

PASSION... WHO NEEDS IT?

AN ACTION-ORIENTED EXPLORATION OF PASSION AND
PURPOSE, AND PRACTICAL STEPS TO TAKE WHEN YOUR
INNER FIRE HAS BURNED OUT

SHAUNICE HAWKINS

*To the peace, love, joy and laughter in my life:
Jesus Christ, Kevin, Ymani & Kalvary*

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INTRODUCTION

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive” -- Howard Thurman

It’s 2:00 a.m. You are sitting in front of your computer... staring into cyberspace... contemplating your life’s purpose... again.

Everything you know...once knew...has changed. Until today, your life was planned.

There was once a time when you were certain what you were supposed to be when you grew up and what you would do with your life. You looked forward eagerly to each knowing that sometime all your hopes and dreams would be fulfilled. There was no question in your mind about which milestones you would reach and how you would reach them. You were certain that you were going to retire early, when you’d travel the world, where you’d meet your soul mate, what you’d say if you had 15 minutes of fame or perhaps what you would do if you won \$15 million.

Yes, there was a time when you had a plan...and then things changed.

Now, instead of clarity, you feel like the rug has been pulled out from under you. And instead of a wealth of answers, all you possess are questions.

- What happens when circumstances change and my life plan is no longer in effect?
- What happens when I no longer know what I'm supposed to be, what I'm supposed to do, where I'm supposed to go and how I'm supposed to get there?
- What happens to the enthusiasm and zeal I had about achieving my milestones...my career goals...my 'hopes, dreams and aspirations'?

As lyricist Bill Foster wrote for the band Earth, Wind and Fire, you begin to wonder:

After the 'love' is gone
What used to be right is wrong
Can 'love' that's lost be found?

Take a deep breath. You're not lost; just temporarily misguided. And before we go any further, the first thing you need to understand is that your 'life plan' was just that...a plan.

Now what is a plan? It's simply a road map or a diagram that shows you the best route to take to get from Point A to Point B. And as you undoubtedly know, there are many ways to get to a single destination. When obstacles block your road, you simply go around them. You take another route. You make another plan. That's all it takes to reach your destination.

Plans change constantly. But passion? That's a different story. Your passion is 'etched in stone' and is with you forever.

What happens to many people is that they lose sight of the certainty of passion when their plans go awry.

This book is not about finding passion. You already have that. This book is dedicated to helping you reclaim what you already have but feel you've lost.

THE GENESIS OF MY PASSION FOR THIS TOPIC

The 21st Century has been a trying one for all of us. As the economy imploded, many of my dear friends, seasoned and well-established in their respective careers, were laid off. They were shocked. They had always thought that they'd be 'safe' - occupationally, financially, romantically -- etc.

That was 'the plan.' My friends were confident that playing by the rules and following the life map they had laid out for themselves would deliver the rewards of life. Their plans gave them a degree of optimism and a kind of mental security blanket.

But when they found themselves unemployed for months... and then those months stretched into a year...and the year stretched to 14, 18, 24 months of joblessness and more, something ugly began to happen. One by one, I watched people I cared out become discouraged, jaded, and bitter. Their optimism turned to pessimism. They felt out of control and, understandably, helpless. After all, it's one thing to be under-qualified and having trouble finding work. But what if you're over-qualified and there's just nothing out there, what do you do?

It was like a tsunami. Wave after wave of negativity began to engulf them. After being hit with the reality of the economic

situation facing an entire country, they were knocked over by personal loss, of their job, of their home, and many of the things that they held near and dear. What followed next was a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness because they were overwhelmed.

Ultimately, they were hit by so much, so fast that many of my friends were stunned and left feeling numb. The pride they once held for their respective careers, accomplishments and lives in general has been extinguished. They were despondent over losing their identity. They could no longer cling to the ‘hook’ on which they had traditionally hung their ‘hat.’ They felt empty and stripped of their passion for life and living.

