



Make your lofty bucket-list dreams come true with these tips.

By Amy Stubblefield

We all have goals and dreams. Some of us even have bucket lists — a checklist of experiences we'd love to have, or feats we'd love to accomplish at some point in our lives. But many of us aren't sure where to start when it comes to realizing those aspirations.

As it turns out, bucket lists are important. They keep our priorities in check, give us goals to strive for, and remind us that our dreams are within reach. Some scientific researchers even believe that people live longer when they have specific goals they hope to achieve.

Oh, and did we mention they just *make our lives more fun?*

Savvy asked two local experts—Laura Erdman-Luntz, life coach and yoga instructor, and Michelle Stimpson, mentor and owner of LifeShine Coaching—to share their tried-and-true advice for turning your bucket list into a reality.

SET GOALS BIG AND SMALL, AND THEN REALLY WRITE THEM DOWN

It's good to have a healthy balance of goals on your list. Think of things that can be done in a weekend and things that might take years to complete, or those that won't cost a dime and those that might take a significant investment.

Then, once you've taken some time to plot out your goals, reaffirm them by writing them down. We mean *really* writing them down — old school, with a pen and paper, because typing them out just isn't the same. Erdman-Luntz stresses this crucial step: "Writing it down makes it real," she says. "There is a connection between handwriting something, not just typing it, and having it come to fruition."

According to Erdman-Luntz, writing a list also aids you in calculating the motions you'll take leading up to your goal. Plus, putting the list somewhere that you can see it keeps you focused and excited about what's to come.

BREAK BIG GOALS INTO SMALLER, MORE ATTAINABLE ONES, SO YOU CAN START NOW

Do you dream of running a marathon, but can't even remember the last time you ran a mile? If a marathon is on your horizon, start with a training plan for a shorter



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FEAR OF MISSING OUT

The “Fear of Missing Out” is such a common challenge for people these days, it even has its own acronym: FOMO. Almost all of us have felt it at one point or another: We see people socializing or having fun without us and feel like we’re missing out. Maybe you think about other places you could be or things you could be doing when you’re already out and about.

It doesn’t help that our friends are Instagramming every party they attend, checking in at every hip restaurant they visit or Tweeting every milestone they reach. In our ultra-connected world, it’s easy to fall into FOMO. This epidemic is deeply affecting us, even resulting in changes in mood, anxiety and depression.

So how do you balance striving towards a major goal or bucket list item when it may mean you are “missing out” on something else? Bucket lists are great because, as Erdman-Luntz says, “they are a great way to keep you focused and aligned with what’s important to you.”

So don’t get bummed if you can’t reach your goal right away. After all, it’s likely that in our interconnected world, you’re not the only friend feeling FOMO! And the most meaningful part about a bucket list is finding joy in the steps you take to achieve your dreams — and the ones that have already come true. If you’re experiencing FOMO, it might be time to reflect and reprioritize.

“Find gratitude for who you are— what you’re doing, your friends, your home, your job, and all of the things that are really going well in your life,” Erdman-Luntz says. “It’s not about being happy when you get to do these things, it’s about being happy and you get to do these things.”

--Amy Stubblefield

race. It’s a great metaphor for your bucket list: Take baby steps, literally and figuratively.

These incremental check points make your ultimate end goals seem less daunting. It’s easier to get started when you’re only tackling a small piece of your final goal, especially because putting things off is a huge obstacle for many people when it comes to realizing their dreams.

“We say, ‘Oh, I’ll get to that someday,’” Stimpson says. “And I love the saying that ‘someday’ isn’t a day of the week. There is no reason to put off living life.”

In short, your bucket list isn’t a place to sweat the small stuff; it’s a place to connect with what really excites you. Start right away and tackle it piece by piece. The rest will fall into place.

VISUALIZE IT COMING TRUE

In addition to making your bucket list “real” by penning it on paper, both coaches encourage clients to create vision boards that help them visualize the path to their goal. Every person’s vision board is unique; it might be plastered with images of marathon finishers or a map of a state parks road trip. It doesn’t matter what your goals are, just find a way to imagine them with images.

“It’s easy for all of us to stay trapped in our head,” Stimpson says. “A vision board is a visual representation of things that excite you, and a way to connect with those feelings.”

MAKE A “BUCKET LIST SAVINGS ACCOUNT”

Not all goals require a significant monetary investment, but some that involve commitments like travel or a career change might. Erdman-Luntz has a special savings account at her bank dedicated to her bucket list, and she started by putting aside just five dollars a month. As your bucket list savings add up, not only will you be closer to your

dream financially, but you’ll be able to better visualize it coming true.

Then, get creative when it comes to your objectives. Want to travel to Thailand? Maybe your boss will let you telecommute while you’re away, cutting back on hours missed or vacation time spent. Whatever your goal may be, “envision yourself doing it,” Erdman-Luntz says, “because the only limitation is your mind.”

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION

Beyond money, time and other resources, the biggest and hardest-to-overcome obstacle standing in your way is oftentimes *yourself*.

“If there is something we really want that we don’t have yet,” Erdman-Luntz says, “there’s a belief inside of us somewhere that says we cannot have it.”

And in Stimpson’s experience, this challenge is especially prevalent with women. “We’re socialized to be caregivers. We’re really good at knowing what others around us need and lose sight of what *we* want or what we need,” she says.

The pressures to stay busy, and to equate being busy with being happy, trip up many women in pursuit of achieving their dreams. But it’s not only okay to think about your dreams, Stimpson says, it’s imperative. As you start to reflect on your priorities, take into consideration what you can say “no” to that will enable you to say “yes” to a new, joyful opportunity.

SHARE IT

To add to the pressure to “stay busy,” women also struggle with the belief that we must take on all challenges by ourselves — and technology doesn’t help. Staying connected 24/7 is a surefire sign that you may not be putting yourself first, and giving yourself permission to unplug is paramount.



There are a few reasons that sharing your bucket list might benefit you. First, it helps you stay accountable. "When you put it out there and talk about it with others, it makes it more real," Stimpson says.

At the same time, if your goal is to start your own business, meeting people, networking and asking for advice is one of the best ways to get the ball rolling. It helps you attract a support system that will stick with you as you strive toward your goal.

For Stimpson, as she began to discuss her ambition to start her own business, she felt that support system form around her. "It's almost like the world opened up to me, to allow all of the pieces to come into play so that it could happen," she says.

Conversely, Erdman-Luntz reminds us that not everyone will be supportive. "Some people will say it's awesome. Other people will tell you to be realistic, responsible, practical," Erdman-Luntz says. "They're coming from their own fears, because deep down they're not living up to their full capabilities." The point is not to let anything, or anyone, distract you from achieving your dreams.

HAVE FUN

Not all of your goals have to be serious, big-time life changers. Your list is meant to bring joy into your life, plain and simple.

Both coaches practice what they preach when it comes to living their lists: One of Erdman-Luntz's self-proclaimed "goofy" bucket list items is being an extra in a feature film. As for Stimpson, who has a knack for landing front-row seats to concerts, it's a goal of hers to upgrade her 11th-row tickets to stage-side at an upcoming Rolling Stones concert; naturally, "sit front row at a Stones show" has been on her bucket list for a long time.

Knowing their track record, they both have a pretty good shot at realizing their dreams — as long as they visualize success, give themselves permission and have a great time on the journey.

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