

Goal Setting

“People who get what they want tend to be the ones who make the effort to know what they want” - Martha Beck

Women of the Summit’s lunchtime discussion on Thursday, Jan 19, will be an interactive exploration of how to get clearer on what you really want, and how to get it. We’ll play with some of the ideas that Martha Beck offers in the latest Oprah magazine. The following is a summary of the article:

How to get what you want: The Four Ps

Because I am capable of making only small moves towards personal improvement, I find it helpful to break down the process of clarifying desire into steps. I call them the four Ps: Pushback, Possibilities, Preferences and Pinpointing.

Step 1: Pushback

A wise Chinese man taught his acolytes by holding a little songbird on his finger. When the bird tried to leave, he’d drop his hand so it couldn’t get enough lift to fly away. Lesson: the ability to soar often depends on pushing back against something you don’t want. Articulate the Pushback.

Somewhere in your life there is a sense of resistance, resentment, discomfort. When you are ready to start complainingdo it about precisely the things that bother you. The more specific you can be about what upsets you, and why, the clearer you can make your desires.

Step 2: Possibilities

Once you’ve complained yourself into a high dudgeon, release the energy of finding fault and take up the energy of imagination. Holding in your mind the situation that leads to the strongest Pushback, begin mentally playing out ways it might change. Emphasis on playing. If you feel confined in your tiny office, imagine working in Cinderella’s Castle, at the beach, on the moon. As Arthur C. Clarke wrote, “The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.” Each time you feel your Pushback, ride the energy and use it to imagine outrageously awesome Possibilities.

Step 3: Preferences

If you stay loose and relaxed while conjuring up Possibilities you’ll notice that some of them leave you feeling intrigued, curious and a bit lighter. These are your Preferences. Let them tiptoe into your consciousness. Don’t think, just allow. (If you could already think about your Preferences clearly, you’d be creating, not complaining. As T.S.Elliot wrote, “Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought.”) Let yourself form a vague impression, then go for a bit more specificity, as if you’re bringing a camera into focus. Allow, and watch.

Step 4: Pinpoints

If you're playful and patient, the Preferences forming in your mind will eventually become clear enough to describe in words. You'll begin articulating exactly what bothers you and scenarios you'd prefer to see. Don't jump the gun; hold on a bit longer and get maximum specificity by pinpointing your desires. Thinking of a solution you'd like to see, ask yourself: what would be even better than that? Repeat this until you've got an image of a situation so perfect you literally can't imagine a situation to top it. This is Pinpoint clarity. Now you're telling the waiter "Please bring me two free-range eggs boiled for exactly three minutes, seasoned with a dash of sea salt and coarsely ground Tellicherry pepper." That kind of clarity may raise eyebrows, but guess what? It lets everyone and everything around you deliver exactly what you want.

For you I wish a new year full of clarity regarding the persistent burdens in your life. These problems may look uncannily like burdens, but they are actually invitations to change. That change will happen when you use the force of complaint to reach precise solutions. Knowing what you want – exactly what you want – is the first step to getting it.

- Martha Beck