

Whose Dream Are You Living?

If you grew up in an immigrant family, you know what it feels like to live between worlds. On one side, the culture of your parents: practical, safety-focused, built on sacrifice. On the other, the Western world: freedom of choice, self-expression, and opportunity. Navigating these spaces can feel like walking a tightrope.

You may have achieved what your parents hoped for you, prestigious degrees, career milestones, stability, but somewhere inside, a quiet question lingers: "where am I in this equation?"

This guide is for the children of immigrants who are ready to explore that question honestly, without guilt or shame. It's about seeing yourself, acknowledging your parents' intentions, and allowing space to live your own life.

The Unspoken Pressure You Carry

For many immigrant families, success is not just personal, it's generational. Your parents' sacrifices come with silent expectations:

- "Your efforts must honor our struggles."
- "Follow the path we know is safe."
- "Do not take unnecessary risks."

As children, we internalize these messages. Even as adults, they shape choices, habits, and definitions of worth. The result? A life measured by productivity, approval, and responsibility rather than joy, curiosity, or personal fulfillment.

For many second-generation immigrants, life becomes a quiet marathon of proving that your parents' sacrifices "worked." Not just through money or status, but through being the good outcome. The child who made it.

When Practicality Becomes a Cage

In immigrant households, practicality is survival wisdom:

- "Choose a major that guarantees a stable career."
- "Don't chase passions that seem risky."
- "Follow the tried-and-true path."

This guidance has value, it keeps families safe, secure, and respected. But over time, it can leave little room for curiosity, play, or exploration.

Many second-generation adults realize they've built a life of external success, but if someone asks what truly fulfills them, the answer is blurry. The truth is, you were rarely given permission to explore that.

The Hidden Cost: Identity and Exhaustion

Following a path of duty often comes with invisible weights:

- Disconnect from joy and spontaneity
- Emotional fatigue from holding everyone together
- A sense of life moving forward without feeling truly present

You may have become highly capable, responsible, and admired, but the question remains: whose dream are you living?

Acknowledging this isn't rebellion or selfishness. It's recognition of your humanity.

A Gentle Re-Alignment

Redefining your life and your definition of success doesn't mean abandoning your parents' values or dismissing their sacrifices. It means integrating them into a life that also reflects your inner voice.

Here's how to begin:

1. Allow Yourself Curiosity

Ask: If I didn't have to prove myself, what would I explore purely for joy?
Give yourself permission to imagine paths that aren't dictated by obligation.

2. Make Room for Small Acts of Freedom

Even brief moments matter:

- Reading poetry without purpose
- Taking a walk without an agenda
- Painting, dancing, or experimenting in a hobby

These aren't indulgences, they're necessary acts of self-reclamation.

3. Question Inherited Beliefs

Not every principle passed down is still serving you. Reflect:

- Which beliefs support me now?
- Which ones can evolve or be released?

Awareness transforms inherited pressures into conscious choices.

4. Redefine Productivity and Success

Success is not a checklist of degrees, promotions, or accolades. True success includes:

- Reflection and self-connection
- Joy and creative expression
- Relationships that remind you of who you are beyond titles

When success becomes alignment, it no longer requires external approval.

Using Reflection as a Compass

Start with honest self-inquiry:

- When I imagine success, whose voice do I hear first, mine or my parents'?
- Which goals energize me, and which exhaust me?
- What achievements express my values, not just my résumé?

Write your answers without editing. Let them surprise you. Awareness is the first step toward reclaiming agency.

Expanding the Definition of Achievement

Once you see the difference between the path you were given and the one you choose, you can act consciously.

This might look like:

- Exploring a new career direction or creative endeavor
- Setting boundaries around time, energy, or expectations

- Reclaiming space for what truly matters to you

Reclaiming your life is evolution, not rejection. It honors your roots while letting you grow into the person you were meant to become.

Permission to Live Your Life

As a child of immigrants, you may feel guilt for wanting more than safety, predictability, or stability. Let this be your permission slip:

You can honor your parents' sacrifices while living a life that reflects your true desires. You can carry their legacy without carrying their limitations. You can be both grateful and unapologetically yourself.

Gentle Reflection: Questions to Explore

The following questions are meant to spark self-awareness and gentle curiosity, they are invitations to consider alignment, fulfillment, and personal joy without judgment.

- Which parts of my life feel truly mine, and which feel influenced by my parents' expectations?
- When have I made choices to satisfy others instead of myself?
- If I were choosing my major, career, or hobbies purely for joy, what would I pursue?
- What small acts of curiosity or creativity could I explore today, even if they feel unconventional?
- How do I feel when I imagine following a path that excites me, rather than one that feels safe or approved?
- Are there areas of study, work, or life where I'm "performing success" instead of feeling fulfilled?
- What would it feel like to experiment, take a risk, or step away from expectations for a short period of time?
- What would I choose to change if I wasn't worried about what others might say/think?
- What small step I can take in exploring my own interests and passions?

You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone

Reclaiming your path is a journey best walked with guidance. As a life coach, I support second-generation immigrants in:

- Exploring the gap between obligation and personal fulfillment
- Reconnecting with inner values, passions, and joy
- Building clarity, boundaries, and self-trust

If you're ready to live a life aligned with your dreams, without guilt or compromise, you deserve support from someone who truly understands the nuance of your experience.



To get more information, checkout www.yourpowertothrive.com

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