

the
enlightenment
of



Revealing the Path
to Happiness, Contentment
and Purpose in Your Job

STEVE NOBEL

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of
WORK

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to you and your descendants – may you courageously step onto the path that leads to seek a more enlightened way at work.

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Introduction

This may seem an obvious statement, but here goes, anyway – many people around the world are now suffering in their work in some way. Not everyone suffers, but many do: millions, perhaps even billions. I know about suffering at work from personal experience. I suffered for many years. I have done my time!

And so here is my message to you about suffering. First, suffering can come in many ways. It can come through feeling aimless and bored when the only reason for being at work is to collect the pay cheque at the end of the month. It can come through stress, overwork and burnout. Sometimes, it comes through overarching ambition, when we have tried too hard and for too long to climb up the corporate ladder, only to find it is leaning in the wrong direction. There are always challenges at work and there will always be the inevitable disappointment and frustration. Sometimes, suffering arises through unrealistic expectations, when we are not able to see the truth in a situation.

Wherever there are relationships there can be disagreement. Sometimes disagreement can be creative, sometimes not. When it is not it can lead to manipulation, conflict and even bullying. We can suffer when we are without work for short or long periods.

Whatever our work, there is always the possibility that we can feel exposed to being undervalued, criticized or harshly judged. Suffering can come through feeling trapped in a job that feels joyless or hard – we may feel we have little say in the content or context of our work. We may feel unable to follow a direction that gives a sense of meaning or joy. We may feel that we are incapable of making the kinds of changes to our work we would most like.

Suffering can be physical, emotional, mental and even spiritual. There is the kind of physical suffering that arises when the stress or joylessness of work

creates ongoing tension in the body. This, in turn, can lead to ill-health and serious illness. There are degrees of emotional suffering when we feel anger, grief, misery and unhappiness at work. We can suffer mentally by recycling thoughts around failure, insignificance and powerlessness – these thoughts can coalesce into fixed beliefs that say we cannot positively influence or shape our destiny in any way. Then there is spiritual suffering which is more commonplace than you may think. This arises when our work disconnects us from our true essence.

Whatever the cause of suffering, it can easily start in one area and then spread. Physical suffering will tend to lead to emotional, mental and, sometimes, spiritual suffering. For instance, if you have a physical injury that prevents you from doing certain activities, then it can be hard not to have certain thoughts and feelings about this. Suffering can be infectious. If you are long-term unemployed, then your stress can so easily touch those you come into daily contact with. In our celebrity culture where the bright and the beautiful are seen as good, suffering is seen as something bad; something to be shunned and kept at a distance. We read about suffering in the newspapers and that is as close as it should get. Suffering is seen as an illness, as shameful, as something that must be avoided at all costs. When it comes knocking at our door, we feel that we should hide away and not speak of it. ‘Keep a stiff upper lip,’ and all of that.

There is a difference between pain and suffering. Pain cannot be avoided. Pain is something we will all encounter at some point. We may be the most optimistic, affirming person on the planet, yet we will still encounter pain. We cannot keep it at bay forever. Hopefully, when pain comes we will know how to use it to uplift us and allow ourselves to grow and move on.

Suffering can be avoided. When we deny pain, then we create unnecessary suffering. When we suppress the pain of certain feelings, then we create suffering that may take any number of forms. This is like trying to force shut the lid on a boiling saucepan – not a good idea.

The good news is that we can unravel patterns of suffering. The good news is that just as suffering happens, so too can inspiration, joy, love and possibility. Life can be an amazingly rich tapestry of experience and growth. This book has a simple philosophy: suffering happens; there is no merit in suffering; suffering can be embraced and transformed; when we truly transform suffering, then something different can be experienced.

I suffered considerably for the first ten years of my working life from a deep sense of meaninglessness and depression. I could see no point in the work I was doing. I had no real affinity with it. Worse than that, I deeply questioned the ethics of some of the things I was working on. For instance, for some years my day would start with processing paperwork dealing with the export of arms to various foreign regimes. Not the most inspiring work I have done in my life!

