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**ARNOLD
SCHWARZENEGGER**

BE USEFUL

SEVEN TOOLS FOR LIFE



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CHAPTER 1

HAVE A CLEAR VISION

So many of our best people are lost. So many of the good ones don't know what they're doing with their lives. They're unhealthy. They're unhappy. Seventy percent of them hate their jobs. Their relationships are unrewarding. They don't smile. They don't laugh. They have no energy. They feel useless. They feel helpless, as if life were pushing them down a road to nowhere.

If you know what to look for, you will see these people everywhere. Maybe even when you look in the mirror. It's OK. You're not broken. Neither are they. This is just what happens when you don't have a clear vision for your life, and you've taken either whatever you can get or whatever you thought you deserved.

We can fix that. Because everything good, all great change, starts with a clear vision.

Vision is the most important thing. Vision is purpose and meaning. To have a clear vision is to have a picture of what you want your life to look like and a plan for how to get there. The people who feel most lost have neither of those. They don't have the picture or the plan. They look in the mirror and they wonder, "How the hell did I get here?" but they don't know. They've made so many decisions and taken so many actions that have landed them in this place, and yet they have no idea what any of them were. They'll even argue with you: "I hate this, why would I have *chosen* it?" Except no one forced that ring on their finger or put that second cheeseburger in their hands. No one made them take that dead-end job. No one made them skip class, or miss workouts, or stop going to church. No one made them stay up late every night playing video games instead of getting eight hours of sleep. No one made them drink that last beer or spend their last dollar.

Yet they fully believe what they're saying. And I believe they believe it. They feel as if life just sort of happened to them. They really think they had no choice in what became of their lives.

And you know what? They're partly right.

None of us has a choice about where we come from. I grew up in a small village in Austria at the beginning of the Cold War. My mother was very loving. My father was strict, and he could be physically abusive, but I loved him very much. It was complicated. I'm sure your story is complicated too. I bet growing up was more difficult than the people around you think it was. We can't change those stories, but we can choose where we go from there.

There are reasons and explanations for all the things that have happened to us up to this point, good and bad. But for the most part, it wasn't because we didn't have a choice. We always have a choice. What we don't always have, unless we create it, is something to measure our choices against.

That is what a clear vision gives you: a way to decipher whether a decision is good or bad for you, based on whether it gets you closer or further away from where you want your life to go. Does the picture you have in your mind of your ideal future get blurrier or sharper because of this thing you're about to do?

The happiest and most successful people in the world do everything in their power to avoid bad decisions that confuse matters and drag them away from their goals. Instead, they focus on making choices that bring clarity to

their vision and bring them closer to achieving it. It doesn't matter if they're considering a small thing or a huge thing, the decision-making process is always the same.

The only difference between them and us, between me and you, between any two people, is the clarity of the picture we have for our future, the strength of our plan to get there, and whether or not we have accepted that the choice to make that vision a reality is ours and ours alone.

So how do we do that? How do we create a clear vision from scratch? I think there are two ways to do it. You can start small and build out until a big, clear picture reveals itself to you. Or you can start very broad and then, like the lens on a camera, zoom in until a clear picture snaps into focus. That's how it was for me.

START BROAD AND ZOOM IN

The earliest vision I had for my life was very broad. It was of America. Nothing more specific than that. I was ten years old. I'd just started school in Graz, the big city just east of where I grew up. It seemed like everywhere I

turned in those days I was seeing the most amazing things about America. In my school lessons, on magazine covers, in newsreels that played before shows at the movie house.

There were pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge and those Cadillacs with the big tail fins driving down massive six-lane highways. I watched movies made in Hollywood and rock 'n' roll stars on talk shows filmed in New York. I saw the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, which made the tallest building in Austria look like a toolshed. I saw streets lined with palm trees and beautiful girls on Muscle Beach.

It was America in surround sound. Everything was big and bright. For an impressionable kid like me, those images were like Viagra for dreams. They should have come with a warning, too, because the visions of life in America they aroused did *not* go away after four hours.

I knew: this is where I belong.

Doing what? I had no clue. Like I said, it was a broad vision. The picture was very fuzzy. I was young. What did I know? What I would learn, though, is that some of the strongest visions emerge like this. From our obsessions when we're young, before our opinions about them have been affected by other people's judgments of them. Talking

about what to do when you're dissatisfied with your life, the famous big wave surfer Garrett McNamara once said that you should "go back to when you were three, figure out what you loved doing, figure out how to make that your life, then make the road map and follow it." He was describing the process for creating a vision, and I think he's absolutely correct. It's obviously not that easy, but it is that simple, and it can begin by looking back in time and thinking very broadly about the things you used to love. Your obsessions are a clue to your earliest vision for yourself, if only you had paid attention to them in the beginning.

Look at someone like Tiger Woods showing off his putting skills on *The Mike Douglas Show* when he was only two years old. Or the Williams sisters. A lot of people don't know this, but their father, Richard, exposed all five of his kids to tennis when they were young, and they all had talent. But it was only Venus and Serena who showed passion for the sport. *Obsession*. And so tennis became the framework for how they grew up and how they saw themselves.

It was the same for Steven Spielberg. He wasn't a big movie fan when he was a boy. He loved TV. Then one year his dad got a little 8mm home movie camera for Father's

Day to record their family road trips, and Steven started to mess around with it. Around the same age I was when I was first learning about America, Steven discovered moviemaking. He made his first movie when he was twelve years old. He made one to earn a merit badge for photography in the Boy Scouts when he was thirteen. He even took the camera with him on Boy Scout trips. For Steven, who had just moved with his family all the way across the country from New Jersey to Arizona, movie-making gave him his first bit of direction.

It wasn't moving to Hollywood. It wasn't winning an Oscar for Best Picture or Best Director. It wasn't being rich and famous or working with glamorous movie stars. Those more specific ambitions would all come later. In the beginning his vision was simply to make movies. It was big and broad, like it was for Tiger (golf), Venus and Serena (tennis), and me (America).

This is perfectly normal. For most of us, it's necessary. Anything more detailed gets too complicated too quickly, and you get ahead of yourself. You start missing important steps on the road map. Having a broad vision gives you an easy, more accessible place to start from when it comes to figuring out where and how to zoom in.

That doesn't mean you get narrower with your vision,