

# Conscious Creation: Module 5

## Step Three: Visioning

*Within our core self is an indelible blueprint of unrivaled individuality—the singular being that each of us exists to express. In this three-dimensional movie called “Life” there are no stand-ins, body doubles, or understudies—no one can fill in for us by proxy! Realization of this truth alone eliminates the need to imitate, conform, limit, or betray our loyalty to the originality of self. Imagine the relief of removing your carefully crafted masks fashioned by societal forms of conditioning and instead responding to what comes into your experience directly from your Authentic Self. One of the first principles to honor in your relationship with yourself is to respect and trust your own inner voice. This form of trust is the way of the heart, the epitome of well-being.*

— Michael Bernard Beckwith, *Life Visioning*

As we have previously explored, many of us are familiar with visualization. Maybe you’ve made vision boards or learned to embrace a thought in order to create something in the external realm. Whether we call it visualization or the power of positive thinking or changing reality by changing your thoughts, this process by which thought is transmuted into external reality is powerful for many people, and it’s been a valuable part of my spiritual journey, too. What I’m hoping for you in this third step of Conscious Creation is an even deeper, more powerful visioning, one that comes from a profound inner knowing and allows you to consciously create the life of your dreams.

Steps 1 and 2, Making Peace with the Past and Overcoming Core False Beliefs, reveal the core truth that lies beneath your conscious thoughts or intentions and even deeper than your unconscious biases and perspectives. These clearing steps open you up to your oneness with source, which is more profound than anything having to do with you as a singular, isolated ego. In that oneness you experience and appreciate the truth of who and what you are as a whole and perfect being.

This connection is your ultimate vision, a deeply spiritual experience that can resonate throughout the rest of your life. This foundational vision is not just an ethereal mountaintop experience; your oneness with source can open you up to the life of your dreams, to the ever-present opportunity to consciously create your life, to bring your deepest, most personal vision to life.

This is how visioning is different from visualization. In visioning you're centered not on a thought or desire, but on your primary vision, which is your oneness with source. Your ego desires, biases, and fears have moved out of the way. This visioning is based on your ultimate vision, your most fundamental purpose, which is to connect with the truth of who and what we all are as whole and perfect and one with source. To the extent that you can remain grounded in and live out of that oneness, that central vision, your more specific, personal visioning will be all the more powerful. What you end up receiving will be more perfect than anything you could have thought of on your own. Anything is possible.

### **What Is Visioning?**

Visioning, the third step in our five-step process, is a deeply intuitive process that comes from a profound inner wisdom. As Dr. Michael Beckwith explains in his course *Life Visioning*: “In catching a vision we aren't looking outside ourselves—asking other people what we should do or telling the universe what we want to do. In visioning we're uncovering or discovering something that's already there. Visioning is a process of receiving, of listening patiently for something that we couldn't come to on our own, and then leaning into that vision more and more fully.”

The difference between visualization and visioning is significant. Because it's centered in the mind, visualization can't help but be limited to what the mind can produce, consciously or unconsciously. Naturally, that tends to also be somewhat self-serving. In contrast, visioning opens us up to what lies beyond our powers of visualization. In her book *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron crystallizes the distinction as one between “thinking something up” and “getting something down.” “If we are trying to think something up, we are straining to reach for something that's just beyond our grasp. . . . When we get something down, there is no strain. We're not doing; we're getting. Someone or something else is doing the doing. Instead of reaching for inventions, we are engaged in listening to our inner wisdom, our essential nature.”<sup>1</sup> The way I would phrase this concept is that in visioning, we are actually “pulling something up” rather than “getting something down.”

