

Pursue Your Passion

HOW TO FIND *YOUR PASSION* AND
MAKE MONEY DOING WHAT YOU LOVE



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The image shows a group of diverse young adults in a classroom setting, all giving thumbs up. The background is a bright, modern classroom with large windows. The text and logos are overlaid on the image.

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Chapter 1: Find Your Passion

Everyone has a passion. It often manifests during childhood and is pursued through play or it is stumbled upon as we age but almost immediately put aside for more practical things like work and building a family. Children are free to actively pursue the things that interest them, but as they age they are encouraged to go after more practical pursuits often putting their passion aside. However, it isn't impossible or impractical to continue to follow your passion even as you age. Doing what you love even as a hobby can go a long way to living a life that you enjoy. There was a time when people weren't encouraged to follow or even consider passion when living their lives. Survival was the most important and that often meant working from sun up to sundown with only room for sleeping and eating. Things like hobbies and passion weren't discussed or even considered because there was no room for it.

Thanks to societal changes like the Industrial Revolution and the advent of technology, we no longer have to toil so hard just to survive. We have the luxury of only having to work 40 hours a week (give or take) and having weekends off to do things like goof off, go on vacation or discover and pursue our passion. With our overly scheduled lives that might not seem like much time but any time spent actively seeking your heart's desire is better than no time at all. Over time, we often forget the passions of our childhood or even the ones we discover as we age. So discovering our passion is often the first step down a path of actively pursuing it. If you're

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unsure how to go about discovering your passion, here are some steps to get you thinking in the right direction.

1. Take a stroll down memory lane and make a list.

Think back to when you were a kid. What are some of the things you really loved doing? What are some of the things you thought were really cool but couldn't do? What are some of the things you really wanted to try but didn't think you'd be good at it? Write everything down, no matter how silly it may sound. This is a great time to throw practicality completely out of the window and live in a fantasy land, even if only for a moment. Take some time with this but not too long. You don't want to spend the rest of your days dreaming about what your passion could be. You want to actually pursue it!

2. Consider your current job. What are some things that you are tasked with doing at work that you enjoy?

While this may not be as fun as strolling down memory lane, it's important to consider what you enjoy doing as an adult. Make a separate list. It may be best to do this while you're actually at work so you can fully assess your daily tasks. Write down everything that comes to mind even the most mundane tasks. While it may not seem very cool to write that you enjoy creating spreadsheets or collating papers, it still counts. Passion isn't always considered cool or trendy but if you love it, you should explore it.

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3. What would you do if you had all of the money you needed and didn't have to worry about paying your bills?

We all have to work to live. Yes we no longer have to work from sun up to sun down just to put food on the table (for the most part), but we still have bills to pay and mouths to feed (even if it's just your own mouth). This is another fun exercise and you're allowed to be as fanciful as you like. Practicality has no place in the world where all of our financial responsibilities are met and we're able to just live as we please. Make a separate list.

Now that you have these three lists, review them. You may notice some similarities between the lists. Take note of the similarities. If you're a fan of color coding, you can color code them or you can just make a separate list. The similarities you discover will lead you down the road to pursuing your passion. In fact, you may find some passions that are ripe for you to begin exploring right away. However, don't throw away the other lists. Keep them in a safe place that you can easily access. Some of the other things on your list may be worth exploring at a later date. Even if it's an interest on one list, it could still take you down a path to your passion. The cool thing about passions is that they can often lead to other things you really enjoy.

The next step in this process is to go out and do some of the things from your final list. Approach this process in an exploratory manner, don't rush it. Finding your passion shouldn't be approached like a timed task. The whole point is to discover things that you enjoy and then do them. I realize that may be easier said than done but it's an important step in the process. So

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now that you have a list of some things you'd like to explore, you may be unsure how to proceed. Here are some tips on how to dig further into your newfound passion journey.

1. Take a class

There are tons of classes, both online and offline on almost any topic around. Do a quick web search for your topic and "class" to see what types of classes are available. For example, if one thing you wanted to do as a kid was climb trees and you live in Boston, do a web search of "climb trees class" or "climb trees class Boston" and you will begin to find classes, courses and articles about climbing trees and the ones specific to the Boston area.

