

TURNING YOUR GOALS UPSIDE DOWN AND INSIDE OUT
(TO GET WHAT YOU REALLY WANT)

TARA SOPHIA MOHR

Lesson #1: Welcome.

Welcome. This is a course in getting what you want in your work and in your life. I wrote this course because I often see people going through this pattern:

1. Set a big, important goal.
2. Throw a lot of energy and will at it.
3. Lose motivation.
4. Feel disappointed, flaky, undisciplined.

I've been through this. I've watched friends and family go through it. As a [coach](#), I see many clients struggle with it as well.

Much of the goal-setting advice out there enables this, by offering models that instruct us to define "specific, timed goals," make a plan, and simply implement. Those models don't reflect human beings' messy, imperfect, complex selves.

This course is about a more loving, gentle path to goal setting and achievement. It's about being so wise about how you define and go after what you want that it comes like water flowing downhill - rather than feeling a steep and difficult climb.

You can't do this course wrong. Do the parts that work for you, in the way that works for you, when it works for you. That is the right way to do it.

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Why I Really Wrote This Course

I believe there is a life you are meant to lead, a contribution you are meant to make. That life and that contribution are revealed in your dreams and longings. They are there to steer you towards a fulfilling, juicy, move-you-to-tears gorgeous life.

When you are living that life, you contribute a whole lot of light to the world. I want you to live that life, and contribute that light. That's why I really wrote this course.

By the way, this course is different from my blog. At my blog, Wise Living, I write free articles about twice a week, about living more authentically, following your calling, quieting fears and the inner critic, and experiencing more "everyday joy." Sign up to receive the blog via email, [here](#). To receive it in a reader, [click here](#).

Warmly,
Tara



Lesson #2: Eight Goal Principles

Here are the eight radical ideas about goals at the heart of this course. We'll cover them in greater depth as we go forward, but here are the headlines:

1. We can create **goals that feel like huge gorgeous presents to ourselves--**"what I call gift-goals" or we can let fears and "shoulds" generate goals that feel like burdens. You get to choose.

2. It so happens that **gift-goals are not only more fun but also more effective**, because they engage your passion and tap your strengths.

3. **Gift-goals give you energy, come from your authentic voice, often feel thrilling and scary, and are about becoming more of who you really are.**

They inspire a journey that is as sweet and enjoyable as the destination. Fear-based or should goals create stress and tension in the body, drain energy, are about changing who you really are, and come from a spirit of self-critique, rather than one of self care. They usually feel safe-- not thrilling.

4. When you first begin to think about a dream, vision or a big important goal, **put the questions about how to make it happen on hold for a while.** Date your dream.

Treat it exactly as you would treat a lovely person with whom you want to develop an awesome relationship.

5. If your action plan isn't working, if you lose motivation, don't ask "What's wrong with me?" Ask "**What supports, systems or changes do I need to put in place to be successful?**"

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6. **Goals are always (deep down, underneath the surface) about creating change in how we feel.** Name the feeling you are seeking through the goal, and then brainstorm the many paths you can take to create that feeling in your life. You don't need to wait till a specific outcome is realized to feel more happy, confident, peaceful, responsible--or whatever it is you want to feel.

7. Embrace this paradox: Achievement of goals has real impact our lives, and on the other hand, **everything we need to change our fundamental state of being is right here, within us, in this moment.** Wise people work on creating external and internal change.

8. Your goals matter. Those things your heart really wants are not going to lead you down a dangerous, unrealistic, or selfish path. Nor are they arbitrary. They **speak to the life that wants to emerge from you.** They point you toward the important contributions you have to make to the world. They nudge you towards the life that is going to feel move-you-to-tears-meaningful, thrilling, and lots of fun.

Lesson #3: Gift-Goals

It's a funny thing: for many of us, the very concept of goals brings up all kinds of unhelpful thoughts about:

- the things we think we *should* be doing
- the things we think a "good person" would do
- the parts of ourselves we like least and want to fix

Goals that come from this spirit...well, they aren't our friends. They are stressful to pursue. They drain motivation. They let us down, because ultimately, we can't sustain the motivation to achieve them.