There were other aspects of my work that I was not sure about, such as offering huge loans to finance what seemed to me to be rather grand projects in many developing countries. Such loans kept these countries tied to high interest payments and debt for many years. I had very little say over my day-to-day work, it was initiated elsewhere and some of it landed on my desk for processing. It did not matter a hoot whether I agreed with it or not; I was there to toe the company line, and I was not in a position to argue the matter. I looked to see if anyone else shared my feelings of disquiet and unease, but the vast majority seemed quite happy to get on with it. As long as they got paid every month and could drown their sorrows with a few beers, all was well. But for me all was not well – I felt deeply unhappy and unfulfilled.

As long as I remember working in that job I had strong migraines that would just emerge unexpectedly. There were an assortment of other minor ailments – nothing serious, but it went on for many years. I sought relief through changing my diet, macrobiotics, yoga, tai chi, and different forms of meditation. I discovered eventually that the source of my suffering was nothing to do with my lifestyle – it was everything to do with what I was

doing. In time, the build-up of tension and stress led me to take time out – around a year, in fact. The physical tension subsided, but the depression stayed. My ten years in banking were at an end, but where next? I could not see a particularly bright future.

During this period of convalescence, and with the support of a psychotherapy group, I began to unearth much that was previously unexamined in myself. I found a new job in an inner city borough in the Housing Directorate, working with special needs and elderly tenants. I had moved from a structured, conservative environment to a socialist, idealistic and rather chaotic environment. This was not without its challenges, but I felt more at home and discovered abilities I did not know I had. I discovered that I was good with people, that I was able to manage and problem solve. I started to trust myself and develop my intuition.

My depression eventually faded and in its place emerged a latent passion for spirituality. I began to attend spiritual and personal development workshops which helped me transform different aspects of my life, but my work still felt out of sync with my heart and spirit. I was promoted to a good position, but this did not really help much. I was feeling the winds of change calling once more. My heart was telling me that now was the time to leave, but my head said stay. Since I was more spiritually aware, I decided to ask my innermost spirit, Higher Self, the Universe (the name felt unimportant) a question: ‘Should I resign from this job?’ I waited, and within 48 hours I received the answer. During a lunch break as I was walking back to work one day there was a guy walking in front of me several feet ahead. On the back of his T-shirt there was the Nike slogan saying, ‘Just do it’. The message hit me like a thunderbolt, but my mind cut across, very quickly discounting the message. I was reminded by a stream of thoughts that I had responsibilities and should not throw everything away because of some random slogan on a T-shirt. As I continued walking, my attention was drawn to a nearby window and there was a sticker with the same message: ‘Just do it’. Okay,

that was it – I gave in, I surrendered, and very soon after handed in my letter of resignation.

I can still remember the bliss of that day and how grey everyone else in the workplace seemed. Thus began my next adventure with work. Now I had let go of the ‘safe’ career and, instead, I threw myself into every kind of job that I could find. I painted houses, I did landscape gardening, I sold books, I sold health products, I worked in an office, I made tea. I was noticing when I was in flow and when I was struggling. I learnt that chasing jobs put me in struggle. The more I trusted the process, the more I felt in flow.

During this time I started doing some part-time work for an amazing organization called Alternatives, based in St James’s Church, Piccadilly, London. After a year or so, they offered me the job of full-time administrator. I was not so keen on doing administration, but I loved the organization, so I accepted. I continued doing personal development seminars and discovered interesting concepts such as values and untapped gifts. After a year of admin I was offered a directorship of Alternatives. Within a short period of time two other co-directors resigned and I found that I was running the organization alone. Not having much business experience, I meditated and prayed. Fortunately, the Universe was listening and responded. I was guided to employ the perfect people for the right jobs and take some important decisions to restore the organization to a place of high morale and financial stability and abundance.

As I write this, I have been a director of Alternatives for just over ten years. Here I learnt to play and to be creative. I learnt more about the power of generosity and ‘what goes around comes around’. I learnt about the importance of community and of finding ‘the right tribe’. In 2001 I started to write my first book and now I am a published author: this is my third book.

