

**Do You Live To Work Or Work To Live?
Finding Work Which Is Compatible
With Your Essential Nature Is a Primary Way To
Achieve Emotional Health**

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Work consumes so much of our lives that we have to question sometimes whether we are married to our jobs. Indeed, we often spend more time with our colleagues at work than we spend with our families and friends. Work is a reflection of what we are able to do in the world. If we are emotionally, mentally, and physically sound...and if we are engaged in work compatible with our basic abilities...our work can be a way of feeling alive, productive, and helpful to others and ourselves. Work can feel exciting and challenging. But we need to do the "right" work...work which is consistent with what we love doing. If our work is wrong for us, it can be a source of endless frustration and unhappiness for us and those in our lives.

The nature of work is changing in our world today. It used to be that one wage earner could provide for a family, buy a house and car, and accumulate a good pension and savings account. Now it often takes two workers in a household to provide the same comforts, and even with two it's now more of a struggle. We used to believe that landing a good corporate or government job was the route to a good life, but that former reality has now become a myth as corporations and governments downsize. Statistics indicate that the average person must now expect to change jobs several times throughout a career. More people are working for smaller companies, often with the expectation that the job will last for a limited time. Many people delve into self-employment and entrepreneurial pursuits. Rather than seeing this new reality in a negative light, it may be more productive to view it as an invitation to examine what work means in our lives, how much money we really need to live a happy and meaningful life, and what type of work we should really be doing. This means taking a look within.

Many of us go into a certain type of work because our families and friends have expectations for us and what we should be doing with our lives... so that we often choose our line of work without examining its consequences for our lives. We may end up feeling that we spend our lives performing for others and seldom for ourselves. It is not long before we feel completely drained and frustrated about never doing what we want to do. When our work is incompatible with our basic nature, we perform poorly and often harbor anger about having to work at all. There is a high probability of stress and burn-out on the job. This can have a powerfully negative impact on our self-image, not to mention our productivity and enjoyment of life.

Our work should be compatible with our basic interests and needs. Humans are social beings: we engage in work during our productive years to provide both for the larger good and for ourselves. No person is an island. The ability to work well is a sign of emotional health, of being able to live fully. It can give us an avenue for expressing our intellect, our physical abilities, our social com



All About Us Biographies

Jody Michael, M.A., L.C.S.W. is founder and president of Jody Michael & Associates, a coaching consultancy that works one-on-one with individuals and small businesses to help them reach their career, executive, small business, and life goals.

She brings to her coaching practice over 15 years of corporate leadership in the finance industry, successful entrepreneurial ventures, teaching credentials, an M.A. and PhD studies from the University of Chicago, and more than eight years of practice applying clinical psychology principles to work-life, career, and business building issues.

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Think deeply about what you really enjoy doing



petence, and our emotional needs. The amount of money or status derived from one's work is not necessarily a sign of its value in terms of emotional health: a fruit picker or cleaning person can find as much meaning through their work as a bank president or powerful politician. It all depends on the person.

Take a look at some ideas to consider as you examine the nature of your work.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem, the value a person places on his or her own being, comes from meeting life's challenges, not avoiding them. Does your work allow you to be true to your innermost desires? Does it allow you to do your best at what you really want to do? Work which is compatible with one's inner nature provides a sense of daily satisfaction and the confidence to deal with difficulties when they occur. When your work is right, you feel a sense of competence...and others see you as competent. You exude a feeling of being a positive person. Others sense this and give you positive cues in return. This then enhances your self-esteem even further. On the other hand, when we are not in the right kind of work, we may begin to feel clumsy, unmotivated, bored, cynical, frustrated... and it is only a matter of time before we begin to see ourselves in a negative light.

Finding Your "Right" Work

The place to begin is within yourself. Thinking that you should be an artist or an accountant or a dental hygienist, just because these occupations might sound interesting to you, is not really the way to approach the question of finding your right work. The expectations other people place on certain kinds of work or the amount of money associated with a certain type of career may not address your own inner longings. Think deeply about what you really enjoy doing. And then take that activity to an abstract level. For example, if you enjoy cooking for others, on an abstract level you are really talking about being creative and nurturing other people. Think about work which involves creativity and nurturance, like working for or even starting a catering service, or social work, or teaching. Of course, your present job may

What's New? Small Business Alliance

Since inception, JMA has hand picked a small cadre of entrepreneurs that provide consistent high quality product and outstanding customer service at reasonable prices. If client needs arise that are specialized and are outside JMA's expertise, we go to our trusty list of specialized SBA service providers that we and many of our past clients have come to trust. If you would like to meet the team and review their specialties, please visit the Small Business Alliance, located in the 'About Us' section of our website, www.jodymichael.com.

How a Coach Can Help You

Whether your career is not quite where you'd like it to be, you're a small business owner in search of new ideas, or you're an executive reaching for the next rung, a coach can prove instrumental in helping you identify, accomplish, and achieve. Please refer to 'Client Case Studies' and read a few examples of how JMA coaches have helped their clients overcome obstacles and succeed.

