

Priya Kumar's Speech on Passion and Purpose at TEDx, Bits Pilani, Dubai

Passion at Work!!

Thank you very much.

I am going to do today what I have never done in my 12 years of being a corporate trainer. I am going to read from the paper that I wrote out last night. I am a speaker and man... I can talk. But TED says that only talk for 18 minutes and THAT needs a skill I have not yet mastered.

If there was one after thought that I would leave you with today, then that would be the power that passion and purpose hold. When you bring passion and purpose into your job, you create realities that earlier seemed impossible.

So how does one become passionate? See, you touch passion, when you have access to it. If this is your job and this is you. And by the way students, home makers and anyone who does not yet earn money is also doing a job. You touch passion when you move ahead of your job. A lot of people hide behind their jobs. You know someone is hiding from responsibility when they tell you, "That's not my job!" And because they hide behind their jobs, they can never access the passion that is actually innate to human beings. It is only when you place yourself beyond the job and open yourself to the entire spectrum of responsibility, then you have immersed yourself in the ocean of passion that will drive you, that will propel you, that will sky rocket you to the life of your dreams.

Let me take you on a little journey here: Mine. I have done three jobs and been an entrepreneur at all. I was at a seminar once and there was one lady who made a comment, she said, "Priya you are very blessed and lucky. I cannot even dream about being in your position, I am just an ordinary tuition teacher, teaching 8th grade students. To even think of reaching where you are, is unimaginable."

I don't know if she really wanted to be in my position, or was she merely justifying her current reality.

See I started my career as a tuition teacher in 1989. I used to teach French to school children, while I was still a student. So even though I had taken a very enterprising step to earn my pocket money, I was doing the job of a teacher.

See a teacher's job is to teach the student. That's all. But passion becomes evident when the teacher not only teaches the student but also takes responsibility for the student to study.

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In doing my job as a teacher I realized my students were sent to me because they did not study in school in the first place. I had to go above my job of teaching and get the students to study. I figured that one cannot study if their mind is occupied with other stuff. When I was upset so to say that my head had **stuff** in it, the teachers words bounced off. Isn't it true? When you have things occupying your mind, the words fly in front of your eyes without making any sense. I figured that for my job to last, I needed to deal with the stuff in my students heads. I needed to go beyond my job and touch that place which I now know as passion. When I cared enough to look, my students' heads were full of the same things that fill most people's heads, they were full of longing for love, waiting to be heard, dying to be acknowledged, worried about the love of their life, anxious about their pet, the bills to pay, the money to receive and so on. How can any one study or for that matter work or do anything when one's head was full. I learnt that to teach them anything I had to empty their heads first.

I remember I used to start my class by serving my students lemonade, playing a song on the guitar, to make them cheerful. When people become cheerful, the stuff in their heads temporarily unravels. During the class if they hesitated or looked lost, I asked them what was wrong. And when they told me what was wrong, I shared some of my own 'that's wrong with me too' story and they emptied their stuff. Not that I offered any solution, but that I understood and I acknowledged was all that was needed to get them back to study. I baked a cake, for every students' birthday. I taught 1900 students in 9 years and practically every day was a birthday. I watched movies with them. I took them out for picnics. I organized social service activities. I promoted their talent. I cried with them, they laughed with me and they knew they could count on me for anything that the world threw on them. My first class used to start at 8am and my last class would end at 11pm. And even though the tuition teacher would wind up the class, the friend was available twenty four hours. When there was a black out in the area, I was on a call with my student who was afraid of the dark. When things got nasty at home, my house was open for those who needed to get away. When someone's little dog was sick, I looked after the puppy under my chair while I taught a bunch of 8th graders who also joined in the mission. I was doing a job of teacher and when I moved beyond that to encompass everything that remotely was connected with teaching; I became passionate about my job.

