



The Power and Potential of Small Steps

How Learning to Take Small Steps Can Change Your Life
in BIG Ways

(Mini, Two-Chapter, Preview E-book)

By Sandy Dempsey



Introduction

This very special mini, two-chapter, preview e-book, is a compilation of newsletter articles written between November 2010 and January 2011 that were the first, small steps that led me to decide to write the book ***“The Power and Potential of Small Steps: How Learning to Take Small Steps Can Change Your Life in BIG Ways.”***

It is my way of saying *THANK YOU* for voting for my book in the [Next Top Self-Help Author](#) book competition.

If you have comments or feedback I'd love to hear from you.

Or, if you'd like to share your story about how learning to take small steps changed your life and to possibly have your story shared in my book please contact me at:

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Chapter One: Start With a Fuzzy Vision

Start with a fuzzy vision, just start heading out with no map, just get going.

How often have you heard that advice?

More than likely you've heard: choose a destination and create a map to get there, make a choice, make a decision, you have to know where you are going if you're ever going to get somewhere, don't waste time wandering around.

Now, does that sound more familiar? Yeah, me, too.

But, that advice, those words of wisdom floating around in my head for so many years is what stopped me, or at least slowed me down enough that I never got moving, so that I never really went anywhere.

I have always had so many things I was interested in and so many different things I wanted to do, that I had trouble choosing the one BIG thing to start taking action on, identifying a destination and creating a map to get there.

I'd try, but before I ever got started something else would distract me.

I'm not a big proponent of having all the answers before you start, or of knowing exactly where you want to go.

I am a big proponent of having a fuzzy vision, just a general idea of what you want or where you want to go.

Sometimes a fuzzy vision of where you want to go can be more helpful than having a clear vision or having no vision at all. That's what happened to me.



If you start with a fuzzy vision, start taking small steps and start moving, your destination may shift and get clearer. If you've already mapped out a direction, a plan and a destination, you may feel less inclined to shift or change directions or in some cases go in a completely new direction.

So, all you need is a general idea or a fuzzy vision to help you get started and take your first, small steps.

I am also a big proponent of making a choice, but the difference is I believe the choice doesn't have to be THE choice, the final choice and that you don't need a clear vision or picture of what that choice looks like to start.

I've always wanted to be my own boss, to set my own hours, to do lots of different things, to have freedom of choice - when I worked, how I worked, what I did, where I worked and who I worked with.

And, I had lots of ideas for businesses, but most sat in my notebooks never to see the light of day. I had ideas, notes and files of research for everything from a grocery delivery business, to a lawn service, food and nutrition research lab, a 3rd-party warehouse, bookstore owner, cafe owner, house painter, mail order millionaire, cable TV program producer, charter schools, life-long learning institute, community education and research center, magazine writer/publisher, independent publishing house, and on and on.

But, no idea felt like THE ONE and so I started very few of them. (I did start a few, but they weren't in alignment with who I was, but that's another story for another day.)

I've also always wanted to be a writer but didn't really know what that meant - fiction book author (what kind? mystery, romance?), freelance magazine writer (what would I specialize in?), children's book author, research/academic papers, non-fiction writer, the list of possibilities was endless. I thought I had to choose before I started.



I had a fuzzy vision of working for myself and writing but since I had no clear vision I never really started, that is until the day I finally got sick and tired of sitting in one place and just dreaming.

So, I just started.

I started by investing in myself and participating in and attending workshops, conferences and teleclasses of interest to me personally - writing and publishing, marketing, entrepreneurship.

Then I started a few profit, as well as, not for profit projects, trying them on for size to see what worked and what didn't, what I liked and what I didn't - logistics consulting, an email newsletter, a blog, online journaling classes, social media teleclasses and workshops, individual and group coaching, an ebook, guest blogging, event planning, online used book sales, affiliate sales and small business social media and marketing consulting.

I had no clear vision, no planned route, no destination and no map to get there. All I had was the fuzzy vision and the dream to work for myself and to write.

The more time I spent investing in myself and learning, the more things I tried, the more I learned.

I confirmed that my dream, although fuzzy, was real. Working for myself and being a writer was what I wanted.

