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**Interesting read**, September 19, 2014

**This review is from:** [**The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything (Paperback)**](http://www.amazon.com/The-Element-Finding-Passion-Everything/dp/0143116738/ref%3Dcm_aya_orig_subj)

Because of my personal and professional experience with students trying to find their purpose and passion, I chose to read Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica’s (2009) The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything. In The Element, Robinson and Aronica posit that as human beings we each have one or more callings about which we can have so much passion that we are consumed by it. They identify this consuming passion as the Element. Robinson and Aronica articulate rich and colorful descriptions of many successful people who found their Element, how they came to find it, and the struggles they surmounted to ultimately find their Element. Robinson and Aronica described the feeling one may have when he or she finds it as an epiphany.

The general points that Robinson and Aronica made in The Element (2009) were that there are many types of intelligence, how creativity is not seen as intelligence, how most schools today stifle students’ creativity, and how finding one’s Element can be very powerful. Some readers of The Element may have seen some of Robinson’s famous Ted Talks. He has one in particular that I have seen several times about how traditional education stifles a student’s creativity and imagination (Robinson, 2006). Robinson and Aronica discussed this topic in what I consider to be their “call to action” chapter which is chapter eleven, “Making the Grade.”

I believe that ultimately Robinson and Aronica wrote The Element (2009) as a call to action book to bring to light how creativity is being stifled by traditional educational methods and what can be done to address this. I believe their idea of infusing creativity into the classroom strongly aligns with the concept of Education 3.0. Education 3.0 is an innovative way of thinking about teaching strategies that encourage collaboration, motivation, creativity, and critical thinking to help students stay engaged and get more out of their educational pursuits.

While reading The Element, one chapter which was particularly salient to me was chapter eight, “Somebody Help Me.” This chapter focused on the power of receiving guidance and support from the right person at the right time which ultimately helps us to find our Element. This chapter was powerful to me because I have enjoyed a strong and supportive relationship with my mentor. While I did not formally seek his guidance, he was my previous boss and remains one of my greatest cheerleaders and motivators. He pushes me to do my best work, even when he knows I am struggling. Robinson also focused on how the act of mentoring others can be a very powerful experience as well.

Robinson and Aronica devoted chapter nine, “Is it Too Late,” to the older readers of his book. At the age of forty-three, I consider myself to fit in this category. The chapter began as somewhat of an “old folks pep talk,” but as the chapter drug on, I was beginning to start thinking to myself, “Oh no, maybe it is too late!!” Once I pulled myself back together, I finally finished that chapter and was relieved. I knew it wasn’t too late for me, but this definitely could have been a shorter chapter in my opinion.

In my opinion, Robinson and Aronica used too many examples of extremely successful people whose names most readers would easily recognize. Although their stories were interesting and inspiring, they left me feeling a bit less successful, even though I feel I am on firmly on my path to discovering my Element. I believe they should have used more examples of ordinary people who found their Element and may not have been wealthy, but have been very happy, productive, and consumed by experiencing their Element.

The biggest critique I have for Robinson’s idea of the Element is that everyone has this “aha moment” when they discover where their true passion lies, and that there is this great epiphany. I could definitely be wrong, but I think too many people wait for that moment and the right feeling to jump in and do something new, whether it be to start a new career, or take up a new hobby. If I would have waited for my “aha moment,” I honestly do not know where I would be today.

So, my point is this; I believe it is wrong to encourage anyone to wait for the grand “aha moment” to know that our life’s purpose has become known to us. Otherwise, it may be too late before we figure it out. Sometimes our purpose and Element are revealed gradually from experiences that either enforce our passion for something or cement our dislike for something. Through experiences, exploration, and remaining open to possibilities beyond our current thoughts we can each find our purpose or Element.

I think Robinson and Aronica (2009) presented some strong and insightful ideas about how when someone finds their purpose and passion in their Element that everything changes for them. I think this is a powerful statement. However, I would use a more subtle version of their description. In my work, I encourage students to find clusters of majors that spark their interest, or to explore various fields through job shadows which can be instrumental in ruling out areas as well as to confirm choices as well. I definitely do not prescribe to the “aha moment” or experiencing an epiphany when our Element arrives in our life. I think that is dangerous and not realistic, but I think many students still believe that a bright light will appear bringing with it a golden envelope which will reveal their dream job. Robinson and Aronica’s idea of the Element appearing is a romanticized tale, and one I honestly hope fades quickly away.

What I would use from this book in my work is the idea of adding creativity into the classroom. Although my students’ creativity may have been stifled during their years in the K-12 pipeline, once they reach my classroom in college I hope to offer an inspirational, motivational, and creative environment in which they can connect with college, each other, and find a sense of belonging with the institution. Robinson and Aronica’s (2009) message of the great need for creativity in the class room is one I will use and enjoy sharing with my students in the future.