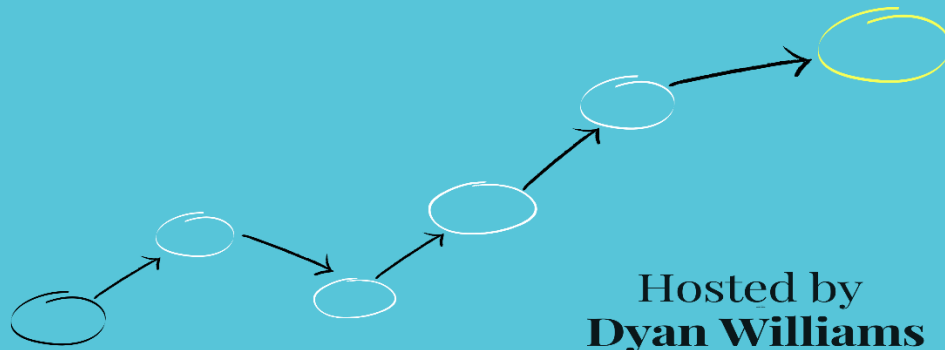


THE INCREMENTALIST

A PRODUCTIVITY PODCAST ON
MAKING BIG CHANGES IN SMALL STEPS



EPISODE 20

Find and Keep a Hobby You Love

<http://www.dyanwilliams.com/find-and-keep-a-hobby-you-love/>

How do you spend your free time? Do you have free time?

Do you practice a hobby when you break from your work, your business, your obligations, or even your passion?

When you're not working, do you feel so tired or guilty that you can't have fun?

This is Episode 20. Find and Keep a Hobby You Love

Hello and welcome to The Incrementalist, a productivity podcast on making big changes in small steps. My name is Dyan Williams and I'm your productivity coach and host for this show.

A hobby is an activity you enjoy doing with little or no focus on the long game or the end results. You do it for fun or leisure in your free time.

Your work or your business can be your passion. But even if you enjoy doing them, they are not your hobby. They come with risks and consequences that can affect your income, your reputation, and your status.

A hobby and a passion can be related, but there are subtle differences between the two. A passion is a strong feeling for something you would love to do repeatedly and regularly. It could be your vocation or calling that transcends your profession or career. It is sometimes connected to your work, life goals or big dreams.

This doesn't mean you will feel motivated or disciplined to do it every day. But when you neglect your passion, you feel uneasy and unfulfilled. You will do what's possible to quickly get back to it.

With a hobby, it's easier to take it or leave it, depending on what's going on in your life. The time, attention, energy, and money you put into a hobby are usually less than what you invest in a passion. While you could improve skills and expand your knowledge through a hobby, that's not really the end goal.

A hobby involves action and active participation. Still, you are less likely to study or practice it in great depth or try to make it into a career or earn income from it. There's a difference between photography as a hobby and photography as a potential business.

You can pursue your passion like a profession or like a hobby. You can set goals to be successful at it or just enjoy yourself. If you're approaching a hobby like a profession, you will be more willing to spend money on courses, books, coaches, teachers, and top-notch equipment to pursue the passion.

If it's a secondary, casual hobby, you will take a class every now and again, rent or borrow the equipment, and keep the basic tools. There's inconsistency and hopping around.

If it's a primary, serious hobby, you will take regular classes, buy your own equipment, and upgrade the tools when you reach a new level. There's more consistency and sticking to it.

A hobby doesn't take on the level of commitment that a passion does. It can grow into a passion and might even become more like a job or a career when you increase your skill level, deepen your interest, and start pursuing ways to make income from it. If this happens, the activity is no longer a hobby you do solely for leisure.

A passion that's related to your core work or long-term goals might become too one dimensional and all-consuming. Turning to a hobby can keep your spark alive and help you find a happy medium between drive and overdrive.

Creating content through writing, blogging, podcasting, and delivering presentations and webinars are passions of mine. I enjoy these activities, but they are tied to core work and professional priorities. I research the topics, make and organize notes, and strive to present insights in an organized and interesting way. As I'm recording this podcast in a closed room, I'd rather be outdoors, bird watching, reading by the lake, or taking a nature walk.

Photography and playing piano are hobbies of mine. While I very much enjoy these activities, they are totally outside the domains of my work, profession, and business. Although I might take lessons and practice the skills often, I'm never going to earn money from these activities or bank my livelihood on them, nor would I want to. They are purely for fun. The interest, determination, and frankly, the talent and skill level, are simply not deep enough to make them into a profession.

