

# Treading Your Own Path

**Hans-Georg Willmann** is a qualified psychologist, a certified coach, a member of the German Association of Professional Psychologists (BDP) and a member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS). He is the author of numerous successful self-help books, several of which have been translated into foreign languages. "Amaze Yourself" is his 25th book.

Do you have dreams? Good on you! That's the first step – now's the time to make your dreams come true. This book is a guide to help you along the way. Can you picture in your mind's eye what you are aiming for, what you are wishing for, the life you are longing for – but find that when you wake up, your daily routine kills your desire and saps all your energy? The path to our most passionately desired goals can be relentlessly tough – but if we put into practice the 11 astonishingly easy tricks revealed in this book, it no longer needs to be.



Hans-Georg Willmann  
**Amaze Yourself**  
 11 Tricks to Help You Hit the Home Stretch  
 160 pages  
 978-3-86936-803-0

## WHY IT WILL SELL

- This book is a practical everyday guide to the small but specific steps we need to take if we want to reach our most passionately desired goals.
- This is about the path we need to take to go from dreams to reality.
- The book is characterised by the author's deeply practical attitude. On top of this, the teachings of the book are combined with beautiful, personal stories of travelling wisdom, which help readers retain more of the psychological tricks.

Willpower has the greatest impact on a successful life of all possible factors. Numerous studies have shown: Compared to other factors, willpower has more influence on professional and personal success than intelligence. People who use their willpower wisely, live happier and healthier.



Hans-Georg Willmann  
**Success through Willpower**  
 How to Get More of What You Want  
 192 pages  
 978-3-86936-638-8

# **Amaze Yourself**

## **11 tricks to help you hit the home stretch**



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The Outback; I'm on the road again. This time, I'm travelling with my wife Melanie. We've come here to spend some time with Australia's native Aborigines. Starting in Adelaide, we take roads and sandy tracks in the direction of Australia's "Red Centre", eventually ending up in the home of the Adnyamathanha people. The Adnyamathanha, which translates roughly as "people of the rock", have been living in the northern Flinders Ranges for tens of thousands of years. Together with our Adnyamathanha friends, we hunt, cook, and talk about the Dreamtime – the Aboriginal understanding of the world and its creation. We celebrate New Year with the tribe. At night, we dance barefoot in the sand around a camp fire, hold hands and sing together. We're in the middle of the Outback, far away from everything, with a million stars above our heads.

## Treading Your Own Path

I'm writing this book in the tropics - Townsville, Australia, to be exact, where I've been living and working for the last nine months. I am a psychologist, coach and the author of more than 20 books. I have been travelling the world for more than 4 years – through the desert states of Africa, the colourful diversity of Southeast Asia, the vastness of the USA, the varied cultures of Europe and finally, one year through this beautiful red continent.

Why am I telling you this? Well, because as a boy of just eight years old, I sat in front of a black-and-white-television and watched a travel documentary on the subject of Australia. The longing that captured me that day never vanished. I can still remember the adventurer on the screen, cruising his 4-wheel-drive through the endless Outback. That documentary had a lasting impact on me, inspiring a heartfelt wish: I wanted to travel; I wanted to be on the move.

Moreover, I wanted to write. God knows why: I was a working-class child. At primary school, my best grade in German was a 5.5 (roughly equivalent to an E in the UK). Rarely did I receive a recommendation from my teachers to attend one of Germany's

academic secondary schools<sup>1</sup> – it was only lucky that I was good at maths and sports. Out of my biggest weakness, reading and writing, came my second passion: I wanted to write books.

Many years went by, and I pursued my path - not without plenty of effort and self-doubt. However, I also experienced moments of fulfilment I wouldn't have traded for anything else in the world – and I pursued my path successfully. After secondary school I completed my apprenticeship as an industrial business management assistant, then did my Abitur (roughly equivalent to British A-levels), studied psychology and graduated with honours. I founded my own company and have now been a successful psychological coach for business for more than 15 years. On top of that, I'm on the road - right here in Australia - and I'm about to write my 25th book.

