

Living Your “Bucket List”

Andrea Bennett, WVU Extension Agent, Mercer County

Educational Objectives

1. Learn how to set exciting goals to enjoy the future.
2. Prepare for life “after work and/or family”.
3. Improve your sense of well-being.
4. Create your own “Bucket List .”

What is a Bucket List?

The term is inspired by the movie “The Bucket List,” a comedy about two terminally ill men who set off to do the things in life they have always dreamed of. A Bucket List is simply a list of things that you

would like to do or accomplish before you “kick the bucket.” It’s a reminder of all the things we want to achieve in our time here on Earth, so that instead of spending our time in fruitless activities, we are using our time to live an exhilarating, fulfilled



life. Ask yourself, “What would I want to experience or do if I had only one year to live?” Organizing the answers to that question and making your own Bucket List can help you turn those dreams into reality.

Why do we need a Bucket List?

*Read “Take Time to Enjoy Life” – Author Unknown.

Take Time to Enjoy Life

Too many people put off something that brings them joy just because they don’t have it on their schedule, or can’t depart from their routine.

I was thinking one day about all those people on the Titanic who passed up dessert at dinner that fateful night in an effort to cut back. From then on, I’ve tried to be a little more flexible.

I cannot count the times I called my sister and said, ‘How about going to lunch?’ She would stammer, ‘I can’t. I have clothes on the line. My hair is dirty. I wish I had known yesterday. I had a late breakfast.’ She died a few years ago. We never did have lunch together.

Because Americans cram so much into their lives, we tend to schedule our headaches. We live on a sparse diet of promises we make to ourselves

– continued –

when all the conditions are perfect! We'll go back and visit the grandparents when we get the baby toilet-trained. We'll entertain when we replace the living-room carpet. We'll go on a second honeymoon when we get two more kids out of college.

Life has a way of accelerating as we get older. The days get shorter, and the list of promises to ourselves gets longer. One morning, we awaken, and all we have to show for our lives is a litany of 'I'm going to,' 'I plan on,' and 'Someday, when things are settled down.'

When anyone calls my 'seize the moment' friend, she is open to adventure and available for trips. She keeps an open mind on new ideas. Her enthusiasm for life is contagious.

My lips have not touched ice cream in 10 years. I love ice cream. It's just that I might as well apply it directly to my stomach with a spatula and eliminate the digestive process. The other day, I stopped the car and bought a triple-decker. If my car had hit an iceberg on the way home, I would have died happy.

The bottom line is that we are not promised tomorrow. Too many people die young without accomplishing the things they wanted to do in life. Too often we say things such as "I'll get to that next month," "I just don't have time," "I'm too busy," and the day to do those things we really want to do never comes. Use your "good china" every day, not just on a holiday. Burn the new candle instead of putting it up for a special occasion. Every day is a special occasion.

Anna Quindlen states in her book *A Short Guide to a Happy Life* that we need to:



"Get a life, a real life, not a manic pursuit of the next promotion, bigger paycheck, or larger house. Do you really think you would care so much about those things if you developed an aneurysm one afternoon, or found a lump while in the shower? Realize life is glorious, and that you have no business taking it for granted."

The point of a Bucket List is to maximize every moment of our existence and live our life to the fullest. Our life follows a timeline and no one knows when the end will be. It's so easy to take life for granted, to just exist and not live. It's up to us to change our mindset and decide to enjoy the present.

*Read "Oh! The Places You Will Go . . . The Waiting Place"

Oh! The Places You Will Go

By Dr. Seuss

*You can get so confused that
you'll start into a race
down long wiggled roads at
a break-necking pace
and grind on for miles across
weirdish wild space
headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.
The Waiting Place . . . for people just waiting.
Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come,
or a plane to go
or the mail to come, or the rain to go
or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow
or the waiting around for a Yes or No
or waiting for their hair to grow.
Everyone is just waiting.*

What are you waiting for? When will you start enjoying your life? Most of us are procrastinators who just keep waiting for the perfect time to do something. Everyone has priorities in life; just make sure that today's priorities don't become tomorrow's regrets. The time to take control of your life is now. We only have one life to live . . . LIVE IT! Are you ready?



