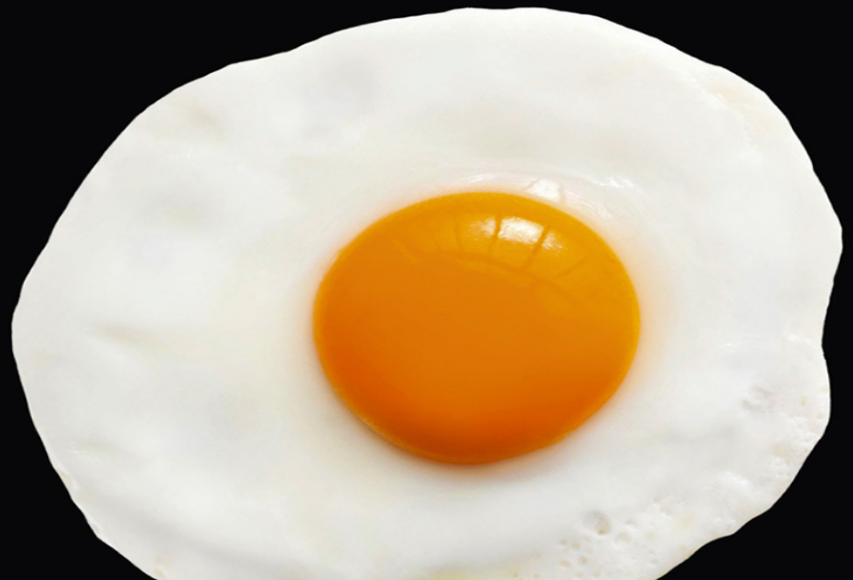


JOHN C. PARKIN

f\*\*k it  
DO WHAT YOU LOVE



*Also by John C. Parkin*

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*'Don't cut the person to fit the cloth.'*

SUFI SAYING

*'For the first time in the human experience, we have a chance to shape our work to suit the way we live instead of our lives to fit our work... We would be mad to miss the chance.'*

CHARLES HANDY – IRISH AUTHOR AND PHILOSOPHER

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## THE 'YES, BUT...' CONTENTS

As I was writing this book, whenever I mentioned to people that I was creating a F\*\*k It take on Do What You Love, I'd get one of two responses:

1. 'Wow, great, I need that! When's it coming out?' (Answer: *now*.)
2. 'Yes, but...' (and they would then reveal their perceived block on doing what they love).

So I started collecting all the number twos and made sure I addressed them in the book. Here they are, with where to find my response to them:

'Yes, but I'm afraid I'll fail.'

(in 4. Do What You Love)

'Yes, but I don't want to give up this lifestyle.'

(in 4. Do What You Love)

'Yes, but what about all my responsibilities – my family, etc.?'

(in 4. Do What You Love)

'Yes, but I'm scared I'll embarrass myself.'

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'Yes, but no one can just do what they love – grow up.'

(in 5. Living By Doing What You Love)

'Yes, but I have no idea what I love.'

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‘Yes, but what about money? My passion is acting, but I need a steady income to pay my mortgage, bills, etc.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but I have to think about everyone else in my life.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but what if doing what I love makes me sick?’

(in 2. Why Do What You Love?)

‘Yes, but what if no one wants the thing I love doing?’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

‘Yes, but what if I do it and it doesn’t work out? I’ll have nothing left to dream of.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but my parents wouldn’t approve.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but it’s hard to take a commercial or business approach to doing what I love.’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

‘Yes, but I’m too old now.’

(in 2. Why Do What You Love?)

‘Yes, but I don’t deserve to do what I love.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but what if I can’t make it work after giving up my safe, permanent job?’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but the idea of what I love changes and morphs all the time – like life.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but what if I realize I don’t love it after all?’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

‘Yes, but the people around me won’t like it.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but I love lots of things, not just one.’

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‘Yes, but I don’t want to do what I love for eight hours a day, because then I won’t love it any more.’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

‘Yes, but it’s selfish to Do What You Love.’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

‘Yes, but I might find out that I’m not good at doing what I love.’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What you Love)

‘Yes, but I could never make a living from doing what I love.’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

‘Yes, but work is meant to feel difficult; it’s not meant to be like play.’

(in 4. Do What You Love)

‘Yes, but I’d never want to work for myself.’

(in 6. Making A Living By Doing What You Love)

## WHY THE EGG?

Why the fried egg on the cover, Parkin?

I spent two years pondering the cover design for this book (on and off, clearly: I didn't work full-time on it for two years). And then I pictured this fried egg and it just worked: I didn't quite know why. Sure, the egg could represent certain things that people might love – like cooking, or eating the food they grew up on, or leaving their job and becoming a chef.

The egg is a miraculous thing: a whole and wholesome food that arrives in its own packet. And it's also the most versatile ingredient in the kitchen. I was doing something I really love yesterday – wandering around Waterstones bookshop in London's Piccadilly – when I saw a book by Michael Ruhlman called *Egg*. It sits by my desk now.