2. Join a group

There is a wonderful website called www.meetup.com where people are encouraged to create groups around a specific interest. I encourage everyone to create a profile on meetup.com. It's free to join and is a great resource. Once you create a profile, you can do a search for any interest and the site will show you all of the groups related to that interest in your area. Then you can join the groups and participate in their meetups. The different groups are free to join for the most part. The ones that require a fee are typically very affordable and may be worth the extra investment. It's a great way to not only explore your interests but meet other people who share your interests and possibly make new friends.

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3. Read a book

If you're not feeling particularly adventurous at the moment but still want to dive into these interests you forgot you had, reading is a great way to explore it without leaving your house. While I do encourage you to eventually get out into the world and actually explore your interests through action, reading is a good step. You can do a search of your favorite online book seller, visit your local bookstore or spend some time in your local library. Get as many books as you can read at one time and spend some time between those pages exploring your interests.

Chapter 2: Find Your Passion's Skillset

Congratulations! You've started down the path of finding your passion. By now you should have at least identified a few things that you are passionate about and be exploring at least one or two of them. Hopefully, you're enjoying this foray into fun and learning more about yourself. In the meantime, let's get back to why you stopped pursuing your passions in the first place; practicality.

Many of the things we're passionate about aren't really the most practical things to do when you grow up and become a "responsible" adult (Let's be honest. Who actually feels like a responsible adult when you become one?). Once you've settled into "real life" and started working and taking care of all of the not so fun adult responsibilities, you may find it challenging to do things that don't contribute to your personal bottom line. It may feel indulgent to take time off to do things like fly kites or write short stories when they don't directly contribute to maintaining your household. So while you may do them occasionally, they will often be put off when more pressing "responsible" concerns arise like having to take the car in for repairs or take the kids to their extracurricular activities.

While doing something purely for enjoyment may feel indulgent, most passion pursuits require a level of skill. Some people really enjoy building websites and that's obviously a marketable skill but if your passion is more obscure, it may be tough to find the practical skills behind it. Don't give up

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and move on to something that you kind of like and abandon your passion, though. It is possible to find the practical skills behind your passion. I'm going to take two examples of passions, one more common and the other more fanciful and show you how it can be done.

Writing Short Stories

Let's start with the more common one. There are many secret writers out there who love to create poetry or prose be it non-fiction or fiction but we all know that most authors don't end up on the best seller list. In fact, most writers never make a dime from their writings. But just because they may not profit from their narrative musings, it doesn't mean that writers aren't building a skill set. While it may seem obvious, there are some skills there that might not be so immediately noticeable as well as the more obvious ones. There are some steps to discover these skills.

1. Take an objective look at what you do as a writer.

When you sit down to write something, take a moment and jot down all of the things that you're doing or are about to do. For example:

- a. Create a story
- b. Organize the idea
- c. Create characters
- d. Research/describe the setting of the story

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- e. Commit to a project from start to finish
2. Research the job descriptions of writers. Do a web search for “writer job description”. This will give you some great insight into the skills built through writing.
 - a. Make a list of the skills you find in a few of the job descriptions.
 - b. Go through the list and pull out skills that you feel apply best to you and add them to the first list.
3. Research writers’ websites and look at the services they provide. These services might give you some insight into skills you hadn’t considered. Add them to your list.
4. Go to writing events and talk to other writers. There are conferences, festivals and networking events for a wide variety of topics. Find local writing events by doing a web search. Not only will you learn about the skills that you have developed, you might meet some cool new writing friends to support you in following your passion.

Flying Kites

Now we can move to a more fanciful hobby like flying kites. It may be tough to see that there are practical skills involved in this particular hobby but there are. For this example, we’re going to assume that

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you also enjoy creating and building kites. Let's go through the same steps.