Plus, these creative fields very hard to crack and reward only a select few from an earnings perspective. It could take many years of consistent, outstanding work to get noticed and to have people pay you for your product or service.

There are many wonderful artists that have day jobs to make ends meet. So, if you want to have a career or a profession – and not just a job (which works for some) – you might treat a hobby (which could also be a passion) as a low priority.

When you already have a full schedule with many obligations and demands to meet, why would you add a hobby to it? If a hobby is something you can live without, why even bother having one?

There are many reasons to find and keep a hobby you love.

In their book, *Win at Work and Succeed at Life*, father and daughter duo, Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller, lay out five principles to free yourself from overwork. One is what they call a Profitable Pause. They recommend you maintain a hobby that delights you to have the power of nonachievement. They describe the problem of the hustle fallacy and the ambition brake.

Constantly hustling doesn't work because obligations will exceed your capacity when you set no limits. There's always more to do, no matter how hard you work and how

many long hours you work. But putting a pause on your ambitions has tradeoffs too because your professional goals and dreams go unfulfilled.

If you want to have the double win at life and work, maintain a hobby that delights you. Hobbies are restorative activities that bring joy, peace, fun, and relaxation in your life. Successful high achievers are prone to think something's a waste of time if it's not tied to a goal or objective. However, keeping a hobby you love, is a double win practice; it allows you to win at work and succeed at life.

Hobbies include a wide range of activities. Ultimately, they tend to be leisure pursuits that are well outside your normal profession. Some are more passive than others. Some involve consuming entertainment while others include building valuable skills.

Hobbies fall into different categories. They include exercise or movement like dancing, yoga, running, swimming, or playing sports; (2) outdoor recreation and activity like hiking, fishing, bird watching, or gardening; (3) entertainment and information consumption like reading books, video gaming, watching movies, traveling, or attending arts and sports events; (4) collecting things like pens, rocks, seashells, coins, or stamps; and (5) creative endeavors like writing, painting, drawing, calligraphy, sculpting, wood working, photography, embroidery, knitting, making jewelry, soap making, cooking, or playing a musical instrument.

While hobbies add to your knowledge and develop your skills, the main reason you do them is for fun. You get into a flow state where your body and mind are synched with and totally absorbed in the activity. In sports, for example, the challenge/skills ratio needs to be just right so you have flow, instead of frustration or boredom.

A hobby provides a low-stakes, low-pressure situation that allows you to suck at something you enjoy doing. It could be a fun thing to look forward to in your day, an exciting part of your morning routine, or the most restorative part of your evening routine.

A hobby gives you the opportunity to get out of your work environment and indulge in a completely different, worthwhile activity. It reminds you to set boundaries, to take active breaks, and to avoid long work hours that are counterproductive. Yes, there are times when you will need to sprint to get things done, but it's also important to have guardrails and limits, to know when to pull back, pause or slow down.

A hobby is "non-achievement" in the professional sense. But even high achievers and over-achievers reap tremendous benefits and rewards from it. Some are direct and some are indirect.

Here are ways you gain from finding and keeping a hobby you love:

A hobby develops the meta skill of learning. When you're a beginner and an amateur, it can be challenging and difficult to learn something new. Even if learning is fast in the beginning, it can start to taper off once you get to the next level.

Your job, your business, your income, or your professional reputation doesn't depend on how well you do in a hobby. If you enjoy the hobby, you can keep going and keep building skills, interests, knowledge, and experience in a low-pressure situation. You discover things about yourself and about what you are capable of doing and learning.

A hobby enhances your creativity. When you have more playtime, you get into a relaxed state that builds your brainpower and cognitive abilities. You become more effective at framing and solving problems, tapping into the right resources, connecting the dots, improvising, and thinking creatively.

A hobby makes you curious. It encourages self-discovery and exploration. You get to experiment and try new things. You get to ask very basic questions. You don't have to be the expert with the expertise. If you stay curious, you learn how to deal with discomfort, take reasonable risks, step into the unknown, and gain mastery.

A hobby boosts your confidence in all areas of life, including your work and profession. Cooking a great meal or growing a garden shows you can create something from scratch, from the ground up, with attention and intention.

A hobby increases patience and perseverance. Activities like knitting, making origami or pottery, and playing a musical instrument encourage you to slow down and learn from and correct your mistakes. You improvise and fill in the gaps when you're not clear on what to do or when the instructions aren't clear to you. You learn to keep going even when there's potential for failure.

A hobby builds resilience and willpower. Running, rock climbing and swimming are some hobbies that allow you to dig deep, face tough moments and overcome obstacles. You increase your endurance, strength and capabilities.

