# Should college graduates do what they love?

## Source: *TheWeek.com*, 5/28/13, Carmel Lobello

You've probably heard the old saying, "Choose a job you love, and you'll never work a day in your life." In his inspirational [commencement speech](http://theweek.com/article/index/244597/2013-commencement-speeches-the-funniest-and-most-inspiring-moments) at Stanford University in 2005, [Steve Jobs exhorted young graduates to take that advice to heart](http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html):

Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle. [[Stanford](http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html)]

Sounds great, right? But this year, as [1.8 million](http://www.naceweb.org/Press/Frequently_Asked_Questions.aspx?referal=pressroom) young Americans enter a grim job market, strapped with tens of thousands of dollars in [student loans](http://theweek.com/article/index/243004/making-money-getting-a-grasp-on-student-loans-and-more), many say new grads might be wiser not to follow their hearts.

"'Do what you love' is an important message, but it's unwise to build a career on the notion that we should all be paid for our passions," argues Carl McCoy at [*The Wall Street Journal*](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324081704578237651740623228.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEADTop).

McCoy says that instead of asking themselves what they love, graduates should identify what they're working toward. "The answer lies in working with a deeper sense of purpose or vocation," he writes, adding, "Does the doctor love going into the hospital to see a patient in the middle of the night? Does the firefighter love entering a burning building? Does the teacher love trying to control a classroom full of disrespectful children? Not likely. But the work is performed with a sense of purpose that 'love' doesn't capture."

Beyond limiting their perspective, telling college grads to do what they love "sets young people up to fail," say sociologists Lisa Wade and Gwen Sharp at[*The Huffington Post*](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-wade/advice-for-college-grads-_b_3329053.html). "[I]t's ok to set your sights just a tad below occupational ecstasy. Just find a job that you like. Use that job to help you have a full life with lots of good things and pleasure and helping others and stuff."

Doing what you love for work can actually ruin the fun, says Alison Green in [*U.S. News*](http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2013/04/17/why-you-shouldnt-follow-your-passion). "You might love to bake, and your friends might regularly swoon over your cakes and tell you to open a bakeshop. But getting up at the crack of dawn every day, baking 100 cakes daily, and dealing with difficult customers and the stress and finances of running your own business might have nothing to do with what you love about baking — and might sap the joy right out of it." She goes on:

"Do what you love" is privileged advice that ignores the fact that the majority of the world's population works to get food and housing, not for emotional or spiritual fulfillment. And even among the most socioeconomically privileged piece of the population — the segment that this advice is usually targeted to — it causes an awful lot of angst and even shame over not loving your career when people are telling you that you should. [[*U.S. News*](http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2013/04/17/why-you-shouldnt-follow-your-passion)]

Instead, Green's advice is to find a job where you can "do something that you're good at, that brings you a reasonable amount of satisfaction, and that earns you a living."

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