Of course, there's nothing fundamentally problematic with using the intellect. Visualization can be valuable when we need to focus on action steps or when we're moving from Martyr Consciousness to a greater awareness of our own will and spiritual power. But at some point we run up against the limits of visualization and we are ready for something more. If we

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2002), 117.

haven't done the work of inner clearing, what we visualize will end up being just a rearrangement of the same old movie. Our vision of what's best for us will be prejudged and predesigned by the past we haven't made peace with and by our core false beliefs, the deeply held sense that we are unworthy or unlovable. Our unconscious will still create a story in which our partner won't love us, in which we fail in business, in which nothing we do will satisfy, and so on.

The difference between visualization and visioning is partly about process: with visualization we are imagining and thinking, and with visioning we are connecting and listening. But there's more to the difference than this. The visioning process depends on and interacts with the work of inner clearing. If we skip this work of making peace with the past and overcoming core false beliefs, then those beliefs—those limited and limiting “agreements made with mediocrity”—will run the visioning.

The deeper you've gone with Steps 1 and 2, the deeper your experience in Step 3 will be. If you still believe on an unconscious level that you're not lovable, for instance, then even your vision of love will be shaped and constrained by that belief. In visioning we're actually moving beyond the idea that our thoughts create our reality. This doesn't mean that ideas aren't useful—it means that we're suspending them momentarily in order to tap into something deeper. Visioning involves a commitment to authentic, conscious listening, to moving from the ideas about what we want in life to something that comes out of our oneness with source and with our essential self. It involves a willingness to listen to that inner voice, the one we may have ignored in seeking what we think we want.

In visioning we experience less limitation, more curiosity, and more pleasant surprises. Visions from this process tend to be bigger than those that result from visualization—they tend to attract more love and more connection, and interestingly, they also tend to serve more people. Somehow in visualization it can often be all about ourselves. We manifest things that will make our life, our love, our family better.

The paradox is that when we tap into visioning, the vision is bigger, more people get served, and we ourselves feel more fulfilled, more loved, more loving, and more connected. The purpose that's revealed is deeper, more fulfilling, and more permanent than any visualization coming from our own mind. Also, when we catch a vision from this deep well-spring of inner wisdom, we find that we already have everything we need to fulfill the vision. We discover we have more than enough energy, vitality, and confidence to embrace and express our unique vision into our lives and into the world.

### **Five Keys for Step 3**

Inspired by Dr. Beckwith's wisdom about this process, I've broken it down into five interwoven keys: (1) sitting in the silence, (2) asking questions, (3) listening consciously, (4) trusting the vision, and (5) moving into love.

As you begin this process, keep in mind that the visioning process takes practice and cultivation. I invite you to practice patience. Just as it takes time to learn a new language, so it takes time to learn a new way of seeing and hearing.

#### **Key 1: Sitting in the Silence**

Stage 1 of the visioning process is simple: be in the silence. Here you allow your body and mind to relax, moving beyond distracting thoughts and feelings so that you can tap into your essential self, into the primary experience of your oneness with source. This connection is love. Not romantic love or even platonic love. Dr. Beckwith says, "This unconditional divine love is the givingness of spirit present within every atom of creation. Having chosen human beings to be vehicles of this love indicates how spirit loves and respects us. We are so loved and trusted that we have been given the capacity to freely cocreate our individual life with source."<sup>2</sup>

By sitting in the silence you are preparing yourself to experience your oneness with divine, unconditional love, and this oneness prepares you to form the questions and receive answers. Remember, the answer will not come from your conscious mind; it will be a revelation, an original idea. So by meditating, by sitting in the silence, you are preparing your ears to hear. You are saying, "Yes, I am ready." How do you do this? First, you cultivate a safe space for meditation. It can be done alone or with others—so long as it is in a space where you are physically, emotionally, and spiritually receptive. It helps if you have been practicing meditation for some time before you begin the visioning process. The longer a space is filled with the energy of meditation, the more powerful your sense of receptivity and oneness with source will be.