Writing is something I have come to love dearly – both the research aspect and the creative aspect. Around 2004 I began to get interested in coaching and NLP, and after a few years of training I started a personal

and business coaching company which I now run part time. Also, I have been running retreats and workshops for several years now. More recently, I started a podcasting section on my website, where I interview different authors and teachers in spiritual awakening, personal development, coaching, business and work and make them available as free resources. All of the above continue to be a great source of inspiration and joy for me.

This book has been a journey of tremendous discovery for me – researching and writing it has changed my views on work and growth. And this is as it should be – as the Buddha says, nothing is permanent. This book draws on wisdom from a number of sources, primarily Buddhism, Coaching/NLP and Taoism. Although I have presented many stories, ideas and meditations that are Buddhist, this is not a book about being a Buddhist. You do not have to believe in anything that is written herein. I simply encourage you to try on some of the ideas for size and see what happens. I offer this book in the spirit of adventure, compassion and service, in the hope that it will help you find your own unique way to transform suffering and navigate to the limitless possibilities beyond.

You can use this book to transform your own limiting attitudes and perspectives regarding the work you do, and open yourself to new ways of behaving. This will certainly allow more peace, joy and possibility to arise within your existing work. You can also use this book to explore changing your work itself. Changing your attitudes and perspectives on what is possible for you will certainly help. Learning to be more authentic, resourceful, intuitive, playfully creative and in the flow will also help you. You may not know what you want as an end result, so use this book as an aid to your process of gaining more clarity. Let the ideas and methodologies of this book lead you in the direction of your heart – towards the boundless experience of peace, purpose, passion, enthusiasm, giftedness, flow, wisdom, joy and bliss in your work.

Steve Ahnael Nobel, 2011

Chapter 1

Why Suffer?

*All the world is full of suffering.
It is also full of overcoming.*

Helen Keller

Prince Siddhartha was born in 563 BC in Nepal near the Himalayas to a rich and royal family. Just before his birth, his mother had a dream that a white elephant entered her womb through her side. A wise man interpreted this dream, saying that the child would either be a world leader or a monk. His mother died two days after giving birth and so the young prince was raised by his father in a palace beneath the majestic mountains of the Himalayas. The King, determined that his son would not be a monk, gave orders that he should never leave the palace grounds. At the age of 16, his father arranged his marriage to a beautiful princess. To keep him further distracted, he built a richly ornate palace for the couple. Here, only young, beautiful and healthy people were allowed. But the prince became restless and wanted to venture beyond the palace grounds.

Eventually, he found a way to leave for short periods. On his first visit to a nearby town he encountered old age. On his second visit he came across sickness. And on his third visit he witnessed death – yet he also met a holy man who appeared content and at peace with the world. The prince felt so moved by the sight of the monk that

he abandoned royal life and took up the spiritual quest. For the next six years he explored ascetic life, and experienced prolonged fasting and exposure to hardship and pain. Exhausted, he accepted some rice-milk from a young woman and henceforth decided to follow the path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-denial. He sat in meditation under a fig tree, henceforth known as 'The Tree of Awakening', and vowed not to arise again until he had achieved enlightenment. After many days of meditation he was able to see deeply into the nature of suffering and, finally, he awakened as 'The Buddha', also known as the 'Enlightened One'.

.....

Work and Suffering ...

Unlike the early life of Prince Siddhartha, most of us are destined to perform some work in the world. Work can happen in the home or out in the world. Work can be a rich source of joy or a source of suffering. Many people are suffering in their work unnecessarily. In some developing countries, where workers receive poor pay in return for long, hard hours, work is no better than slave labour. Often, these same workers feel trapped because they have no voice, no freedom to organize, and they feel generally exploited.

In the developed West, work can also be a source of suffering, where human dignity is squashed by overwork, stress, criticism, bullying, and uncaring employment practices. Many feel unhappy in their work, and many feel unhappy that they have no work. The scale of the problem is huge.

