



THRIVE IN LIFE

LIFE ALTERING STORIES OF INSPIRATION, HOPE AND COURAGE

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[Expert Series: Too Late For Your Dream?](#)

By Noelle Sterne



*Do you feel stuck in your job, your activities, your life?
Do you condemn yourself about what you could have, should have done differently?
Do you yearn for more, even if you don't know what it is?
Do you suspect you've got something to give, even if you can't identify it?
Or do you know what it is but haven't been able to let it out?
Have you pushed your secret yearnings into the back of your life, like old photos in the sock drawer?*

Like many people, maybe you live for the weekends or retirement. Maybe you promise yourself that then—finally—you'll do what you really want to. Too often, these envisioned golden times never materialize. Why?

Partly because of that mindset of "later," of lifelong habits of feeling non-deserving, and because the first steps may seem overwhelming, bewildering, or unattainable. You spend years that go too fast in activities that don't satisfy, self-blame, frustration, illness, and a growing sense of failure.

Maybe you've recited your own "If Only" stories, or believe the many others you hear that supposedly prove widespread (and contagious) victimitis. But you don't have to believe them. You *can* take charge. In Deepak Chopra's words, "You and I are essentially infinite choice-makers. In every moment of our existence, we are in that field of all possibilities where we have access to an infinity of choices."

That infinity includes your Dream.

Why It Isn't Too Late for Your Dream

Whatever your secret desires to do more and be more—to paint, write, sculpt, make pots, create your own business, or devote more time to anything else that's

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- [Neil Tessler](#): HI Ivor Thanks for sharing your inspiring journey and gorgeous photos! Warm wishes, Dr. T
- [Dave](#): I'm new to CipraleX but not new to antidepressants....30 years experience. I am happy that you...
- [Anonymous](#): '...unlike hairlines, our creative desires don't recede with age.' Love this line. Now to...
- [Marie](#): Victor, That email address listed above was shut done recently. Please email me instead at...
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always fascinated you—it's not too late.

Whatever your age, circumstances, childhood background, or the state of your bank account or waistline, it's not too late.

Every life experience has perfectly prepared you—even though you may not see it—for where you are now. Any self-judged “wrong turns” you feel you've taken have been nothing less than perfect.

These convictions are based on my own life lessons and three principles in my book *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams*:

1. 1. There are no mistakes.

Miles Davis, the great and enlightened jazz musician, said, “Do not fear

mistakes. There are none.” Your imagined failures stop you from reaching for your buried Dreams and living more fully.

1. 2. We can reframe our pasts.

When we realize there are no mistakes, we can free ourselves from branding past experiences as negative or wasted. Instead, we can review, relabel, and understand our past differently—as the perfect foundation for reaching our long-cherished desires. We can reflect on what we learned and turn every perceived botching of our past into a greater bonus for our future. We can more easily forgive ourselves for our “mistakes” and see them as the inevitable steps toward the future we want to create.

1. 3. The outer reflects the inner. “Out there” is “in here.”

As you see your life differently and become freer from the self-defeating thoughts and labels that have kept you down, you'll start to shed your old habits of negating yourself. You'll ease gently into the splendid clothes of deserving. In these new clothes, which are much more than zipper-deep, you'll begin to blossom and develop your talents and abilities as you've always secretly known you could.

Believe your desires and speak them. The Bible promises and instructs us that when we wholly believe and speak the words of what we desire, we experience it:

You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; And light will shine on your ways. (Job 22:28)

According to your faith will it be done to you. (Matthew 9:29)

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. (Mark 11:23)

Today's spiritual teachings reiterate these principles: Napoleon Hill's Conceive-Believe-Achieve, Neale Donald Walsch's Thought-Word-Action, Eckhart Tolle's Power of Now, Louise Hay's affirmations, Abraham-Hicks' alignment with the Source, the ancient-new Law of Attraction.

When we apply these magnificent teachings, we learn to name, visualize, deserve, expect, and act on our God-planted greatest desires. We begin to feel a wonderful sense of rightness and *know* we're really on the way to our Dream.

My Dream

My Dream has been writing. According to my mother's story, I stood in the crib at 4 months old crying not “Momma, Momma” but “Book-a! Book-a!”

Wanting to write my whole life, I nevertheless pursued all the undergraduate and graduate degrees, supported myself with office jobs, and right after the last graduation taught college English and literature. Two years later I retired (or got fired, depending on one's perspective and title), weary of too many committee meetings and too much letterhead.

informative. I'm...

