

Take Your Cue

FOLLOW YOUR LOVES
TO A BETTER LIFE

"I don't believe people are looking for the meaning of life as much as they are looking for the experience of being alive."

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

HOW IMPORTANT IS it to do what you *love* rather than spending day after day doing what you're only *content* to do? Will you be happier and live longer if you do what you love? Lissa Rankin, author of *Your Inner Pilot Light*, says that the most important medicine for mind *and* body is doing what fulfills and excites you: doing what you love lights you up, she says, and turns on your natural self-healing mechanism. In her TEDx talk, Rankin explains the science behind how the state of your life affects the state of your body. Her advice is to listen to your body's "whispers" before they turn into life-threatening "screams," and to trust your inner guidance.

Take Your Cue is about turning up the volume on the small voice inside that knows what you love, allowing its guidance to

take you to the place where there is joy, and then using this joy to discover the activities that fill you with a sense of purpose. According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a sense of purposefulness is associated with a longer lifespan. Over the course of the five-year study, people without a purpose were significantly more likely to die during that period than people with an aim in life that they loved and that excited them. Ikigai (pronounced icky-guy) is a Japanese concept meaning “the reason for getting up in the morning.” Having an ikigai is believed to be one of the reasons why the people of the Japanese island of Okinawa often live well into their nineties and beyond.

To begin this exciting journey of loving self-discovery that could potentially lead to a longer life, get together with your friends and a stack of blank cue cards (also known as index cards). Write “I LOVE . . .” at the top of each card in big, bold, capital letters and then complete the sentence with whatever comes to mind, one idea per card. Keep going without overthinking it, writing down the things you most adore. Filling out the first few cards may feel wobbly yet strangely exhilarating and familiar, like riding a bicycle for the first time in many years. Keep at it. Eventually the inner voice that’s repeating “you don’t know what you love” will tire, allowing a deeper knowing to break through with new ideas. It usually takes the voice of the inner critic ten minutes or so to become hoarse, so do this activity for at least twenty minutes. Don’t worry if you find it difficult: connecting with what you love, especially if you have spent many years drifting in another direction, is much harder than it looks.

After you’ve finished writing out your cards, take a breather. Chat with your friends about a few of your favorite things. Then, when you’re feeling refreshed and ready, go back to your cue cards and organize them into piles that seem to fit together.

There are no right or wrong ways to categorize your cards, but themes in your life will begin to emerge, and you may have an “aha” moment. The benefits of Take Your Cue are twofold: first, you will be filled with gratitude for all the things you LOVE in your life; and second, you will gain perspective on the type of things you LOVE that are *missing* from your life—or that you don’t have enough of.

When we did this activity together, Lynne had two business degrees and a job forecasting pharmaceuticals, but none of her cue cards professed a love of numbers or a passion for the art of exponential smoothing. Her cards did, however, spell out a deep LOVE of the arts, women’s causes, and minimalist design. The activity prompted her to pursue a part-time English degree, study creative writing and acting, volunteer at a women’s shelter, and throw out a whole bunch of stuff. And those cards unanimously cued her that she must somehow quit her numerical day job.

After Deb sorted her cards into themed piles, writing an objective for each stack seemed to be the next logical step. Many cards related to how much she LOVES the outdoors, and many others reflected her LOVE for physical fitness and exercise. Deb decided that one of her objectives would be to run a marathon, a goal she eventually accomplished. A simple stack of cards became the springboard to improve her health and wellbeing.

The most difficult part of this activity for Julie was waiting for the thoughts and feelings about what she LOVES to start to flow. She knew spending time with family and friends, health, learning, and adding value through work were important. But by taking time to reflect on her LOVES, a deeper truth became clear—her life was out of balance. Although she loved all the elements of her life, she saw an overemphasis on work at the expense of quality family time and self-discovery. This

revelation led to a mission: she would focus less on her career, spend more time with her children, and devote more time to personal growth. The long-term result was that she carved out a new career through part-time arrangements and a more balanced, happier life. Oh, and Julie's love of freedom propelled her to take up flying!

Whether or not you change your career or your entire lifestyle, doing more of what fulfills and excites you will improve your overall health. What will you discover about yourself and what actions will you take to bring more of the things that you LOVE into your life?