

Commitment Isn't the Starting Point

In *Make Waves*, I wrote “If you’re passionate about something, and you can’t motivate yourself to take that first step, then your first step is probably too big.”

This was a point I made earlier on a recent episode of *The Minimalist* where we answered questions from callers about goals.

When Ryan & Josh posted that quote on Twitter, someone asked the following question: “What if you’re passionate about nothing and still can’t take the first step?”



This is a question I hear a lot. So I thought I’d tackle it here on my blog where I don’t have to abide by the character limitations on Twitter.

Here’s what I would say to anyone who doesn’t know what to do because they’re too overwhelmed by the process of trying to sort out what their life passion is:

Don’t force yourself to be too specific too soon.

Before you try to figure out what you love, take some time to follow up on what you like. Instead of seeking a big epiphany about what you want to do for your entire life, make a small effort to explore a few things that seem interesting to you right now. Commitment isn’t the starting point for creating your life. Curiosity is.

Too many people place an unrealistic pressure on themselves to find their “one true calling” while overlooking the wisdom and directional clues to be gained from cultivating a sense of wonder towards everyday life. We approach the process of finding our life path as

if it's supposed to be like falling in love at first sight when it's really more like figuring things out on a first date.

If you're not passionate about anything, then your first step is to release yourself from the pressure to be passionate about some single specific thing. Then give yourself permission to playfully explore whatever you're curious about without feeling the need to marry it or monetize it right away. Repeat that process again and again until your knowledge of self begins to manifest in the form of creative impulses that you can't resist expressing.

Exploring your curiosities is like pouring water into a cup. If you keep doing it, the water will eventually spill out in every direction and you'll have a condition called "overflow." Being passionate about something is the result of creating a condition of "personal overflow" by consistently nurturing your sense of wonder.

Life isn't going to just walk up to you and say "Hey, here's a single specific passion that I'm going to assign to you and this will provide you with all the insight you'll ever need about what to do for the rest of your life." What life does give to you, however, are questions. At various moments, you'll find yourself intrigued by certain types of conversations, stories, topics, hobbies, games, styles, etc. And you'll find yourself asking all sorts of questions about how those things work. When those moments happen, your job is to follow your curiosities just as Alice in Wonderland followed the white rabbit: all the way down the rabbit hole until your life begins to intersect with the characters and adventures that seem uniquely designed for you.

No one has all the important answers about what they're supposed to do, but everyone has interesting questions they know how to pursue. Prioritize the questions that make you come alive over other people's answers about how to make a living.

Passion is like a flower. Curiosity is like a seed. Your dream of building a wonderful garden will never be realized until you're willing to patiently nurture your small seeds of curiosity even though they look far more fragile and unflattering than the beautiful end goal you have in mind.