



BMCC Center for Continuing Education & Workforce Development

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# Zen and the Art of Liking Your Job

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# Questions



[www.SpiritEye.com](http://www.SpiritEye.com)

## Key Questions

- *Do you like your job?*
- *Would you still keep your job if you were not paid for it?*
- *What would you love to be doing if money were not an issue?*
- *What is the right job for me and what should I do with my life?*

“Zen and the Art of Liking Your Job” article at  
[http://www.SpiritEye.com/SE\\_PE\\_ZenArtJob.htm](http://www.SpiritEye.com/SE_PE_ZenArtJob.htm)

# The Price of Opportunity



Dailyzen

[www.DailyZen.com](http://www.DailyZen.com)

- Today we have more options and opportunities than humans ever had
- In the past there was little choice – the place one's birth defined one's life and occupation
- *Opportunity and Choice have a price*
  - Choice leads to confusion
  - Too often we let go of something we don't like because we have a choice – reducing our chances to understand the true meaning and potential of what we had been given

# Three Options



[www.DailyZen.com](http://www.DailyZen.com)

- Don't need a job (rely on other sources of income)
- Get a job of your dream (assuming you have one)
- Get a job to pay bills (and wonder if it's all there is)
- **Reality Check**
  - **Wealth is not a recipe for happiness**
  - **Dream job is not a substitute for hard work**
  - **Great education does not guarantee a fulfilling job**



CNN: Truth About Happiness May Surprise You

[http://articles.cnn.com/2006-11-10/health/happiness.overview\\_1\\_happiness-joy-genes?\\_s=PM:HEALTH](http://articles.cnn.com/2006-11-10/health/happiness.overview_1_happiness-joy-genes?_s=PM:HEALTH)

# Why Zen?



Through green fog, red clouds,  
Miles of bamboo,  
To a hut where quiet lasts  
Just let go and worries end  
Stop to think and they're back  
An unpolished mirror holds millions of shapes  
A bell doesn't ring until it's rung  
Your basic nature is the real Buddha  
Not form or space nothing old or new.

- Stonehouse

[www.DailyZen.com](http://www.DailyZen.com)

- A popular philosophy: implies wisdom and expertise
- A method for inward gazing and self-reflection
- A method for concentrating one's will

## Zen offering:

- **Tame "monkey mind"**: busy for the sake of being busy, no focus, no purpose (creeps on you when you will is dissipated)
- **Develop "sky mind"**: path to understanding and self-reflection
- **Practice**: any task can become an opportunity for the self-improvement and self-realization

# Food for Thought



*Dailyzen*

[www.DailyZen.com](http://www.DailyZen.com)

- We are makers of our destinies: we have the power to shape the world around us via concentration of our will and spirit
- Universe gives us exactly what we need at any given moment. It's our task to discover and realize the opportunity given to us
- Think of a sail boat: it's capable to use wind from virtually any direction to advance in the direction it needs to go (with the help of a skillful captain)
- *Zen Proverb: Before enlightenment; chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment; chop wood, carry water.*

# Exercise

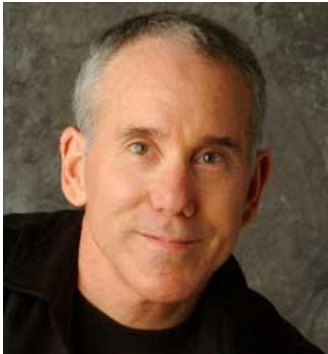


*Dailyzen*

[www.DailyZen.com](http://www.DailyZen.com)

- Pretend that you don't have a choice: this is it! How can you make your current situation more rewarding?
- Write down what your current job does and means for you (i.e. what you would lose if you did not have it).
- Write down what possibilities and opportunities you see in your current situation which you have not yet realized.

# The Peaceful Warrior's Perspective



[www.DanMillman.com](http://www.DanMillman.com)

I'm twenty-two years old and feel that my life has a spiritual purpose. Meanwhile I feel obliged to fulfill the material demands of a job, paying off college loans, and making money. I feel that I've strayed from the path. How do I rediscover my destiny? Do I need a teacher?

You express a sense of dilemma I hear in one form or another, from many people young and old. My wish for you is not that your situation should necessarily change, but that your perspective shifts so that you come to accept where you are as a perfect part of your process. Rather than waiting for big things to happen, you should begin to focus on the little things you can do now—anytime—that renew your sense of spiritual purpose and meaning.

Consider the little things that make a difference: One baseball player hits .275 for the season; the other bats .300. The .300 hitter may make twice the salary as the one hitting .275, yet the difference between them is only one extra hit every forty times at bat. A racehorse may win by a nose, a marathon runner by a step, a swimming champion by a fraction of a second, a basketball team by a mid-air shot at the buzzer. In most fields, nobody is twice as good, or even half again as good, as everyone else. A five- or ten-percent advantage makes all the difference. And if these analogies from the real world don't seem spiritual enough, consider the difference between someone who meditates (or does a simple exercise routine) for three minutes a day, and someone who doesn't practice at all but intends to begin "soon." In a year, those three little minutes have become more than sixty hours, and a healthful habit.

Your future calling, great or humble, is a seed waiting to grow in its own time. Meanwhile, nourish the soil with a good education and practice patience. I encountered a variety of jobs and experiences until my gifts and interests began to clarify themselves. It was all part of the process. You can't push this river; choose the most attractive options as they appear and handle what is in front of you.

You write, "I cannot move on with my life until—" But you are moving, each and every day, whether or not you notice it. This isn't a dress rehearsal; it is real life, and the little things you learn each class, each page, each day, make a difference. Don't miss what is happening now while waiting for something else. Life is unfolding perfectly around you. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with your life or your present challenges. Play the cards you are dealt, and play them well, until you get dealt a new hand.

While you wait to discover that great path or calling, focus on the little things, like helping out at a school or shelter or soup kitchen for an hour or two each week. This helps draw you out of yourself and into the world. In reaching out to others you will worry less about finding your teacher and can instead become a teacher by example, in everyday ways. Live each day on purpose, one small step at a time. We never know what surprises await us. As Francis Bacon wrote, "We rise to great heights by a winding staircase."



# The Way

## *The Way*

*Every person has a path to follow.  
It widens, narrows, climbs and descends.  
There are times of desperate wanderings.  
But with courageous perseverance and  
personal conviction,  
the right road will be found.  
This is what brings real joy.*

*Konosuke Matsushita*