

TRUST YOUR DESIRES

You can create the life of your dreams without struggle, effort, self-discipline, or resisting your desires. You can trust your desires—in the process of determining what you want in life and ways to get it.

The common assumption in our culture is that in order to get what you want—more money, a more slender body, a better career, more education, or anything else—you have to live a life of self-discipline, effort, and struggle.

I reject that premise. I believe that we can let go of struggle and self-discipline. We can get what we want by following our passions—*not* by following other people's desires, doing what we "should" do, doing what we've always done in the past, or following any other external pressures. Instead, we can just trust our desires.

Go for pleasure

People who know me think that I'm disciplined about eating. I don't eat meat, dairy products, or hydrogenated oils. I eat only low-fat foods. And I eat only one bite of dessert per week.

But there's no discipline involved in my diet. I don't eat what I "should." I trust my desires and eat exactly what I want. For example, I don't want to eat more than one bite of dessert per week. To me, eating more than that means a sugar high followed by a "crash"—feeling tired and lethargic. That's not the way I want to feel.

I'm also smoke-free. But I don't stay smoke-free because it's hard. I do it because it's so *easy* not to smoke. I watched my mom and dad die of lung cancer—slow, long deaths. I don't want that, so there's no discipline involved in my choice to stay smoke-free.

I've even given away millions of dollars from a state of desire. I don't give away money because I should or because my grandparents or my minister told me to. I give money away because I can't think of anything that would make me feel better than giving it away.

Let your passions be your moral guide

I'm not writing to act as your moral guide. But I am suggesting an unusual possibility, which is to let your passions be your moral guide.

People will argue this idea to the death. "Life could be pandemonium if everybody did what they wanted instead of what they should be doing," a client said to me. "If I trusted my desires and acted on my passions, I'd go to bed with the next man I'm attracted to. My husband would leave me and my friends would desert me. I'd eat so much that I'd be 100 pounds overweight."

Well, you could find a new husband. You could also find friends who want you to have what *you* want. And if you eat whatever you want and start gaining a lot of weight, you might not feel good. You might then desire to have a little less weight. You might even *want* to eat less.



If you want to have sex with that man you're not married to, you could even go for that. Of course, you might get into a lot of trouble. You might even lose your marriage. If that happens, you could get married again. Then, the next time you see a "hot" man and think about having sex outside your marriage, you'll probably realize that you really don't want that.

Your desires will mature and grow *if you let them*. But if you stuff your desires in a backpack or shove them in a closet, then your desires never get a chance to grow up. You stifle that part of your being that's filled with passion and moves you into action. Instead, you're pushed forward by your obligations.

If you let your desires be your moral guide, you might make mistakes initially—just as you would if you let your parents or your minister be your moral guide. No problem. When you follow desires that lead to something less than a wonderful life, you will naturally lose those desires or discover new ones.

When we thoughtfully choose what we enthusiastically want, perhaps there is no sin. Remember that the word *enthusiasm* is derived from a Greek word that means "God-filled." This implies that our ultimate passions are sacred, not sinful, and that we can trust that there is wisdom in our deepest wants.

In suggesting that your desires will change and evolve, I'm not saying that spirituality or philanthropy will be or should be your ultimate desire, or that you should follow a path from "selfish" desires to "unselfish" desires. Just follow your desires in any direction and trust where they lead you. When climbing the tree of desire, feel free to eat from the fruit of any branch.

Look at the big picture

Trusting your desires is not the same as being careless. When following the lead of your passions, you can make choices based on what you desire in all aspects of your life over the long run.

Recently, my oldest daughter experienced the power of considering comprehensive, long-term desires. She called me to talk about a new car she wanted. Although she wanted this vehicle, she acknowledged that it was small, perhaps a little unsafe, and probably too much for her budget. She asked for my coaching on whether to buy the car. I suggested that she keep looking at the issue, sleep on it, and trust her wants. "If you buy the car," I said, "after a few months you might like it so much that you decide it's worth cutting your other expenses or getting a second job to pay for it, and that it's worth taking some extra risk on the road."

As it turned out, she decided that she really didn't want that small, sporty, and impractical car. What she wanted more in the long run was a safe car and a budget that wasn't so tight.



Allow endless desire

When you follow your desires, you might find that your desires expand. You could satisfy one desire and find that another one comes to mind—and another one, and another one, with no end in sight. No matter how many you fulfill, there might always be more desires waiting to be satisfied.

That's fine. Living the life of your dreams is not just figuring out what you want, getting it, and then being done with desires. A wonderful life includes having desires that are not currently fulfilled. We can be totally satisfied while working to fulfill our desires. Perfection includes the possibility of change, and paradise includes the possibility of endless desires.

According to some teachings, the purpose of human life is to be free of desire. I disagree. Human beings are desire machines. We have infinite desire, and that's great. We can celebrate the desires we've already fulfilled—and create even more desires to fulfill in the future.

I've met people who worry about fulfilling too many desires too soon. They try to spread out the pleasures of life over several years for fear of burning out their happiness in a year or two. Other people argue that they don't want to get something that they've always yearned for. They fear that once they get it they will have nothing left to do and nothing left to look forward to.

I don't think either of these scenarios is likely to happen. Once people attain what they want, they'll find that they desire even more. And that just leaves the door open for even more achievement and more fulfillment.

Let your desires pull you forward

When you follow the path of creating the life of your dreams, then you can enjoy yourself even if the path is uphill. When you trust your desires, you can expend great energy and still feel like you're just playing. When you pursue a career you love and take on projects that you care passionately about, then you can work hard, even to the point of exhaustion at times, and do it happily.

That's the purpose of creating promises, plans, dreams, and goals to capture our vision of the future. A vision is not there to be followed blindly—it's there to pull us forward. If a vision is not compelling, then it's time to create a new vision. It's time to align our vision with what we truly want and return to trusting our desires.