In this safe and calm space, prepare to sit for a while—at least fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. Focus on your breath to calm your body and move beyond your thoughts. As you breathe, turn your focus to your heart center. Let your breath soften your heart and ground you in divine love. Sit in silence and let the love wash over you, through you, and *as you for*

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Bernard Beckwith, *Life Visioning: A Transformative Process for Activating Your Unique Gifts and Highest Potential* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2012), 142.

as long as you like. There's no predicting progress with visioning. During your first session you may not feel much oneness with source. I encourage you to not give up. Don't rush to the next stage. Simply commit to the process, saying, "I will come back and try again." Then choose another time to return to it.

If after several tries you feel that something is blocking you, dip again into Steps 1 and/or 2. Return to your work on making peace with the past and overcoming core false beliefs. Do some more of that inner work. Then come back, sit in the silence, and wait for the experience of oneness. Remember, there is no end to the depth of oneness we can feel with source. It's an ever-unfolding process. Wherever you are, whatever your stage of conscious awareness, oneness with source is always there for you. When you feel ready, whether it's after five minutes or five days, move into the second part of the visioning process, asking questions.

## **Key 2: Asking Questions**

In this stage you allow each question to emanate from a place of centered consciousness, a place of being whole and perfect and grounded in divine love. Because the question comes from this place, it will be different from questions you work with in visualization. The words may be the same, but your perspective in asking will be quite different.

Again, Dr. Beckwith puts it perfectly: "Posing questions to Universal Intelligence bends your knee before its omniscience and omnipresence, its Love-Beauty. [Posing questions] is an expression of humility, a declaration that you realize there is a difference between your plans for yourself and the spiritual ideation of what is your true calling and the highest vision for your life. . . . What we 'should' be pumped into us from outside sources. What we are meant to be is already living at our center and is what we are seeking to discover through the Visioning Process."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Beckwith suggests five questions:

(1) What is spirit's highest idea or vision for [my life, this relationship, this organization]? Remember, visioning can be done for any area of life—your occupation, a relationship, your health. Start with the thing that seems most relevant, and you may be surprised by what else emerges.

(2) What must I become in order to empower this vision?

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<sup>3</sup> Beckwith, *Life Visioning*, p. 154.

(3) What must I release? Here you are asking about what no longer serves you—things, relationships, patterns, or concepts that are limited and limiting, and are barriers to the vision.

(4) What must I embrace? From a place of deep oneness with source, this question is about whatever is yours to embrace, receive, or accept in order to begin to make your vision come alive.

(5) What are my unique skills, gifts, and talents that will help me fulfill this vision?

As the questions form, return to your heart center as often as you need to, diving again into your oneness with source with the reassurance that you are wholly and unconditionally loved. As you move back and forth between sitting in the silence and asking questions, start shifting your awareness to the next visioning activity, listening.

### **Key 3: Listening Consciously**

The third stage in the visioning process is listening for the answer. This is deep listening, which is a profound practice. It's a listening that is comfortable with silence; it doesn't rush to fill the empty space but waits reverently until the silence is augmented by the answer. Because the answer is unpredictable and not from the conscious mind, you can't put a timer on it. You can't force it. You can simply wait, with actively open ears and eyes. (Of course you may close your physical eyes, but keep your inner eyes open and aware.)

Again, I invite you to be patient. Trust that silence, questioning, and listening will reveal answers. The answers might come in words, or they may come in colors or images, even musical phrases. They might come later in the day, in the middle of your shower, or while you are dreaming three weeks from now. They might not make sense at first. They might even scare the living daylights out of you. But if you continue to trust that your inner wisdom has a bigger vision than your conscious mind, your resistance will fade and the answers will become more well-defined and more resounding.

Feel free to take notes, draw pictures, use whatever form you like to record what you see and hear. For now, do not add to what you are receiving. You're like a scribe, receiving dictation. If nothing at all comes—again, be patient. Keep seeking. Do not force it. Return regularly to sitting in the silence and offering your questions from a place of oneness with source. Learning these skills and developing these practices will take however long it takes. See if you can let go of any expectations about how long it should take. Your process is unique to

you. Move from question to question according to your intuition, not your watch or calendar. Move to the next question when you feel ready to say yes to the answer you've received. The next session may bring deeper answers or more resounding encouragements. Ask a question. Listen. Ask another question. Wait patiently, and listen some more.

