

**DARE – DREAM – DESIGN – DO
TO REALIZE YOUR VISIONS™**

Live your authentic life, love your authentic self!

Written by

V. Ophelia Rigault

Dear Fabulous One! Yes, that's you!

There is no one that is more beautiful, more powerful, and more dynamic than you. I believe with all my heart and soul that if you had a conversation with the Divine, that is how she (or he) would describe you. So why let negative thoughts dominate your life? Why criticize yourself when things seem to go wrong? Why not praise yourself for having courage and determination?

The future is composed by a series of "nows". What is your "now"?

Are you:

- weighed down by a negative self-image?
- trying to be someone you're not, just so people will like you or respect you?
- running yourself down even when you make a tiny mistake?

What if you could:

- learn to love and respect who you are right now?
- be yourself and let your natural strengths carry you through life, even in the most challenging times?
- accept that mistakes are a part of life and see each one as a chance to learn and grow?

I'm here to tell you that you can. It is possible to feel great about the person you are, without trying to be someone you're not. This guidebook is all about telling you how to shift your attitude. It shows you how to start living an authentic life by listening to your inner voice, instead of being guided by your worries about what other people think.

This mini guide-book is a celebration of the wonderful person that you are, even if you don't see it or feel it. It is about making a conscious effort to love yourself as you are, right now at this very moment. It's about connecting with your inner spirit and letting your light shine upon the world. I truly believe that by following my simple four-step program you will be well on your way to creating your authentic self and living life to the fullest.

Chapter 1

Getting to Know Ophelia

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.”

-Marianne Williamson

My name is Vanessa Ophelia Rigault and I believe that we are all meant to shine. When I first heard those words in Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech, they resonated very deeply within me. Those words inspired me to create my own philosophy for authentic living.

In my career, I have worked to share that philosophy with people from all walks of life, to help them identify what is really important and to show them how to live an authentic life. I speak from personal experience with self-esteem issues - I am a plus size woman.

The year 2008 is my fortieth year and I feel that I have finally reached a place where I am embracing me -Vanessa Ophelia Rigault – in all my voluptuousness glory!

I realize that my appearance doesn't change the way people in my life love me, care for me, support me or even laugh with me. I long ago dismissed the ones who are offended. The people I choose to have in my life embrace me for me. They love the way I look. They love that I stay true to myself at all times. They respect my positive attitude and rejoice in my unique, fun and energetic personality.

I now want to share my tools for loving oneself with people of all backgrounds who may be feeling less than perfect.

The Road I Have Travelled

Knowing a little more about me might give you some insight as to how I got to the wonderful place I'm in. Here is my story, in a nutshell. I hold a B.A. in Sociology and Psychology, and spent many years working in the non-profit sector as a program coordinator and workshop facilitator. While working there, I began to realize that I was meant to do something different. I took some courses in image consulting at a local college and I slowly moved into a role as an image consultant for plus size women.

I took it upon myself to create a placement with a top plus size Canadian retailer and acted as their image consultant for a year. This position afforded me the opportunity to connect with plus size women from all walks of life. From there I created a networking/support group for plus size women called the Voluptuous Women's Network.

My work as a trainer and facilitator for women opened my eyes to my skills as a coach. I listened to my inner voice, and left a comfortable job to head off in a new direction and pursue my dream of becoming a self-esteem and life coach. During this re-birth of my career I started using my middle name, "Ophelia". Ophelia means "helper" in Greek, and the name seemed to manifest everything that I wanted to achieve in my work and life.

As I embarked on my coaching career in 2005, I attended many training courses in spirituality, personal growth and development and worked with mentor coaches. Throughout this time I was able to formulate my own definition of authentic living.

To me authentic living means developing a vision of what you really want and putting all your energy towards realizing that vision. The power of that concept, of realizing your vision, inspired me so much that I named my coaching business Realize Your Visions Intuitive Consulting Services.

The Road I Am On

My coaching practice is very spiritual. I believe we are spiritual beings. I also believe that the true essence of who we are, our true selves, lies within each of us and that the trappings of society, the “I shoulds”, keep that true spirit from coming out.

My mission is to inspire people to let their spirit shine through, to really see themselves in the way the Divine sees them. This mission is not only a culmination of my goals for my professional life, but also a way for people to get in touch with that ancient gift we all have - intuition. Once we begin to heed our intuition, we can see our perfect selves and we can carry this vision through to our physical world.