In it, Ruhlman writes: 'The egg... is the Rosetta Stone [an ancient Egyptian tablet that helped us decipher a little-known language] of the kitchen. Learn the language of the egg – understand completely this amazing and beautiful oblong orb – and you enter new realms of cooking, rocketing you to stellar heights of culinary achievement.'

It seems to me that, like the egg (and the Rosetta Stone), 'doing what you love' unlocks the secret language of life itself. When you learn how to find your flow – and then to trust it, and follow it – everything starts to work. Real magic starts to happen when you're doing what you love. It changes your brain waves (to the more relaxed alpha ones), and as a result, you're happier, you're healthier, and you seem to recruit invisible forces that make everything work more smoothly.

If you're open enough, following the flow of doing what you love can take you anywhere. It's the most versatile of life-compass tools – just as the egg

is the most versatile of ingredients. Doing what you love doesn't mean acting in a particular way, or following a set of rules, or leaving a job, or staying in a job, or persisting with something, or giving something up... it just means doing what you love. Whatever that is, in the moment.

By learning to Do What You Love in this book, you'll have your own recipe for a deliciously led life.

# MY DOING WHAT YOU LOVE (OR NOT) AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I've looked back through my life and recorded the moments when I was doing what I loved (and also when I wasn't). It's actually been very enlightening to do this: a little bit like seeing your life flash before you, but with this filter on: *Did I do what I loved?*

You can write your own Doing What You Love (or not) autobiography. Get an idea of the times in your life when you've done just what the hell you've wanted to. And when you haven't. The times when you've said F\*\*k It and done it. And when you haven't.

As you think about your whole life in this context, there will be some very obvious milestones that pop out. You don't have to go through your life and your decisions year by year – just get a sense of when these milestones were.

Here's my Doing What You Love (or not) autobiography – so you can see how I did it.

**1971.** I was a young boy, and early one evening I was dropping stones into a drain on the street where my family lived. As I dropped each stone, I'd watch it hit the water a few feet below, and then I'd imitate the sound it made by saying, 'plop'.

Suddenly, one of our neighbours – a rather severe senior policeman – appeared behind me. He simply pointed at me, and then walked away. I still wake in the middle of the night sometimes, wondering what it was I'd done 'wrong'. I was doing something I enjoyed, and it was judged (I think). Not a great start to a life of doing what you love.

*Lesson: people might judge you for doing what you love.*

**1983.** I'd cycle to school every day with my friend Gareth. It was a good distance and at one point in our journey, we had to go down a path that forked into two paths – one of which went towards school (Long Eaton) and the other towards 'town' (Nottingham). Each day, we'd take the fork towards school. But then one day we stopped, nodded at each other, and took the fork towards Nottingham instead.

It was a huge adventure – a feeling of total freedom that you only get when you're escaping from something that's oppressive and prison-like. That was one of the few school days that I actually remember. In fact, it's the highlight of *all* my schooldays – not going to school.

*Lesson: doing what you love, even if it's against the rules, could be the highlight of your life.*

**1985.** I decided to give up playing the guitar (something I thought I loved) to become a car mechanic (something I thought I *would* love), even though I had no experience of engines – or anything practical for that matter. While the other students went off to do their work experience in law practices and accountancy firms, I turned up at the local Ford car service garage.

It was hell. During my time there, the mechanics frequently joked about throwing me in the canal on my last day (which they said they did to all such temporary apprentices). The canal contained shopping trolleys, girders, rats and, probably, the dead bodies of previous apprentices, so as my work experience drew to a close, I was in a state of rising tension. On the final day, one hour before I was due to leave, I went to see the manager and told him I had a doctor's appointment, and needed to go. I then slipped out via the front door (the mechanics used the back door), never to see any of them again; and never to change the oil in a car engine again, either.

*Lesson: finding what you love is a process of experimentation.*

**1986.** I decided that going to university to do what I loved (which was reading great literature) for three years was probably a better idea than the



alternatives (like working in the local Ford garage), so I finally got my head down and started studying.

*Lesson: sometimes, getting to Do What You Love takes some hard work.*

**1987.** I became a windsurfing instructor. Windsurfing was a passion of mine – and one reason I’d chosen a university located close to the sea – and I saw the possibility of a job as a windsurfing instructor after I’d graduated.

*Lesson: it’s fine to make plans to be able to Do What You Love for a living.*

**1989.** During my final year at university I applied to management consultancy firms. Their salaries for new graduates were crazily high, and I’d also get to travel to the USA for training. I persuaded myself that it would be just the job for me.

*Lesson: it’s fine to play with all the options.*

**Later 1989.** I declined high-paid job offers from management consultancy firms. One firm (Coopers-Anderson-Waterhouse-or-something) called my dad to explain how crazy I was being, and asked whether he could help persuade me to join them. Dad thought I was crazy too. But I wouldn’t go.

