

Define Your Direction

*Clarify your values, purpose, and the life you're actually building —
before taking another step forward.*

By Coach Andre Fredericks · 10BrilliantThings.com

Introduction

Most people don't lack ambition. They lack direction. They wake up Monday morning motivated — and by Wednesday, that motivation has quietly dissolved into a blur of reactive tasks, competing priorities, and unspoken doubts about whether any of it actually matters.

The problem isn't effort. It's orientation. You can be incredibly productive and still be moving in the wrong direction. You can be busy every single day and still feel, deep down, that you are not truly building the life you intended.

Direction is not a destination you arrive at once. It is something you clarify, revisit, and refine — a living compass built from your values, informed by your purpose, and expressed through the choices you make every day.

This guide walks you through ten practical chapters designed to help you do exactly that. Not through abstract theory, but through structured reflection, honest questions, and immediately applicable frameworks. Each chapter builds on the last. By the end, you will have a clearer sense of who you are, what matters to you, and the direction your life and work are genuinely heading.

"Purpose is a central, self-organising life aim that directs goals, regulates behaviour, and provides a sense of meaning — a compass guiding individuals in

allocating their resources and making daily decisions aligned with broader life goals." — McKnight & Kashdan (2009)

That compass is what this guide helps you build. Let's begin.

Chapter 1 UNDERSTAND WHY DIRECTION MATTERS

Before you can define your direction, you need to understand why so many people lack one — and why that absence costs them more than they realise.

Research consistently shows that individuals who operate with a clear sense of purpose outperform those who don't — not just in professional outcomes, but in wellbeing, resilience, and life satisfaction. A 2025 State of Values report drawing on data from nearly 48,000 participants confirmed that values alignment is one of the strongest predictors of sustained motivation and fulfilling work across all life stages.

The absence of direction doesn't feel dramatic. It feels like low-grade restlessness. A sense that you are running, but not sure where. A creeping suspicion that the ladder you are climbing might be leaning against the wrong wall.

Direction matters because it is the difference between a life that happens to you and a life you are actively building. It filters decisions, anchors priorities, and gives your daily effort a reason that extends beyond the task in front of you.

- **Without direction**, effort becomes exhaustion — energy spent without return.
- **With direction**, even difficult days carry meaning — because they're pointing somewhere.
- **Direction is not rigid planning** — it is a stable compass in an uncertain world.

◆ **Reflection:** When did you last feel a clear sense of direction? What was present then that might be absent now?

Chapter 2 IDENTIFY YOUR CORE VALUES

Values are not aspirations. They are not the qualities you wish you had. They are the principles that already drive your decisions — often without your conscious awareness.

Psychologist Shalom Schwartz's foundational research on basic human values, replicated across more than 80 countries, identified ten universal value types — including self-direction, benevolence, achievement, and security — that shape how individuals prioritise their choices and

interpret their experiences. Crucially, values that emphasise autonomy, responsibility, and growth are consistently associated with higher wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Identifying your core values is not a branding exercise. It is an act of honest self-examination. It requires you to look at how you actually behave — not how you wish you behaved — and ask: what principles are genuinely driving these choices?

- **Step 1:** List 10 values that resonate with you (e.g. integrity, autonomy, creativity, family, growth).
- **Step 2:** Reduce the list to your top 5 by asking: 'Which of these would I refuse to compromise?'
- **Step 3:** For each of the 5, write one sentence describing how it shows up in your daily life.

When your actions consistently reflect your values, you experience what researchers call 'values congruence' — and it is one of the most reliable predictors of authentic fulfilment.

◆ **Reflection:** Which of your current daily actions most clearly reflect your values? Which ones feel most misaligned?

Chapter 3 CLARIFY WHAT YOU ACTUALLY WANT

There is an important difference between what you think you should want, what others expect you to want, and what you genuinely want. For many people, years of conditioning — from family, education, culture, and workplace — have made these three things almost indistinguishable.

Genuine want is grounded in your values. It is not what impresses people or satisfies external expectations. It is the vision of a life that, when you imagine it clearly, produces a feeling of rightness — a quiet internal 'yes'.

Purpose-driven planning research emphasises that goals connected to your genuine desires — rather than externally imposed benchmarks — generate stronger motivation, greater persistence, and more authentic fulfilment. The key is learning to distinguish the signal from the noise.

- **The 'If no one was watching' test:** What would you pursue if approval, money, and status were removed from the equation?