What if you leave the should-goals and the fix-this-about-me-goals and the I've-got-to-get-it-together-goals aside....and instead, create your gift-goals?

A gift-goal is a goal that feels like a true, gorgeous, exciting gift to yourself.

Qualities of Gift-goals

1. **Gift-goals are as meaningful to pursue as to achieve.** Consider: what are those goals you could pursue that are so connected to the core of who you are, so reflective of your values and aligned with what gives you joy that the journey would be as sweet and thrilling as the destination?
2. **Gift-goals allow you to be more of who you really are.** Often our goals are about "fixing" ourselves. What goals could you set that would bring you closer to who you really are?

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3. **Gift-goals reflect your voice, not others'.** They aren't from your society, culture, company, friends or family. They aren't about pleasing other people, getting approval, avoiding conflict, or being popular. They aren't about "shoulds" or "have to's." They are about what *you really want*.

4. **Gift-goals leave room for imperfection.** Often, fear-based goals and the plans we create to achieve them don't allow for the messiness of life, for our human imperfection, for ups and downs. Gift-goals are big, real and heartfelt -- they allow for lots of human messiness and imperfection along the way.

5. **They feel good (and often scary!).** Gift-goals feel exhilarating and expansive and resonant. They wake you up. They make you smile. They get the adrenalin flowing.

6. **They pull you.** Sometimes we feel like we are pushing towards our goals. A gift-goal feels different. It has a magnetic pull on you.

Questions for Creating Gift-Goals

Use these journaling prompts to help you find your gift-goals. Tune into your gut, your heart, your intuition as you explore them. Put on a favorite song or go to place you love to write. Pay attention to your first answer to these questions - the first thought, image or sensation that comes up before your brain overrides it.

As you are writing, you might hear your inner critic grumbling. Maybe it's saying you have no gift-goals, or that pursuing them isn't realistic, or that you should revisit this work in a couple months when....if that's happening, please check out the tools for working with the [inner critic here](#).

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1. Putting all perfectionism, people-pleasing, shoulds, and self-critiques aside, what do you really want to create in your life?
2. What important parts of you are getting neglected in your life right now or need more attention? What would it look like to live those parts of your life more fully?
3. What contribution do you want to make to the world? What goals would help you make that contribution?
4. What do you feel a gut-level pull toward? What interests and intrigues you?
5. Who do you most admire? What about them do you admire? What would it look like to live those qualities more in your own life?
6. Close your eyes and picture yourself as a young child. See yourself in a childhood scene. Spend a few minutes with your childhood self and then ask him or her: what goals would you like to see me to pursue this year?
7. Close your eyes and picture yourself in your elder years, after a long happy life. Meet your wise, older self in his or her home. Spend a few minutes there, just being together. Ask him or her: what goals would you like to see me pursue this year?
8. What experiences have made you feel most alive? What would create more moments like that in your life this year?
9. What are the dreams and longings that your fears or inner critic won't allow you to even consider?

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10. What would give you huge delight and joy? What goals feel like giving yourself a big, important gift-the gift of fulfillment?

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Lesson #4: Date Your Dream

So you've spent some time thinking about gift goals. What emerged from your reflection as the most important new directions to pursue, the most important goals to work toward?

What do you do with your new, shiny goals, now that you've got them?

Good news: You don't need to jump in with planning and action yet. In fact, I suggest you do just the opposite. Sit on the couch, stare out the window, and get to know your dreams.

The Whats and The Hows

Goals have "what-questions" and "how-questions." "What-questions" are questions like these: What is my dream? What do I want? What would be fulfilling, amazing, thrilling? Who do I want to be?

"How-questions" include questions like these: How will I get there? What is my strategy? How long will it take? How much money will I need? What resources, skills, or partners will I need?

In short, the what is about what you want to create. The how is about how you'll get there.

