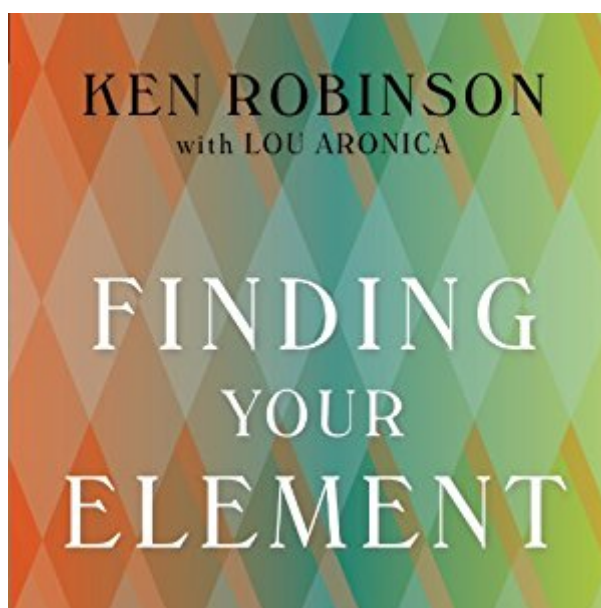


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Finding Your Element: How To Discover Your Talents And Passions And Transform Your Life



Synopsis

Sir Ken Robinson's groundbreaking book *The Element* introduced listeners to a new concept of self-fulfillment through the convergence of natural talents and personal passions. *The Element* has inspired people all over the world and has created for Robinson an intensely devoted following. Now comes the long-awaited companion, the practical guide that helps people find their own Element. Among the questions that this new book answers are: How do I find out what my talents and passions are? What if I love something I'm not good at? What if I'm good at something I don't love? What if I can't make a living from my Element? How do I help my children find their Element? *Finding Your Element* comes at a critical time, as concerns about the economy, education, and the environment continue to grow. The need to connect to our personal talents and passions has never been greater. As Robinson writes in his introduction, wherever you are, whatever you do, and no matter how old you are, if you're searching for your Element, this book is for you.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read an excerpt or an interview about *Finding Your Element* somewhere and somehow I got hooked into the idea that this book contained some revolutionary wisdom on discovering your true calling in life. For me, this wasn't the case. The book is stuffed with a great many tired platitudes, and its "revolutionary insight" basically boils down to the obvious idea of "do what you love." I'm not saying this is bad advice, or that the commonsense wisdom, spoken through the silver-tongued

mouth of Sir Ken Robinson, won't inspire some to get off their butts and take action. But the majority of the book contains disappointingly obvious cliches backed up by real-life accounts of people who have followed this obvious advice, and, unsurprisingly, had positive results. *It worked for Sally-Jo... It can work for you, too!* For me, the book never digs deep enough into the gritty, challenging areas of helping people transition to a meaningful career. Rarely if ever, for example, does the text address the fact that we live in a techno-industrial civilization that is specifically designed to prevent most people from fulfilling their individual creative potential, and to enslave us in a monolithic, hierarchical corporate economy. "You always have choices," Sir Ken boasts confidently. Well, in today's world of neoliberal domination, choices are becoming narrower and narrower for the vast majority of the population. The book feels somewhat out of touch with the struggles of everyday people. It's very genial throughout, and the tone is avuncular, as if a rich old uncle is talking to his young rich nephew about whether or not he should be a horse jockey or continue in the family silver business. It's not easy to find my element when I can barely stay afloat in the economy, and it's a tragedy that Finding Your Element is such a luxury in contemporary society, where there's more than enough wealth for everyone to share, were it more equally distributed. I'm fighting desperately to find my element, but sometimes I feel it's a losing battle because of the intense pressure the system puts on my back to conform and become a wage slave so I can survive. Criticisms aside, if you're looking for a basic book to give you a few ideas about how to expand your world, you could do worse. Some bits of wisdom that genuinely resonated:

- Finding your element is about discovering what lies within you and, in doing so, transforming what lies before you.
- Being in your element gives you energy. Not being in it takes it from you.
- Many of the opportunities you have in your life are generated by the energy you create around you.
- The search for your element is a two-way journey: an inward journey to explore what lies within you and an outward journey to explore opportunities in the world around you.
- Do all you can to explore new avenues of possibilities in yourself and in the world around you.
- You may be better than you think at what you love. You may underestimate your talent because you set unreasonably high standards for yourself. Having high standards is good, provided you're not immobilized by self-criticism.
- Connecting with people who share your Element can have tremendous benefits for you and them.
- The most common regret: Not having the courage to live a life true to yourself.