I am in essence a life coach. Life coaching is a process that can benefit many people as they make changes that bring them closer to the life they have always wanted. People with self-esteem issues seek the same things as other clients, but may need extra support as they strengthen their self-confidence and deflect the negative images reinforced by their feelings that they are not good enough. In my life coaching I look at each client as a whole person. I do not judge. I do not criticize. I look inside to see the beauty within all of my clients, and I help them to bring that beauty out.

Chapter 2

Authentic Living Defined - Developing the 4 D's

You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be wonderful. What you'll discover is yourself.

--Alan Alda

Before we go into the four steps we must first define what authentic living is. What I am offering you here is my personal definition, based on my experience and training.

To me authentic living is a mode of living in which you follow your instincts, listen to your inner voice and stay true to what that voice is telling you. That voice may nag you, cajole you and even annoy you, but it will tell you whether or not you should follow a particular path or take a particular action. When you ignore it you soon realize you should have listened to it. Even at times when your inner voice doesn't make seem to make sense, when the physical signs around you are pointing in another direction and you choose to follow your rational mind, you will often realize that your intuition was right.

This inner voice is your soul compass. A compass is constant. It is never wrong. It points to the direction you need to go so you don't get lost, in bad weather or good. No matter the circumstances, the compass will steer you toward the right path. That is why I call your intuition your inner compass.

The Risks of Tuning Out Your Inner Voice

Let me share a personal story, a cautionary tale if you will, that demonstrates what can happen when you disregard your inner voice.

About five years ago, I met a man at church and we became friends. Well, in truth we weren't friends at first – I didn't even really like him! We actually got in an argument the first time I met him. My inner voice told me to stay away, to not get involved, but I didn't listen. Instead I married him and now, five years later, we are divorced.

I should have listened to that inner voice. That voice was trying to help me avoid the pain that I went through (and that I'm sure he went through too). Instead of listening I chose to follow my rational mind and ignore the signs that we were not compatible. Although we both tried, the relationship did not work.

In the end, I wished in many ways that I had listened to the message that I heard, but I will not waste time on regrets. I am focused on moving forward, having learned the value of listening to my inner voice. Now I am more attuned to that inner voice and I believe it is will lead me to my best life, if I keep listening.

The plan I am sharing with you here is the one I followed with great success. As I shifted careers and recognized my true calling as a coach, I put all my energy into becoming what I was meant to be.

I began by daring to want more out of life. I then gave myself time to dream – to visualize what I needed to do to start living the life I wanted.

Next I designed a life plan. The final step was the implementation of the plan, or the “doing”. From these four steps – dare, dream, design, do – my coaching business was born. The name “Realize Your Visions” is a true reflection of what I hope to achieve with my business. Using a spiritual life coaching model, I help people determine what they really want in life, and then I help them achieve it, all while building their self-esteem and instilling in them the confidence they need to bring their goals to life. All aspects of your life must be in balance in order for you to realize the vision you have for yourself.

Looking back on my life I see that I have so many stories, so many moments that brought me to this very point, to this awareness that it is what I am on the inside that truly counts, but it is only now that I finally get it. I am happy to share some of these stories with you, to help put each of the four steps in context.

Each of these personal moments has profoundly changed and molded my life and given me my wonderful sense of self. Although there were times when I lost track of my inner voice, or it became quiet, knowing it was there gave me strength and confidence, even in my saddest and most challenging times.

The 4-step plan I developed has worked for me and for hundreds of my clients. I want to share it with you, so you too can realize your visions and live an authentic life.

Chapter 4
Step 1 – Dare

What does “dare” mean to you?

That word takes many of us back to youthful games of truth or dare. For some, the word has connotations of danger, of confronting fear.

I want to share my definition with you. It is one that has evolved out of my personal experience. For me, daring is more than a word. It is a concept that has the power to effect change in all aspects of life.

Daring is not something to be feared, although it may make you uncomfortable. Daring is about being bold, about stepping out of the safe cocoon you’ve built around you. It is about challenging yourself to seek your best life. There is risk involved, but it is manageable risk. My mantra is: “Look before you leap.” In other words, take stock of what’s around you before you jump off in a new direction.

