



LIFE GOALS: TAPPING INSPIRATION
INSTEAD OF DESPERATION AS THE SOURCE
Joseph Nguyen

I think, therefore I suffer.

When I finally realized that thinking was the root cause of my suffering, it was a huge epiphany for me. I felt exhilarated, relieved, and grateful that I had discovered the true reason for my negative experiences. This ecstasy was short lived, though, because soon after the exuberance settled, the following questions popped into my mind:

If thinking is the root cause of all my suffering and I stop thinking, how do I live my life now? What about all of my goals, dreams, and ambitions? Do I need to stop wanting things in life? Will I devolve into a couch potato and not do anything meaningful with my life?

As I pondered these questions, fear and anxiety began to surface because it seemed that in order to find peace and happiness, I would have to give up all my dreams and become a monk in the middle of the mountains.

I was not ready to do that, nor did I want to. As much as detaching from my life might have made my journey easier, I genuinely enjoyed being in the world and experiencing the fullness of life with other people.

So what are we to do if we wish to end our suffering but also not give up the lives we have built? The answer lies in the fact that where our goals and dreams come from will determine how we feel pursuing them. The key is understanding the difference.

There are two sources of goals: goals created out of inspiration and goals created out of desperation.

When goals are created out of desperation, we feel an immense sense of scarcity and urgency. They feel heavy, like a burden, and we may feel daunted by the colossal task we've just committed ourselves to. Impostor syndrome and self-doubt begin to manifest, and we feel like we're always short on time. We go about our lives frantically, desperately searching for ways to accomplish our goals faster, always looking externally to fill the void we feel internally.

Worst of all, if we achieve the goal, soon after, all those feelings of lack begin to resurface again. We start feeling discontented with what we've done, unable to savor our accomplishments, and because what we did never feels like it's enough, we feel that same way about ourselves. Not knowing what else to do, we look at what others are doing for guidance and see that they're continuing to do the same thing. Thus, we proceed to set another goal out of desperation in an attempt to escape all of the negative feelings gnawing away at our souls.

When we dig a little deeper into these types of desperation goals, we see they are all typically "means goals" and not "end goals." In other words, we want to accomplish the goal in order to get something else, which is why these goals make us feel that we never have enough. An example of this would be having a goal of becoming famous in order to finally feel significant. Unless you address the internal root worry that you're not good enough, achieving this external goal will never change how you feel.

Ironically, if we achieve a goal created out of desperation, we end up feeling even emptier than before, so we set an even bigger goal and then an even bigger one, never reaching a state of fulfillment. No matter how hard we try or how big of a goal we set, it seems as though it will never be enough.

If you have experienced this, know that you are not alone. This is how most of us set our goals and live our lives. The only reason I can describe it in such detail is that this was how I lived my life as well.

Here's the good news: it's not your fault if you set goals that way—it's what so many of us have been taught to do—and there's a way out through creating goals and dreams out of inspiration instead of desperation.

Where our goals and dreams come from will determine how we feel pursuing them.

When we create goals out of inspiration, it's an entirely different story. In this state, we are creating because we feel deeply moved, inspired, and expansive. Our goals feel like a calling rather than an obligation. We feel like a powerful force of life is coming from within us, wanting to be expressed through us and into the physical world. This is why painters paint, dancers dance, writers write, and singers sing even if they never get paid or make a living from it. We feel pulled instead of forced to create something. We gravitate toward it. We feel compelled to do it. When we feel like this, we create from a place of abundance instead of lack.

Most of us had goals from inspiration when we were kids. To act on stage. To cook like a chef. To write a book. To explore space. To make art. To save animals. To heal people. To invent something. To make people laugh.

What did you dream of doing when you were a kid?

How would it feel just to do it for fun to any degree you can?

This will reveal to you some of the goals of inspiration you may have forgotten about.

Even as adults, we naturally have goals of inspiration. It could be starting a charity, business, hobby, or animal shelter. It could be raising a family, traveling the world, living off-grid, growing a garden, learning a new language or instrument, running a marathon, or starting a blog.

When we create goals out of inspiration, we are not creating from a place of lack. We don't create because we feel like we *have* to or we need more. We create because we *want* to. This type of creation is an overflowing of love and joy for life. This is the reason why most of us want or have children—not because we want something from them but because we want to share the abundance of what we have with them.

This feeling of deep inspiration comes not from us but through us from something greater than ourselves. I call this feeling divine inspiration, because our ideas of what we want to create seem far bigger than we could have imagined or come up with on our own. It knows no boundaries, limits, or constraints.

It's an expansive force that energizes and lifts us, making us feel "high" on life. In this state, we feel whole, complete, and filled with unconditional love, joy, and peace. It is one of the greatest feelings we can experience.

Everyone has experienced this feeling of pure inspiration. Before moving on, pause and spend a moment recalling a time in your life when you felt an overwhelming desire to create something magnificent because you felt deeply inspired to. It doesn't matter if you actually created it or not; just think of a time when you felt that feeling of inspiration.

Isn't it just one of the most amazing feelings in the entire world? Most of us feel this divine inspiration but then suppress it as soon as we begin thinking about bringing it to life. We begin to think ourselves into doubt, rationalize why we can't achieve these goals, and tell ourselves that they are unrealistic, that we should focus on more important things, and that we're not good enough. As soon as we begin to think about the thought of wanting to create, we completely shut off the source of that inspiration, and we go back to living life in desperation. When we cut off that source, we also cut off feelings of abundance, vitality, ecstasy, joy, and pure unconditional love and go back to feelings of doubt, anxiety, frustration, and sadness.

So how can we tell whether a goal is created out of inspiration or desperation?