Is that where you are today? Have the circumstances of your life left you feeling that nothing will ever excite you again? That your days of enthusiasm are gone for good? If so, then I’m going to ask you the same question I put to them: **What’s more important, the ‘hat’ or the ‘hook’?** Is it your life defined by a plan, or by the passion that gave birth to that plan?

You can’t actually lose passion. You can ignore it, abandon it, or allow others to convince you it’s only for the naive. You can stop tending its flame, but that ancient fire never dies out completely. Fan those coals a bit, give passion a little fuel, and you’ll find yourself alight with a white-hot roaring blaze of passion re-kindled.

So in the coming pages, I hope to guide you on a journey of discovery...or more correctly, *re-discovery*. Because I believe that when you re-discover yourself, you’ll re-discover your passion.

ABOUT ME

Before we get to talking about who *you* are, however, let me take a moment to tell you a little bit about me...

Professionally speaking, I’m the founder and chief executive officer of Evolutions Consulting, LLC, a business consulting boutique specializing in improving efficiencies, maximizing effectiveness, promoting brand visibility, and strengthening consumer engagement. I am perhaps best known for building strategic partnerships and alliances with key leaders, influencers and stakeholders; and I have a strong background in the publishing, financial and educational sectors.

I have been described by my peers as the “ambassador for diversity.” It’s a badge I humbly wear with honor. I teach and lecture nationwide on employee relations, diversity, organizational behavior, workplace culture and race relations and inter/intra-cultural conflict resolution. I have been privileged to lead keynotes, moderate and participate on panels at conferences, seminars and symposia around the U.S. and share insights on radio talk shows and in various local, regional, national and online publications.

I am a graduate of St. John’s University, New York University, Cornell University, Tulane University and Villanova University with degrees and certifications in a variety of business, diversity and human capital management curricula and have been nationally recognized for my body of work in the fields of diversity, human resources, strategic planning, marketing and business management.

On a personal note, I live in New Jersey with my husband of over 15 years and our two teenage children...and, I’ve been downsized twice during my 20-year, multi-industry career.

I hope this snapshot of who I am gives you an understanding of where I'm coming from and what qualifies me to serve as your guide.

Where are we headed? I'm glad you asked.

WHAT THIS BOOK WILL TEACH YOU

This book is designed to be an action-oriented exploration of who you are and how insights about yourself can help you get back on track to wherever you would like to go. We'll begin by looking at the subject of passion, what it is and how to recognize it.

However, *Passion...Who Needs It?* is not about finding your passion. To be honest, there are plenty of books on that subject. This book focuses on giving you a new perspective on passion, one that you can use in a practical, productive way.

We'll accomplish that together by delving deep into your psyche so that you can

- Name and identify feelings of grief, loss of purpose and helplessness
- Understand what you are feeling
- Learn strategies on how to renegotiate the sense of loss
- Turn the lack of direction into focus for the accomplishment of more positive ambitions

You'll find equal measures of instruction, advice, coaching, and motivation. Like the good folks at Nike, I'm a firm believer in the concept of 'Just Do It.'

So while I'll encourage you and root for your success, I'll also hold you to a high standard. Page by page, I hope you will find yourself

- **Enlightened** - and enriched in what Oprah Winfrey calls 'light bulb moments' that illuminate and clarify
- **Informed** - and in possession of different ideas and perspectives that will allow you to think critically in new ways
- **Transformed** - and experiencing a paradigm shift in your thinking
- **Energized** - and prepared to use what you learn to take substantive action
- **Inspired** - and eager to evangelize the messages you've learned and help others

Hard work? Yes, it is. But the results will be fulfilling, rewarding, life-changing, and worth every ounce of energy you invest. By the time you reach the last page, it is my genuine desire that you will be able to say:

- "This was a new way of looking at things"
- "These are things that I could try myself"
- "Now I have hope for solving my problem"

My goal is for you to find the content of this book entertaining, even humorous, but you will never lose sight of the clear and present learning objectives.

So let's get started...

WHAT IS PASSION?

