

Burn Your Bucket List



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Ever since Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman made that movie a few years ago, everybody is making lists of things they want to do before they die. Sometimes these lists are long and extravagant. The creation of a bucket list can be a constructive gesture of freedom and self determination when you are feeling stifled and unfulfilled, and it may even result in the accomplishment of one or two of its entries. But my clients routinely demonstrate that bucket lists have a way

of morphing into to-do lists over time, at which point they are likely to generate anxiety and frustration rather than exhilaration and fulfillment. In these cases the question becomes “*How can I ever hope (or afford) to accomplish all the things I have defined as essential to my fulfillment?*”

It is time to scrap the bucket list in favor of a more subtle metaphor, one that celebrates the inexhaustible range of possibilities in the world as well as the fluid nature of our own preferences and taste. I propose *The Funnel of Life*, for which you should imagine the sort of contraption that dispenses food pellets to your hamster when he chooses to dine. Harry the Hamster assumes there is an inexhaustible food supply and he takes it for granted that the next pellet out of the chute will be just as tasty as those still buried in the hopper above. He does not ask for any particular pellet and he does not worry about getting through them all; he simply asks “*What next?*” Harry is serene and happy. Be like Harry. Trust me. Call me.

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