



**Bonner Curriculum**

# Personal Vision: Creating One

## Overview:

As individuals engaged in community service, activism, politics, and other realms, we strive to create inclusive communities on and off of our campuses. These are communities that value full and effective participation of all its members, regardless of varied personal identities, experiences, or backgrounds of their members. Communities such as these cannot be built without trust and self-awareness. Defining who we are and what we want to be in the world is essential if we are to help others as effectively as we might.

This workshop, drawn from The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook (Jossey Bass, 1994) is an inspiring and useful place to begin. It provides a simple framework to allow people to reflect on and consider their personal visions. In addition, it can be modified in many creative ways (such as artistic, dramatic, etc.) for people who would like to “represent” their visions in forms other than written/spoken words.

This activity works best in conjunction with the second exercise found in the curriculum, “Creating Shared Vision.”

## Category:

Visioning; personal development; communication skills

## Level:

Suitable for all levels (introductory to advanced); helpful to repeat multiple times over the years (college and later) – as personal vision will continue to evolve

## Type:

Structured activities suitable for a workshop

## Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Provide a structure through which each person can reflect on and define a personal vision: what you want to create from your life and the world around you
- Provide an opportunity for individuals to share elements of their personal visions with each other, as a tool for building relationships, teamwork, and understanding

- Set the stage for later teamwork on shared vision - as a way to connect personal vision with team/project vision and make the work more meaningful

### Materials:

- Questions for personal vision (see below)
- Writing implements and something to write on

### How to Prepare:

Read the activity. Become familiar with how to present the exercise. Share some of your own vision as an example. Set aside the proper time and space. Prep materials.

### How to Do/Brief Outline:

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 1) Introduction                         | Suggested time 10 min. |
| 2) Vision One: Creating a Life's Work   | Suggested time 15 min  |
| 3) Bonfire of the Insanities            | Suggested time 10 min  |
| 4) Deepen and Broaden Your Vision       | Suggested time 15 min  |
| 5) Clarification and Expansion in Pairs | Suggested time 10 min  |
| 6) Posters                              | Suggested time 10 min  |
| 7) Vision Gallery                       | Suggested time 20 min  |

---

## Part 1) Introduction

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Framing quote:

**Is that what they call a vocation, what you do with joy as if you had fire in your heart, the devil in your body?**

~Josephine Baker

Explain that the success of this exercise depends on everyone's ability to relax and honestly share their visions with the rest of the group. In order to help them do this, you are going to lead them in a brief relaxation exercise. Ask people to remove their watches, lie down on the floor (if appropriate) and close their eyes.

When everyone is situated, ask them to take four breaths. The first one should be short, and each succeeding breath should be about twice as long as the previous one. Ask everyone to continue breathing deeply at the same rate as their fourth breath. As facilitator, you should lead this exercise by example. Invite people to join your breathing, then breath loud enough that everyone can hear and follow you. As they do this, tell them to concentrate on their breathing, on the slow, graceful rise and fall of their chests. Tell

them to listen to the silence of the room around them. Tell them to notice the humming of the electric clock, the sound of traffic passing outside, etc.

Then ask them to listen carefully, as they continue breathing, for the sound of others breathing in unison with them. Tell them that their life, like all those in the room with them, survives on the same air and breathes in the same way, sometimes even at the same rate. Everybody shares this. What makes us unique is what we choose to do with that breath. The fundamental difference between all of us is thought. There are no boundaries on our thoughts.

Tell the group to recall a meaningful image, a place, or a memory that is personal to them, that they consider their own. Ask them to bask in it for a moment. After a pause, ask them to concentrate again on the breathing of everyone around them.

Then, ask them to think of a personal image, place or event in the future. It should be a place or activity involving a person or group that, sometime in the future, they would like to become a reality. Ask them: Where are they? Who are they with? What are they doing? How does it feel? Ask whether this image is as perfect as they can possibly make it for themselves, reminding them that there is no boundary to their thoughts. After you ask these questions, give them a minute for it to sink in.

Ask them to open their eyes and sit up. Then introduce the following:

## **Part 2) Vision One: CREATING A LIFE'S WORK**

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Pass out paper and pens/pencils/markers as you introduce the following:

Imagine that you are looking at your life and that you have achieved what you most wanted. Ignore how possible or impossible this vision seems. Imagine yourself accepting, into your life, the full manifestation of this result. Imagine that you can transport yourself, magically, into that vision, to make it present day reality. Describe on paper (writing or sketch) the experience you have imagined, using the present tense, as if it is happening now.

Ask them to jot down or draw or list:

- **What does it look like?**
- **What does it feel like?**
- **What words or images would you use to describe it?**

## **Step 3: Bonfire of the Insanities**

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Ask the group: Did you say what you really want to write? Who found themselves censoring their thoughts, saying things like “these things are impossible” or “this isn’t realistic”...?

Explain that it is normal to interrupt yourself with negative thoughts or feelings such as the following, especially as you start to think without boundaries:

*I can't have what I want.  
I want what someone else wants.  
It doesn't matter what I want  
I am afraid of what I want.  
I don't know what I want.  
I know what I want, but I can't have it at work.  
I have what I want, so what?*

These are normal thoughts, but not necessary!

Ask people to free their minds of these kinds of defeating thoughts, to not get stuck by negativity, to see themselves as powerful. Have them write down these thoughts on a sheet of paper, then crumple it up. Walk around with a trash can and have them literally throw their negative thoughts away.

