

The Passion Trap

Module 3: The Truth About Talent

Welcome to module three, the Truth About Talent.

Okay, let's take a look at what we've covered so far. It's a lot. We've started to untangle all the knots around our thinking, and how our perspective affects what we will and won't do. What we think we can do. And what we're really talking about is this kind of man-made cage that inhibits our creativity, our initiative, our willingness and belief that we can do the things we want to. Not to mention, makes us feel bad about ourselves, even the way we think and talk about passion makes a difference, right?

We learned that when we think of passion as this given, dyed in the wool thing, then we're forever thinking we're making the wrong decisions or that we have it wrong, or that we fell short by not finding our passion first. And I told you that can all go out the window. We talked about how being overly fixated on passion can actually limit our opportunities and cause us to miss out on things we might really, really love.

Then we talked about this idea that we can or can't do certain things, that we're allowed to do this or not allowed to, what we should or shouldn't. However you think about it, that is the issue of authority. Who says right, who says what we can do? Is it the church? Is it your parents? Is it your upbringing? It could be people who had influence over you who aren't even alive anymore. It can be experiences.

Whatever we think we're allowed or not allowed to do, unless we break that pattern of thinking, we will just continue to do those things or continue to live under the mantle of this rule that really doesn't apply. So we started looking at those things and starting to question them. You're not gonna like throw off that mantle all in one day, but what I'm encouraging you to do is start to think through it to say, why do I think that? Why do I assume that I can't do that? Who says?

All these voices and criticisms become internalized? Right? So then we start to hold ourselves hostage by allowing that critical voice to stop us before we even start, right? We're so afraid of looking stupid or embarrassing ourselves. That critical voice says you'll never do it right. You're always gonna embarrass yourself. You're gonna make people look bad, you're gonna make yourself look bad. All those things. And there's a lot more, you know, that we can do around the critic because you don't get rid of that either. That's just a function of the brain.

What we can do is start to choose what we listen to, what we don't, and how we respond. Okay, so what's another reason why you might not try something? Why you might not take a leap or risk something or even just explore something on your own that you might really like? Why might you not? What's another reason?

Okay, one is, well, I don't know if that's my passion. Another is, well, I don't know if I'm, I'm supposed to do that. I don't know if I should do that. I don't know if I'm allowed to do that or if people would look at me funny if I did that. Okay. Then there's the next one. What's the next reason why we might not do something? We simply don't have the talent. That's what we might believe. What's the reason why you wouldn't try a new industry or job or reinvent your life or your lifestyle? Any of those things is because you think, well, I don't know if I have it in me. I don't know if I'm meant to do that or if I have the talent to do this or that. Talent. Let's talk the truth about talent.

Talent is a very slippery thing. We think you're either born with a lot of it or a little of it or none of it. People say, oh, I have no talent for this and I'm very talented in this area. Or she's very talented. We might think we have a little talent but not enough to get us over the line to do what we really wanna do. Does it sound familiar? Yes. Because it's a lot like fixed mindset thinking, right? Thinking I either have this thing or I don't and there's nothing I can do about it. Does talent exist? Yes, it's a real thing of course. But to start to make up these stories about why certain people get to do things and we can't. Oh cuz they just have more talent. That's a really great cop out, isn't it? It's a really great way to decide, oh I just, I can't even try cause I don't have the talent.

How do you know what shape is talent? How do you measure talent? Can you look in your cells and see talent? Can you look at your blood flow or the way your heartbeats or your lungs move and decide that that's enough talent? I mean, yes, we can look at athletes, people who seem physically suited to what they enjoy doing, but that's not most of us and that isn't usually our issue at all. It's the idea that we don't have the talent or that someone else is always talented. That's a zero sum game. That's very linear, and talent is anything but.

Just ask Seth Godden, who wrote in his book "The Practice: Shipping Creative Work," which is a great book if you're trying to get some creative projects off the ground, I highly recommend it. He says it's insulting to call a professional talented. Many people have talent but only a few care enough to show up fully to earn their skill. Skill is rarer than talent.