Two questions accompanied me throughout those years:

1. *WHY* do people do what they do? Why do we set big goals?
2. *HOW* do people get to where they are? How do we reach our heartfelt goals?

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<sup>1</sup> Once their primary schooling is complete, Germany's school system divides children into one of five options for secondary schooling. Some types of school are focused more on academic subjects, others on vocational skills.

An answer to the question “*WHY?*” lies deep within us. It’s our deepest desires that guide us through life and from which our most heartfelt goals are derived. As such, we are willing to take chances. We climb the highest mountains, cross the widest deserts and traverse the deepest oceans. We found charities, manage worthwhile enterprises and research for decades to invent something that makes other people’s lives easier. We do this because we refuse to let anybody take away our desires, our passions and our hopes of reaching the stars.

An answer to the question “*HOW?*” is what I aim to explore in this book. The answer is not easy and it’s not quick to put into words. As you might have guessed, watching a documentary on Australia at the age of eight and being poor at reading and writing in primary school was not enough to achieve my goal of writing 25 books and travelling the world for many years.

Even the greatest of longings and the strongest of passions can be brought down to earth with a bump. Even the deepest of desires are just the beginning of the journey. And that’s what I want to share with you – how each and every one of you can enable yourselves to reach your heartfelt goals – even when things get demanding.

Besides my travels around the world and my work as an author, it's my clients who have taught me what works and what doesn't. As a coach, I've supported many people in treading their own path and reaching their most heartfelt goals, whether they be travelling the world, working overseas, achieving a Master's degree, climbing the career ladder, becoming self-employed, writing a book or stacking up their first million.

Between the covers of this book, I'm going to tell you what has helped all of these people. I'm going to explain to you eleven tricks with the potential to shake up your life. These *eleven tricks* are proven in practice and are invaluable for anyone truly seeking to implement their most wished-for goals: from the start-up entrepreneur to the employee, from the adventurer to the homemaker.

*I wish all my readers a great deal of fun whilst trying out these eleven pieces of wisdom!*

Hans-Georg Willmann  
Townsville, Australia, Spring 2017

### 3. And Go!

**If you know what works, just do it!**

Some people expect coaching to be something huge, something spectacular, something that will change them completely. Some people imagine something magical – and they have the understandable but unrealistic wish of reaching their goals overnight. Effective coaching is not spectacular. Quite often, it's about an awareness of this simple truth: if you know what works, just do it.

Do you want to write a book? Do you know how to write? Just do it! Are you aiming to train for an hour on the treadmill? Can you walk? Just do it! Do you want to study for your exam? Do you know which topics you'll be asked about? Just do it!

Unfortunately, it's not that easy to start doing something we perceive to be strenuous. More than often we are motivated, we know exactly what to do, but we still don't do it, even if we have time. Instead, we prefer to do a thousand things that are easier and faster to accomplish and that therefore give us instant satisfaction: calling a friend, answering emails, going shopping, having a shower, even cleaning the windows or tidying the spare room.





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Spring 1996. USA – South West, at the border between Arizona and Utah. I have been on the road for two months and several thousand kilometres. The road to Monument Valley, an elevated plain of the Colorado Plateau with unique table mountains, is far away. However, I have a goal and I know how to get there: I do what I can right now and I keep the big goal in sight.

If we're facing a demanding task, we often become inventive in an attempt to delay getting started. We distract ourselves - and too often, we don't ever begin. One of our biggest obstacles on the way to our goals is getting started. Overcoming this is something that requires a clever trick.

### **The trick of “starting before you begin”**

We can “start getting started” right now by saying to ourselves, “I’m going to do this for ten minutes.” As soon as the ten minutes are over, we give ourselves permission to stop if we wish. In this way, we don’t immerse ourselves entirely in the task, but rather just make the first step – which means we limit the amount of effort involved.

We’re already familiar with the “10-minute-effect” in reverse: it’s what we utilised to resist the temptation of a fast reward and stop pointless habits such as constantly grabbing at our smartphone or reaching for chocolate or crisps. To start doing something useful, we simply turn this trick around.

