

What will you do when you grow up?

Young people have opportunities like never before ... But growing up can be daunting – academic study, future jobs, social media, peers and parents ... What would you advise your son or daughter to do?



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I had no idea what I wanted to do when I grew up. As a school kid, living in the rural hills of northern England I had one passion - running. I loved kicking on my Nike trainers and running over the hills. I was free, working my body hard, and running like the wind. I was inspired by athletes across the world. From Brendan Foster to Henry Rono, Steve Cram and Said Aouita. World record breakers. Olympic champions. People who seemed like super humans.

At school I was good at understanding logical things - maths and science. But also creative - playing jazz, doing drama, playing sport. At University I studied Physics, but also European Studies. I wanted to keep my options open. And I wanted to travel, to explore new places, meet people. I ended up in a PhD nuclear physics lab in Freiburg, Germany. Fascinating stuff. But boring. I loved doing human things much more.

Time to break free ... My first real job was with British Airways. I did lots of different roles, particularly in brands and marketing. The one thing I really hated was being put in a box - "you've got a scientific background, so you can do the spreadsheets" kind of thinking. I loved being creative as well as analytical ... intelligent and imaginative, left brain and right brain (which would become the theme of my first book 15 years later!).

In fact my best job ever was when I was 27 years old, managing the Concorde brand. Supersonic travel for the jet set. 3 hours London to New York. Champagne all the way. I then worked in other companies - American Express, Microsoft, Virgin, and then as a consultant with over 250 companies. Get a real job first gets you to learn real things, and how to work with people. Then be a consultant, to learn the best practices and get more experiences fast. Then do your own thing.

Steve Jobs, in that most incredible Stanford speech, just before he died, said it's all about "connecting the dots". It's hard to connect the dots when you are young, but easier when you are older and look back. My dots did not seem logical - science, running, music, travel, brands, people - but they do now. Every experience you have is useful. You never know what the future holds, but you can shape it in your own vision.

But as a young person. Don't panic. Don't try to create a master plan. And certainly don't live a boring life. Whilst your parents might want you to get every qualification, go to the best schools, study abroad, get more qualified, do what they did and dreamed of. You also need to live. Hang out. To experience things for yourself. Spend time with interesting people, doing unusual things, being a bit different. So be a bit crazy. Find time to discover what you love in life.

If anybody ever asks you "What will you do when you grow up?" ... just laugh. It's fine to say you don't know. It's probably best. Over time, you'll work it out. You'll probably try lots of things, have some great successes and spectacular failures. I

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had both. They are all good. All part of the journey. By the time you are 30, or 40, or 50, you will start to work it out.

The best advice I ever got came from Richard Branson. I was interviewing him at a big event, and sitting together off stage, just talking about his life and mine. He told me about his three circles - What are you passionate about? What are you good at? What makes money? The secret of success, he said, is to find a way to do all three together - to make money by doing what you love. Think about it ... draw out the three circles now, then explore how it could apply to yourself.

Following your passion is hard. Because most of us think that work and personal lives are different. How can you possibly make money out of listening to music, shopping for clothes, running over hills? In fact, it's easier than ever today. Just look at Zoe Suggs, the teen vlogger, who makes \$5 million a year out of being incredibly normal, chatting about fashion and cosmetics, and men, on her weekly YouTube channel. Or Mark Zuckerberg, who was only really interested in looking at hot girls online, but then FaceMash become Facebook, and the billions followed.

In the past, we used to do one thing all our lives - follow one career path. Some people even worked for one company all their lives. That's not likely, or particularly healthy today. A 20 year old today is likely to have 7 different careers, and to work for many more companies over time, and most likely for themselves. As the world changes rapidly, industries and skills will change. Most 40 year olds are now thinking of going back to school. Many 60 year olds too.

The Future of Work Study by the IFTF says that the top job of 2030 will be the Data Scientist. More like 2020. In a world of rapidly emerging artificial intelligence, driverless cars, space travel, and genetic engineering, the world's job market will change incredible fast. But remember that we are human - emotional, aesthetic, collective - and therefore the best jobs will be creative and human too.

Whilst you can follow the futurologist's advice, or your parents, my advice is to do what you love. To find a way to be different, and better, and successful, at doing what you love.

For me, I realised I love inspiring people. Giving them ideas, insight and inspiration to do incredible things. In the business world, it's all about trying to be better (a bit like running faster), making sense of the world (a bit like scientific discovery), and then achieving peak performance (like flying on Concorde). I started writing books to share this passion. In my new book "Gamechangers: Are you ready to change the world?" I got to interview 100 of the world's most innovative companies right now. How cool is that. But most of all, I did it, because I wanted to share it.

Today I have an incredible life. I get to travel around the world - typically working with around 50 companies a year, meeting around 500,000 people, discovering new brands, each one giving me new stories and ideas to share. Best of all I enjoy working with real people to solve real problems, and seize new opportunities -

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future strategies for business and brands, innovating new products and experiences - from the Berlin to Buenos Aires, Istanbul to Shanghai.

I love me job, and my life. When I'm not travelling, I get to be at home. To read something new. Go somewhere different. I love running for an hour through the local parks. Yes, it can be hard work, but there is nothing like pushing yourself to go further and faster, feeling the pain and sweat, and then afterwards feeling so much better. It's when I have my best ideas too. When things connect.

And I love to inspire friends and family too.

In particular, I'm thinking about my two teenage daughters - growing up rapidly in today's incredible world. Yes, they go to the local school, do most of their homework, and hopefully do well at exams. But life is more than that. It's also about friends, sports, parties, shopping. Discovering themselves. Whilst they might think the world revolves around Snapchat and Instagram, that's ok for now. Maybe the 10,000 followers will be useful some day?

All part of their journey.

Be bold, be brave, be brilliant.

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Peter Fisk is an expert advisor, keynote speaker, and bestselling author. He has over 25 years of experience working with business leaders in every sector across the world. He is professor of strategy, innovation and marketing at IE Business School. Explore more about his experience, insights and ideas, case studies and workshops at www.theGeniusWorks.com