

## Spark #1.06 - What Must Be Done

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Blasts from the past are a wonderful thing. I recently received some email from an old friend from college I hadn't heard from in many years. She had married her college boyfriend and now has two kids. After almost twenty years of trials and triumphs, tribulations and victories, she is now working creatively again and is thinking of approaching her fine painting skills with something more than a hobbyist's interest.

I said GO FOR IT. And I enumerated a number of reasons why she should- sort of like a "Creative Life Directive 101 Class Synopsis". I thought the ideas brought out in my email to her were, I hope, inspiring enough that she will go forth and explore her creativity. They were also timely to me, in that they are some of the things I've been telling myself for the past several years. I've got a fairly large row to hoe- I'm writing this column for this awesome website, I'm making paintings, and I'm making electronic music. I'm also working a super intense day job, driving a hellish commute that sucks 2 hours of my day away, and, with my wife, raising a three year old girl. So, I'm busy, and I have to be ultra-efficient with my time. But I'm doing what I need to do- I'm living as creatively as I can under the circumstances.

And that's why I told her to do what she believes in. It's really the only path of honor and integrity. If it's something you believe in and know as a personal truth, then, I believe, it is incumbent on one to do the Right Thing and follow where that talent or skill leads. It follows the form of an interesting truth table. You can build it like so:

	Go for it +	don't go for it (na)
Material Reward +	++	NA
No Material Reward -	+ -	NA

By this table, if you go for it, and you succeed (in terms of external recognition and economic benefit), you get a positive/positive result. You are doing what you feel you must and you are getting rewarded for your efforts. This is the best possible outcome. If you go for it and fail horribly — everyone hates your work and you get nothing for your efforts, you get a NEUTRAL balance, with a positive result - you have the positive fact of having done what you do best for the right reasons. That one hasn't made serious bank on one's efforts is of specific negative value but combined with the integrity of doing

one's work, a neutral balance in terms of what you can say you have done with your life. You may have lived to be 103, and that was still 10 years before people figured out you were a genius. But in the intervening decades, you know you were doing good work, and that is a Positive Thing.

And even if people 3000 years from now STILL think your work sucks, it doesn't matter- you've done your bit to the best of your ability- you have played your part on the world stage and played it well. And if people 110 years from now don't even know your work because people 100 years from now cheerfully heaped it into a bonfire, you're still in positive territory, because your personal integrity and commitment are still intact, and that is eternal and imperishable- completely unassailable and always true. Your inner strength and personal vision is something that can never die on a post-humous bonfire. Heck — the sun could explode and even a conflagration as mighty as that couldn't possibly tarnish the good you've done for others through the beauty of your works, however great and profound or tentative and small.

However, if you DON'T go for it, the Very Best you can ever Ever EVER hope to do is a Not Applicable, because you can't get rewarded for something you didn't do — nothing ventured, nothing gained. So, even if you go for it, and even if the world thinks you SUCK, you've still done what you find to be important and valuable in your life, and in that sense, you've achieved some positive outcome. If you don't put forth the effort, you get nothing, and deserve nothing, and that's the most you can expect, and that ain't much.

This is not an invitation to whoring yourself out to who or whatever might come along- personal integrity is always paramount - but if you don't put forth some effort to make your works Work for you, you'll always wonder "what if?" The creative life is always a dodgy proposition at best, and many compromises and sacrifices are made. This means balancing your creative output against your personal responsibilities (Kids, Significant Other, Health, Job, etc.) in terms of time management, directed attention, and personal codes of ethics. But that is something that can be worked out with the right effort and intentions and appropriate compromises.

It can be done. It must be done, and you're the only one who can do it.

And the funny thing is- you don't have to be some creative artist or musician for this to be of value. I know a lot of people who are not "creative". But they are also in the same position, and in some ways have an even greater and more glorious calling. Artists, Musicians, and other Creative Types, spend a lot of energy and effort on their work, and in order to do that, sacrifices are made and compromises are reached. These kinds of decisions block them from other life experiences. We can't do everything. But these people- who are the majority of people in the world - who don't have the demands of a creative life, can have a calling of equal, if not often greater, profundity. These are the people who are the engine of change in this world. They may not have the musical skills to sing the anthems of their spirit, they may not have the artistic skills to summon the Weltanshauung into a living work of art, but -

these people are the healers, the scientists, the moms and dads, the factory slaves, the taxi drivers, the paper pushers, the gardeners, the voice on the phone, the store clerks, the insurance agents, the people who make the world happen. And in every small way we contribute to the life of society as much as the artists. These are real heroes. And if we all approach our lives with the same attention that the committed creative professionals approach their works, then they, and that means anyone, will live forever in their own good graces. Matter and Energy are never lost. They simply transfer to another form. No good deed goes unpunished.