



Set Your Own Standards

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I have to confess that I'm past tired of getting the emails, receiving the phone calls and seeing the advertisements on television of people trying to tell me what should be important to me. The emails saying "can't believe you haven't responded to our offer". The voice mails claiming "we know the secret to your success." Advertisements subconsciously programming "your car is a reflection of your achievements." The unaccountable media and politicians saying "we need this or that" when in fact it is what best suits them and not me at all which they are proclaiming. The fight to have my own values and standards is at an all time high.

It's no wonder we're all so busy. We are not only trying to accomplish what we need to accomplish, but what everyone else wants us to accomplish. Even well intentioned school teachers, bible study leaders and community volunteers (all of whom I am myself) unconsciously attempt to shape where we spend our time and money. And too often we let them.

It has been said that to understand what is important to someone is as simple as looking at their day-timer and check-book. The point being where we spend our time and our money represents what is most important to us. In reality, it is not that simple. Where we spend our time and money is a combination of what is important to us and what is important to others. In fact, for many people stuck in the hamster wheel called "life as defined by others", most of their time and money is going to areas that are important to others. As the nineteenth century Irish playwright and poet Oscar Wilde said, "Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation." In business and at home, either define your own values or accept a life defined by others. You will always live values, if not yours, someone else's.

If you're part of the herd mentality, consider deciding for yourself what is important and worth your time and money. Look in the mirror and ask yourself, "What are my values?" Contemplate what is important to you. You have the ability to set your own standards.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting you leave your family, quit your employer, develop anti-government philosophies or become disrespectful to others. On the contrary, I'm suggesting that until you decide for yourself what is really important, you will never reach your peak performance – for you or for those with whom you live and work. It is only after you have decided what is worth your time and money that you will fully engage in it. It is only when you truly believe in what you are doing that your passion will be released and you will do your best. You will never work as hard for someone else's objectives as you will your own. Don't let your passion be a quotation. Make it real.

Follow these steps to discover your passions and set your own standards:

- 1. Know Yourself** - Know what you can and can't do. Understand your talents and weaknesses. You can develop and become anything you want, but don't try to be something you are not.
- 2. Accept yourself** - Be confident in your unique combination of abilities, experiences, values and knowledge. Don't let your confidence be imprisoned by your position, possessions or the perceptions of others.
- 3. Acknowledge what drives you** - Understand your true desires. They may not be popular. They might even be against the prevailing winds of modern society, but so has most every great invention, great leader and great idea.
- 4. Consider regrets** - Consider that which you will most value when you are old and gray. Reflect on how you most want to be remembered. It is rarely what you have, but what you've done and been that is most remembered.
- 5. Identify your true passions** - Answer the question "What do I want to be or do when I grow up?" Write it down in specific words that you can reflect on and edit over the coming weeks and months until you are satisfied with it.
- 6. Pursue written goals** - Based on your true passion, establish what you need to do and what you don't need to do. Create a list of goals with written plans including actions and milestones. Create a "not to-do list" to guide you in what you need to stop doing.

And last but not least, when you vote, use your own brain and vote for what you believe is best for you, your family, your community and your country. Don't fall into the trap of merely following the rhetoric of the media, politicians and self-interest groups. Set your own standards.

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