

DEFINING YOUR

PURPOSE

A meaningful life is more than just the pursuit of happiness. Discovering your passions and understanding your purpose can help you have a deeper connection to something greater beyond yourself.

What does it look like to lead a meaningful life?

Everyone can cultivate meaning in their daily lives. But how we do it may look different for each of us.

Here are some common value-drivers people often gain from pursuing their passions and purpose:

- Contributions to others:** social improvements and helping people in need
- Learning:** attainment of valuable skills and new experiences
- Accomplishment:** intrinsic satisfaction in completion and achievement
- Belonging to a community:** a sense of connection
- Relevance:** feeling like your contributions have made an impact
- Status:** respect, recognition, and an increased sense of worth
- Control:** freedom to do your own work and master a task
- Power:** the ability to direct or influence others in a leadership capacity

Source: Morten Hansen and Dacher Keltner, University of California, Berkeley, "Finding Meaning at Work, Even When Your Job is Dull," *Harvard Business Review*

FINDING MEANING

Purpose can give us energy, optimism, and motivation to live our life to the fullest. It is a guiding light that can help us focus on the things that matter most, even in the face of adversity.

Reflect on the following areas to identify the potential gaps between what you value and where you spend your time.

AT HOME

AT WORK

AT HOME

- Are you maintaining and nurturing your relationships with your spouse, partner or significant other?
- What family heritage or cultural tradition do you value?
- Are you able to connect, in person, with others in your community to build and nurture friendships?
- Are you surrounded by people that inspire, empower, and encourage you to be a better person?
- Do you spend quality time with your children, friends or family, and actively engage in their lives?

AT WORK

- How much of your time is spent doing things that make you feel energized and engaged?
- Do you understand how your work can impact clients, their employees or customers, and potentially our society?
- Are you seeking opportunities where your strengths are most needed.
- Are you making effort to connect with your colleagues on a personal level to create a sense of belonging.

FROM WITHIN

- Have you developed a sense of your true self and the values you want to live by?
- Do you feel whole and centered?
- What does your best self look like?
- What do you love to do that gets you excited and energized?
- Are you able to help maintain your well-being with physical activity, proper nutrition, and adequate rest?

Knowing your "why" can make what you do that much more meaningful.

FRAMING YOUR PURPOSE

Understanding your "why" can be difficult to identify when you are not fully present and/or engaged in your life. Take a mindful moment and reflect on some of these practical tips to help connect to your purpose.

Map to your values and beliefs: Know what you stand for. Do what you believe in.

Self-awareness through reflection: Gain deeper insight through journaling to contemplate and discover your "best self".

Play to your strengths: Do more of the things that you are good at that can energize you.

Pursue your passion: Don't forget to engage in hobbies and activities that give you pleasure.

Life is an adventure: Continue to reflect and re-frame your purpose as your situation changes. Be agile, adapt, and reiterate.

Take time to recharge: Consider a short break or a longer vacation to rest and recover so you can be refreshed for what's next.

Share your coins: Don't underestimate the impact you have on others. Imagine your life experiences as valuable coins. Share them but also get inspired as a "coin" collector.

Road blocks and barriers: Understand what's holding you back? Re-frame those faulty stories and excuses you tell yourself with a new positive narrative.

Make self-care a priority: Remember to take care of yourself first before you take care of others.

How engaged are you with your:

- Work ☆☆☆☆☆
- Family/Friends ☆☆☆☆☆
- Health ☆☆☆☆☆
- Hobbies/Interest ☆☆☆☆☆
- Community ☆☆☆☆☆

STATING YOUR PURPOSE

Purpose gives us direction. Without it, we may feel lost or unfulfilled. Use this exercise to help you identify what's important in your life so that you can make daily choices that align to your values.

1 Expand your horizon

On a piece of paper, make a list of all the things that are important to you. Dream big. Be spontaneous. You should have at least 25 - 30 items on your list and include:

- + Your core beliefs and values
- + Other characteristics and traits that define you
- + Activities that you love and come naturally to you
- + Your special gifts, talents, and passions
- + People that are important to you

2 Narrow your focus

Edit your list down to just five non-negotiables. These are now your non-negotiables. If it's too difficult, start by paring the list down to 20, then to 10 and eventually to five. This process helps to filter out the superfluous and usually ends up leading to something greater than yourself.

3 Tell your story

Weave these words into a short narrative, a passionate tweet about why your life matters. This is your "North Star". Keep it close to you. Refer to it often. It will guide you in day-to-day actions and decisions along the way. And if comfortable, share your story to inspire others.

If life is a journey, then purpose is a compass that helps us stay the course. And if you veer off the path, don't be discouraged. Replot your course and refocus on what matters most to you.

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