

By Karen S. Danner

Contact Information:

Karen@loveyourselfwell.com

www.KarenSDanner.com

www.LoveYourselfWell.com



Chapter Four

Creating Your Exercise Vision

“Vision without action is a day dream. Action without a vision is a nightmare.”

–Japanese Proverb

Creating a mental picture, or exercise vision, based on your own needs and preferences is essential for living an exercise lifestyle. It is difficult to maintain a commitment to something that is unclear or undesirable. When something has been defined for you that does not match your tastes and wants, you may be left with the feeling of being stuck, as if there were no choices for you. When you don't like the choices someone else is offering you, it is time to define choices for yourself. Reframing exercise starts with creating a connection between exercise and fun. As you begin to reframe

exercise, the ideas and pictures that do not fit in your life will be replaced with what works and is enjoyable for you.

Exercise has to be something you want, it must have a purpose that resonates with you and is applicable in your life. Your success depends on your clarity about what you need, what you want, what you enjoy and what you are capable of committing to. Clarity about what you want gives you a direction to head toward, clarity about what you enjoy is the gas that drives the vehicle to your destination and clarity about your commitment is the vehicle you travel in. By defining your own exercise vision by reframing exercise, you are empowered to make choices that create an enjoyable exercise journey.

Do you find yourself saying, “I have no motivation to do what has been defined for me?” Is the issue really about motivation? Or is the issue really that you don’t like investing your time in something that has been defined for you and does not appeal to you? Motivation is derived from the meaning you hold within your mind and that meaning embodies your emotions. Motivation is all about your emotions. You *feel* motivated one day and the next day you don’t feel motivated. Motivational empowerment is fueled by the meaning and emotion behind it, and you assign that meaning and choose that emotion. Once meaning and emotions are assigned, motivation is the activation to action.

Keep in mind that motivation is not a thinking word it is a feeling word. When you are

creating awareness about your exercise experience, you are not only addressing external characteristics, such as type of exercise, duration and amount, you also must look at and identify your internal environment. It is important to be clear about what you want in order to take the steps to fulfill your desire. Only in knowing what you want are you able to receive what you want. Imagine walking into an ice cream parlor and stating that you don't want vanilla ice cream, or ordering from a dinner menu and communicating that you don't want the special. By stating what you don't want, you leave yourself open to getting what someone else thinks you need. Clarity about what you do want holds the most opportunity for you to experience what you desire.

Live an exercise reality based on your clearly defined exercise vision. Your exercise vision is a picture you envision for yourself to walk into in any moment. How exercise looks and feels, the qualities it contains, how you desire to experience it and what motivates you to engage in it, all make up your exercise vision. When defining your exercise vision, keep it simple and make it all about you. It can be anything at all. You are starting from scratch. You are the chosen leading expert on you and the best advice you can take is the information that is communicated to you by your own body, thoughts and feelings. The criteria and standards for your choices are completely up to you. By defining and living your exercise vision, you will change how you experience exercise and thus change your exercise reality. The object is to

identify what you want exercise to be from your perspective. By taking the time to know yourself and to uncover the truth about your relationship with exercise, you empower your ability to choose to move. You empower yourself in a way that continually motivates you to exercise. You provide yourself with an exercise vision to live.

An exercise vision is the foundation upon which you can build and reference for a lifetime of enjoyable exercise. As you clarify your own exercise vision, guided by your inner wisdom, you start exercising based on what you enjoy. The basis for beginning to exercise is rooted in feelings around “I want to exercise.” Therefore, when you create an exercise vision you want to engage in, and that vision is enjoyable and appealing to you, you have a stronger affinity towards walking into and living your exercise vision. No matter what you are told to do, no matter what the consequences for not exercising, no matter how important you know it is to get started, the bottom line is, if it doesn’t resonate with you, then all the education, encouragement and support does not make one bit of difference. You have to want to exercise and what’s easier than wanting to do what you have defined as desirable. By defining exercise for yourself, you tap into your inner creative power and strengthen your connection to your desire to exercise. A vision from within that brings the most joy, peace and power to you is how you can live every exercise experience. Flex your creative muscle and fortify your power of choice by

clarifying the way you want exercise to show up in your life.

Use past exercise experiences to jump-start your imagination. Your awareness, answers and clarity can come from identifying exercise experiences you've enjoyed and want to repeat. Bill remembered when he used to be physically active almost everyday. As he looked to past exercise experiences for insight into what had motivated his exercise choices, he visually saw himself walking different trails several times each week and getting together with a buddy to hike back-country trails. His activity level in the present moment is very low because he feels unmotivated and uninspired. He had not realized how much a part of his exercise experience was supported by nature. Bill determined that it is important for him to be surrounded by nature when he exercises. Being able to identify what supported his pleasurable exercise experience in the past, gave Bill the direction he needed for rediscovering his motivation for choosing exercise. Acknowledge any movement or activity in your life where you enjoyed your exercise experience and include that awareness in your exercise vision.

Include more of what you like to do by being aware of what feels good to you. All exercise experiences have something wonderful to offer. Identify the aspect of an exercise experience that worked for you and the benefit you gained from that experience. An example may be that you try a new activity and decide that you don't care to repeat it. You may take away that you felt adventurous

performing your activity or that you had the courage to try something new. Acknowledge yourself for taking a step and being active even if you did not care for the exercise activity itself. From reviewing your exercise experience, you may decide that your exercise vision needs to include new activities that feel adventurous.

