beacon for your life. It’s really as simple as that.

For those who feel they don’t have a passion, I believe they just haven’t found it yet. Everyone has a calling, a passion, a dream, and it’s only a matter of drawing it out for yourself.

Exercises have been provided at the end of this chapter to help you discover your dreams and passions. Knowing where you're headed is the first step to creating a life with meaning, the impact you were meant to have, and the legacy you were meant to be leaving.

Why is getting started so difficult?

Imagine yourself sailing along a river. The wind is in your hair, the sun is shining, and it's an absolutely perfect day. Suddenly, up ahead you see a massive boulder in the water. The waters around the boulder get angrier and faster. You have the choice of heading to the safety of shore or of navigating your way around the boulder. As you get closer, it seems like the boulder gets bigger and bigger, and you switch your focus between the safety of shore and this looming boulder. You know that if you choose the shore, you'll put an end to the day without reaching your destination. If you stay the course, you'll soon catch the boulder out of the corner of your eye as you pass by it. And then it's behind you. And you go on to the next one, which doesn't feel as difficult to navigate because you've seen that you've gotten past it before and can do it again. In this way, you'll reach your destination.

Managing your way around change is like learning any life skill—practice makes it easier. If you are someone who regularly takes risks, goes out of your comfort zone, and is conscious about personal growth, then the next change is not as difficult as for someone who lives a "routine" life. Becoming proficient at taking leaps requires making changes along the way.

As an aside, if you haven't made a change in a long time, there is still hope to get on your path. Start with making a small change that feels resonant for you—something that you've been wanting to do. Whatever you do, though, do keep the momentum going so you'll have more confidence to make the next change.

Even more important than being used to making change, the key to what makes it so difficult is this: It's those voices in our heads, the negative self talk, the "pirates" that invade our minds and keep us from reaching our most important successes. They tell you: "You're going to crash into that boulder," "You don't know how to sail this thing," "Who are you to think you can get around that boulder?" These pirates are trying to get you to maintain the status quo, to thwart your efforts to go where you want to go, to take the easy way out, and, in effect, to protect you from making a mistake. They have been with you since you were able to start judging yourself and will be with you until the day you die. And as you get closer to that boulder, in essence to making an important change, those pirates get louder and louder. But here's the thing:

The key to achieving your dreams is how you navigate your pirates. How you deal with your pirates is what will determine whether or not you can take the necessary steps to follow your dreams.

Any important change will be accompanied by those pirates. Expect it and be prepared.

How do I know if it's my pirates holding me back or my inner truth telling me I'm on the wrong path?

The difference between your pirates holding you back and your own inner truth telling you that you are not on the right path lies in the level of resonance you have for the path that you are on.

The waters of the South Pacific are warm and inviting. They sparkle the kind of blue-green seen only in postcards, are abundant with plant and sea life, and have incredible visibility sometimes 60-feet deep. What better way to experience this spectacle than by snorkeling. I love snorkeling—although only in warm water—and it's one of the most fulfilling things I could possibly do. However, in the South Pacific, if you are going to snorkel, you have to be prepared to encounter sharks. Every. Single. Time. I was scared to death, even though I knew that others before me were able to do it safely, and if I was to fully experience life in the South Pacific, I had to come to terms with this. Notwithstanding my fears, swimming and encountering sharks safely was so resonant for me that it took my breath away, even as I literally took the leap, each and every time, into the water. I just knew that I had to get past my pirates.

Thursday,
May 19, 2011

A WORD ON SHARKS

It's been a real treat to swim in the crystal clear white-sand-bottom, coral-lined bay of Anaho, a picturesque paradise on the north side of Nuku Hiva. And the treat is

not just the eye candy. We've been unable (or unwilling) to do any extensive swimming in Taiohae Bay, a black sand bay, known to be home to plenty of sharks and where we spent our first 13 days after making landfall. Rumor has it that a local boy was bitten by a shark last year and died of his wounds. Tempting fate is not on my "to do" list.