When it comes to advice for finding success in your business or personal life, one of the most often-cited suggestions with 21st Century coaches, gurus, and talk shows hosts is ‘Find your passion.’

“Find your passion, whatever it may be. Become it, and let it become you and you will find great things happen FOR you, TO you and BECAUSE of you.” -- T. Alan Armstrong

“Find your passion and you will invariably show intelligence, inspiration and perseverance when it comes to achieving it. Passion is the genesis of genius.” – Anthony Robbins

The advice is sound...but incomplete.

The problem is that these suggestions assume that people know what passion is, but in truth, few people truly understand its meaning. And without that key puzzle piece, trying to ‘find your passion’ is like looking for a needle in a haystack, without having any idea what the needle actually looks like.

When you're unsure of what 'find your passion' means exactly and clueless as to what actions to take to discover your inner fire, you have no choice but to continue doing the same things you've always done leaving you frustrated, confused, and envious of others who seem to have such clarity about the path they should follow while you wait and wonder.

Have *you* been waiting for your passion to find you? Many people do. They wait for the moment that passion will reveal itself like a thunderbolt of inspiration and tell them what they should do with their lives.

Sadly, when the answer doesn't materialize, these lost people decide that 'passion' is something that other people have. Instead of embarking on a joyful journey to discover their passion, they stay stuck in place. "I don't have passion" becomes their way of life.

It doesn't have to be that way! Trust me when I tell you that there is **passion within you**. It burns brightly with an incandescent fire that will ignite your life. The problem is that you just can't see it...yet.

Do you love caring for animals, but fear that you will never make money at it? Have you always dreamed of being a singer or an artist or a dancer or a circus clown, but think you're untalented or the wrong 'body type' to pursue that dream? Perhaps your passion has tried to reveal itself to you, but you were unable to see it.

And that's precisely the reason I created this book. I wrote it to open your eyes to your potential...your possibilities...and most of all, your passion. I wrote it so that you can live a happier, more fulfilled life.

"There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." -- Nelson Mandela

The goal of this book is to help you **throw off the chains** and set your passion free without fear of failure or judgment. After all, how will you know if things are possible if you don't put yourself out there?

In this way, finding your passion in life can be a lot like finding the love of your life. You have to **seek out, meet, and reject many suitors** before you'll know "Mr. Right" or "Ms. Right" when you meet him or her.

Remember, understanding your passion is an **exploratory process** that is unique to you. There is no right way or wrong way to discover the thing or things you're passionate about. However some approaches are so complex and convoluted that people get lost in the process and end up losing sight of their goals. Instead of finding their passion, they lose their motivation to try, convinced that it's too hard, too time-consuming, or just 'not for me.'

DEFINING PASSION

Many people associate the word 'passion' with torrid love and feelings for the opposite sex. But, in truth, passion is so much more. From a linguistic point of view, passion is best and most simply defined as 'any powerful or compelling emotion or feeling; a strong or extravagant fondness, enthusiasm, or desire for anything.'

Passion provides the fuel that allows you to get through your days with abundant energy. It supports you from the inside out so that you can reach higher, go further, and continue to pursue a goal, even when the finish line seems elusive...or even unachievable.

“Without passion you don’t have energy; without energy you have nothing.” -- Donald Trump

Drop by a research lab where dedicated scientists spend years working on a cure for a disease such as cancer. Though they may never enjoy a ‘Eureka’ moment, their passion for scientific pursuit keeps them engaged and fulfilled by the work they do.

Or consider the thousands of Olympic athletes for whom the dream of winning a gold, bronze, or even silver medal will never be a reality. Just like top competitors, ‘average’ Olympians train hard and take joy in the process, driven by their passion for basketball, swimming, hockey, track, fencing, curling, or whatever sport they’re passionate about.

Or think about a hard-working business person who comes home after a 10-hour day and sits down at her computer and tries to create an elegant piece of ‘code’ to make her work easier. She doesn’t expect to be hired by Apple or get a big check from Microsoft’s Bill Gates. But there she is, working as hard as any high-priced computer tech, feeling the same satisfaction and joy of creation.