Who will guide you through your journey of discovery? The inner voice I talked about earlier. We all have one, but many of us ignore it. Daring is about taking a chance on that inner voice and listening to what it’s telling you. That voice is the voice of peace and confidence.

It is the voice of your Divine spirit communicating with you. You’d be surprised what can happen when you open your heart and mind to this voice. I learned about the power of this voice several years ago. I was working for a non-profit organization. Deep inside, I knew it was not where I was meant to be. I suppressed those doubts, choosing to ignore my inner voice and stay the course.

What was the result of turning a deaf ear to that voice?

Three years of unhappiness, of enduring an unfulfilling job, and of struggling to motivate myself. Everything changed when I started to listen to my inner voice. I dared to want more. I prayed, focused, meditated and emboldened myself to make changes in my work life.

You too can dare. Dare to dress for success, even if you don’t think your appearance is perfect. Dare to be heard over all the negative voices that want to put you down. Dare to look yourself in the mirror everyday and tell yourself what a truly wonderful person you are.

You can find that inner voice and listen to its message of empowerment. You can find your best life. Once you have heard what this voice is telling you, you will be ready for the next step – dreaming.

Chapter 5
Step 2 – Dream

The ability to dream is one of the greatest gifts people have. Nighttime dreams are thought to have a restorative effect on the mind. They help you process all of the information, images, and emotions you encounter during your waking hours.

Dreaming is not limited to times of sleep, of course. Conscious dreaming is as important and powerful as the involuntary dreaming that occurs while you sleep. A conscious dream brings forth vivid imaginings of what could be. It can also include the goals and aspirations you have for yourself. It is this conscious dreaming that I am referring to when I ask you to dream.

When you dream, you engage in a happy, peaceful reverie, expanding your mind, and conjuring up the infinite possibilities available to you. Wakeful dreaming offers the perfect opportunity to ponder what your inner voice is telling you; to evaluate its messages and direct your thoughts toward translating those messages into tangible goals for your life.

Conscious dreaming allows you to visualize the various paths you can pursue to fulfill your goals. In your dreams you have the freedom to imagine and play out every detail, consider all options, and find the direction that is best for you. Conscious dreaming involves focus and concentration. You must let the communication from your inner voice flow, trying your best to eliminate any blockages that might get in the way of the messages it is sending.

Meditation and yoga provided the mindset I needed to begin understanding what my inner voice was telling me. Once I mastered the art of conscious dreaming, a clear vision of my future came to me. From that point on, I put all my energy, skill and experience into becoming a life coach, and Realize Your Visions was born. You can do this too.

Meditation is not as intimidating as it sounds. All it takes is some quiet time to focus on you. It may be hard to find that time, but you owe it to yourself. During your first session, take time to unclutter your mind. Forget about the laundry and the dishes and the meeting you have tomorrow. Just think about you and the life you have now. As you get more practice with meditation, you can start to focus on certain aspects of your life. Review where you are.

Ask yourself some tough questions:

- Are you really happy?
- Are you fulfilled?
- Do you greet each day with enthusiasm or dread?
- Can you imagine another life or career that might make you happier?

- What would it take to get there?

Play out all the possibilities – that’s what dreaming is for.
In our busy world, dreaming can seem like a luxury.

Taking the time to focus on yourself can seem selfish. And maybe it is, but there is nothing wrong with that. My greatest accomplishments occurred when I was consciously dreaming and designing my life.

You need to give yourself the chance to determine whether you are on the right path. Once you have taken the time to dream and figure out where you want to go, you are ready to design a plan for getting there.

Chapter 6
Step 3 – Design

Whether from your own creative pursuits or the appreciation of the artistry of others, you have encountered design. You know, as I do, that design is the first step in bringing your visions into the real world. When it comes to implementing change in your life, design is critical. It is much easier to accomplish goals if you design a clear plan to follow. The design I am talking about is best implemented through a spiritual life plan.

With a spiritual perspective, you are viewed as a complete being, rather than an individual who may be looking to achieve just one goal or resolve a single challenge. Using a spiritual approach, you will see that balancing one area of your life will have a positive impact on other areas.