What's the difference between someone who relies just on talent and someone who builds skill? Number one, a growth mindset. Because talent is to a fixed mindset in

some ways what skill is to a growth mindset. They're not opposites at all. But do you see what I'm saying? Skill is the idea that you can acquire and build and hone and sharpen something, even if you don't think you necessarily were born to do it. And I don't mean to necessarily pit talent and skill apart from each other or against each other because they are in some ways really interlocked, right? You might have a natural predisposition to swimming, and so your skill building will happen around the thing you like.

We all have varying degrees of talent and various things, but trying to determine whether you have enough talent to say, write a book, is a really wasted effort. Better you spend your time sharpening your skills and learning to write, and write even better. And that is something you can do. But think about that. How interesting that is to assume, on one hand, that oh, I don't have talent, I can't do it. And on the other hand, to think skill is the rarer thing.

Talent shment. You could be born with a talent and never discover you have it and never use it and whatever. Maybe you'd be a really skilled ice fisherman, but you grew up in Arizona and you're never gonna ice fish, and so you won't know and you won't miss it. It's not a matter of, oh well I missed my thing. It's more about what piques my curiosity, my interest, what feels good to do or to try.

I have never spent a year in the past, let's say up to the last like maybe seven years or something, before that I never edited a video. I don't know how to edit video. I would've said to you, well, I don't know how to do that. I didn't major in that and I didn't do that. I'm one of those people. I would've said, oh, I don't know how to do that. And guess what happened? I needed to edit video, and so I learned how.

I'll say, let you even say the last 10 years. Uh, I'm not 11 years old. Obviously I learned this skill and I don't do it professionally, meaning I'm now gonna be a film editor, I have no interest in that. But I learned this skill and learned it was really fun. I could really get in the zone with it. Like all of these videos you're seeing and I think it's fun and it doesn't have to be my job and it's not my passion, but when I get to do it, I think it's really fun. What if you gave yourself the chance to develop those skills and didn't quit too soon?

We could look at talent in a far more holistic way. Take Marcus Buckingham, who's a prolific author and one of the great minds of our time and looking at management and leadership styles. And he says when he, you know, surveyed and studied some of the best top managers in the world, he said they don't see it as talent as whether you have it or you don't. They see it as something you cultivate, like a skill. That talent is the blend of part of what you were born with and also the skills you acquire and choose to learn,

and your experiences which hone your intuition and have taught you some things. If you grew up on the water on boats, you have something you weren't "born with" but you have learned over your whole life. You know how to read the water or know how to balance yourself in the water, there'd be things that you'd know how to do, right? There are things you know how to do in lots of areas of your life and work because you've been doing them a long time. But no one is born knowing how to do stuff. We learn everything, except like breathing.

My point is, what if you started to look at all of the things you do as things you have acquired, that built on what you already have, and drew on your experience? What if we looked at it that way rather than I either have it in the bank or I don't? Because that kinda thinking is gonna limit you. Cuz you're gonna stop short the minute you, you say, I wanna be a writer, I wanna write more. And then you start doing it and then it gets harder.

You get rejected if you quit right then that's not, you could be a talented writer and just quit and say, I hate this. Do you know how many bestselling books that went on to be huge books in movies and all that were rejected? Dozens and dozens even hundreds of times, until they found the right person for the book, the right agent, the right publisher, whatever. We can't use our own talent to predict how other people will receive us or what kind of monetary success we'll have. How many artists do you know who died before they were very famous, and they were hugely famous after? So we can't worry about that. We can only worry about focusing on where we wanna put our effort in because otherwise we're going to limit ourselves. And the point here is not to limit.

There's a million podcasts out there, right? Tons and tons of them. That doesn't mean you can't do one. Podcasts are fairly new, like people have only been listening to them in the mainstream for a very short amount of time. If you say to yourself, well I don't have Joe Rogan talent, so then why would I bother, then yeah, you shouldn't do it cuz you'll be doing it for the wrong reasons. The idea of talent is something you try and you don't know where it will take you.

I always knew I would enjoy being on the air, not always, but like as an adult, I was like, it'd be really fun to be able to speak about the magazine content I'm editing on TV or on the radio. And I happened to have an opportunity, which if I didn't, I wouldn't have done it, right? But I happened to have the opportunity to host that radio show, for the Martha Stewart omnimedia company, and I learned there was a place where I got to acquire some skills. Does that mean I went on to be a radio host forever? No.

