



# Redefining Teen

## **The Point Of Life Is Not School, It Is Adventure.**

Let's begin this book with a bold proposition: You're in high school, and it bores you to tears.

Maybe you're frustrated by poor teaching or a melodramatic social scene. Maybe your eyes glaze over every time that you're treated like a child (or worse, like cattle). Or maybe your teachers are fantastic, your school brims with extracurricular activities, but you nevertheless sense that the world is much bigger than high school—and you don't want to spend another year in the holding chamber.

Let's propose that one way or another, high school doesn't challenge you. And thus, you're bored.

Unlike other people, I'm not going to suggest tips for perking up, trying harder or accepting the reality of high school. I assume you've heard the argument that you simply need to change your attitude toward school. Mine is a different approach. If you're genuinely bored, frustrated or disappointed by school, then I have only one suggestion: *Stop wasting your time*. Life is made of nothing more than time, and if you are bored, then you are wasting your time—and not really living.

What is the alternative to high school tedium? My answer is: adventure.

An adventure, specifically defined, is any challenge that requires a lot of learning in a small amount of time. Traveling cross-country to teach rock climbing at a summer camp is an adventure. Crafting an online marketing plan for your friend's small business is an adventure. Spending three months on an organic farm in Italy to learn permaculture and the Italian language is an adventure. Walking into a physics professor's office to get book recommendations, working nights as a veterinary assistant and volunteering at a disaster relief site are all adventures. And going to college, too, is an adventure.

Because the word adventure drums up many more images than what I've just described, let me also tell you what adventure is *not*. An adventure is not an escape—i.e., an excuse to give up something that you've chosen to start but not yet finished. Adventure doesn't mean throwing yourself headlong into danger. And an adventure is not necessarily a physical challenge (like climbing Mount Everest); adventures come in many flavors, including social (introducing yourself to a hero), mental (writing a book) and spiritual (attempting a ten-day silent meditation retreat).

An adventure pushes your comfort zone, demands courage and requires determination. It's centered around your interests, your dreams and your personality. And most importantly, it must be chosen by you—not your parents, not your teachers, but *you*. More on that part soon.

To cure the disease of high school boredom, you need adventure. But adventure cannot be boxed into after school activity slots or one-week winter breaks. Real adventures take time—the time currently taken by high school. The radical idea I'm proposing, in other words, is that you stop thinking of school as your full-time occupation. If school does not challenge you, then leave school and seek adventure.

## **Bored People Become Boring People**

Leave school! Butterflies riot in your stomach. No matter how ready you are for the idea of leaving school, a little voice inside cries, Wait, don't jump yet! This is the voice of eight+ years of schoolroom conditioning. It's the same voice that says dropouts become welfare-dependent drug-addicts! And maybe school will be better next year. I don't want you to squash this cautionary voice (because jumping without looking is always a bad idea), but I do want you to consider what will happen if you let caution rule your life.

What you have to fear is this: If you let yourself be bored in high school, then you will let yourself be bored as an adult. What does a high schooler who slaves away at meaningless, disconnected problem sets every night become in later life? She becomes the adult who slaves away at a job she doesn't enjoy, for less pay than she deserves, for a one-week vacation through which she would prefer to sleep. She does not spend the time she'd like with her children. And despite being a kind, compassionate and well-intentioned person, because she chooses to take orders instead of think for herself, she does not create the life that she wants.

Boredom is *powerlessness*. If you let yourself become bored then you load the dice in the game of life against you.

I'm certainly not suggesting that all teens who work dutifully in high school meet the fate of an unhappy or disempowered adulthood. School works for some students (i.e., it challenges them in the adventure sense), and it doesn't work for others. Most big, normal public and private schools work poorly for most students. Hence the very real threat of letting school shape you in a negative way.

Listen to the cautionary voice in your head, but weigh it evenly against the fate of allowing boredom to rule your life.

## Homeschooling and Unschooling

To legally leave school, you'll have to become a homeschooler in the eyes of your school district; this is your quickest and easiest ticket to freedom.<sup>1</sup> But first let's get our terms straight.

I *don't* advocate becoming a homeschooler in the common misconception of the word. I don't want you to stay home all day, follow the state-prescribed 10th grade curriculum and cut yourself off from the world because other people's opinions are scary. This version of homeschooling, while it does exist, is practiced far less often than the media would have you believe. Homeschoolers are an eclectic group of educators with a wide range of learning and teaching styles. The flavor of homeschooling that best matches the adventuring lifestyle has its own name: unschooling.<sup>2</sup> Unschooling is a philosophy that places the responsibility for learning and growing in the student's hands. In this world, parents and teachers act as resources—not dictators.

