

**Passion:**  
**Life's High Performance Fuel**

**SEASONS OF GROWTH™**

SEASON OF  
SELF



SEASON OF  
DROUGHT



SEASON OF  
NEW GROWTH



SEASON OF  
SIGNIFICANCE



*Why settle for success when you can grow to significance?*

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## Passion: Life's High Performance Fuel

*“The only person who succeeds is the person who is progressively realizing a worthy ideal. He's the person who says, "I'm going to become this" and then begins to work toward that goal.”*

~Earl Nightingale

**P**ASSION is a bit of a mystery. People readily agree that it is a crucial ingredient to enjoy life and professional success. This is the point at which the common understanding stops. The ever-elusive questions remain:

1. What is passion?
2. From where does passion originate?
3. What am I passionate about?
4. Do I want to live my passion?
5. Do I have the courage to follow where my passion leads me?

Since passion is an essential ingredient in your life and career, we want you to develop as much of this natural resource as you want. This article answers the five questions listed above.

### 1. What is passion?

The dictionary defines passion as “having a keen enthusiasm or intense desire for something”. The positive descriptions include such words as fervent, zealous, obsessive, and fanatical. Lurking behind this mask of positivism, though, is the darker side of passion described by such words as fiery, quick tempered, easily incensed, and hot blooded.

A key to your success is to channel this intense desire or enthusiasm to get where you want to go. Many people, and you may be one of them, haven't identified what you want to be when you grow up. Keep reading as we're going to discuss ideas that can help you live a passionately engaged life.

### 2. From where does passion originate?

Where does passion come from? As you might expect, there are different hypotheses without a defining conclusion.

According to one hypothesis passion is rooted in our DNA (Kaufman, 2009). Support for this notion emerges from the fact that passion can emerge from our basic human instincts. The DNA based hypothesis leads to an interesting question. So if we are DNA coded to be passionate about certain life events, does psyche scans life's horizon to attract life experiences per our DNA code? That is to say, we may be attracted to a certain career that may be passionately engaging because of our specific DNA map. This leads to another

interesting issue – what role does our freedom of choice play? As you would expect, there are different opinions. On the one hand, there is the belief that life events are determined. The definite order of the universe (e.g., night follows day, the four seasons, etc.) gives credence to this hypothesis. The authors believe there is a definite order to the universe, while at the same time we exercise freedom of choice. For example, we can make the choice to engage in certain careers regardless of the attraction for that career. The fact that many decide to remain in a career in spite of overwhelming disadvantages is testimony to the freedom of choice.

There is much to learn about our DNA and, consequently, we certainly can't rule out any DNA based predispositions. At this point, researchers have not found the "passion gene." It does seem to be a bit fatalistic to think that some of us may be devoid of such an important life ingredient because we were not fortunate enough to inherit the "passion gene".

On the more positive side, we believe that being passionate about life is not only possible, but a natural process of living. For just a moment, consider Mother Nature's creations. First, note that every non-living and living creation has a purpose. In some instances, the purpose is to serve as a food source for a predator. That perspective doesn't sound too promising does it! Second, is the fact that every living plant and animal is striving to be everything that its DNA allows while taking into consideration the resources available for that development.

We're part of Mother Nature's structure, thus according to her laws, we also have a purpose. The one characteristic that differentiates humans from other living plants and animals is our capability to think. With that ability, we believe that each of us has a higher-order purpose than to serve as the food source for a predator. A logical conclusion is that like other living organisms, each of us should strive to be everything that we can be while taking into consideration the resources that are available to us. One of the most powerful resources is the ability to think positive "can do" thoughts, which is essential to maximize our potential. Unfortunately, research has shown that some 80% of our thoughts are negative which sabotages any effort to be the best we can be. The challenges are to exert the self-control to be a "can do" thinker and to define our life's purpose so we can maximize our time on earth.

We want you to consider the process to define your purpose as an exciting event. Consider it analogous to taking a journey to an exciting location. Perhaps for the first time in your life, you will have a sense of meaning and a more complete understanding of what you need to do to put life into your purpose and purpose into your life.

When one of the authors (Larry) first put his purpose in writing twenty-five years ago, he used the activity that provided the most enjoyment for him as the basis for his definition. While drafting his statement, the core purpose that continued to come to mind was to "help people through teaching".

