

1

**ACTIVATE
YOUR
INNER
TODDLER**

If you have a toddler or know one or were one once, you know that they are NOT shy about expressing their feelings. They can go from squeals of delight to raging temper tantrum in 60 seconds flat...and vice versa.

One more time on the slide? Squeals of delight! Time to leave the sandbox? Code red meltdown.

A new Thomas the Train toy? Pure joy! Ask him to share it with his little sister, and you've got a miniature King Kong on your hands.

Toddlers aren't very concerned with social norms. They wear their feelings on the outside. They're still relatively new to the planet, so they haven't picked up all of the rules yet.

Is that really such a bad thing?

As adults we play by the rules and do what's expected of us. We're polite, proper, and professional. We don't do a happy dance in the middle of a crowded street; it's not cool. We don't cry and kick and scream in a vocal range audible only to dogs; it's not acceptable.

Well, aren't you a little sick of that?

Aren't there times where you want to kick and scream and flop around on the floor because you have to do something you hate? And aren't there times where you want to squeal with delight and do a goofy little jig, but you don't because you're afraid people will think you've flipped your lid?

When it comes to your career (and, hell, when it comes to life), **I think we'd be better off if we activated our inner toddler a little more often.**

No, I'm not suggesting that you call your boss a poo poo head (but if you must, please line up another job first), or flop around like a fish on the floor of a crowded grocery store when you don't get that promotion. I'm suggesting that you get in touch with your inner toddler.

Notice what makes you want to throw a raging fit. Notice what makes you want to squeal with delight. These are MAJOR clues on the path to feel-good work.

A friend of mine is a business consultant with a big firm. They're very corporate and have lots of rules. Even rules about her shoes. She's allowed to wear pointed heels, but not square-toed ones. When I hear this, I think *OMG, kill me now*. I would never survive there. That is just too many rules for me, not to mention ridiculous.

There is some sort of implicit rule that professional business women should wear high heels. I hate high heels. They're sooo pretty, but they hurt my feet. I put heels on my hissy fit list a long time ago. Other things on my hissy fit list include pointless meetings, mindless small talk, annoying jargon, networking events, and boring research journals. All of these things make me want to throw myself on the ground and carry on like a toddler who's just been told it's time to leave the splash pad.

WHAT'S ON YOUR HISSY FIT LIST?

Include things from your work life that you hate, but feel free to add other things too. Non work-related things on my hissy fit list include wine (I've tried to like it for years, but I think it's gross and I'm sick of trying to like it just because everyone else does) and the gym (I can happily walk in nature for three hours, but put me on a treadmill for 20 minutes and I'm borderline suicidal).

What do you hate? What societal norms and implicit rules do you long to stop following? In toddler terms, what makes you want to flop around like a fish in a crowded grocery store?

My hissy fit list:

Good. Now, let's activate the other part of the inner toddler spectrum.

SQUEALS OF DELIGHT AND PEALS OF LAUGHTER

What things do you just LOVE? Make a list. Like the hissy fit list, this can include a combination of work things and non-work things. In fact, if you're feeling really stuck on your career path it's actually better to include more non-work things. For example, some things on my "squeals of delight" list include bright nail polish, rivers and mountains, pretty markers, alone time, pom pom socks, and Kate Spade stationery. Not very work-ish, right? It doesn't matter. Just make your list and I'll help you take it from there.

What lights you up? What feels like pure delight? In toddler terms, what makes you feel like a kid with a bag of Skittles and a Kool-Aid stained grin?

My squeals of delight list:

Awesome! Don't you feel happier already just looking at that list?

Now, here comes the magic part. We're going to treat these crazy little bits of information as career path clues. Look at both of your lists. What themes emerge? Don't expect a specific job title to pop out at you. We're not there yet. Just look at your lists and see if any themes emerge.

My hissy fit list tells me that I'm reeeeeally not into shallow connections or interactions. It also tells me that I'm not into traditional corporate stuff, and that doing things just because it's conventional makes me feel like crap.

Try it with your own hissy fit list. What does it tell you?

My hissy fit list tells me...

Now, let's do the same thing for our squeals of delight lists. My list suggests that I like things that are fun and a little bit kooky. I'm also a visual person. Art and design matter to me. Also, space and nature make me feel good.

What does your squeals of delight list tell you?

My squeals of delight list tells me...

YOUR INNER TODDLER WORDS

Looking at both lists combined, is there anything that stands out to you as a theme? For my inner toddler lists, the following words come to mind: unconventional, deep connection, fun, visual, and nature. Hey, what do you know? Maybe my ideal career should involve those kind of things! See where I'm going with this?

Now, you try.

My inner toddler words...

You've just identified some of the main ingredients for your ideal career. And you're only on section one! Let's keep this momentum going...