Spiritual life planning is a guided process in which you carefully examine all areas of your life. A life plan identifies specific issues and concerns that may be standing in the way of the life you envisioned in your conscious dreaming. In a life plan you set out your goals, prepare for challenges you might face, and clearly define each step you need to take to attain those goals. Your life plan is specific to your needs, your core values, and your spirituality. In your life plan, you design clear action items that will lead you to the life you truly want.

My experience has taught me the value of life planning. After I used my dreams to determine what I wanted in my life, I began working with a mentor coach to design the plan that would take me where I wanted to go. Your life plan has its beginnings in the conscious dreaming phase described in Step 2 of this guide. Your dreams provide you with a vision of what you want to achieve.

The design phase breaks that vision down into manageable goals and objectives. To establish these goals, I focus on the power of creating a life story that takes into account the changes you want to make. This story gives you an action plan for achieving your goals. Throughout this planning process you will learn how to harness the power of your mind to create new experiences that transform the way you think.

My goal setting program helps you set goals that are realistic, but attainable. You need to start with goals that are specific and measurable, and then make sure you can evaluate and account for your progress. If you are aiming to feel more energetic, don't make that your goal. Set out a series of objectives – going to bed 30 minutes earlier, cutting out your morning danish, going for a brisk 30-minute walk three times a week – and then measure yourself against your goals. You'll be amazed how quickly the successes pile up!

With a clear life plan in hand, you can then start taking action. As you'll see, it is what you do with your life plan that really matters!

Chapter 7 Step 4 – Do

“There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you.”

--Maya Angelou

How many times have you made a to-do list and then found it, days or weeks later, buried under a pile of papers without a single item checked off? I think we've all been there. Many of us succeed in making a plan, but fall down in the action or "doing" phase.

There is a reason for this failure to act. Change can be scary. Implementing change in your life takes effort and determination. It requires a wellspring of motivation, from within yourself and from others in your life. It is not easy, but with the right supports, you can take positive action and realize the rewards that come from following the plan you have designed.

Life plans involve many objectives and goals. After taking the initial step in your life plan, you may find you need help to sustain your momentum. We all have our low moments, especially when heading off in a new direction in our lives. At these times, I relied on the support system around me.

My mentor coach was an especially strong ally in my efforts to implement my life plan. I shared my vision with her, sought her feedback and fed off of her words of encouragement. I looked to my coach and support network to challenge me and inspire me. It worked -I feel fulfilled and truly happy.

It goes without saying that if we don't take action, we will never reach our goals. Sometimes the first step is the hardest. I can tell you from my experience that all it takes is one small accomplishment to get the ball rolling. That is the benefit of a life plan – it creates manageable steps so that the act of "doing" is not so overwhelming.

It is sometimes easier if you write down your life plan. Start with the present and end with a big "Mission Accomplished". In between these two points, include each small step you need to achieve along the way. This is an easy way to measure your progress and see how close you are to your ultimate goal. Each step is progress. If you can remember that, you're well on your way to realizing your visions. If you find the "doing" phase of your life plan difficult, consider a consultation with me.

When I talked about designing your life plan in the previous chapter, I described a process of creating a new life story, of developing a roadmap to lead you where you want to go. Calling on that roadmap during the "doing" phase will ensure you stay on track with your goals and accomplish all you set out to do.

In my approach to life coaching, I act as a guide. I will ask you challenging questions that will help move you toward achieving your goals. I will listen and support you in all of your efforts. I will keep you moving forward as you follow your roadmap to a richer, more fulfilling life.

My wish for you:

- **Dare** to overcome your negative thoughts and see that you are beautiful inside and out.
- **Dream** of a life where you are confident, energized and ready to face any challenge head on.
- **Design** your life to follow your intuition. This powerful voice will never fail you.
- **Do** something everyday to move you towards your goals and bring you to the happiness you deserve.

Your best life is out there waiting for you. Think of this guidebook as the roadmap that will get you there. With this book I am not trying to force you into a rigid plan for improving your life. Nor is my aim to overwhelm you with thoughts of drastic lifestyle changes. My goal is simply to guide. In offering you direction, sharing my experiences and giving you ideas, I hope I have motivated you and inspired positive action.

I encourage you to explore the possibilities the four steps in this book can create for you. If you have any questions or feel you want further advice, please contact me. I look forward to helping you dare, dream, design and do!

Blessings,

Ophelia