**Student Question | What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?**

BY MICHAEL GONCHAR

It’s one of those questions you’ve probably thought about countless times since you were little. And, as you get older, the question can start to feel more real, especially when teachers, parents and even friends start asking.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

If you have it all figured out, then great. If not, then just be patient. That’s what Angela Duckworth advises recent college graduates in [this article](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/05/jobs/graduating-and-looking-for-your-passion-just-be-patient.html). She writes:

For all their grandeur and euphoria, graduation ceremonies can be harrowing. Until that momentous day, you’re a student whose job is to do what your teacher asks. Now you have to ask things of yourself — but what?

If you’re relying on a commencement speaker to set your compass, you may still be confused at day’s end. In my experience, it’s common to hear “Follow your passion” from the podium. This is great counsel if, in fact, you know what that passion is. But what if you don’t?

Young graduates might imagine that discovering your passion happens the way it does in a movie: with a flash of insight and a trumpet blast. Before that flash, you were struggling to find yourself, and in the next moment, you know exactly who you were meant to be.

As a psychologist who studies world-class achievers, I can say the reality of following your passion is not very romantic. It takes time to develop a direction that feels so in-the-bones right that you never want to veer from it.

Thus, my advice to young graduates is not to “follow your passion” but rather, to “foster your passion.”

Ms. Duckworth then makes three recommendations:

* Move toward what interests you.
* Seek purpose.
* Finish strong.

**Students:** Read the entire article, then tell us …

— What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?

— Do you know? Have you always known, at least since you were little? Or are you still looking for your “passion,” as Ms. Duckworth writes? And are you ever worried you won’t find it?

— Do you think you [will have a career that you love?](https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/28/do-you-think-you-will-have-a-career-that-you-love/) Is that the most important quality you’ll look for in a job? Or do you think providing for your family or making enough money will trump your desire to enjoy your job?

— Are there other motivations that will help guide what kind of career you have — such as working toward social justice or following your religious beliefs?

— Do you have particular talents or skills that you think you should put to good use?

— What do you think about Ms. Duckworth’s advice? Have you already started to “move toward what interests you,” for example, by trying out different jobs, internships or volunteer opportunities?

**Read the questions and formulate your answer to the questions in two paragraphs and write your response in the text box below. Save to your “Documents” Folder and upload to “Student Upload.”**

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