My greatest compliment still remains when one father of a student called and said, "My son has high fever and he wants to come for tuitions. He says, when he comes for class, he feels better,"

Being a tuition teacher changed my life. My first job taught me lessons I could never have managed to learn on my own. I carry those lessons to date. You know when a

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person's phone line is engaged, you cannot reach him. It is true for everyone, whether you are a manager talking to a client, whether you are a lover talking to your loved one, that you can't reach them, you can't talk to them and be heard, if their head is full of stuff. If you could care enough to disengage their head from the stuff that they cannot seem to silence, you not only touch passion, you touch their soul.

I started my second career as a speaker in the year 1998. It was a historic transition from tuition teacher to motivational speaker. And in two years of doing a job at speaking, I fell flat on my face. Nothing seemed to work. People said the passion was lacking and mainly that my words didn't hit home. Something was terribly amiss and I was almost falling into the trap of "My job sucks. I am not lucky like the other speakers I had admiration for. I spoke loud, I dressed well, I said exactly what I had learnt to say but something seemed amiss." And then one day in December 2000 it hit me when half the class of my participants walked out and never came back. I was in the rest room during the lunch break and I heard one of the participants say outside the door of my cubicle, "Why should anyone listen to her? What has she done with her life? Who is she to tell me what I should do with mine!" I stayed in the cubicle till everyone had walked out. I did not have the courage to walk out in front of them and own up to the truth they had just said. And that's when I realized that words don't inspire, actions do. From that day, I had one purpose, to put into action all that I was telling others to do. I had attended seminars that gave me the **certificate** to practice as a corporate trainer, but I had forgotten to earn my **'right'** to motivate people. It was from December 2000 that I spent every waking hour of my day in self improvement, in self betterment, in applying every little law of success I had ever read about **to my life**, and conducting my seminar from THAT reality. And when I did that, my work became magical!!!! I guess when one spends one's energy in constantly improving at one's job, one touches passion. I had to move beyond my job of speaking words, to actually **do** with my life that which I expected others to.

In moving beyond my job as a trainer I realized that words really don't change anyone's lives, they may bring a temporary sense of well being, but the only thing that changes lives is your own application of all that you know is right. In my seminars, I only share from my life. I have nothing to teach anyone, because that would be pretty arrogant to even imply that I have lived 'my' life for 37 years and I know more about 'yours'!!!! Passion is not in leading another; passion is only found in leading oneself ahead every day. It's been 10 years and I am still ahead of my job as a trainer and I still live my life daily in self improvement, and when that works for me, I have new stories to tell in my seminars.

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Anyone can be a trainer, as long as they realize that people don't need **you** to tell them what to do, they need **you** tell them **what you did** when you didn't know what to do. They need to know what you did when you hurt when you failed when you were lost and had nowhere to go. And when you tell them THAT truth, you become the greatest trainer in the world.

And then a lady comes along and says, "Priya you are very blessed and I am just an ordinary tuition teacher, teaching 8th grade students." In my long career I know of many ordinary trainers and many extra ordinary tuition teachers, and what sets them apart is not the work that they do, but how far they go to get their work done.

Now coming to my 3rd job. In 2009 I started a new job as an author. A few weeks ago I met a gentleman at dinner and I was introduced as, "This is Priya, she is an author," And the gentleman said, "How nice to meet you, I am also writing a book." And I love it when people say that, I said, "No, Sir. You are not writing a book, you are talking to me." He was a little puzzled and said, "No. I **AM** writing a book." And I said, "NOOOOO. You are talking to me!" You see, he was not getting it. Finally I had to tell him. You don't have a pen and paper in your hand right now. What kind of statement is "I am writing a book" when you clearly aren't!!! When you don't put a time line on your job – you dissipate passion and you invite frustration. When you don't align yourself on the start and finish line, you are not even in the race, forget in the job. And if you are not in the job, then passion is not even a necessity. You have to make time for your job first, and then to go beyond it for passion to even exist.

