

## WE SPEND SO MUCH TIME EXPERIMENTING WITH FOODS, WITH WAYS TO ORGANIZE OUR HOUSES, AND SO LITTLE TIME EXPERIMENTING WITH ALL THE WAYS WE CAN ACT AS A PERSON.

opportunity to promote conservation and environmentalism—using her celebrity and her amazing swimming skills to introduce viewers to the wonders of the sea.

Streeter was not a natural in front of the camera. The first day of filming her first ocean documentary, she was painfully self-conscious. “I was horrible,” she says. “I sucked.” When it was over, she strapped on her fins and took off for a reef for a good cry. But as she’s become better at hosting, she’s enjoyed it more and more. “It’s just so difficult to be relaxed and calm and who you are on camera,” she says. “That’s the endless—and the most satisfying—challenge.”

It’s tempting to brand Streeter as a fundamental go-getter, born with fire in her belly. But finding a pursuit that pushes your buttons can infuse anyone with sudden zeal for life. The secret about consuming passions, though, is that while they appear effortless, they require discipline and ability. If they were easy, they wouldn’t be so rewarding. Such passions—anything from becoming an opera aficionado to a black belt in karate—tend to be “very open-ended in the amount of skill or knowledge required,” says psychologist Paul Silvia of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The Holy Grail comes in moments of “flow,” when you are so absorbed in what you’re doing that you lose yourself. This, in turn, generates feelings of mastery, well-being, and enduring satisfaction.

Many people have at least one such passion. Streeter already has two. But for those who are seeking this sense of fulfillment, there are a few tricks, suggests Todd Kashdan, a psychologist at George Mason University. The first step is to commit to learning a bit about a subject. Passions don’t arrive like bolts out of the blue. They build slowly, through the process of gradual mastery. “Passion and interest, the research is clear, come out of practice and expertise,” says Peterson.

As a greenhorn, you also have to put up with feeling like an idiot—to tolerate and laugh at your own ignorance. “You must

be willing to accept the discomfort and negative feelings that come your way,” says Kashdan.

In fact, those butterflies in your stomach will probably be the first sign that you’ve hit upon a potential pursuit, says Streeter. “The thing that scares you the most tends to be the most fulfilling,” she

says. “It doesn’t have to be something great. It has to be something that you aren’t sure you can do.”

### JOY: The Art of Loving Life

MAURO ZAPPATERRA WAS in the fast lane of the fast track, among the elite of young physician-scientists. After grueling train-



**MIRACLE GROWTH:** Researcher Mauro Zappaterra went from joyless lab rat to happy healer.



ing at Harvard Medical School, in January of 2004 he plunged into the research he'd been longing to do, the project that would earn him his Ph.D.

The problem: He was miserable. "I've always been really excited about life," he says. "And then I got to the lab, and it wasn't working." His research didn't mesh with his curiosity about healing, which was what had brought him into medicine. And he was preoccupied with the future. His girlfriend urged him to take some time off, but "vacation" and "break" are foreign concepts to M.D./Ph.D. students. Finally, he did—and it was a transforming experience. During eight months in Santa Fe, Zappaterra soaked up everything he could about healing techniques not taught at Harvard: polarity therapy, meridians, trauma resolution. "I was interested in how compassion, healing, and medicine could be intertwined," he says.

When he got back from Santa Fe, Zappaterra switched labs to study how cerebrospinal fluid nourishes and protects the developing nervous system. This cutting-edge research project also connects to his ongoing training in craniosacral therapy, an alternative medical practice in which the cranial bones, spine, and connective tissue are subtly contacted to bring harmony to the nervous system and thereby treat pain, stress, and injuries.

He also vowed to live more fully in the present moment, and to look for the joy in everything, including failure, disappointment, and sickness. He used meditation, focusing methods, and techniques learned from craniosacral therapy to reach his goals. That's when Zappaterra stumbled upon one of the counterintuitive realities of personality change: The kind of joy he found was often quiet and reflective rather than loud and exu-

"The positive stuff ain't like that. You have to open the door, go hunt for it, and find it."

To heighten joy in life, Bryant suggests that when something good happens, you make time to pay attention to it. Share the experience: The happiest people celebrate triumphs with others. Take a "mental photograph" in which you describe the positive event and its circumstances to yourself in great detail.

Joy can also be held back by rigidity. Kashdan recommends scrutinizing the prohibitions and barriers that structure your life. "The way to living a more zestful life is to be guided and flexible rather than governed," says Kashdan. Zappaterra's turnaround came when he realized that he needed to take time off, even though it violated the creed of M.D./Ph.D. students.

Try paying more attention to your mind-set, Kashdan adds. Are you concentrating on avoiding failure or looking forward to an opportunity to do something well? "The protection mode—focusing on being safe—might get in the way of your reaching your goals." For example, are you hoping to get through a business lunch without embarrassing yourself, or are you thinking about how riveting the conversation might be? That slight difference in mentality "changes how you think, how you feel, what parts of the brain light up," says Kashdan. It subtly inflects your interactions with the world, and is one simple way to have more fun with what you already do.

As with other changes, learning to be more joyous does not come quickly. When Zappaterra got back from Santa Fe, he planted a dozen seeds from a split-leaf philodendron, a slow-growing houseplant that eventually produces huge, glossy leaves. Zappaterra tended the seedlings as a daily reminder of how long it takes to make a real change in a human life. Nearly three years later, he's learned to get better at seeing the good in things. And he's enjoying his big, beautiful plants.

## BAD THINGS WILL COME FIND YOU... FOR THE POSITIVE STUFF, YOU HAVE TO OPEN THE DOOR, GO HUNT FOR IT, AND FIND IT.

berant. The way Zappaterra, now 32, describes it today, it's as if he feels all of his feelings more deeply, and takes pleasure even from sadness. "I can be joyous, even when I'm not in a joyful mood," he says. In the lab, failure is a constant. For every experiment that goes well, 99 don't work at all. But Zappaterra now believes that these frustrations and setbacks help him learn—about both his research and himself.

Essentially, what he trained himself to do is what Loyola University psychologist Fred Bryant calls "savoring": the art of managing positive feelings. Whereas coping well means dealing successfully with problems and setbacks, savoring—glorying in what goes right—is an equally crucial emotional competence. "If all you're doing is trying to get by, trying to avoid the bad, you're missing half of life," says Bryant, author of *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*. Although people tend to think that taking pleasure in good things comes naturally, it's really a skill. "Bad things will come and find you, knock down your door, and make you deal with them," he adds.

**COURAGE:** Doing the Right Thing  
USUALLY, WE THINK of courage as physical bravery—the backbone it takes to face enemy fire or stand up to a dictator. But ordinary

life demands its own style of bravery, more humble and harder to spot. Day-to-day courage might involve confronting a bullying boss. It could mean stepping up to take responsibility for a mistake. For industrial engineer Kenneth Pedeleose, it meant speaking out against something he thought was wrong.

Pedeleose, an analyst at the Defense Contract Management Agency, which monitors federal military contracts, was stationed at a plant in Marietta, Georgia, where military cargo planes were being built. His job was to oversee the contracts, and he didn't like what he saw: high prices for spare parts (\$714 for rivets and \$5,217 for brackets) on one project and serious safety violations on another. In 2002, he and other engineers went "public," sending a report to the Congress members making decisions about military operations.

The Department of Defense launched a major investigation of the project, and an inspector general's report later substantiated many of Pedeleose's allegations. The agency found it would be too dangerous to use these planes for their main pur-