

Finding the Work You Love

How to Find Fulfillment and Success

by Doing What You Love to Do and Being what you Choose to Be



By g Hamilton

Yiheyuan Martial Arts

Finding the Work You Love

"When you are doing what your soul wants you to do, you are filled with meaning and purpose, you are grateful to be alive, even in difficult times, and your creativity fulfills you. On the other hand, if you wonder why you are alive each day and each day is difficult, like walking up a sand dune, you are not doing what your soul wants you to do.

Your inner sense of meaning is like a compass needle that always points in the direction your soul wants to travel. The closer you come to that direction, the more meaning you experience. The farther you wander from that direction, the less meaning you experience. So if your life is not meaningful to you, try something different."

Gary Zukav

This guide is about discovering what it is that you feel that you were born to do; what it is that, when you are doing it, makes your heart sing. You might like to print off a copy so that you can fill in your answers to the questions in the spaces provided.

If you already know what that is and you are already doing it, you don't need to read any further.

If, however, you are currently trudging up that sand dune, or running ever-faster round the treadmill, getting more and more weary and wondering what the heck it's all for and how you can get off and get a life, this is for you.

This is not a regurgitation of a pile of self-help books, this is some tried-and-tested advice based on my own direct experience.

I don't know if you currently have employment or are looking for work, so I will offer suggestions to suit each of these possibilities.

I will begin by addressing those of you who are currently in employment but find it unsatisfying and wonder how you will survive it until you reach the ever-rising retirement age and are old enough to claim your pension. (If you are currently unemployed, you may wish to go straight to the "Moving On" section.)

If that is how you are feeling, it is time for a paradigm shift.

So many people see their work as a necessary chore whose sole purpose is to earn enough money to support themselves and their families, buy a few luxuries and get away for a holiday once a year. There's the build up to the holiday, counting the days; then there's the great escape to somewhere-or-other and the first few days spent letting go of all the stress; then the days spent dreading going back; and then the return to the treadmill and starting to save up again for next year's escape. There seems to be no end to it until we retire or "go out in a box".

That's a very sad situation - I know because I've been there, usually without the holidays - and it doesn't have to be that way.

We spend a high percentage of our lives, the very prime of our lives, working. So if we are to feel fully alive, we need to enjoy the work that we are doing. This doesn't mean just soldiering on day after day and living for the weekends and the annual holiday; it means enjoying our work for its own sake, on a daily basis.

There are basically two ways of doing this:

1. We can learn to love the work we are already doing.
2. We can go do something else.

Let's look at each of those possibilities in turn. You may have already had a very strong reaction when you looked at the options above and you may already know, in your heart of hearts, whether you want to stay or go. If not, it may be useful to do the following exercise. Begin by listing as many items as possible in each column of the table. Be honest. If you're feeling very emotional it's easy to dwell on the bad stuff, but try to think of some good things your job has going for it if you can.

What I like about my job	What I don't like about my job

Staying where you are

If there's a substantial set of good things about your job in the left hand column and only a few niggles in the other one, it may be that you generally see your work as worth doing and you're just going through a rough patch and can maybe take a few practical steps to solve the niggles, like talking to your boss or your team and finding win-win solutions that improve the situation for you and possibly for them too.

Perhaps the service you are offering to others is so important to you that you feel it's worth putting up with some niggles in order to keep providing that valuable service, whether you teach children, nurse the sick, clean sewers, sell insurance, break up rocks or sweep streets.

Martin Luther King once said:

"If you are called to be a street sweeper, sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great sweeper who did his job well.'"

If you feel you have a calling and take pride in doing your work well, whatever it is and whatever anyone else thinks about it, then you are a fortunate person indeed. If there are some aspects of the job that get under your skin, maybe they are things that make other people's lives difficult too and you can work together to sort them out. Do you have any examples of this?

It may be that the job itself is OK but there's so much red tape attached that you feel hemmed in by targets, statistical reports, inspections and rules, and maybe you can find ways to simplify the paperwork, set up more user-friendly systems and thereby make it easier for everyone to just get on with the job. Might this be possible? What ideas do you have?

Maybe communications channels need improving so that one half of the work force doesn't have to read the minds of the other half to know why they are dissatisfied, and so that everyone can make constructive suggestions and be heard. Who could you talk to in order to improve communications in your workplace? Who most needs to talk to whom and what can you do to make this easier?

It may be that you feel undervalued and underpaid, particularly during the present global recession. Perhaps you need to ask for a promotion or a pay rise or suggest ways to improve the service offered to your customers and increase the productivity of your company so that there is more money available for everyone. Is this a possibility? What ideas do you have?

When you take time to think about it and jot a few things down, you may have lots of creative ideas for improving your present working conditions so that you can love the job that you are already doing.

Moving on

If, on the other hand, you couldn't think of anything to put in the left hand column and the right hand list was more or less bottomless, leaving you with the impression that you are a square peg in a round hole, perhaps it's time to discover what else you might be doing that would be more suited to your own unique strengths and talents and, perhaps more importantly, something you could be happy doing.

There are several questions coming up. Rather than just skim through them, I would like to suggest that you take your time in writing down the answers to each question in turn. The questions are equally valid if you are currently out of work and seeking employment.

