

## Finding Your Passion

Being committed to some goal in your life - a sense of having a mission, a purpose, even a calling - is a very motivating, very comforting thing. Some people's mission steps up to greet them, others have to hunt theirs down.

A strong curiosity and the ability to enjoy whatever you are doing, are a huge help in life. You just have to be honest about what excites you.

Motivation that comes from inside is the first key ingredient to every successful endeavour. Encourage yourself to find out what suits you, what thrills you, what brings you pride.

Be open to discoveries. Don't have too fixed a notion of the path, but rather more have some idea of the kind of things that most appeal to you.

Find yourself a purpose in life and then don't let that be muddled or overshadowed by the hurly-burly of day-to-day events.

Go after your dreams - let them lead you. It's the chance you have to move towards profound happiness.

If there are two vital elements in life, they are determination and enthusiasm. Of these two, enthusiasm is probably more important because it's so infectious and people can't help but respond to it. So what are you enthusiastic about?

I have endless get up and go for the things that I enjoy.

Offer something positively original to the world. Originality is always more important than quality, but the combination is stunning.

Own up to what you most want out of life, and then work out the most positive and direct way of getting it.

You've got to fight against the urge to try to say and do what other people want. That's not how you earn their respect. They will most respect you for thinking and doing what they didn't think of, what they didn't dare. That's the key.

Your accomplishments will bring great pride and joy to your closest friends and family, but it will hurt all of you badly in the long run if you've done it only for them. You have to do things for the passion in your heart.

### College courses: now, later or while you work

University is definitely not right for everyone just out of school, not even after a year off. So don't be forced by the expectations of those around you, and know the alternatives: there's a lot of them out there.

Are you sure you want to go to University or College, and are you sure you want to go right now? You can postpone not just for a year, but for two or three years till there's a course or university you desperately want to go to because you've tasted the working world full-time which has developed and focused your ideas. Or, rather than do a full-time course, you could go part-time while you earn money in an apprenticeship for some profession. Later, you might choose to go to university full-time, or to do a one year masters or a three year doctorate in a specialist field. Bear in mind, too, that the extra personal confidence and focus that comes from postponing could help you shine in your studies and social life once you reach university.

It's too easy to get on an escalator towards college or university, and you stop asking yourself important questions. Take the stairs!

University can be as narrow-minded and mediocre, or as useful and exciting as you chose to make it. University isn't something that happens to you - where you go in as a 'uniformed school-student' and come out as 'a remarkable adult'. It's a diamond mine, but you have to do a lot of digging through a lot of crap to turn up the occasional jewel.

One thing they don't tell you in the adverts and brochures is that you can always take a year out of the middle of your course and postpone if you need to. It's a bit more hassle for the university, but it's your life, and you don't want to waste your college years if it's not working out straight away.

It's rarely owned up to, but three or four years spent studying at university can sometimes severely dampen entrepreneurial and inventive spirit. It can often be best to get out into the very heart of the working world as soon as possible. After all, university courses will always be an option for you in one form or another a little later down the road - when you're clearer about what you want to study, more confident in your approach, and wanting a change of pace.

What's wrong with creating your own 'training course' for yourself. Learn at your own pace, not only at some college classes'. Your track record of self-designed experiences will speak for itself and it will very quickly be evident to any employer what you can and cannot do. On their own, degree certificates are too vague and dilute a form of evidence about your abilities and passions.

## Making the most of college

Choose the subjects you love. School isn't the bus to university, and university isn't a departure lounge to life. You can't just hang around waiting for the future. Each part of your life is as valuable as any other.

Be prepared to change a few weeks in to a course, if needs be. Better to kick-up a fuss now, than spend years unhappily studying the wrong subject.

People who over-specialise aren't being exposed to alternative disciplines. It's great feeling you know a subject well, but better still to know where it fits into and can benefit from other areas. Why just do German when you can do German and Business Studies? Or vice versa? Combinations like these are a good idea because they open doors of opportunity for you.

I couldn't believe how fast the first year went. You've got to try and make it count, not just piss your college years away at parties with people you probably won't see again. Now I'm working, I know what an opportunity that time was. More importantly, I'm glad I did bother to do other things, not just because I'm sure it helped in getting a job, but because I don't look back with any regrets.

