

Finding Your Passion

By Randy J. Heller, Ph.D., LMFT, LMHC

It was the summer of 2006 and my 50th birthday was soon approaching. My only daughter was heading off to college and I was not at all sure how I was going to manage “emptying my nest.” I thought about the very thing that I talk to my clients about when they are feeling scared, lonely, distressed or confused about a pivotal time in their lives -- find something you’re really passionate about and dive into it head first!

As a psychotherapist practicing for over 25 years, I have discovered that one of the best things people can do when they are going through a difficult time, at a crossroad, or looking for direction, is connect to people, activities, and circumstances that are meaningful to them. Doing so helps them to redirect their thoughts and find fulfillment in ways they did not know they could.

To that point, I listened to my own ‘voice’ and filled out the application form for the Doctoral program in Nova Southeastern University’s Department of Marriage and Family Therapy. Returning to school for my Ph.D. was a long time dream of mine and since I graduated with my Master’s degree in 1988. I have always had a passion for learning, joining with diverse groups of people, and making a difference in the lives of others.

Being a doctoral student here at NSU provided me the opportunity to do all of those things. The people at NSU soon became my extended family, and being here became my passion! As alum, I am now an adjunct professor in the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy at NSU’s Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities, following my dreams and passions. To my mind, being passionate about anything you do is the key to unlocking your full potential, and ultimately, your happiness.

So, just what is this thing called passion? And, most importantly, how do we discover it? To me, it’s anything we become focused on, entrenched in, and do not want to do without. Passion is a powerful emotion that may make our adrenaline flow, our hearts pound, and keeps our mind active. Take some time and consider what are you curious about? What interests you, drives you, inspires you, challenges you, motivates you, and leads you to look forward to the day?

Ariel Enisman, a first-year law student at NSU’s Shepard Broad Law Center, is finding her passion at NSU on a multitude of levels. Enisman told me about her interest

in the law, the meaning it holds for her, and the way she believes she will be able to utilize her knowledge and skills to help people. She suggested that her passion feeds off of the passion of her fellow students and professors. She explained,

“Everyone here is in it together so you are able to share your passion with your friends and colleagues; you support, motivate and get through the really challenging times together,” Enisman said. “NSU is intimate and small so you get to know everyone you’re with. The professors know all of their students by first name, and it becomes easy to get involved.”

Elena Rose Minicucci, J.D., director of Alumni Relations at Shepard Broad, said she decided to enter law school at NSU in 1993 to come home and closer to her mother, who became ill.

Through this turn of events, she discovered her passions and continued to flourish. Elena met her husband, Adam Scott Goldberg, J.D, when they were both first year law students at NSU. Now, she and Goldberg are attorneys, and adjunct faculty at NSU’s Shepard Broad Law Center, where they share their love and interest for the law, teaching, charity work, and for each other. Elena was assistant city attorney (**what city?**) in 2002 when she began to combine her passions.

“I was lucky enough to have an opportunity to teach legal skills and values II, and I haven’t stopped since; it’s what I love to do,” said Minicucci, who is now teaching a new course in collaborative family law this summer. As Director of Alumni Relations at Shepard Broad, she is creating law alumni programs related to promote professional development; student engagement with alumni including mentoring; and alumni networking. Every day is exciting for someone as passionate as Minicucci.

So, I invite you to take the challenge of finding your passion. How will you transform your life and enjoy doing it every day? Create a vision and consider what needs to be in place in order for you to realize your dreams. You’ll be surprised that the answer most likely lies right inside of you!