

The Conclusion Comes Last

How do you know if a shoe fits? You have to try it on.

How do you know if the blue shirt is a better fit for you than the red shirt? You have to try them on.

Even if you already know your size, the best way to know if something is a good fit is by trying it on.

Ditto for your career and your curiosities.

If you're wondering "Is this sport, subject, or style good for me?", the best way to find out isn't by guessing or navel-gazing.

You find it out by trying it out.

Instead of pressuring yourself to make a religion out of some specific passion you think you need to have, give yourself permission to playfully explore the ideas and interests that intrigue you.

Discovering what you love is like doing science:

1. Start with a hunch (ie. "this seems interesting").
2. Formulate a hypothesis (ie. "I think I'd really like this").
3. Conduct an experiment (ie. "I'll sign up for one lesson to see if I'm good at it" or "I'll take an online course to see how it goes" or "I'll do an internship to see how it feels from the inside-out" or "I'll invest a small amount of money that I can afford to lose").
4. Form a working conclusion (ie. "I think I would like to do this for the next couple of years" or "I'm ready to invest more money into this").
5. Be willing to revise your conclusion in light of new evidence and future experience (ie. "my passions are not religious beliefs that I need to be loyal to. They're evolving interests that I'm free to upgrade along the way.")

Notice something here: The conclusion comes last.

Instead of announcing to the world "this is what I'm born to do" after having a single rapturous experience or after making a single interesting observation, you take a "wait and see" approach.

The “wait” in “wait and see” isn’t about waiting on taking action. It’s about waiting on the decision to marry the first hypothesis you form about yourself.

Discovering and doing what you love is analogous to dating. Before getting on bended knee to propose to a beautiful stranger, it might be wiser to flirt first and see where that goes. There’s no need to make an overnight leap from “this person has captured my attention” to “I’m ready to spend the rest of my life with you even though I don’t even know what it’s like to have a disagreement with you.”

In the same manner, get to know your interests before you get on a mountaintop and declare “this is the whole meaning of my existence” or “this is my calling.”

You don’t need to put your entire life on the line for the first beautiful thing that captivates your attention.

You can afford to relax a little.

Before you lose anymore sleep trying to figure out how you can “follow your passion,” it might help if you just slow down a little and flirt with your curiosity.