Work was not always such a source of misery. Before the Industrial Revolution in Britain, people worked close to the land and in communities. It is a myth that people worked in dreary conditions from dawn to dusk. Before the Industrial Revolution, according to some accounts, the tempo of life was

relatively slow and leisurely and the pace of work was quite relaxed. The pre-Industrial calendar was filled with holidays – mostly religious – and there was also plenty of time for feasting and merrymaking. This all changed, of course, as factories and mills and railroads began to dominate the landscape. Coupled with religious ideas on the righteousness of the work ethic, work quickly turned into an activity that was long, hard and stressful, where time was something not to be enjoyed, but exchanged for money.

Over the past few centuries, we have been conditioned with some unhealthy ideas that need to be undone if we are going to transform our rather unhappy way of thinking about work in the Western world. Viktor Frankl was a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp and he wrote about his experience and insights just after the war in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*. Frankl wrote about three psychological reactions experienced by concentration camp inmates: the first was shock when people were admitted to the camp; the second was apathy as inmates became accustomed to camp existence; and the third was depersonalization and disillusionment. Does any of this sound familiar? It is bizarre to note that the sign welcoming the millions of unfortunate inmates into many concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Dachau, read 'Work makes you free'.

An Absence of Work

The effects of unemployment can range from emotional trauma to problems with being hired in the future. Being made redundant or being fired may mean a change of career. If you had planned a certain career path with a particular level of advancement and incremental salary, then this may cause you to suffer. Being unemployed can generate feelings of apathy, discouragement and embarrassment. Not working can lead to a crisis of meaning and a certain lack of connection and engagement with the world.

Losing a job for a short period of time can cause stress and even depression. Where unemployment is longer term the psychological problems

of decreased self-esteem, stress and depression may be more far reaching. The stress of long-term unemployment will tend to impact friends and family also. In times of mass unemployment there can be a collective gloom that descends on a country. Various studies point to there being a statistical correlation between unemployment and crime, suicide and mental illness.

Meaningless Work

A major source of suffering arises when work feels dull and meaningless. There is an old English proverb that says, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' The original meaning of the word dull was more akin to stupid than boring. Nowadays, there are many jobs that are simply dull. Some jobs are little more than paper shuffling – some jobs are about making senseless widgets – some jobs are highly repetitive.

What is not so well known is that dull work is a killer. According to a study conducted by University College London Medical School, some workers may actually do themselves a favour by not showing up for dull work. According to the report, 'Men with low-paying jobs and less education have a higher risk for heart disease, a trend that has been evident for the last 30 years.' When it comes to this kind of work it is sad to see someone going through the motions, just turning up, doing what needs to be done and then heading off home. There is no spark and no passion. Often the lights are on but there is no one at home!

Shallow Work

One of my favourite films is *Before Sunrise* which tells of a love story between two young people meeting for the first time on a train to Paris. Jesse is a good-looking young American guy on his way back to the States and Celine a beautiful young French woman returning to her home in Paris after visiting her grandmother. Celine tells Jesse about her father who is always thinking of her future career. Celine would say to her father she wanted to be a writer and

he would respond by saying, ‘So you want to be a journalist?’ Celine would say she wanted to be an actress and her father would say she should be a TV newscaster. Celine would say she wanted to create a refuge for stray cats and her father would reply with the career of veterinarian. Celine complained, ‘It was this constant conversion of my fanciful ambition into these practical, money-making ventures.’

Chasing money can eventually become a source of suffering. Money, in itself, cannot provide real meaning. Yes, money is important to live in the modern world, to pay the bills and support a family, but work is about so much more than money. The question worth asking is, how much money can compensate you for a life unfulfilled?

Stressful Work

We can suffer at work through busyness, overwork and stress. Work is often challenging, presenting various deadlines, frustrations and demands. Work may require us to work long hours or even spend hours commuting. Stress in small doses can be a motivating force, but when stress is ongoing it can lead to feeling frazzled and overwhelmed. If it goes on for too long it will then feel like a way of life. The effects of stress increase or decrease in relation to a number of factors, such as strength or weakness in the following areas: our network of family and supportive friends; self-awareness and emotional intelligence; optimistic attitude; and level of self-confidence.

