

H A B I T

Begin with  
the **End in  
Mind**



Control  
Your  
**Own  
Destiny**

OR SOMEONE ELSE WILL

LICKING VALLEY H.S.

## **Begin with the End in Mind — What It Means**

**Y**ou may not realize it, but you do it all the time. Beginning with the end in mind, that is. You draw up a blueprint before you build a house. You read a recipe before you bake a cake. You create an outline before you write a paper (at least I hope you do). It's part of life.

Let's have a begin-with-the-end-in-mind experience right now using your tool of imagination. Find a place where you can be alone without interruption.

There. Now, clear your mind of everything. Don't worry about school, your friends, your family, or that zit on your forehead. Just focus with me, breathe deeply, and open your mind.

In your mind's eye, visualize someone walking toward you about half a block away. At first you can't see who it is. As this person gets closer and closer, you suddenly realize, believe it or not, that it's you. But it's not you today, it's you as you would *like to be* one year from now.

Now think deeply.

What have you done with your life over the past year?

How do you feel inside?

What do you look like?

What characteristics do you possess? (Remember, this is you as you would *like to be* one year from now.)

You can float back to reality now. If you were a good sport and actually tried this experiment, you probably got in touch with your deeper self. You got a feel for what's important to you and what you'd like to accomplish this next year. That's called beginning with the end in mind. And it doesn't even hurt.

As Jim discovered, beginning with the end in mind is a powerful way to help turn your dreams into realities:

*When I feel frustrated or get depressed, I have found something that really helps me. I go someplace where I can be alone, and then I close my eyes and I visualize mentally where I want to be and where I want to go when I am an adult. I try to see the whole picture of my dream life—and then I automatically begin to think about what it's going to take to get there, what I need to change. This technique started when I was a ninth grader, and today I am on my way to making some of those visualizations become a reality.*

## A Personal Mission Statement

So if it is so important to have an end in mind, how do you do it? The best way I have found is to write a personal mission statement. A personal mission statement is like a personal credo or motto that states what your life is about. It is like the blueprint to your life. Countries have constitutions, which function just like a mission statement. And most companies, like Microsoft and Coca-Cola, have mission statements. But I think they work best with people.

So why not write your own personal mission statement? Many teens have. As you'll see, they come in all types and varieties. Some are long and some are short. Some are poems and some are songs. Some teens have used their favorite quote as a mission statement. Others have used a picture or a photograph.

Mary Beth Sylvester took her mission statement from the Sinéad O'Connor song "Emperor's New Clothes." It reads:

*I will live by my own policies.  
I will sleep with a clear conscience.  
I will sleep in peace.*

Steven Strong shared this one:

**R**eligion  
**E**ducation  
**S**ucceeding  
**P**roductive  
**E**xercise  
**C**aring  
**T**ruthful

A personal mission statement is like a tree with deep roots. It is stable and isn't going anywhere, but it is also alive and continually growing.

You need a tree with deep roots to help you survive all of the storms of life that beat you up. As you've probably noticed already, life is anything but stable. Think about it. People are fickle. Your boyfriend loves you one minute and then dumps you the next. You're someone's best friend one day, and they're talking behind your back the next.

Think about all of the events you can't control. You have to move. You lose your job. The country is at war. Your parents are getting divorced.

Fads come and go. Sweaters are popular one year and on their way out the next. Rap music is the thing. Rap music stinks.

While everything about you changes, a personal mission statement can be your deep-rooted tree that never moves. You can deal with change if you have an immovable trunk to hang on to.

## **Make Your Life Extraordinary**

**L**ife is short. This point is emphasized in Tom Schulman's screenplay for the classic movie *Dead*

*Poets Society*. On the first day of class at Welton Academy, a boarding school steeped in tradition, Mr. Keating, the new English professor, takes his class of twenty-five boys out into the hall to look at old black-and-white photos of the young men who attended Welton more than half a century earlier.

"We are food for worms, lads," he tells his class, as they look at the old photos. "Believe it or not each and every one of us in this room is one day going to stop breathing, turn cold, and die. I would like you to ... peruse some of the faces from the past. You've walked by them many times but I don't think you've really looked at them.

"They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they are destined for great things, just like many of you. Their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because you see, gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. If you listen real close you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen. Do you hear it?"

As the boys curiously lean in toward the glass enclosure, Professor Keating whispers in their ears, "Car-pe. Car-pe. Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys! *Make your lives extraordinary!*"