

A vertical flame, primarily orange and yellow, rises from the bottom center of the frame against a solid black background. The flame has a smooth, flowing appearance with some internal texture.

PASSION AND PURPOSE

HOW TO FUEL THE FIRE,
FOLLOW YOUR ENERGY AND
PURSUE YOUR DREAMS

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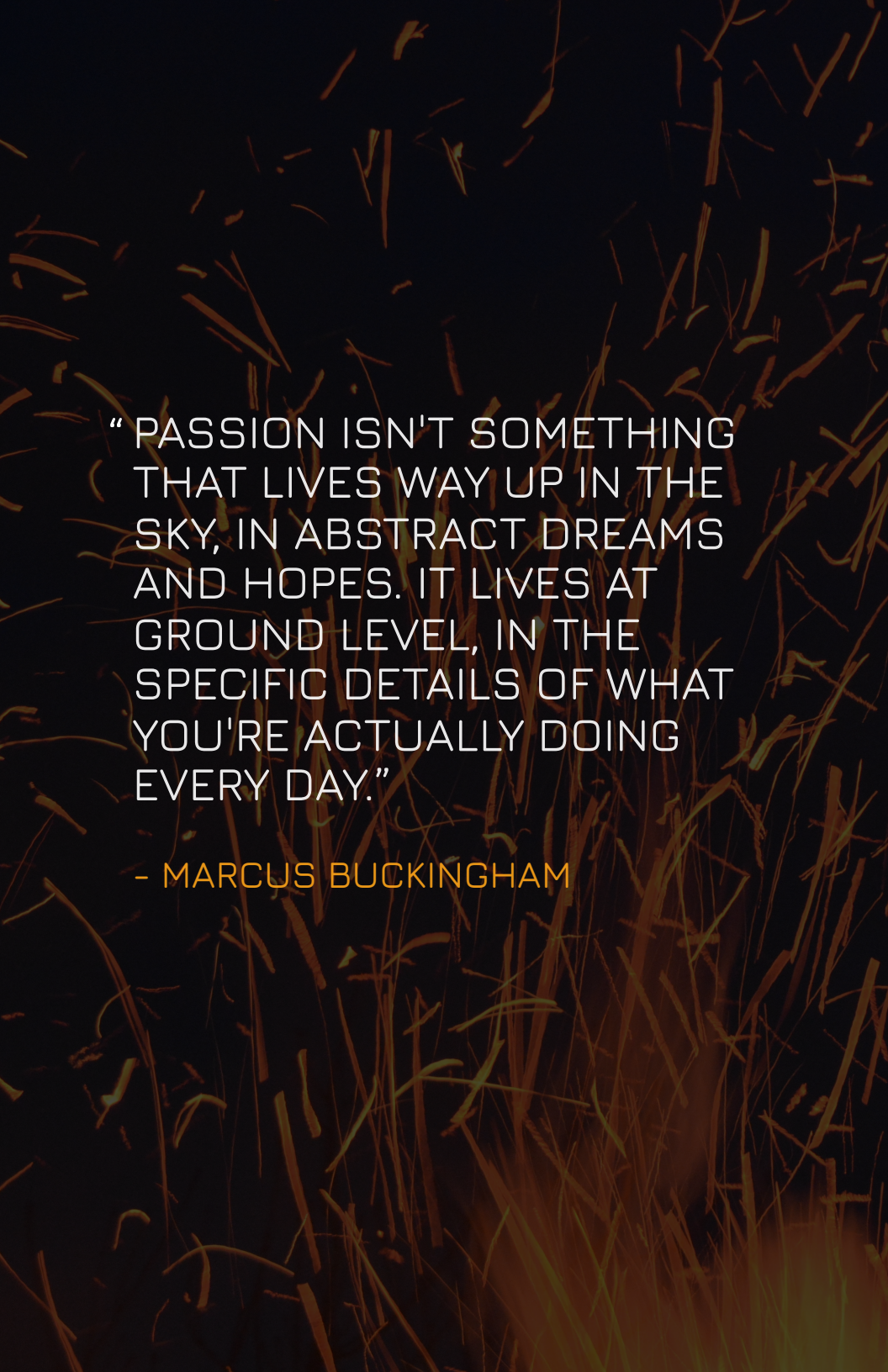
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“PASSION ISN'T SOMETHING
THAT LIVES WAY UP IN THE
SKY, IN ABSTRACT DREAMS
AND HOPES. IT LIVES AT
GROUND LEVEL, IN THE
SPECIFIC DETAILS OF WHAT
YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING
EVERY DAY.”