If, for example, we intend to learn a foreign language, we know how language-learning works and we have enough time to do so, yet we still haven’t managed to get started, we might say to

ourselves: “I’m going to do this for ten minutes. If I don’t want to keep doing it after ten minutes, I can allow myself to stop.”

Just like when we use the trick in reverse, it’s important, during these ten minutes, to keep the long-term goal in mind, the state we wish to reach by getting started, e.g.: “I want to be able to speak Italian fluently by the time our new boss arrives from Italy, to enable myself to progress up the career ladder.”

As soon as we have started, the activity itself - in conjunction with our goal and the permission to stop after ten minutes - develops an amazing allure. After ten minutes, we don’t want to stop, but rather to continue doing what we need to.

### **The trick of “starting before you begin”**

*“If I want to begin a task but can’t seem to get started, I can begin by setting myself a target of ten minutes. As soon as the ten minutes are over, I can give myself permission to stop if I feel like stopping. In addition, during the ten minutes, I will think about the goal I’m going to reach by sticking to the task.”*

This trick works because our brain doesn't like undone tasks: as soon as we get started and are threatened by stopping, the brain wants to carry on and bring to the task to completion.

However, it is crucial, during these ten minutes, to create a non-distracting environment that enables us to approach our task in a concentrated manner. If someone enters the room or the smartphone rings during those precious ten minutes, the task is put at risk. This is because it takes only 20 seconds of disruption for the "alluring" effect of the 10-minute-phenomenon to be negated.

We can make the ten-minute kick-off even easier by preparing the things we need to get started. Want to go running before work? Put your running shoes beside your bed. Want to learn something after work? Tidy up your desk at home and place your books there so that on your return, you'll find a ready-to-go working space. This way, we give ourselves an extra head start. "Getting started" is hard work (in Australian slang: *hard yakka*) - that's why we need every bit of help available to make it easier.

No matter whether we want to fill in a tax return, clean the house, write a book, prepare for a final medical exam, train for the ascent

of Mount Kinabalu, learn how to speak Italian or go running regularly, the ten-minute trick can help us get started.

Let's look back to the beginning of 2011. As I've previously mentioned, after my first three years as an author, I – to put it kindly – had put on weight. This was due partially to my fondness of gummy bears, but also to the fact that I had completely stopped all my sports.

*Now I tipped the scales at 20.4 kg heavier than before, my trousers didn't fit any more and when I held public lectures, I started getting short of breath. At this stage, my doctor wanted to prescribe a medication to reduce my blood pressure.*

*I said to myself, "No! That's not going to happen. I'm 42 years old. I'll have to start doing the regular exercise I used to enjoy." Now, this is all well and good - but how do you start doing sports after three years of doing no sports at all? I felt like an old horse being pulled out of the stable. I was close to crying, because on this occasion, conquering my demons felt so incredibly tough and out of reach. Honestly, I was surprised at how many excuses I found to duck out of sports activities: "I'd planned two hours of sports, but sadly this won't be possible, because right now I have to... Drive the car to the garage, get the groceries for tonight, vacuum, hang the laundry out, call someone, check my emails very, very urgently, watch an unmissable documentary on TV, take a shower..."*

*Of course, there was no way I could avoid restarting my sports activities if I wanted to get back to my normal weight, fit into my suit, breathe in a relaxed way during lectures and prove to my GP that I was able to manage my blood pressure without medication.*

I applied the ten-minute trick to get this exhausting challenge off the ground. I said to myself, “Do it for ten minutes. If you still feel like stopping after those ten minutes, you can.”



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Monument Valley is part of the Navajo Land, a National Reservation maintained by the Navajo Indian Nation. It's February, and quite cold here. I am camping on a plain within the Navajo territory. My first view in the morning: breathtaking. No five-star-hotel has such an amazing view. I hear the Navajo songs and think, "I had to work many low-paid jobs during my studies to earn the money for this trip. But I started, and now I'm here."

