



Stanford eCorner

Three Dysfunctional Beliefs

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Dave Evans, co-founder and lecturer at the Stanford Life Design Lab, points out some popular misconceptions that can be counterproductive when figuring out one's career. He explains how your major in college doesn't necessarily indicate what you'll do after graduating, how your passion isn't immediately evident, and how unrealistic the notion is that people should know their true calling by the time they're adults.



Transcript

ideas that are untrue or ungenerative and not helping they're getting in the way. Examples, okay: we're at Stanford we're talking about students there's a big student dysfunctional belief. You're sitting on the quad you're having a conversation about what? Of course, what you're studying. "So, what's your major?" "Well, I'm majoring in Creative Writing." The next question is? "What are you gonna do with that?" Everybody knows that's the question and if in fact you're majoring in Creative Writing what are you going to do? (replies from audience) Be unemployed! (laughter) That's right; you know what you're going to be. No, that turns out to be a massively dysfunctional belief. It turns out within ten years of graduation 80% of people with a college baccalaureate are working outside their field of major study. The correlation between what you study and what you do is extremely low. How many of you over the age of 35 are still doing the thing you studied as an undergrad? (chuckles from audience) Are you willing to say, "I'm over 35"? (laughter) Okay, it's not zero, here's the deal. So that's it, it just doesn't work, it's just stupid. Now Dysfunctional Belief Number Two, our personal favorite: "What's Your Passion?" What's your passion? Are you an entrepreneur? You're passionately entrepreneurial, aren't you? You are, aren't you? And you know your passion, right? How many of you have been asked the question "What's your passion?" in the last week? Keep your hand up if you asked somebody else that question.

Okay, cut it out. (chuckles) The research demonstrates that eight out of ten people answer the question either "I don't know" or "Which one did you want me to start with?" (laughter) Now, in either case, zero or many, "What's your passion?" is lousy guidance and maybe you're wonderful. We're kind of getting a rep as the anti-passion guys, that's not fair. We're not anti-passion, we're anti presuppositional singular passion as an organizing principle preceding all other behaviors! You knew up front and it was gonna work out fine. If you happen to know that passion clearly and you are competent to do it and the world is interested in it at the same time commercially great, you're called lucky. That's what we call that. But that's not a good place to start. For most people passion is the outcome not the input. It's the end of the game not the beginning of the game. Number Three: You should know by now! In fact, if you haven't got yourself most of the way down the yellow brick road toward the City of Oz that you're pretty sure is where the cool stuff is happening you're probably late.

And you're supposed to be a smart Stanford person if you're one of our students. How many of you have ever felt late? For what? I mean, there is no such thing! You're just here. I got called by a guy named Tim who was a sales guy at Oracle many years ago and he calls up and he goes, "Hi Dave!" And I go, "Well, hello Tim; how are you?" He goes, "Well, I'm late!" I go, "Oh, well why'd you call? Call me later." "No, no, no, I'm three years late!" He was 33, and he said he was three years late and I said, "I don't think so," and he goes, "No, I really am, trust me, I'm really three years behind!" You know, and we argued for a year about whether or not he was behind or here. At the end of which he finally concluded he was here, thank God, because then he's four years late. But that is not necessarily true; everybody's figuring it out on their own merit. So it's time to think a

little bit differently.