A few years later, like five years later, that show didn't exist anymore. That channel didn't exist anymore. And I took those chops, right? The talent if you will, that I had worked on, the skills I had grown to be comfortable speaking into a microphone. Did I know 10 years ago that I would be doing that through courses and programs and virtual speaking events? Of course not. We can't predict where the world will take us, but you know that skillset, I wanted to make that even better. And so I did. And so I use it now. It's about where your interest takes you and what you're willing to work on.

So now we're going to do a little activity. You ready? Grab your notebook, grab your open, clean document page. First thing I want you to do is take a few minutes to list all of the things you like to do that you've always noticed came easily to you.

I don't care if it was gardening or like landscaping or some kind of sewing or maybe it was algebra. I don't care, things that seem to come easier to you. Just make a quick list.

<Pause for writing break>

<Resume after writing break>

Okay, now I want you to jot down the skills you learned that you know you could not have been born knowing how to do. Skills that you have learned, say at camp and in high school or at your first job. Things that you were taught that you were surprised you enjoy doing.

Now I want you to pick one of the skills you are the most proud of that you've worked hard on and what you enjoy doing and getting better and better at. And I want you to set a timer for 10 minutes and I want you to take me into the moment when you're doing this thing. Why do you like it? What does it involve? Teach us a little bit about it. I want you to take 10 minutes, take us into the moment of doing that skill. Start writing.

<Pause for writing break>

<Resume after writing break>

What was it like to write about that skill? Write about that thing you liked to do? Did it bring on a visceral feeling? Did it feel physically, you know, like fun and satisfying? Did you get back into your body again and feel it? What did you discover about it that maybe you never realized? You know, maybe as you're writing about it, you're like, God, I used to do this and I kind of, I used to love fishing. And actually that's what I do with clients right now. I love fishing for clients. I mean, you might see connections that you

didn't expect to see. But what I want you to do is take that one skill and I want you to unpack that skill because there's other skills in it. If you say well, I'm really good with customer service, I'm really good with people, and I love solving customer problems, there's a lot of skills that go into that. Any one talent has lots of skills in it.

So I want you to take that one thing and now unpack it based on what you were just writing and write down, you know, what are some of the skills you see involved? And just make it as a list. You're, maybe it requires that you be a good listener. Maybe it requires you think on your feet, or being a really good strategist. Maybe it requires accessing resources, coming up with solutions. Try to list as many as you can for that one activity. You know, at least five minutes, no less.

<Pause for writing break>

<Resume after writing break>

Now that you have that list, look at that list. Look at all the things you have skill and talent for. They're not that different, are they? The things that you can do because you learned them and the things you love to do. The idea is that they blend together and they can be used in lots of places. So I want you to look at that list of skills that you've just unpacked. What other things might those skills be used to do? When you consider what you might like your next step to be? A new job, new career, a new practice, a new project? What is one of those things that you're thinking about doing? And I want you to look at that list of skills and see what of those skills, how might they transfer? If you're a good listener, that might be really critical to being a great podcast host because you'd need to listen to people when you interview them. That's just one example. There's a million, but I want it to be led by the effort of something that you are interested in doing, but you worry that you won't have enough talent to do. And now I want you to look at those skills, the things that you, and that's why I wanted you to slice them really thin, and see how might those skills play a role in the thing you wanna do. Take 10 minutes right now to write out all the ways that you can use skills that you clearly already have, skills and talents, how they might apply in the thing you want to do. Start writing.

<Pause for writing break>

<Resume after writing break>

This is what I call a skill and talent inventory. You can actually go back and do it again for another thing you love to do and then another. And you can write them on post-it notes and put them on the wall and look at all of the things you love to do and can do.

You do not have to start back at zero and learn from scratch again. There are so many talents and skills you already possess that can be refreshed, revived, and retrained to serve you in another venture or project. This is something you wanna hang on to, keep hold of, because this is who you are and it has so many wonderful implications, so many myriad applications, of where you can use this and the work you'll do next. We'll see you in the next module.

<End of Module 3>