

5.9 Find Your Purpose

Actively seek your life's true north.

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In the midst of our everyday lives and responsibilities, it's all too easy to get mired in busy work and lose sight of what's important to us. After living like a hamster on a wheel for a while, we begin to feel empty or directionless. We may be unsure what to do with our lives or struggle to feel a sense of meaning.

In such times, actively working to define your purpose can help. This is an ongoing process. Many people believe that, when they seek greater meaning in life, they must find their one true purpose, which encompasses everything they are and will ever want to be and do. Or, they decide that this problem is so intractable that they should give up and only aim for short-term goals. The truth lies in the middle ground. It's possible to find a purpose, live by it, and then adapt it as your life progresses.

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- With a clear purpose as your compass, daily decisions become easier.
- Can instill a powerful sense of meaning.
- Can nourish your motivation, especially in difficult times.

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- Articulating a direction for your entire life can feel daunting.
- It's often hard to know the first step in discovering and refining your purpose.

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There are a lot of ways to discover a sense of purpose. For example, you can participate in workshops designed to help attendees connect with their purpose, work with a coach who specializes in this field, or explore writing exercises. One good exercise is to connect with and list your values, then attempt to articulate the world you're seeking to create and how. Be specific. Try to express this in a sentence using this format:

I create a world of ___ by being ___.

Examples of purposes can be:

- I create a world of radical acceptance by accepting myself, others, and what I can't change.
- I create a world of beauty and creativity by removing boundaries to free expression.

Alternatively, you can adapt this format to articulate more specific goals, for example:

- I reduce class inequality in South Africa by building an inclusive business.
- I make sure my family stays loving and connected by creating opportunities to spend quality time together.

The scope and content is really up to you. However, using the present tense can feel more actionable and concrete.

Another compass you can use to orient yourself toward your purpose is the Zuzunaga Venn Diagram of Purpose, often misrepresented as the Japanese concept of Ikigai, a reason for living. According to Zuzunaga, the center of this diagram is the place where various phenomena overlap:

- What the world needs
- What you are good at doing
- What you can get paid to do
- What you love doing

{INSERT Image #1: Zuzunaga Venn Diagram of Purpose}