- MARCUS BUCKINGHAM

INTRODUCTION

Passion is more than dreams of great things and following your bliss. **It is energy.** Passion requires reserves of energy that are replenished as you feed your dreams through accomplishments. **That feeling of power, drive, energy, and borderline obsession required to achieve your dreams is passion.**

A psychologist once related that, during both of her pregnancies, she lost all her creative energy. The conclusion she drew from this was that for her, there was a limited amount of energy reserves. During the time her body was creating and sustaining another life, she did not have enough energy to create anything more.

Considering the quotes noted previously with references to passion as energy and soul fuel, her thinking makes sense. Passion is energy - physical, emotional, and spiritual. Perhaps passion is even social when working in groups or sharing your passion with others.

In the case of social energy, we are fueled by both the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of our

progress, success, accomplishments. The passion is continuously sparked, and reserves are replenished, through these processes. The drive - and need - to continue to reach toward our goal is reinforced.

Let's look at this in greater detail.

PASSION: PURPOSE

Finding Your Purpose

Finding your purpose makes it sound like it is lost. That you have misplaced it. That it is somehow out of reach.

But, in truth, **your purpose is all around you**. If it is out of reach, that is because it's out of your consciousness - likely crowded out by busyness, stuff, and mind-numbing activities.

To have a purpose in life is to fulfill a calling or engage in a mission. Purpose is action driven by passion - the energy that nourishes our dreams, desires, ambitions, and goals.

Your emotions can help you realize your purpose. Even anger can help because anger is energizing. People who channel their anger into action get things done and they're not likely to lose sight of their purpose.

Try these techniques to find your purpose:

1. **Slow down.** Rest your body, mind and soul. Immerse yourself in the present moment. Take in your environment and focus on your senses.
2. **Become aware of things that make you smile - and things that make you angry.**
 - Movies and books that resonate with you deeply
 - People who inspire you
 - Things that bring you joy
 - Injustices that push your buttons
 - Policies that make you want to scream
 - Social issues that break your heart and make you furious
3. **Allow yourself to explore your memories.**
 - What did you love to do before you got too busy/tired/old/broke to enjoy it?
 - Recall the wrongs you wanted to right and the problems you wanted to solve.

4. **Make time.** Prioritize and embrace things that make time stand still or energize you to take action.
5. **Do something!** Move toward your purpose, no matter how small the action.
 - Make a call.
 - Attend a meeting.
 - Do online research.
 - Start an online group.
 - Ignite the fire.

Committing to Your Purpose

The act of committing to your purpose requires goals. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of the groundbreaking book *Flow*, believes that goals need to be beyond our reach, but not too far beyond our reach.

Think of long-term and short-term goals.
Short-term goals are close enough to motivate you, but far away enough to make you stretch.



“PASSION IS ENERGY.
FEEL THE POWER THAT
COMES FROM FOCUSING
ON WHAT EXCITES YOU.”

- OPRAH WINFREY

For example, if ending world hunger makes you want to do something (big picture/long term goal - not likely that you will attain that one on your own), then decide how you want to contribute.

Create short-term goals based on what is doable, but not quite within your reach. It may be a project that has many steps - each getting you closer to your goal. For example:

Goal: Ensure that all children in my county have access to school lunch.

Ideas to achieve this:

- Fundraiser to pay off all school lunch debt
- Establish a fund to pay for all loans for school lunches each week
- Registration drive to get families who qualify signed up for the free lunch program
- Solicit people to make healthy lunches for kids who are unable to eat at school due to allergies, etc.

It is most helpful to have target dates, deadlines, or milestones built into your goals.

If they are reasonable, and they should be, milestones provide a sense of accomplishment and reinforce your purpose. **Each achievement fuels the next** - replenishing the stores of energy that ignite your passion.

Living Your Purpose

Once you recognize your purpose and commit to goals with short-term, achievable action steps (objectives) get to work!

Lose yourself in the moments of flow. **Allow yourself to celebrate milestones toward your goal.** Find a way to share your progress with others and it will provide additional motivation for you.