Unschooling does not discredit formal learning (e.g. structured classes and curricula) as long as it is voluntarily chosen. Community college, four-year university, structured art class and a summer architecture intensive are examples of formal learning situations that an unschooler might openly embrace. High school-style classes—where students perceive themselves as captives and school personnel treat them as such—are not.

When not doing structured learning, unschoolers spend their time in self-directed learning. Emerie Snyder, a former teen unschooler and New York University graduate, poignantly explained self-directed learning in her college application essay.

I consider myself an unschooler. The homeschooling community debates over what exactly the word means, but I define it as self-directed learner. My approach to learning is some-

thing like diving into the pool of a particular interest, swimming around it a bit, following the current through a nearby network of streams, stopping off to explore connected pools, then continuing down whatever rivulets I find from there, and perhaps even ending up back in the lake where I began.

By following one interest to another and recognizing their interconnected nature, I get a detailed and full picture of the whole network. The overall picture becomes clear as I explore each stream from within, and having a sense of the whole helps me appreciate the value and place of each detail.

Unschoolers take advantage of the best learning resources they can find to answer the questions that drive them. They tend to be independent, self-motivated and hardly ever bored. Not all unschoolers spend their time in around-the-world adventure like I suggest, but many do. Not all unschoolers choose to go to college, but many do as well. So while unschooler is an imperfect word for our purposes, it will do.

To lead a life of teenage adventure, become a homeschooler, legally, and an unschooler, mentally.

## **Unschoolers in History**

If unschooling sounds appealing but still leaves you skeptical, I understand. In this book you'll learn that unschooling doesn't divorce you from the possibility of a normal life (specifically, in getting into college). But I'll also take a moment to explain why unschooling, a relatively unknown concept, is in fact a valid approach to education. Unschooling has existed and been practiced throughout the millennia, and by becoming an unschooler, you will join a long line of self-educating adventurers.

**Maria Montessori**

In the 1920s, Italian doctor Maria Montessori built the theory behind today's wildly popular Montessori preschools (and lesser-known elementary schools). She unfortunately died before publishing her full theory for the teenage years—what she called the adolescent plane of education. Montessori did, however, leave behind illuminating notes on her vision, from which you may ask yourself if the world-renowned Montessori was a closet advocate of teenage adventure unschooling.

***Notes on the Goals of the Teenage Years***

- ◆ Teens are newly social creatures. Unlike ages 6–12, where children desire to learn objective facts about the world (Why does this happen? How does this work?), teens crave discussion of moral and spiritual issues, the meaning of life and death and the exploration what others are thinking and feeling. Creative expression is their means for self-discovery.
- ◆ A teen's overriding interest is the dual exploration of the natural world and the world of human organization: commerce, trade and production. In nature they desire to test themselves, and in the world of commerce they wish to become helpful and financially independent.

***Notes on Academic Study***

- ◆ Intellectual study best arises from real-life discovery, both in nature and society.
- ◆ Academic subjects should interweave and heavily follow the student's individual interests.
- ◆ In a teen's life, adults are most effective when they act as resource centers and mentors in goal-setting (helping students avoid aimless activity).

- ◆ Seminar-style classes (discussion and debate) are more appropriate than lectures (which fit the data-gathering mode of ages 6–12).

### ***Notes on the Teenage Years in Practice***

- ◆ Teens learn best when living away from home, in communal housing, with both peers and adult mentors, from a few months to an entire year.
- ◆ Academic schedules should be flexible, with large blocks of uninterrupted time (typical of Montessori preschool and elementary). Teens should have significant practical duties, including cooking, cleaning, caring for animals, gardening and running their own businesses (like hotel service for visitors to the communal housing).<sup>3</sup>

In other words, Montessori advocated that teens experiment with living away from home, follow academic studies that match their interests, focus on discussion and independent study instead of lecture, do real world work, start their own businesses and explore nature while discussing life's deepest questions with friends and adult mentors. That's unschooling in a nutshell.

### **A Short A–Z of Notable Unschoolers**

Unschoolers have existed ever since widespread compulsory schooling was invented. The following (very condensed) list of great achievers from the 20th, 19th or 18th centuries (or earlier) each left high school or never went there at all.