However, as our friend and former Danish navy diver said when warned of the sharks by another cruiser while he was diving our anchor, sharks are everywhere in the ocean – especially in tropical waters. This happens to be particularly true in the South Pacific, where apparently a ridiculously large percentage of the world's shark population lives. The fact is if we want to truly experience the South Pacific, we have to get comfortable swimming in the water.

Here is what our friend Caren (who cruised with her family for five years) said about overcoming our fear of swimming with sharks:

- 1. Get a good shark book (we have one). Knowledge is power over our fears, so get to know the different kinds of sharks, which are the aggressive ones, and what their different behavior means. They show curiosity first, so there is plenty of time to get out of the water before they start showing agitation, arching, or circling behavior, which precedes an attack. Apparently, most of the sharks we will see on our trip will be reef sharks, both black and white tip, which are used to eating small reef fish. This means that we are not their natural food, so they may come to check us out, but then they move on...*

2. *Ask the locals. Caren warns that other cruisers are often ignorant about sharks and give misinformation based on their fears and inexperience. So in addition to learning from a reliable written or online source, it makes sense that the locals are a great source of knowledge about the sharks in their particular area. They'll know if any tiger sharks have been around, for example, and if so, it's important to stay clear. Simply do as the locals do...*
3. *Be prepared. Have a Hawaiian slingshot handy while swimming in water with many sharks, although Caren and her family never actually had the need to use one. Hawaiian sling shots are used for spear fishing, and they look like a long rod with a few sharp metal pokes at the end. Caren suggested finding them in Mexican fishing stores, but here we are already in the South Pacific without any. We'll have to do without.*
4. *Be calm when you see a shark. It's important to remember that we are not their normal food, so they don't automatically think of us as food. They do, however, have an uncanny ability to sense fear and distress. Their normal prey are the weak and injured creatures, so if you splash and scream and act like you are in trouble, you look an awful lot like a weak and injured creature. Stay calm, and they just figure you are some other big fish ...*
5. *Get over it. Overcoming our fear of sharks, any way we can, will ensure that we can fully experience their mystery and beauty. We are fortunate to have sharks still roaming the waters of the South Pacific, since most cruising grounds in*

the Atlantic are devoid of these creatures due to overfishing. Caren encourages us to snorkel at the passes, or entrances, to the atolls in the Tuamotus, well known for shark hangouts. For example, there are all kinds of sharks breeding at the atoll entrance at Rangiroa, where the water is known to resemble a shark screensaver because there are so many sharks. People come from all over the world to dive this pass. And our guide book tells us there are many more like it, which can be experienced by scuba diving or just plain snorkeling while at a slack or incoming tide (called drift diving/ snorkeling).

- 6. Know the statistics: The statistics are much worse on the highway, and we never hesitate to drive, so, Caren says, don't let fear of sharks ruin your experience of some of the best underwater spots on earth. She assures us that we would be missing half the trip if we don't go in the water.*

We'll keep you posted on any face to face encounters, but since there haven't been any yet, we don't have any photos for you. In addition, our Internet is way too slow to start looking for them online. For now, though, we're studying up from our shark book.

-Barb in Anaho Bay, Nuku Hiva, Marquesas

When something is exciting for me, I know it because it takes my breath away. Even though it scares me so badly that it feels like I'm choking, I want to do it anyway. And if I can imagine myself having achieved that exciting thing and I still feel empowered and excited about it, I know that it's my pirates telling me not to do it. That's my place of resonance: I do need to

get prepared for what I'm about to face, but I need to do whatever it is that scares me, anyway.

What if I make a change and it wasn't the right one?

One of my dear cruising friends worried that her dream to cross the Pacific and cruise the South Pacific was developed in her twenties. Now she was in her mid-forties. How was she to know if it still mattered? What if she got there and it wasn't what she had thought it would be?

You know it's still the right dream if you are still excited about the prospect of achieving success on that dream. The What Ifs are your pirates, without a doubt. And if you don't go after your dream, then you'll never confirm that, in fact, you can do it, or worse yet, you'll continue living with your Big Deal Syndrome.

