

Abracadabra, Bibbidi-Bobbideeboo

If I had a magic wand, what would you want? Who would you want to become? Close your eyes and imagine an ideal you. Imagine when that comes true. If you can't think of what you want to become, what do you desire? For example, if you love someone, just imagine that person appears in front of you—you are excited, and thrilled when you touch the person's hand, you think, "I did it! Yeah, my dream came true!". You can have a winning pose like this, or a cool pose like Superman or Wonder Woman. Just be there feeling as real as possible, enjoying the moment when your dream comes true.

I have good news for you today. Your dreams can come true.

It is said that a dream comes true twice. The first time is when you imagine it, as we did just now.

The second time is when it really happens before your own eyes. The fact that the image came to mind means that the dream uniquely belongs to you and that you certainly have the power to make that dream come true.

So how can you make it a reality? Who wants to know?

Yes, today's talk is about you and for you, how to make your dream come true. It is about how my voice and thoughts can resonate with you and awaken something within you.

I have now returned to Japan, having fulfilled my dream of working for the United Nations. I worked for 25 years at the United Nations WFP, an organization that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.

Some people say that I was lucky enough to be born in a diplomat's family, educated overseas, and speaking some English, but that's not the case.

Both my parents worked hard for a family business, and I grew up in a family that had little to do with academics. There was a time in my twenties when I was depressed for about three years. I looked up at the ceiling every day from my bed. I had a dream, but I didn't know how to realize it. Perhaps you've felt the same way.

First, this image. The famine of Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s. I was very shocked when I saw the hollow eyes of a skeleton-like child with a big tummy. This planet earth, has enough food and has the capacity to produce enough to feed nearly 8 billion people, yet, about 800 million people, one in ten, are suffering from hunger. Every 7 seconds, one child under the age of 5 dies due to hunger and malnutrition or related diseases. How many minutes have passed since I started this talk and, and how many children are gone by now?

This is not acceptable to me. I want to make this image a thing of the past. By the time I become a grandma, I want to make a world where my grandchildren wouldn't have to watch such a tragic image on the TV, this has become my dream.

And when I told my father that I want to work for the United Nations, he said, "what a silly dream." If you go to Africa, you would take and eat the bread of a hungry child. Get married early, he tried to arrange it. I was 25 years old, so he called me a Christmas cake and I was told that it wouldn't sell after 26. It was the first time I knew that I had a best-by date.

I would like to add here in honor of my father. He was not trying to destroy his daughter's dreams. He did not know that there was such a job at the United Nations, and he was also worried about his daughter going to unknown countries. He was after all trying to protect me.

Please remember, on the way to fulfilling your dreams, there is a voice in the head, you can call it a Dream Killer. It can be a voice arising from social norms, a parent's voice, or your own unconfident voice. The role and purpose of this voice is to protect you. It has a good intention, but whenever you try to do a new thing, it tries to keep you in the comfort zone.

I, however, couldn't ignore the small voice within me, the voice of my heart. Otherwise, it wouldn't be my life, I must be responsible for my life, I thought.

That's why I decided to study in Mexico, and for the first time I did something opposed to my father's advice. I'm often asked why Mexico? It was because I could not afford to study in countries such as the US or the UK without my father's financial support. Japan had the bubble economy back then, so many wondered if I went nuts, "Mexico, the Third World? To study poverty and development?" The reaction was that they couldn't believe me. The Mexican government's scholarship was about \$300 a month, \$100 for the rent, \$100 for food, and the last \$100 I used for photocopying the textbooks because I couldn't buy them. It was the poorest time in my life, but I certainly felt that I was standing on my own feet, for the first time in my life!

I found this old photo from my parents' house. As you can see from the date on the bottom right, it was taken the day I left for Mexico on December 5, 1988. Via Vancouver to Mexico City. This is a picture of what I felt was my starting point. If you were with me at this time, you would notice that my eyes were so red and swollen. The night before, I cried all night. I was scared, I was worried because I didn't know what was waiting for me. I wasn't confident. All night long, came my father's voice saying "I told you so" with scary images spinning around in my head and I couldn't sleep. Yet, the next day, I was standing in front of this board. So, it wasn't a powerful start like that of Wonder Woman, but I was almost crawling and nearly fell on the first step forward.

