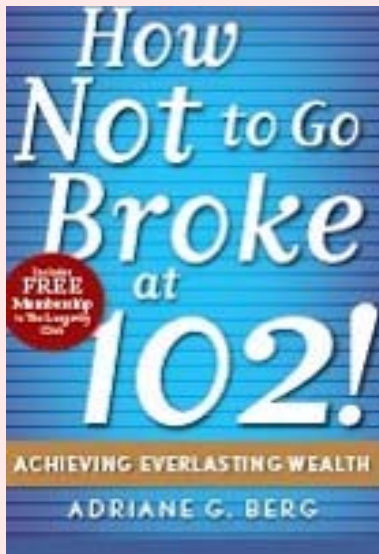


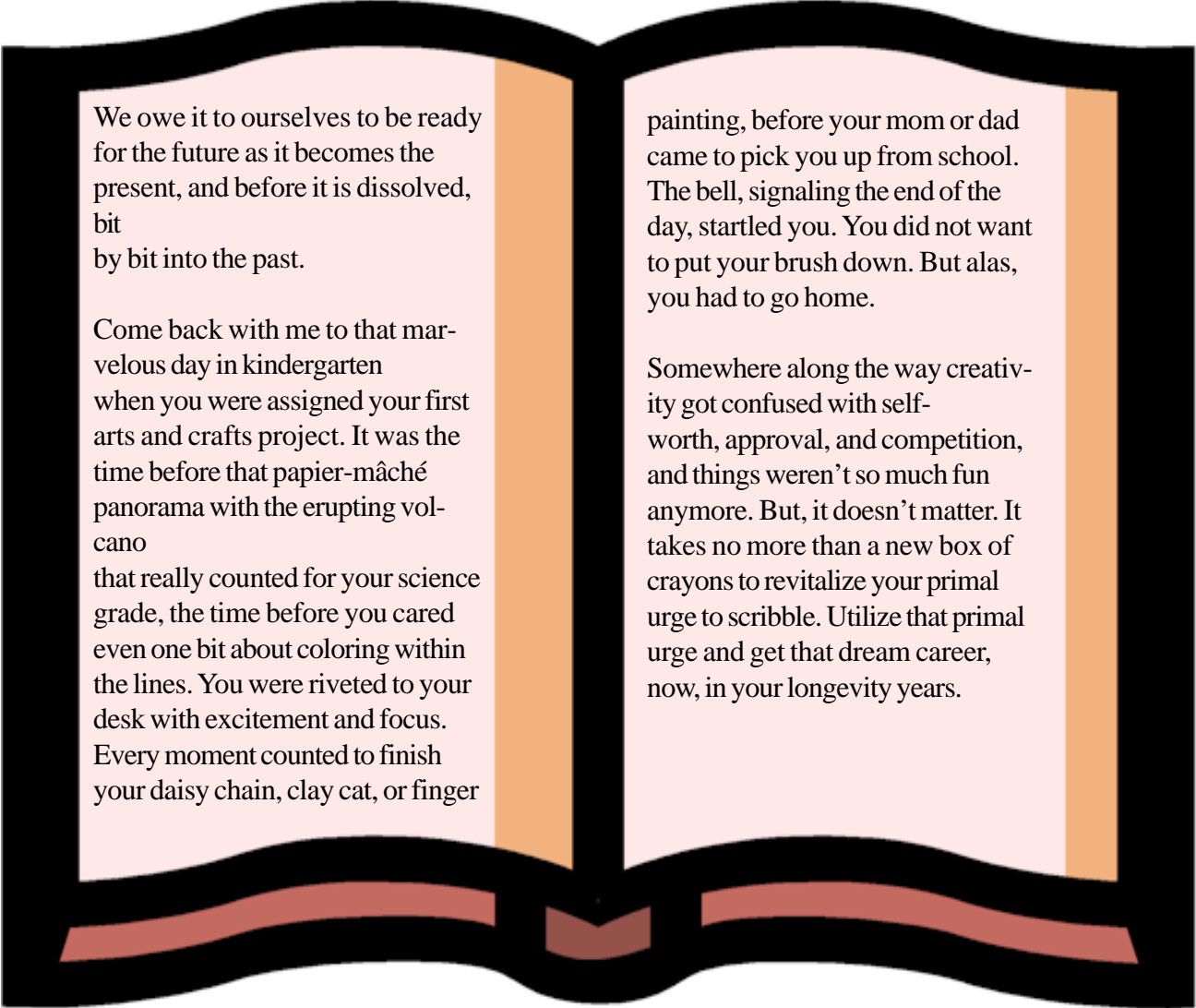
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Chapter 5