- ◆ Ansel Adams: Photographer of the American West
- ◆ William Blake: English poet
- ◆ Liz Claiborne: Fashion designer
- ◆ Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain): Writer

- ◆ Charles Dickens: English novelist
- ◆ Thomas Edison: American inventor (1,093 patents)
- ◆ Benjamin Franklin: Author, inventor and statesman
- ◆ Henry Ford: Industrialist and inventor
- ◆ Whoopi Goldberg: Actress, comedian and author
- ◆ William Lear: Inventor of the Lear Jet
- ◆ Abraham Lincoln: President and abolitionist
- ◆ Jack London: Author
- ◆ Liza Minnelli: Actor and singer
- ◆ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Composer
- ◆ Florence Nightingale: Nurse, author and statistician
- ◆ Beatrix Potter: Botanist and author of Peter Rabbit
- ◆ Keith Richards: Rolling Stones guitarist and songwriter
- ◆ Frank Lloyd Wright: Architect
- ◆ Orville and Wilbur Wright: Flight pioneers<sup>4</sup>

Add 1/3 of the signers of the US Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation and Constitution to this list, and you'll get the idea that unschooling has been done before.

### **Churchill and Einstein**

Finally, two of the most influential figures of the 20th century, Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein, credited much of their success to their independence and self-direction, two qualities not fostered by mainstream K-12 schooling.

*Churchill:* “My teachers saw me at once backwards and precocious, reading books beyond my years and yet at the bottom of the Form. They were offended. They had large resources of compulsion at their disposal, but I was stubborn. Where my reason, imagination, or interest were not engaged, I would not or could not learn.”<sup>5</sup>

*Einstein:* “One had to cram all this stuff into one’s mind for the examination, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year.”<sup>6</sup>

Despite its lack of publicity, unschooling is a time-tested and powerful educational philosophy. It has existed in perpetuity since the first compulsory schooling law was passed. Don’t let the burden of explaining the term deter you from making the unschooling decision; all pioneers find themselves in strange territories with foreign names.

### **But First: What Do You Want?**

After you begin your life of adventurous unschooling, what will you do with yourself?

A passion for freedom is an important element for success in unschooling, but it is not enough. Some would-be unschoolers jump out of school too fast, become overwhelmed by the sudden influx of free time and consequently give up self-directed learning and return to school. Don’t do that. Smart unschoolers leave school because they’ve got better things to do—not simply to rebel. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to helping you discover what you’ll do with your unleashed life.

### **Implanted Dreams**

If I ask a group of typical high schoolers what big things they want to do with their lives, most will paint me vague images of becoming a doctor, solving world hunger or making enough money to retire young to a white sand beach with a tanned love interest.

Chances are that if you haven’t spent lots of time grappling with your own dreams, you’ll have similarly vague and clichéd goals. Of

these goals, you must ask yourself: Is this really the apex of life? Where did these ideas come from?

Unless your parents gave you a non-traditional upbringing, your exposure to life has likely come through two lenses: school and the major media (television, movies and magazines). From these two sources you have absorbed a huge amount of information, much in the form of stories. And with these stories come messages—messages about what is important in life and how to live it. These are what I call implanted dreams. Some of them may be noble (like becoming a doctor or solving world hunger), some may be trite (like retiring young to a white sand beach), but each implanted dream is the same in that *it is not your own*.

Maybe your gifts are not in medicine; they're in journalism. Maybe ultimate frisbee makes you feel infinitely more alive than thinking about world hunger. And maybe your perfect date wouldn't happen on a white sand beach; it would happen in a mosh pit. Implanted dreams are dangerous because they, like most schools, are one-size-fits-all. And a one-size-fits-all shoe is an ugly thing that fits no one.

To some extent, every teen spends time trying on new faces toward the world. It's a part of growing up. But investing too heavily in the ideas of people paid to sell you things is dangerous. As with boredom, the teens who blindly follow implanted dreams become the adults who blindly seek the white sand beach vacation, only to discover that baking in the sun ten hours a day is incredibly boring. And even more damning is the realization that the white sand vacation doesn't make up for the other 51 weeks of the year that you spent working...for what? For someone else's dream.

### **The Dream Core: Excitement**

My advice to you is to throw away every image of the good life given to you—unless given by a trusted friend or family member.

Real dreams are inspired by real life experience. Ask yourself what people really want behind implanted dreams: the silhouetted image of a mountain climber in a magazine, the tanned and fit bodies running through the ocean surf on a TV show, the hip dancers at a midnight club. Each connotes a feeling—the feeling of *excitement*. Climbing a mountain suggests the excitement of wilderness exploration. Tanned bodies running across a beach suggest the excitement of possessing physical stamina. Hip clubbers suggest the excitement of being part of an exclusive social group.

