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## Bringing the ultimate dream closer

**Y**ou may remember that in the beginning I asked you to dream big. I hope you did.

**Y**ou then whittled your ultimate dream down to something that was accessible right now, via your maximum viable ideal and then the further adjustments you made to allow the ideal to become a reality right now. The whittling at various points may have felt like the inevitable micro-adjustments of any dream to any reality: nothing too frustrating. Or they may have felt like massive concessions: like things that you longed for that you had to accept cannot be yours for now. If this was the case, you may well have felt quite a lot of pain contemplating the gap between what you allowed yourself to dream of and what you concluded was possible for you.

**I**f this was your experience, it may have been painful both in itself and as a prompt to reflecting on the events and the decisions that have led you to this point where you're dreaming of something that is simply not available to you.

**W**e're on tricky ground here. It is demonstrably not the case that anything we dream of, we can make happen. But it is the case that not daring to dream tends to lead to things not

getting better, and that many dreams do come true if the dream leads to plans that lead to action—even actions performed without a particularly consistent belief that we'll ever really pull this thing off. So, if you want some significant things to be different, you'd probably better dream first and then plan.

**H**ere are some common morning dimensions along which reality and dream get separated, or desires can feel like pipe dreams:

- I'd love to wake up whenever I feel like it, not to an alarm clock.
- I'd love to be waking up somewhere completely different (maybe city versus countryside, a different climate or landscape or political reality, a specific other country or continent).
- I'd love to be with or without specific other people or categories of person (e.g. partners, children, parents, friends).
- I'd love not to need to commute.
- I'd love to have different personal and/or professional activities in my morning and/or the rest of my day (e.g. practising some other fun activity as part of my morning routine, or setting my day up for some other work activity).



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For any that apply to you, make some notes to explore what you really want under any of these headings, and what precisely it would mean to you if this were true. If your specific reality/dream gap isn't covered, write it down and explore.

Then for each part of the dream that's relevant, make notes on how, if you decided to make it a priority, you might be able to get from here to there. You may find yourself including ideas about:

- Other day and evening commitments (e.g. bedtime-related!)
- Earning, spending, and retirement planning
- Professional development
- Travel and immigration
- Dating, socializing, and family relationships
- Hobbies and skills
- Healthcare (your own and your family's)

It may seem weird to be using a morning routine as a starting point for pension planning, but given how easy it is to put off ever thinking about these big-picture things, using a small-picture prompt can make a lot of sense.

**A**s ever, I recommend getting as specific as possible. So if you want to be living in a specific other country and you've clarified to yourself the reasons why, you might make notes along the following lines:

- Investigate visa requirements for your destination country (e.g. Google immigration lawyers for country x, contact 3 of them; ask friends x and y for tips); sketch out timelines for meeting the requirements and completing the relevant application processes (and saving for any fees)
- Work out how much the relocation itself would cost and whether property/rental prices and other living costs would be higher or lower in the destination country (find online forums and other info, do some rough calculations)
- If additional funds are needed to fund the move, sketch out options for increasing your income and/or decreasing your outgoings, with timelines for reaching the required level
- Talk to your partner/family/friends about what this move would mean for them, presenting a sample of the practical details gathered in the previous steps

**O**r if you want to be waking up without an alarm clock, your notes might look more like this:

- Formulate a proposal based on an ideal working hours scenario; talk to your manager about flexible working hours options
- Shorten the journey to work: try borrowing a bike from a friend as an alternative to walk + bus; if it works well, look into secondhand options or workplace subsidies for buying one (maybe considering electric if it's hilly where you live!)



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- Rejig your evening routine so you're consistently getting to bed before 11—the options might include asking your partner to commit to being home for dinner by 7:30, and moving some household tasks to weekends
- Improve your sleeping environment so you're less likely to wake in the night, e.g. get all tech out of the bedroom (ask your partner to do this too), buy new pillows or better curtains/blinds, change the heating timer so it comes on later

**W**hat you have here may be a good draft of your options for any relevant dimensions of possible change. You can decide on any exploratory actions you'd like to take, and make calendar notes to do them and to review your findings. You can also share with a partner or friend or parent or child or anyone else to whom these possibilities are relevant, or who may have useful insights into them.

**T**hese activities will be a great starting point for conversations about what your options are—you as an individual and/or you together with others around you—and they will help you establish which of them, if any, you intend to seriously pursue. Whatever you do, if there's something you care about, don't just assume there is no path from here to there; instead, work out what terrain that path might cover, and then decide whether you want to walk it. It may feel temporarily less

comfortable to acknowledge that there is a path but that you don't care enough to tread it for now. But in the longer term, it'll be better than pretending it was never up for grabs at all.

**S**o have fun—seeing what translations and transitions you can imagine and plan and make happen for the months and years to come.