

THE TEN STEPS OF VISIONING
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http://www.luciac.com/essays/VisioningSteps.html

Step 1: Make a Wish
The Visionary begins by deciding to explore new possibilities in some area of life, choosing a theme on which to focus. This is like the designer's first step of getting an idea. The first step of Visioning poses the question: What do I want? What is my true heart's desire? It might be: "A new career direction," or "Finding a place to live," or Finding a mate," or "Making more money," or "Getting healthier," or "Making a film." Some Visionaries choose a broader playing field, such as, "A projection of the year ahead," or "What areas of my life need attention?" or "What does a balance between professional and personal life look life?" Other Visionaries want to resolve a specific problem or situation and do a "before" and "after" collage titled "How it looks now" and "How I'd like it to look."

Step 2: Search for Images and Words
This is the designers research phase. The task here is to gather pictures, captions, and phrases from magazines, newspapers, catalogs, or other visual sources. One's personal collection of snapshots, postcards, or greeting cards can also be used. In this phase, the Visionary is tearing, cutting, amassing a heart's-desire image bank. The emphasis is on what experience she wants to create in her life rather than simply picturing stuff to be acquired. It is a way of exploring quality of life, living by choice instead of default. The only rule during the research phase is to collect photos and phrases that depict one's deepest wishes. The mantra is: Grab what grabs you. Dreaming is in, practicality is out. This is about going for it, the sky's the limit. This is a time to be inclusive and expand one's horizons, keeping an open mind while gathering as many relevant images and words as possible. If other great pictures surface that are unrelated to the theme, they are set aside in a separate file to be used in other collages.

Step 3: Focus on the Vision
In the design process, this is when the research is connected more specifically to the designer's idea or problem to be solved. Here the Visionary sorts through the mass of torn or cut-out raw material that has been gathered. The question is asked of each image, word, or phrase: Does this express my innermost wishes, my fondest dreams? If it relates to the theme it's in. If not, it's out or put in the "save" file for possible use in the future. This phase is about discrimination, selectivity, choice-making, but always from the heart.

Step 4: Compose the Design
Visioning collage-making is a new language, a language of symbols and images, of color and words blended together to form a unique montage of creative possibilities. Like any designer assembling the elements of a design, the Visionary starts building the visible expression of her dreams by putting the pieces together, almost as if assembling a jigsaw puzzle. Laying the pictures out on the art paper, she tentatively arranges them in relationships to each other. Mixing and matching, she tries ideas out for size and placement, using a sixth sense about how to accurately portray the dream. There is no right way to do it, only the particular Visionary's way. This is the time to be completely authentic and original, true to oneself and one's vision. It is at this point that a great deal of inner doubt often arises, leading us to the next step.

Step 5: Explore and Find Order in Creative Chaos
Chaos is a natural part of any creative or design process. If it doesn't happen, it usually means that nothing new is being learned, nothing original is being created. This step isn't one that is done consciously or by choice. Something within the Visionary just starts questioning the whole enterprise. For designers, this often occurs during the mix-and-match phase when mock-ups are being created. For the Visionary, it's getting closer to the time when pictures will be glued down, a commitment will be made, the collage will be made permanent. The self talk usually starts with questions like, "Why am I doing this? Or statements like, "I don't know how to do this" (as if there were a set way such collages should look, which there isn't). Perhaps an inner art critic starts in: "This is ugly and stupid. People will really laugh when they see this stuff." Worse yet, is the voice that says the entire activity is a waste of time. "This wish will never come true. This is all just pie-in-the-sky dreaming.

You're doomed to disappointment." This phase holds the biggest challenge but also the greatest learning. It is where the leap forward takes place and where the Visionary is tested for faith in the dream and courage to express it. This is the time for perseverance in the face of self-doubt. The warring factions in the mind are dealt with through journal work.