An alternative model and a more comprehensive model, is to write your life’s story. Review the significant experiences, choices, and people in your life, and record how each contributed to your development. The authors have completed this exercise and it is an interesting, thought provoking process leading to solidifying your life’s purpose.

While thinking about how your life’s experiences have impacted you, ask yourself, “Why am I here?” An alternative question is, “What am I supposed to do with my life?” Begin writing the answers that emerge in your conscious mind. Soon, the right answer will emerge and you’ll know it when it does – the words you’ve written just seem right.

Now you’ve got the formula to put more passion in your life.

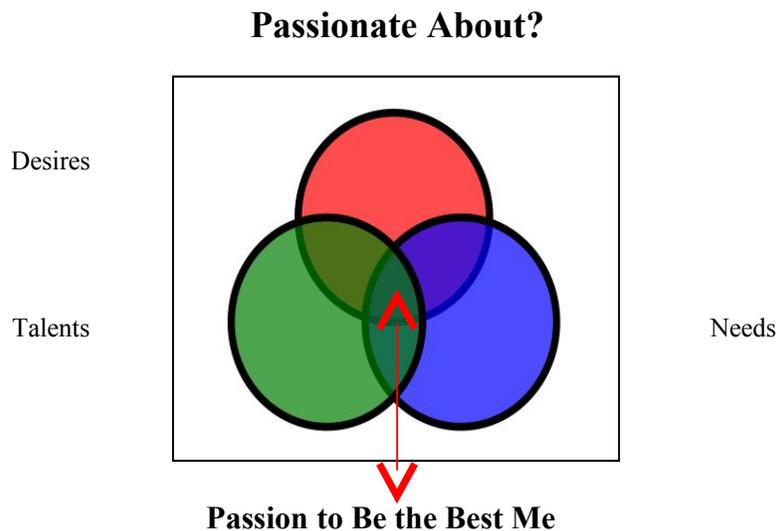
Purpose  $\Rightarrow$  Passion

### 3. What am I passionate about?

Addressing “what we’re passionate about” requires us to consider the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation includes our internal drives, e.g., self-fulfillment, and joy. Extrinsic motivation pertains to that which happens to us, e.g. externally receiving rewards, threats, and punishments.

Passion is an intrinsic motivator. It puts “fire” in our bellies. It allows us to be part of something that is bigger than self. The answer to that question gives us life and, in turn, we have more life to share with others.

A popular notion is that passion develops over time through a multiplier effect (Golvin, 2008). That is, “something” triggers the belief that “I can be good”. That “something” could be as simple as a thought, or feedback from a significant person in their life. According to Mathew Kelly, author of *The Rhythm of Life* the ultimate answer emerges from the intersection of our talents, desires, and needs as illustrated in the following Venn diagram.



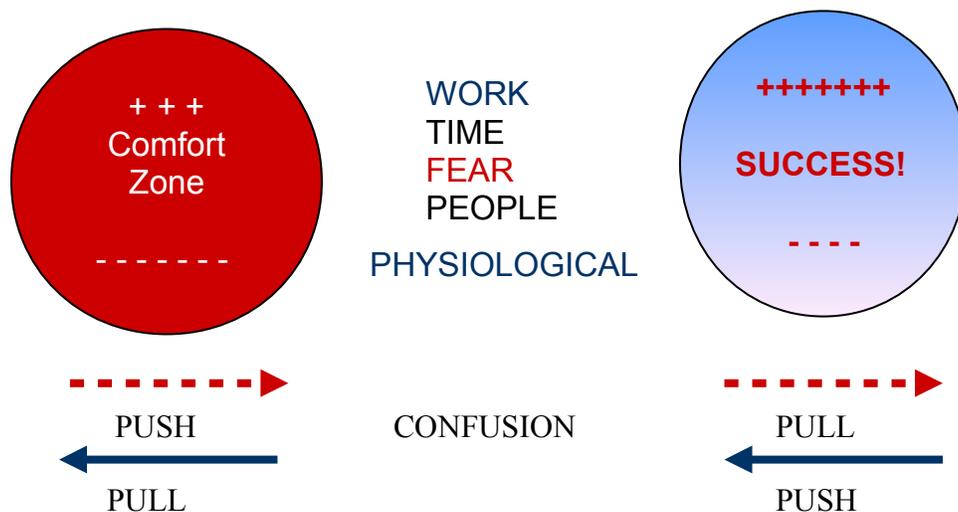
In the words of Mac Anderson, *“Find what makes your heart sing and create your own music”*.

