



Purpose Discovery – Purpose, Passion and Potential

“Why do you get up in the morning?” A simple, yet complicated question that many of us struggle to answer, as we try to understand our life’s purpose – and its impact on our work and careers.

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” – Mark Twain

You’re walking along a crowded street with other people on their way to work. Many of them look bored, resigned, stressed, or a little checked-out. They seem to be going through the motions. Suddenly you realize that you are not just an observer – you are one of them! Are you living or simply, surviving? How many people do you know that live FULL lives?

Did you enter your life and career with high expectations and excitement for the future. But now it is painfully apparent that you are bored most of the time, unfulfilled, and losing the motivation to get up in the morning?

I hope you choose to be a participant, and not just an observer in your journey to greater awareness and fulfillment. This is about getting unstuck and stepping confidently into the career/life of your dreams. The key to transforming yourself from someone who is simply surviving in their career to a person who successfully leads in a purposeful life is taking the time to understand yourself and the process.

The glory of God is man Fully Alive

I made the mistake of leaving education after serving for over 25 years without working with a coach/counselor. This mistake propelled me to gain the needed skills to guide people through the process. I felt called out of education and “thought” I wanted to work in corporate America. After a long, arduous process of applying to jobs I quickly learned the process had drastically changed from the 1990’s. I didn’t know about keywords, algorithms, applicant tracking systems, or the importance of an updated resume customized to the employer.

After working in corporate America for a year I quickly realized that my real “calling” was in education, counseling, coaching, and truly adding value to people’s lives. I felt unfulfilled, lacked motivation, and even struggled with depression. It was hard to get out of bed in the morning. (I’ll cover career exploration depression in a later section). While corporate America can be a great place for many it just didn’t fit my personality and values. It didn’t meet my strong desire to connect, contribute, and grow in order to help other people grow.

“Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls-- family, health, friends, integrity-- are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered.” — Gary Keller,

I hope my story will help you and that you will learn from my mistakes. After all, we oftentimes learn the most from our failures: FAIL FORWARD. I certainly learned a lot and see my world through a different lens. I have now made my life’s mission to engage others not merely to survive, but to thrive; with passion, grit, compassion, and humor – inspiring and empowering people to be the best version of themselves.

“Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress; working hard for something we love is called passion.” — Simon Sinek

When we think about why we do what we do, it sometimes scares us or makes us feel uncomfortable. We may think, I’m not Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela with a grand sense of Purpose. That’s okay. You and I are not expected or required to have a magnificent Purpose statement. We simply need to understand **our** Purpose, big or small, **own it and live it.**

Purpose is a very **personal** thing – it’s why you do the things you do, whether at work, home or in your community. It’s the ultimate driving motivator for you. Purpose provides clarity, meaning and direction and is your constant around everything you have done and will do. This doesn’t mean that your Purpose is the same throughout life; a common misconception about Purpose is that it is just one definitive thing. It isn’t. Purpose can take many different forms – some people may be finding their Purpose for the first time while others may be re-Purposing.

One of the most sacred things that we can offer another human being besides love is our work. It is an offering of our energy, our time, our inspiration, our strengths, and ultimately our desire to take ACTION. It is through our labor — which is really our LOVE in ACTION — that we share our greatest gifts with one another.

I’ve lived my entire life desiring to be in SERVICE of something bigger. The most life-changing lesson I have learned (and relearned) is that my most impactful contributions happen when I’m IN PURPOSE. Purpose is the unique GIFT that you bring to the world.

Knowing your purpose in life brings greater focus, confidence, contentment and meaning to life. Becoming a more authentic you improves your performance and well-being. You’re well positioned to make a very positive difference for others when you start with yourself.

"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

Simon Sinek is one of my favorite authors and speakers. Obviously, it is hard to stop with one quote because he speaks with such passion and wisdom. He became a sensation after he presented a [TedTalk](#) on knowing your why. In fact, it is the third most watched TED Talk of all time. His book is entitled, *Start with Why – How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. His work resonates with me because it gets to the heart of why we do the things we do.

When we help ourselves, we find moments of happiness.

When we help others, we find lasting fulfillment." — Simon Sinek

He teaches that starting with why is the foundation to discovering your lives best work. This is the purpose or call that drives you – it’s a calling and mission. I love his analogy about changing everything in your home – paint color, doors, windows, siding, etc. but you cannot change your foundation. Why is your “foundation” and leads you to your life’s mission, your purpose, and your gift to the world. We build upon and grow from our foundation – it strengthens you.

Simon has written a new book entitled, *Find your Why – a Practical Guide for Discovering Purpose for You and Your team*. It picks up where *Start With Why* left off. Read Simon in his own words:

“The concept of WHY is a deeply personal journey born out of pain. I discovered the idea at a time when I had lost any passion for my work. The advice people gave me wasn’t helpful either: “Do what you love,” “Find your bliss,” “Be passionate.” All accurate—but totally un-actionable. I agreed with all the advice in theory, but I didn’t know what to change. I didn’t know what to do differently on Monday. And that’s the reason the WHY has been and continues to be such a profound force in my life.

