

By Leading an Integrated Life, You Are Today's Pioneer

For those of us who are committed to leading our lives in a new way, an integrated way, from inspiration, how do we make it through?

Andrea Henning



Nobody ever knows what a pioneer is doing.

— Timothy Leary

When looking up the definition for “pioneer” in a variety of online sources, the theme is clear. A pioneer is the first. She is attempting something that has never been done before. She is the inventor, developer, creator and explorer.

As we imagine this pioneering woman, the picture in our minds is often romantic, exciting, and thrilling. We are drawn to her story; the adventure, strength, daring, spirit and character of this person who created a path where there was none, then showed us the way. Perhaps we relate to her personally, knowing that in our own way we are pioneering in our lives.

If you do relate to her (as we do) you also know that being a pioneer comes with challenges. You often feel alone, misunderstood, questioned and judged. Colleagues and loved ones might wish you were more traditional, conservative or normal. People around you might be worried for you or feel their own choices threatened. You often have no proof of concept. Your inner knowing serves as your only compass.

The pioneer's story is celebrated once it's completed; yet during the long journey the pioneer is often criticized. For those of us who are committed to leading our lives in a new way, an integrated way, from inspiration, how do we make it through?

1. Be clear on what you desire.

First, you need to know what you really want, at a very deep and very true level. At this stage, you want to take the time to discern and discard those items you think you "should" want and hone your understanding of what you do want. When you are a pioneer and you want something no one else around you wants, this can be a tricky phase. Don't rush through this.

Do you want to be an author? Do you want a promotion to CEO? Do you want to work and raise a family? Do you want to be a full-time mom? Do you want to fly to the moon? Do you want to be a mom, wife, entrepreneur and Ironman athlete at the same time?

Once you have that flutter in your heart of true desire, dig deep. Make sure you articulate why you want this, for yourself. It doesn't matter what you want. If it's a true desire it is a gift, so go for it. It is never selfish.

When it's a unique desire that's not held by anyone around you, it's important that you capture it for yourself so you can reconnect to it over and over again, in the face of questions and doubt from those around you. You can do this is a phrase, quote or picture.

Amy Riley, one of the authors of this article, decided less than a year ago to become an Ironman athlete while being an active mom of two young kids, a supportive wife and successful business owner. Even though she is determined to go for this big personal goal, she is pioneering how to integrate the rest of her life's priorities at the same time. Why does she want to do this now? Why doesn't she wait until her kids are older? She says: "I know that by taking on the Ironman while staying connected to my family and clients I am paving a new way for everyone to integrate family with their major personal goals without feeling like they have to put their lives on hold."

2. Make a plan, then wait for the inspired next step to emerge.

You know what you want. You can't stop thinking about it. It's in motion. Now what?

When you are a pioneer, the journey is often slow. When you think of the American pioneers heading west, they didn't zoom on paved roads in fast cars. They plodded, step by step toward an unknown horizon. When you think of the first space explorers heading into the galaxy, they didn't rush it. They took some time and had failures along the way. Pioneering isn't speedy.

Yes, it is helpful to make a plan, outline or checklist of how to get from where you are to where you are headed, with your current understanding. Yes, you do need to start sharing

your goal with others. Yes, you do need to be in action to make progress.

At the same time, a pioneering woman knows when to rest, when to accept help, when to make requests, and when to allow for creative new ideas to emerge. Remember, since what you've imagined has never been done before, no one knows how to do it, not even you. If you are too rigid about doing it yourself, within a certain timeframe or in a certain way, you might impede your progress.

Andrea Henning, one of the authors of this article, reminds us that the outcome of a true desire does not always look the way you imagine. She had a vision of a beautiful, inviting workspace that she would own in the Netherlands and use as the creative space for her business colleagues and clients to gather. As she writes this article she is in a workspace much like what she envisioned – but she doesn't own it. She shares it and leases a space. If she were too rigid about what she wanted, she would have said no to this opportunity, not realizing that it was an easier way for her to reach her vision and meet financial goals.

3. Stay true over time.

The journey will get hard. We don't remember any stories of pioneers who had it 100% easy. On every hero or heroine's journey there are dark, long nights that challenge our spirit and cause us to dig deep. In some cases, it is the best choice to learn whatever lessons need to be learned and abandon the expedition.

However, for the pioneers that make it to the end of their journey, they need to persevere toward their goal, step-by-step, over time. They can rest. They can nourish themselves. They can process lessons learned. They can take time to recover and fuel for the next phase.

Yet they must keep their vision in mind and stay true to their inner knowing in the face of very little evidence and in contrast to what others around them believe and advise.

Sounds fun, yes, maybe? If you've been there like we have, you know that although it's not describable as fun, it's real. '

Because it's real, it's beyond fulfilling when you keep going and start to collect the evidence that what you see is coming to realization and your vision is possible.

4. Reinvent the conversation.

Because you are going first, there is not a supportive dialogue in the community about what you are doing (unless you find questions like "Why?", "How?", and "Are you out of your mind?" supportive). In fact, there might not be any conversation or language for what you are doing in the world. As a pioneer, one of your biggest jobs is to share, educate and invent a positive new conversation for what you are doing.

Amy says: "I am using my blog to share with everyone that it is possible to integrate their priorities at home and at work with a big personal goal like Ironman. I felt kind of odd about starting my blog, but I knew that I wanted to shift everyone's thinking so that they didn't feel like they had to wait to go for their own goals, whatever they are. [Here's one I'm really proud of](#) that shares how I set the stage to include my family and grow closer during the training instead of excluding them and growing apart.

5. Find your tribe.

Even though you will often feel lonely as a pioneer, you are not alone. You have friends who will support you know matter what, colleagues who have surprisingly similar goals and kindred spirits around the world who get it and are with you. Find those people. Let them in. Lean on them when you need to. Celebrate with them.

Andrea says: “Your soul mates are out there, and it is essential to connect with them. Even though being a pioneer can feel like a solitary experience, it cannot be achieved without support from others along the way. Sometimes the biggest support lies in being deeply listened to, without judgement of good advice. I personally feel like the Tiara Resource Circle is a tribe of kindred spirits for me, as I progress on leading an integrated, unique life.