

Audio Lesson #3 – Career Goals – Pursue Your Passions

*It's not a hill, it's a mountain
As you start out the climb...*

Hello. My name is Jeff Tyburski. Welcome to my third in a series of audio lessons. I teach financial literacy with a focus on helping you save money. Unfortunately, you can't even begin to save if you have too much college debt. This is the second of three sessions devoted to ensuring you end up with minimal student debt. Doing so will keep you in a *position* to save. **This session will focus on career choice and pursuing your passions.**

*Although it was a long time ago, I can say I **did NOT** consider my passions when I was in HS. My dad was an engineer. My brother was away at college studying to be an engineer. I did well on the math SAT. So, I blindly decided to be an engineer too. I generally struggled with the course load. And times were different back then, there weren't intensive summer internships offering a glimpse into career opportunities. Instead, in the summers, I worked on a road paving crew, sold refreshments at a racetrack, picked produce in a field, and also worked at a grocery store; none of those jobs taught me what it meant to be an engineer. Despite struggling in class, I did earn the degree, on time in 4 years. But when I entered the workforce, at least initially, I really did not enjoy being an engineer.*

If I actually had considered my passions in high school, I may have connected some dots...like my love of baseball, my analytical and math skills, and a budding trend in professional baseball to look at old statistics in a new way. I could have been on the ground floor of the revolution in baseball data analytics, well before the book and movie Money Ball. I could have reported to work at a major league ballpark. I could have interacted with major league players, for a living. It was and remains an ultra-competitive field but, hey, you never know!

Let's take a step back. **Where does “pursuing your passions” fit into my teaching framework?** You can't change the high price tag of some colleges and the self-perpetuating nature that results in ever higher college costs. You can, however, try to avoid taking on so much debt. **The *critical first* step is to acknowledge that the ultimate goal is not a degree. The ultimate goal is a job and career.** I encourage you to deeply consider what is best for you, what fits you, and what you are passionate about.

As the old saying goes...“Choose a job you love, and you’ll never have to work a day in your life”. While this statement sounds obvious, how many discussions with family, friends, school counselors, or college admissions offices **challenge you to think this way?** I hope that by thinking about your passions you will arrive at clear career goals that you will be *driven* to achieve; that you will *want* to achieve.

I encourage high school students to really engage and actively consider what they should study in college and all that goes into selecting and preparing for a career. I know you are juggling a lot already...homework, standardized test prep, after school activities, friends, and in general the *fragmented and short attention span world* we live in (yes, I’m talking about our phones). It is hard to step back and think of the big picture and a long-time horizon. But if you spend time actively considering what to pursue in college, **it can pay dividends. With the cost of college so high today, it really is *not* best to just go to college and *then* explore your options.**

Let’s do this in somewhat of a checklist format. What are the questions you should ask yourself? ...to zero in on your career objectives

- **First, let’s go deeper into pursuing your passions. My definition of passion is *no motivation required*.** If you are passionate, you don’t need to be prodded, pushed, and nagged to get something done; you will want to do it and it will get done. So, I’m definitely not passionate about cleaning kitty litters. Seriously, you really do want to deeply consider the reasons you will be waking up early, enduring a commute, and devoting possibly 10 or more hours a day for years of your life. To figure out what your passions are, ask yourself:
 - What are your skills?
 - What are your interests, talents, and gifts?
 - What are your values?
 - What **drives** you?
- ***Next, I suggest you consider... what is the balance between doing what you love, vs maximizing income?*** That is, **explicitly consider how important money is to you.** Is your goal to simply do something you love, or to maximize income, or somewhere in between? The reality is that you may be unhappy if you force yourself into a high-paying job just for the money. I can assure you,

if you want to be home for dinner and coach little league, actual priorities I had, then careers like investment banking or trying to be a partner in a law firm, may not support your desired work/life balance. Or you may use your passion in a lower-paying field to create or grow an opportunity into more income than you ever imagined.

- **Another important question to ask yourself...Are you potentially an entrepreneur?** As you deeply consider possible career options, I also suggest that you at least ask yourself: are you someone who wants to start your own business and work for yourself? **I am not suggesting it is one or the other, become an entrepreneur or go to college, in fact, it typically is not.** A desire to become an entrepreneur *though* **may impact your college choice or selection of classes.** Consider the pros and cons

Pros	A clear opportunity to pursue your passions, flexibility, being your own boss, and keeping the rewards of your work.
Cons	The fact that many, if not most, small businesses fail and there is no employer sharing the risks and certain costs such as healthcare coverage.

- **Moving on with our career objectives checklist...An important aspect of determining what you want to do is determining what is necessary to attain that goal. You should ask yourself, is college right for you? College is *not* for everyone!** Some people may prefer trade schools or working as an apprentice with an experienced tradesman. For example, your passion may be electrical work, plumbing, carpentry, car repair or refurbishment, cooking, decorating, etc. **Be honest with yourself** and make sure you consider all options where your passions lie. You might know the television personality Mike Rowe, mostly from the Discovery Channel show *Dirty Jobs*; he is very articulate on this topic. You might want to check out his social media presence and web sites
- **A final consideration, and another question in the category of “determining what is necessary to attain your goals”, is to ask...Do you know, *upfront*, the amount of schooling you need in order to get the job you want?** Is an associate degree sufficient? Do you need a bachelor’s degree, a master’s

degree, or PhD? Perhaps a high school diploma is enough. Considering this level of detail exposes some options with financial implications:

- Knowing upfront that you will very likely need a master's degree could impact your undergraduate college selection decision. Future employers may look more at where you earned your master's degree and not your undergraduate degree. Plus, acceptance into the master's program is likely more to do with grades at the undergraduate level and the entrance exam scores than where you attended undergraduate school. **So, if you are fairly certain that you will need a master's degree, why take on crippling amounts of undergraduate debt?**
- Also, discovering that your career goals require a 2-year degree and not a 4-year program presents an obvious opportunity to save money.
- Some students transfer from one school to another prior to graduation. Many transfers are because the student determined they did not like their first choice or because they changed career goals. However, some have a plan all along to **start out at a less expensive community college** (e.g. for the first two years) and **then transfer to another college, which appears on their diploma. This strategy produces significant savings. This approach also helps high school students who have marginal grades.** Successfully completing two years at a community college essentially gives such a student a clean slate, becoming a proven college student with good grades to get accepted and to finish at a four-year college.

To wrap up... The objective here is to attain your career goals with minimal debt. My process is a 3-step plan. We just completed step 1 – pursuing your passions. I provided a specific checklist to help you determine your career goals. Steps 2 and 3 are in the next audio session.