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actually be right for you: it's perhaps a matter of looking within yourself to see what you need in life and then finding ways for your present work to fill these needs. Sometimes this just involves looking at what you have in a more positive light or thinking differently about what you already have. Or this could mean changing your activities on the job or being around different people at work. If your present job absolutely precludes your being able to be true to your own longings, and if you cannot make cognitive or behavioral changes, then it might be time to look into the possibility of changing your work altogether. The change does not have to be sudden. You may decide to keep your job but start a part-time business from your home...which may eventually become your full-time occupation. Your right work is that which allows you to do what you love, which lights up your inner being and allows you to flourish.

Discovering Your Limitations

Finding your right work involves not only a personal journey of discovery into what you like doing but also a recognition of those things which are not right for you. We like to see ourselves as people who are strong and can overcome any obstacle, and to a degree this is a healthy and life-affirming approach. But there are realistic limits all of us have which, if recognized and accepted, can lead us to smoother and more adaptive life choices. Failing to accept these limitations is to invite an endless series of frustrations into your life. Examine the experiences which cause you unhappiness, particularly if they occur again and again. Like yourself for being a person who can recognize both the abilities and the limitations which characterize your life...for you then have a more integrated and reality-oriented personality. And your road to discovering your right work becomes much easier to travel.

Show Me The Money!

Think about the rewards you can get from your work. Money is one of them, but it is hardly everything. You may also enjoy the psychic rewards of social contacts, the ability to be productive, the feeling of being true to yourself or the sense of a job well done. The rewards you derive from work can be as diverse as your individual needs. Some types of work bring few monetary rewards, but consider this: if you engage in work you love, there is a higher probability that you will make more money. Your output will be of higher quality, and this will be recognized by others. The product of your labor will reflect your inner strivings, your zeal for life, and your motivation to make your life and your work the best it can be.

The quest for right work, in short, requires nothing less than a deep look into your inner life. It means finding out who you are and what you do best. It means defining yourself as a unique individual and discovering ways to be true to your distinctiveness. Therapy is a way of embarking on this journey.

Take A Look Within

Many people who grow to old age take an inventory of their lives. They identify their dreams and recognize their limitations. They define their essential nature and come to terms with what their lives are about. They often decide at this point to live the "true life," to drop all their false expectations and to live the rest of their lives with integrity. But why wait till old age to do this?

- What is your real purpose in life? What gives your life meaning?
- What can you do, on a day-to-day basis, to engage in activities which reflect the true purpose in your life?

A Listening Exercise for Couples

Reciprocal listening is a powerful tool for couples who need to improve their communication. Couples who try this may become aware of how limited their communication has been in the past. They also learn an effective technique, which can increase the respect, trust, and intimacy of their relationship. This exercise may seem structured and perhaps contrived at first, but stay with it. The rewards can be immense.

The couple decides on a minor disagreement that they need to talk about. Each partner takes turns being either the speaker or the listener. The speaker has five minutes to speak without interruption. As speaker, talk about the problem as you see it. Present your argument briefly and stick to the point. Be sure to use "I statements" to present your views and don't place the blame on your partner (that is, just talk about how you feel about the conflict without putting your partner in a defensive position). After five minutes your partner (the listener) will verbally summarize what he or she has heard. This allows the speaker to let the listener know if anything has been left out or if it has been misinterpreted. Keep going until the speaker feels that the point has been completely heard.

As the listener, pay close attention to what is being said and try to attune yourself to your partner's needs. When you summarize what your partner has said, make sure you don't disagree, argue, or criticize. Just repeat what you have heard.

- What are your limitations? Can you come to see that accepting your limitations is as important in achieving wholeness in your life as focusing just on your abilities?
- Make up a list of things you really enjoy doing (gardening, organizing, reading, caring for others, leading others, solving problems, listening to music, socializing, being excited, and so forth)
- Does your work include these activities?
- Do you have social support (family, friends, a therapist, a support group) which encourages you in a positive way to be true to who you need to be?
- What are the things that block you from living a life of full integrity?
- Can you take small, incremental steps, starting today, to build the life you really want for yourself?

Your Work As Play...

Those who find their right work sometimes comment that there is no difference between playing and working. They love the work they do. Their work reflects their inner strivings, their life force. They feel fully alive when engaged in their work. They lose track of time and focus on the moment. Their best qualities are expressed through their work.

But then we get to the question: how is this any different from an addiction? Isn't this person just a workaholic? Doesn't this person rely on one source of gratification to the exclusion of all other life pursuits? The addicted person lacks free will. The workaholic lives a constricted life, trapped within an obsessive world without choices. On the other hand, those who find their right work can constantly grow and can experience their pleasures both through work and also through avenues other than their work.

Now switch positions. The speaker becomes the listener and the listener, the speaker. Follow the same procedures until the new speaker feels satisfied that his or her position has been understood. It is important to avoid letting this exercise turn into an argument. Because this is such a powerful way of learning to listen and to communicate better, many people prefer to try it with a therapist present, at least for the first few attempts.

Downtown Location

Continuing our tradition of offering comfortable and convenient locations for our clients, we announce the opening of our new downtown location at 405 N. Wabash. Solid natural materials and a birds-eye view of the Magnificent Mile create an ideal setting that prompts both relaxation and renewal. The ambience metaphorically reflects the new heights and perspective our clients achieve in their one-on-one work with us. Please call and schedule an appointment with us at this provocative setting today.

Suggested Reading...

Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow: Discovering Your Right Livelihood, by Marsha Sinetar (New York: Dell Publishing, 1987; \$11.95).