The feeling behind each of these moments is excitement, but I'll add one more element: What real dreams are made of is the excitement of *fighting against great odds*. Here's a quick thought experiment to illustrate the point.

The Iron Man Triathlon is an annual event in Hawaii in which racers endure a grueling back-to-back 2.4-mile ocean swim, 112-mile bike ride and 26.2-mile run. Competitors train for years to participate in an event of this caliber. Now imagine yourself suddenly implanted into the body of the Iron Man first place winner at the moment of victory. You would experience a quick emotional spike in reaction to the fame of winning, but then what? Your victory would be a hollow shell without the years of training and blood, sweat and tears that preceded the event. Because you did not fight for your goal (because it was hand-delivered and required no struggle against great odds), the excitement of winning the race would disappear.

Really living means seeking the excitement of fighting for a goal. Always winning your goal is not mandatory; most of us would be excited to simply finish a whole marathon. Fighting, and getting up when you are pushed down, is mandatory. So when you ask yourself, What are my big dreams and goals? the question you're really asking is, What excites me, and what would I fight for?

Finally, remember that excitement only comes from fighting for goals that *you* choose. Training for the Iron Man Triathlon is certainly

exciting, unless your parents signed you up for it. Then it's one of the lower circles of hell.

### **The Question of College**

Where does college fit into the excitement spectrum? I wrote this book for teens who want to both unschool and go to college — teens for whom the idea of four-year college is *exciting*. But does college actually excite you? Is college your own dream, or is it just another implanted dream?

Let's start by agreeing that college is not the universal ultimate goal of young adulthood. You can lead a wildly successful life with only your wits and determination, as demonstrated by the college dropout founders of Microsoft, Apple and Facebook (to mention only the computer industry). College diplomas are no guarantee of a fulfilling or financially independent life; observe the massive outsourcing of white-collar jobs. Four years of real-life working and learning holds the potential to benefit you more than four expensive years at a giant university. Learning to live a life of constant self-challenge is ultimately more important than any diploma.

Nevertheless, I wrote this book about college. I did this for two reasons.

Firstly, the college experience (college meaning both four-year colleges and universities) tends to be significantly better than the high school experience. What frustrated you in high school is much less likely to exist in college.

The biggest reason for this is that college comes in many different flavors, unlike the monolithic public/private high school. There are small liberal arts colleges and big research universities. There are sport-obsessed state colleges and academic-obsessed Ivy League colleges. There are low-residency colleges like Goddard, tiny colleges like Marlboro, independent study colleges, study abroad colleges and online colleges.<sup>7</sup> You have a much better chance of finding a college

that fits your goals, personality and budget than you do a high school. And because college students are a self-selected crowd—unlike high schoolers forced together by age and geography—you’re virtually guaranteed to meet people who share your values and interests.

Other areas where college excels in comparison to high school include: College gives you the space to pursue your individual goals; high school doesn’t. College lets you set your own study schedule and attend classes only if you find them useful; high schools don’t. And in college you’re likely living away from home and taking care of yourself—an element of adventure that high school lacks.

Secondly, I wrote about college because even if college isn’t for you right now, you can use it to your advantage. Precisely *because* our culture perceives college as the singular measure of success, doing college prep gives you *carte blanche* to leave high school and go adventuring. It’s a bargaining chip. If skeptical adults argue that you’re throwing away your future economic safety net by leaving school, explain that no future employer will care that you don’t have a high school degree—as long as you have a college degree. With college prep in your pocket, you can go globetrotting, and one or two years later when you discover that one college that does indeed fit you, you’ll be equipped to go there.

Because college is typically far superior to high school and college is a bargaining chip that will let you craft a teenage life of adventure, I chose to focus this book around college. And for these reasons I hope that you will *choose* college as one of your dreams—either as an adventurous goal in itself or as a tool that will help make your other dreams possible.

### **Dream Map Prep**

The stage is set now to define your biggest dreams. But before you begin brainstorming, keep the following three guiding principles in mind.

## Big Excitement Comes from Big Challenge

I recall a magazine contest from my days as a video game-addicted ten-year-old: the full-page ad displayed a big screen television, every video game system in production, full accessories and a dozen games cartridges, all of which you could win if you completed a series of increasingly difficult mail-in puzzles. My brother and I spent days working on those puzzles. We never won, but we still worked our butts off and had a good time. Why? Because the payoff was huge, the puzzles were nearly impossible and we loved video games. It all added up to a huge sense of excitement.

