

SUMMARY

THE DESIRE MAP

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Summary of The Desire Map by Danielle LaPorte

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The Desire Map (2014) invites you to channel the power of your passion into the development of a positive future.

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Introduction

Everybody wants something. Actually, we want a lot of things. Whether it's an extra piece of chocolate cake or a promotion or the freedom to sleep with your neighbor's husband, we all have desires that are both good and bad. And because the human brain typically prioritizes instant gratification, we tend to go after those desires, even if we know they have the power to generate catastrophic consequences. Because of this, we often label our deepest longings "guilty pleasures" and stigmatize ourselves for pursuing things we want. But personal development doesn't mean you should bury your desires; in fact, wanting things is healthy! We just need to learn a little more about wanting the right things and how to harness the power of our desires into creating positive choices. So, in this summary, you'll learn:

- Why unrequited crushes can actually be positive
- Why feelings exist on a separate plane of truth from facts
- Why you should pay attention to people with big noses

Desire Makes The World Go Around

The word “desire” is most commonly used to characterize a sexual impulse. It’s also frequently implied to have bad connotations, as though it’s predicated on wanting something we shouldn’t have. But desire is actually so much more than a base animalistic response. So, let’s take a look at what desire really is and how it functions in our lives. For starters, desire can best be defined as the power of wanting. And if we characterize it as a state of simply wanting something, we can understand that desire is also what motivates us to create, to dream, to set goals and go after them. After all, if we didn’t want something, we wouldn’t make an effort to go after it!

So, when we think about desire’s power to make us act on our feelings and get creative about achieving our goals, we can see that it’s actually a very healthy and beneficial thing to feel! And that’s exactly why LaPorte posits that unrequited crushes can even be healthy. Because we can all think back to a notable crush we had in high-school. Even if we knew we had no chance with that person, we all spent hours daydreaming about them liking us back and about what we could do to get their attention. Our brains worked overtime in coming up with creative solutions to make them notice us, throwing up every possibility from leaving notes in their locker to sending them flowers from a secret admirer to subtle ways we could work our feelings into a conversation.

And although our high-school selves probably didn’t realize it, we were engaging with a force that drives us to evolve as a person. Without being conscious of the personal development taking place, we were strengthening our emotional intelligence, our powers of creativity, our mental acuity and our self-awareness all at once! That’s why desire is a healthy emotion in our lives. Because if we stopped wanting anything, we would simply shut down and cease to exist! Without wanting to get to know someone new, we have no motivation for conversation, friendships, or an exchange of ideas. Similarly, our desires for love, companionship, personal fulfillment, food,

and sex keep us pursuing things on a daily basis. If we didn't want any of these things, we'd never get out of bed!

Follow Your Feelings

If you've ever been told to listen with your head, not your heart, you're not alone; pretty much everybody believes that logic is the best way to make decisions. That's because feelings, which are personal and subjective, are often considered to be misleading while facts are supposed to be solid and impartial. But even though facts are universal truths, that doesn't dismiss the validity of your subjective feelings. Your feelings are definitely true too--the difference is just that they're true to you, instead of to everyone else! Opinions are a great example of that, because if you've ever described somebody as annoying, you're not stating an objective fact, but you are sharing something that's true to you: you personally find that individual annoying.

The same is true of more intense feelings like sadness. Experiencing a deep and personal loss can trigger a flood of feelings that seem too real to handle; we might feel awash in our sadness or unable to focus on anything else. These feelings can often be so powerful that they diminish our ability to be productive or successful in any other areas of our lives. That's why it's highly unlikely that your boss will ever tell you to "follow your heart"--because if you've just gone through a devastating breakup, your heart will tell you to lay in bed and cry. And although that's a very valid grieving process, the advice to listen to our heads often sounds like a mandate to ignore our feelings and that isn't healthy.

