

Don't Settle: A Pick-Your-Path Guide to Intentional Work

George Appling

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Suggesting means of balancing between delight, satisfaction, and excitement in one's working life, Don't Settle is an encouraging professional discernment guide.

George Appling's shrewd business guide *Don't Settle* recommends pursuing one's passion in order to be fulfilled at work.

Based on the Japanese concept of ikigai, which presupposes that a person's purpose is found at the intersection of what they love, what they excel at, what the world needs, and what the marketplace will pay them for, this encouraging book shares advice for finding one's calling. Work, it asserts, should be intentional, rewarding, and uplifting, with career paths chosen based not just on practicality but on passion. It follows a discussion of the ideal life with the acknowledgement of obstacles to reaching one's ideals; then, it introduces a matrix for finding one's purpose before naming different paths toward fulfillment, including those based on passion, independence, finances, and experimentation.

With awareness that going to the mountains to pick berries almost always sounds far more appealing than practical pursuits like accounting, the book suggests means of striking a balance between delight, satisfaction, and excitement, among other aims. It is an exercise-heavy book that sketches rational means of avoiding poverty, uselessness, and emptiness. There are prodding questions about what a person's ideal workday or vacation looks like; these complement bullet-point lists on topics like prioritizing ("To approach what's ideal from another angle," the book encourages, "ask yourself what your life would have to include for you to consider it a success." This is followed by a list of examples, ready for ranking, that includes qualities like beauty, security, and community). Takeaway points appear at the end of the chapters, as do additional reading lists.

However, the book's interactive approach overwhelms its space at times. Designed to be worked through with an accountability partner, it includes prompts such as to name three potential mentors and develop a mentoring plan; some such directions overcomplicate its subject. Still, the prose is conversational and clear. Further, the book is amiable in describing the act of settling itself, gesturing to get-rich-quick hustlers and the career trajectories of high-paying consultants as warnings. Most people will spend tens of thousands of hours working, it notes; many could end up leading lives of quiet desperation. However, the book's epilogue undercuts this somewhat: its tone is that of a mission statement, rather than a proper coda.

A sage professional discernment guide, *Don't Settle* is about discovering one's reason for being and attaining fulfillment via professional balance.

JOSEPH S. PETE (August 31, 2024)

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