Here's what happens to many of us: the minute we start thinking about "the what" we get attacked by thoughts about "the how." That lovely, inspiring idea or dream strikes. We start thinking about it, painting the picture in our mind, basking in it, enjoying it. Then, the how thoughts descend--often in a fearful tone--and overwhelm us.

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Here's an example: My [coaching](#) client Allison longed to leave her job and start an innovative program working with teens. She often daydreamed about this. But when she started to think about how she might get there, her mind was quickly overridden by thoughts like these: "Where do I even start? It's so big. How could I ever support myself and my family financially? How would I raise money? How would I recruit the kids? How, how, how...." You can imagine, it only takes a couple of minutes before Allison is too overwhelmed to take any productive action forward.

Put The Hows on Hold

Early on, "the how" is opaque, confusing. It is absolutely an unknown. Contrary to what we think, need to tread into how-territory carefully and consciously, in order to protect our vision and inspiration.

Whatever how-questions showed up with your gift-goals, try putting them on hold for a while. Just spend time with your vision.

Let me reassure you: I know the how is important. I will not tell you to think of rainbows and tap your crystals three times in order to get what you want. I'm a devotee of planning, action, and realistic execution. [I have an MBA](#) for goodness sake.

But for most of us, how-thinking, done too early, kills vision and inspiration. Baby dreams have a gestation period, and how-thinking is a toxic substance for them.

Date your Dream

Think of this period as "dating your dream," a courtship period. Take it out. Get to know it. Ask it questions and let it speak. Let it be exactly what it is. Compliment it. Court it.

Build a relationship. Let your dream or goal be its own living thing, nested in you but not exactly you. Approach it as you would approach someone with whom you wanted to develop a close and loving relationship. Treat it with curiosity, respect, and love.

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This involves spending time with it. You might want to daydream, journal, doodle, brainstorm, write a story or make a piece of art about it. You might want to connect with it while listening to some of your favorite songs or while taking a walk.

This doesn't need to take a lot of time, or happen in perfect quiet time either. (So don't make up a story about that!) What's important is that you pay attention to your goal and play in "the what" in a way that works in your schedule, in your life.

How thoughts will come up. Notice them and set them aside again and again. Return your focus to the what.

When Is It Time to Move On to the How?

You'll know. It's time to approach the hows when you feel really connected to the what. When you two have moved from first date to a meaningful, committed, delicious relationship and you are ready to start planning a life together. When the what of the dream feels strong enough to weather the ups and downs that come with tackling the hows.

When you do introduce how thinking (and we'll explore that more in the next lesson), ask yourself two questions:

1. Am I inviting in how-thinking or is it attacking me?
2. What's the tone of my how thinking? How-thinking can be done with fear and worry, or it can be done from a place of commitment and creativity.

If you find you are getting attacked by fearful how thoughts, put the hows aside - perhaps for 3 breaths, for 5 minutes, for an hour or for a day, and re-establish your connection to the what. Let it become vivid in your mind and alive in your heart again.

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Lesson #5: How Do You Want To Feel?

Take out a piece of paper and draw 3 columns. Keep this handy. We'll be using it for the rest of the course. Label column #1 "Original Goal" and write down the two of the goals you developed earlier in this course.

What's the Desired Feeling State?

For each goal, ask yourself: What feelings do I think I am going to get from achieving that goal? For example, if you have the goal of getting into shape, you might anticipate that achieving it will make you feel energetic, or attractive, or secure that you are taking care of your health. If you want to start a business, you might anticipate that this will make you feel more empowered, independent, and challenged.

To figure out your desired feeling state, dig beneath the superficial layers. For example, when you consider "train for triathlon," your first thought might be, "I wanted to know I could run x miles." That's too specific: your heart's dream and desire was not to know you could run x miles. Go underneath that and you may find something like "I wanted to feel strong and powerful" or "I wanted to feel committed and consistent." There may be multiple feeling states you want to achieve with each goal.

