

What if your job is not your passion?

We have all sat through a graduation speech or parental lecture telling us to “follow our dreams” or “live your passion”. But what does that really mean? What happens when your passions and your job don’t align?

Nothing bad happens, that we can be sure of. This idea of being passionate about our work is a new one. Think about your grandfather or great grandfather. Do you think they were passionate about working in a factory for long hours and low pay? Probably not. But they did what they needed to do to support themselves and their families. There's no shame in working to pay the bills.

While jobs have drastically changed in the last generation or so, it's not possible for everyone to work in an occupation they're passionate about.

Passion vs. Talent

There's often a substantial difference in what one is passionate about versus what their actual talents are. An exception to this might be a musician or actor. These people have taken their passion to practice and developed skills that most don't have. It's still not surprising to hear that a musician found he/she was talented but reluctant to take up the craft since the passion wasn't there.

Being good at your job doesn't mean you have to be passionate about what you do. You do have to take your job seriously and put your full effort into it. Many people find themselves accepting a job when they come out of schooling or reach a period of unemployment. Sometimes those are temporary positions. Other times, those jobs develop into careers, whether we intended them to or not.

Acknowledging that your job isn't your passion doesn't mean you don't like what you do.

Over the years you've developed skills, relationships and networks within your field. You've worked hard for promotions and have developed yourself. You may have even identified yourself as a leader in your field or area of expertise. This should be celebrated.

As humans we have varied interests, passions and abilities. In your work, it's most important that you're self-aware and know what your strengths (and weaknesses) are. If you're one of the few whose talents align with their passion, then you're very fortunate. But for the rest of us – if our jobs aren't our passions, we're in good company.



Use Your Free Time

While our jobs may take up a great deal of our waking hours, they shouldn't be consuming all of them. Make sure you're pursuing your passions outside of work. Whether you love to write, garden or fix things around the house, be sure to carve out enough time either daily or weekly to feed those passions. You'll feel more satisfied with your work if you're still able to do what you enjoy on your personal time.

If you're passionate about getting into another field of work, consider volunteering during your off hours. Not only do you get to do what you feel passionate about by working with an organisation or cause, it's possible it could lead to future career opportunities.

Feed Your Passion Through Your Work

Look at your day job as a means to pursue and support your passions. If travel is something you're deeply passionate about, consider how having steady work can provide paid time off and the money needed to travel. Maybe you can look into working overtime in order to save up for a special trip or you decide to work towards a promotion that will provide better pay and more time off. You might not find “passion” in your everyday work, but it should be a resource to do what you love outside the office.

Consider whether it's possible to bring your passions into your organisation even if it's not specifically related to your job. If baking is your passion, recommend a chili cook off or bake sale to leadership. The proceeds can go to a charity of the company's choice or to a competition winner. If you're an avid reader, ask around about starting a book club.

If you love blogging about food, put out the feelers to see if other like-minded colleagues want to get together for a recipe swap. Not only will this potentially help to marry your passions to your work life, it will show your organisation you're an engaged member of their community.

Indifference or Hate?

If you would describe yourself as someone who isn't necessarily passionate about what they do but doesn't dislike their job, you're probably on par with many other workers. By now you've acknowledged that you're good at it and it supports your needs.

If you wake up each day loathing the idea of walking in the office door, maybe passion isn't as much your issue as being in the wrong job/company is. If you aren't able to find anything redeeming in what you do or who you do it for, perhaps it is time to try to pursue another venture. Who knows, maybe you'll be one of the lucky ones who is passionate about their next job.

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