

Passion and Purpose

There's much discussion these days about passion and purpose in the workplace. A Google search of passion at work results in 11,500,000 hits. Many often confuse passion and purpose. A search of purpose and work results in 21,300 hits. Purpose in the workplace, 61,400.

So, what is the difference between passion and purpose and how do the two connect?

Purpose defines why one is on the planet. Some refer to purpose as a calling. Others, as ones "life work."

Passion is energy - emotional, physical, mental, psychic and, often, spiritual that drives one and supports one to engage in, and focus on, ones efforts - sometimes purposeful, sometimes not.

When connected to purpose, passion supports one to energetically and intentionally engage in ones purpose during the day, on one level, and be a continuous learner, strive towards self-actualization, and look for ways to continually improve what one does and how one does it, on another.

However, passion, in and of itself, can be as much self-limiting, self-destructive, self-sabotaging, and hurtful to others as it can be self-supporting. It depends on how one chooses to channel ones energy, ones passion.

For example, some passionate folks dress up and go to sporting events to engage in harassment, uncivil and disrespectful and hurtful behavior in the name of I'm really passionate about my team. Colleagues at work can unfairly judge others, be bullying, engage in gossip, be rude, demeaning and disrespectful about others perceived lack of skills and talents in the name of I'm really passionate about what I do and so why do you have to be so stupid! Often folks feel their passion allows them to be disrespectful.

In addition, folks can be passionate about coming home at night and binging on alcohol, food or chemical or non-chemical drugs.

Passion is energy. The important question is, toward what end is ones passion directed?

Is ones passion positive, supportive of ones self, others and humanity? Is it negative, self-destructive or harmful to one's self, others and humanity? Being passionate does not automatically assume one is humble, emotionally intelligent, good at relationships, acting in integrity, honest, even skilled or talented etc. Passion is just energy.

Purpose, then, completes the passion equation and gives passion a "raison d'etre".

Without purpose as an anchor, passion has no inner or outer guidance system. Without a purpose, one often will feel disoriented in life, out-of-sync and unhappy.

In my years working as a coach, I've always been curious about folks who (1) face a mid-life crisis at 30!, and (2) spend countless dollars, enormous amounts of time and energy studying, for example, law, medicine, IT, finance, management, etc., and end up literally hating what they are doing, and sooner rather than later.

In some of these cases, folks choose to enter a profession/career area because they were directed by career folks, career coaches, career consultants, etc., of one kind or another who suggested that their interest, talent, or other assessments pointed them in a particular direction they should follow. You're really talented in (fill in the blank). Your assessment indicates that you're best suited for (fill-in the blank). Ergo, your path. Your "purpose." Hmmm.

What career folks, parents, relatives, good friends etc., almost never measure is heart. Heart is the focal point of purpose. Not the mind. Not logic. Not what's sexy. Not what The Futurist says one should do, and especially, not Hey you're really good at (blank) that so why don't you pursue (blank)?

Some never get it. Purpose is not a career area, a job, a talent, an expertise. Purpose, however, can be manifested by working in a career area, a job, using a talent or manifesting an expertise. The difference is the energy (passion) one brings to that endeavor, and whether one's actions and work are "purposeful".

So, two lawyers, two IT professionals, two managers, two bloggers, for example, can both do the same thing, but their energy, their engagement, their true love (not ego) of the work, their stick-to-it-ive-ness, their steadfastness, their joy of work, their sense of inner peace and well-being, depends on whether or not they are on purpose when doing (only the purposeful are engaged in) their work. One has their heart in it; the other muddles through with an ugh at every turn.

So, purpose is the anchor, the beacon, the direction, the career compass that guides one to making decisions that keep one living a life on purpose. Without such a guide, then, are those many who hit a dead end at 30 (then 40, 50,), constantly wonder and lament, Is this all there is? Or I have all this talent, and I don't understand why I'm not happy.

The heart is what drives purpose, not the mind, not the ego. When one has ones heart in ones work, ones play, ones life, then meaning abounds; they are, and feel, purposeful in their work, in their life. When all is ego-driven, when one has figured it out in their mind, meaning is most often trumped by unhappiness, agitation, and constant negative judgments and invidious comparisons with others while always feeling to some degree, lacking, deficient, and disconnected. And from what do they feel disconnected, perhaps unaware? Their heart, their purpose, their True and Real Self, their Essence. The ego mind, logic, assessments, "thinking" and "figuring it out" are not the path to purpose.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- How do you characterize your relationship to work?
- How did you arrive at doing the work you are doing?
- Do you feel purposeful in your work? Do you feel "coerced" to work or "called" to work?
- Do you feel passionate about your work? What motivates you to go to work?
- Do you feel completely engaged at work?
- Why are you on the planet? What is your purpose in life?
- What is the legacy you'd like to leave behind?
- What will others say about you when you're gone...about you as a professional, a spouse, a partner, a parent, a friend...?
- What are three things you're passionate about? How do you express this passion?
- Are you following your life's purpose? How do you know?
- If you really, really dislike your work, what story do you tell yourself to justify your doing it?

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Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is a founding partner of **SpiritHeart**, an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching, counseling and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit — that is, **Essential Well BE-ing** — Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.spiritheart.net or contact pvajda@spiritheart.net or phone **770.804.9125**