



LOVE WHAT YOU DO

You spend one-third of your life working so why not do something you love? If you don't know what career would spark up your life, or your beliefs are holding you back from pursuing your passion, here's some help.

WORDS / SONIA ZADRO

"It seems to me that in the last analysis there are only two choices: Macbeth's contention that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury and signifying nothing, and Pierre Teilhard's 'something is afoot in the universe, something that looks like gestation and birth'. Either there is a plan and purpose — and that plan and purpose can best be expressed by the words 'life' and 'love' — or we live in a cruel, arbitrary and deceptive cosmos in which our lives are a brief transition between two oblivions."

~ Andrew Greeley,
The Courage of Conviction

Andrew Greeley, priest, sociologist, journalist and popular novelist, paints a black-and-white perspective. Either you can embrace your calling and live a life bursting with love, joy and purpose — or not and live a life mired in meaninglessness and despair.

I would think a person's future is more complex than this, with more ups and downs and shades of grey, but the quote does capture the idea that your potential to aspire to your greatest joy or to live a small unfulfilled life is in your hands. Of those two possibilities, which are you currently closest to?

A SEARCH FOR MEANING

Viktor Frankl was a psychoanalyst who survived the concentration camps of the Second World War. During his time in captivity, he observed the other prisoners and noticed that their survival didn't necessarily relate to their degree of malnourishment but rather their will: whether they had some purpose that motivated them to stay alive so it could be fulfilled if they survived the horrors of the camp. For some it was to see their children, for others it was to write a book or pursue a career.

Frankl survived the camp and began a whole field of therapy around the

Work that gives you purpose does not have to be grandiose but, if you seek to do more of it regardless of payment, then you know you are on the right path. This became very clear to me when I worked as a TAFE counsellor for many years. I'll never forget the client who came in looking utterly depressed, withdrawn and hopeless, stating, "I want to be the person that stitches the material together on car seats." He spoke of the attention to detail with the work and the idea of putting the pieces of fabric together to mould to the shape of the car. He had enrolled in the trade that enabled him to do this. His father discovered his career choice and forbade him from pursuing it: "This is not a man's work. A man does not sew for a living." But it was all that my client wanted to do. When he spoke about it, his eyes lit up and his face filled with enthusiasm.

This made me realise that the notion that people shouldn't define themselves

WHAT GIVES YOU JOY?

and purpose. Follow a career that fills us with energy. Total lives working, we'd be crazy not to spend approximately one-third of our career simultaneously. Given that we some people pursue more than one career seven times in their lives. And Training, most Australians will change Department of Education, Science and According to research from the doesn't really energise you.

pays the bills and has some perks but drained? Perhaps you don't mind it; it with energy or does it make you feel what you do for a living? Does it fill you love and who love you. But what about The answer is usually the people you important thing?"

to be about? What is the single most me meaning? What do I want my life up in the morning? What really gives Ask yourself right now, "Why do I get But why wait for a major life crisis? cancer scare or a serious accident. want to do?" This may be in the face of a around for long — what is it that I really "I don't have much time left, I'm not be in absolute crisis before they feel Often people wait for their lives to will to discover that meaning.

and the main motivation for living is the even at its most miserable, has meaning, called his theory logotherapy: that life, purpose is fundamental to happiness. He notion that the search for meaning and

The idea that you should do only what you love as a hobby isn't the only belief blocking people from experiencing joy in work. Others include the following: "I'm not good enough," "I could never aspire to that; it's too ambitious," "What will everyone think of me?" "Women don't do that," "Men don't do that," "People will judge me or laugh at me." "Everyone wants to be a singer or a painter or a model or an actor; there are too many people doing it and it's too competitive — I'll never really make it." The list goes on.

At the end of the day, the one thing that stood out to me as a careers counsellor is that what motivates you and fills you with life in your work is not something that motivates other people. The joy you feel when engaging in your chosen passion is unique to you. By giving yourself permission to express this joy, you are honouring your life.

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by their career is not correct. Sure, there's more to you than what you do for a living, but what drives you in life, how you express your passion and joy in your work, says so much about you as a person. As such, it's important to honour these passions and feelings — not dismiss them as just dreams; not minimise, belittle or judge them. As with any feelings, they are there for a good reason: they are trying to communicate something to you. Listen to them.

Sometimes, if you seek your parents' advice, they can have the attitude of, "Oh yes, that's a nice dream. You can do that as a hobby but you need a real career to bring in the money." Such parents are well intentioned and practical but they can also be dream-killers. Common sense and realism have an important place — of course, if you're broke and need to support a family then finding a stable source of income is a must — but that doesn't mean you should give up completely on pursuing what you love. And keep in mind that when your work is something you love it generates its own energy and with that it usually generates its own income.