- [Eva](#): I enjoyed reading this piece tremendously. The fabulous description of details really make the story “come...
- [Kristie](#): 2 weeks so far, hoping cipralex helps me like it did you, I have 2 little girls depending on it.
- [Nancy Oloro Robarts](#): Thank you for sharing such an amazing experience. I am an animal lover too and your article just...
- [Melissa](#): I'm speechless... truly struck a cord with me. Beautiful writing.
- [lottie](#): jesse has such an amazing talent and a round of Aplaws to his owner heather brook too !!!!!
- [Becky](#): Heather your video is so inspiring for those training service dogs. Our organization would love to purchase...
- [JudithJean France](#): Well said. Real transparent reader can feel the emotions. You express what some find impossible to...
- [Amara Rose](#): Thank you, Flo! I hope you're following yours ~ this is the moment for everyone to step up to their...
- [Flo](#): Love the article. Great practical advice for following our dreams.
- [Danette](#): I love your videos of Jesse. He's such a cute dog. Our Jack Russell just turned 16 yesterday. His name...
- [Amara Rose](#): You're so welcome, Zoey! My purpose and service is to translate what I understand into language...
- [Rose Regina](#)

[Formula](#)

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A friend brilliantly suggested that I become self-employed so I could devote more time to writing. So, being also a good secretarial student and having weathered the rigors of the doctoral dissertation, I advertised dissertation typing in my university community. Clients appeared quickly. Maybe the draw was my hand-typed card, "Intelligent Typing," with the phone number.

As I typed, I often became engrossed in clients' materials, and when they next visited to pick up the work, I started asking questions about their drafts. They began to suspect I wasn't your average office drone. Encouraged by my questions and interest, they spilled their troubles about impossible deadlines and chapters from their professors endlessly thrown back dripping with blood-red pen critiques.

Clients often would wail, "I'll *never* get this degree!" Their desperation tugged at me, and I began bolstering them, giving advice and suggesting changes. Just wanting to ease their misery, I hardly knew where my guidance came from. The clients' faces relaxed and their small smiles of hope showed me I'd reached them. I felt wonderful.

I graduated again—from typing to editing and advising. Continuously learning, I developed a business that became one of helping adults pursue their Dreams.

Each step helped prepare me for the next. With great gratification, I've watched clients develop the certainty that they do deserve to achieve their Dreams. I see their growth in expression—verbal, written, and body language—and their solid self-confidence in inviting their formerly sadistic doctoral committee members for beer and pizza.

Through my business, I too have gained immeasurably—in self-assurance, the ability to master many subjects quickly, greater organizing skills, and—what a surprise!—greater facility as editor and writer. I've stretched in ways never before attempted or imagined, meeting apparently unthinkable deadlines, putting in longer hours than ever in my life, taking shorter naps, and tapping depths of creativity never suspected.

Have all these capabilities developed, or been thrust on me, in a vacuum? Of course not. Each has been absolutely essential for my own writing. Each has enabled me to keep at it, stick to it, and ceaselessly refine it. In the process I've learned volumes (another book) about interpersonal relationships—more of what I need for successful writing and publishing.

Only after the many lessons I needed to learn was I able to pursue my own Dream. And I eventually wrote *Trust Your Life*, about helping adults pursue their Dreams.

Still Skeptical?

Maybe you're shaking your head and saying, "Sure, sure. I've tried this, that, and those. I've spent money, time, and tears and got nowhere." Maybe you feel you'll never get out of this dark place. Maybe you've already dismissed the likelihood that any wonderful things can happen to you.

You may have a lot of reasons for this reaction. Other than low blood sugar, a large one is that you probably don't credit yourself with what you've already done. A lot of us don't even remember our accomplishments. The rest of us dismiss them and say, "Big deal." How then can we give ourselves credit and build on our

experiences?

Lilette's Story

I'm reminded of a client. Lilette knew she needed a change of career. For too long, in her view, she'd been a bank teller and, at 36, couldn't see herself behind the glass cage for the rest of her working life. As we worked together, and I asked squirm-producing questions, Lilette realized she'd always wanted to help children. She decided to go for the Master's degree in childhood education, dreaming of becoming an elementary school teacher.

When we started filling out the application, Lilette stopped cold. She asked her

[Saskatchewan](#): I had heard of the Love Kitchen, but your detailed and interesting story really brought it...

