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1.1.

Your Passions Will Guide You

So achievers love to set up goals and to throw themselves into reaching those goals. Sometimes, however, they listen more to others than to their own hearts when deciding what goals to go for. In many cases, unfortunately, they choose goals they think will impress the people around them. Some achievers create an entire career just to make their parents proud or to gain status.

Choosing goals according to these criteria is unfortunate in that doing so requires you to throw your integrity out the window. Instead of doing what you really want to do, you do what others think you should do. Sooner or later you will realize what is happening, and then you will most likely run out of steam. Your motivation will dwindle. You will have to take time to find your footing again.

In the workplace today, you are expected to be so highly involved, so highly responsible and results-oriented, that you really have to love what you do. It is no longer enough to be a pair of helping hands for the company. Nowadays employers want your full devotion. Therefore you have to be committed 110%. Otherwise, you will not be able to achieve the excellence required of you.

That is why it is so important that you choose your course in life carefully – that you find your true passion. What do you really love doing? If you want to succeed, then this is what you must choose to work with.

Then why don't more people follow this simple strategy? Why don't people spend more time doing what is really important to them? Why do we get trapped in routine and forget our own personal dreams? As far as we know, this is the only life we've got. Isn't that reason enough to make the most of it?

I believe that one reason for this is found in the power of Mammon. All of us have to earn money for our daily bread. Yet we have extremely different opinions on exactly how much money is enough. It is all too easy to get stuck in a lifestyle that requires a certain level of regular income. This quickly becomes an excuse for us to ignore what we really want to make of our lives.

Another reason we spend so little time following our innermost dreams is that we consider them unattainable. This is often the result of a defective self-image. We have been taught that we are less capable than we actually are. Our innermost dreams challenge this view of ourselves. Deep inside we know who we really are. Pursuing our dreams means saying yes to this inner wisdom. This is why we speak of "self-realization" and "finding your true self". This is in fact one of the best ways of getting to know the real you.

In this context, it is important to differentiate between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is something you gain in different ways. One way is by reading books. Wisdom, on the other hand, is something that comes from within, something you carry ever within yourself. The problem is that during different times in life, our level of access to this wisdom can vary. One way of improving your access to your inner wisdom is to slow down long enough to be able to listen to yourself. In the hustle and bustle of daily life, there are many people who never take the time to do this.

I know that my name is Bengt, for example, and yet I understand that I am not just Bengt. "Bengt" is only a label given me by others to use in this world when addressing me or when referring to me. Likewise, I know that I have a physical disability that means certain limitations

for me and at the same time understand that this disability gives me a unique opportunity to convey an important message to the world.

Self-realization requires the courage to make up your mind about who you are and who you want to become – you must dare to make a decision. When I told my local unemployment office that I wanted to start my own company for giving workshops in personal development, they thought I was crazy. I had a speech impediment. How would I make myself understood? But I held my ground, because I knew the true Bengt.

Besides, I knew that it was one of my great passions in life to educate people through lectures and workshops. At my previous job, I had done a good deal of this kind of work and found it extremely satisfying to watch people develop. I really wanted to continue working with people in this way, because I felt that this was one way in which I could make a difference. I could see no reason to give up this idea just because of practical obstacles.

But the people at the unemployment office couldn't see the real me or my hidden resources. I wonder if they were even able to see themselves accurately. Somehow, I doubt it. Avoiding listening to your inner wisdom when putting together your worldview is often treacherous. It is even more treacherous, of course, to make important decisions without consulting your inner wisdom. There have been many times that I have had to make decisions that upon first sight appeared to be plain crazy, both to me and to others. But these decisions proved sound in the end.

We know more than we think we do. Some call this understanding from within intuition, but it isn't so important what we call it as long as we heed it. Sometimes, however, it requires us to make decisions that seem completely irrational both to ourselves and to others.

Another obstacle to realizing our dreams is that doing so requires us to change our lifestyle. Routine has far greater power over us than we think. You know what you have now, but not what change may bring. All change guarantees a certain amount of uncertainty. I believe, however, that life is intolerable in the long run unless you set out after your dreams. By denying your dreams, you begin living two separate lives – the one of your imagination and the one of actual daily life.

Living two lives like this creates conflict and disharmony within us. We become less efficient. Achievers who find themselves in this situation tend to burn out because of the great energy they expend in doing something they

have no personal interest in. They feel that they are getting nothing but money in return for all their hard work. And in the long run, this is not enough.