Many of us also suffer from Analysis Paralysis, the syndrome of being so afraid of making the wrong choice that we don't even begin to act. Taking the first step needs to happen if you are to move forward, however. There is always room for change. If you find as you go along that it is not right, then you must realign. You have the choice to make it right again by making a different change or adjusting the one you are already making. A wise person (my older sister) once told me that it really does all work out in the end, and if it's not working out yet, then it's not the end: We can always re-route ourselves, and we have the power to make the choices necessary to do that.

On day 15 of our 20-day Pacific crossing, the reinforced webbing at the top of the mainsail came undone,

detached from the sail, and caused the entire mainsail to fall to the deck. The halyard (the rope that attaches to the top of the sail and is used to haul up the sail) was at the top of the mast. This meant that even if we could repair the sail en route, we had no way of hauling it back to the top of the mast. One option was to get the halyard down by climbing to the top of the mast. For me, the danger of this option—being out at sea in big swells, which would make the climber swing like a pendulum—was too dangerous. The only other option was to do nothing, as far as we could tell. Yet not having a main sail is pretty serious. We were close to a week from landfall, with only four days of fuel remaining in our tanks, and no mainsail.

Out at sea, giving up is not an option. Since it wasn't yet working out, we knew it wasn't yet the end of the line. What had us keep moving was the belief that this situation would work out, one way or another. And it did. We kept at it, used our much smaller foresail, and made landfall safely five days later (where, incidentally, we were able to get our mainsail repaired, climb to the top of the mast to get the halyard back, and re-rig the boat for our next passage).

Life is like any sailing voyage. It's not a dress rehearsal. You get one chance to make the crossing. Giving up cannot be an option. You need to keep going, moving forward, keeping that momentum, until you get there.

Getting started is the first step to getting that momentum. Once you begin to move forward, your perspective changes and things become apparent to you that were not apparent from where you stood before you started moving. The right routing will become apparent only as you go.

Several years ago, I worked with a client whose dream was to buy an island somewhere in the tropics and create an ecotourist destination. While she wasn't prepared to start working toward it while she still had children at home, she kept the idea at the back of her mind. Just by identifying what she was wanting got her started, and although the momentum slowed down slightly, she was able to keep her eyes and ears open. Years later, I met up with her and the first thing she said to me was: "I bought a children's bookstore—and that's my island!"

Some people know very specifically what they want to do, and some don't. Our dreams, however, are wound up in who we are as beings, and our dreams enliven us because of what they bring to us, not necessarily because of what we are doing. As long as we come to the state of being that we are wanting from any particular dream, it will keep us enlivened and passionate. In other words, what we end up with might not actually come about by doing what we set out to do. It is, ultimately, a way of being, or how we show up in the world, that we all seek.

Once you get started, you will become aware of things you need to know or do that weren't apparent from the starting line. Your perspective changes as you move forward, both physically and mentally.

My own personal story of how I came to my life coaching career is illustrative of how forward movement got me to where I needed to go, notwithstanding I changed my perspective on how to get where I wanted to go. When I was heading to college and needed to declare a major, my consciousness told me that I should go into psychology, but for various

reasons, I ended up in law school. After ten years of practicing law and some other career fits and starts, I finally gave in to my deep truth that, “I love helping people feel good about themselves when they are not starting out that way, so they can then go out into the world to be the best they can be.” That was how I wanted to show up in the world since it really was an extension of who I am. My belief was that the only way to get there was through being a psychologist. I began researching psychology programs, while still being adamant that I was not willing to spend another eight to ten years re-training. In the process of doing my research, I came across life coaching and realized that’s what I had been describing in my dream career all along. I had no idea when I set out that that’s where I would be.

Don’t let your pirates get the better of you. Don’t let them stop you from even getting started and making a move. Choose a path, any path, and start moving. You can adjust your course as you go. But if you don’t even leave the dock, you are certain not to go anywhere.

What if I don’t succeed at making this change?

