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For love, money and meaning: *how you discover the work you were born to do*

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ABSTRACT: Your work has the potential to be one of the great blessings of your life and can be emotionally and even spiritually fulfilling. The true purpose of work has always been to utilise your unique talents and gifts in order to make a difference and serve others and, in doing so, to inject a little more love into the world, spreading more joy and then be paid for it. You work for love, money and meaning. Far from being selfish, it is one of the most generous things you can do for yourself – and your community.



When you are working from your authentic and creative self, you express your unique gifts and talents, you will experience some joy and everyone around you benefits from what you have to uniquely contribute. On paper this can sound very easy, but the discovery and living of the work you were born to do can be more challenging. For several hundred years, culturally we have divorced our soul from our livelihood. Work has become regarded as a mainly economic activity allowing you to earn the money you need to live. One of the prevailing beliefs about work is that it is an activity which can be boring, stressful and must involve some pain and sacrifice, as well as the martyring of our deeper self. Then the hard work ethic has us believing that hard work and sacrifice are the essential ingredients of any significant success. These beliefs then rob you of the potential joy, fulfilment, inspiration and growth that the work you were born to do offers you.

WHO YOU ARE BEFORE WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING. Before asking the question: “What is the work I was born to do?”, each one of us needs to address the question: “Who am I?” Less important than what you actually do for a living, is your willingness to access who you really are and bring that to your work. As well as possessing a personality, you are a spiritual being, blessed with talents, gifts and resources. You are made in and from love. Your existence is a blessing. There is a core in you that is whole and intact, untouched by your life experiences. Your mind and heart are the



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Self to become. Your job in this life is not to try to shape yourself into some idealised version of yourself, but to find out who you already are in embryo and then become that individual in full.

There is a potential Self in you that you are here to realise, which holds the answer to why you are here on this planet. Realising this inner Self defines the work you were born to do, and it is your calling and vocation to discover and unlock your latent brilliance.

However, none of us has unlimited choices and it is a fact of life that we can't all be absolutely everything we want to

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be. Your personal calling is as unique as your fingerprint and the best way to succeed is to discover what you love doing, and then to find a way to offer it to others in the form of service, allowing your heart and the energy of the universe to lead you in the process.

SPIRITUAL IMPULSE. Your desire to discover the work you were born to do is not a selfish act on your part, but a natural – even spiritual – impulse. Think of it this way: you were put on this earth to bring a little more joy and inspiration to it; to inject some more love into the world and make the planet a little better for your existence. When you don't do what you came here for, when you don't become who you were meant to be, you rob yourself, you rob me and you rob everyone else. We are all a little diminished. You were created with your unique gifts so that you could help nudge humanity one millimetre further along its path home. Your work is your gift to the world and everyone in it. Please don't rob us of your contribution. Give us what you've got.

COMING TO THAT SENSE OF PURPOSE. Twenty years ago I reconnected with my sense of purpose, having been very unhappy in a corporate job in IT sales and marketing. I decided to listen to, and follow, my heart. For 15 years I have also been helping people around me discover the work they were born for. I have found that there are nine certain ways in which people come to that sense of purpose:

most amazing things in the universe, and you are a soul which is powerful beyond measure. I am with the poet William Wordsworth on the nature of your true self:

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home [...]*

William Wordsworth Ode: Intimations of Immortality'

So your own credentials are pretty sound. There is nothing wrong with you and there is much that is right with you. You have the capacity to inspire and be inspired. You were not born a blank page waiting for the world to stamp its imprint on you. You showed up in this life as a highly individuated soul, with a specific destiny to fulfil. You also have unique talents, a calling to enact, challenges to face, rewards to treasure, obstacles to overcome and a

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1. **Through your inspiration, intuition and deeper guidance.** The work you were born to do resides within your own heart, so inspiration, emotional connection and your capacity to feel deeply are your compasses. Your heart is your connective tissue to life and your own inner guidance system. As you know yourself, you trust yourself and the answers are obvious.
2. **Behind your resistance.** While you have the capacity to be inspired and guided, you may also seem to have an equal, and sometimes seemingly greater, capacity to resist your calling, to doubt, procrastinate, undermine,

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sabotage, avoid, frighten and distract yourself from what you know you'd love to do and your destiny. In living the work you were born to do, you will encounter your resistance and learn how to beat it by courageously acting in the face of it. The power of your will is greater than that of your resistance.