This also makes us extremely vulnerable in the face of adversity. It's like giving a shove to a person already off-balance – it's easy to make him lose balance altogether. Living passionately and going after your dreams gives you direction in life. Having direction makes it easier to surmount obstacles. You have something pulling you forward. It doesn't matter that you encounter obstacles along the way. You know where you're going and this gives you the energy to keep striving.

It's another matter altogether if you lack this focus in life and let yourself be swayed by every contrary wind. In that case, you might even find yourself stuck at the first minor obstacle, bewildered and without recourse. It's easy to take the first road away from difficulties, any road whatever, since you don't have a specific destination. You find yourself driven like a feather on the wind, without taking responsibility for your future.

I really believe that we have within us all the information we need to become who we really are. This information is of course different for each of us. It's our choice whether we explore that part of ourselves or ignore it. If we choose to ignore this inner call, then it will find ways of making itself heard, sooner or later, by tripping us up with different kinds of obstacles. It's not the kind of thing that goes away.

It is much like the acorn that contains within itself everything it needs one day to become a gnarly old oak tree. It's mind-boggling!

Life becomes easier as soon as we decide to listen to this call. Certain things just fall into place. It's almost like magic. You don't have to be religious to believe this. Heeding your call seems just to make things happen.

In my view, this has to do with energy. If we are doing what we most like to do in life, the

energy around us quickens. This attracts people and events that are surrounded with the same kind of positive energy.

The difference between energy and matter is becoming more difficult to define by science today, which, for instance, considers atomic particles to be both energy and matter. This way of thinking has gone so far that scientists now see everything around us not only as solid matter but also as energy and information. Some would even call this combination of energy and information intelligence.

It's the same with our very bodies. The brain is no longer considered to be the sole seat of our intelligence. Rather, each and every cell in the body contains an intelligence of its own. This makes it easier to understand how it is possible for the immune system to "know" which types of germs to attack. And it makes it much easier for us to understand why events sometimes coincide with other events in our lives in a seemingly planned manner.

Because the atoms in our bodies are in continual motion, a new stomach is formed within each of us every fifth day. Our skin is renewed every five weeks. It is not the material, then, that binds everything together, for that is constantly being replaced. What does bind our bodies together is energy and information. They are what prevent the brain from suddenly turning into a liver.

This way of thinking can also be applied to the rest of the world. Consider this. What if there is intelligence behind the pattern of a snowflake? If this is the case, then I wonder what is the exact dividing line between my intelligence and that of the snowflake. There is a continual exchange of atomic particles between the snowflake and the world around it.

So what are the boundaries between my surroundings and me? Such boundaries might be nothing more than the inventions of man. If this is so, it would be easier to believe that people in different places could communicate without the help of traditional electronic means. If this is the true nature of things, then it is imperative that we choose carefully the kind of energy we wish to project. If we project negative energy, then we can't expect anything other than negative energy in return.

I have seen proof of this in my own life. Just today, as I was proofreading this text, my neighbor Caroline called and wanted to talk. There's nothing strange about that. It's just that a few hours earlier I had jotted down her name on a piece of paper to remind myself to send her an e-mail. There is nothing particularly strange about this either. But she happened to be in Los

Angeles just then. Again, that is not particularly strange. It's just that even if we saw each other this last Christmas, it would nevertheless have been 391 days since we had last e-mailed each other.



Here is another example. Yesterday, Kristina, one of my personal assistants, called me to suggest that we have tacos for lunch. She had even bought taco shells and hamburger the day before. I had been thinking of suggesting beef enchiladas. It wasn't exactly the same thing, but you can't expect this kind of communication to be 100% effective. I consider this more than coincidence, especially since we had never eaten Mexican food together!

If you want to continue giving off positive energy in the long run, you must be happy with your life. You have to restructure your life by discontinuing the denial of your innermost dreams and by going after them instead. You must do your best to live them out. I realize all this talk about energy may sound a bit strange to you, but a more concrete illustration may make this concept easier to understand.

If we experience joy in our daily lives, it is natural that we attract other joyful people to us, and several joyful people together are usually the makings of an excellent work team. The positive atmosphere they create makes their work easier. Such a group usually accomplishes remarkably more than a negative-minded group, and their very success only serves to increase the positive atmosphere around them. In other words, a positive attitude attracts positive events to one's life. This principle is true both at work and at home. In an organization, this applies to all levels: to the individual, to the work team and to the entire company.

