



Set Your Internal Compass - Create a 5-Year Timeline

A five-year timeline is not a map. It is a sketch. You can revisit it at any time and either revise the timeline or revise your activities to be in line with your goals. Use this process to create your timeline.

5-Year Perspective

How old will you be in 5 years?

How about those closest to you? Spouse, children, parents, siblings? Extended family members or very close friends. How will their needs and activities change?

How about your pet(s)?

What potential changes do you see in your job, industry, or other areas of life?

Opening the Imagination

Think out loud by drawing and doodling. Use a plain piece of paper and draw your family in 5 years. Stick figures or symbols are fine. This is for you. Imagine what day to day life might be like. What significant goals or milestones will be reached? How will finances or obligations change? Drawing your future self helps to better imagine reality. Look ahead the best you can.

Play with possibilities. Imagine options and decisions. Extend your imagination out beyond five years. What life experiences do you hope to enjoy? Is there a legacy you want to leave?

Clarifying the Goal

As you look at the five-year mark, how do you describe your desired destination? Write it down in as few words as possible. Don't dwell on the details. Take a fresh piece of paper and draw or write it out.

Mapping the Route

Now that you have a destination consider your route. Talk to your future self. Consider what needs to be done to head in the direction you want to go. How can you focus your time and energy to move toward your desired goals? This destination informs when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no.'

Does the plan ever work out as expected? No. However, it does inform the journey. Having a plan in place lessens stress, steers decision making, and clarifies priorities. Use this tool. Start the next 5 years of your journey with a clear destination in mind.