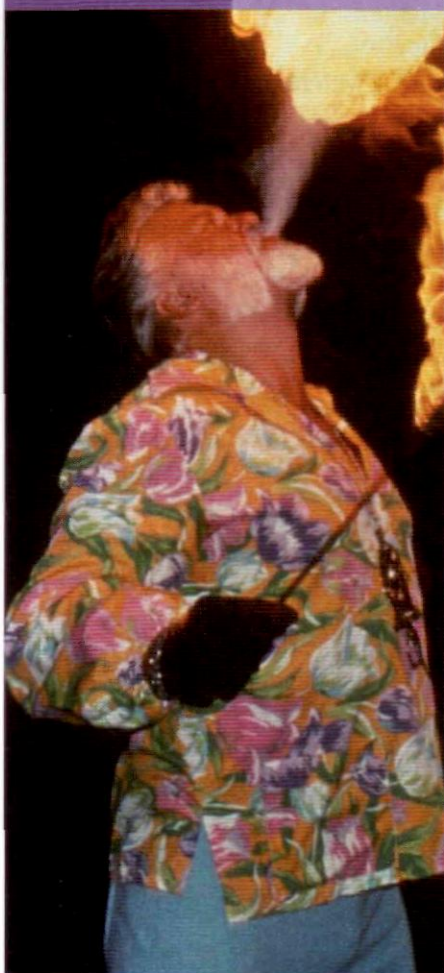


Ten Tips for Creating a Career That LIGHTS YOUR FIRE

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! Begin exploring your passions and discovering ways, big or small, to incorporate them into your life.



1 GET TO KNOW YOURSELF – Before you start off in pursuit of a career that really lights your fire, take some time to do some serious self-exploration. Make a list of all the things in your life that you have really enjoyed. It could be work or play, an event, a period of time in your life, etc. Pick one and start digging into the reasons why. Get beyond what you love doing, and break it down into the underlying characteristics. Think of it as identifying your passion's building blocks.

2 BRAINSTORM – Once you have a picture of the things that light your fire, brainstorm ways you could incorporate them into your life. Write them down alone or with friends, in one session or on a small pad of paper you carry with you. Above all, be creative. You never know what crazy idea is going to spark the Big One.

3 EXPLORE – Ask, ask, ask! Once you have identified some things you think you might be interested in, identify people who are knowledgeable in those areas 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.

4 BABY STEPS – The fear of jumping in the deep end of the passion pool keeps many people from swimming at all. Remember there's a shallow end too, so you can still enjoy splashing in the water. Look for baby steps you can take that will bring your passion into your life and keep you moving towards your long-term goal.

5 IDENTIFY YOUR OBSTACLES – What things are getting in your way? Make a list. Maybe they're real financial obstacles, or perhaps the need for more training. Maybe they are internal. What's stopping you? Fear? Self-doubt? Simple inertia? We all have voices in our heads that are always telling us 'You can't do that', 'You're not good enough', 'What will they think?', etc. Identifying and acknowledging those voices is the first step in taking their power away.

6 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. Friends, family and colleagues can all be a great source of support and inspiration. It can be an informal support network, or a regularly scheduled meeting to exchange ideas and brainstorm solutions to challenges.

7 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 on material accomplishments, status, etc.

Unfortunately, that gets 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 towards 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? 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.

8 MAKE A PLAN – Whether it's a high level overview or a step-by-step action plan, it 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.

9 ACT! TODAY! – The fact is, the time will never be right. Something is always going to be less than optimum. 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.

10 COMMIT TO MAKING IT HAPPEN – Let it out of your brain and into the open. Say, 'I am going to 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!