Most teens (and adults) tell themselves that their largest dreams are impossible to achieve, and they consequently set reasonable goals for themselves. The boy who wants to write a book settles for a more reasonable short story. The girl who wants to meet a human genome decoder settles for a chapter in a biology textbook. Being reasonable is hailed as common sense, but it's in fact self-sabotage in two ways.

Firstly, by setting a low challenge/low payoff goal, you immediately shrink the energy quota you'll apply toward the goal. Would my brother and I have spent hours playing detective to Super Mario and Zelda's personal lives if only a single Nintendo system was at stake? No way. If you're excited to learn how hybrid cars are built, shooting for a full-blown factory tour will inspire you more toward action than reading a few online articles. Baby steps are important, but only as steps toward something much bigger. Overambitious goals are the key to *seeding* any long-lasting ambition.

Secondly, with the whole world focused on reasonable goals, competition for big, unreasonable goals is surprisingly small. How many teens call the hybrid car factory and ask to tour the line? My guess is zero. Therefore, you have zero competition. You're not going to become an astronaut or make personal calls to Nobel Prize winners by simply wishing it. But if you're one of the few (or the

first) in a field, and you've got a little perseverance, you can set the rules. Of course teens take personalized tours of car factories. Didn't you know?

### **Production is More Exciting than Consumption**

Writing is more exciting than reading. Directing and editing a movie is more exciting than watching a movie. Coding a computer program creates a rush where simply using one does not. Production—the act of creation—is more exciting than simply consuming.

Consumption (of things like books, movies, computers) is indeed necessary to inform and inspire creation. But too much consumption leads to analysis paralysis: getting lost in excessive information absorption. Modern teens succumb far more often to over-consumption than over-production. Escape analysis paralysis by focusing dreams whenever possible on production.

### **Guilt is a Poor Motivator**

Unschoolers tend to have a keen sense of social justice. This leads them to dreams of helping the homeless, feeding the hungry or saving the whales. Follow these dreams, but not at the expense of censoring your self-oriented goals. If the thought of performing Cirque de Soleil-level acrobatics (a totally self-oriented goal) makes you shudder with exhilaration, go for it. If you want to volunteer 80 hours a week for a nonprofit, that's fine too. But do it out of excitement, not guilt.

### **The Dream-Mapping Workshop**

Now let's put it all together. To begin dream mapping, start with a blank sheet of paper. Turn it sideways. This is your map. You'll also want a few sheets of scratch paper for fleshing out wordings before putting them on your main map.

Dream maps begin in the middle, with your biggest dreams, and move progressively outward as you break your dreams down into smaller, more concrete steps.

Write small, because you're about to think big.<sup>8</sup>

### Dream Mapping, Step 1: Define the Biggies

We'll begin by trolling for your biggest, deepest, most *unreasonable* dreams. Ask yourself the following two questions and use scratch paper to record every answer that pops into your head.

- ◆ What would you do if failure were impossible?
- ◆ What would make you most excited to wake up in the morning?

In defining the biggies, you'll notice that dreams come in three flavors: Things, Experiences and Characteristics.

- ◆ *Thing* dreams involve *owning* something (your own car, \$5000 in a savings account or a new laptop).



———— Dream Map — Step 1 —————

- ◆ *Experience* dreams involve *doing* something (traveling to India, meeting a favorite author or writing a novel).
- ◆ *Characteristic* dreams involve *being* something (a crocheting master, fully versed in Egyptian history or a world-class sailor).

Aim to create at least one goal in each flavor. To help spark your creativity, you can apply the first two questions to each flavor. For example: What experience would I pursue if I knew I couldn't fail? What characteristic would make me excited to wake up in the morning?