Try to not let your parents pay for everything through college. If you're always asking for cash, you don't get much of a sense of independence, and that dilutes the experience. Even a few hours paid employment helps maintain a sense of self-respect.

I found it's too easy to ignore the world beyond the campus. There's so many distractions, but if you make an effort to get out, even if it's only working in a bar or something, it really pays off. You make new friends and see other people's lives and it gets what you're doing in perspective. You also don't get so complacent and you remember that you're going to leave and get a job some time. It just keeps you sharp.

## Deciding What To Do For a living

There are probably at least a dozen professions that would each be just as right for you as another. So don't imprison yourself with the notion that there's one thing you're made for, and if you can't do that it's not worth bothering.

Have a thorough, in-depth review of what you've done in your life, and what you've wanted to do. Be totally honest with yourself. It is vital to know what you don't like, just as much as what you do, so don't regret the 'miserable' experiences.

If you like performing to an attentive audience, that could make you a good teacher, a barrister, an actor, or a sales executive - yet each of these professions offers quite different styles of life and a sense of who and what you are. You might want constant change and adventure or you might prefer security and stability in your life because you've got a great place to live and great friends within driving distance. And, of course, all of this might change in 6 months time as new experiences develop your needs and horizons.

Raw enthusiasm isn't enough on its own; you've got to have a sense of direction.

Find yourself a path that you could put your whole heart into.

You don't need to give your future goal a 6-figure compass reference, but it helps to decide that you are going this way, rather than that.

Whatever you do, do it well. Doing things well brings a great sense of satisfaction, no matter that it's cleaning your bathroom or making a movie.

Identify your 'unusual features', your differences, and make these work for you. Make them a strength and explore and mine them. Let your 'uniqueness' be your 'competitive advantage'.

Make a niche for yourself. Find a job, a place, and make it yours.

Don't think you have to know what you're going to do by the end of the final year of university. If needs be, take the year afterwards to experiment, but don't just bum around; actively investigate various possibilities. Get a work placement somewhere, everywhere! Make it your business to learn about the various work options that might suit you.

Look for those activities or a career that you could take pride in saying you do: not just what

you do, but how you do it. Doing a good job has its own invisible rewards. Earn your living doing something that you thoroughly enjoy for its own sake before any consideration of the social status, or salary or approval it affords you.

Ask yourself, 'Do I know what my capabilities are? Where does my potential lie?' That's not to say that's what you'll do, or that's what you'll do for the next 10 years, but at least it's a good base to build upon.

It can be painful to realise that sometimes even your best friends don't always want to help you get where you're going, simply because they don't want to lose you.

Film making seems great until you've hung around a cold set all day for a ten-second shot that ends up on the cutting room floor, and you have to do the same thing four weeks running.

Many young people are worried about disappointing their parents, but this means their choices for action are limited by their parents' values.

Beware! Impressions of what a particular industry or a company is like, are very often false. Parents, friends and teachers can often be wrong or just out of date with what a particular world is really like. There is usually a place to suit a wide variety of personalities within any one organisation, and it's a question of exploring them. Challenge your prejudices by talking to people who actually do it everyday, and by experiencing the environment first hand. Internships, which is 2 or 3 months work experience within a company, are invaluable for you to see the organisation and for them to see you.

The greatest influence on everyday choices, behaviour and expectations is the real-life examples in your immediate vicinity. This is why you need to brush shoulders with a whole host of different worlds.

Take a year out after university to shape your ideas, to investigate a range of companies and industries. But don't try that near your home or where you went to university. You need perspective, and creating physical distance from those places and people you know is really the only way to achieve that.

Increased specialisation has for so long been the accepted norm, but it may now be giving way to a new form of 'artisan' who can single-handedly produce the whole product or service, and have the satisfaction of doing so.

Of the hundreds of thousands of would-be books that are written in Britain each year, only a few hundred get published and only a couple of dozen make enough money so that the author can concentrate full-time on their writing - and no more than a dozen writers in Britain get rich on it. The odds are awful: literally a thousand to one against of being published successfully.

Very few people make a reasonable living as novelists or book writers, very few people. Same goes for artists and musicians and actors and other creative artists and performers. You need to consider very carefully if it's the only thing you want to do with your youth. Why not deploy your creativity to make another better life for yourself.

## Landing a job

Internships, during the summer or otherwise, are a priceless way of gaining insight into a company or business. You get to see them, and they get to see you, benefiting you both.

