



FINDING YOUR FIT

Happiness does not come from success,
success comes from happiness.
When you love what you are doing,
you are successful.



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Life Coach

I can still remember that pair of size 2 Limited Jeans I shared with my friend in college. Between the two of us, that pair of jeans walked the halls of East Carolina University five days a week for years and had a nightlife to rival any college student. We loved the fit of those jeans; they made us feel very slim and stylish. I don't even need to try them on to know they no longer fit. Currently, my best fitting jeans are the pair I inherited from my mother when she died five years ago. I was amazed to find that her favorite pair of jeans fit me like a glove, just like the ones in college! (Rest assured they are not a size 2!)

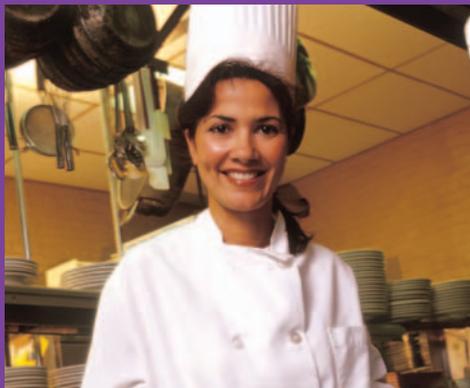
We expect to outgrow clothes, and eventually we shop for new ones, often trying them on prior to purchasing. When we cook a nice meal, we often follow a recipe. And when we travel, local and abroad, we usually plan a route to our destination. Even when our relationships no longer work, we often leave them in search of new ones. So why is it that we do not give the same attention to planning our lives and careers? Did you know that most people spend more time planning their vacations than they do planning their careers?

Adults are always asking children, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Yet the majority of adults are still struggling with the same question. I think we ask kids because we are searching for ideas! And I think the question should be WHO do you want to be when you grow up rather than WHAT do you want to do.

What do you DO? Don't you just love that question? Most people do not. So why is it one of the first questions we ask when we meet someone new? There is a tendency to define ourselves through our professions, which can be very dangerous, especially considering the fact that most people do not make conscious career choices.

There is a natural tendency to look outside ourselves for clues regarding what we should do and who we should be in life. Our family, societal, organizational and cultural systems send powerful messages regarding what is desirable and appropriate. Media is a multi-million dollar industry designed for the sole purpose of convincing and selling us what they believe will bring us happiness and contentment. It is easy to get caught up in the glamour of what others appear to excel in and enjoy, without taking the time to search our own hearts for what is personally and professionally fulfilling.

What fits in our lives and careers changes as our journey evolves. For



IN LIFE AND CAREER

this reason, it is important that we evaluate and adjust our choices along the way. Early in life, goals often revolve around gaining credibility in our careers and establishing a financial base. As we gain life experience and wisdom, the importance of honoring our values becomes glaring. We are driven to embrace and express what is important to us through our experiences and relationships. As we prepare for our final season of life, the prominent question is, "What impact will my life have when I am gone?" Giving back, sharing wisdom and experience and leaving a legacy become important aspects of finding our fit.

Finding your fit is an internal evolution of discovering and honoring your uniqueness.

It is the process of expressing who you are through what you do. It is a lifelong adventure fueled by genuine curiosity and commitment to yourself and to living the life you desire and deserve. Here are some strategies for getting started:

Inventory your Assets

Carefully consider what you do well, and what comes naturally to you. Evaluate your abilities along with skills you have acquired through education and work experience. In what areas are your talents recognized? Consider using professional instruments and assessment tools for understanding and applying your natural hardwiring.

Identify your Interests

What fascinates you and captures your attention? Think about what you really enjoy doing and what you choose to do in your spare time. What did you enjoy doing

as a child and with whom did you spend the most time? Consider avenues for exploring your hobbies and interests through paid and/or volunteer roles. Connect with others who share your interests.

Evaluate your Style

To what type of lifestyle do you aspire? How do you like to operate? Are you a people person? Do you prefer to work alone? Is it 8-5, night shift, life in the fast lane or simplicity that suits your style? Are you single, married, parenting children and/or parents? What pace do you prefer to live your life and whom do you include in it?

Survey Others

Talk to people who have and do what you believe you want. Ask about how they arrived where they are and what challenges and rewards they have experienced? Shadow their life if possible and see firsthand how well it fits for you.

Finding your fit requires a multifaceted approach to understanding your skills and abilities, taking inventory of your interests and personal style, all within the context of your family, your values and your goals. It is not necessary to quit your full-time job in order to pursue your passion, but it is necessary to define your desires and explore various avenues of pursuit. Be sensitive to the relationships and experiences that enter your life every day, realizing there are no coincidences. We attract what we are and the clearer we are regarding our authentic selves, the more likely we are to find our fit in life and career.

Gail is a local speaker, author and coach committed to supporting individuals and organizations to reduce stress and increase job satisfaction, productivity and retention by identifying and maximizing individual and collective strengths and creative capacity. Gail is the former Missy Thornbury, a 1980 graduate of Cary High School.

Who do you want to be when you grow up?
Did you know that most people spend more time planning their vacations than their careers?

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