

Good fairy seeks work!

The so-called miracle question originates from therapist and coach Steve de Shazer. It is a powerful questioning technique that encourages coachees to imagine an ideal future in which their problems are solved. I use a modified version of this question with my clients in career assessments. Surprisingly often, I receive no answer.

Peter Näf

«Picture this: I am the good fairy, and I grant all your career wishes. Whatever they may be, I ensure you have all the skills required. Place yourself in this perfect future – what do you see yourself doing professionally?» With my imaginary wand raised, I wait – until my arm sinks from fatigue – in vain for an answer.

Another question often remains unanswered: «What did you say as a child when asked, what do you want to be when you grow up?» Many younger clients tell me they never engaged with this question in their childhood and had no dream jobs. Particularly in this generation, career uncertainty seems especially pronounced.

More options, fewer miracles?

I recall that in my own childhood this was a major topic among friends and me. I had plenty of ideas about my professional future: I wanted to be a painter, to travel the world as a ship's captain; I wanted to become a cook and nearly started an apprenticeship in that field. Later, I dreamed of owning my own café and even trained as a publican to pursue this ambition. None of these

dreams came true. Yet each fantasy contained aspects I now recognise in my current profession.

Dreams are not always meant to be realised, as I have shown in an article of the same title. But they are an important source of inspiration for shaping the future. Had I consciously engaged with my dreams earlier and recognised them for what they often are – projections of my wishes and needs – I could have spared myself some detours in my career.

No goal without goal setting

Are we living in such a rational world that dreams have lost their legitimacy? Have we, precisely now – when we have so much more freedom of choice in shaping our lives – forgotten how to dream?

Dreams and wishes are not the only way of tracing our needs. We can, as convinced realists, simply try everything first and decide afterwards whether we like it or not. Compared to this, however, dreams and wishes are efficient and time-saving. There must be a reason why we humans possess this ability.

After all, the most visionary people first created in their minds everything they later brought into being – and it all began with a dream. Hence my advice: start dreaming and wishing again and give unemployed fairies some work to do.

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