Not only did discovering my WHY renew my passion, it gave me a filter to make better decisions. It offered me a new lens through which I would see the world differently. And it was through this lens—to inspire people to do what inspires them so that together each of us can change our world—that I started preaching the concept of WHY and the Golden Circle. And people listened. In fact, people did more than listen, they joined me in preaching this message, sharing the vision. And our movement was born.” (Sinek, September, 2017)

Sinek says we may know our what and our how but knowing our why gives our life meaning and purpose. For example, Zappos mission statement is “to live and deliver wow.” They just don’t sell shoes – their purpose is creating the very best customer service through a company culture that leaves you *wowed*.

Too many of us define our lives by what we do for a living rather than accepting what we do for a living as just a part of an overall purpose that guides our lives — or, as Simon Sinek would call it, a why.

All businesses, organizations, and careers operate on three levels: (1) what we do, (2) how we do it, and (3) why we do it. **We’re all acquainted with what we do**—the products we sell, the services we offer, the jobs we do. **A few of us know how we do it**—the things we think differentiate us or make us unique compared to the rest of the crowd, or our competition. **But only a handful of us can clearly articulate why we do what we do.**

Your why is what sets you apart from everyone else. It’s your purpose. It’s what inspires you to take action. Your why is also what inspires *others* to take action, spread your ideas, or buy your products. Your why statement is the most effective possible way in which you can articulate your why—your purpose... not just to other people, but to yourself as well.

Opposite of Depression = Purpose

35% of waking hours are spent at work yet we spend so little time considering work that is energizing. Search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, believing we MATTER can make a meaningful impact. PURPOSE(FULL) life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying!

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

In a discussion of purpose and after living in unimaginable conditions, Viktor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, wrote, "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." People need their lives and effort – and their work – to matter.

Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist and neurologist who was arrested and sent to a series of concentration camps during World War II, including Auschwitz and Dachau. During his time in the camps, he witnessed and experienced unimaginable suffering and brutality, including the loss of his wife, parents, and brother.

Despite these traumatic experiences, Frankl was able to find meaning and purpose in his life, which he later wrote about in his influential book. He believed that even in the most difficult and challenging circumstances, we still have the power to choose our attitudes and responses, and that this ability to choose is what gives our lives meaning.

Frankl believed that the search for meaning is a fundamental human need, and that it is possible to find meaning even during suffering and adversity. He wrote,

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Victor Frankl

He also believed that Despair = Suffering – Meaning. Let that sink in.

Frankl's experiences in the Holocaust and his subsequent reflections on the search for meaning have had a profound impact on psychology and philosophy, and his work continues to inspire people around the world to find meaning and purpose in their own lives, even in the face of adversity.

"I cannot believe that the purpose of life is to be happy. I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be compassionate. It is, above all, to matter, to count, to stand for something, to have made some difference that you lived at all."
— Gary Keller

Ikigai

Ikigai is a Japanese concept that combines the words "iki" (life) and "gai" (value or worth). It loosely translates to "reason for being" or "waking up to joy." The idea is that your Ikigai is the convergence of the following elements, a central point that provides a sense of fulfillment, happiness, and balance in life.

- What you love (your passion)
- What you are good at (your vocation)
- What the world needs (your mission)
- What you can be paid for (your profession)

It is no coincidence that in the Okinawa culture, which belongs to the cultures where people live the longest, everyone knows their Ikigai. National Geographic reporter Dan Buettner (TEDX talk, How to Live to be 100+) identified five communities across the world where people live longer and are healthier than the average. These Blue Zones® have common factors, one of them being that the inhabitants have a strong sense of purpose!

Okinawa was a place of extreme suffering and death during World War II. Yet, many decades later there are more people over the age of 100 than any other place on earth. They are replete with joy, serenity, community, and activity. They understand the value of kindness and living in the moment even after devastation!

Know Thyself – Self-Reflection

Over two thousand years ago, Socrates spoke two words that have been immortalized:

“We are what we repeatedly do.” Aristotle

When you know who you inherently are, what you like and don't like, and your strengths and weaknesses, you start to understand where it is you want to go in life and how best to get there. You learn how to grow and the way you want to grow.

“The secret of success is learning how to use pain and pleasure instead of having pain and pleasure use you. If you do that, you're in control of your life. If you don't, life controls you.”
—Tony Robbins

You cannot give away what you don't possess. We can live our entire lives not knowing who we really are. And the more change there is around this, the better. Knowing yourself brings confidence, clarity, and wisdom.