In doing my job as an author, and by the way, it's a job of great responsibility, I can say that yet again, I have discovered a BIGGER and BETTER me. A journalist asked me one day, "So how did you create this story?" And she left me speechless for the entire interview. I had to call her back after 2 days to finish her questions. See all I knew was that I WROTE the story. HOW? I don't know. All I knew was that I went off alone, gave my office authority to my manager and said, you are the boss, I kept my phones off and I just wrote. How did I create the story? That answer changed the way I have lived ever since. See, up until then I thought passion was enough to create legends and it was here I learnt, that **purpose** is superior to passion.

Let me explain this. You see, I **created** a story. I knew I wanted to write a story that would add great value to the life of the readers. So the purpose of the book was created first. I wanted to write a book which very subtly, very gently, through a thrilling adventure persuaded people to wake up and stop complaining and take control of their lives. After the purpose was set, the characters were created. I knew there was a lead character of a lost soul. I then created the master, the wise person who had the answer to all the questions ever asked. Then I created a lot of obstacles

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and put the lead character through tests and turmoil's and traumas. Then I also created all the characters who would pose problems for the lead character. I then created realizations, solutions, passion, victory and wisdom that the lead character discovered about herself to overcome all the challenges that came her way and emerged glorious at the end of the fable. Those 8 days of my life, I lived a parallel life literally. I lived as each one of the characters individually. When I wrote about the hero, I became the hero. When I wrote about the villain, I became one. When I wrote about the master, I could only do that by becoming one first. Those 8 days I stopped living my life as Priya Kumar the corporate trainer and I started to live the life of all the characters, which by the way were totally created by me from start to finish. The lost, the wise, the evil, the good were all my creation, an extension of my own thinking which all eventually came into alignment with my original purpose of writing the book. How the book would end was evident from the purpose with which the book was started, isn't it? I can't have the purpose of writing a self help book and then ending it with failure! For those 8 days I lived a life that I **had** created. Do you understand what I understood in telling you this?

We all create our lives with or without passion by virtue of the purpose we assign ourselves to. Let me give you a more plausible example. A wrong example of misplaced passion fuelled by misplaced purpose. If you have ever told a lie, then you have attempted to alter realities. Ask the woman who cheats on her husband. She now must tell a story to her lover to mislead him into believing her justification on why it is ok for her to put her marriage to shame. Heck her story is so powerful that she almost builds reason and respect in her action. She then by her actions leads her lover away from the truth. She also guards her husband from finding out the truth. Her actions and words and intentions are all focused on creating a whole new world of lies and deception. And does she succeed in creating characters out of the people in her world, yes!! Does she succeed in creating circumstances that lead her and others into her lies? Yes!! Does she succeed in creating challenges and struggles and momentary victories in all of this? Yes!! But sadly, the end of her story is a disaster because the starting purpose was a lie. And though creation of a reality needs passion but if the purpose is misplaced, disaster is inevitable.

No matter what job you do, know that you create your own confusion, that you create all the characters that then by virtue of your creation become a part of your life, that you create your own challenges and circumstances, and in the end you create your own victory or failure. Its all self created. I create it when I start with a clear purpose, like how I started my book with a purpose. Without a purpose the book becomes a deception, where the writer thinks he is writing, but the reality is that he is nowhere even close to a pen or paper. Without a purpose a person's life

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becomes a deception, where the person thinks he is living life, but is nowhere even close to the glory that life holds for him.

No matter what job you do, if you care enough to care for people you deal with, if you constantly focus on self improvement, if you keep your purpose expanded towards service then you connect to a degree of passion that will raise you to heights beyond your wildest dreams.

The true test of purpose driven by passion is "Did your job change your life? Did you emerge bigger? Did you make a contribution far greater than you will be ever be compensated for. And if your answer is a hesitant yes,,, then my friends you have taken a leap beyond passion, you have touched and fulfilled the purpose of life itself!!!!"