**Ten Tips for Creating a Career That Lights Your Fire**

Have you ever found yourself so excited about something that the energy it generates just seems to pull you along? Imagine feeling that every day in the work you do. It’s possible. What’s more, it’s within reach! Here is a Passion Primer to help you begin exploring your passions and discovering ways, whether big or small, to incorporate them into your life.

**Get to know yourself**

Before you strike off in pursuit of a career that really lights your fire, take some time to do some serious self-exploration. One of my favorite approaches is creating what I call a Passion Profile. Make a list of all the things in your life — from childhood through now — that you have really enjoyed. Items could be related to work or play, an event, or a period of time in your life. Once you have your list, pick one item and start digging into the reasons why you enjoy it. Get beyond what you love doing, and break it down into the underlying characteristics. Think of it as identifying your passion’s building blocks. The question why is a powerful tool for your explorations. Use it liberally, both in this exercise and others.

**Brainstorm**

Once you have a picture of what lights your fire, brainstorm ways you could incorporate them into your life. Write them down in one session or tuck the question in the back of your mind and carry a small pad of paper with you to record your flashes of inspiration. Have a brainstorming session with friends. Above all, be creative. Don’t confine yourself to the logical and rational. You never know what crazy idea is going to spark the Big One.

**Explore**

Ask, ask, ask! Once you have identified some things you think you might be interested in, identify people who are knowledgeable in those area(s) and contact them. Explain that you are exploring your options and ask if you can pick their brains. You’ll get some fantastic insights if you make this a habit, not to mention making some great contacts along the way.

**Baby steps**

The fear of jumping in the deep end of the passion pool keeps many people from swimming at all. Remember that there’s a shallow end of the pool. It may not be realistic to jump into the deep end right away, but you can still enjoy splashing in the water. Look for baby steps you can take that will bring your passion into your life. Keep your eyes on the long-term goal, but take action to create your passion in small doses along the way.

**Identify your obstacles**

What things are getting in your way? Make a list. Maybe they’re real — financial obstacles like a mortgage, the kids’ tuition, etc., or perhaps the need for more training. Maybe they are internal. What’s stopping you? Fear? Self-doubt? Simple inertia? We all have gremlins. Little voices in our heads that tell us “you can’t do that,” “you’re not good enough,” “what will they think,” etc. What are your gremlins saying? Identifying and acknowledging your gremlins is the first step in taking their power away. Create a Passion Posse In my interviews with people who have followed their dream, the most commonly mentioned success factor has been the support of the people around them. Create a Passion Posse to support you in your pursuit. Friends, family, and colleagues can all be a great source of support and inspiration as you make your journey. It can be an informal support network, or a regularly scheduled meeting to exchange ideas and brainstorm solutions to challenges.

**Re-examine your definitions of success and failure**

What is your definition of success? Is it getting in the way? Our culture places a lot of emphasis material accomplishments and status. Unfortunately, those things get in the way of real happiness for a lot of people, who choose to stay on the treadmill in pursuit of that version of success. Perhaps you’re not at a point where you can or want to change that definition of success. That’s OK, don’t. Instead, try identifying one or two less common ways of identifying “success” — ones that come from the heart — and try to move toward them as well. Our definition of failure, which tends to be all or nothing, also gets in the way. If you try something and it doesn’t pan out, how do you see that? Is it a failure? Or is it an opportunity to learn from what you did and apply that knowledge to your future efforts? If you “fail” in an effort to move toward your passion, it’s not really failure. Think of it as a step in the right direction. Taking a longer term view can help with this.

**Make a plan**

Map out your Passion Pursuit. Whether that should be a high-level overview or a gradual action plan is up to you — you know how you work best. Creating a plan will force you to think things through and add some comfortable structure to something that can seem very up in the air and undefined. It will also offer you those critical next steps when you are feeling sluggish or lost.

**Act! Today!**

The fact is, the time will never be right. Something will always be less than optimum. With that in mind, don’t wait! Do something right now that will move you toward your passion. What two things can you do right away that will start the ball rolling? They don’t need to be earth-shattering; they just need to happen.

**Commit to making it happen**

Let it out of your brain and into the open. Say, “I will do this.” Say it out loud to yourself. Say it to a friend. Put it in writing and put it where you can see it. Once it’s out in the open it will have room to grow. And that’s exactly what you want! Questions about some of the terminology used in this article? Get more information (definitions and links) on key college, career, and job-search terms by going to our Job-Seeker’s Glossary of Job-Hunting Terms.