Stress can also be a killer – studies show that the stress of returning to work after the weekend can trigger a dangerous increase in blood pressure – leading to death from heart attacks and strokes which tend to peak on a Monday morning.

Driven Work

Ambition can lead to unhappiness. A good friend of mine studied to be a doctor and early on, her group was asked what motivated them to want to be

doctors. One by one the students responded, and mostly the answers revolved around money and status. When it was her turn, she said she wanted a job that could really help people and make a positive contribution to their lives. She told me that there was an uncomfortable silence in the room after she answered. It was a rude awakening for her that most of the other students were not motivated in the same way that she was.

Ambition alone may not sustain you through a lifetime of work. Ambition is certainly a motivating force, but it is less reliable an ally than enthusiasm. The word 'enthusiasm' comes from the Greek language, meaning 'to be possessed by a God'. Ambition can lead us to climbing the executive ladder and getting a bigger mortgage, but ambition without enthusiasm can lead to suffering. I have met many people who create a series of goals for their lives that goes something like: 'By the age of 21 I will get a first-class honours degree in my chosen subject, then I will have an MA by the age of 22, then I will travel the world for a year, then I will get a top job in a company I have been researching,' and on it goes. If the drive and focus are strong, then these goals may well be reached. But having such a check list is no sure way to long-term happiness.

For some, the ambition is so strong that it tips into negative ambition. This is where an excessive desire for something leads to suffering early on. Perhaps the negative ambition manifests as greed and selfishness where the needs or rights of others are sacrificed by the burning desire to reach a goal.

Stuck Work

Feeling stuck or trapped in a line of work is a source of misery. You may feel stuck in a job and unable to move on because you feel you have been there too long; the pay is good; you have invested too much in it; you have bills to pay and moving is risky; you have a family to consider and so staying put seems the simplest option; you are too old to move, or you feel you lack the competencies and skills to move towards what you really want to do.

In some places the culture itself creates stuckness. For instance, in India, over 260 million women, children and men belong to the ‘Untouchable’ caste. The caste system in India determines people’s social status, potential marriage partners, access to education, and work. Although the term untouchable was banned under the Indian constitution some 60 years ago, ‘Untouchables’ are still relegated to the lowest jobs in society. Their occupations are often the same as those of their parents.

Violent Work

Conflict is, unfortunately, a very common cause of misery at work. Whereas creative disagreement can lead to new ideas and possibilities, destructive conflict rarely produces anything useful. Whenever there are big egos on the loose in the workplace, conflict and disagreement are bound to happen. Also, whenever there are major changes on the horizon, this can lead to conflict. When people feel insecure and afraid, they may react defensively and aggressively.

Bullying at work is a very specific form of conflict. This can inflict suffering on others, especially when it is constant and spiteful. It is usually – though not always – done to someone in a ‘lower’ position. Bullying can come in different forms: face to face, by letter, through a phone call, by email, or through social media messaging. There are various ways people can feel harassed in the workplace, including feeling: constantly picked on or criticized; humiliated in front of colleagues; regularly treated unfairly; verbally abused; blamed for problems not of their making; or threatened with punishments. It is important to feel respected and safe in the workplace, otherwise this can lead to suffering.

Insecure Work

In the past there was the notion of a job for life and at the end of a long period of dedicated service you could then expect a pension and perhaps a gold

watch and framed certificate. I still remember my grandfather's gold watch and the certificate hanging on his bedroom wall honouring his 40 years of service. I used to look at that certificate with great admiration and wonder about his work. At the time, I had no concept of how long 40 years really was.

Now it seems a really long time to stay in one place. Now there is no job for life and this can be a source of excitement and adventure or insecurity and clinging, depending on your point of view. When the fear of uncertainty is strong, there may be a fear of rocking the boat or taking risks. This can block the possibility of trying anything new. Where there is a lack of courage, or higher or broader vision, this can prevent you from fully embracing the possibilities of your life which, in turn, creates suffering.

