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Why Following Your Passions Is Good for You (and How to Get Started)

Whether you plan to turn your hobby into a career, or just use it as a release valve¹ for the stresses in your life, here's how to find time for a little self-care.



Before Andrew Rea started his popular “Binging With Babish”² YouTube channel, he could barely get out of bed. Today, he credits the show, which inspires its three million subscribers to make their favorite “as seen on TV” dishes, with saving his life.

5 In 2015, six months before starting the channel, Mr. Rea, a former visual effects supervisor, was overcome with depression. But by combining his passions for food and filmmaking, as well as seeking professional help, he rediscovered how using those passions could lead to a rewarding career.

10 “Even if it hadn’t become my career and completely changed my life, the late nights spent tinkering³ after work would’ve been worth it,” Mr. Rea said. “I was cooking again, I was filming again, I was happy again.” [...]

¹ *release valve*: (her) afledning

² *Binging With Babish*: madlavningskanal

³ (her) pusle med et projekt

Mr. Rea's experience isn't atypical. A 2015 study published in *The Annals of Behavioral Medicine*⁴ found that pursuing your passion both lowers stress and contributes to greater happiness over all. Researchers found that participants who engaged in hobbies were 34 percent less stressed and 18 percent less sad during the activities, as well as for some time after.

15 Laura Vanderkam, a productivity expert, advocates finding time for yourself as a means to greater happiness over all. "Life just feels better when you have things in your hours that you want to do," Ms. Vanderkam said. "There're moments when time almost has no meaning because we're so happy about what we're doing. The more time you can spend in that zone, the better life feels." [...]

20 We're all busy. Whether we're juggling demanding careers, family life or both, most of us feel as if we can't cram anything more into our schedules. But Ms. Vanderkam wants to dispel⁵ that idea. "When you say you don't have time, what you're really saying is, it's not a priority," she said. While there are definitely moments in which we legitimately don't have time to spare, most of us can find a little time if we know how to look.

25 To figure out where extra time lives in your schedule, she recommends thinking of time in weeks, rather than days. A week "is really the cycle of life as people actually live it," she said. Each week is made up of 168 hours. If you work 40 hours and sleep eight hours each night, that still leaves 72 hours. "Maybe you can carve out⁶ a few hours of really fun, cool stuff per week. That will make the other 165 hours that are in a week feel a lot more doable," she explained. [...]

30 Once you find those free hours, it's all about using them effectively and motivating yourself. Going to bed an hour earlier a couple of nights a week might allow you to get up an hour sooner and use that time. If you have children, consider trading "free days" with a friend or neighbor, switching off kid duty for a few hours on the weekends. It may feel like you're trading your precious "free" time for another item on your to-do list, but a pet project⁷ you're passionate about is probably better than Netflix, and one that'll leave you feeling more energized and rewarded.

35 "When you did activities as a kid, they were often built in – there was an adult forcing you to go," Ms. Vanderkam added. "As an adult, you're fully responsible for that. Many people find it easier to let go of promises they make to themselves."

40 Whereas Mr. Rea has millions of subscribers waiting for him to drop a new video, most of us don't have anyone relying on us to write those pages, paint that picture, or get into downward dog⁸. Sometimes we all need a little external motivation.

"Turn your passion into an obligation," Ms. Vanderkam advised. "If you want to take up woodworking, take a class. If you've paid for it, you're more likely to show up."

(2018)

⁴ *The Annals of Behavioral Medicine*: medicinsk tidsskrift

⁵ afkræfte

⁶ *carve out*: skabe plads til

⁷ *pet project*: yndlingsprojekt

⁸ *downward dog*: yogastilling