Step 6: Create the Collage
After the mock-up stage, a designer must develop his design with an eye toward the end product. In Visioning, this is the step of integration, of putting all the pieces together on the paper to create a Vision collage. Gradually, the images and words that speak for the dream are being committed to paper and glued down for good. It is an experience of surrender to some inner knowing, to the creative self (which has a vision) and the creative conscience (which speaks from the heart). By combining photos and phrases in new ways, new connections are made and personal meaning is revealed.

Step 7: Articulate the Vision
As visual as the design process is, eventually the designer must translate his design and communicate it in words to others. Drawings, blueprints, diagrams must be explained to production specialists, manufacturers, and builders. In Visioning, it isn't quite enough to simply make a collage. It is the act of gaining deeper insight. Looking at these picture/word collages after they are completed is like reading poetry or deciphering symbols. We see all kinds of things we didn't notice while we were in the heat of creative chaos. The first part of articulation is to quietly sit and contemplate the collage. What does it say? What surprises does it hold? What is the resistance, if any, to taking this Vision collage seriously and believing that it will come true? One question to be avoided is, "How am I going to make this dream happen?" Visionaries are asked to relax and surrender to a higher order of creativity and *allow* the dream to materialize rather than force it. Anxiety and fear only block energy. Following the guided contemplation, journal-writing activities are used for more deeply exploring meaning in the pictures and phrases. As the visual right brain has its say (in art) and the verbal left brain gets to talk (through the written word), both hemispheres of the brain are activated and integrated.

Step 8: Reinforce the Dream
It is now time for the production process. Since it is the creative self who works the magic and makes the dream a reality, the Visionary's task is to turn the design over to this higher power within. The artwork that results from collage-making is a visual affirmation. As with verbal affirmations, which are positive self-talk messages, the Vision collage establishes and reinforces a desired goal or experience. The Visionary exercises her visual right brain (which sees the pictures) by using the visual affirmations on a daily basis. By looking at the collage repeatedly, the images are reinforced in the imagination and memory. Practicing the art and science of building wishes and dreams in the world of physical reality develops "practical imagination."
The clearer the collage image, the more receptive we can be when it shows up in real life. The very concreteness of the photo collage makes it the perfect vehicle for reinforcing-through the eyes-the inner vision of the heart. We take it out of the realm of imagination and bring it down to earth. Before long, as if by magic, the Visionary's dream appears in three dimensions. There may still be some final hurdles, however, and that's where we enter the next step.
Step 9: Embrace the Reality
In order to make their designs a reality, designers get help. After sharpening their own skills, they enlist the support and expertise of others. Step 9 is both an internal process of enhanced perception and an external one of working with others. First, it involves the ability to recognize the embodiment of one's desire when it comes along. Fortunately, the specific and realistic nature of the photo collage makes this easy. The guesswork has been removed. The collage and the physical reality look and feel the same. There may even be captions that are specific. However, it is not unusual for resistance to arise at this point. We start questioning: "Can I afford it? Do I have time for it? Does my life situation permit me to have this? Do I deserve it? Will it really happen? Will I get it and then lose it? Will I be disappointed in the long run? More journal work, the gathering a support system, experts, or mentors who can provide coaching are all encouraged. Once we say, "Yes, this is it, and I'm going for it!" the decision to embrace the reality is made. We reach out to others for help, and then simply live out the actions that take us to our destination: the dream come true.

Step 10: Celebrate the Dream Come True
Architects, designers, artists, authors, theater companies, filmmakers, and so on announce the unveiling of their dream-come-true with receptions, grand openings, book signings, and other kinds of festivities. Celebrations are just as important for the Visionary. This step may seem obvious, but it can't be overemphasized. Acknowledging ourselves for a job well done builds self-confidence. When we celebrate we also express gratitude to others, starting with a prayer or other ritual of thanksgiving to God, the creative self, or whatever

higher power the Visionary recognizes. It is also time to thank all the members of one's personal support team as well. The process has been brought to completion, the traveler has reached her destination. It's time to party!

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