- [Abe Winnipeg](#)
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- [Zoey Surrey BC](#): This is an excellent article Amara. You make clear concepts that are sometimes hard to understand....
- [Joyce Vancouver BC](#): Thank you for this very well-written touching story. I am sure Lottie will make a great big...
- [Rose Winnipeg Manitoba](#): Interesting interview and a reminder as to how important communication and trust are,...
- [Rose Winnipeg Manitoba](#): Hi Keith, Your article reminded me how inspiring and succinct quotes can be and how they can...
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- [Diane](#): This was a very good article – reminds me of how Harry the dog is giving my friends comfort
- [Diane](#): What a

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- [Maggie Meets The Car](#)
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- [The Day My Life Was Saved](#)
- [From Ukraine With Love](#)
- [Felix The Cat Part IV: The Grev Dragon](#)

when we started filling out the application, Lilette stopped cold. She snook her head, almost crying. “It asks for previous teacher experience! I don’t have any!” She threw her hands in the air. “I can’t go!”

“Easy, now,” I reassured her. “Just take a deep breath. Think back. What have you done with kids? Not teaching, but anything else?”

Lilette shrugged. “Babysat my cousins, almost every week while my aunt went to her weekend job.”

“Okay, good. What else?”

Her brow furrowed. Then she lit up. “Oh, a neighbor. My aunt asked me if I wanted to do her friend a favor. So I stayed with the neighbor’s boy and read to him.” She started smiling as she recalled. “We watched *Dora the Explorer*, and I taught him letters and numbers. He was going to start preschool.”

I nodded.

“And then,” Lilette grew more animated, “I taught Sunday School! Kindergarten kids. We read stories and did drawings and games.” She laughed, finally realizing that she certainly did have “teaching” experience.

We completed the application with little effort, and Lilette looked forward with excitement to enrolling. She’d taken the first step toward her Dream.

Like Lilette, you may feel stuck in a job, or a life, that offers little. You may not quite know what you really want to do. Or you think reaching your goal seems impossible because you lack experience, training, education, or a truckful of other things. When you can reverse this deficient image of yourself, no matter how many drawbacks you think you have, you can take the steps needed to achieve your Dream.

Maybe you’re not like Lilette, who needed prompting to uncover her real interests and career desires. Maybe you’ve always known what you most wanted to do, but by choices and circumstances (and often a feeling of helplessness), you’ve denied or buried your desire. This was the case with Tom.

Tom’s Story

Tom had been an important man with an impressive title. Director of the premier art museum in a large Eastern city for 38 years, he handled and acquired the most treasured works. Part of his job was to discover, develop, and showcase stellar new artists.

Tom had always secretly wanted to be a painter himself. He’d begun painting in his early twenties but abandoned it as family and responsibilities grew. His Dream receded and almost disappeared as he became busier, kept up with the art world, and graciously accepted promotions, which of course meant more work and more time devoted to his profession.

At 64, with his wife’s gently insistent urging, they retired to a quiet, elegant South Florida community. After Tom’s decades of living with the best paintings in existence and encouraging and nurturing the next generation of artists, he longed to resume his own painting, which he’d put aside so long ago.

I met Tom at a local art exhibit, and we became acquainted exchanging pithy critiques of the paintings and photographs. I told Tom a little about my work, and he asked if we could get together. At our first meeting, he pulled out his yellowed résumé and said he wanted it revised so he could teach art criticism part-time in an adult education pro- gram.

He admitted in that first meeting, almost with tears, that he knew teaching was a ploy to still avoid painting. As we kept meeting, he made a series of embarrassed confessions, shouted that it was “too late,” and recriminated himself with amazing bursts of anger.

He felt, as he said, “way behind,” fearing he’d lost his early promise. He daily condemned himself for not having plunged into painting earlier, whatever the

wonderful story about Watson.