1. If you had all the money you could ever need and ample time for whatever you chose to do, what work would you really love to be doing?

2. How would it feel to be doing that work?

3. What kinds of activities and experiences would you be enjoying?

11. How do you feel about the idea of work as fun, enjoyment, passion, creativity and pleasure?

12. What things can you do naturally and easily while others seem to find them a struggle?

13. What have other people in your life told you that you are good at?

14. Are your answers to the last two questions the same or different?

15. What do you consider to be your greatest talents, strengths or gifts?

16. Are you already using these talents in your work or might there be new ways to express them?

17. What do you long to be or to create?

18. What would you like to be your purpose in this life?

"When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break your bonds: your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be."

Patanjali, 2nd Century BC

19. If you could do or have anything you wanted, and you had unlimited money available, what would be your life's work?

20. What has been holding you back?

21. Are you prepared to receive money for doing what you love and loving what you do and being what you love to be?

22. What need does the world have for your talents?

"Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, there lies your vocation."

Aristotle

Provide a service and provide it with love and with all the creativity, energy, enthusiasm, inspiration and passion your soul has to offer. Bring joy to the world and then, when people recognize your sincerity, you may well discover that they will pay you for that service.

By now your mind may be buzzing with possibilities. The next step is to believe it is possible.

As Wayne Dyer said in his book of that title: "You'll see it when you believe it."

Whether our beliefs act as filters, interpreting and colouring the input from stuff happening "out there", or whether they act more like a movie projector, creating reality on the 4-D screen around you; either way, your beliefs shape your experience of reality.

If you truly want something, act as if it is already yours. Wanting pushes it further away from you because it implies that you believe you don't have it already (or there would be nothing to want!) In a similar manner, putting all your attention on the things you don't want tends to attract them to you, since what you put your attention on grows. Nobody ever got rich by putting their attention on their lack of money, or got happy by focusing on their misery.

There is a popular saying that: "What you resist persists."

It is also true that:

What you believe, you perceive.

So see yourself as you choose to be, doing the work you choose to do. Feel what it's like and believe that this way of life is yours, if not right at this moment then some time very soon. Set your attention on it, like laying in the course of a starship or switching the points on a train track, so that it is impossible for you not to reach your destination. Then enjoy the journey, living fully in the moment and experiencing each instant to the full.

Keep your attention focused on what you love and it will come to you. Remember that what you put your attention on grows and becomes your reality.

Mind is the creator of everything. You should therefore guide it to create only good. If you cling to a certain thought with dynamic will power, it finally assumes a tangible form. When you are able to employ your will always for constructive purposes, you become the controller of your destiny.

Paramahansa Yogananda - Author of "Autobiography of a Yogi"

Intend and expect the very best of outcomes for yourself and others. Unity is all there is, therefore it is obvious that you will succeed, since what you choose to be is what you already are.

You can start right now by taking small steps.

Can you begin to find small ways to gradually let go of some of the things that are not compatible with your vision and replace them with things that are?

Might it be possible to take on a few tasks that make you feel alive and whole, peaceful and energised and heading in the right direction? What sort of tasks might these be?

If you are worried about where the money will come from, could you begin by doing one or two of your chosen activities in your spare time?

Can you think of any extra knowledge and skills that might be useful and where you might get these? Could you make a start by reading and researching or going on a course to learn some of the skills that you might need?

Your research may help you to be ready for any new opportunities that come your way and you may also meet new people who share your interests and can offer you those new opportunities or advice.

Rather than leave a well-paid full time job and plunge headlong into a new career, could you gradually reduce the hours in your present job and build up the number of hours you spend doing the work you love to do?

It's worth remembering that there are many different types of work, not just full time employment. You could become self employed, run your own business, invest in property, buy and sell businesses or become an entrepreneur.

The Tax Return form for self-employed people has space for both employment and self-employment. It is becoming very normal for people to have more than one type of employment. The days of one secure job from school to retirement and a decent pension are long gone.

Many people now have what's called "a portfolio career", with different types of work on different days. This could give you the freedom and flexibility to experiment and gradually fill your time with more and more of the types of work you love to do.

What type of work would you not need to/want to retire from when you reach retirement age, because you love it so much?

In this way, you may not only replace your full time income without taking a huge gamble or undergoing temporary hardship, you might even increase it. This flexibility is also a kind of insurance to insulate you against some of the risk of redundancy during economic down turns.

If it's true that when one door closes, another door opens, it's good to have lots of doors to choose from.

A final word of advice before you just go out and do it: cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Be deeply thankful for everything you already have and for all the good things you are attracting to you right now simply by focusing the power of your attention on them.

Make a list right now of things you are grateful for.

Your work can be the joyful expression of your soul.

Once you truly believe this and begin to take steps in the direction your soul wants you to go, you can find the weight dropping from your shoulders, a spring in your step and a smile on your face and you can experience a deep feeling of relief and bliss and healing. It would not be surprising if you were soon to feel at least ten years younger.

Every day can be another opportunity to create something beautiful and make new discoveries that inspire you and give your life meaning, and when it's time to move on from this world to whatever lies ahead on the next stage of our journey, you will know that your life was well-lived and your work was worthwhile.