I include adventurous activity in my exercise vision. To fulfill that quality of my exercise vision, I went rappelling, you know, over the edge of a cliff. I was a bit scared at the prospect of hanging off the side of a cliff with only a rope and my own strength taking me down the distance. I did it and enjoyed the feeling of empowerment. I'm not ready to repeat my rappelling experience anytime soon, but the benefit I received was that I experienced moving through my fear, gained a boost to my self-confidence, and had fun doing something that I did not think I could do. I don't go rappelling, but I do try things that at first appear to be a challenge to me. I acknowledge that my self-confidence was really bolstered by trying something I had never done before and I felt empowered. On top of all that, I got to exercise. I took the best and left the rest. Just as you can take the best and leave the rest, too.

Identify and acknowledge what has been successful for you and what works about the activities you engage in. By identifying the whole or part of an exercise experience that appealed to you and extracting those components from your exercise activity for future exercise choices, you are orienting yourself in a focus on exercise that works

for you. This allows you to release what doesn't work so that you may embrace an exercise vision that is fun and brings you joy. You may also want to identify the part of a program that you liked and therefore was a success for you. An example might be that you attend a 6:30 a.m. aerobics class. After arriving at the gym, you realize you are more asleep than awake. You enjoy doing aerobics, but you certainly don't want to get up at 5:30 a.m. to attend a 6:30 a.m. aerobics class in the future. Acknowledge the class as a fun activity you would do again, and let go of exercising at 6:30 a.m. Now you have acknowledged what works for you and left the early morning workouts to the birds. It is now appropriate for you to open yourself up to noticing where there are aerobic classes available at other times throughout the day. The key is being open to the possibilities.

When you notice what you like, you are creating a platform for a lifestyle integrated with enjoyable exercise. Drop associations that do not fit in with what is enjoyable to you. Unlearn what you've learned about exercise. Let go of exercise pictures that have no appeal to you. Create your own exercise vision. Uncover your personal truths about exercise. Explore your relationship with all your activities, as well as exercise. What do you love about the things you do? What attracts you to the behaviors you engage in? Identify the qualities you value in those activities, so you can include them in your exercise vision. For example, you may love crossword puzzles because they challenge your mind. Include "challenge my mind" in your

exercise vision. Also contributing to the exploration and discovery of your exercise vision are the exercise experiences you imagine will support you in feeling good. Acknowledgement of what feels good in association with your exercise experience keeps you focused on the positive and encourages you to see more successful exercise experiences. Acknowledgement of what you have done, what benefited you and what worked for you are major contributors to building a foundation for choosing exercise in the future.

It is time to brainstorm and make exercise your own. Reveal your feelings and thoughts about exercise by writing down whatever comes up for you. If you become stumped, keep moving because defining is an ongoing process and your exercise vision continues to evolve as you integrate exercising your way into your life. Your exercise vision may include single words, phrases, pictures and/or paragraphs. To assist you in getting the ideas flowing, refer to the feeling and descriptive words list that follows. The list is only a smidgen of the possibilities you have access to. If other words not on the list support your exercise vision, be sure to include them. Circle the words that resonate with you or use them to assist you in answering the questions in the **Get to Know Yourself** section.

This type of questioning may be unfamiliar to you, but once you get the creativity and imagination flowing, it becomes easy. Remember, all your answers to the questions are perfect, because they come from within and are right for you.

“All acts performed in the world begin in the
imagination.”

–Barbara Grizzuti Harrison

Feeling and Descriptive Words

Adventurous	Agreeable
Amusing	Animated
Beneficial	Breezy
Blissful	Bold
Buoyant	Campy
Carefree	Celebratory
Centering	Challenging
Cheerful	Comfortable
Confident	Cool
Creative	Daring
Delightful	Divine
Ecstatic	Effervescent
Elated	Electrified
Energetic	Energizing
Enjoyment	Enlivened
Entertaining	Enticing
Enthusiastic	Excited
Exhilarated	Festive
Free-flowing	Freeing
Fun	Funny
Gleeful	Glorious
Grand	Gratifying
Groovy	Happy

Feeling and Descriptive Words continued

Hearty	Heavenly
Inspired	Intense
Interesting	Invigorated
Joyful	Jubilant
Laughter	Likable
Lively	Loving
Magical	Magnificent
Mellow	Merry
Mirthful	Moderate
Musical	Optimistic
Peaceful	Playful
Pleasant	Proud
Quiet	Refreshed
Respectable	Satisfied
Spirited	Splendid
Sporty	Stimulated
Stupendous	Surprised
Thrilled	Titillating
Tranquil	Transcendent
Variety	Vigorous
Vivacious	Wild
Wonderful	Zestful

Get to Know Yourself 

What does enjoyable exercise look like to you?

How do you want your exercise experience to feel?

What do you look like when you are exercising successfully?

What desirable qualities do you want to experience each time you exercise?

What are the qualities you love about the things you do (activities other than exercise)?

What attracts you to the activities you engage in?

Identify successful exercise experiences from your past.

What about the exercise experience would you repeat?

Identify exercise programs that worked for you.

What components of the program would you repeat?

What strategies for exercising did you engage in that worked for you?

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