*Lesson: saying ‘no’, even when everyone is saying you should say ‘yes’, takes courage.*

**Still later 1989.** I still needed some cash, so I worked for my dad’s accountancy firm. It raised his hopes that I might stay on, and take over the business. But I was rubbish at it, totally rubbish – I couldn’t concentrate on lists of figures for long enough. I left, which upset my dad, but I knew that it would all have ended in tears. This decision wasn’t hard.

*Lesson: not doing what you don’t love is as important as doing what you do love. And sometimes people can get hurt in this process.*

**1990.** I thought about becoming a combination of English teacher and windsurfing instructor in some unspecified-but-hot foreign land (I wasn’t feeling too well, and my health tended to improve in the sun). But then I

realized that was a crazy idea and instead went back to college (during a recession) to learn how to write TV ads.

*Lesson: I should have taken my teaching-English-and-windsurfing dreams more seriously. I had a 'You have to settle down and get a proper job' thing running through my head. I could have ended up in just the same place (i.e. a hot place, next to the sea), and enjoyed the journey more, taking that route. But then again, who knows?*

**1994.** I really liked the idea of a job that involved sitting around all day, thinking up ideas. And so I got my first paid job at a great advertising agency – BBH (Bartle Bogle Hegarty – they all still had acronyms back then) – on the back of a script for a TV commercial for Häagen-Dazs.

*Lesson: I really wanted to work as a creative, but there were very few jobs around. So this was a real result. It came from sticking to my belief that I could do what I loved, and persevering with it through numerous internships, disappointments, and so on.*

**Later 1994.** However, my heart's desire was to work for the coolest agency in London/the world – HHCL (Howell Henry Chaldecott Lury). They offered me a job soon after I started with BBH. And I took it, despite being sat down by BBH owner and ad guru John Hegarty, who told me I was making a serious mistake that I would regret forever.

*Lesson: It felt right. It was right: I had the time of my life at HHCL, where I was surrounded by genial geniuses.*

**1997.** I met Gaia. We did lots of stuff we loved – together. Not strictly Doing What You Love, but Marrying Who You Love.

*Lesson: trust love, and trust instinct. Gaia is an angel and I'm a lucky man.*

**1999.** I started to do something I love – using trance and shamanic techniques – while still working at HHCL. It became very popular and soon I was putting 20 or so people into trance a few times a week.

*Lesson: sometimes you can incorporate doing what you love into your current life. It is possible.*

**2000.** I began to work part-time, so I could do something else that I loved – screenwriting. Every Friday I’d put on my writing hat and write my screenplay.

*Lesson: you might not have to leave your job to Do What You Love.*

**2001.** I finished my screenplay. And as I pictured all the rewriting and agony required to get my film(s) made, I saw it would be another struggle. I just wanted to feel good in myself, so I decided to give up screenwriting and concentrate on the art of feeling good in myself: Qigong.

*Lesson: always be open to re-evaluating whether you’re doing what you love. Even if you have a well-mapped plan, don’t be attached to it. Follow the passion, not the plan.*

**2002.** Gaia and I packed up our London flat, climbed into a camper van with our one-year-old twins and headed for Italy: to look for a suitable bit of land and property on which to create a holistic retreat.

*Lesson: it was crazy timing. Within a few days of leaving, we were crying in campsites. But we felt we had to get moving, so we did. Sometimes you can’t resist the pull to Do What You Love.*

**2004.** We opened our retreat, ‘The Hill That Breathes’. It was tough at first, but a real blast. We were soon doing what we loved – living in an amazing place, hanging out with lovely people, and sharing ideas with them in a big tipi.

*Lesson: getting to Do What You Love is often hard work. It might require sacrifices, and overcoming whatever obstacles are put in your way.*

**2005.** We ran our first F\*\*k It Retreat. Despite a lot of resistance from people who thought it wasn’t a ‘spiritual’ idea, and that we were ‘of the devil’.

*Lesson: if you trust yourself, and Do What You Love, people may well resist it. But if it feels right, stick with it.*

**2008.** I realized that what I'd really love to do is make music (again). This became a struggle and a joy and a struggle and a joy for years to come.

*Lesson: doing what you love is rarely plain sailing. I faced constant challenges, and the fear of making a fool of myself.*

**2012.** We closed The Hill that Breathes in order to concentrate on teaching F\*\*k It Retreats in various locations around Italy and the world. Despite the success of The Hill, we realized our real love was teaching.

*Lesson: don't keep going with something just because it's successful. Success can make doing what you love even harder. We had to take a risk, make another leap, in order to stay on the track of doing what we love.*

**2014.** Wanting to do less, and to stay at home more with my boys, I said 'no' to every single invitation that came my way: to talks and interviews and retreats and book offers. It gets easier to say 'no' after your first few.

*Lesson: sometimes, to Do What You Love, you have to say 'no' to lots of things that you'd quite like to do.*