

Keep Playing

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Sample of Content:

When was the last time you just played? When was the last time you followed a passion and deeply immersed yourself in something you loved? What if you could have and do what you most enjoy?

Content:

Recently I had the great pleasure of hearing one of my favorite bands, Groovelily, perform their original musical theater piece Striking 12 in New York City. Before the show, as the band was warming up, the lead singer/violinist Valerie told us a powerful story. Valerie had recently performed with her father at an event to celebrate his lifetime contribution as a cantor. After the performance, an older woman came up to Valerie and told her about how she had played violin as a child in Germany and how much playing

the violin had meant to her. She went on to explain that when her family fled the country during the Nazi regime, she was not allowed to bring her beloved violin with her to America because her family feared it would mark them as Jews. So, she grew up, got married, and raised a family. While she encouraged her son to play the violin (and he grew up to be a musician), she never indulged or rekindled her passion to play the violin again. When the woman finished telling her story, she held Valerie's hands tightly, looked her in the eyes, and emphatically said, "Keep on playing."

Every time I hear this story I am deeply moved (yes, I love the band and have heard this fairly recent story multiple times already). I am moved because of my own ups and downs as an amateur musician who can think of a million excuses why I'm not good enough to be playing or how I shouldn't be "wasting" time when there are so many other more important things to do. I am also moved because I am overwhelmed with the sheer amount of creation, beauty, joy, and passion that is missing in this world each day because so many people have abandoned their passions and joy for the much more "important" and "serious" business of life.

Take a moment right now and consider:

What activities did you love to take part in as a child, teenager, or young adult? Do you still partake in any of these or related activities? What did you dream about most wanting to be when you grew up? What are you doing when you feel the most joyful, passionate, or in the flow? When was the last time you spent time doing this?

If you're like most people I know, you're probably laughing because it has been so long since you've done any of these things that you don't even remember or you're muttering a number of excuses as to why you can't be doing these things. Some of those excuses might sound like:

I don't have time! There are more important things to do!
It's impossible to do now that I have a wife/husband/mate, career, kids, house, etc.
There's no way I can ever have what I dreamed about, it was only a fantasy.
After all, I'm middle aged, overweight, and out of shape and certainly not going to become an NBA, NFL, WNBA, Broadway star, or rock musician in this lifetime, so why bother at all.

Well, what if you could have and do what you most enjoy? What if you could get in touch with the essence of what you really wanted and then go and do **THAT**? For instance, perhaps what really appealed to you about becoming a rock musician was making music and sharing it with others. You could achieve that dream at any age. Pick up an old instrument you used to play and begin to take lessons again. Learn something new. Volunteer to share your music with kids, the elderly, or a church group. Another example could be that you loved the spirit of competition and physical challenge inherent in the dream of playing professional sports. Well, you can have that too! While you might not be the next Lance Armstrong or Serena Williams, there are many ways to get physically fit and be competitive in sports at any age. I've seen athletes in the Masters division of different sports play with more heart and competitive spirit in their 70s, 80s, and 90s, than many young professional athletes exhibit. I personally know people with demanding careers and families who regularly compete in triathlons and cycle, run, or walk untold numbers of miles each year for charity. If they can do it, so can you.

My point is "you deserve to have joy, passion, and play in your life. Yes, life can be serious at times and we all have responsibilities, but you owe it to yourself to really live a little and give yourself the gift of something just for you. You'd be amazed at how just a little bit of time spent regularly on something that feeds your soul will yield results ten times over in the other "more serious" parts of your life.

This month, go in search of your long lost violin. Dust off your guitar, tennis racket, paintbrushes, or writer's pad. Give yourself permission to rekindle the passion, find the joy, and PLAY.

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