That’s passion.

It could also be said – especially if you’re French -- that passion is the *joie de vivre* (joy of living) and *raison d’être* (reason for being) that wakes you up in the mornings ready to conquer the world.

WHAT PASSION IS NOT

Sometimes it is easier to define a thing by talking about what it is not. One thing that people often mistake for passion is desire. That’s a mistake. For while passion and desire may be linked, they are actually two very different things.

I like the way marketing guru Stephen Pierce distinguishes one from the other:

- DESIRE – to want something
- PASSION – the refusal to live without something

Everyone has something they desire. Fame and fortune. A loving relationship. Status. Prestige. A pony. When you get what you desire, society brands you ‘a winner.’ But the flip side to being a winner is being a loser. And that’s how many people feel when they are unable to get what they want. For them, pursuing a desire (rather than living with passion), causes heartache, misery, and disappointment.

When you are pursuing your passion, however, you are *never* disappointed in this way.

People who are driven by desire encounter ‘obstacles’ that prevent them from being winners. People who are driven by passion, on the other hand, encounter stepping stones that they experience as ‘part of the process.’

Think for a moment about the contestants on the television program American Idol. Many say they are passionate about singing. But are they really? The ‘passionate’ contestants are the ones who sing when no one is listening. They practice and train and study. And just like the Olympians we talked about in the previous chapter, they enjoy the work they put forth in an effort to be selected as part of the Top 24.

And if they aren't chosen? They don't become discouraged. Instead, they thank the judges for the opportunity and 'learning experience.' They joyously re-dedicate themselves to study and improvement because wanting to learn more and making an effort comes naturally when you're passionate about something.

Compare this to the Idol wannabes who merely have a desire to sing. They believe they have a talent for singing, but they have done nothing to nurture that talent. Instead they show up unprepared and unqualified, and leave angry that the judges don't grant them their wish for stardom.

This is exactly why passion plays a critical role in success. Passion is about 'doing what comes naturally.' It's an internal source of drive and energy that you can ride toward whatever your ultimate goal might be. For someone who is pursuing a passion, rather than chasing a desire, the journey is as joyous as the destination.

There's another difference between passion and desire. Passion is never-ending while desire fades. When you have a desire and fulfill it, you are satisfied and no longer interested in pursuing activities that are in-line with that desire. This is the difference between wanting to have children (a desire) and wanting to care for children (a passion). Once you become a parent through birth or adoption, your desire is satisfied. Game over.

But if you have a passion for childcare, you can have your own children...become a teacher...open a daycare center...write children's books...or become a children's advocate. A lifetime of activities and accomplishment is waiting for you.

When passion is your foundation, anything you do that is in sync with that passion makes you come alive. When you're truly passionate, it's easy to become so focused on what you're doing that you lose track of time and may even become

obsessed. This is often the case with creative artists such as painters and writers who work at a fever pitch, forgetting to eat while they are 'in the zone.'

"A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labor and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both." - Francois Auguste Rene Chateaubriand

The energy you feel when you are doing something that you're passionate about can actually be addictive. So for now, the 'take away' idea is that passion, unlike desire, **always makes you feel good.**

INNER AND OUTER VOICES OF PASSION

I can't tell you what your passion is, and neither can anyone else. You must look within yourself and allow passion to emerge from the inside out, rather than attempt to 'install' it from the outside in.

Your passion is your power source and, in this way, it makes human beings similar to batteries. When we do things that we're passionate about, passion makes us feel energized and powered-up, just like a battery that's gotten the right 'juice.'

But when we do things that are not in sync with passion, we feel like a battery that doesn't have any power left...drained.

It would be nice if you could simply decide that working in an office would energize you as much as working at a florist, wouldn't it? Unfortunately that's not possible. Your unique 'passion' battery is something you were born with, just like your inherent skills, interests, and potential. **They're pre-set** and so are the activities that energize and drain you.