It was such a weak and fearful step forward, but I stepped off the cliff and there awaited something unimaginable and powerful for me. I was queueing for tortilla with 100 pesos (5 yen or less at that time) with poor people, and that's how I filled my stomach. I had a big fight with a Marxist teacher in Spanish. I couldn't imagine such inner strength while being in Japan. I bought a second-hand kimono in a local shop for 100 yen, selling it in Mexico for 100 dollars as it was so precious, and earning living expenses. Based on these four years of living in a foreign land on a tight budget, language studies, experience, and earning my degree, I was able to realize my dream of working for the United Nations.

So, come to the edge, take a courageous step toward where you want to go, even if you are scared. Get out of the safe zone. This is my invitation to you.

When doing this, make sure that you place the voice from your own heart in the cockpit. It's here and it's the voice of your soul, your very existence. This voice is deeply linked to emotions and body. The reason I trembled in the Ethiopian footage and couldn't stop crying was because it was the cry of my soul.

Don't let your inner pilot be hijacked by the dream killer, the voice in your head. Keep your logical voices quiet. Fear and worries are here in the head. There is a reptile brain in our brain that has been around for more than 200 million years and is trying to ensure your survival. It subconsciously remembers everything that happened in the past and sets off alarms when you try to do something new and unprecedented. It loves maintaining the status quo; it likes being in a safe zone repeating the same thing. It reacts strongly to words and images.

So be careful what words or images you put in your head, because they will become a reality. These are my favorite words from Mother Teresa. Please let the Mother speak to you.

"Watch out for your thoughts, because someday they will become words. Watch out for the words, because someday they will become action. Be careful with your actions, because someday they will become a habit. Watch out for habits, because one day they will become your destiny."

Just search Google for "sweets" and you will be happy to see various sweets like this. But for example, try putting in "getting irritated". I cannot even show here the nasty images and dirty words, which make me frustrated and irritated. In the same way, if you put "the ideal you" in your head and your mind will come up with information and methods on how to become that image just as a Google search turns up information. Isn't that great? But the same goes with negatives, which will fill you with excuses and reasons why you can't.

Just like when I was in my twenties, I was depressed and telling myself it would be impossible for me to fulfil my dreams because I was born in this family, etc., and I was seeing the image of myself with an expiration date that had passed.

So, how to get out of this negativity? There is only action. Come to the edge, explore and expand the limits. Like a bungee jump, when you stand on the platform and look down. You are so alert. OMG, no, no, no, no, no! It's dangerous, I will fall, I should stop! But the moment of the countdown comes--5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and bungee jump; , I flew. That is when the stage changes (click). The landscape changes.(click)

It is only at that time you realize that you had a parachute. You know that you had a power within you. You had wings. You can trust yourself. You can believe in you. I often hear "I can't do it because I'm not confident" when the opposite was true. You will be able to believe in yourself because you act.

Then, what kind of image and words did I put in my head after I made a decision to pursue my dream? This is it. The photo of United Nations Headquarters in New York. I was thrilled and excited to imagine myself working here with colleagues around the world, people with different hair colour, eyes and skin tones. People who spoke different languages and saw the world from different perspectives. And this has become a reality. I worked with a team with people from countries I didn't even know existed at that time such as Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan.

I also put a big "United Nations" sticker next to my bed and looked at it every night before going to bed. At the time, my friend saw the sticker and wondered why I was interested in the labour unions. (N.B. both labour union and UN has "Rengo" in Japanese language)

You got the joke – we were connected. If there's anything that moves your heart or resonates in today's talk, it is because we share something. Certainly it is within you. If it's not in you, it will not resonate for you, you feel nothing, it will not move you.

Close your eyes once again and imagine yourself, your ideal you; imagine your dreams and your wishes. Feel the moment when it comes true, Then decide to take a step forward. Let's do it together. You can actually take a step forward like this. You can remain seated or you can stand up. Those who are online, please try it with us. It is important to feel it with your body. Let's take a step together, Bang! Yes, just like this.

Ok, close your eyes, imagine who you want to become, and feel when it becomes reality. Please take a breath in and out, decide to take a step forward. Say it to yourself: If I don't do it now, I may never be able to do it again. All at once, Bang! This is when magic happens (magic wand sound). The stage has changed. So take action today, no matter how small. You can declare it to your friends, send an email, or do a Google search, for example. In this way, when you make a decision and take action, your heart's desire will be in the driver's seat; the words and images in your head will support you. May many of your dreams come true. Bibbidi-Bobbideboo. Thank you very much.