If your purpose involves a solitary pursuit of your goals, **establish ways to recharge.** Many people do this through relationships and emotional connections.

If people aren't your thing, get a pet.
Hemingway, Salvador Dali, Freddie Mercury,
Elvis, Franklin Roosevelt, Picasso, Stephen

King, Winston Churchill, Kurt Vonnegut, Alfred Hitchcock and many more formed special bonds with their pets.

The Story of Sherry: A Child with a Passion for Helping Others

Sherry was a 10-year old foster child who lived in a group home. Born into a family with a mom who had schizophrenia and a dad with alcoholism, she had a difficult childhood. After years of neglect, she and her sisters were removed from their home and placed in foster care.

One day Sherry was riding in the car with her social worker. They passed a group of homeless people standing near the street. Sherry asked who they were and why they were standing out in the cold. Her social worker explained that they were people who did not have a place to live and spent time during the day looking for shelter and food.

Later that afternoon Sherry came to see her social worker with her little arms full of blankets.

Sherry had been very concerned about the people she saw on the street in the cold with no place to call home. It had prompted her to act. She had collected old blankets from the house parents at her group home. She asked if the social worker would take her to give blankets to the people in the cold.

This became a tradition for Sherry and her social worker. In the winter, Sherry collected blankets and together they took them to a shelter or gave them to someone on the street.

Sherry's purpose was sparked by her empathy for others who she believed were not being properly cared for. She took action.

Each year she remembered the people who were cold and homeless. **Her actions were fueled by a passion to help people in need.** After thirty years, Sherry continues to help anyone who needs it.

PASSION: ENERGY

Body

Passion as energy - soul fuel - is certainly physical. As such, **passion requires participation from the body**. Although many who live their purpose report working for countless hours without food, sleep, or restroom breaks, it isn't sustainable. And it is not healthy.

A well-rested, nourished, and hydrated body strengthens the functions of the mind. Flow requires focused attention, which includes a sharp mind.

Keep your body alert with these actions:

- Move around at least every two hours to get the dopamine flowing again.
- Stretch your muscles.
- Wiggle your fingers and toes.
- Roll your neck and shoulders.
- Move your eyes side to side.
- Drink some water.
- Take a restroom break.

Mind

It's important to feed your brain as well as your body.

Keep the neurons firing and your focus sharp with plenty of protein throughout the day. A snack of protein every couple of hours combined with movement on the hours in between will help you stay alert and avoid distractions.

You can feed your brain and strengthen your mind with these activities:

- Puzzles
- Learn new languages
- Play an instrument
- Social interactions
- Take a class
- Pick up a hobby

In addition, find ways to use your mind that are not related to your goals. Varied types of activities give it the exercise it needs to stay sharp.

Soul

How do you nourish your soul or spirit? Some people find that being in nature meets that need. For others, it's more traditional, such as going to places of worship. Many find that meditation, journaling, breathing, and stretching activities replenishes their soul.

Sit on the porch with a glass of wine or cup of tea and take in the surroundings. Breathe in the moment. Focus on your senses and let everything else fall away.

Whatever works for you - do that.

The Story of Ron: Passionate Dedication to His Craft

Ron is the type of person who might have been referred to as a slacker a decade ago. He is very laid back and rarely gets excited about anything. He can sit for hours watching television or playing around on the computer.

Ron is very social. He is witty, intelligent, and engaging. He has a few interests, but nothing really lasts long with Ron. He got interested in ham radio for a while, bought the equipment, and soon lost interest.

Later he was interested in brewing beer. He acquired all the necessary supplies and brewed a few batches but moved on to something else - or nothing.

The one thing that Ron has always loved, and does very well, is mixing sound for live music. In his early 20s he began doing sound for local bands two or three times a month with just a couple of microphones, a few speakers, and a mixing board.

Ron loves music. He loves people. He loves perfecting sound. He is okay working on the weekend until the wee hours. Drunks don't bother him. And everyone loves him.

As he began to develop a reputation for excellent work, he started to build his business. He invested in equipment and hired other technicians. The more work he did, the more he loved it. Soon he was running a full time, full

service company and expanding their reach regionally.

Ron eventually partnered with someone who had stage and lighting equipment, which he took over and eventually added to his business.

He did not set out to build a brand. Or rub shoulders with people like Bill Clinton when he needed sound for a speech in a nearby state. Nobody really expected that Ron would turn what looked like another hobby into a six-figure business - including Ron and his long-suffering wife.

