



## Career Choices

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When I was in my 20s, I aspired to be a teacher. Actually, it was a friend of mine who, hearing me say I didn't know what to do after university, suggested "I always thought you'd be a teacher." And it was true that as a girl I really enjoyed delivering spelling lessons to a row of dolls and stuffed animal buddies, so I figured she was on to something.

But it was not to be. Applying after completing my studies, I didn't quite make the cut when one teacher's college closed its doors and the other slashed enrolment in half, both in response to a glut in the numbers of teachers. I tried again in my early 30s and was told that the quota for "mature" students was full, and again in my late 30s, an opportunity that I let go when serious family issues intervened. Truly, I was not meant to be a teacher!

In the deep unexplored corners of my mind, an occasional thought escaped, whispering "I want to write." Unfortunately I equated "writing" with the fictional, novel-style craft. And it was only when I discovered business writing at the age of 45 (I also knew that I was a "late bloomer") that I found my stride. I am finally a happy and productive self-employed writer.

But for all those years I floundered and found it far easier to figure out what I did not like doing, where I did not like being, and which roles I detested, than what I enjoyed.

I see that same thing with many of my clients, people who come to me to help out in a career change (I write mainly resumes and cover letters for a living). Some have found their sweet spot – what I call that intersection between talents, knowledge, and an existing need – and I define their skills in those written documents.

And then there are those who plod on, trying this and that, perfecting their definition of what they do NOT like doing, but somehow avoiding the discovery of what they would LOVE to do.

It is such a waste of the talents you were given, the skills you've learned, the interests and knowledge you've accumulated, when these are not used in a way that makes you productive and content with your role in society, in a role that makes someone's life more pleasant, beautiful, easier, fun, that fills an intellectual curiosity, improves health – that fills a need of some kind. We must all strive to find what our maker desired for us when sending us this way!



I really believe that if you listen to that small voice that whispers in your mind's ear, you'll discover your ideal occupation, that sweet, *sweet* "thing" you will love to do, that people will seek you out for, and that will leave you feeling content with your lot in life. As I like to say "Everyone deserves meaningful work." The definition of "meaningful" is left to each of us to uncover.

If you are struggling with this, and simply cannot pinpoint what you would like to do, here are a few ideas that will move you forward.

- Seek out a career counselor, someone who knows how to use personality and aptitude tests to reveal a talent that meets a societal need, one that leads to a paycheck.
- Meditate. Ask yourself to dust those memory banks and open up the path that illuminates that long-forgotten dream of being an event planner, teacher, construction worker, cabinet maker – the list is not only endless, it is ever-changing as our world evolves at a quickening pace! You might also consider those traits you've forgotten, like having a real respect for elders, feeling joy around the youngest of children, or reveling in the scents of flowers, sawdust, or spices!
- Make a list of the jobs you've held and sure, list what you didn't like about each, but challenge yourself to list at least one thing you DID like about each role. I disliked being an administrative assistant (organization is not my thing), but I sure liked the fact that I could be self-directed as my boss was away from his office more than he was there. I am self-disciplined to the max, which really helps as a business owner!
- Read books on the topic. There are oodles of these, as you are certainly not alone in your search. Subscribe to blogs, newsletters and join or start a career search group.
- Set up a job alert for jobs in your geographic area, read job postings, job descriptions and log the ones that really grab your attention. Keep a file and as you add a new one, review these to see if a pattern begins to emerge.
- If you have a few jobs that you think you'd like, but really aren't sure, find someone who does this kind of work. Spend a bit of time with him or her, in an information gathering exercise.

There are likely as many approaches to seeking one's destiny as there are destinies. One thing I know for sure: it is worth discovering. Since finding my ideal job, I hit the ground running and haven't looked back. I may not earn what I once did and don't have the benefits and pension, but I don't regret leaving those "perks" behind. I have new perks like a feeling of really contributing, the joy of working at something I love, and yes, even the pride of being recognized for being good at what I do.

One last thought to leave you with. It is not the "fixing of faults" that makes us better; rather, it is the discovery of our natural gifts and putting these to work, that makes us better. Better in helping our fellow humans, better in contributing to society, and better in delighting our maker by respecting the gifts we were given.