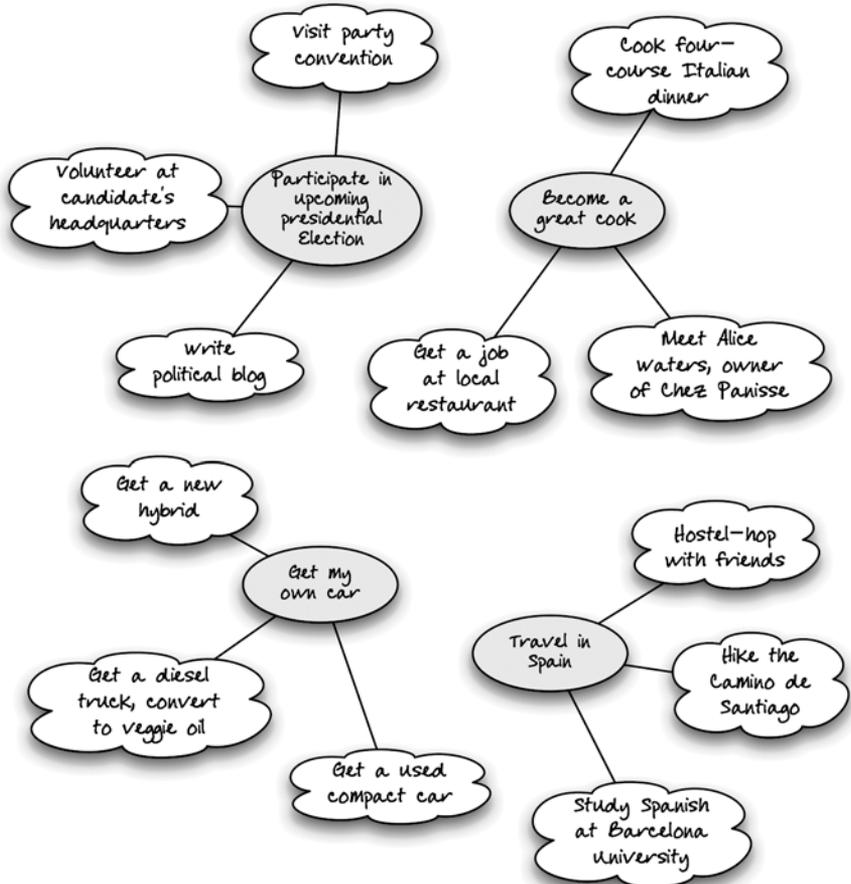
Write three to five big dreams in the center of your map. This example dream map begins with four dreams.

### **Dream Mapping, Step 2: Cerebral → VAK**

Next, take each of your big dreams and scan them for *cerebrals*: abstract words and phrases that have many possible interpretations. Freedom and responsibility are quintessential cerebral words. Become an awesome guitarist is a cerebral phrase, as is save the planet, make money or travel the world. Cerebrals are not bad in themselves; big dreams often emerge in unspecific terms. Your dream to spend a month learning Kendo in Japan may begin as a vague desire to travel. On their own, however, cerebrals leave you helpless to take action.

If I dream to spend a lot of time in the outdoors (a cerebral phrase), I'll sit outside with my finger up my nose. If I dream to go on a long backpacking trip (less cerebral), then I can start researching trails. And better yet, if I dream to hike the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail between April and September (not cerebral), I'll know exactly what to do. Cerebrals need modification to become accomplishable.

The antidote to cerebral dreams is visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) language. Because humans ultimately trace the meaning of



———— Dream Map — Step 2 ————

cerebral phrases like “find myself” back to perceived (visual) sights, (auditory) sounds and (kinesthetic) feelings, VAK dreams have a higher chance of getting done. To change a dream from cerebral → VAK, write it in language that you can see, hear or feel.

- Save the planet → Plant ten redwood trees in my city park (kinesthetic)
- Travel internationally → See the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Parthenon (visual)
- Spend time outdoors → Listen to the rainfall in a cloud forest (auditory)
- Become an awesome guitarist → Play five songs on the electric guitar (kinesthetic)

Notice that dreams changed to VAK language become incredibly *specific*. They do this by including numbers (e.g. five songs, three places to see in Paris) and visual/auditory/kinesthetic details (redwood trees, rainfall). The more specific the dream, the more power you have to realize it.

Also notice that turning a characteristic dream (e.g., Become an awesome guitarist) into VAK language changes it to an experience dream (Play five songs on the electric guitar). This leaves you with only two types of dreams—experiences and things—each of which is straightforward to pursue.

Change each of your big, cerebral dreams to VAK language. But don't just do it once. **For each big dream, brainstorm three VAK options. Draw them in bubbles radiating outward from the parent bubble.** Three is a vital number because you'll later choose between these different paths to accomplish your dream.

- Save the planet →
1. Plant ten redwood trees in my city park
  2. Research peak oil and nuclear alternatives
  3. Introduce five neighborhood kids to local flora and fauna