Work: Beyond Suffering ...

The really sad thing in selling our time to a job that we are unhappy in is that we are selling a commodity that is finite. Our time on this earth will eventually run out and this is a resource we will never recover, at least not in this lifetime! On the other hand, the good news is that suffering at work is not mandatory, it is optional, and the person who decides whether you suffer or not is not the boss, the company, your government or your culture – it is you.

Some circumstances may feel very challenging, but it is not so much the circumstances but your reaction to the circumstances that is important. Victor Frankl said, 'Every human being has the ability to change at every instant.' There is a way out of suffering, and that way has to be chosen consciously. Suffering is a form of feedback that tells us something is amiss, that something needs to change. Nowadays in the Western world, we are being called to take charge of our destiny – our working lives are no longer largely organized for us, there is no job for life any more. The values of our parents and grandparents cannot guide us as they could in previous decades. As long as we are suffering we will never realize that there is anything else available.

THE FOUR POSSIBILITIES

1. There is the possibility that at some point in your work you will suffer, either physically, emotionally, mentally or even spiritually.
2. There is the possibility that you will transform your suffering and go beyond it to explore a new way, a more healthy and joyful way.
3. There is the possibility that you will know your true nature, become more resourceful, play instead of work hard, know your heartfelt values, follow your true direction, and find or create work that you love.
4. There is the possibility that you will learn to flow, take effortless action, open to grace and awaken to bliss in your work.

When we manage to go beyond suffering in our work, there are many new possibilities that can open up to us.

Work and Meaning

The world of work we are entering into demands that we are on track, have a sense of direction and purpose, and seek to make a meaningful contribution to others. Perhaps the job is a stepping stone to something greater. Perhaps the job is a way of getting clear about one's true direction in life. Purpose is an inner fire, a clarity, a heightened sense of aliveness. Purpose shines through the eyes, body language, the way a person speaks and moves through the world; there is a vibrancy in the voice. Purpose is about knowing where you are going and why you are going there. Purpose is like falling in love – you do not know what it is until you experience it for the first time. Purpose is visionary rather than goal driven. Here we become the artists of our working

lives. No longer limited by the dreams and hopes of others, we let our own dreams soar and take flight.

Work and Presence

The world of work we are entering into demands that we are awake and conscious, rather than asleep or on autopilot. When work is painful we will avoid that pain with all manner of things that put us to sleep. When we are awake we are more present in what we do. When our work is a source of suffering we cannot be present in it. We can be simultaneously alert to danger and seek to be elsewhere in our minds.

When we enjoy what we are doing and enjoy the people we work with, then we will be more present. This can transform even the most menial kind of work. I have met people who do very menial tasks and bring to it such care, devotion and joy that they uplift everyone around them. I have seen joyful and attentive cleaners and met focused assembly-line workers, bubbly sales-people, and genuinely warm receptionists. I once knew a Jesuit priest who commanded great respect simply because of the power of his presence. He listened and spoke with great attention and focus. He never rushed, always taking his time, and gave very thoughtful responses. He brought a great presence to everything he did and everyone he met. Presence is one of the qualities that we can bring to enhance our experience of work.

Work and Courage

The world of work we are entering into demands that we be courageous. For centuries, we have been taught to conform to a system. The current working climate does not favour conformity, it favours courage. Courage is about maintaining a healthy individuality when working with others. It takes courage to know our values and to work by them. This can be challenging in some working environments, for sure. When things are tough, courage is the pivotal energy that can flip us out of situations our head says we must

endure. Without courage, we will simply endure situations that we should not! Courage makes us stand up and speak out. Courage makes us move when we need to move. Courage leads to tenacity and change.

By the way, when I talk about courage I do not mean rashness or stupidity. Courage is not reactive, it is deeply contemplative. Rashness or stupidity are reactive knee-jerk states where there is no real sense of inner power.

