



Work Hard, Go to College, Get a Good Job

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This is the conventional “wisdom” that has been foisted on so many children during their formative years – when we all formed our view of the world, how it works and our place in it. It suggests that hard work will be rewarded and that you have to work hard to be a success. It suggests that higher level education will make you a better person and will secure your future. And, of course, it suggests that a good job will provide the necessities of life on an ongoing basis and, indeed, security into old age.

All of these myths have been busted over the last couple of years. Not only are they the myths of an economic and social system that is in disarray, they are myths that squeeze the very spark of creativity, ingenuity, adventure, enterprise and excitement out of us. And, unfortunately, as psychology tells us, these myths become our beliefs at a very early age – probably, eleven or twelve. And it is for the very reason that these myths are held as subconscious beliefs that so many people are now lost – wondering what has gone wrong, hurting because they see no other way, fearful that if they haven’t lost their “good job” already, there is certainly no such thing, any more, as job security.

The personal world view encapsulated in the “work hard, go to college, get a good job” attitude diminishes the believer right from the word go. It says that you must conform, it says that this is the path of least resistance, the path that sets out your whole life ahead of you. It closes down your options – not because those options are not there, but because you don’t believe that you have them. Above all, it subliminally suggests that you are a flawed person, in need of betterment through an education system that, in its very nature, demands conformity. In short, it squeezes the life out of the vast majority of people – and perpetuates a system whereby very few people rise above the crowd to achieve uncommon success – and system where very few of us find or live our true passion.

And, what’s the point of getting up in the morning without passion? Over 70% of Americans don’t like their job – they’re the lucky ones, of course, that have one. How can you do your best, in your daily life, if you don’t like what you’re doing? The answer, of course, is that you cannot. Research tells us that to say that normal people only half-heartedly do what they’re doing would be to vastly

overstate the reality of the situation. Normal people only pay about 1% attention to what they're doing – the rest of their attention or mental energy is lost in the void of those early-created beliefs that have led them to this sorry state.

You need to have excitement in your life – the normal life is boring, in comparison to what life can be, because normal people follow mundane patterns which amount to little more than going through the motions of living. You need to find and to follow your passion – otherwise you are missing out on the true joy of living. Excitement and passion have nothing to do with what is going on around you – they have nothing to do with economic trends or, indeed, what other people think about you. Excitement and passion are all to do with what's going on within. As a result, you don't have to go looking for excitement and passion – let them find you.

Let's take a practical example near to so many people's heart. What if you're doing a job you hate? You have two choices. You can decide to stop hating it or you can do something else. "I hate my job" is a useless thought. In entertaining that useless thought, you divert your energy into the thought, devote less attention to what you're supposed to be doing, as a result of which the job becomes ever more difficult and you end up proving yourself right – it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. Research from the University of Chicago shows that some of the most fulfilled people are doing some of the most boring, repetitive jobs – but they choose not to see the job as such. The second option is to take the plunge – do something different, perhaps completely different, something that truly turns you on. This requires what normal people would call courage, but if you're in the right state of mind, such leaps are not courageous, they're simply the obvious thing to do.

Either option requires the correct state of mind – one that is clear and present. A clear and present mind will not give any quarter to useless thought. A clear and present mind will know what to do if a "leap of faith" is called for. By clear and present I simply mean what the words themselves, in their simplicity, actually suggest: clear of thought and focused in the present – the two go hand in hand. You develop this clarity and presence by dismantling your mundane life – in simple, non-threatening ways for starters. More practical examples: eat your breakfast before your shower tomorrow instead of after it; dress yourself starting with the leg and arm that you do not habitually lead with; get up ten minutes earlier and meditate – the list is endless, you can make up your own.

At the end of the day, your passion, excitement, success and happiness is entirely up to you and your state of mind. The ball is in your court – you can stay on the normal set of rails that take you round and round the same little track, or you can jump aboard the express train of clarity and presence and see where it takes you.