- **The 'Deathbed clarity' test:** What would matter most to you at the end of your life? Work backward from there.
- **The 'Energy test':** What activities consistently energise you, regardless of how difficult they are?

◆ **Reflection:** Write down three things you genuinely want for your life — not what you think you should want. What patterns do you notice?

Chapter 4 UNCOVER YOUR PERSONAL PURPOSE

Purpose is not a luxury reserved for philosophers and life coaches. It is a practical psychological anchor that shapes how you allocate your attention, energy, and time every single day.

McKnight and Kashdan (2009) describe purpose as 'a central, self-organising life aim' that provides the underlying structure and coherence that gives goals their lasting significance. In plain terms: goals tell you what to do, but purpose tells you why it matters.

Your purpose does not have to be grand or world-changing. It simply has to be genuinely yours. It is found at the intersection of what you do well, what you care deeply about, and what creates value for others.

The Japanese concept of Ikigai captures this beautifully — purpose emerges where passion, mission, vocation, and profession converge. You do not have to find all four at once. But you can begin to identify where they overlap.

- **What you love:** Activities and ideas that captivate your attention and energise your spirit.
- **What you're good at:** Skills and strengths that come naturally, often so naturally you underestimate them.
- **What the world needs:** Problems you feel called to address or contributions you are compelled to make.
- **What sustains you:** Work or activity you could imagine doing even if the external rewards were reduced.

◆ **Reflection:** Write one sentence that begins: 'My life is most meaningful when I am...' Don't overthink it — write the first honest answer that comes.

Chapter 5 UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU ARE NOW

Direction requires two coordinates: where you are going, and where you currently are. Most people have some sense of the former. Far fewer have an honest, clear picture of the latter.

The Motivation Ladder used in the 10BrilliantThings™ framework identifies three stages of personal and professional functioning: Survival — where decisions are driven by immediate pressure and fear; Success — where goals are pursued but often for external validation; and Fulfilment — where effort is aligned with purpose and values.

Understanding which rung you currently occupy is not about self-judgment. It is about honest orientation. A navigator who doesn't know their current position cannot plot a meaningful course — regardless of how good their map is.

- **Survival mode:** Reactive, stress-driven, focused on getting through each day.
- **Success mode:** Goal-oriented, results-focused, but often driven by external benchmarks.
- **Fulfilment mode:** Purpose-aligned, values-led, sustainable — growth that feels like growth.

Awareness of your current position is not discouraging — it is the most liberating piece of information you can have. It makes the next step clear.

◆ **Reflection:** Which stage feels most like your current reality? What would it take to move one rung higher on the ladder?

Chapter 6 DESIGN YOUR PERSONAL VISION

A personal vision is not a wish list. It is a structured, values-grounded picture of the life you are intentionally building — specific enough to guide decisions, broad enough to allow for growth and change.

Research on goal-setting consistently finds that vivid, emotionally resonant visions of a desired future are among the strongest motivational forces available to human beings. Psychologists found that people who set specific, ambitious goals aligned with their values performed significantly better — in many studies, outperforming 80% of their peers.

Your vision should address multiple dimensions: not just career, but relationships, health, contribution, learning, and the quality of your daily experience. A vision that only covers professional advancement often produces success that feels hollow.

- **Three-year vision:** What does your life look and feel like in three years if you follow your values and purpose fully?
- **Daily experience:** What does a deeply satisfying ordinary Tuesday look and feel like in that vision?

- **Contribution:** What are you contributing to others or to the world in this vision of your life?

◆ **Reflection:** Write a paragraph describing your life three years from now — in the present tense, as if you are already living it. Include how you feel, not just what you have.

Chapter 7 RECOGNISE AND REMOVE WHAT PULLS YOU OFF COURSE

Defining your direction is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing practice — because the forces that pull you off course are constant, subtle, and often disguised as urgency.

Distraction, comparison, other people's expectations, habitual commitments that no longer serve you, and the simple inertia of 'this is how I've always done it' — these are the forces that erode direction quietly, over time.

Living and working in alignment with your personal values significantly enhances wellbeing and increases resilience. The reverse is equally true: persistent misalignment — doing work that contradicts your values, living in ways that conflict with your purpose — is one of the primary drivers of burnout, disengagement, and the sense that something important is missing.

- **Values misalignment:** Work or relationships that consistently require you to act against your core values.
- **Approval dependency:** Making decisions based on what others expect rather than what you genuinely believe.
- **Urgency addiction:** Filling your days with reactive tasks that feel important but don't advance your direction.
- **Comparison drift:** Measuring your progress against others' paths rather than your own vision.