So, remember that no matter what well-intentioned advice you receive, your feelings shouldn't be discounted or suppressed. Although you shouldn't be ruled by them or allow them to take control of your life, you deserve a safe space where you can sort through the feelings that are important to you. And that's especially important when it comes to understanding your relationship with desire. Because whether you're searching for a cause you believe in, a community you belong in, or the freedom to create, we all have core desires that characterize our lives. These feelings make us who we are and they drive us towards the careers we

pursue, the relationships we invest in, and the big life decisions we make. So, acknowledge the fact that your desires are signposts which are meant to guide you and choose the pursuit of fulfilment over money or approval.

Free Your Desire From the Pressure of Others

If you now find yourself doing some critical thinking about what your core desires are, good for you! This process can help you identify the difference between the desires that are truly yours and those which are imposed on you by others. Because chances are, as you start reflecting on your goals and wants, you might catch yourself comparing them with the choices that align with your social group. And if you notice that the goals which are most personal to you don't match up with your friends', you're not alone; many of us make choices based on what others want for us or what we think will win others' approval. It's one of the most common human mistakes and that's why it's vital that we remember that's exactly what it is: a mistake.

So, if your introspection reveals that you're trying to get married by a certain age or have children by a certain age or earn a certain amount of money, ask yourself if these are your goals or if they've been impressed upon you by your mother-in-law, your friends, or your desire to compete with that successful guy you went to college with. And if you find that you don't really want things for yourself, take a minute and ask yourself why you're bothering with them. As corny as it sounds, you do only have one life; the desires you pursue during your time on earth should belong exclusively to you. Once you cement that understanding in your mind, you'll find that you're free to start making better choices. You'll be able to distinguish between the desires that are closest to your heart and you'll be more motivated to pursue them. You might also be able to see that if what you want most is to feel like you're making a difference in the lives of others, a career on Wall Street might not bring you the most fulfillment. But volunteering at a homeless shelter will!

However, it's also important to keep in mind that sometimes, critical thought alone isn't enough to bring your self-awareness to where it should be. Because we're all formed by our experiences, chance encounters can sometimes unlock opportunities you might never have noticed otherwise, so pay attention to them! For example, if what you really want is a deep and

stimulating romantic connection, don't brush off a potential partner who makes you feel that way just because they don't fit into the overall aesthetic of your life plan. Because if that person is healthy for you and makes you feel what you wanted to feel, you shouldn't dismiss them based on a lack of college education or the fact that they have a big nose. Being open minded can help you to embrace your desires and treasure new experiences.

You Shouldn't Dread Your Goals

You probably know this already, but we could all use a little reminder. So, let's say it a little louder for the people in the back: if you dread working on your goals, you have the wrong goals. The author learned this firsthand because she used to set strict goals for herself. Whether it was publishing a book by a certain date or earning a certain amount of money in a year, she set these goals and worked hard to attain them. But instead of feeling satisfied with her progress, she found that the rigidity of these goals just made her stressed and nervous. And although part of that is normal-- setting goals can always feel a little intimidating-- working towards our goals should also bring us happiness and fulfilment as well.

So, take a look at your goals and ask yourself if any of your goals fill you with dread. If you feel a sense of crippling pressure instead of excitement, if you're giving yourself panic attacks from all the pressure, accept that these are not the right goals for you. Although that acceptance might require altering both your present and your future plans in some way, it's important not to let that make you sad. Instead, take this as an opportunity to create new goals that really capture your true desires. The author learned how to put that into practice for her own life by transitioning her goals from hard deadlines to creating awareness about her work among groups that were important to her. She then used that renewed sense of energy and purpose to concentrate on making her work as inspirational as possible. And you can do the same!

In fact, once you launch the process of setting satisfying goals, you may find that you've unlocked a creative spark that will leave you hungry for even more goals! You can now push yourself to grow and achieve things that never felt possible before and you can take inspiration from the success of completing that first meaningful goal. For example, if you publish your first poem, you might be inspired to enter a new piece in a competition. If you win runner-up in that competition, you might be motivated to start your own publication and give other writers the same chance. Our desires evolve

through experiences like this, so listen to your longings and generate new goals that will help you grow.