3. **In your shadow life.** Your shadow life is what you have disowned in yourself, and what remains so far un-lived. It usually shows up in two ways. Firstly, in situations in which you are involved on the fringes of a creative activity that interests you, yet where you are not being fully creative yourself. For example, you work in a book store, but secretly want to be an author yourself. Secondly, in instances where you are supporting the creativity and talent of others, but denying or neglecting your own creative talent. When you are living a shadow life, you are being called to quit hiding and show up more fully in your world.
4. **Under the statement "I don't know".** At times, we genuinely don't know what we'd love to do, but at other times, "I don't know" can be a cover for two other dynamics. Firstly, we are afraid to know, because then we would be called to change our life significantly. Secondly, people often confuse "I don't know what" with "I don't know how". You need to separate the "what" from the "how". Too often, we deny what we know we



would love to do because we are unsure of how we could do it.

5. **Through your naturalness, which shows up in other people's eyes.** Each of us has our own blind spots and one of the most common is recognising the very talents that come most easily and naturally to us. They feel so natural that you can't imagine they are anything particularly special; or maybe you don't even notice them at all. You may have been doing something for so long, and so well, that it feels naturally easy for you. So sometimes you need the perspective of others to show you the special facets of yourself. Whilst there can be a danger in letting others define you, there is also a great wisdom in listening to – and appropriately filtering – other people's perceptions of you. They can often recognise more clearly those talents and skills that are so close to you that you may fail to spot them yourself. It may take courage, but asking other people what they think your talents and strengths are can be very enlightening and teach you a lot about yourself.
6. **Behind the words "If only I could find someone to pay me to do it..."** Other variations on the statement above include: "It's what I'll do when I've been successful and made my money" and "When I've won the lottery, then I'll..." You may well have been brought up in the belief that you sell your soul by doing work you don't enjoy very much in order to earn money, or that if you follow your heart to do whatever you love, and whatever comes easily to you and inspires you, then you can't and



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psyche, but it doesn't completely disappear. Your deeper Self is always speaking to you, and perhaps never more loudly than when you have stopped listening to it. Your calling becomes an un-lived life within you, patiently trying to get your attention. At other times, a brush with death – your own or others – or a significant loss can wake you up to your deeper Self. Similarly, mid-life is often a time of questioning and of redefining ourselves. And if you miss all these warnings, a full-blown crisis might finally claim your attention. Crises often represent an attempt by your deeper Self to move you into a more

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shouldn't expect to earn much money from it. In these instances, you believe you should be virtuous, but poor. My teaching is very much about a third way: not to work for love **or** money, but to work for love **and** money. Doing work that you love makes a real difference and you **should** receive money for doing it, and can often be paid very handsomely indeed.

- 7. **In your lost and neglected dreams and your unutilised talent.** When we are children, we often know what work we are destined for, but then we are talked out of it, or we talk ourselves out of it. We hear our true calling, but for some reason we don't answer and become distracted. You may be afraid of going against the wishes of family, peers or school, or afraid of breaking with the social conditioning you've grown up with in order to follow your own path. You may fear loss of approval or rejection, and so go along with a path that was never really yours. But those dreams are still there, even if they are buried. At times reconnecting with lost or neglected dreams can initially be painful, but it can also be a poignant and energising experience, leading you in a new direction. The psychologist Carl Jung wrote: "The greatest damage to the child is the un-lived life of the parents." I don't say this in order to guilt-trip you – just to encourage you to realise that your being happier and more fulfilled does not represent a selfish act on your part, but is a real blessing to you and the people around you.
- 8. **Behind a wake-up call or even a crisis.** The calling you avoid or choose not to pursue goes underground in your

authentic way of being and working. The pain of the crisis can justify your desire for change, making it appear more socially acceptable than if you were simply to declare: "I want to change my life."

- 9. **In a greater sense of yourself and a new sense of identity.** The work you were born to do is often found when you begin to think about yourself more highly and recognise your significance in ways you may have previously overlooked. Research shows that by the time you reach adulthood, you will have received nine times as many negative messages about yourself as positive ones. So you may well have a few negative ideas about yourself, your significance, your worth, abilities and talent. Yet we each have the capacity to shine in our own unique way, and that includes you – although you may feel that you have lost some of your sparkle! You may have had a thorough conditioning in "thinking small", belittling yourself or always putting yourself below others. Consequently, perhaps you dismiss opportunities and possibilities as being "not for you". So it is a disservice to hide away what you have.

TAKING BABY STEPS. As you discover your true direction, you can change incrementally. Each day you can take baby steps which, in turn, lead to breakthroughs and even miracles. When you find and create the work you were born to do, your work can become your love made visible in the world. ■