

FINDING YOUR PURPOSE

Consider two hypothetical organizations: one with a mission and one without a mission. Let me describe the one without the mission first. It's a small business that repairs computers. It has five employees who came in at 9 AM sharp and go home at 5 PM sharp; no one stays late unless overtime is paid. All of them come without any enthusiasm and look like they came to work because they had to come to work. All of them wish they were paid better and at their earliest opportunity will move on to a different job. The only motivation that the owner of this corporation can provide is the promise of a raise.

Now consider an organization with a mission: "To make life better for needy children." This organization also has five employees, but it is a charitable organization, and the employees are tremendously dedicated. Some of them work 14-hour days trying to collect as many donations as possible. Three of them are volunteers working without pay. All of them know their efforts are going toward a cause.

These two organizations illustrate the importance of purpose. Missions give us purpose. Obviously, you would prefer to work for the second organization because it has a purpose. You would look forward to coming to work and would be full of energy when you got there. You wouldn't care what difficulty you had in your work environment. You would still come because you would be driven by the organization's purpose. Your work would have meaning.

Now consider your own purpose. Why do you get out of bed every day? Why do you live and go to work? These are questions that all of us ask at some point in our

lives. When you have the answers to these questions, you have purpose and meaning in your life. You are energized.

Whether you are a CEO, a banker, or a teacher, your life has a purpose. No matter how insignificant you might think you are, in the overall scheme of things, you still have a purpose. Without you, there would be nobody to fill the gap. The difficulty lies in finding that purpose.

It is important that we all seek this purpose in our lives. Similar to the organizations that I illustrated before, having purpose and meaning gives you a reason to get up in the morning and tackle the day and its challenges. It gives you motivation and energy to do things and make changes to your lives. Most importantly, having a purpose gives you direction so that you can make good choices.

Do you already know what your purpose should be? If you answered this question quickly, then you are part of a select, clear-thinking crowd. For the rest of us, it takes days, months, years and sometimes decades to find answers to this age-old question. Even after we do find the answer, it is sometimes not a complete answer.

Questions about our purpose and meaning have been around for centuries. However, there are hardly any generic answers even to this day. This is because the meaning of life is a very complicated and subjective question. It depends on your perception of life, and that's as unique to you as your personality. It is based on your experiences, values, attitude, culture and many other factors that sometimes even you cannot identify.

However, to have a fruitful life, you need to understand its meaning. This is a basic prerequisite to success. You need to know why you are here and living. Everyone has a purpose, though our individual meanings might differ. Once you know your purpose in life, everything else falls into place. The whole picture starts to take shape.



It takes a lot of searching to find the answer that you are seeking. Most of the time the answer lies right in front of you even though you never noticed it. All you have to do is “want” to understand it. Then it becomes very obvious to you. Your desire to understand turns your mind to the search process.

Sometimes humanity gets petty minded about borders, money, and power. You start to understand figures like Christ, Gandhi, and Buddha when you understand the meaning of your life. Everything that they taught essentially boils down to the purpose that we live out in the world. Your purpose is the foundation of your existence. Once you understand this foundation, you start understanding every piece in the puzzle that you call life. It truly is awakening!

It is rare that anyone has just one reason for existence. No matter who you are as a person, you are an integral part of society and the world. In my opinion, your purpose is usually a combination of several components. They generally fall into three groups, which remain constant for most of us. Forming a framework based on these three groups enhances your ability to think through your reasons and ultimately to determine your overall purpose.

Searching for Your Purpose

Why we exist can be boiled down to three foundational reasons ... The Three Pillars of Life:

- To be happy with the life that we have.
- To ensure continuation of life.
- To enhance life.

If you are breathing, you have a life. The first pillar of your life is to enjoy and be happy with this opportunity. As living begins, we also need to ensure our species' survival; thus, we need to contribute toward continuation of life or we risk extinction. Furthermore, if we do nothing to improve the world even in the smallest way we can, we would still be in the Stone Ages. All of us need to contribute to the enhancement of life.

All three pillars need to be fulfilled in order to have a fruitful life. Your purpose is to fulfill these three pillars no matter who you are. You need to take action in each of these three aspects of life in your own way. Let's look at these pillars in detail and see how we ought to craft our purpose for each of these pillars.

Identify What Makes You Happy

To be living in this world is a gift and an opportunity no matter how difficult life becomes. Having the opportunity to experience life is by far the greatest opportunity we have. We instinctively know this, which is why survival is our primary instinct. Because we have the opportunity of life, we can enjoy all our other opportunities. Whether you believe that it is given to you or not, this opportunity is the same thing that you don't want to miss. Some would even call it a miracle. Whatever label you apply, we must make the most of this opportunity. The only way to do that is to be happy, which is the first pillar of your purpose.