Dream Fulfillment and Compromise— They Are Both Okay

How many marvelous things would you like to do, see, experience, or become that you have postponed until tomorrow? Whenever tomorrow starts for you, one thing is certain: It is never today. The trouble with waiting until tomorrow is that our future unfolds moment to moment. Life starts right now, and it keeps on coming until it is over. There is no intermission, no time out after which the future officially begins.



We owe it to ourselves to be ready for the future as it becomes the present, and before it is dissolved, bit by bit into the past.

Come back with me to that marvelous day in kindergarten when you were assigned your first arts and crafts project. It was the time before that papier-mâché panorama with the erupting volcano that really counted for your science grade, the time before you cared even one bit about coloring within the lines. You were riveted to your desk with excitement and focus. Every moment counted to finish your daisy chain, clay cat, or finger

painting, before your mom or dad came to pick you up from school. The bell, signaling the end of the day, startled you. You did not want to put your brush down. But alas, you had to go home.

Somewhere along the way creativity got confused with self-worth, approval, and competition, and things weren't so much fun anymore. But, it doesn't matter. It takes no more than a new box of crayons to revitalize your primal urge to scribble. Utilize that primal urge and get that dream career, now, in your longevity years.

If Not Now When?

One friend went looking for her dream house by the shore, and ended up sinking a ton of money into redoing her kitchen instead. An executive client, who had spoken of early retirement for five years, refused a terrific golden parachute deal and kept working. My longtime buddy, who swore she would start her own business as soon as her son went to college, never got around to it.

If you have lots of, “I should have,” just loudly declare what you know to be true. “It’s not the

economy, stupid!” What we do with our lives is not a function of what we have in our wallets. It is a function of our own self-created stop signs and red lights.

No matter what your life is like right now, I bet you are making plans for tomorrow, when the really good stuff will start. For big dreams, like traveling around the world or starting a business, tomorrow may be sometime after retirement, or when an early pension kicks in, or when the kids graduate from high school or college. For the lesser dreams, like traveling or pursuing a hobby or learning to play an instrument, tomorrow may be next summer, or when the kids

are in camp, or when the slow season at work starts.

If you don't refresh your vision with occasional action, eventually the great achievements become stale. When you finally make room for them in your life, they have been reduced to the realm of fantasy, too difficult to pick up with any significant results. Here is the action to take: Write it down!

What have you tucked away in your dreams? Will you be equipped to take it out and fulfill its promise as soon as you retire? When you reach 60? 80? 100? 102?

As you make your written list, your mind will inevitably start the process of conjuring dreams—the things you have always wanted to do but saved for later. Not all the entries are positive. Many times you will want to consider negative entries—things you want to stop doing, like smoking or traveling so much for business.

Write down these goals in simple sentences, without elaboration. Don't skip this step. By clearly expressing your desires and creating an object (paper with the description words), you have brought your desires into a new realm, and made them tangible. This is a most significant step toward fulfillment. At

a recent seminar, I asked the audience to do this exercise. One woman nearly began to cry. “What I want is not possible,” she said. I saw that it was hard for her to express her desire. It turned out that she always wanted to travel to China, and because of her health it was impossible. I asked her if she had heard of a travel agency that specialized in disabled travelers? She had not. But there are such specialists, and I have no doubt that by clearly expressing her wish she will reach what seems to her like an impossible dream.

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