Ken Robinson wrote this book as a follow-up to his other book *The Element: How Finding Your*

Passion Changes Everything by Ken Robinson, Lou Aronica (Reprint Edition) [Paperback(2009)]. He takes a 360 view of your life and walks you through it all. You do a series of exercises where you ask yourself deep questions. You find your element when you find the intersection between your passions and aptitudes. He has three major principles: Principle #1: Your Life is Unique. We're all different. We're all a mix of nature and nurture. Principle #2: You create your own life. Carl Jung: "I am not what has happened to me, I am what I choose to become." Principle #3: Life is Organic We all change. We don't have a linear path. He incorporates a lot of examples of successful people who had a completely nonlinear path to success. Vivek Wadhwa, famous for his work on immigrants working in the technology field in the United States, realized that "there is no link between what you study in college and how successful or otherwise you are later in your life." Ken Robinson talks about a lot of the existing literature and methods for finding out what your passion is and he's fairly critical of them. He talks about what's called the Forer Effect, also known as the Barnum Effect. You mold your personality to conform with what people tell you your personality incorporates. Robinson is in favor of using personality types to describe yourself, but he says not to let the personality definitions (MBTI for example) limit you. He also takes a lot of time to talk about happiness and positive psychology. He differentiates between your physical and spiritual well-being. When I was in the Andes and taking an anthropology class, I learned that the indigenous culture believes in two types of life force. One is the breath of life and the other I would call the force of spirit, just like Scott Russell Sanders' *The Force of Spirit*. He talks about Gretchen Rubin's *The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun*. His definition of happiness comes from Sonja Lyubomirsky: Happiness is the experience of joy, contentment, and well-being combined with a sense that life is good and worthwhile. I felt like that was a really comprehensive yet concise summary and I think that the happiness section was the best part of this book. Robinson goes on to talk about the 5 different kinds of well-being: career, social, financial, physical, and community. He asks you what sorts of hurdles or responsibilities you have and what sorts of risks that you can take. He asks you who you want to be, but in a much more specific way. He also talks about Bonnie Ware's *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying: A Life Transformed by the Dearly Departing*, because a lot of his action steps at the end of the book have to do with mitigating risks. I found it interesting that a lot of the suggestions that he had were in line with things that Barry Schwartz said at the end of *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less*. I've seen Robinson's TED talk and expected more of the book to be about the education system and creativity. While he does talk about them, he encourages the reader to engage in a lot of introspection through a variety of exercises; each

chapter ends with a few questions about you and your life. My favorite exercises had to do with vision boards. I used Pinterest to create them and I really loved having a concrete, pictorial representation of more abstract concepts, such as the activities that I do in daily life. Robinson also says that it's all an iterative process and we grow organically (Principle #3), so nobody should expect his or her desires at one point to be the same as at another point in his or her life. I know that it's valuable for me to read this as a recent college graduate and that I'll read it again, further down the line.

Where do I begin! Inspiring. Probative. Gnawing at your possibly "less than you had hoped for" life. Sir Ken shares the process to releasing the joyful life that you are meant to live. Without the "if only", "I'm too old" "I could never" "my parents would be disappointed" restraints, you will learn step by step how to make your tomorrow reveal the unique you. As a nearly seventy year old, I reflected with each question Sir Ken encouraged one to ponder, "Am I enduring my life?" "If so, let's begin to turn that around." This book will empower the reader to step out of the conformities that have become entrenched in our educational institutions of learning. I was an instructor of mathematics, music and physical education for forty plus years. As I was reading and rereading Sir Ken's thoughts, I imagined every educator implementing even one or two of them throughout her/his lessons. From the first page to the last, you will travel a journey of personal enlightenment. If you are one of the precious few who has been true to herself living the life of joyous fulfillment, you will celebrate your uniqueness with each page you turn. And, then, give this book to those you know and love who may be struggling with "where do I go from here?" This book is a gift every person must give her/him self, most especially if you are a professional educator.

Another superb text by Sir Robinson. What I like the most are the questions that are listed at the end of the chapters, and some of the exercises. I assigned this text to my students since the questions provide a good stimulus for an intelligent discussion on issues of ignorance, imagination, and creativity.

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