One out of four respondents to my survey about making successful change indicated that the fear of failure has stopped them from moving forward toward their goal.

One of the scariest things for high achievers is to go after what we really want, for the very reason that we *are* high achievers. We consider ourselves to be people who succeed—at a lot of things. As high achievers, what if we are not successful at something we actually love and are passionate about?! That would be the scariest thing of all.

On the other hand, how will you ever know? It's as simple as this: Just get moving. National Hockey League superstar Wayne Gretzky once said, "You will miss 100 percent of the shots that you never take." If you don't even try, you're certain not to succeed.

I've heard it said that every boat in the South Pacific has come in contact with a reef at least once, but there are two types of sailors: Those who admit to it, and those don't. A "mistake" must not be viewed as a failure, but rather as the weather patterns that are letting you know that you should change your course. No one gets to success without re-routing. After all, if it's not yet working out, it's because you are not yet finished with your task.

If I go after my dreams now and actually succeed, I'm worried that there won't be anything left after I'm done.

Many successful people don't even begin the route that they really want to be taking for fear that there will be nothing left after they've gotten there. They worry that life will be completely devoid of excitement, so why not simply live with some minor aliveness now, which they know, than end up with a huge high from making it to their destination and then a major dip on the excitement and aliveness scale when there's nothing as good that follows.

I can promise you this: There will always be more, and that's what's remarkable about being human. Once you've achieved what you really want, you are so excited about life that you'll keep going and find more. You'll be even better equipped the next time around with more confidence that you can indeed get past your pirates with greater ease.

There's no such thing as having nothing left, until, of course, you die. That's not to say you won't have to work

for your “Next Big Thing,” but anything worthwhile requires work. The bottom line is that there’s no time like the present. If you don’t work toward getting what you really want now, the time may never come. Do it now.

How do I know what I was meant to be doing?

One of the things to remember when examining your dreams is not to censor yourself. There is no reality in the dream—that’s why it’s called a dream. On the other hand, reality comes into play during the planning stage only.

If you would have told me the day before my husband suggested his sailing dream that it was possible for me to experience firsthand my own travel dream, I would have told you that you were crazy. The dream *was* crazy—in fact, so much so that I hadn’t actually allowed myself to think about it. What I needed to realize was that even though it felt like a crazy dream in my mind, that didn’t matter. In order to turn a dream into reality, you must focus on logistics. I can do logistics. We can all do logistics.

In figuring out what one of my clients was meant to be doing, where she fit into this world, and what impact she was meant to have, she stated that she dreamed of being just like Christiane Amanpour, the CNN correspondent who reports from war zones. After sheepishly admitting to this dream, she said: “This is crazy. I am forty-something, have two kids and a husband, and there’s no way I’m going to do that.” Perhaps not, and that’s a choice she’s made and continues to make, but there can be some reconciliation with what she would get out of being Christiane Amanpour that she can look for elsewhere. In our analysis, she felt thrilled by being at the forefront of heated issues that are current and widespread, of being seen as an expert in these issues, and of high visibility. Other options she could

consider and which she felt resonant included involvement in creating documentaries, exploring journalism (writing or broadcasting), getting involved in local issues, reporting about them, or advising different constituents affected by them, going back to school and studying international issues that were compelling for her so she could become the expert and ultimately to advise government. Some of these options could take upwards of ten years, but ten years was going to come no matter what, so she might as well be working toward being in that place she's dreaming. Then, come ten years, she'll be living her dreams and not still dreaming about them.

Tuesday,
December 7,
2010

ON GAS AND WIND

I'm on sunrise duty again. We're more than halfway to Zihuatenejo and hope to make it in by tomorrow morning. We've been motoring for over 24 hours now as the winds are very light or non-existent and coming from directly behind us. That's the problem with Mexico cruising. Either there's a weather warning, where we stay put, or there's a weather window, which means there's no wind.

Michael and I had a familiar conversation at 1:30 a.m. this morning, except it usually takes place in a car on a road trip somewhere: Should we stop and get gas?