According to the “multiplier effect”, the trigger causes the person to develop additional competency. This improved performance is self-fulfilling (intrinsic) and is positively reinforced by others (extrinsic). The combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic events continues to support the belief “I can be good”, which serves as the stimulus for the person to strive to achieve higher competence levels.

World-class (i.e., passionate) performers, in every profession, are obsessively committed to fulfill their purpose. They understand that the road to success equals 90% frustration and disappointment and are willing to endure because they realize these are the footsteps to tomorrow’s success. The answer to “What is it that I want?” provides such an intense magnetic force that their passion literally takes over their lives. For example, Mark Ingram, the 2009 Heisman Trophy winner, summarized the essential ingredients of a passionate performance in his advice to younger athletes. *“Keep your eyes locked onto your goal, believe that you can be successful, do whatever is necessary, and do not listen to those who tell you it can’t be done.”*

The following figure summarizes the energy systems inherent in the passionate drive to success.

### Passionate Performance



Passionately engaged individuals:

1. Use the disadvantages (frustrations) of their comfort zone to push them to higher performance levels.
2. Use the advantages of what they want to accomplish as the magnetic pull to do whatever is necessary.

3. Understand that hard work, time, fear (e.g., of failure), and other people may not want them to succeed. Additionally, current research suggests a physiological based resistance to changing behavior.
4. Realize that the pushes/pulls of the dynamic performance process can produce considerable confusion.
5. Are resilient. They know that in spite of the challenges, keeping their eyes locked onto their goal provides the continued and necessary hope and expectations of success. The magnetic quality provides the necessary energy to bounce back from the challenges.

#### 4. Do I want live my passion?

Your answer to this question will be determined by the personal benefits you receive versus the degree of discomfort that must be experienced to achieve the benefits. So let's look at this ratio of personal benefits to disadvantages. We've listed advantages/disadvantages of being passionate, and we recommend that you do the same to create "your" list. Feel free to use our suggestions to stimulate your thinking.

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Have more <b>direction</b> and a purpose in your life.	The time required to think about your life.
Life can be more <b>meaningful</b> .	The mental exertion required.
The <b>energy</b> to accomplish that which you desire.	Fear of where this process might lead.
The feeling of contributing and making a <b>difference</b> in your life.	Learning required to know "how to identify" your passions.
A better <b>understanding</b> about life.	Must change my attitude that "I can" or "I deserve" to live my purpose.
Improves <b>resiliency</b> or "bounce back".	
Overall life is <u>more</u> <b>enjoyable</b> .	

**Direction.** What is more enjoyable? Being lost in a strange city or knowing precisely how to reach the desired location? Being lost is not a lot of fun because the information we are processing doesn't make sense. We feel out of control with the chaos in our lives at that moment. A definite direction/purpose gives us control of our lives which provides considerable emotional security.

**Meaningful.** Knowing our passions provides meaning because we know what's important in our lives. It helps us to concentrate on the 20% of our lives that generally yields 80% of the enjoyment.

**Energy.** Passion is energy. We “naturally” participate in activities that align with our passion. Passion is the fuel source that drives us to achieve that which we’re passionate about.

**Difference.** It is a comforting feeling knowing that we’re making a difference, contributing, and having a positive impact upon the lives that we touch. Knowing that we’re an integral contributor to something that is greater than self individually continues to fuel our passion. Consider the purpose-filled and passionate lives of Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, David Robinson, and Nelson Mandela, to mention a few. Each became involved in a cause greater than self. There is no doubt that these individuals made a positive difference in the lives they touched.

**Understanding.** For the most part, life is a mystery. Passion helps us to unravel life mysteries. We have direction; we’re living a life of meaning, and making a difference. We have a better understanding that living our passions is what life is all about.

**Resiliency.** We’ve said that *success = 90% frustration and disappointment*. Passion fuels our resiliency, which is how quickly we bounce back when we get the wind knocked out of our sails. The words of John D. Rockefeller provide an excellent summary, “*I always tried to turn every disaster into an opportunity*”.

**Enjoyable.** Simply stated, life is more fun. We dare to say that most, if not all, people like to have fun in their lives.