- [Diane](#): I loved this article. What an amazing woman.
- [Lyn Schello Melbourne Australia](#): What an absolutely gorgeous JRT. Jesse is so clever with the tricks he does and I...
- [Chris](#): Thanks, dad. Your acknowledgement and words of support and encouragement mean a lot. I know it was also...
- [Morrigan Balek](#): I was just browsing through the web when I spotted this story; I’m so glad I stopped to read...
- [yeong shin](#): What a vivid tragedy it was to hear, even it happened long time ago. I couldn’t imagine how deep...
- [Sandi Shelton](#): This is such a beautiful story and a reminder to look beyond the typical stereotypes. What an awful...
- [Chris](#): Thanks, Andre-Marc!! It’s so good to hear from you! Indeed with sharing such a deeply personal...
- [Shirley from Winnipeg](#): Diane, I read your article “From the Ukraine with Love” – what a wonderful...
- [Tam](#): Wonderful people, wonderful story. But — not “the” Ukraine! Just Ukraine. The France, the...
- [AMAllain](#): WOW, Chris! Such a courageous and inspiring story...so proud and happy for you that you are in a place...
- [Chris](#): Thanks, Allen. I think it’s no coincidence that I

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- [Cooking With Love](#)
- [Ganesh](#)
- [I Now Realize](#)
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sacrifice, and kept reeling off the names of successful artists his age who had “made it.” Tom said he wished he’d had someone like himself to encourage and guide him, as he had done with so many young artists in the past.

Now, though, with his time his own, Tom was terrified of starting. He watched too much television, went out and ate too much at trendy restaurants with friends, played cards in the afternoon with other retirees, and struggled with guilt, conflicting desires, and fears. Finally, the anxiety in his stomach propelled him to grapple with his desire to paint.

Slowly, I helped Tom see that no talent or time is wasted. His “interminable detour,” as he called it, had helped him refine his aesthetic sense, critical skills, and discerning eye. With a great light in his face, he finally realized that he needed his long training to embark on his own. He accepted that his desire to paint was God-given and he deserved to pursue it.

Late Flourishers

I told Tom about many artists, writers, and world figures who came to their calling in their later years (I keep a list to shore myself up). Look at some of these “late bloomers”: Anna Mary “Grandma” Moses; the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian; Miguel Cervantes; *Robinson Crusoe* author Daniel Defoe; President Harry S. Truman; Pope John XXIII.

And more recently . . .

- Gerontologist Dr. Charles Oakes started his third career in his 70s as an exercise therapist for older adults. Then he wrote *Working the Gray Zone*, a chronicle of his clients’ remarkable sense of purpose, expansion, and spirituality.
- In 2009 Arlene Ameson won the Boston Marathon in her age class. She was 74.
- In 2010 Myrrha Stanford-Smith landed her first book deal—at 82. The publisher, admirably forward-thinking and age-unbound, signed her to a three-book deal. Stanford-Smith never retired and continues to write and direct for a repertory theater.
- In 2012, Tao Porchon-Lynch teaches yoga 20 hours a week at the center she founded outside New York City. She also pursues her other passion—competitive ballroom dancing with partners in their twenties. She’s 94.

With such a barrage (I showed no mercy), Tom began to see that there’s no limit or cut-off point to creativity. More important, unlike hairlines, our creative desires don’t recede with age. Writing guru Julia Cameron says that if we want to write a novel at 20 we’ll still crave to write it at 80.

And our talents don’t evaporate. As we plunge in, instead of ignoring them or pretending they don’t matter, we honor them and reinvigorate them.

When you feel inclined to dismiss, devalue, or give up your Dream, remind yourself:

- My Dream is implanted by God.
- My greatest Dream is God’s desire for me.
- God is seeking to express through me.
- I can achieve my Dream because it is implanted in me.
- My Dream means I have the tools and talents I need to fulfill it.
- I fully deserve my Dream.

Tom? I helped him set up his studio, and he’s been painting daily, currently preparing for a show at one of the city universities.

The Lesson Is Trust

Listen to yourself and your deep-seated desires. Trust that inner urging. Muster your courage. Visualize yourself living your Dream. For Lilette it was teaching little kids, for Tom working on his canvases.

was drawn to criminal law in law school and started my...