Goals created from desperation and inspiration can look very similar from the outside, but they differ greatly under the surface.

A simple way to know if a goal or dream is created out of inspiration is to remember the distinction between thoughts and thinking. Goals and dreams that come in the form of thought are created out of inspiration. Goals and dreams that come from thinking are created out of desperation.

Goals from desperation are typically rooted in fear and make your happiness conditional on achieving them. Goals from inspiration are rooted in love and focus more on the joy of doing over the outcome. The joy comes from the act itself, not just what you externally get out of it. The reason why you create the goal will determine how you will feel while pursuing it.

Goals of inspiration come from identifying what you value and what is most important to you. Is it security? Raising a loving family? Traveling? Creativity? Learning? Peace? Expressing yourself? Goals of inspiration are aligned with your values, while goals of desperation contradict them. For this reason, one person's goal of inspiration can be another person's goal of desperation. It all depends on what your values are.

For an author who values their craft but feels driven by a sense of insecurity, an example of a goal created from desperation would be to want to hit the bestseller list because it would finally make them feel like they were good enough. A goal created from inspiration would be to write a book because they love the act of writing with their whole being.

The first goal was created to try to *prove* they are good at what they do (external validation), and the second was created because they simply *love* what they do. The second aligns with their values, while the first does not.

Goals of inspiration are aligned with your values, while goals of desperation contradict them.

But for an author who primarily values spreading their message as far as possible, the opposite might be true. For this person, reaching the bestseller list could be a goal of inspiration. It all depends on understanding our own personal value systems.

For most of us, however, goals born from a love of the work itself will lead to greater happiness than goals based on achieving a certain output. And more times than not, falling in love with what you are doing in the present will allow you to achieve many of those external goals you previously had as a byproduct. Love will take you further than sheer effort ever will.

I want to emphasize that I'm not saying we shouldn't have financial goals. There are no right or wrong goals—only goals created from inspiration or desperation. What matters is the source of the goal, not necessarily the goal itself.

For instance, if a person values safety and stability for their family, a goal of making money in order to achieve this could absolutely be a goal of inspiration. But for that same person, making money in order to achieve social status might be a goal of desperation. The key is in asking yourself, What does money give me or allow me to do that I value most?

It's also important to recognize that when you create a goal from inspiration, it does not necessarily mean you are meant to drop everything and devote every moment of your day to it. Most of us are not in a position to do that. But what we can do is begin taking small steps toward that goal each day. What matters is not how long you are doing it each day but that you are doing it to some capacity every day.

If your goal of inspiration is to raise the best family you can, what are you doing on a daily basis to help you achieve that goal?

If it is to become the best you can be at your job, what steps are you taking each day to incrementally improve? If it is to grow a garden, can you start with one small herb? If it is to learn a new language, can you learn a word a day?

If it is to travel, what are you doing each day to allow you to do so more often? You may not be able to travel each day, but you can do many things to enable you to travel more often, such as saving a bit more each day, exploring remote work options, or maybe even taking a language class.

There are an infinite number of ways for you to make your goals from inspiration a reality. It's not about *if* you can do it but *how* you can make it happen. Start small and do it at any capacity you can daily. Doing so will create more meaning and fulfillment in your life because you will be making progress on what matters most to you each day. This is how we find more love and joy in the doing and not just the outcome.

So how do we create goals and dreams out of inspiration?

As with surfacing thoughts, creating goals and dreams from divine inspiration isn't something you have to *try* to do. We naturally have thoughts of inspiration all the time. If you look at children, they naturally have the wildest dreams of what they want to do. It almost never registers in their minds that they might not be able to accomplish something. The only difference between us and children is that we have learned to shut down these thoughts of inspiration.

Imagine your inspiration is a river, and thinking is a dam. If a dam is built to block the river, it leads to the death of fish, the disappearance of wildlife, flooding, and the destruction of forests.

Our thinking creates a dam that blocks the river of inspiration within our minds, leading to self-doubt, self-sabotage, and anxiety.

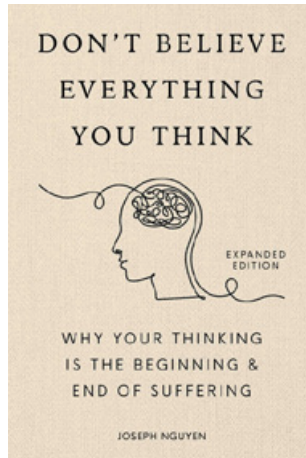
But once the dam is removed, the ecosystem will heal and return to its natural state. The same is true for our minds. When we're tapped into our intuition and free from the blockages that come from thinking, new inspiring thoughts and ideas can freely come through us as intended, and that is how we "create" goals out of inspiration instead of desperation.

A question that significantly helps me settle my unhelpful thinking and tap into the limitless well of creative possibilities is this:

If I had infinite money, had no fear, and didn't feel the need to receive any recognition, what would I do or create?

Try asking the question and seeing what comes up for you. You'll be surprised at what surfaces when you remove the barriers of fear, criticism, and self-doubt. Let the inspiration rise to the surface, but then don't get caught up in thinking. **Allow your true dreams to reveal themselves without shutting them down.** 📌

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Nguyen is the author of the #1 international bestselling book, *Don't Believe Everything You Think*, which has been translated into 31+ languages.

He is a writer who helps others realize who they truly are beyond their own thinking and conditioning to live an abundant life free from psychological and emotional suffering.

When he's not busy petting his three cats that he's allergic to, he spends the rest of his time writing, teaching, speaking, and sharing timeless wisdom to help people discover their own divinity from within and how they are the answer they've been looking for their entire lives.

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