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6 Simple Steps to Bring Out Your Inner Adventurer

By Jessica Winter

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So you're eager to move outside your comfort zone—but you can't find the exit ramp, you have no directions, and your destination is hazy. Fear not, brave explorer! We've got the road map to your next adventure, whatever it may be.

Step 1: Get your bearings.

A great leap is about fulfilling passions that already burn inside you. So if you hate sports and heights, daring yourself to climb a mountain by 2011 is inviting disaster. "I ask my clients to draw up a list of five to ten things that make them thrive," says Margaret Moore of the McLean/Harvard Institute of

Coaching. "If it's cooking, you might be ready for a culinary adventure. If you love exercise, maybe white-water rafting is in your future." Todd Kashdan, PhD, associate professor of psychology at George Mason University and author of *Curious?*, suggests simply walking into a bookstore and seeing which section catches your attention.

Step 2: Visualize, visualize, visualize.

When you put aside a few minutes each day to create a mental picture of your adventure, "you start believing it's going to happen, and belief fuels action," explains Jonathan Fields, author of *Career Renegade*. If your fantasy is to open a yoga center, close your eyes and conjure it: What does that beautiful, profitable studio look, sound, and smell like? Research shows that this mode of "outcome simulation" increases the chances of achieving your goal. Even more effective is "process simulation," in which you picture the mundane tasks required to reach your dream (checking Craigslist for potential yoga studio locations, calling contractors for quotes). "If you go that extra step beyond writing the to-do list and actually visualize doing all of those tedious things, you're more likely to get them done," says Fields. "It's not sexy, but it works."

Step 3: Consult the masters...

Track down role models, experts with credentials, "reverse mentors" (younger folks who might have unexpected wisdom to share), and what Kashdan calls transcendents. "We all know these people who are a little bit punk rock—they're flexible and creative and they've figured out how to break free from the box they're stuck in," he says. These advisers can offer both practical tips ("In Ghana you must check out this wildlife sanctuary that's not in the guidebooks") and inspiration ("The mantra that got me through the last 20 miles of that bike tour was...").

Steps 4-6: Create an entire mindset for change

Step 4: ...And ask for blessings.

Seek advice and encouragement from the people who know and love you best. "For the most part, our family

and friends want to give us permission to change," says life coach Debbie Ford, coauthor with Deepak Chopra and Marianne Williamson of *The Shadow Effect*. "So ask for it. Maybe they want to be adventurous along with you."

Step 5: Think holistic.

Getting your pilot's license, learning Mandarin, or planning a trip around the world might feel like all the excitement you need. But if you search for little bursts of surprise in other areas of your life, Moore says, "you create an entire mind-set for change"—exactly what the adventurer needs. "Finding novel sensations in the everyday hits a mental reset button," adds Kashdan. "It recharges your batteries, so you have more energy for bigger challenges." It could be as easy as "trying a new cuisine, a new route home, or a new position in bed," says Temple University professor Frank Farley, PhD, who studies risktaking. Bonus: People who are most open to change are also the most resilient in the face of setbacks, Farley says.

Step 6: Find comfort in discomfort.

"Remember, it's supposed to hurt; you're supposed to feel sore," says Ford. She's not talking about just the physical aches and pains of the couch potato turned triathlon competitor, but also the mental and emotional uneasiness of the would-be CEO or aspiring artist. "Accept that you'll never get rid of self-doubt," Kashdan says. "An adventurous person will always have moments of feeling like a fraud—it's a sign that you're creating new roles for yourself, that you're evolving. It means you're doing great, passionate work."

No guidebook. No map. No plans. Catherine Price takes on Tokyo...by the seat of her pants