1. Take an objective look at what you do as a kite flyer.
 - a. Visualize the kite
 - b. Draw the vision
 - c. Figure out the materials you plan to use
 - d. Map out how you plan to put it together
 - e. Build the kite
 - f. Test the kite
 - g. Tweak the kite in case it doesn't fly properly the first time
 - h. Commit to a project from start to finish
2. Research job descriptions of kite flyers and builders. You may not think these descriptions exist but you'd be surprised at the types of jobs that exist. Kite flying might very well be a viable job somewhere so it doesn't hurt to look.
3. Do some video website research. Find a how to video on kite making and make note of the steps. Then go through the steps objectively and pull out any skills you notice.
4. Research festivals, events and conferences related to kite building. Many of the more obscure or fanciful passions have festivals, events and parties created around them. These events will often have seminars and workshops that discuss the more technical aspects of

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the hobby. This is a great place to find those hidden skills you may be developing by building and flying kites. As an added bonus, you will begin to meet people who share your passion and might make some new friends.

As you can see, it is very possible to find practical skills that are being developed by pursuing your passion. Plus since it's something you truly enjoy doing and actively pursue, you're going to be really good at it.

Chapter 3: Monetize Your Passion

Once you've identified the practical skills behind your passion pursuit, you can consider having it make money for you. The really cool thing about any kind of specialized interest is that there are other people out there who share that interest. When your interest is really unique, it can be a very niche market but those people are also often very involved in their unique interests. But even if your passion is in a more general arena, there are ways to make money from it.

Find a Job

Since you've already done some research on job descriptions that relate to your passion, you can look further into those descriptions to see the kinds of companies that hire those people. If you are able to secure a job and use your career to pursue your passion, kudos! Many people aren't able to work in an area they're passionate about and you should fully enjoy and appreciate this opportunity. If you don't find a job right away, consider volunteering for an organization. You could support a positive cause while doing something you love.

Start a Membership Website/List

Many experts create websites or email lists where they share information on a regular basis for a monthly fee. If you enjoy flying

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and building kites, you could consider creating a membership list where you email members weekly tips on how to build better kites. Membership programs are great because they create income that comes in on a regular basis. As long as you continue to provide valuable information and good service to the members of your list, you'll have a steady stream of income. One way to get subscribers for your list is by attending those events, festivals and conferences mentioned in the previous chapter. You can request people's email addresses and find out if they'd be interested in signing up.

Create a Blog

Blogging is very popular and can be a great way to share your knowledge and passion while making money from it. With a blog you can make money promoting products, selling ad space or selling products. Plus, by blogging about something, you get the opportunity to showcase your knowledge and discuss your passion.

Chapter 4: Productize Your Passion

As I mentioned in the last chapter, selling products is a great way to monetize a blog but you can create and sell your own products without having a blog. Ideally, you should have some access to an interested audience of people to buy your products but even if you don't, you can still benefit by creating some. Now that you've done some research into your topic of interest and you know that you're not alone, you can rest assured that there are customers for your products.

Ebook

Ebooks are a great way to share your knowledge about a topic easily and independently. Typically, ebooks aren't expected to be hundreds of pages long which make them much easier to write than a novel. The length isn't as important as the quality of information but it should be more than just a few pages to make sure the buyers of it feel they've gotten their money's worth. As you know, many people purchase and read ebooks (like you're doing right now!) on their computers, smart phones or tablets on a regular basis. The key is to ensure that the information being provided is valuable. Even if you're writing on a topic that you're very knowledgeable about, do some research to make the book the best it can be.

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Video Course

If you prefer talking to writing, a video course is another way to monetize your passion. All you need is a camera that can shoot video, a tripod and an easy video editing program. Most computers (both MAC and PC) come with a basic video editing program. MACs come with iMovie and PCs come with Windows Movie Maker.

However if your computer doesn't have either, you can download Adobe Premiere Elements, which is another easy to use video editing program that works on both operating systems. You can download a trial to practice using it with limitations and then upgrade for less than \$100. Once you have the technical tools, you're ready to record but now you need a plan for your course.

1. Determine the goal of your course or your desired outcome. It helps to know the end result of the course then you can work backwards.
2. Write out the steps required to meet your desired outcome. Make sure you write it in the correct order as if you're going to tell someone how to do it in writing.
3. Decide how many videos you want in the course. Try to keep the course nice and tight but don't cram too much in one video. Ideally, an online video should be no more than 8 minutes long.
4. Create a plan for what you will cover in each video. Don't write a script. You will be tempted to memorize it and won't sound natural

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in your videos. Give yourself an outline to make sure you touch on all of the steps.