◆ **Reflection:** Name one thing currently pulling you away from your intended direction. What would it cost you to keep tolerating it?

Chapter 8 BUILD ALIGNMENT BETWEEN VALUES, VISION, AND DAILY ACTION

Values without action are wishes. Vision without daily alignment is fantasy. The real work of defining your direction happens in the gap between your stated intentions and your actual daily choices.

Values congruence — the degree to which your daily actions reflect your core values — is one of the most reliable predictors of sustained motivation and authentic satisfaction. Research in career development confirms that professionals whose daily work aligns with their personal values report significantly higher engagement, wellbeing, and sense of meaning.

Alignment is not achieved through a single grand gesture. It is built through small, consistent choices that gradually shape a life that matches the direction you have defined.

- **Daily alignment check:** At the end of each day, ask: 'Did today's choices move me toward or away from my direction?'
- **Weekly review:** Once a week, review your calendar. Does how you spend your time reflect what you say matters most?
- **The 'one next step' rule:** For every value or vision area, identify one concrete action you can take this week. Not a plan — an action.

◆ **Reflection:** Choose one of your core values. What is one specific action you could take tomorrow that would honour that value more fully?

Chapter 9 COMMUNICATE YOUR DIRECTION TO OTHERS

Your direction does not exist in isolation. It lives within relationships, teams, families, and communities. How clearly you communicate your values, vision, and boundaries directly affects how much support — or resistance — you experience as you pursue them.

Research on personal values and professional relationships confirms that individuals whose values align with their professional environment and the people around them experience greater collaboration, stronger trust, and more sustainable growth. Conversely, operating in environments persistently misaligned with your values drains energy and erodes direction over time.

Communicating your direction is not about demanding others adopt your vision. It is about being honest, specific, and consistent — so the people around you can support rather than inadvertently undermine the path you are building.

- **With your team or colleagues:** Share what matters to you and why — authenticity builds trust more reliably than authority.
- **With family or close relationships:** Name what you are working toward and what support would genuinely help.
- **With yourself:** Write your direction down. Externalising it makes it real — and revisable as you grow.

Clarity of direction, shared honestly, invites collaboration. Ambiguity invites interference.

◆ **Reflection:** Is there someone in your life who would support your direction more effectively if you communicated it more clearly? What would you say to them?

Chapter 10 COMMIT TO THE PRACTICE OF ONGOING CLARITY

Direction is not a destination you reach. It is a practice you maintain. Life changes — circumstances shift, values evolve, new opportunities emerge, and old priorities lose their relevance. What matters is not that your direction stays fixed, but that you remain honest, intentional, and engaged with the process of defining it.

The State of Values report (2025) found that values shift with life stage — young adults prioritise exploration and connection, mid-career professionals focus on achievement and meaning, and later life brings renewed emphasis on health, contribution, and legacy. Your direction will evolve. That is not failure. That is growth.

The commitment is not to a particular direction in perpetuity. It is to the practice of living intentionally — regularly returning to your values, revisiting your vision, and ensuring that your daily choices remain in honest alignment with the life you are choosing to build.

- **Monthly direction review:** Set aside 30 minutes each month to ask: 'Is my current direction still true to my values?'
- **Annual values audit:** Once a year, revisit your core values list. Have any shifted in importance? What does that tell you?
- **Course corrections are not failures:** Adjusting your direction when circumstances or values evolve is wisdom — not weakness.

◆ **Reflection:** Commit to one practice from this chapter. Write it down as a specific, time-bound action you will take in the next seven days.

Conclusion

Direction is not found. It is built — one honest question, one values-aligned decision, and one intentional day at a time.

The ten chapters in this guide are not steps to complete and set aside. They are practices to return to, tools to apply repeatedly as your life evolves and your understanding of yourself deepens. Clarity is not a destination. It is a discipline.

What separates people who live with purpose and direction from those who drift is not talent, luck, or favourable circumstances. It is the willingness to do the inner work — to ask hard questions honestly, to align daily actions with genuine values, and to keep returning to the compass even when circumstances pull them off course.

"You're not stuck. You're simply under-structured." — Coach Andre Fredericks

The structure is now in your hands. Use it. Revisit it. Share it with someone who needs it.

And if you would like to go deeper — through coaching, courses, or community — Coach Andre and the 10BrilliantThings™ platform are here to walk alongside you.

10BrilliantThings.com · Clarity. Autonomy. Teamwork.

Citations & References

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