You can do this alone, or you can do it with others. That's where spiritual community can come in. I've found that visioning with like-minded and like-hearted people can be more powerful than visioning on my own. There's something powerful about the collective, where people hold an intention together. When we come together with a focused intention of listening deeply to inner wisdom, something powerfully influential happens because the vibration gets magnified. Try it and see what happens. For a more in-depth and detailed description of the visioning process, I highly recommend that you read Michael Beckwith's book, *Life Visioning: A Transformative Process for Activating Your Unique Gifts*.

#### **Key 4: Trusting the Vision**

It takes courage to listen to an inner voice that is likely to surprise us. It takes trust to listen to something beyond our own ideas and feelings about what we need and want. Visioning is bigger and deeper and more powerful than visualization. It's a force of nature. That's really what we are entrusting ourselves to in this process—a law of nature. Part of what we're trusting is that visioning works, that it's genuine. At first you may have to take the word of people who have experienced it before you, but if you look back later, you'll be able to see the process at work in your own life as well. It's a spiritual law, just as real as the law of gravity. The more you listen, the more you hear; the more confident you become, the more you will trust what you receive. The more you let go of conscious desire and listen to what comes to you out of grounded oneness with source, the less resistance you will feel, and the more perfectly your divinely originated vision will align with your thoughts and feelings.

Repetition creates expansion. In visioning, we are practicing receptivity and nonresistance. We become open and more available to what is beyond our ability to visualize, and we become more flexible and fluid in moving through the stages of sitting in the silence, asking questions, and listening. As you practice visioning, you might find that your core false beliefs are activated less often, and they may even fall away entirely. No matter how often you tell yourself this, part of you might still expect an answer that echoes what you've learned from your old programming. Use your meditation practice as a way to witness this sort of projection or expectation. Focus your inner ear not on the expected sound but on the power of silence.

Sasha, for example, entered the visioning process with an unconscious expectation. Her conscious mind was expecting a vision about work because it had been so difficult lately. But her parents had been asking about dating and whether she wanted children, and she was feeling pressure from her biological clock. Romantic love was one area in which she had not yet succeeded. As she described it to me later, when she first entered the stillness of the visioning process, which happened in the context of her regular meditation group, she found herself conjuring images of weddings and baby clothes.

Surprised, she wondered if this was a true vision. But as the meditation led her deeper into body and breath awareness, those images faded. All was silence, a deep purple screen. Sasha focused there and let herself feel a profound allowance. She let herself relish what she later described as a state of open freedom—just being and being loved, even as she wasn't accomplishing anything. She had never felt this way before, and it was just what she had been longing for. A profound sense of belonging, no matter what. You might be surprised to hear that Sasha was able to sit in the silence so quickly given the strength of her ego. But her will was strong too, and once she started along the five steps, she committed wholeheartedly. Once she identified and started to overcome her core false belief about being unworthy, things began to shift quickly.

This brings us to another element of visioning that requires trust: timing. We learn to trust the *when* as well as the *what* of our vision. I once held a vision for my life for about two years before it started manifesting in the external realm. Once it did, things moved rapidly and doors opened one after the other. But those were two long years, and if I had not been nurturing my vision through spiritual discipline, I could have easily given up. As you sit, ask, listen, and receive, you may be tempted to jump up straight away and do something concrete.

You may feel the urge to get to work on your vision as soon as you get the tiniest glimpse of it. You may get impatient with the silence, with the waiting, with the listening. That's understandable, but in my experience, this pivot point of impatience is when your spiritual practice can come to fruition—in awareness, in nonjudgment, in nonresistance, which in turn will give you more patience, more trust, and more receptivity. It all flows easily and gracefully the more you practice it. Part of what you're learning in visioning is the ability to align with the timing of your particular vision, to know and feel when it's time to add intention to the process. For a time, no action is required. Simply sitting with and contemplating the vision is a powerful part of the process.