Work and Flexibility

The world of work we are entering into demands that we are adaptable, that we know how to change, that we can move with agility from one set of skills to another, and that we can let go of our fixed plans and become more spontaneous. Adaptability is a core principle of evolution. We are now evolving from one mindset and identity into another. If we try and work in the new age of work with an old mindset we will struggle. We are moving into the Virtual Age, but work never stops adapting, so it will carry on evolving beyond the Virtual Age. Certainly, to enter into the Virtual Age and move beyond it is not possible with the same level of thinking that worked in the Industrial Age. Have goals but, more importantly, have vision.

Vision will take you much further than goals. Vision will help you to be more adaptable. Being adaptable means that you can shed what you do not need, you can downsize, take time out, try out new things, think outside the box, and move career paths if you desire. Be willing to let go. Now there is more room to manoeuvre and more help and support available than in previous decades.

Work and Possibility

The world of work we are entering into demands that we reclaim a sense of possibility. Liberation happens foremost on the mental level. A free mind can create a life that feels free. A trapped mind is not really aware of its true capabilities, gifts and potential. We are conditioned into being blocked by

limiting beliefs and expectations. We cannot truly know ourselves or see the world through these beliefs. When we transform our beliefs, we literally see and experience a new world. My personal definition of freedom at work is to do the work we want, when we want, and where we want. In today's modern world, with all its emerging technologies, especially the internet, there is more opportunity than ever before to take charge of our time. The nine-to-five job is no longer the only option available.

Work and Talent

The world of work we are entering into demands that we bring our natural talents to it and play to our strengths. Work is a very powerful way to connect us with our gifts, talents and inner resources – often ones that we do not realize we possess. When you access a gift you lift and bless the world around you. You can be a mathematics teacher with a passion and ability for maths, which will be apparent to anyone you teach. Your passion will rub off and infect all those around you. You may be a great cook and inspire others to love cooking. You may be great with people and can find many different kinds of work that allow you to take advantage of this ability.

The important thing is that you discover your talents and apply them to a real need in the world, one which people will pay you for. You may be a latent artist, coach, doctor, engineer, healer, leader, social worker or teacher, but if you are not utilizing your talent, you will suffer.

Work and Intuition

The world of work we are entering into demands that we be more whole-brained. We cannot rely on just logic and intellect; we need our intuition and imagination to survive and thrive in these times of change. Relying on logic alone just will not do it any more. You need to become more innovative. You need to awaken your intuition and combine it with your logic. Intuition is your personal compass to navigate challenges in the workplace, find new

solutions, make more empowered choices and take more effective action.

Does it make sense to only utilize half of your brain! The brain is a marvellous tool and work is one great way to use and develop it. Intuition can help you find or create the work you love. It is increasingly hard to predict what is happening in the work markets. Intuition allows you to be one step ahead of those who only proceed through logic. Intuition and logic combined form a synergy of resources that can seem almost magical.

Work and Creative Play

The world of work we are entering into demands that we are more creative, playful and available to having fun. If your work is not fun, then you need to consider changing something – either the way you work or the work itself. The old work ethic no longer really fits our current landscape. There is a new ethic emerging which is more about play than graft. This is about shifting from being a worker to a player. As a worker you know about hard graft; as a player you work in a different state of mind. Players naturally move towards what they love doing and away from what seems hard and overly serious.

Fun and play lead to being more productive and happy in your work. Play is a state of mind that is naturally creative and innovative. Play helps us to break out of our habitual thinking and doing and to try something different. Playful environments have a joie de vivre feel about them, they are lively, humorous, engaging and non-critical, and there is a genuine appreciation of good work done. Humour is an essential part of the evolution of work.

Work and Love

The world of work we are entering into demands that work is a love affair. Work does not have to be passionless – work and love are not mutually exclusive. When you are doing something you love, then it will not seem like work. Passion and enthusiasm lead to purpose – without a sense of passion

we are ruled by our head and not our heart. We need the heart to be awake in our work.