*At the same time, I thought about my feel-good weight, my favourite jeans, how fit I used to be and wanted to be again. As soon as I was walking on the treadmill and ten minutes had passed, I didn't want to stop any more. It was strenuous, but I kept telling myself, "Ten more minutes, then you can stop if you want to." In addition, I imagined my goal: my normal personal feel-good weight, jeans that fit, enough air to breathe properly and no need for medication. After six months, I weighed below 80kg; after eight months, I had reached my previous weight. To this day, I have never taken any blood pressure-reducing medication.*

Many things get easier as soon as we start doing them, and this applies to all our goals: to small goals like doing a tax return and to big goals, heartfelt goals, goals that can't be achieved overnight. That's why the question that will bring us closer to our goals is not, "How do I get this done and dusted?" but rather, "How do I get started?"

The next time you're facing a challenging obstacle and don't know how to overcome it; the next time you're surprised by the many creative ways you find to procrastinate before the first step, simply take a deep breath, smile and "start before you begin" - just for ten minutes.





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1993. Australia. In the heart of the Red Continent – alone in the Outback. My destination: Uluru, or Ayers Rock. The way to get there: 500 kilometres of sandy tracks. I have been on the road for thousands of kilometres and am thinking more and more about goals and pathways and the difference between journeys and destinations.

## A Story of Goals and Pathways

Actually, this chapter is about a twelfth trick that can help us reach our goals in an amazingly easy fashion. Well, I say this, but it is more than a trick and it's about more than our goals. With the inspiration from this chapter, you'll be able to go further. You'll be able to tread your own path. Goals – if they are your own – are only stages on your journey. Allow yourself to be amazed!

Many people come to their coaching session with the goal, “I want less stress”. In response to this, I often ask, “For how long? An hour, a day or a week?” There is a small but essential difference between goals and resolutions. We can reach goals – like reaching the top of a mountain. We cannot reach resolutions; they don't have a fulfilment date. Implementing a resolution means living it.

Imagine someone wants to spend less money, to be more economical. Usually, people can do this for a month or so, and afterwards they spend more money than before. No wonder: being economical is not a goal, but a resolution without a

fulfilment date. Another example: someone wants to lose weight and stay in good shape afterwards. Ten kilograms is the goal - an achievable one. Afterwards, the person puts on more weight than they have lost. Does this sound familiar? It's not surprising! Like spending less money, staying slender is not a goal, but a resolution without a fulfilment date. (That's why all these diets don't work!)

Unfortunately, our resolutions don't work like goals. Psychologically, they're very different. We're able to pass an exam, climb a mountain, cross a desert or write a book. These are goals. They have a fulfilment date. We can achieve them. We can be brave and hit the trail. We can endeavour until we have reached them: mission accomplished, goal attained. We can go to considerable lengths to reach our goals – tough physical exercise to survive the exertions of crossing a desert – and afterwards, we can have the same lifestyle as before. Goals have a “time after”.

That's the big difference between goals and resolutions. Good resolutions like “less stress”, “eating healthily”, “being economical”, “watching less TV”, “having more time for the family” or “reading more” are all “unattainable” – we need to live

them. We need to make these behaviours part of our lifestyles. There is no such thing as a “time after”; the journey is the destination. And that’s something for which we need a foolproof trick. Luckily, I have one for you here:

### **The trick of “I want” instead of “I’m not allowed”**

Anyone who has ever tried going on a diet has experienced this:  
We intend to loose weight: beach body in four weeks.

For this beach body, we’re prepared to deny ourselves cakes, fries, soft drinks, alcohol. We say to ourselves, “I’m not allowed to eat and drink this now.” And it works - we do lose weight! Alas, after the four weeks, we put the weight back on as fast as we lost it, often more than we lost.

