MAX PARADOX

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Self-Help with a Sense of Humor ;)

I Don't Have a Passion

How to Find Something of Your Own Without Turning a Hobby into a Second Job



We have a problem. Relax. We can solve it—and have a laugh along the way.

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INTRO

At some point, usually while scrolling past a thirty-two-year-old ceramic artist who apparently discovered her "calling" at age six, you begin to suspect that something may be wrong with you.

She has a studio full of beautiful mugs, twelve thousand followers, and a sentence in her bio that says, Clay chose me.

You have Netflix.

You have a half-finished jigsaw puzzle under the couch, a guitar you bought during a particularly optimistic February, and possibly some baking equipment that briefly convinced you sourdough would become a meaningful part of your identity. You also have several interests that seemed promising until they required effort on a Tuesday evening.

None of them chose you.

Apparently clay had other plans.

This is when the panic starts. You look around and notice that everyone seems to have a Thing. One friend runs marathons. Another restores old furniture. Someone you vaguely know from college now photographs mushrooms in forests and somehow makes the whole operation look spiritually important. Meanwhile, if somebody asks what you do for fun, your brain produces the same blank expression as a printer that has just been asked to work immediately.

"Well... I like movies."

Excellent. A personality has been located.

The strange idea that every adult should have one powerful, recognizable passion has become surprisingly difficult to escape. We are encouraged to find our passion,

follow our passion, monetize our passion, build a personal brand around our passion, wake up early for our passion, and presumably create a newsletter so strangers can receive weekly updates about it.

A hobby can no longer simply be a hobby.

Apparently it needs a growth strategy.

You start drawing because drawing seems relaxing. Three weeks later, the internet suggests opening an Etsy shop. You learn to bake bread because it makes Sunday pleasant. Somebody asks whether you have considered selling it. You enjoy taking photographs, and before you have figured out how aperture works, a cheerful online entrepreneur is explaining how to turn your photography into six figures of passive income.

Nothing says relaxation like immediately assigning revenue targets to the thing you started doing to escape revenue targets.

And if you do not have even that hobby yet, things can feel worse. There is an unpleasant little suspicion that everyone else received a brochure called Things That Make Life Interesting, while yours was lost in the mail. Other people seem energized by gardening, cycling, woodworking, dancing, painting, cooking, collecting vinyl, climbing rocks voluntarily, or traveling three hours to look at a bird.

You are sitting on the couch thinking:

Do I... like anything?

Yes.

Probably.

Give me a minute.

The problem is not necessarily that you lack passion. The problem is that you may be using an absurd definition of it.

We tend to imagine passion as something dramatic. You discover an activity, lightning strikes, violins begin playing somewhere, and suddenly you know exactly how you are supposed to spend every Saturday for the next forty years.

Real interest is usually much less theatrical.

It often begins with something closer to, "Huh. That was kind of enjoyable."

That is not a disappointing beginning. That is how most real interests begin. Curiosity comes first. Repetition comes later. Skill may arrive eventually, assuming you do not frighten the hobby to death by asking where the business plan is.

One reason people believe they have no passion is that they expect passion to arrive fully developed. They try pottery once and do not immediately feel called to establish a relationship with clay. They go running twice and mostly discover that lungs are capable of filing complaints. They buy watercolor paints, produce something that resembles a weather emergency, and conclude that painting is not "their thing."

Of course it is not your thing yet.

You did it once.

Imagine applying the same standard elsewhere. You cook one disappointing omelet and announce that food has rejected you personally. You speak three sentences of Spanish and conclude that languages are incompatible with your soul. You go bowling once, score forty-seven, and formally withdraw from athletics.

We give new hobbies approximately the same probation period as spoiled milk.

Then there is another problem: comparison.

You decide you might enjoy photography, so naturally you search for photography online. This seems sensible until your phone immediately introduces you to someone who photographs Icelandic waterfalls using equipment worth more than your car.

You take a picture of your coffee.

His photograph wins an international award.

The experiment is going extremely well.

The internet makes beginners feel strangely late. Whatever you want to try, somebody has already been doing it for fourteen years, owns professional equipment, has perfect lighting, and has made a thirty-minute video titled 10 Mistakes Every Beginner Makes.

You have not even made mistake number one yet.

Give yourself a chance.

The purpose of this book is not to help you identify your One True Passion, because I do not think life works like a game show where one correct hobby is hidden behind Door Number Three. You may have several interests. They may change. One may last twenty years. Another may survive four weekends and quietly disappear.

That is allowed.

You are not signing a mortgage with watercolor.