We are passionate when we are working in accordance with our values. Mostly, we do not know our values, so how can we know our passion? When you work in accordance with your values you will see a different world. The world looks literally different – in fact, the world you are seeing is different to the world seen by a person who is passionless. Passion is the doorway to inspiration, where our minds are also on fire, but this fire comes from the heart. Passionate work is sensual work, it uses our hands and all of our senses.

Work and Bliss

At the other end of the spectrum from suffering comes bliss. Bliss is a state of being that is beyond joy or happiness. Bliss can come upon us unexpectedly through spiritual practice, or it can come through taking persistent steps towards doing the work we love. When we learn to flow instead of struggle, then we are on the path to bliss.

In our work we can invite grace and divine providence. All of these – flow, bliss, grace and divine providence – are spiritual concepts. Miracles can and do happen in this world. This is a mystery which we do not need to understand fully before allowing it into our lives. In the same way, we do not need to understand electricity fully before being able to turn on the lights in our home.

Work and spirituality have not really mixed for centuries, but nowadays it is more important than ever that our work is a vessel for our spirit. Work that is disconnected from our spirit can cause suffering. The good news is that nowadays we can live a spiritual life without retreating from the world. Most of the spiritual people I have met do not live in monasteries, but in varying work situations.

Bliss happens when we go beyond states of boredom, stress or fatigue, and instead learn to access states of relaxation, creativity, clarity, curiosity,

focus, passion and wisdom. Work is blissful when it becomes like flowing water moving around all obstacles towards our highest visions in life and work.

Work: Intending Something Different ...

As you can see, this book explores an approach to work which refuses to accept suffering, and this new way really begins with a different focus, or set of intentions. These intentions can orientate your mind towards what you want instead of what you do not want, and this will generate more enthusiasm and desire. When you do the opposite and focus on what you do not want, depression will soon follow. Intention works with what is and what could be.

With this in mind, every chapter ends with a *Declaration of Intention*. This is a set of intentions which you can use or adapt for your own purposes, to help you clarify what you want to experience from your work today, tomorrow, next month, next year, and in the next decade. Clarity of intention is important when it comes to finding or creating work that you love.

Mostly, we do not operate with clear intentions in the world. This takes a certain amount of consciousness. Mostly, we have conflicting intentions which create conflicting results in the world. The following intentions are based on the unlimited nature of love, compassion, self-worth, and possibility. Each intention begins with the affirming phrase, 'I am ready!'

Declaration of Intention

1. I am ready to witness and transform all suffering arising from my work. I am ready to release all limiting conditioning, beliefs, assumptions, unconscious agreements, obligations, drama, persecuting, rescuing and victim consciousness that appear to block me.
2. I am ready to be more authentic, present, conscious and aware in my life and work. I am ready to release any excessive reliance on living on autopilot. I am ready to be 100 per cent courageously myself.
3. I am ready to transform my attitude and perspective in my work. I am ready to face all my fears about the present and the future. I am ready to see a bright, expansive, inviting, hopeful future opening before me.
4. I am ready to acknowledge that my time on earth is limited. I am ready to acknowledge that my time is precious. I am ready to use my time more wisely.
5. I am ready to embrace the fullness of my gifts, resources, strengths and talents. I am ready to use my intellect with my imagination and intuition. I am ready to play to my strengths. I am ready to find my niche in the world. I am ready to listen to feedback and use it wisely.
6. I am ready for fun, humour, laughter and creative play in my work. I am ready to take myself lightly.
7. I am ready for fun, playful, supportive people to enter my life. I am ready to reach out and connect meaningfully with other explorers and pioneers in my chosen fields.
8. I am ready for my work to be a love affair. I am ready to know my heartfelt values. I am ready for enthusiasm and joy to enter into my work. I am ready to love the work I do. I am ready for my life's work to be revealed to me. I am ready to dream my work into being.
9. I am ready to flow like water rather than struggle. I am ready to take effortless action in alignment with my heartfelt values. I am ready to be in the right place at the right time. I am ready for my work to unfold with ease and grace. I am ready to work with ever more bliss.
10. I am ready to take this journey and find my own way. I am ready to trust in my inner guidance and see this journey through, wherever that shall lead me.