As you would expect, there are disadvantages associated with putting more passion in our lives and we’ve listed major ones. The process is going to require time and effort on our part. As you will learn in a succeeding section, having the courage to follow your passion means facing our fears and doing whatever is required regardless of the consequences.

We know that the deciding factor to putting more passion in your life is the degree the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Simply listing them as we’ve done may not be sufficient to make your decision. You can quantify the intensity of these energy sources. Rate each of the listed advantages/disadvantages on a five-point scale, and calculate a mean for each category. Your five-point scale can be based on the **overall importance** the behaviors contained in each category have upon you ranging from 1 (Very Little) to 5 (A Great Deal). Using our list of advantages and disadvantages, an example of the scorecard is as follows:

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Score</b>
Have more <b>direction</b> and a purpose in your life.	5	The time required to think about your life.	2
Life can be more <b>meaningful</b> .	5	The mental exertion required.	3
The <b>energy</b> to accomplish that which you desire.	5	Fear of where this process might lead.	4

The feeling of contributing and making a <b>difference</b> in your life.	4	Learning required to know “how to identify” your passions.	2
A better <b>understanding</b> about life.	4	Must change my attitude that “I can” or “I deserve” to live my purpose.	4
Improves <b>resiliency</b> or “bounce back”.	5		
Overall life is <u>more</u> <b>enjoyable</b> .	5		
<b>Add the scores</b>	33		15
<b>Calculate the mean (sum of scores ÷ the number of scores)</b>	4.71		3.0

### 5. Do I have the courage to follow where my passion leads me?

Decision time! Are you living or ready to live your life’s purpose? If the answer is no, do you have the courage to do so? Unfortunately, many people choose not to live their passion. The balance of energy for the disadvantages associated with identifying passion that we listed on page six exceeds that of the advantages. We suspect lifestyle traps most people. This entrapment ranges from not believing “I deserve” or “I can” live a better life” to those who are trapped in the comfort zone by “their lifestyle’s riches”.

Then, of course, there is the fear factor, i.e., fear of failing, fear of taking the necessary risks to journey out of the comfort zone, etc., that keeps us trapped. Fear may, in reality, be the number one enemy of living a passion-filled life. One of the authors (Larry) delayed writing his purpose for several years because he was fearful of the changes that would be required to live that purpose. At that time, he knew that he was frustrated about being in a boring, dead-end career. So he stuck his head in the sand. A series of life events subsequently encouraged him to take the risks required to live his purpose. The short version of this story is that through the more difficult years of establishing his career, knowing that his life was in synch served as the beacon that kept him locked onto the course. Life provided the answers, people, and opportunities when he needed them the most to continue the journey to personal and professional significance. Fortunately, he had the courage to follow where his passion led.

Another author (Lawson) spent over 32 years in the Army with a clear purpose in the service of our Nation. He retired to the civilian sector right before the attacks of 9/11. Over the next five years he held senior positions in the defense industry and university research sectors. Although he received very high salaries, neither position fueled his true passion to lead and pass on years of leadership experience to others. It was not until he was inspired by his spouse after reading *The Power of Full Engagement* and *The Purpose Driven Life* did he decide to solidify his purpose in life and then change career fields. He is now living a life of true significance as co-founder and coach at the True Growth Academy and a senior mentor for military leaders worldwide.

Breaking out of the mold of our entrapments requires engaging in a personal change process. We support the notion that answers, people, and opportunities required to live one's purpose will become available as needed. You just need to keep your vision locked onto where your passion leads while enduring the discomfort associated with traveling what may be uncharted waters. Both the journey and the results you achieve will enrich your life. Believing that the change is worth the effort is the starting point, and we can help you to successfully manage the pushes and pulls associated with the personal change that is required to live your life's purpose. We encourage you to read our eBook, *Smart People Work People Smart*, in which you will learn a 7-Step Personal Change Process©.

Our wish for you is to have the courage to follow your passion and enjoy the journey. In summary, the four action steps to live a life of passion are: 1) Define your purpose; 2) Become passionately engaged in something greater than self; 3) Commit to the acts of daily disciplines required to live one's purpose; and 4) Don't quit before the blessing.

*Passion is something resonating deeply within the soul.  
It's usually a sign of how God made us special.*

- Tom Morris, best selling author

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