It was not ambition that resulted in his success - he seemed to have little or none. But his passion for music and the state of flow he attained when working sound reinforced his love for the work.

If you ask his wife, she will tell you he would keep doing it even if it did not make money, as evidenced by the first 15 years of their marriage. It was difficult for her, but she supported both of them financially. Now, that dedication has paid off.

The closest thing to ambition and success you will see in Ron is this work - his passion is the drive and motivation.

Everything else is gravy.

PASSION: FLOW

Mindfulness

We have mentioned the concept of flow a couple of times. **Mindfulness is a term that is more commonly used to refer to that zen-like state of mind.** Whatever you choose to call it, it is the result of living your passion and fulfilling your purpose.

Mindfulness and flow are about being so focused that nothing else matters. It is about living in the moment, fueled by the soul energy that propels you forward to the goals that are just out of reach.

Lean into the work. Drafting forms for a committee meeting may not seem like living your purpose. But if the meeting is about your passion for and purpose of ending hunger for school children in your town, drafting the forms is part of the bigger picture.

If you get lost in the details, **remember your goal.** Put pictures or goals in writing near your

desk to remind you of your purpose when you're tired or frustrated.

Every small step gets you closer. Maintaining a focus on whatever is in front of you allows the work to flow.

Internal and External Motivation and Rewards

While passion and love for your purpose (or anger about some injustice) provides internal motivation, you may still get bogged down when things are difficult. During those times, a bit of external motivation can carry you through.

Your intense desire to see all children eating lunch at school will drive you toward your goal. Going to the school at lunchtime to sit with kids who are benefitting from your work will provide an external reward to keep you going.

Many of us are internally motivated to do the work that we do, but getting a pay check is a great reward to remind us of the other benefits.

What motivates you to do what you love?

There is an argument to be made that doing well builds our confidence, which reinforces the motivation to continue. For those who help others, whether directly as a helper or indirectly as a City Council member, helping gives us a sense of being a good person - also a great motivator.

So, in many cases, our motivation is self-reinforcing through these intrinsic rewards. And, receiving a commendation for a job well done certainly helps.

What's Next?

The starting place is often the end. Stephen Covey talks about beginning with the end in mind. **That refers to your goal - what do you want to accomplish?**

If you're having a hard time finding your purpose or passion, think about this story...

The Story of Keira: Merging Passions

Keira enjoys photography and getting the best photo possible, with new lenses, better light, and more details. Though she enjoyed photography, she wasn't really lit up about it. Photography was a hobby, but she didn't feel a lot of passion for it.

She also fosters cats with medical challenges that are usually very hard to place - this she is passionate about.

At some point, she got the great idea to marry her passion for rescuing cats and her enjoyment of photography.

Keira now goes to shelters to photograph the cats that need homes. She lovingly edits each photo to give each cat the best chance of finding a forever home. She has helped many cats that had little hope of finding a home to get families of their own.

So - if you enjoy knitting, and feel strongly about caring for the elderly, maybe you can knit lap blankets for seniors. Or have knitting groups and classes at the senior center.

If art is one of your gifts, and stopping teen pregnancy is important to you, volunteer at a school or shelter. So many teens share that gift but have no outlet for it.


Consider these ideas to discover your passion and put your ideas into practice:

1. **Interests.** What do you like to do? Do well? Find interesting? Want to know more about?
2. **Strong feelings.** What causes, population, issues, or interests do you feel strongly enough about to do something to help?
3. **Think about how to integrate this into something that motivates you.** If you don't think of it right away, come back to it. As you go through your day, make note of anything that energizes you.

4. **What can you do?** If you come up with something, think about the big goal (world peace) and what you can do to contribute (use your art skills to help kids who have been abused develop an outlet for their feelings or design a t-shirt as a fundraiser for the local domestic violence agency).
5. **Plug in to something that energizes you.** Find others with the same interest and support each other in your efforts. If you don't like being with people, do this online.

Additional Resources

- [Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi \(TED Talk\)](#)
- [Living in Flow - The Secret of Happiness with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#)



“PASSION IS ‘SOUL
FUEL’ - WITHOUT IT,
YOU WILL RUN OUT OF
THE FOOD THAT FEEDS
YOUR VERY SOUL.”

- FRANK KAMAL