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Passion for science

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Passion for science

It is often said that the creativity, passion, and urge for expression and exploration are essential human qualities. These human qualities are implemented in sciences and arts, although with different approaches: the former highlight the use of the analytical human mind and the latter the creative mind.

I am not an artist of any kind, but I love science. I believe that many scientists like artists share my feeling of being passionate about their work. Career in science may not be a good choice if one wants to make money or have a safe source of livelihood – the latter one being a reasonable wish by the way – but it is a good choice if one feels the passion for science. Something is driving us scientists forward despite all the obstacles and competition on the way. Science is indeed competitive. The old saying "publish or perish" is very real regarding the scientific careers at universities. In my understanding, it is getting real also in other research organizations. Unfortunately, often quantity instead of quality matters in this competition.

Science by nature is never ready, which feeds the passion. When proper scientific protocols and peer-reviewed publication processes are used, science corrects itself. First, scientific findings are tested by other scientists. Even when some findings are verified in several studies, there typically comes a day, when the new evidence shows that the old findings were inadequate and, in some cases, even wrong. This is how science works. Scientific knowledge is accumulating, and we always have at hand the best possible knowledge, but never the absolute truth. This is the beauty of science, at least in my eyes. There are always new pieces of scientific knowledge waiting to be found. I often have the feeling that a scientific experiment typically brings not only answers but also new questions. This drives science further.

However, the passion for science can also be exhausting. We can be too demanding for ourselves and for our colleagues. The never-ending possibilities to read more, measure more, analyse more, publish more, and apply more funding can make one feel that what they are doing is never enough. What is enough? I do not know any generalizable answer for the question, but I do know that it is important to realize that enough is enough. I know many scientists, especially young scientists, that are exhausted and feel that there are not enough hours in a day. I also often feel this way, but I have also learnt that working less can be more as this way we have more time to think and process our thoughts.

We should learn to appreciate the strengths we have as scientists over the weaknesses we recognize in ourselves and in our colleagues. By working together, we accomplish more. We need each other to solve complicated questions, such as the grand challenges the Earth is facing today. The key is the collaboration that is based on trust between scientists of different disciplines, different scientific backgrounds, and different skills. Step by step, following our passion in science, keeping the scientific standards high, and making our share to create a good working atmosphere we can change the world.

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