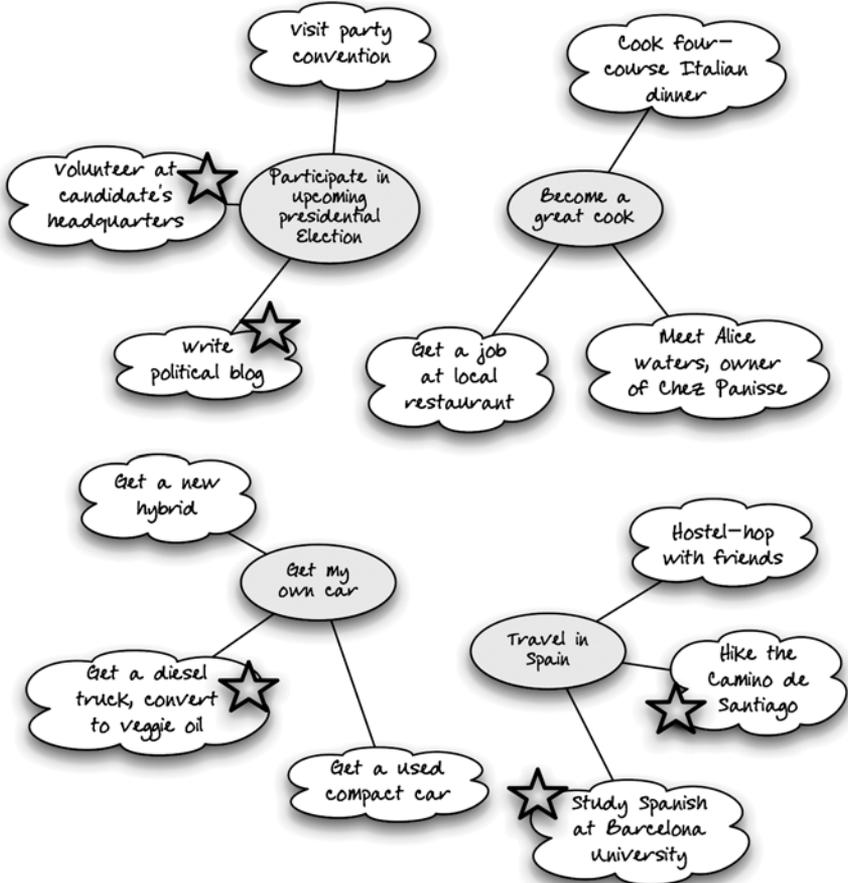
- Become an awesome guitarist →
1. Play five songs on the electric guitar
  2. Perform a cover song at the local coffeehouse
  3. Read two books on music theory
- Travel internationally →
1. See the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Parthenon
  2. Visit relatives in Russia for one month
  3. Build houses in Mexico over spring break
- Spend time outdoors →
1. Listen to rainfall in a cloud forest
  2. Run 40 miles each week for eight weeks
  3. Learn to race dogs in Alaska

### **Dream Mapping, Step 3: Fat-Cutting**

Now it's time to prioritize. Of all the VAK options you've just created, *choose the five that really excite you*. If a malicious genie suddenly placed a death sentence upon you, these are the things that you would do before you died. You don't necessarily need to choose one option from each big dream. Just choose five and put a star next to each one.

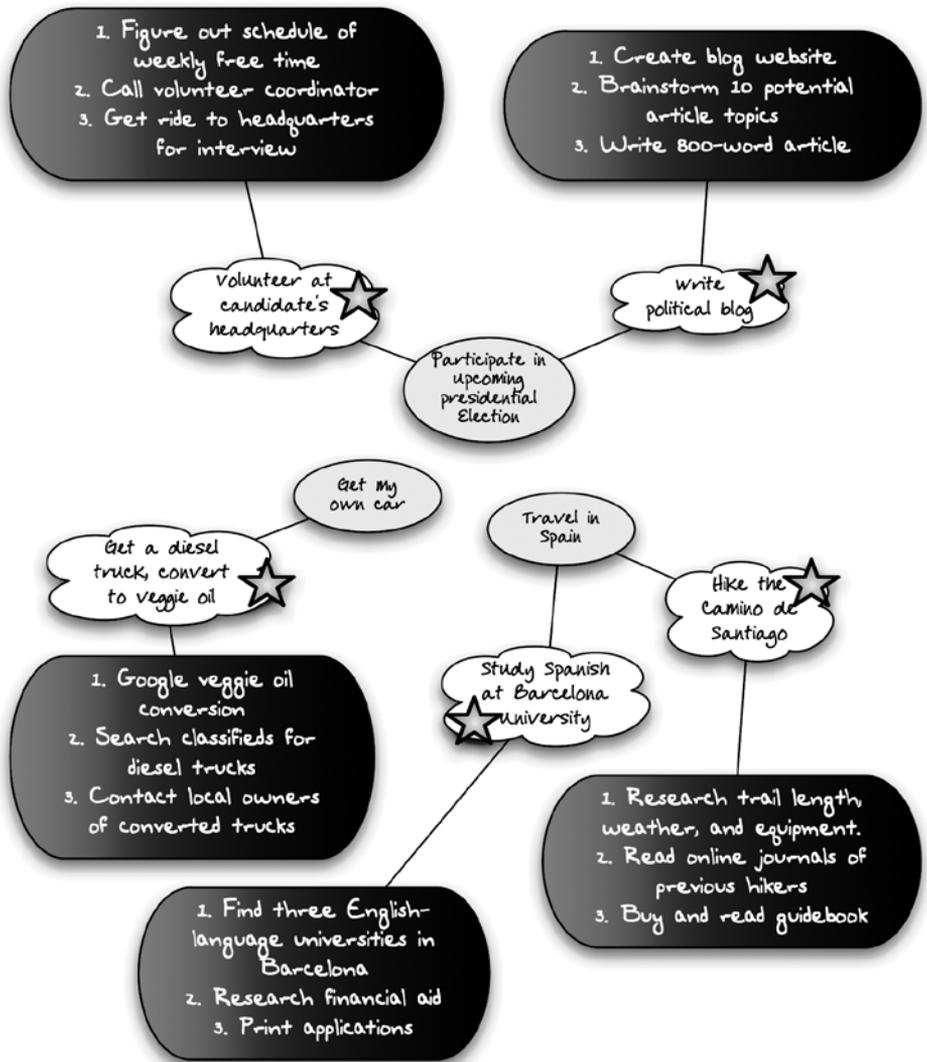
### **Dream Mapping, Step 4: Baby Steps**