Discover your Purpose

I suggest thinking about what four core elements of Purpose:

- **Passions**— Understanding what makes you excited and gives you energy.
To understand your passions, ask yourself, what are the things I do that make me lose track of time?
- **Gifts**— Understanding your unique strengths and talents.
To understand your gifts, ask yourself, what do I get complimented on often?
- **Values**— Understanding your guiding principles.
To understand your values, ask yourself, when faced with tough decisions, what factors do I consider to make the decision?

- **Habits** - It's estimated that nearly half (around 45%) of our daily actions are performed instinctively, driven by **ingrained** habits. It's important to contemplate on the structure of your day and identify the activities to which you're naturally inclined and drawn to.

Passions, gifts (talents), and values all work together to inform your purpose and help you live your life on purpose.

When looking at it individually,

- Passions fuel your purpose,
- Gifts support your purpose and
- Your values guide your purpose.

Your why statement should be:

- Simple and clear
- Actionable
- Focused on how you'll contribute to others, and
- Expressed in affirmative language that resonates with you

Your why statement should be able to encapsulate all of the qualities we just mentioned—and it should be able to do so in a single sentence.

Examples of Why Statements

Example #1. Simon Sinek's why statement "To inspire people to do the things that inspire them so that, together, we can change our world."

The *impact* Simon wants is for each of us to change the world, in however way we can, for the better. But this alone is too broad. It's incomplete until his intended *impact* is combined with his *contribution*—the work he actually does on Monday morning to make change happen.

The *contribution* portion—to inspire people—is what ties it all together, bringing focus and direction to the *impact* he wants to make on the world. Simon's *contribution* is essentially what he does (to make his why a reality).

Example #2: "To empower and educate people everywhere so that they can improve their lives and achieve their goals."

My WHY: To inspire and empower others to THRIVE in purpose and meaningfulness for the good of themselves and their communities.

Stories for Reflection

The discovery of how you can live a purposeful life you love is found hidden in the stories you tell about your life. It's who you cannot help bringing when you are at your best – in your flow.

“Words may inspire, but only ACTION creates change. Most of us live our lives by accident – we live life as it happens. Fulfillment comes when we live our lives on purpose.”

—Simon Sinek

Story 1: A recent experience (at work or in life) that you loved being a part of.

Story 2: Pinpoint one person who has significantly influenced the person you have become. What did they do? Tell a specific story that clearly explains the impact they had on you. .

Story 3: Who is your hero? Why?

Story 4: 5 things that you believe. Circle the one thing you cannot live without

Story 5: What did you love doing as a child?

Story 6: What do you want your life/career to do for others? What is one way that you would like to be a force for change in the world? .

Story 7: 1What are you most curious about? Here are some clues that will help you answer: What are your skills & strengths?

Story 8: What is your superpower? What's your kryptonite?

Story 9: What are you most curious about? Clues that will help you answer: Time passes quickly (FLOW). It's so interesting, you can't help spending time on it!

Story 10: What would you do even if you didn't get paid? .

Story 11: What makes you come alive (what energizes you)?

Story 12: What keeps you up at night?

Story 13: What activities would infuse my life with more joy and meaning?

Story 14: In what areas of your life or career do others seek your counsel?

Story 15: What do you want to be remembered for?

Story 16: If you were to ask ten of your closest friends/coworkers to complete this statement about you: “You were born to _____.

What do you think they would say? Have you ever asked them? Why not?

The Why Statement Format

Simple format to use as we draft our why statement:

To _____ so that _____.

The first blank represents your **contribution** — the contribution you make to others through your why. And the second blank represents the **impact** of your contribution.

Contribution: action/verb , storyteller’s superpowers!

Impact: What your storyteller believes all people deserve to feel or experience. It’s not an action – it’s something they hope will happen.

7 days of Free Journaling on Purpose

1. What did I love doing (what energized you)?
2. What depleted my energy?
3. What was I good at (strengths/skills)?
4. How did I impact others (look for themes)?
5. What is my unique contribution (fingerprint)

Other Great Videos and resources on Purpose and Self-Awareness

Assessments

Stand Out – discover the best and most meaningful version of yourself (Marcus Buckingham)

SparkType - essential nature of work that fills you with meaning and lets you feel fully-expressed, alive with purpose and absorbed in flow (sparked) by Jonathan Fields.

16 personalities – in order to know yourself better and articulate your value.

Via Character Strengths Finder

What is your Driving Force by Tony Robbins

DISC test – Self-awareness is essential to success. If you don’t know what drives your actions and behaviors – it’s difficult to cultivate positive growth. The DISC shows you how to leverage various aspects of your personality for a life that aligns with your personal values.

Videos

The Origin of the Why – in 5 minutes

Trombone Player Needed by Marcus Buckingham

Netflix – I Am Not Your Guru with Tony Robbins

Steve Jobs Commencement Speech

Simon Sinek – Start with Why. Third most listened to podcast of all time.

"We imagine a world in which the vast majority of people wake up every day inspired, feel safe wherever they are and end the day fulfilled by the work they do." –Simon Sinek

This is your super power! This is you *experiencing being fully alive.*