Label column #2 "Desired Feeling State." Write your desired feeling states in column #2, next to the corresponding goal. Here's an example:

Column #1 Original Goal	Column #2 Desired Feeling State
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Stay in touch with family.	I feel connected and close to my family. I feel the peace of knowing I'm a responsible family member.
Find a more fulfilling job.	I feel passionate and energized. I feel a sense of significance about my contribution to the world. I feel proud of what I do.
Take first backpacking trip. (plan it, save \$ for it and take it!)	My life has a sense of adventure. Every year offers something new.

The Feeling Is What We Really Want

Goals seem to be about things we want to do, but they are always really about ways we want to feel. Your goals are actually clues about the feeling states you want to experience in your life.

Another way to say this is that goals are often symbols for what we really want. Without us realizing it, our minds make up a little equation: doing x will lead to feeling y. Then we get stuck spending lots of time getting x done. What about spending a little time focusing directly on how we can feel y - right away?

For the Next Few Days, Play With This

For the next few days, explore this idea. What feeling states are you really seeking through your goals? How do you want to feel?

You can apply this question to any small day-to-day task too. When you make a plan with a friend, or to go to the gym, or pick up the phone, or wake up early, or wake up late...what

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feeling are you seeking? What feeling do you think you are going to get from doing the activity?

Over the next few days, see what patterns you notice in the feelings you are commonly seeking. See where you are surprised by what you are really seeking - underneath the surface level.

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Lesson #6: Many Paths

Go back to your three-column worksheet. You'll see there your goals in column #1, and the desired feeling states in column #2. Label column #3 "Other Pathways to the Feeling State." You are going to brainstorm other strategies that you think will give you your desired feeling states.

1. In your first round of brainstorming, just list whatever ideas come to mind. Go for ten ideas for each feeling state.
2. Then go back and do a second round, adding to your column 3 list. This time ask yourself, "What can I easily **do today** that will get me into this feeling state?" You'll discover some new "little things" you can do in your life - right now- that will have big impact.
3. In round three, ask yourself, "What new **thoughts** would put me in this feeling state? What thoughts get in the way of my feeling this? What thoughts do I need to let go of?"

Put down thoughts quickly as they come to you, without evaluating their feasibility or merit. Go for volume, not quality. This is just brainstorming!

Column #1 Original Goal	Column # 2 Desired Feeling State	Column # 3 Other Pathways to the Feeling State
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<p>Stay in touch with family.</p>	<p>I feel connected and close to my family. I feel the peace of knowing I'm a responsible family member.</p>	<p>Keep family pictures nearby Spend more free time together Acknowledge birthdays Focus on listening when we are together Go play around with my kids downstairs. Call my parents. Send an email to begin planning a special celebration for sister. While doing stuff around the house today, think about some of my favorite things about my family Think about what's happening now, not how I failed to stay in touch in the past.</p>
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<p>Find a more fulfilling job.</p>	<p>I feel passionate and energized. I feel a sense of significance about my contribution to the world. I feel proud of what I do.</p>	<p>Do things I'm passionate about outside of work - hobbies, giving to causes I love, reading about subjects that energize me. Start figuring out what I really love. Spend more time on the things I'm most interested in at work. Get passionate about the quest for a more fulfilling job. Take more pride in the work I'm doing now. Appreciate the significance of what I do now. Make a bigger contribution through volunteering and philanthropy. Remember all the significant contributions I've made over my career, and remind myself of them. Stop paying attention to those thoughts that are constantly saying what I do is lame, and start paying more attention to where I want to next.</p>
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<p>Take trip to New Zealand.</p>	<p>My life has a sense of adventure. Every year offers something new.</p>	<p>Try some sports I have never played before. Be more courageous and daring in how honest I am with people in my lives. Expose myself to different cultures through food, film, music and neighborhoods right here in my city. Take more risks everyday. Go on some blind dates. Call Rick and tell the truth about how I'm feeling, even though I'm petrified Go to the bookstore and pick up some novels that will connect me to a different part of the world. Go for a long run and really push myself. Stop thinking, "I need to leave town for some adventure." Start thinking "Adventure is available everywhere."</p>
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There Are Always Many Paths

There are always many, many paths to what we want. When we get attached to a very particular goal (I want x job, I want to Rick to fall in love with me, I want to be a mom of 2 boys and 1 girl, I want to close x deal, etc.) we get stuck. It may even be true that there is no way to get what we want.