However, while you can't *control* your inner fire, you *can* listen to your inner voice to help get a better understanding of what lights it and helps it burn bright.

The first step is to slow down, spend time with yourself, and simply listen to what your heart, mind, and spirit are telling you. Let your inner voice tell you what fills you with energy and enthusiasm.

Be prepared. Your passion will often come as a whisper or a serendipitous event that reminds you of what's important and what makes you happy. If you're busy listening to what 'society' defines as the 'right path,' you may not hear the wisdom in the whisper.

This doesn't mean that you should ignore external voices. It means to become a more balanced listener. In the next section, we'll talk specifically about what people who know you – friends and family – have to offer.

ARE YOU LISTENING

The conversations we have with friends, business colleagues, and even people we don't know are definitely signposts that can be followed to find passion. These conversations don't feel forced. When you're passionate about ecology, it seems com-

pletely natural to debate the relative merits of 'paper vs. plastic' with a stranger when you're standing in a checkout line at the supermarket.

It doesn't matter whether your favorite subject is global warming or lipstick colors or writing a best-selling novel. As long as what you're talking about excites your interest, it's a topic that reveals your passion.

It's so natural to talk about the thing that you're passionate about that you may not realize you're doing it. But the people who are listening to you do. They know when you're talking about your 'pet topic.' Imagine well-known motivational speaker Tony Robbins was talking about how to find success with someone who has never heard of him. Tony's enthusiasm would be immediately apparent in his demeanor, in the quality of his voice, in the brightness of his eyes, and even in the way the words seem to flow effortlessly from his mouth.

His passion would be apparent, even to an alien from outer space.

So a good technique to use to identify what you're passionate about is to ask your friends, colleagues, and other people who regularly come in contact with you like your grocer, the elevator man in your building, etc. the following:

- If I seemed blue and you wanted to start a conversation with me that would change my mood, what topic would you pick?
- Do I do something that you think is amazing...even though it seems second-nature to me?

THE 'UNBIDDEN' SMILE OF THE SPIRIT

"If you smile when no one else is around, you really mean it." - Andy Rooney

What do you do when something makes you unhappy? If you're like most people, your face sags and your mouth shapes itself into a frown. Your spirit sags, too.

And when you're happy? Chances are your face lights up and, if you're really and truly happy, a smile spreads across your face from ear to ear and everyone who looks at you knows that you're in a joyful state.

You don't make yourself smile; it just happens. Your smile is an unconscious, automatic reaction, an unconscious physical response to a metaphysical state of mind.

Watching for the sudden, unbidden, unconscious arrival of your internal and external 'smile' can help you consciously pinpoint your passion.

Do you smile when you see a photo of a goldfish, or a lion, or a squirrel? Are you happy even when you're cleaning out your cat's litterbox? Does a smile creep across your face when you just think about going to an animal shelter and adopting a puppy?

If so, you probably have a passion for animals.

The things in life that bring us the greatest joy make us happy whether we're thinking about them or doing them. So what's *your* happy place? What do *you* think about or participate in that invariably makes you smile? Sports? Cooking? Mentoring?

True happiness does not exist without passion and vice versa. So using the smile test to figure out what makes you happy is an easy, foolproof way to identify your passion.

A good place to put yourself to the test (the smile test) is at a magazine stand. Which magazines capture your attention - *Home and Garden...Computers Today...American Bride*? Which ones do you automatically reach out for and open up and which ones barely rate a second glance? Which ones make you smile even *before* you open them up?

When you start to smile, pause for a moment. Get in touch with how you feel when you're smiling and *luxuriate* in the feeling of happiness that you're experiencing. As you develop a better understanding of what makes you truly happy, you'll become more adept at identifying your passion.

PASSION HAS MORE VALUE THAN DOLLARS

Are you familiar with Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs? This brilliant mid-20th Century theorist believed (as expressed in his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality* and graphically represented below) that **human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs**, and that certain lower needs need to be satisfied before higher needs can be addressed.