This is systematic: Our brain reacts to self-instructions like “I am not allowed to eat and drink this” in an amazingly rebellious way. It instantly responds with, “Alright, not now, but wait until the four weeks are over...” As soon as the time is up, we think, “Done! Strike! Finally I can eat and drink “normally”, just like before.” With a negative self-instruction like “I’m not allowed to”, it is quite probable that after four weeks or so, we will allow ourselves to resume eating and drinking too much cake, too many fries, too

many soft drinks and too much alcohol – because it is normal for us. And we really want to live our lives “normally”.

On the contrary, if we say to ourselves repeatedly, from the beginning, “I want to eat and drink in moderation,” our brain receives the message and responds, “Okay, he / she really wants it, I’m not banned from *anything* and I’m allowed *something*.” This is an important difference. Scientists have found that “I want” self-instruction links our personality with new behaviour. We create a new behavioural norm for ourselves, and after some time, our urge to be allowed to act “normally” (the old normal) vanishes. In the end, it’s about shifting our personal norm baseline. With the constant repetition of easy “I want” self-instruction, we shift our own behavioural standard.

### **The trick of “I want” instead of “I’m not allowed”**

“Whenever I want to implement a resolution and I realise I’m telling myself, “I’m not allowed to...”, I smile and rephrase it as, “Now I want to...” The more often I rephrase my thoughts positively, the more my desired behaviour becomes my personal norm. And as a consequence, I live the resolution.”

Let's outsmart our brains a bit. First, we differentiate between our resolutions and our goals, and then, we simply keep repeating "I want" instructions in relation to these resolutions: "I want to eat more healthily" (instead of "I'm not allowed to eat so much pizza"), "I want to achieve more financial freedom" (instead of "I'm not allowed to spend so much money"), "I want to be more active" (instead of "I'm not allowed to sit around on the couch") or "I want to spend more time with my family" (instead of "I'm not allowed to play computer games for so long").

Be aware that it makes sense to focus on only ONE resolution at a time. If, for example, you want to watch less TV, smoke less, drink less alcohol, eat less or more healthily, be more active *and* read more, you're likely to overcharge your brain. As a consequence, you probably won't do any of these things. With any resolution, you need time to anchor your new behaviour. Give yourself the time to go the direction you REALLY want.

Aside from this, there is an extra tip you can use to help you implement the trick of "I want" instead of "I'm-not-allowed": any time you notice you're telling yourself "I'm not allowed to..." and you're able to rephrase it as "I want to...", you can move a little symbolic object (like a coffee bean) from one trouser pocket to

the other, or you can change your watch or bracelet from one wrist to the other. That's a simple way of anchoring your new "I want" thinking style and your new way of acting: by feeling and seeing these symbols of your internal change externally.

Our heartfelt goals, our desires, our passions and our hopes are just like our resolutions – they don't have any delivery date. Again, the pathway itself is the goal. What you do is what you want. Each goal along the way is a stage of your change. Furthermore, it's important to divide a long pathway into manageable sections, to make it possible to walk it at all. But the urge, the necessity behind our most heartfelt goals doesn't go away as a result of us reaching these individual milestones. It's just like we always get hungry again, even if, after an abundant dinner, we swear we'll never eat as much again – ever!

*My urge for independence, freedom and growth was never diminished by my numerous travels - that's something I realised when I travelled through Australia for half a year. At the age of 23, I had already achieved many of my travel goals: vast bicycle tours through the Swiss Alps to Italy and Austria, taking the train through Germany down to beautiful Sicily and up north to vibrant London. I had crossed the Black Forest on foot from Freiburg to Munich and I had walked west through the Vosges Mountains,*

*all the way to Paris. I had crossed the Algerian Sahara twice, by car and by motorbike. And then there was the Fifth Continent.*

*Maybe it was a lucky coincidence that for the whole year before departing for Australia, I barely had any time or energy to carry out the usual precise planning I do for my trips. With a full-time job in community service and a number of extra jobs to earn money for my travels, I was absolutely working to capacity. When I arrived in Perth with my backpack and my motorbike clothes, all I knew was this: "I'll be here for at least half a year. I need a motorbike and some equipment, and then eight million square kilometres of Down Under are my osyter." It was actually a bit daunting. What was my goal?*

