

## Do What You Love

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Family members often play a role in helping their student to choose a career direction during the college years. Sometimes graduate school is an immediate next step, but many students attempt the feat of finding employment.

Sometimes that employment is any kind of job to start meeting financial obligations -- and for other students it is a job in a field of genuine interest. Some students get salaried positions while others are paid by the hour. In these lean times we often hear ourselves say, "Take what you can get." Yet in times of plenty you might more commonly hear, "Do what you love and the rest will fall into place."

Having been an advisor to college students for twenty-two years, I advised students in both lean and plentiful times. My advice was often similar, "Discover the many things you love (we are rarely one-dimensional in our interests) -- and integrate as much of what you love into your work and community involvement as you can afford." The key word here is, "afford." One student might need to take the \$11.00/hour job as a dog walker to begin to meet financial obligations and personal spending needs, even though he or she really wants to get a job with a marketing company. Another student might not experience a similar degree of financial pressure -- and can afford to postpone taking just any job to look for a position in his or her career field. I encourage parents to help their student to articulate what he or she loves -- and to help him or her think of ways to keep the dreams alive.

### So what's your role in all of this?

- When talking with your student look for signs that he or she really loves something – more animated when talking about some topics, expresses

enjoyment when doing specific tasks or using particular skills – and acknowledge when you notice this, which will help your student to do the same.

- Encourage your student to sample various career environments and jobs through internships, work and volunteer involvements – and then to deepen or expand an experience when your student feels like the job or career might be a good fit.
- Reinforce the value of accessing career development resources at his or her campus as a student or recent graduate. Career counselors are focused on partnering with your student to help him or her develop job search skills, and to explore and attain employment.
- With your student, brainstorm ways that he or she can integrate some of what he or she loves into his or her work and/or community involvement.

That student who really desires to go into marketing, but who needs to take a job at \$11.00/hour as a dog walker, could likely volunteer with a community agency, small business group, or local media outlet to keep his or her marketing skills and dream alive.

- Help your student to identify any additional training or experience he or she might benefit from to continue to strengthen his or her skills in a competitive job market. With on-line education there is much that one can continue to learn to advance specific workplace skills – especially in technology.
- Set an example in your own life, demonstrating ways that you pursue and/or integrate the various things you enjoy -- perhaps they are reflected in your work, your volunteer commitments or family life.

Maybe you have a job as school teacher, but over the years you have developed a love for photography – so on the weekends you are a wedding photographer – and maybe this is even moving you toward starting your own full-time photography business.

- Help your student to map out “What if” scenarios. “What if I get a job at a rental car company, but I really want to teach music?”

If the need is to take the job at the rental car company, then invite your student to brainstorm about ways that he or she might be able to have some sort of involvement teaching music – perhaps at a community music school, or offering a music class at a local youth agency, etc.

- Encourage your student to get a foot in the door – focusing less on the distinct job and more on being in the career environment that he or she seeks -- and then having access to dozens of people working in your student’s field of interest. Access to people means having an expanded network to help facilitate and navigate future employment.

Young people often benefit from guidance that helps them to see that doing even a part of something they love will likely bring them closer to doing more of what they love more of the time.

“Don’t get lost in what you can’t do – get lost in all that is possible.” -Kay K. Gruder