Although we started this passage with a full tank (105 gallons), our fuel gauge seems only to work intermittently. Most of the time it shows we are

completely full. So Michael (aka MacGyver) has taken to measuring the gas in the tank by using a long wooden dowel and then measuring the fuel level with a ruler. We keep track of our engine hours, so this way we can figure out how much fuel we use per hour. Based on our estimates, we'll barely make it to Zihuatenejo, unless we get some real sailing in later today. That's what I'm hoping for.

Usually, in a car, like many men I know, Michael's the one to "risk" it, which drives me crazy as I'm always worried we'll run out of gas and get stranded somewhere. I like the security of a full tank of gas (and, as an aside, a clean boat—another oddity of mine: I must start a passage with a clean boat—I was up 'til all hours the night before we left cleaning the windows ...).

This time, I'm willing to risk it, even if it means we have to bob around for a while, going reeeeeaaaaalllly slowwwwwly, using only our sails. And, of course, cars don't have the option of hoisting a sail.

Like this longer 3 to 4 day passage, I figure it's a good dress rehearsal if we do end up going to the South Pacific, which we still haven't decided on yet. You see, this lack of wind requiring us to motor most of the time would continue into Central America. In the meantime, if we go to the South Pacific, there is much more wind. On the other hand, based on our calculations, we'd be spending 25% of our days getting to and around the South Pacific being on a passage (including 3+ weeks at sea just getting there, without seeing any land, or having the option of seeing any land, for that matter). But at least we'd be sailing, even if some of it is merely bobbing. With the continuous hum of the motor giving me a headache

all day yesterday and continuing into today, the South Pacific is sounding much more attractive.

Sun is rising, dolphins at our bow. It's not all bad.

*-Barb, 12 miles offshore, approx. 20 miles south of
Manzanillo (we didn't stop for gas)
18 degrees 41.611 minutes North by 104 degrees 10.372
minutes West*

*P.S. Now that we've passed Manzanillo, we are officially
the furthest south we've been yet. Another milestone.*

Here's what I know to be true: I grew exponentially from this leap into adventure, in ways I never dreamed of. The difficult part was simply making the leap. That's all I needed to get me started on my path.

Not all who wander are lost.

*-JRR Tolkien (1892-1973)
English writer, poet, professor*

EXERCISE:

Discovering Your Dreams

For many, the key to figuring out how to live on purpose and follow your dreams is to ask yourself the ten questions listed below. Not every question may speak to you, but if you haven't yet identified your dream, or you don't know the impact you want to have, or the legacy you want to leave, there should be at least a few questions listed that can help you get started on your path toward that leap, to move you closer to whatever you were meant to do and be in your lifetime.

1. What are you passionate about? What are the issues and causes that draw you in or that you care deeply about?
2. Where do you "go" when confronted with other people's issues or problems? What are your natural inclinations? For example, are you the fixer, the resourceful one, the nurturer, the relationship broker, the leader, the cheerleader?
3. Who are you when you are feeling at your best? Ask the people who are close to you. Think about what adults said about you as a child. Think about who you are now to your friends, family, and/or colleagues. What can they count on you for, almost every time they encounter you?

4. If you could do anything you wanted, without the possibility of failure, without any fears, and with the full support, faith, and encouragement of everyone around you, what would it be?
 5. If you can change jobs with anyone on this planet, who would it be and why?
 6. If your face appeared on the cover of any magazine, which magazine would you want it to be? What would you want the cover story to be about?
 7. If you had \$1.5 million to invest in three ventures (\$500,000 each), each one guaranteed to succeed, what ventures would they be? These could be businesses, organizations, start-ups, grants, personal hobbies, i.e., anything.
 8. Imagine yourself ten years from now, being called onto a stage to receive an honor. What would the honor be for? What would people be saying about you as they introduced you?
 9. If your cell phone was to ring and it was you, 20 years from now having accomplished your dreams, what would your older self tell you about the next 20 years?
 10. What have you always dreamed of doing?
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