Now that you have everything you need, it's time to record your videos. Make sure you do it in a quiet room with good lighting. Be clear but concise in your instructions. Practice a little if necessary. It might be odd to see yourself on camera if this is your first time so do some test runs to get used to it.

Webinar Course

If you don't have a video camera or don't want to be on camera, you can do a webinar course that doesn't require that you be on camera in person. You will need to provide your voice and expertise, but that's it. The steps to creating a webinar course are similar to creating a video course.

1. Determine the goal of your course or your desired outcome.
2. Write out the steps required to meet your desired outcome. Make sure you write it in the correct order as if you're going to tell someone how to do it in writing.
3. Decide how many modules you want in the course. Try to keep it nice and tight and don't cram too much information into one module.
4. Create a presentation in PowerPoint or a similar program. This will be your plan but also provide visual materials for the people who

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will be participating in your webinar. If they can't see your lovely face, they should have a cool presentation to see.

Once you have these pieces organized, use a program like Web Ex which can cost up to \$89 per month or anymeeting.com which can cost up to \$69.99 per month. Both have free options which have limitations but may work when you're just starting out. If you're unsure how your products should look, do a web search for others that are similar to what you'd like to create. The web is a great repository of products that have been created and can be used to provide an example that you can work from.

Ideally, you would have a website or blog that you could use to market your products, but that isn't necessary. There are online marketplaces like ClickBank and Paydotcom where individuals can sell information products that they create. There are pros and cons to all marketplaces so do your research and make sure you read the fine print, carefully. Many people don't pay much attention to the terms listed on most websites but if you're selling your products, it's important that you do. You want to make sure that you understand and truly agree to those terms before you click to create an account and start selling your products.

Chapter 5: Scale Your Passion

In the entrepreneur community, scale, is a very popular word. It can mean several different things but in this case, it means growth. If you are able to take your passion and turn it into a business, that's a wonderful thing and should be applauded. If you can take that same business and successfully scale it, that should be commended. While it may seem like an unnecessary factor to consider, there are many businesses that make income but can't handle explosive or consistent growth. Some businesses are created to be and remain small. There's absolutely nothing wrong with keeping your work load small and easy to manage but if you want to turn your passion into a viable business that supports and sustains you, it has to be created to grow.

For example, if your passion is writing short stories, you can make money by writing short stories for other people. If it takes you three days to write and edit a complete story and you work on your stories Monday-Friday from 9am-4pm, you would only be able to churn out about 1.5 stories a week. If somehow the word got out and 5 people asked you to write a story a piece and they were all due in one week, you'd end up working a lot of overtime or have to turn away potential clients. This business model is not built to scale. You are limited to the number of stories you can produce and if you want to get more clients, you'd have to adjust your hours, write stories faster or hire other writers. It can be hard to make those kinds of changes once you've started working. But if you go into it knowing that

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those things will have to happen, you are more apt to be prepared when the time comes. One reason why many new businesses fail in the first three years of existence is that they're not built to properly handle growth. Yes, a lot of customers is a good problem to have but only if you can take advantage of the opportunity.

There are definitely some other processes that can be put in place to help with scalability like automating or outsourcing some of your business tasks. But with any process, it takes time and preparation to really benefit from them. When you are creating a business, it's ultimately up to you as the owner to consider your long term goals and what needs to happen to successfully grow your business. This is best done early on.

Chapter 6: Live Your Passion with Intention

Once you've identified your passion and found some practical uses for it, the hard part comes next. Living your passion won't be easy. You may find yourself having to defend it to family and friends. While standing up for your passion may be a challenge, it won't be the hardest one. You will have to consistently work with yourself to stay true to doing what you love. If you've made it all the way to adulthood without pursuing your passion, there's sometimes a very compelling reason; fear. It's not easy to put yourself out there to potentially be judged, especially if your passion is considered impractical. It can also be scary to do something that you aren't familiar with or comfortable doing. This fear is natural and shouldn't be used as an excuse not to move forward. If you have found something that you enjoy, it's worth it to pursue it.