Preparation

As you prepare to make your Bucket List, you will want to find out a little bit about yourself. Start by asking yourself these questions:

1. What makes me happy?
2. What are my interests, wishes, and dreams?
3. What is something I have always wanted to do, but keep putting off?
4. What would I like to see, hear, or experience in person?
5. Is there anything I would like to learn to do?
6. What if I only had six months to live? What would I want to do?

Tips:

1. You do not have to share your Bucket List unless you choose to.
2. Do not think about money when writing down ideas. You may not be able to afford all the things on your list and that's ok. However, if you filter your list by thinking "I can't afford this," you stifle your creative thinking and limit yourself.
3. Don't wait until you retire to do these things. By that time you may not be physically able to do some of the things; plus there is no guarantee you will live that long.
4. Look at other Bucket Lists to get ideas.



Warnings

Avoid treating a Bucket List as putting your life on hold. The whole premise of creating a Bucket List is to start doing things NOW. Be careful not to turn your Bucket List into a list of consumer wants. This isn't about buying the best of everything; it's about experiencing the greatest things life has to offer, the achievements you want to make. Do not do anything illegal. Remember that dangerous activities have consequences.



Making your Bucket List

Answer the questions above. Review other Bucket Lists online or in books. Think of your Bucket List as an ever-changing list. Be flexible – you own it, and it's allowed to change.

Materials:

- A pen
- A piece of paper or a notepad specifically for your Bucket List

Living your list

The hardest part of a Bucket List isn't creating it, but living it. We often have a great idea and write it down, but then never follow up to accomplish it. Creating your Bucket List is just the beginning; living it is a decision you have to be willing to make. Immerse yourself in the concept of your dreams. Read books, articles, or online about the different things you want to do. Break down large items into smaller action points so you can see how to accomplish them.

Writing your Bucket List is a form of goal-setting from the heart, which gives a deep level of satisfaction and accomplishment. Accomplish something extraordinary, something that reminds you that you are worthy of living your best life!



Here are a few tips:

1. Identify the challenges you might face in completing the list and plan around them!
2. Keep you Bucket List with you ALL the time. This keeps it on your mind and visible.
3. Check off things as you do them. This will give you a feeling of accomplishment.
4. Share your idea or your list with others so they will help guide, support, and motivate you.
5. Just do it! The time is now; tomorrow may never come.

Do not procrastinate or wait for the perfect time; the perfect time doesn't ever seem to come around. Today is the day to make changes in your life, for you to take charge of your future.

*Life should not be a journey to the grave
With the intention of arriving safely in
An attractive and well-preserved body.*

*But rather, to skid in sideways,
chocolate in one hand
Margarita in the other,
Body thoroughly used up, totally worn out
Screaming ~
WOO HOO!! WHAT A RIDE!
Author Unknown*

Quotes

“Each day is a gift and not a given right; today is the only guarantee you get.”

“Learn to love the journey, not just the destination.”

“Never confuse your life and your work. The second is only a part of the first, and much less important.”

“Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans.” – *John Lennon*

“Every man dies, but not every man really lives.”
– *William Ross*

Recommended reading

A Short Guide to a Happy Life by Anna Quindlen
Chasing Daylight by Eugene O’Kelly

Tips for leaders

- Have a preprinted list or notebook paper for people to write on.
- Have a small bucket for each member as a prize or a memory of their Bucket List.
- Play the song “Live Like You Were Dying” by Tim McGraw or print the lyrics to read.

Websites for Bucket List ideas

<http://bucketlists.wetpaint.com/page/Popular+Life+Goals>

<http://marelisa.hubpages.com/hub/Bucket-List-Create-One>

www.bucketlist.net/lists/all_lists/

www.term LIFE insurance.org/50-bucket-list-articles-things-to-do-before-you-kick-it/

2011

Programs and activities offered by the West Virginia University Extension Service are available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, and marital or family status. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Director, Cooperative Extension Service, West Virginia University.

FH11-268

Theater photo: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pena2/4546375379/> By Pena2

