

HAPPINESS AT WORK

Does happiness at work really exist? YES, it really does and you can spot it in people who have energy and are generally upbeat about their jobs. What is different about these lucky individuals? Their career life is truly a marriage of their passion and their strongest core competencies, also known as soft skills. Core Competencies or soft skills include Teamwork (a willingness to work as part of a team, to be able to cooperate with those with different views) and traits such as a desire to learn and to deal with change. As important as the core competencies are your Aptitudes and the skills sets you learn in college but these core competencies are the very bedrock of happiness and success at work. For a full list of the Core competencies see us in the Life and Career Center or e-mail me at plaw@champlaincollege.qc.ca. Awareness of your strongest competencies together with your passions leads to respecting yourself and ultimately showing respect for any potential employer. For example, as a counselor I would be hopeless at balancing the books and in fact when I volunteered to be treasurer of an association I nearly had a nervous breakdown. Think back to a time when you took on a job, project or volunteer work that was not a good fit for you, my guess is that you were not using your strongest core competencies and chances are you approached it with dread. You may have only hung in for a short while before quitting or being fired. On the other hand, doing what you love and what you are good at helps bring out your excellence. A wise person once said “If you love what you do you never work a day in your life”.

How can you know what activities and work you would love and be suited for? One way is to notice when you are in what University of Chicago professor M. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls a state of “flow”. Flow occurs when you are so absorbed in what you are doing that you have little sense of time passing. You are focused on your goal and enjoying the challenge; there is a feeling of fun. Of course there is still the fatigue factor. We’re not designed to operate like machines. However, generally individuals in flow feel more energy and greater satisfaction. “Babies and young children are naturally in this state of flow” according to Csikszentmihalyi (watch a baby learn to walk and you’ll see flow in action). The Professor maintains that people in flow are found in all jobs even the most routine and that they are more creative and less likely to burn out than their stuck co-workers. I am reminded of something I read about a toll taker on a busy highway who had what it took to turn what most of us imagine to be one of the dullest jobs around into a job with meaning. He greeted each driver with courtesy and genuine friendliness and since he loved nature and had a splendid view of the mountains from his booth. He appreciated all the seasons and their riches. How can you do the same in your life? You can get to know yourself well and be interested enough in yourself to discover when you are in flow.

Take at least half hour each day to notice the flow in your life. Reflecting on your life may involve keeping a journal, talking to a counselor, teacher or a person you trust. When you multitask or fill up every minute, you are operating in partial attention mode.

Its dangerous to be in this mode 24/7. Take the time to think about yourself, your life , your dreams. Within each of us is a gold mine of energy, motivation and joy. We need to tune in to find it.

To learn more about mining your gold drop in to the Life & Career Center located in Student services. Arrange for an Orientation to the Center with a counselor by speaking to Student Services secretary Wendy Jones or e-mail me at plaw@champlaincollege.qc.ca

(References used include LE GUIDE DE L'EMPLOI EDITION 2004, WISHCRAFT HOW TO GET WHAT YOU REALLY WANT by Barbara Sher, THE NEW JOB HUNTING MAP by Richard Bolles and LOOK FOR COMPETENCIES FOR A GOOD FIT , the Gazette in 2000).