Another thing that prevents more people from following their passion is failure. The fear of failure is one of the strongest and most paralyzing ones. However, the fear of success may be just as strong. Sometimes it's easier to simply sit and dream about what could be than it is to actually go out and do it. Both success and failure carry with them their own level of responsibility but in either case, you've made the first step and tried.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is

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our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be?

— Marianne Williamson, *Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of "A Course in Miracles"*

We can often be our own worst critics, especially when it comes to stepping outside of our own box and doing something different. Negative and doubtful self-talk is natural but it shouldn't stop you. Neither should you not knowing what to do next. Yes, I've given you some steps to follow but if you noticed, many of them involved doing some research. We live in a society where information is an important commodity and it's very readily available. Take advantage of it.

Just as not following your passion brings with it the responsibility of a dream unfulfilled, following your passion and being successful brings with it the responsibility that comes with that success. The great thing about following through with something that's risky is that even if you do fail, you can rest comfortably knowing that you tried. If you do nothing at all, you never know what could have been. Happiness is a decision. If you make the decision that you are going to follow your passion and that it will make you happy, it will.

Addendum: True Stories

When you begin to actively follow your passion, it could be an isolating experience. Often your family and friends won't be able to come with you on this journey. But there are a lot of other people out in the world who have taken that plunge and done so successfully. Here are three real people who took their passion and ran with it.

Angela Halsted: Passion is puzzling

Angela Halsted is a mother of who lives in Arlington, VA with her husband and two children. While she lives a happy life as a soccer mom and wife, she had an interest in puzzles-crossword puzzles to be more exact. One day she decided that she wanted to look into her interest to see what was out there. She would fill out crossword puzzles on her own and an internet search lead her to the world of crossword tournaments. She was hesitant but curious enough to check it out. She went and was pleasantly surprised at the number of people there. She struck up a conversation with some people and ended up talking about all of the random and obscure facts that everyone knew about. She was hooked. Since then she has become an active participant in the puzzling community event doing some guest puzzle submissions for publications like The New York Times. She also attends puzzle conventions and competitions and writes for different crossword blogs. While she didn't quit her day job or completely change her lifestyle, she found a way to successfully pursue her passion.

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Kevin West: Passion is jamming

Kevin West is an editor of *W* magazine who fell into his passion almost by happenstance. Although he grew up eating strawberry jam and pickled beets canned by his grandmother in his hometown in Eastern Tennessee, he didn't grow up with a passion for doing it himself. It wasn't until he bought an entire flat of strawberries that he found his passion for making jam. After buying the flat, he realized that he would not be able to eat them all before they go bad. Not wanting to waste a good crop of strawberries, he took some of them and made preserves, failing miserably. It was that failure that spurred him to push forward. He knew that preserves should taste a certain way and became determined to replicate the recipe of his grandmother. It took him some time, but he was victorious and created a tasty jar of preserves. Along the way he found his passion in creating jam and preserves. He hasn't quit his day job but canning is a passion that he pursues on a full time basis. He shares his passion through his blog and truly lives the canning life. He regularly eats food that he's canned and even encourages novices to take up canning. He is fully immersed in the canning lifestyle.

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Jenny Blake: Passion is writing

Jenny was one of the lucky ones. She found a great job that she loved. She made great money working for Google. While she loved her job, something was missing. She had an entrepreneurial spirit and always wanted to strike out on her own but the fear and uncertainty that comes with it kept her from making the leap. Plus her job was great, so she worked to be satisfied with it. She was living the corporate dream with a growing 401k, yearly bonuses and a nice salary. She loved her position and the work that she did at Google but in the mean time she continued to pursue her passion for writing by starting a blog which lead to her writing a book. After much thought, she took a three month leave of absence and self-funded her own book tour. After those three months, she realized that not only could she be an entrepreneur, she could excel at it. She left her job, which was not a popular decision, and is now blogging full time, coaching, speaking and promoting her book project. While she loved her job and all of the comforts it brought, she loves running her own business even more. It wasn't an easy decision to walk away from her comfortable life to pursue her passion as a career but she did it and is glad she did.