## **Key 5: Moving into Love**

As you practice sitting in the silence, asking questions, and listening, you may find yourself moving into and experiencing an ever-deeper sense of feeling love and being love. You may find yourself more able to rest in the truth that has always been there—that you are whole and perfect and one with the divine. From this place, there is no longer any real distinction between you and the world around you. Neither is there any separation between you and source. From this place you come to understand—both intellectually and experientially—that all is one. From this place, you are the eyes, ears, hands, and feet of divine love.

As previously stated, at the Mystical level of awareness your primary identity is with spirit. You understand that everything that occurs is a perfect expression of source energy. You know that whatever anyone else says or does—it too is a perfect expression of the divine. It is spirit in action. From this place of oneness, there is no longer any distinction between right and wrong or good and bad. There is no such thing as an enemy. Any perceived enemy is simply showing you the possibility of deeper healing. There is only the continuously unfolding, moment-to-moment expression of life, which arises from one source. There is just what is, and all of it is sacred.

At first this experience of Mystical Consciousness might seem to contradict the visioning process. If there is nothing to do, then why search for a deeper purpose? If there is no distinction, if all is one, then how can there be an individualized plan for me? In my experience, it is paradoxical. It is true, at this level of awareness, there is no power “out there” with a specific predestined plan for your life, but there is a spiritual blueprint deep within you that will guide you to a life filled with more purpose and meaning.

As I described in Step 2, Travis was able to let go of his attachment to the tragic story of his love life, where he, as the villain, kept doing things to drive away the “perfect” love. He was able to enter into the visioning process with an open heart. When Travis uncovered the emotional burden he had been unconsciously carrying since childhood, he began to experience unconditional love for the first time. It wasn’t human love; it was a deeper, purer love that came from within as he overcame his core false belief in his own unlovableness. When he first sat in the silence, it was already a safe, loving place, and he was familiar with the concept of living in the question. Listening in the silence was a skill he’d already been honing in Steps 1 and 2, and he was visibly excited at the thought of what he would discover. He had prepared so well for Step 3 that he imagined it would come easily. And what happened next was beautiful. But first it was challenging. Really challenging.

Maybe because of the intensity of his early traumas, Travis's visioning process included dramatic reappearances of the "I'm not lovable" script. In meditation, a vision of a loving partner would arise, along with a deep feeling of sadness. "I don't deserve someone like that," he'd say. As a result, Travis needed to return to Steps 1 and 2 to uncover more of what lay in the shadow so that once he started catching visions for his life, he would feel worthy of stepping into them. He came to realize that deep down, he was expecting his vision to bring him a perfect partner. He recognized that although he thought he was truly open to spirit, he was bringing an expectation to the process that was based on the old script of failed love. Because this work only grounded him more in his oneness with source, because it left him all the more enveloped in divine love, Travis was able to navigate what might seem like bumps in the road, or outright barriers, with grace, strength, and gratitude.

One day, in deep meditation, Travis saw a newly opened vista, clear for as far as his inner eye could see. He sat with this every day for several weeks. Then, just as suddenly, he caught a simple image in the emptiness: the same child he had seen earlier, but transformed. This young boy had the glow of someone truly and fully loved; his smile was the heartrending smile of pure happiness. Travis returned again and again to visioning in silence and listening, and each time, he saw this same beloved boy.

Remember, your primary vision is just that: a delving into the mystical unity of all things. That vision is a basic prerequisite, the raw substance for your visioning process. The more in touch you are with divine love for you personally, the easier it will be for you to let go of expectations and attachments and to sidestep old thought patterns as they come up. And the more you operate from a place of nonresistance or nonattachment, the more receptive you will be to your vision, including its timing and requirements.