If we focus on the underlying feeling state we desire, however, we'll find there is always an abundance of paths to what we want.

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We also find that there are also many ways to achieve the feeling state you want today.

You don't waste the next few months waiting for a particular external goal to be achieved so that you can have it. Whatever you want to become in your life, the only way there is being that thing, moment to moment, in the now.

What would it look like to claim the underlying feeling state you desire, right now? What's available to you? What would it look like to fully embrace that feeling state today?

As you move forward work on three levels:

- Work towards your gift-goals over the long term
- Regularly do the things that give you the feeling you are seeking - the change in feeling state that is at heart of your goals
- Each day, explore how you can look at your day, the perspective with which you can view your life and yourself, the thoughts you can think - that allow to experience your desired feeling state, beginning NOW.

Love,

Tara

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About Tara Sophia Mohr: *Tara Sophia Mohr is a writer, coach and personal growth teacher. A regular blogger for Huffington Post's Living section and author of the popular blog Wise Living, her writing on women's professional and personal fulfillment has also been featured in Forbes, USA Today, MoreMagazine.com, The International Business Times and Ode Magazine. Tara received her MBA from Stanford University, her undergraduate degree from Yale, and her coaching certification from the Coaches Training Institute. She adores poetry, dance, vegetables, and living by the bay in San Francisco.*

Coaching, Teaching and Inspiration from Tara...

Wise Living Blog

Tara's practical and inspiring reflections on becoming yourself, realizing a vision, experiencing everyday joy and other juicy topics, delivered twice a week, for free. [Subscribe via email here](#) or [via a reader here](#).

"It's female conversation that isn't pushing the "5 new winning strategies to a new you" but rather more like gentle nudges guiding you towards where you really want to go." - Wise Living Reader

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Wise Living Women's Small Group Coaching Circles

Tara's Wise Living group coaching helps women clarify life and career direction, overcome insecurities and fears, and create more authentic, thrilling lives. Small groups of up to eight women at the same stage of life meet monthly in guided phone-based sessions with Tara. For more information, [click here](#).

“Without a doubt, working with Tara has been one of the best things I have ever done for myself....I've learned to listen to myself and rediscover my instincts – and the simple genius of them – and have been blown away by just how “right” they are. Every. Single. Time.” - Coaching client

Individual Coaching Tara's one-on-one, phone-based coaching sessions for women leaders, entrepreneurs and creatives specialize in supporting women to 1) define and transition into more fulfilling work 2) increase their impact and step more fully into leadership and 3) live a more authentic, satisfying life. For more information, [click here](#).

“After working with Tara, I noticed a complete and positive transformation in not only who I am and what I am able to do professionally, but also personally. (And my friends, family, and colleagues have also noticed this change!). Tara has helped me believe in myself and become more confident as a person. She has changed my outlook on what I can and should expect from myself. – Coaching Client

Doing Your Right Work E-course

Doing our “right work” brings us huge fulfillment, energy and joy. This e-course guides you step by step in 1) figuring out what your right work is and 2) charting a practical path to doing it. For more information, [click here](#)

“ I had a great resume but a career that was less than fulfilling. Through Tara's coaching, I was able to get to the core of what matters to me in a career. As a result, I am starting a new career that excites me in countless ways, because my job aligns with my personal values and priorities.” – Coaching client

Living Your Brilliance: Quietening Your Inner Critic and Reclaiming the Driver's Seat in Your Work & Life

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No matter how accomplished or successful we become, we still hear those crazy inner critic voices holding us back. This distance-learning workshop teaches you how to quiet them so you can get on fulfilling your dreams for your work and your life. For more information, [click here](#).

“Tara’s taught me the tools to rediscover my own voice, formerly hidden beneath a deafening and suffocating avalanche of self-doubt. Through working with Tara, I have felt my senses and confidence sharpen, heightening my experience in every part of my life.” – Coaching client