



HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR PASSION AND WHAT TO DO WITH IT

- Dr. David Turpen

Passion is a critical component to successful living. Passion is the internal motivation (i.e. inspiration) that keeps you moving forward when things get tough. Passion is the goal of your “love” – as in, “I love to _____.” If your passion is helping people, in whatever context, then academics and careers that allow you to feel that passion become your outlet for living fulfilled. You’ve heard the adage, *if you do what you love you’ll never work a day in your life*. Remember this, passion is not what you do (i.e. your job or career), it’s who you are. Your career is simply how you express it. Meaning, you aren’t pigeonholed to just one job, your passion can be expressed through a myriad of different careers. Your passion is greater than your career or academic major. Having this perspective also takes the pressure off of making the right choice – you don’t have just one job possibility – you can focus on what you love and what matters most.

One of the most important aspects to personal happiness, joy, and living the life you want to live is doing what you’re passionate about. Don’t live for the weekend and dread Sunday night because you know you have to return to a job you hate on Monday morning. Life is too short not to love the work you do. Identifying your passion can sometimes be a challenge. Provide 3-5 answers for each question listed below. When you reach the last question, go back through your answers and identify common themes. These themes can help you solidify your passion and avenues through which you can live it out.

1. In your free time, what do you spend the most time doing? What do you love to do when you don’t have responsibilities for other things? Unless they really “fire you up,” do not include things you have to do (e.g. grocery shopping, fixing lunch) or things you do to make yourself more attractive (e.g. working out). What is it you truly enjoy spending your time doing?



2. What skills or abilities do you have that come to you naturally? These require little thought or effort on your part. (e.g. working with your hands, writing, math, problem solving)

3. Your answers from question 2 are your strengths. Now, describe the things that make or times when you “feel strong.” This is where your strengths overlap with something you’re doing (or have done). For example, you can be good at writing but feel strong when you’re leading meetings and helping people. Organization and articulation are included in both but each has different applications.

I feel strong when I..._____

4. What were your favorite subjects and classes in high school? In college?

5. If you could do any job, what would it be? What did you dream about doing/being when you were a child (pre age 14)?

6. In what areas do others seek your input, advice, or opinion? You might consider yourself an “expert” in these areas.

7. Consider places you’ve visited or lived, people you’ve known, things or activities you’ve done – what types of things energize, excite, or make you smile?

8. What do you enjoy reading about – books, magazines, online? What topics or subjects do you gravitate toward when you visit a library or book store?

9. What are the values that guide your life? What beliefs, attitudes, or character traits are non-negotiable for you? What matters the most to you about yourself...about other people?

10. What are your work values? These are things that you *need* to be happy in your work life. Things like a dark room with no talking; a window and the ability to see other people; freedom to figure out your tasks without your boss watching over your shoulder and telling you what they should be – these are work values.

11. What kind of volunteer work have you done that you found especially rewarding? Community service? Mission trips? What was it about these experiences that you found most fulfilling?

12. What have your friends and family consistently told you you're good at or a career or job you would be excellent at doing? Have you had a career in mind that you've always deeply desired to do but might have been reluctant to share with others? Do you think about your "calling" in life? What would it be?

13. Think about your friends, relatives, and those closest to you – list the careers they are involved with. Do any of these grab your attention? Write them down.

Where are you living? _____

How much money are you making? _____

What difference are you making in the world? _____

How do you feel right now, in this moment, doing this exercise – like you can climb mountains? _____

What activities make you lose track of time? _____

If you could teach anything, what would you teach? _____

If you won the lottery, what would you do? Start your own business? Never work again? Donate some, live on the rest? Continue working? _____

On a separate piece of paper, commit to writing for the next 20-minutes about who are and what you offer to the world? What do you think your life purpose is? Don't stop writing for at least 20-minutes and let the process lead you where it goes and see where it takes you.

Once you've identified some of the trends and common themes, start to combine them into statements that could serve as a brief life purpose statement. For example, you find the theme of helping people and traveling. A purpose statement might be to help people plan their domestic vacations. Or you like to organize and design, maybe a purpose statement would be to bring order and beauty to chaotic lives or places.

Identified themes and trends _____

Possible purpose statements _____

Once you've got a purpose statement, brainstorm ideas on possible careers that would fuel your passion. For example:

Purpose statement – Help people find happiness in their careers.

Career brainstorm: career coach, HR specialist, job recruiter, career services for alumni, college admissions director, guidance counselor, career counselor, teacher/instructor, etc. Note how all these jobs are related to the purpose statement.

Rule for brainstorming – nothing is off limits. All ideas are viable, credible, and good. Write it all down and make your list of possible jobs.

Now rank these jobs in the order of what excites you most, not on whether you can do it tomorrow. Your top three are where you're going to focus your attention.