On the other hand, a group with a negative outlook usually attracts even more negativity. This kind of group will usually avoid positive, joyful people since such exposure might put their very foundation of negativity at risk. Instead, they ally themselves to like-minded people who can confirm the group's negative

viewpoint. The group even hopes for failure, so that the ultimate message will be that it's not even worth trying. In this way, the group traps itself in negative behavior. Learning to handle challenges successfully is a threat, because this would require these negative people to reassess their worldview.

This not only applies to your work, but applies to your private life as well. So if you want to be effective in your private life, in your company, or together with your work team, then you must set your passions free. This is the foundation upon which solid positivity must be built – the joy of living that may prove to be your greatest ally in the pursuit for excellence.

Are you living passionately?
 What makes you passionate?
 How can you find more time to follow your passions?
 Is there any part of this you find difficult to accomplish?
 Why? What are the first steps you could take to start doing this?

One person who really knows about living out his passion is Ingmar Bergman. He says some interesting things in *Three Days with Bergman*, a book of interviews by Stig Björkman and Olivier Assayas.



SB: *Would it be accurate to say that your artistic pursuits with the theater and later with film got their start when as a teenager you began working with your school theater at Medborgarskolan?*

IB: *It's difficult to say, because all my life I've liked to create things, as far back as I can remember. There's no difference between when I walk onto the stage today to start rehearsals and when my scenographer and I discuss the set design for Peer Gynt, which we're working on now. I experience exactly the same feeling as when I was little, long before my school years. In the morning when I'd eaten breakfast, I'd open the doors to my nursery, where my toys were kept, and decide how I would keep myself busy that day.*

The feeling hasn't changed, and I'm not rationalizing or being coquettish in any way. Playing with my toys on the floor of my sunlit room, although most of them were rather simple and commonplace, is exactly the same as directing a play. The feelings generated by these two situations are exactly the same. Only the circumstances have changed, as well as the scale and the context.

Czech psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has also achieved insights into the idea of living out one's dreams. He believes that when we are caught up in doing something we really want to do, it's then we move into a state that he calls "flow":

This is what we mean by flow. It is what the sailor holding a tight course feels when the wind whips through her hair, when the boat lunges through the waves like a colt – sails, hull, wind, and sea humming a harmony that vibrates in the sailor's veins. It is what a painter feels when the colors on the canvas begin to set up a magnetic tension with each other, and a new thing, a living form, takes shape in front of the astonished creator.

Or it is the feeling a father has when his child for the first time responds to his smile. Such events do not occur only when the external conditions are favorable, however: people who have survived concentration camps or who have lived through near-fatal physical dangers often recall that in the midst of their ordeal they experienced extraordinarily rich epiphanies in response to such simple events as hearing the song of a bird in the forest, completing a hard task, or sharing a crust of bread with a friend.

Contrary to what we usually believe, moments like these, the best moments in our lives, are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times, although such experiences can also be enjoyable, if we have worked hard to attain them. The best

moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen. For a child, it could be placing with trembling fingers the last block on a tower she has built, higher than any she has built so far; for a swimmer, it could be trying to beat his own record; for a violinist, mastering an intricate musical passage. For each person there are thousands of opportunities, challenges to expand ourselves.

Such experiences are not necessarily pleasant at the time they occur. The swimmer's muscles might have ached during his most memorable race, his lungs might have felt like exploding, and he might have been dizzy with fatigue – yet these could have been the best moments of his life. Getting control of life is never easy, and sometimes it can be definitely painful. But in the long run optimal experiences add up to a sense of mastery – or perhaps better, a sense of participation in determining the content of life – that comes as close to what is usually meant by

happiness as anything else we can conceivably imagine.

So how does this relate to your work? How does it relate to your company or your work team? Do you experience this kind of flow at work? Do you feel that you have the right kind of people around you? Do you feel passionate about what you are doing? Is going to work joyful for you, or would you prefer to stay in bed a little bit longer when the alarm clock rings?

I myself don't need an alarm clock. Usually, I just get up at four or five in the morning and start working. I am privileged in that I don't have to go anywhere in the morning. I have my office at home. Thus, I can choose to work when I feel most motivated and creative. Like Ingmar Bergman, I can go play with my toys whenever I feel like it.

Good luck with discovering your own passions in life!

What is happiness for you?

**Remember five times in your
life when you felt really
happy:**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

20 Examples Of What You Like

Fill in the form below with 20 examples of what you like in life. Circle the activities you think you don't do often enough and write down in the column to the right how often you would like to do them. If there is not enough room on the form, continue on the back of the paper.

20 examples of what you like	# of times per week/month/year
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	
20.	