Lead into the following set of questions.

### **Step 4: Deepen and Broaden Your Vision**

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Tell people that they have successfully removed all barriers between them and success. They are now successful people. As successful people, others in the world are interested in what they have to say about their successful lives.

Ask them to fill out the following questionnaire as though they had achieved everything in life that they had hoped. They are now in the future. They should use the present tense when describing their accomplishments and live. Tell them that if the questionnaire's categories don't fit, they can feel free to adjust them.

Also let them know that they should answer these questions in the IDEAL, VISIONARY state. The responses can be in prose, poetry, song, art, pictures, etc. If they would like to move around the room, they may.

**1. Home: Where and how do you live?**

**2. Self Image: What are your personal qualities?**

**3. Tangibles: What material things do you own?**

**4. Health: What is your desire for health, fitness, athletics, and anything to do with your body?**

- 5. Relationships: What types of relationships do you have with friends, family, and others?**
- 6. Work: What is your ideal profession or vocation? What impact does your efforts have?**
- 7. Personal Pursuits: What would you like to create for your life in the arena of individual learning, travel, reading, or other activities?**
- 8. Community: What is your vision for the community or society you live in?**
- 9. Other: What else, in any other area of your life, would you like to create?**
- 10. Life purpose: Imagine that your life has a unique purpose fulfilled through what you do, your interrelationships, and the way you live. What is your calling? Describe that purpose.**

## **Step 5: Clarification and Expansion in Pairs**

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Bring the group together for this step.

Ask people to look at the visions they articulated. Ask them to think about what aspects of those visions are closest to their deepest desires. Tell them not to consider whether their choices seem selfish or selfless; they are probably a mix.

Before going on, ask people to consider each aspect of their vision: “If I could have it now, would I take it?” This question allows people to dig deeper, clarify what they think, and eliminate things they truly don’t want or value.

Then have people ask themselves: “Assume I have it now. What does it bring me?” This question also asks people to reflect on what they just said and confirm their own values and desires. For example, someone could have said, “I want to live in Utah.” Then realized, “I want to live in Utah to be closer to my family.” Then, the person may revise their vision, “Really, I want to have a family and have them be near me.”

### **With a partner’s help**

Tell everyone to find a partner. Explain that the partner’s role is to be a good listener, to help draw out what the person is thinking and feeling.

Partners should ask simple questions, such as:

- “If you could have this vision now, would you take it?”
- “If you had it, what would it bring you?”

Partners should also ask questions in the present tense, such as “What does your house look like?” “What is your family like?”

Be sure to instruct the group: **Partners are not therapists.** Partners should not substitute or lead people to a different vision, analyze the person’s words, body language or anything else. Partners ask the same simple questions above, then answer them in turn.

## **Step 6: Sharing Personal Visions - POSTERS**

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Give each person a sheet of flip chart paper. Tell them they will have ten minutes to create a poster that demonstrates their personal visions. Provide markers, magazines and scissors and glue, pencils, and anything else that will help people demonstrate their visions creatively.

When they are done with their posters, hang them up around the room.

## **Step 7: Vision Gallery**

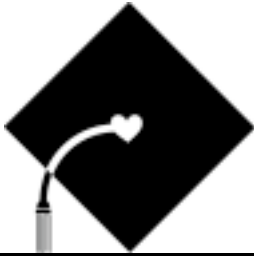
Suggested Time: 20 minutes, depending on size of group

As a large group, walk around to each poster, as if taking a tour of an art gallery. Give the “artist” the opportunity to share some aspect of his or her personal visions with everyone. Reaffirm the importance of listening, speaking, and respectful silence as people present.

Depending on your personal style, skills as a facilitator, allotted time, etc., you can have them present these personal visions in a number of ways. Examples include asking each person the opportunity to speak, addressing specific questions or topics, or giving individuals total freedom over their presentation.

Providing the forum for the sharing of personal visions, regardless of the style, can be an effective way to bring out the personalities, concerns, and unique qualities of team members in a way that lays the groundwork for future collaboration and visioning together. As a facilitator, your job is simply to provide a safe space, ample time, and direction to allow people to share some aspect of their visions. You don’t need to analyze or comment on those visions; rather, simply affirm that you (and others) hear them, note them, and value the sharing.

If time allows, have some people share their vision and also what they have learned. Thank people for sharing. Figure out ways that you can allow people to connect their personal visions to their work, team, or next steps in their lives.



# Personal Vision Questions

---

Take the time to consider each of these questions.  
Just write, or draw, or scribble your thoughts.  
Come back to them later, as the most salient and meaningful parts of  
your personal vision begin to form in your mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

**1. Home: Where and how do you live?**

**2. Self Image: What are your personal qualities?**

**3. Tangibles: What material things do you own?**

**4. Health: What is your desire for health, fitness, athletics, and anything to do with your body?**

- 5. Relationships: What types of relationships do you have with friends, family, and others?**
  
- 6. Work: What is your ideal profession or vocation? What impact does your efforts have?**
  
- 7. Personal Pursuits: What would you like to create for your life in the arena of individual learning, travel, reading, or other activities?**
  
- 8. Community: What is your vision for the community or society you live in?**
  
- 9. Other: What else, in any other area of your life, would you like to create?**
  
- 10. Life purpose: Imagine that your life has a unique purpose fulfilled through what you do, your interrelationships, and the way you live. What is your calling? Describe that purpose.**