A hobby breaks monotony and gets you out of a rut. It adds a sense of agency, vitality and curiosity to your life. Hobbies are a way to move out of your comfort zone, and grow and stretch in a low pressure, fun way. You can mix things up with a hobby. If you're a personal fitness trainer, you might take up calligraphy as a hobby. If you're a lawyer, you could try kayaking or sailing. A hobby is a different field to learn, explore and discover things.

A hobby recharges your energy and refreshes you physically, mentally and emotionally. It reduces stress, which causes health problems when left unchecked. There's no pressure to be the best, to be competitive or to be on the top of your game. You avoid burnout when you have a meaningful activity, besides work, to focus on. You know when it's totally worth it to indulge in watching movies and playing video games because you feel recharged afterwards. You let go of perfectionist tendencies and learn to accept mistakes in a non-judgmental way.

A hobby centers and grounds you, especially it's a regular part of your life. You find inspiration and freedom in just being present with the activity itself and not being too concerned about the outcomes. Watercolor painting and drawing, for example, can be calming activities that reduce cortisol and stress hormones.

A hobby builds connections. Fishing, camping, and hiking are healthy, outdoor activities for families and friends to do together. There's also social bonding when you take a class or join a club, league or team with people who have common interests. Over time and with ongoing interactions, these bonds can also grow into lasting friendships.

A hobby enriches your life. It makes you more interesting and enables you to have far better, richer conversations. Life expands beyond work, chores, and other obligations and beyond sports stats, and news headlines that you don't control. You gain a different perspective of life. You can teach others what you've learned. You can talk about things that move you and motivate you, outside work.

A hobby lets you have more fun in life. If you're feeling stuck, the solution is not always to work harder, rediscover your purpose or get more disciplined. Maybe you're just working at an unsustainable pace. While you might need to say no more often or cancel appointments, you might also need to say yes to a fun hobby and add it to your regular schedule.

If you don't have a hobby you love, make time to find one and make it a top priority. It will not only make you more productive and creative at work, but also add meaning and peak moments to your life. As I discussed in Episode 19 of The Incrementalist podcast, peak moments bring elevation, insight, pride and connection.

To rediscover or discover a hobby you love, you could down memory lane and think about what you enjoyed most as a kid, or before you became a grown up focused on work, career, business or profession. At the same time, don't pick a certain hobby only to keep in line with your identity or persona or what you think you're supposed to do or be. Maybe the right hobby is board games with your family, not solo skydiving. Or growing a garden, not learning a new language.

You could start with research from watching YouTube videos, to reading blog posts and books, to listening to podcasts. The best way to know though is through experimentation and experience. Join a group, a club or a league, sign up for a class, or hire a great teacher or coach. You could quit early when you don't like something from the start. It might be worth it though to stick around. Try it 5 to 10 times instead of just one. Try different approaches. There are so many styles of yoga, dancing, music to play, and so on.

Consider why you chose this hobby. If you just want to learn how to play a particular song on the piano, music theory is not essential. But if you want to compose a song, music theory is a toolbox that will be very useful. Your why is your guide to how deep and broad you go with a hobby.

Consider your personal circumstances and season of life. If you're short on cash and free time, you'll be more likely to stick with origami making and hiking than scuba diving and mountain climbing. Be sure to block and protect time to engage in your hobby. It might be for a half day on a Saturday, an hour in the morning or 15 minutes in the evening.

When you intentionally engage in a hobby, your life will be more multifaceted and multidimensional. Even if you love the work you do, it's good to have something else that excites you, enhances your skills, and teaches you vital things about yourself and the world.

In my book, the Incrementalist, I describe rest and recharge as Principle number 5 to create big results in small steps. I write, Play is essential to every child's mental stimulation, emotional development, and physical well being. But play for grown-ups is often downplayed as secondary to personal responsibilities and professional obligations. It's a luxury you get to enjoy only after all your work is done. And sometimes your work is never done. So there's barely any time left for play.

"Unnecessary creating" reignites passion and fuels insights for your day job. For this and other reasons, it's essential to do non-essential creative activities.

I'm all about subtracting things from your to-do list if you're feeling overwhelmed and scattered. But a hobby you love is something to add, savor and enjoy.

The Incrementalist ebook, which I first released in May 2020, is on sale for \$4.99 up to June 20. After this date, the regular minimum price of \$9.99 will apply. Check it out at leanpub.com/incrementalist. The link is in the show notes.

If you like The Incrementalist podcast, your shares, subscribes, and 5-star ratings and reviews will help keep it going. Thank you for being with me and tune in again next time.

