

2,333,000 Minutes

I picked up the small, red book, intrigued by the cover design, and noted the title in miniscule font: *Where Will You Be Five Years From Today?* You know those moments. You are suddenly in your own private universe, time freezes, and you are totally alone with just your thoughts for company.

Before I even opened the book, I was imagining where my choices might take me in the 2,333,000 minutes that make up five years. The creators of this itty-bitty tome reminded me that in just under five years Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel and Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and five other plays. Yikes. I had better hop to it. (Why is it that being reminded of how productive others are never increases your own productivity?)

*Lead your
life, don't
just live it.*

*You are the driver
and you know
the destination.*

All around me every day, I see the amazing array of choices women have and what they make possible with those choices. Just this past month I have talked with a woman who took a yearlong sabbatical to travel to nearly every continent, a woman who created a documentary of her life with her parents and is using it to foster multigenerational conversations, a woman approaching her 60th birthday who was planning a move across the country to a town where she knew no one, and one who is discovering herself by saying “yes” to every experience New York City offers to 20-somethings. These women are not just living their lives, they are *leading* their lives. They are making choices that take them in interesting directions, expose them to new ways of thinking, and challenge them in all the best meanings of that word.



How did they come to believe they had permission to make such choices? Did they have affirming parents? Did they go to a girls' boarding school that told them they could do anything they set their minds to? Did they have a supportive spouse who urged them to live life with verve? Or is the recipe really much easier than that? I think it is the last. In fact, I think any of us could use the 2,333,000 minutes brilliantly if we did one small thing: set goals.

Don't get grumpy on me now. Think about it. When was the last time you had a laser-like focus on a goal you committed to paper or shared publicly? Can you remember a goal that was so clear you could paint a picture of it? If you have such a memory, then you are one of the lucky ones who know exactly why goal setting works: you invest all your considerable energy in designing strategies to attain what you desire. You *lead* your life. You are the driver and you know the destination; you refuse to be distracted.

My itty-bitty red book had another great quotation from H. Jackson Brown, Jr.: “Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Louis Pasteur, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.” And we all know what they did with the hours allotted them. So where will you be five years from today? What will be better, different, new, interesting, or marvelous because you set one small goal, and then another, and then another? Don't you owe it to yourself to *lead* your life? The five-year clock is ticking even as you read this. **e**