In your final year at university, target very carefully what places you approach. Half a dozen would be a good number. No need for anymore if you do a proper job of it. Even big companies vary a lot in their Graduate Training Schemes. Some offer you an afternoon with a flip chart and coloured pens and that's that. Others send you abroad to specialist training courses, rotate you to a new job every 6 months, appoint mentors and peer-buddies and generally take training and development very seriously.

You have to make your own inquiries rather than expecting your university department to do it for you. Some departments are reluctant to have Careers Guidance officers talk to their students in case good students are lured away to attractive commercial jobs after graduation, rather than staying on to do post-graduate work on the projects that Professors run. This is particularly common in the science subjects.

Know about the organisation you're applying to. And if you're not excited enough to find out about them and their industry, then ask yourself whether you really want to work for them 50 hours per week. Ditto if you weren't excited enough to do a three month internship with them during your college years.

I couldn't just go in at the top. I had to prove myself to the people I wanted to work for, and to serve a sort of apprenticeship. That's the same no matter who you are.

If you haven't got the 'normal' qualifications for a job, it needn't stop you. Simply apply and prove yourself to the employer in an unorthodox way. Perhaps work for free for a while; or work in the same building and then get yourself noticed and appreciated or devise some other way to demonstrate your passion and abilities.

## Changing Direction

Don't expect to get the right job first time around. Be prepared to change, whether that's after a few weeks or months or even years. You will inevitably have acquired certain transferable skills, perhaps with computers, people or presentations, that you can always take with you into another line of work.

Lives change direction much more quickly now than they ever have in the past. What you want to do now might not be what you want to do in five or even just two years time. So don't be afraid of making a new choice.

First rule is to love what you're setting out to do. Second rule is to give yourself a time limit. Don't just bang your head against the wall till you're thirty; get on and do something else with your life. No one's a one trick wonder. Find or create another way forward for yourself. Deploy your well-developed talents in another direction. Do you want to go past 25 years of age still drifting? I'm rich and famous, but believe me there are better things in life that are far more fundamental and really very 'earn-able and plan-able'. Don't let the mirages in the distance delude you.

Get as much hands-on experience as possible. People think success happens overnight, but really it takes several years. Don't put a time limit on what you are trying to achieve just as long as you feel strongly that it's worthwhile. Keep doing it while its enjoyable, that should be your rule. Let the passion decide for how long you'll continue.

What have you always enjoyed? Your answer might be a good vantage point from which to see new directions in life.

You will only feel dissatisfied with yourself if you don't try your best ... and the old adage of "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well," really does hold true.

You only keep going and get really good at things if you enjoy them enough. So don't kid yourself or other people. Once you've given something a go, own up to how much you really like it.

There are probably several things that would be just right for you, but that doesn't mean you have to choose between them. You could make a rewarding life out of a mix of things without forcing yourself into one pigeon-hole. I spent ages worrying about finding the one thing I would love to do, before I discovered that it didn't exist. So I built a sort of portfolio of working roles for myself that has proved very satisfying ever since.

Every sportsman has to build a second career, and there's only a small number who can go on to be coaches or managers or commentators. You have to look ahead and work out what you'd like to do and start preparing the ground for it. It can be very exciting going into another profession after several years in a previous one. Nothing to be worried about, because you'll have developed a whole range of transferable skills and experiences from your previous field.

Just because you're good at something, doesn't mean you have to pursue it. Success can get you into a lot of trouble if you don't handle it properly, because it can take you in accidental directions. You might be good at the piano, but that doesn't mean you have to become an orchestra musician.

Master your craft in whatever walk of life. Regularly ask yourself if you're doing the right thing for yourself and for those you love dearly. Don't do things just because other people think it's a good idea.

Never lose sight of those things that are fundamentally important to you, and use them as landmarks to help you keep your bearings on route.

Today's charity worker is next year's corporate lawyer, and vice versa. Keeping a flexible outlook is the key. You're committing to a couple of years, not the rest of your life. Don't freeze in the headlights of decision-making and end up doing nothing at all.

There is a grave danger that if you undergo a miserable journey in the hopes that it will lead to better things, it may only lead to more or the same miserable journeys. There will always be 'tough days' or even awful weeks, but miserable months might be telling you something.

You'll only make the most of your life if you feel it really is your life and you get to choose which direction it goes in and what routes it takes.