Travis sat with the experience of divine love long enough to believe it, to feel it in his bones, his gut, and his heart. Out of that feeling of perfect allowance stepped the child of his vision. Eventually he knew, just as deeply, that his vision would involve working with children. Sasha's vision is also tied to her experience of the primary vision. She tried to get into Steps 4 and even 5 with what she thought was her vision—developing wellness programs for lawyers. But she soon realized that this vision came mostly from her ego, from her mind wanting a project at which to excel. And she dedicated herself again to sitting in the silence.

Once again, Dr. Beckwith: "When it comes to visioning, nonattachment allows us to be fully open and receptive to what is revealed. If our visioning reveals that more sessions are required to fully download intuitive guidance, we are grateful for such an insight and remain trustingly patient. If we are guided to see that we must first cultivate or release certain qualities in order to fully live our vision, we find within us the surrender, willingness, and commitment to do so. If we have a potent visioning session, we are thankful without getting

all caught up in having ‘done it right.’ We are nonattached to the results and simply grateful for all that has been revealed.”<sup>4</sup>

Visioning is an openness to divine inspiration that is sourced from divine love. It reveals a vision of the future that can feel both gut-punch unexpected and why-didn’t-I-see-it-before obvious. Catching your vision can seem like the end of this process of conscious awareness, and at the same time, it’s only the beginning of the life of your dreams.

### **Support for Your Vision**

Some years ago, I was in a workshop led by Diane Conway, author of the book *What Would You Do If You Had No Fear?* We were going around the room sharing our answers to the question that is also the title of her powerful book. When my turn came, I stood up and shared my vision for the first time. Voice shaking, I described how I was going to be involved in spiritual work, I was going to become a spiritual teacher, and I would write books and speak about spirituality. Suddenly, it was all more real.

An important step in bringing your vision to life can be sharing it with people you trust, after you’ve sat with it in silence for however long the visioning requires. This does not mean sharing it with everyone, which can be a temptation when we’re on fire with our vision. If you share your vision while it’s still undeveloped with people who might not understand it, the responses you get might be enough to destroy it.

Your vision is like a sapling: If it sprouts too quickly the sun will burn it up. To withstand the elements, it needs to gather enough strength before it breaks through the soil. And for that it needs fertile soil, water, and time. Likewise, your vision needs time. It needs nurturing in the silence. It needs to be fertilized by your fundamental oneness with source. Too much sunlight too soon can cause it to wither. (So can being buried for too long.)

One great example of this happened in my life. Some years back, while visioning, I received the message to collaborate with Marianne Williamson in some way. I had always respected her work, and it felt like a perfect alignment. At the time, I was the senior minister of Awakened Living, my spiritual community in San Francisco. Soon after “catching the vision” I went to an event where Marianne was speaking. I approached her and asked if she would be willing to participate in an event sponsored by our community. She expressed interest. I went to the next board meeting, excited about the possibility of fulfilling my vision of partnering with Marianne on the event. To my surprise, a few of the board members stated:

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<sup>4</sup> Beckwith, *Life Visioning*, p. 149.

“That’s awfully ambitious.” “Are you sure about this?” “That seems too big!” They were unable to hold this larger vision, and ultimately, the event didn’t come to fruition. However, I continued to hold that vision, and eventually, it manifested. I have had the opportunity of partnering with Marianne in multiple ways over the past few years, and I am extremely grateful for our connection. Even more than that, I am immensely grateful for trusting the creative power of visioning.

Sharing your vision at the appropriate time with carefully chosen people allows you to work on an important step in the creation process, which is articulating your vision and describing it to other people, as well as to yourself. Talking about your vision will bring to light more details about it, more things to consider, more ingredients, more factors, more ramifications. As you give voice to your vision and own it with selective people, it will gradually become more and more genuine, and then you’ll be ready to start bringing it to life. You’ll be ready for Step 4.