If you're clear about what you want in your career but are not pursuing it, you may need to look at your blocking beliefs. If you're not honest about your excuses and fears, they will block you your entire life.

In their book *Soul Work: Finding the Work You Love, Loving the Work You Have*, Deborah Bloch and Lee Richmond suggest that the following questions may help:

- What do I need to let go of in my life to move forward?
- What will I miss out on if I don't move towards what gives me energy?
- What is the balance between risk and security?

On the other hand, fears and negative beliefs are one thing but some people just don't know what they want to do. Even when they've reached 30 or 40 they can't identify their passion. If you're one of these people, a good place to start is by closing your eyes and thinking carefully about the following question: "If you could do anything at all in the world, if there were absolutely no limits — that is, you had unlimited money, talent and confidence and there were no obstacles in your way, and obstacles from those around you, and you had no doubts or fears within you — what would you do?"

If you come up with a clear answer then you should listen; it's at least heading you in the right general direction. You might come up with "astronaut" and know you're absolutely hopeless at maths and science. But it still could be a clue to a related career. If however you still come up with nothing, then it's time to turn to some practical resources to give you some ideas. It's good to consult these sources anyway unless you have a very clear sense of what you want to do. Career questionnaires are a good place to start.

Some questionnaires focus on personality and what type of career your personality type would suit. The Myers-Briggs test is a popular choice here. It examines four scales: extraversion/introversion, sensory/intuitive, thinking/feeling and judging/perceiving. On completion you end up with one of 16 combinations and these are then matched to certain careers. You can do this usually for a small fee online. A good place to start is the website personalitypage.com, which charges US\$5.

HOW TO GET STARTED





There's more to you than what you do for a living, but what drives you in life, how you express your passion and joy in your work, says so much about you as a person.

John Holland's Self-Directed Search questionnaire is based on the idea that people seek environments that let them express their skills, abilities, attitudes and values and take on roles which appeal to them. He defines six "types" of people: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional.

An example of a category is that "realistic" people are often frank,

practical and persistent and like jobs such as car mechanic, electrician or aircraft controller. These people often have mechanical ability but may lack social skills. This questionnaire costs US\$9.95 to complete online at self-directed-search.com.

Other career questionnaires focus on everyday preferences such as, "Do you like working indoors or outdoors?"

A good one to try is the Career Voyage because it provides 40 specific career options at the end with practical related information. It takes about 30 minutes to complete and you can find it online through the Western Sydney Institute (WSI) of TAFE (wsi.tafensw.edu.au) or WSI's Open Training and Education Network (oten.tafensw.edu.au).

A good general website for up-to-date career information is joboutlook.gov.au: just type in the occupation and search. It will let you know the personality skills needed for the job, as well as job earnings, size, prospect and training required.

Finally, if you're still not certain about what direction to take, don't despair. Gather information about yourself through career questionnaire then trust your intuition and simply try something. So often we may not be certain about a path until we actually follow it. We might think we'll love it but it turns out to be different from what we expected. Or we might be unsure about it and love it when we start doing it. This is normal. At the end of the day, if you value how you spend a third of your life, then spend it with energy and purpose. 🌱

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LIFE PURPOSE EXERCISE

Imagine two timelines before you, stretching out to your last day on this planet at the other end of the room.

Timeline A represents your positive timeline. Its last day represents your ideal last day, in that everything you've wanted to achieve in this life has been achieved. This includes your work: you have pursued a career that has filled you with excitement and meaning.

Timeline B represents your life not fully lived: your regrets with regard to your life, including your work. Imagine what might make up this timeline and some of the reasons for these unfulfilled dreams.

Walk to the last day of timeline B. How does this feel? How does your body feel physically? Feel your regrets, your dissatisfaction.

Now slowly walk towards timeline A and, once you're standing on it, feel

what it's like to live the life you always wanted. Breathe into it. How does your body feel? Light? Heavy? Tense with fear? Tingling with excitement? If negative feelings come up, ask, "What is this tension or heaviness about? What am I afraid of? Why do I feel burdened?" Your body provides the truest expression of your feelings and truth. Then ask yourself, "What quality do I need to get closer to my dreams? Is it belief in myself, self-love or courage? What colour is this quality?" Very slowly step into this quality and colour and feel it move through all your cells. How does your body physically feel now?

Which timeline are you more aligned with in your life at the moment: fulfilling your dreams or a life of regrets? If you're on the path of regret, what would it take for you to change your life?