

THE TORONTO STAR

CAREERS

Saturday, July 31, 1999 Section H

www.thestar.com

HIGH TECH H11

Align work, passion and you'll thrive on the job

BY GRACE CIROCCO
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

When the Great One retired from playing hockey he thanked God for giving him talent. Then he paused, thought about it, and said it probably wasn't so much the talent that was important as it was the passion to play hockey.

When we think of passion, too often we think of our lover or significant other but not our work. The truth is that without passion for our work we lack the means for discovering our purpose. And without purpose, our life has no meaning.

Passion as a verb is how you live your life, how you do your work. Being passionate is an attitude and an energy you bring with you all the time. Passion as a noun is connecting with a what, a thing, a person, place or activity that brings out the best in you. It is a sacred connection to your innermost self, your own life force. It is a connection to spirit, God, or the universal energy. Your passions are your loves and your loves tell the world who you are.

So many people I see in the workplace today practice "psychic absence" — that is, they go to work, but they leave their minds, hearts and souls at home. Part of the problem is that we live in a fast-paced world that makes constant demands on our energy. In this environment, passion dries up. The other problem is that many people have long suppressed their passion for life, so accessing passion for work is next to impossible.

I think Og Mandino expressed it well when he said, "Many people die at 40 — they're buried at 80." Since so much of our identity comes from our work, it's important for our emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being that we become more passionate about and engaged in what we do.

Unfortunately there is a misconception that there are only certain careers that one can feel passionate about and that others are just "jobs" to pay the bills. "It's easy for you to be passionate," I was once told by a workshop

Career Monitor

participant. "You have glamorous work. You get to travel all over the world teaching seminars and workshops. Some of us have to do the crummy jobs."

I have seen people be passionate about jobs that I would never want, like Jack the plumber who came to help us with a flooded basement one summer. I never knew someone could be so passionate about plugged pipes and backed-up drains.

At one point he stuck his whole arm into the sewer and pulled out the culprits. "It's roots," he said with glee, obviously pleased with himself. My Dad is retired now but he's passionate about motors. His eyes get big and wide when someone hands him a sick motor. He loves taking it apart and figuring out the problem. He can work on his tractor or truck for hours, forgetting to eat or go home.

For my mother, it's her fruit farm and garden. The last time she was in Italy, which was to bury her father, she brought back a tiny walnut tree seedling from her parents' garden. That seedling has grown and produces bushels of walnuts. For her, that tree is sacred. It carries the spirit of her father, and each time she discovers a new walnut seedling she tells us that it's one of the babies of the original tree.

The point is that passion is in the eye of the beholder. It's not some magical ingredient that is found intrinsically in the work itself. The source of passion is who you are; it's the attitude you bring to your work that brings passion to your experience.

Perhaps you're thinking there's no way you can become passionate about your current job. Maybe you're in the right field but working the wrong hours. Perhaps you love parts of your job but not others. You may have to do some fine-tuning. In order to do this, you need to ask "Who am I"? The



MARCOS CHIN FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Conference Board of Canada lists self-knowledge as a core competency for career/life success.

Connecting to passion is about connecting to your authentic self. We all have special talents and gifts. People who are aligned with their passion have a compass for their lives, a focus, a purpose. The problem is that after years of following someone else's advice, your authentic self gets buried

under layers of masks.

Here are three suggestions for connecting to your passion:

■ Pay attention to your gut feelings. Gut feelings have saved lives, discovered cures, and made people millions. They come as a hunch, a flash, a deep knowing. The problem is so many of us tune feelings out in favour of something more logical or rational. Feelings are sacred. They are your barom-

eter for what's really important. Go inwards. Listen. Keep a journal. Make friends with your feelings.

■ Pay attention when you're enthusiastic. "Entheos," the Greek root of "enthusiasm," means "filled with God." Studies show that people with enthusiasm have stronger immune systems because they're high on life. Enthusiasm comes from your "well of passion" deep inside. When you feel this way, your soul is speaking, you feel endless energy, exhilaration. To find your passion, tune into your enthusiasm.

■ Pay attention to synchronicities. The German poet Goethe once said that when you commit yourself to something then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help you that otherwise would never have occurred. Have you ever been attracted to a book, a career, a person only to have them keep popping up in your life in strange ways? That's synchronicity. These aren't just coincidences, they're meaningful coincidences. They mark significant points of transition in your life and they point you in the direction of your purpose.

Keeping passion alive is about courage, the courage to be who you are, regardless of some of the consequences. Living with passion is about living on the edge — it's about pushing yourself to grow outside your comfort zone.

Remember the message of the movie *Good Will Hunting*. All professions are honourable, but there is no honour in laying bricks if you have the heart of an artist. There is no honour in a desk job if your heart yearns to roam the land.

The point is strive to know your authentic self and then be it! The outcome: a more passionate and meaningful life.

Career Monitor guest writer Grace Cirocco has delivered motivational seminars and keynotes to more than twenty thousand people on three continents. She is a former broadcast journalist with CBC Radio.