My fuzzy vision began to get clearer. I would have never discovered how much I enjoyed teaching online classes if I hadn't tried it, or that I prefer group coaching to one-on-one coaching and that event planning isn't my strong suit, but that I can collaborate with others who have the skills set I don't.

What I'm trying to tell you is that your destination doesn't have to be clear, that you don't need all the answers to start, you just need a fuzzy vision of what you want, and to start taking small steps in that direction.



Your vision will get clearer, you'll refine as you go, change your course, go forward and back, and as you learn, your dream will come into focus, it will begin to resonate with your heart and soul, align naturally with your values and it will feel right.

You may be thinking. *"How do I choose? There are some many things I want to do."*

Have you tried any of them yet? Or, does the sheer number of choices have you stuck in place?

When I say choose one and start, I'm not saying you have to give up the rest of the things you are interested in doing or pursuing. I'm just saying that to get moving you just have to pick one thing for right now, just today.

The very best book for anyone feeling overwhelmed or feeling stuck because of too many possibilities is Barbara Sher's REFUSE TO CHOOSE. I heard her once say that you can no more choose just one of the things you love to do as you can choose just one of your children to feed. You love all your children and you have to feed them all. It's the same with your dreams and goals. You can't just choose one. You need to choose them all and feed them all. In her book Barbara shares a number of ways to make time for, to feed and allow all the things you love to play a part in your life.

Determine where you are now. Choose one of these loves to focus on for the next 30-90 days. Break it down into small steps and start taking action.

The key is to just start, to have a fuzzy vision.

Let's say you have two pre-school aged children at home, you are married and you work part-time in the evenings at the local bookstore and you "want to be a tap dancer, restaurant owner, beach lifeguard, a welding artist, quilting queen, mother to six while also running my own multi-million dollar corporation."

You know where you are now.



Next, pick one of your loves. Let's choose your dream of being a welding artist.

Have you ever welded before? Where does this dream come from? Maybe you saw some welded sculpture at one point and fell in love with it and thought you'd like to try it one day. That thought, that dream, has never let you go.

Let's break it down. First, check out your local library, then your local bookstores (starting with the one you work at) and see if there are any books about welding art, welding sculpture or welding artist.

If your interest is still there and possibly growing, do a Google search and read about this area of art.

Do you know any artist, painters, photographers, clay artists, etc.? Ask them if they know about welding art or if they know someone who does.

Go to your local hobby or craft store. Maybe they know someone or they may know of a local workshop or class you can take.

If you have a name, someone in the field, Google them and see what you can learn on your own, then email them, write them a letter or call them and ask them about their art.

See if there is a workshop or a class you can take. Look on the internet and to your local schools. Maybe there is high school shop teacher that can teach you to weld one Saturday a month.

Use your imagination when you are breaking your dream into small steps. Check in with yourself while you are taking the steps and see if your interest has grown, or if it's run its course.

The fuzzy goal is to know more about welding art. That's all you need to start. Nothing bigger. A fuzzy vision, something you love or want to try, a few small steps to get you moving in the general direction.



You don't have to decide the rest of your life today. You just need a fuzzy vision, a general direction to start moving in and a few small steps to get you started.

For me, letting go of having to have all the answers and a clear vision and trading it for a fuzzy vision and a general direction has changed my life and given it a richness I could have never imagined.

Are you ready to give your fuzzy vision a chance?



Chapter Two: Don't Let Obstacles and Roadblocks Stop You

Taking small steps, facing obstacles and roadblocks, starting again and taking small steps has shown me that living instead of merely existing means that you will no longer be on cruise control, drifting down a calm river. Living means experiencing it all; it means traveling the white water and 'shooting the rapids'. Emotional highs and lows are part of the journey, part of living. Notice I didn't say good or bad. There are cycles to everything - emotions, energy, the wind. The highs and lows are neither good nor bad; they are just part of the cycle - ups and downs like a wave.

As you step out into your own journey and begin taking small steps you'll run into obstacles and roadblocks.

It's bound to happen. It happens to us all.

How you handle them will determine how fast you get moving again, as well as, help build your confidence and help you recommit to your dreams, your goals and your journey.

The most important key in the beginning is to just start moving. We've already talked about having a fuzzy vision and the idea that planning and research are overrated. Now let's imagine you're cruising right along taking small steps every day.