- [Allen](#): I never heard this before from you Chris. My thoughts are with you and your family, even 30 years later.
 - [Nayanna Chakraborty](#): Dear Donna Roth, Thank you for your comment. There are infinite tales in the religious scriptures...
 - [donna roth](#): I have always been drawn to the stories of Ganesh. I had the honor of attending a Pujah Ganesh as part of...
 - [Cipralex Jour 5: La fin du cauchemar](#): Découvre un blog sur un utilisateur de Cipralex. Ça m’encourage. Je...
 - [Anne Boucher](#): I know this little cat... it was exactly as written! She loved ‘Grandma’ and remains a...
 - [Joyce](#): Another beautifully written story Diane. I loved the story. What a great family. Love.....Jo...
 - [Chuck Muniak](#): This is an excellent story; I can almost smell the bread baking.
 - [Terri Bentley](#): Enjoyed the article. Looking forward to reading more from you, especially if it involves the...
 - [Arthur Klein](#): Hi Michelle, Thank you so much for writing this article... I still very much look forward to coming...
 - [Kathy](#): What a great article Mary! I never knew you suffered from any of that when we were growing up.
- I feel bad that...
- [Phil](#): I have always wanted to express

Kick out your guilt and the years you thought you wasted. Your wealth of life experience can only add to your Dream. You *are* the master of your choices.

As your Dream becomes clearer, you'll know the first steps to take: enroll in a pastry-making course, clear out the spare room for a workshop, call the interior designer who offered to show you the wholesale houses, start that novel with a modest little outline.

One step leads to the next, and soon you'll be naturally following the perfect sequence.

So, let the messages come. Your inner guidance knows, and it knows you unequivocally deserve your dream. Embrace your creative strength and power. Trust your Life and the answers within.

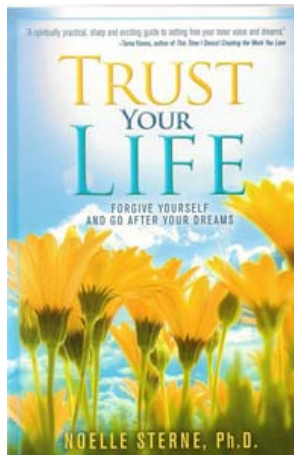
Too late for your Dream? Never!

* * * * *

Adapted from Noelle Sterne, *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams* (Unity Books, 2011).

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Noelle Sterne Bio:



Author, editor, ghostwriter, writing coach, and spiritual counselor, Noelle Sterne writes fiction and nonfiction and has published over 250 pieces in print and online venues. With a Ph.D. from Columbia University, for over 28 years Noelle has helped doctoral candidates complete their dissertations (finally). In her book, *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams* (Unity Books), with examples from her practice, writing, and other aspects of life, she uses "practical spirituality" to help readers let go of regrets, relabel their past, and reach their lifelong yearnings. Noelle's website: www.trustyourlifenow.com . See YouTube review: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziP_7KSSlpE&feature=relmfu

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Comments

4 Responses to "Expert Series: Too Late For Your Dream?"



1. Juanita L. Wilson

this exact sentiment.. Very good.

- [Trish W](#): Thank you Mary for the insight into your life. I am proud of you for your courage and your skill as a writer...
- [Eva](#): Awesome response. Thanks for your open-hearted approach to Bill's story. It's true...we should...
- [Noelle Sterne](#): Thank you, Juanita and Joseph, for your enthusiastic words. Let us all keep nurturing our dreams as...
- [Donna](#): I am grateful for your honesty & wisdom. From you terror & misery you have become a compassionate...
- [Joseph](#): I liked the Too Late For Your Dream? article
- [Linda](#): I loved this PTSD article
- [Winnie](#): Evelyn's piece is the most well written article. great story. great language usage.
- [Juanita L. Wilson](#): Enjoyed your article, very inspiring. Never let it go. Great Job. Very well put.
- [Juanita L. Wilson](#): Enjoyed your article very much. Hope others enjoy it as much as I did. Keep up with the good...
- [Corrina \(aka Callie\)](#): This is an amazing story. I'm always so happy to hear how people can change their...
- [annie.r.g](#): she is amazing in a big fan well done
- [sallie](#): He is GREAT! I'm in love ! What a wonderful little guy he is. Do you know how precious he is? You're...

April 6th, 2012 @ 5:58 am

Enjoyed your article, very inspiring. Never let it go. Great Job. Very well put.



2. Joseph
April 6th, 2012 @ 2:05 pm

I liked the Too Late For Your Dream? article



3. [Noelle Sterne](#)
April 7th, 2012 @ 9:50 am

Thank you, Juanita and Joseph, for your enthusiastic words. Let us all keep nurturing our dreams as they become our reality!



4. Anonymous
June 6th, 2012 @ 7:45 pm

‘...unlike hairlines, our creative desires don’t recede with age.’

Love this line. Now to keep reminding myself of the greater truth you have stated: We can fulfill our dreams at any stage of life. It is never too late.

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