*In Africa, the Sahara, my primary goal was to get through and survive. In a totalitarian state - where the military ruled the country and civil unrests had taken place at the beginning of the 1990s - surviving wasn't always an easy task, even before you factored in the heatwave occurring at the time. If you're stopped by the military, the only way to get your freedom back is through lengthy negotiations held in a nonsensical mish-mash of French, Arabic, German, talking hands and feet and "baksheesh" (a Persian and Arabic word for "gift", i.e. money). If your body proteins are starting to denaturise and you can't drink more water than the amount you're sweating out, your focus is clearly on survival.*

*Here in Australia, everything was easier. Of course, the distances were huge, the climate extreme and the sun merciless.*



*But that's something I was used to from Africa. Here, Down Under, there was no corrupt military. I got by with English. There was fuel - and even in the deepest corner of the Outback, far away from civilisation, there was a roadhouse where I was able to buy a new toothbrush.*

*By the end of my first week in Australia, I had found a suitable motorbike, a Yamaha XT 600 with a 30-litre-tank, all-terrain-tyres and good shock absorbers. So I simply hit the road: anticlockwise from Perth through the Nullarbor Plain, 2700 kilometres to Adelaide. Along the coast to Melbourne. Crossing the Blue Mountains to Sydney. 2500 kilometres up the East Coast to Cairns. Up Cape York to Cooktown. Due to a cyclone, I wasn't able to drive further north.*

*I cut across country, heading west along muddy tracks and numerous floodways to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Downwards through the Outback to Alice Springs, Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata Tjuta (Olgas), then to the south, to the Opal Mining town of Coober Pedy, and back to elegant and relaxed Adelaide. Back to Perth and more than 4000 kilometres up the West Coast to Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory, then back down again via the Stuart Highway to Alice Springs; back to the red heart of Australia. When I started, I set goal after goal: "I wanted to be in such-and-such an area within a certain amount of time." Month by month, kilometre by kilometre, the constant setting of goals fell by the wayside. I just wanted to be out and about; I was on my way, the journey became the goal, and I realised that travelling is never about reaching a certain place, but rather about being on the journey.*

As soon as we start aiming for the “right” things - meaning our purpose, destinations that have a connection with our needs, our urges - these goals become stages of our personal journey. And we never feel empty after having reached a goal, because this journey is the most important goal of all.

If the journey is the goal, it becomes about our values, about what’s meaningful to us and about what we truly want to achieve. With every single step along the way, we know: “I am doing this because I want to do it, because I have made a conscious decision to do it, and not because I have to do it or I’m not allowed to do something else.”



The Red Centre, the red heart of Australia. After more than 15,000km on my motorbike, I have reached my destination in the Central Australian Desert: Uluru (Ayers Rock). The picture of the Anangu people's holy rock was burnt into my mind as an 8-year-old boy, as I watched a travel documentary on Australia on a black-and-white TV-screen in a 3-bedroom apartment in Freiburg, Germany. Now I'm here, I realise that travelling is never about getting somewhere, but about being on the journey.

“I want to...” instead of “I’m not allowed to...” – this amazingly easy trick will set free enormous reserves of strength. Try it – because you want to do it.

*I am grateful to have the strength to follow my heartfelt goals. I’m living my heartfelt wishes and I’m going my way. After numerous travels through Europe, the African Sahara and Australia, the journey through my psychology studies followed. Then, I went to Southeast Asia, the Southwest of the USA and Eastern Europe. After my studies, I started my journey into self-employment as a coach – and further long travels with my partner Melanie through Australia and Europe. Since 2009, I have been on my journey as an author – and right now I’m on my life journey in the Australian Tropics, together with my beloved partner. And it goes on; the next journey lies ahead.*

*I am living and working as a self-employed coach and author, I am on my path and I’m doing the best thing I could imagine: helping people to find their own way and tread their own path.*

*I want to encourage everyone to follow their heartfelt goals and to never let anybody take away their desires, passions and hopes of reaching the stars – even if, in the end, they might only reach the moon.*