However, as you do so, it's also important to remember that setting fulfilling goals should be fulfilling across the board. Your pursuit of these goals shouldn't make you feel like you have to sacrifice other things that matter to you. You shouldn't feel torn between your goals and the relationships that matter to you or other aspects of your life that bring you happiness and peace. Likewise, you should never feel the need to put other people down in an attempt to reach your own goals. If anything, you'll find that you feel happier and more successful when you're helping others grow alongside you!

So, if you find yourself feeling torn or as though you're in a competition, it's time to re-evaluate your goals.

Make Peace With Your Weakness

What's your biggest, craziest dream? Do you want to open your own bakery? Write the next best selling novel? There's no reason you can't do those things-- but chances are, a critical little voice in your head stopped you. And that's why it's important to remember that looking at an unfinished draft and telling yourself you can't write is like looking at your uncooked cake mix and saying, "This cake tastes awful!" Neither of those things are realistic because in each case, your project isn't finished and it definitely isn't bad; you're simply engaging in negative self-talk that keeps you from growing.

So, start by ignoring that negative voice in your head and making peace with the goals you want to achieve. No matter how big or small they are, your goals are still valid and they're still worth pursuing if they bring you happiness. If you aspire to be the next Picasso, go for it. If you want to learn to sew your own clothes at home, take a shot! Making fun of your own goals is an exercise in pointless invalidation and this attitude has no place on your journey to grow and realize your desires. So, begin by being accepting of your own goals and make a conscious effort to expand that understanding to the goals cherished by your family and friends. If you're trying to be kinder to yourself, that same kindness should apply to them in the form of filtering out negative words and replacing them with affirmations.

However, practicing positive self-talk doesn't mean accepting everything at face value. Because sometimes, your goals are going to be at odds with each other. Sometimes, it's fully possible for your deepest desire to be living alone in a cozy cabin in the middle of the woods... even if you're also a mother of six who has a chaotic family life. So, in this case, fulfilling your desires doesn't mean that you should abandon your family and go live in the woods (even if that might sound really great on some days). Rather, this is an opportunity for you to make a choice and sometimes that choice might be accepting that your cherished goals aren't a good fit for you. So, when

you practice the self-awareness to let that desire go, you open the door for new and better desires to take its place.

Instead of living alone in the woods, for example, your new goal might be to make more time for self-care throughout the year and prioritize personal getaways that allow you to connect with nature. This can open up new possibilities for growth and fulfilment that you never imagined, so be open-minded enough to let those opportunities come into your life. You should also be prepared to address the limitations that affect the pursuit of your desires. Because we don't all have unlimited resources and none of us are invincible, it might be that you're prevented from accomplishing your goals because of a limited budget or personal responsibilities that place a heavy demand on your time.

That's why it's important to acknowledge those limitations and work with them. They're not a reason to give up on your dreams but you shouldn't just ignore their existence. So, spend some time in critical reflection and come to a realistic understanding of how these limitations will affect your desires and how you can work around them. Applying this type of self-awareness to your growth process will help you find sustainable ways to reach your goals and avoid burnout. Who knows-- you might even find some new ways to overcome your problems and grow beyond your wildest dreams!

Final Summary

Although desires are often interpreted as a purely sexual and negative thing, nothing could be further from the truth. Desires fuel the human existence and provide us with the necessary motivation to grow, achieve, and create. That's why it's important to get in touch with your true desires and find out what you really want from life. Once you take this important first step, you can go on to free yourself from the pressure of fulfilling others' expectations and open your mind to the positive power of achieving what you want. As you follow your desires, it's also important to remember the validity of following your feelings, accepting your limitations, and making peace with your weaknesses.



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