You're thinking "*Hey, this isn't as hard as I thought it'd be.*"

You're feeling elated, euphoric really. You've acted despite your fear and anxiety and you're wondering what took you so long to get moving in the first place.

This is about the time you hit your first wall or trip and fall down. You're shaken, confused, not sure what is happening. It suddenly feels like everyone and everything is conspiring against you, trying to stop you.



Take a deep breath and relax. Obstacles and road blocks are a natural part of the journey. As a matter of fact, taking three steps forward and two steps back is a pretty average dance, especially in the early stages.

You have to be prepared for these setbacks and not let them stop you.

There are several strategies that can help you get back on track and moving again.

Reach out. Sometimes you need to talk to someone who understands. Having a circle of support, people who understand what you are doing and why is essential. Now is the time to tap this support, reach out and talk to someone. Sometimes that's all it takes to get on your feet again and start taking small steps again. You just need someone to hear you and understand. You just need to share what has happened.

Ask for help. Sometimes you'll need to ask for help. Again, turn to your circle of support. Put what you need out there and be specific. Do you need help with technology, need a resource, help spreading the word? Ask for help.

Inspiration. Go to the well of inspiration often. Inspiration can be one way to overcoming obstacles and roadblocks. You need reminders and you need to stay inspired to keep moving forward. (I learned this one from Barbara Winter, author of *"Making a Living Without a Job"*)

Know why. Understanding your own motivation and the reasons why you are pursuing a particular dream or goal is very important. It's also important to write it down and carry it with you to refer to as often as necessary to give you the continuing courage you'll need to keep taking small steps, even if it feels like you are moving backward sometimes.

Take a break. Sometimes when you are hitting roadblock after roadblock and are having trouble figuring out how to get around them or move through them it's best to just take a break, walk away for a bit and have a little fun. You'll be surprised when the answers



to your problems just seem to pop into your head or you have a sudden insight or clarity.

Get quiet. Sometimes you just have to sit with the obstacle and see what it is trying to tell you. Maybe you took a misstep and need to change directions. Maybe you need to slow down. To hear the message the obstacle is trying to send you, you may just need to get quiet, sit silently and see what comes up.

Some of the obstacles and roadblocks I've encountered are a lack of knowledge or skill set, technical issues and snafus, losses and failures and timing issues. Other obstacles I've faced revolve around my own self-doubt and the emotional highs and lows associated with living instead of merely existing.

Some examples of the technical obstacles I've faced over the last two years include my web server crashing, my laptop crashing, and my website being hacked several times. Each and every time I had to start over.

In the personal realm I've lost some key supporters and friends along the way. People, who I thought were on my side, cheering me along, suddenly just disappeared. I'm not even sure in some cases. It hurt, but I had to let it go and move on.

My own self-doubt has been a huge battle and obstacle. I've felt like quitting and running away lots of times and on a few occasions came very close to chucking it all. It's hard when you suddenly start acknowledging your dreams, who you are and who you want to be. Everything in your psyche can fight back, trying to keep things the same. Growing is hard. Growing pains are real. Using some of the techniques listed above can help - they've helped me again and again.

Just remember obstacles and roadblocks are a natural part of the journey. Expect them and be prepared, but don't let them stop you.



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Sandy Dempsey is a writer, entrepreneur and founder of the Dreaming Café, an online resource dedicated to supporting, educating and inspiring people as they travel the creative journey to self-discovery.

Sandy teaches both in-person and online workshops. Some of her recent workshop topics include: *Journaling for Self-Discovery*, *Twitter Basics*, *How to Use Free & Almost Free Online Tools to Start and Grow Your Business*, *Facebook for Beginners*, *Dream Building 101* ([with Jami Yanoski](#)) and *Learning How to Take Small Steps to Change Your Life in Big Ways*.

In addition, Sandy consults with individuals and small businesses to help them use small steps to achieve their personal and business goals.

You can find Sandy blogging regularly at <http://TheDreamingCafe.com>. She writes about personal growth and self-discovery, creativity and self-expression and about entrepreneurship and self-employment.

She also publishes a weekly ezine (email newsletter) where she shares her own journey and the things she's learned along the way. Sandy has been writing and publishing The Dreaming Café newsletter for over two years. If you are curious you can subscribe by following this link: [The Dreaming Cafe Newsletter SUBSCRIBE](#)

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