

A GUIDE TO PURPOSE

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# A Purpose(*FULL*) Life.

*A Guide to Discovering and Cultivating Purpose*

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PurposeFULL Life Coaching

*“A driving force that infuses life with meaning, shapes decisions, and inspires you to IMPACT the world.”*

— Diane Mitchell-Miller



## A Purpose(FULL) Life.

Who do you know that actually lives a full life? If you're like me, that number is small — just a handful.

*The glory of God is man fully alive.*

— St. Irenaeus

That's where the FULL in PurposeFULL comes from. Not a life crammed full of accomplishments, but a life fully alive — fully inhabited, fully awake to what it's for.

The opposite of depression isn't happiness. It's purpose.

Roughly a third of our waking hours are spent at work — yet most of us spend almost no time asking whether that work actually energizes us. We search for our daily bread and rarely stop to search for daily meaning, as if the two were unrelated. They aren't. Believing we matter — that what we do makes a real difference to someone — isn't a soft add-on to a good life. It may be one of the things that makes life good at all.

*Purpose is the ultimate source of momentum — it's about feeling that you're adding value. Purpose is the most powerful way we can prevent languishing, unlock our potential, and maintain peak performance.*

— Adam Grant, Wharton

*There's a difference between building a purpose-full life and quietly living out a Monday-through-Friday kind of dying — going through the motions of a life that looks fine from the outside while something inside slowly stops paying attention. This guide is for closing that gap.*

Three bricklayers were working the same construction site when a passerby asked each of them what they were doing. The first said, "I'm laying bricks." The second said, "I'm building a wall." The third smiled and said, "I'm building a cathedral — a place where people can come to worship."

Same bricks. Same site. Same hours. The first bricklayer had a J.O.B. The second had a career. The third had created meaning out of the very same task — he wasn't just laying bricks, he was building a purpose. That's the difference purpose makes. It doesn't change the work. It changes what the work is for.

## Purpose Leaves Clues.

We're often told we need to find our purpose — as if somewhere out there is one perfect answer to why we're here, and our job is to figure it out. That search can become its own kind of crisis. What if I choose the wrong career? What if everyone else already knows why they're here and I missed the memo?

If you're picturing something like Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King — a grand, world-altering mission — take a breath. That's not what's being asked of you. Most of us will never have a purpose that makes headlines, and that was never the bar.

It can help to think of this in two sizes. Every so often, someone's purpose does turn into a Big-P Purpose — a calling large enough to end up in a history book. But that's rare, and chasing it is usually where the pressure comes from. Little-p purpose is the one available to you today: the phone call you make because someone needed to hear from you, the way you lead a meeting, the patience you offer a tired child. It's quieter, it's available every single day, and it's most of what a meaningful life is actually made of.

What matters is understanding your own purpose, whether it's large or small, and living inside it on purpose instead of by accident.

But purpose isn't something you find. It's something that's been revealing itself throughout your life — you just haven't always known what to look for.

*What has my life been trying to show me?*

— the question underneath every clue

Purpose may already be present in how you love the people closest to you, what you can't stop talking about, the problems that break your heart, the moments you become so absorbed in something meaningful that you forget to check your phone. These things can feel ordinary while you're living them. Looking back, they often tell you more than you realized.

*Purpose leaves clues.*

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### 03 A FRAMEWORK FOR NOTICING

## Your VITAL Signs.

One way to start noticing those clues is a framework I call VITAL. Vital comes from the Latin *vita* — life. That's what we're looking for: not a perfectly crafted answer, but signals about where your life already has energy, meaning, direction, and contribution.

You may have seen this idea before, sometimes called *Ikigai* — the idea that purpose sits where passion, skill, need, and income overlap. VITAL asks a similar question, but points it inward first: not what does the world need from you, but what has your own life already been trying to show you.



## V — Values

Your inner compass. The principles you'd stand behind even when it costs you something.

*What matters enough to me that I wouldn't compromise it for a title, a paycheck, or approval?*

## I — Interests

What genuinely pulls your attention, not because someone assigned it.

*What would I explore, read, or think about even if no one ever paid me a dime for it?*

## T — Talents

What comes so naturally to you that you underestimate it. Some of the clearest clues are the oldest ones — what you loved doing as a child, before anyone was paying or grading you for it.

*What did I love doing before anyone paid me or graded me for it — and what would I name as my superpower?*

## A — Aliveness

More than excitement — the deeper sense of energy that shows up when something feels congruent with who you are. Psychologists call it flow: you're so absorbed that time stops behaving normally.

*What activities bring me the most joy, meaning, and energy — the ones that leave me feeling most fully alive?*

## L — Legacy

Not something you leave behind someday — something you're building right now, in how you show up for the people in front of you.

*Who do I want to help? What difference do I want to make? What do I want to be remembered for?*

## Connecting the Dots.

The discovery of how you live a purpose-full life is often hidden in the stories you tell about your own experiences — the ones you return to again and again. It's who you can't help bringing when you're at your best, in your flow.

Clues show up everywhere: the people you admire, what keeps you up at night, the pictures on your walls and the books on your shelves, the conversations that make you lean forward, the places where you flourish — and the places where you don't.

*Who is your personal hero, and what values or traits of theirs inspire you?*

*Your environment is not neutral. Look around. What have you surrounded yourself with? What does it say about who you're becoming?*

## The Right Purpose in the Wrong Room.

VITAL helps you understand what's true about you — but purpose doesn't exist in a vacuum. It gets lived out in a particular family, organization, community, and season of life. Sometimes the problem isn't what you're doing. It's the place you're doing it in.

The same talent can flourish in one environment and wither in another. So when something that once felt meaningful starts to feel lifeless, don't assume you've lost your purpose. Get curious about the room you're trying to live it in.

*You can change the paint. You can change the windows. You cannot change the foundation.*  
— what stays constant when the room doesn't

Your VITAL signs are the foundation — they don't shift because the room around them does. The room is allowed to change. You're allowed to change rooms. What you're building on doesn't have to move with it.

*Does this place — this team, relationship, or culture — let me bring more of who I am, or does it keep asking me to become someone I'm not?*

*Think about a time when you felt a real sense of belonging. What made it feel right for you?*

# Putting Your Purpose Into Words.

Once you begin to see a thread running through your VITAL signs, it helps to put language around it.

*When I am at my best, what seems to happen because I am there?* Maybe people move forward. Feel seen. Become more hopeful. You aren't looking for the perfect sentence — you're looking for the pattern.

**Try this simple form:**

To [contribution] so that [impact].

Don't be surprised if the words change over time. Write them in pencil, not permanent marker.

## 07 MAKING IT VISIBLE

### Give Your Purpose a Symbol.

Once you've put language around your why — even a rough first draft — find something you can see. A metaphor, an object, an image that carries it for you on the days the words feel distant.

A lighthouse doesn't chase down ships in trouble. It stays exactly where it is, and it shines. A ship lost in fog doesn't need the light to find it — it needs the light to stay put, a single fixed point to orient by.

Your purpose works the same way. Naming it doesn't manufacture something that wasn't there. It gives the light already inside you a shape precise enough to reach you on a hard day.

*Find your own symbol. It only has to be true enough that you can hold it in your mind and remember why you're here — then put it somewhere you'll actually see it.*

## 08 YOUR TURN

### Reflection.

Take VITAL into your journal this week. Explore one letter a day, or sit with all five at once. Don't force an answer — notice what's already there.

*What has my life been trying to show me?*

— come back to this

*"Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live." — Norman Cousins*