



Alexis Willis,
Co.Lab's Program and
Events Coordinator

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MAKE YOUR DREAMS A REALITY WITH VISION BOARDS

by Nikki Sneed
FEATURING ALEXIS WILLIS



A sample vision board courtesy of Pinterest

We all have dreams and goals that seem bigger than ourselves. Dream big, we're told, reach for the stars. Those sound like great ambitions when we are young, but as we grow and mature, we begin to understand that big dreams are unattainable. We begin to believe that if we dream too big, we will only be disappointed. But that is only half true. "Dreams will not manifest without the power of vision," says Alexis Willis, Program and Events Coordinator of Co.Lab and Founder of The Red Lipstick Experiment and Natural Beautiful Me. Vision boards help to manifest these dreams - they bring the abstract into reality. If you can see your dream, really see it physically in front of you, you've already made it tangible - which is half the battle of accomplishing it.

Willis is living proof of the usefulness of vision boards in making your goals reality. She often uses them in her daily life and even hosts an annual workshop in Chattanooga to teach other people the benefits of vision boarding.

Specifically, when training to compete in IRONMAN Chattanooga in 2014, her first triathlon, Willis used a vision board to keep her on track. "One of the images that I tacked onto my vision board for that year said, 'Run. Influence the World.' I don't know if I influenced the world, but I did inspire a city on my journey to IRONMAN and on race day," says Willis.

Stated simply, seeing your goals on a vision board helps you accomplish them because it is a daily reminder of what you are heading toward. The board isn't a replacement for the hard work and dedication that it takes to succeed fully, but it helps inspire you to keep moving forward, to keep pushing yourself, even when the world pushes back.

There is just something magically motivational about having a goal, seeing it on your vision board and then knowing that you have accomplished what you

SET S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

(SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE,
REALISTIC (RESULT FOCUSED),
TIME BOUND)

BE INTENTIONAL

ABOUT THE IMAGES
THAT YOU SELECT FOR YOUR BOARD.
INCLUDE IMAGES AND WORDS
THAT DEPICT HOW YOU WANT TO FEEL.

PUT IT IN A PLACE

WHERE YOU WILL SEE IT EVERYDAY -
OVER YOUR DESK, NEAR YOUR FRONT DOOR,
OR WHEREVER YOU SPEND THE MOST TIME.

INVITE FRIENDS

TO DESIGN THEIR BOARDS
AT THE SAME TIME -
THIS WILL CREATE AN
ACCOUNTABILITY
CIRCLE AND BE A LOT OF FUN!

INCLUDE ONE "STRETCH GOAL."

A STRETCH GOAL IS ONE THAT,
IN THE MOMENT, SEEMS NEXT TO
IMPOSSIBLE, BUT YOU ARE WILLING
AND DETERMINED
TO ACCOMPLISH.



wanted. It inspires you to keep pushing yourself toward bigger and better things. Before you know it, you will have accomplished those dreams that you thought were too unrealistic.

"Last year, I glued an image of a fist full of money to my board because one of my goals was to become financially free. The first week of December 2015, I made the final payment on my credit card, and I am now debt free," says Willis.

Just as anything else in life, it's very important to pace yourself when attempting to accomplish your personal objectives. Work your way up to your

larger goals by starting out with simple, easily attainable tasks. Seeing yourself accomplish the small things will motivate you to work toward even more difficult aspirations. Some goals may still seem impossible to accomplish, even with the added motivation of a vision board, those are called "stretch goals" and they are just as important as small, attainable objectives.

"A stretch goal is one that, in the moment, seems next to impossible [to achieve] but [one that] you are willing and determined to accomplish. IRONMAN was my stretch goal for 2014. When I signed up, I didn't even know how to swim - nine months later I swam 2.4 miles," Willis says.

When creating your own vision board, it is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all formula for choosing what images or words to include. "I recommend whatever speaks to you. As a writer, I am drawn to words more than images. I also believe in the power of affirmations and value statements, so my vision board tends to have a higher volume of words than images," says Willis. If you are a more visual person, photos or drawings of your goals will put you in the right mindset to chase your dreams.

After you've put together a board that speaks to you, you need to decide where to put it - it won't do any good hiding away in the back of your closet! Whether you keep it in your home or at your office, make sure it serves as a daily reminder.

"Keep your vision board in a place where you can see it every day. Currently, my board is hanging in the foyer of my apartment so that every time I enter or exit my home, I am reminded to live [with] purpose," says Willis.