With your dream map now narrowed to five high priority and accomplishable steps, it's finally time to get reasonable. Let's break down each starred bubble into three baby steps that you can start *today*.



— Dream Map — Step 3 —

For each starred bubble, draw one more radiating bubble. In the bubble, repeat the process of brainstorming three VAK options. These are your baby steps. Baby steps should be totally concrete. They should be so concrete that if you gave a list of baby steps to a stranger, he would know exactly what to do with them. And unlike our previous VAK options, baby steps have a timeline.



Of the three steps you create

- ◆ **The first step** you'll take immediately, after finishing this chapter. It should take less than five minutes in total to complete.
- ◆ **The second step** you'll take tomorrow, before 11:00 PM. It should take less than 15 minutes.
- ◆ **The third step** you'll take within one week. It will rest on the shoulders of the first two baby steps.

Baby steps are the most important part of dream mapping. Thinking of big cerebrals is a relatively easy process, but only through concrete action will you discover which dreams are actually yours and which are implanted.

### **Your Finished Dream Map**

Congratulations! A finished dream map is a beautiful thing—a practical and personal work of art. Keep it in a convenient location, like a desk drawer or taped to the wall above your computer. We'll call on it at various points throughout the book.

### **Create a Dream Book**

The last step in defining your dreams is starting a dream book.

Dream mapping is a cyclical energy generator. After seeing the success of your first baby steps, your mind will flood with more and more dreams. They'll come at odd hours: in the shower, during a run or while you're sleeping. Letting a dream nugget slip away can be a sad loss, because if and when you remember it (days or weeks later), a chance opportunity may have passed. To prevent runaway dreams, use a dream book.

A dream book is a blank journal or notebook that you keep close to your body (e.g. in a pocket, backpack or handbag) at all times of day. Armed with a few reliable pens, use the book to jot down every dream, goal, VAK option or baby step that pops into your

mind. Draw dream maps when the inspiration hits you. If you're a visual artist, draw your dreams in pictures. If you prefer, keep two books: one for spontaneous notes and the other for precision-crafted maps.

Jim Wiltens, summer camp director extraordinaire and mentor to my young adulthood, started his first dream book at age 14. His current book is over 30 years old. Jim (a more traditional adventurer) credits his dream book with inspiring him to

- ◆ maroon himself on a deserted island in British Columbia for an entire month.
- ◆ kayak on the Amazon river through headhunter territory.
- ◆ train and ride camels through India and Nepal.
- ◆ run the only roadless lodge-based wilderness summer camp in California.
- ◆ write six books (both fiction and non-fiction).

Jim's own hero for goal setting was John Goddard who, in 1940 at the age of 15, sat at his kitchen table and wrote a list of 127 goals, 109 of which he has completed today. John's teenage goals included such ambitious plans as pilot the world's fastest aircraft, read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica, study primitive cultures of the Sudan and publish an article in National Geographic—adventures that he immediately embarked upon at an age when most teens consider school the only point of their lives.<sup>9</sup>

Where will your dream book take you?