You also do not need to become good enough for anyone to be impressed. This deserves emphasis because adults are remarkably uncomfortable being bad at things. Children draw

terrible horses and proudly bring them to everyone in the building. Adults draw one terrible horse and begin researching whether perhaps they are more suited to podcasts.

Being bad at something is not evidence that you should stop.

It is often evidence that you have just started.

We are going to make this easier. Instead of asking the enormous and slightly melodramatic question, "What is my passion?" you will learn to ask smaller questions that can actually be answered. What makes you curious? What kind of activity leaves you feeling better afterward? What do you keep returning to without needing to force yourself? What would you still enjoy if nobody saw it, praised it, followed it, bought it, or asked you to create a course about it?

That last question removes quite a lot of nonsense.

We will also separate hobbies from achievement. You do not need measurable progress every week. You do not need a certificate. You do not need to post evidence that the activity occurred. You certainly do not need to turn every pleasant interest into a second job that sends invoices.

Sometimes the correct business model is zero dollars.

The hobby pays you in enjoyment.

Tax-free.

You will learn how to test interests without buying an entire new identity first, because human beings have a charming habit of purchasing equipment for the person they hope to become. Want to start running? Naturally, you need shoes, a watch, wireless headphones, performance socks, three apps,

and possibly sunglasses designed to survive atmospheric reentry.

You have not run around the block yet.

Equipment is easier to buy than habits.

We will deal with that.

You will learn how to experiment cheaply, how long to give something before judging it, how to distinguish genuine boredom from beginner frustration, and how to notice when you like the idea of an activity more than the activity itself. This is useful because there are hobbies that look magnificent in photographs and feel remarkably similar to unpaid manual labor when you actually do them.

You will also learn what to do if nothing grabs you immediately.

That part matters.

You are not required to emerge from Chapter Three shouting, “BEEKEEPING! OF COURSE!” and ordering protective clothing before lunch. Finding something of your own is usually a process of trying, noticing, adjusting, and trying again.

A small interest is enough to begin.

Not passion.

Not destiny.

Not a five-year plan.

Interest.

That is much easier to find because it does not demand fireworks. It only asks you to notice what makes life slightly more engaging than scrolling through other people’s lives

while wondering why they appear to be having more interesting ones.

And perhaps the most important thing we are going to remove is pressure.

Your hobby does not have to improve you.

It does not have to make you fitter, richer, smarter, calmer, more cultured, more employable, or more impressive at dinner parties. You are already allowed to do something because you enjoy doing it.

This is apparently a radical concept.

So if you currently feel as though you have no passion, do not panic. You are not missing a vital human component. You may simply be expecting a thunderbolt when what you actually need is a small experiment.

We are going to stop looking for the magical Thing that instantly explains who you are.

We are going to find things worth trying.

Some will be boring.

Some will be ridiculous.

One or two may stay.

And if none of them become a side hustle, a personal brand, or a six-figure online business?

Excellent.

You may have accidentally found a hobby.

Chapter 1 - The Passion Myth

You are at dinner with six people, and somehow the conversation has moved from normal subjects like work, rent, and whether anybody actually understands how airline pricing works to hobbies.

“I climb.”

“I make pottery.”

“I restore motorcycles.”

“I run half-marathons.”

Then everyone looks at you.

You consider saying, “I watch documentaries while simultaneously looking at my phone.”

Technically, that is a recurring activity.

Instead, you mumble something about reading, even though the last book you finished was eight months ago and half of your current reading consists of opening articles, saving them for later, and creating a digital retirement home for information you will never see again.

The conversation moves on. Nobody cares.

You do.

For the rest of the evening, a small administrative department in your brain begins reviewing your entire personality.

Why don’t I have a thing?

Other people seem to have things. They own specialized shoes. They know terminology. They say sentences such as, “I’m working on a new glaze,” or, “I’m training for Denver,” or, “I finally upgraded my table saw.”

You own chargers.

Several.

This is where the first mistake begins: you assume that a passion is something other people possess and you somehow failed to receive.

You did not fail.

You may simply be looking at the finished version of somebody else's interest and comparing it with the blank beginning of your own.

The climber did not emerge from the womb asking for chalk. The person restoring motorcycles probably did not experience a spiritual awakening at the sight of a carburetor. Most long-term interests start quietly, almost embarrassingly quietly. Someone tried something. They liked part of it. They did it again. They got a little better. That made it more enjoyable, so they continued.

Years later, you meet them at dinner and think:

Wow. A person with a passion.

You missed the twelve years in the middle.

Passion usually comes after interest

We talk about passion as if it must appear first.

First comes passion.

Then effort.

Then skill.

Then identity.

In reality, the order is often almost the reverse.

First comes curiosity.

Then a few attempts.