Happiness is difficult to define. To be happy, you first need to be satisfied. Satisfaction in life means different things to different people. It might mean making a difference in the world, experiencing life to the fullest, or just maintaining your current status. You need to identify what will satisfy you and make you feel happy.

It is important to understand what makes you happy and satisfied. Is it spending time with your family? Is it shopping? Is it living with music? Is it traveling? Whatever it is, it is something that you don't regret spending time on. You need to visualize your final moment and your last breath. If you are spending a lot of time working rather than spending that time with your two-year-old-daughter, would you regret this choice in your last moment? Imagine that you've been told that you won't live beyond today. Would that influence your choice to spend time working or spend time with your daughter? The type of choice you make is the ultimate test of happiness. If you are doing something else, then you are not truly happy. This doesn't mean that every individual should be spending their time with a loved one. The time you spend at work could be for the greater good and would make you happier on your dying day. This simple test should reveal your priorities. Only you know the answer.

This choice is unique to all of us. You need to make the choice that is right for you. Nobody can tell you how to make it. It is a choice of your heart, and it is one of the fundamental choices we make in our lives. The choices that we make define who we are and how we live.

You might also have more than one thing that makes you happy, so don't think that spending time with your



family is the only thing that would make you happy. Decide what makes you happy. Spend time thinking about it. Take time away from work and the rush of everyday life to understand. Sometimes in the rush of things, it is very difficult to get into this level of thought.

Happiness brings a great sense of inner peace. It brings satisfaction to our lives. This inner peace and satisfaction make life worth living. You need to search for this happiness.

Doing What You Love

The ultimate career is doing what makes you happy and earning a living at the same time. Most of us don't fall into this category. More likely, we started on a career track that we stumbled onto when we got out of college, and it might be difficult to change now, as changing means starting all over again.

If what you are doing is not making you happy, then you need to give thought to and strategize about how to change your life. If what you are doing is what makes you happy, try to think about cultivating it more in your life.

Ensuring the Continuation of Life

Most of science confirms that we live on a lonely planet (at least with the knowledge that we have today). We humans need to ensure the continuation of our existence. Thus, we need to support the continuation of life. Thousands of years ago, this concept would have meant increasing our numbers. In fact, in today's context, supporting the population growth at the current levels would be contrary to continuation of life. Although this principle has not gone away, it applies to us in the modern day in a very different way. It means to be there for each other. The purpose can be fulfilled in two ways.

1. Continuation of you and your legacy.
2. Helping others to continue life.

Let's look at these two ways separately.

Continuation of You and Your Legacy

All of us want to leave a legacy. We have a certain number of years to live, yet instinctively, we all would like to be remembered.

To explain the core concept, forget a moment about all the permutations of family that exist today, such as single parents and gay marriage. Consider the traditional family. The mother and father live forever in

the genetics and the attitudes that we pass on to our children. Who we are gets passed on in how we bring up our children. We live forever through our children. Bring them up the best way you can. Give them the best you can, and you'll be fulfilling this purpose in life. If you are a parent, you know that this is much easier said than done. However, making the next generation healthy and good citizens is our modern way of supporting the continuation of life.

Bringing up children as good citizens is one way to ensure the continuation of life. However, this isn't the only way to ensure continuation of life. For example, there are thousands of children around the world who are orphaned for various reasons. There are many ways to help these children. You can adopt, sponsor a child or help look after him or her.

Helping Others to Continue Life

Ensuring the continuation of life also means helping others continue life. It might be helping a poor family, it might be helping a poor child or it might be comforting a sick person. In whatever form, we all need to ensure that we assist in the continuation of life by helping one another. We live on a lonely planet.

All of us have problems. You would not be human if you didn't have any problems. They might be financial, physical or psychological. Whatever their nature, problems are frequently a hindrance to the continuation of life, and helping one another solve contributes toward the continuation of life. It could be as simple as helping your colleague in the next cubicle spell a word correctly or as big as solving world hunger.

The help you lend could be very personal. For instance, your parents might be old and need your help to look after them. You caring for them and doing what you can to make their lives easier is also your contribution toward continuation of life. Whether you conscientiously raise your own children or help others around you in some way -or both- you are fulfilling a core purpose of life. Each of us can do something to help ensure the continuation of life.

Enhancing Life

The third Pillar of Life is to enhance life and add value. We have evolved to be the dominant species on this planet because we keep on enhancing our lives. Each of us has the responsibility to make this world a better



place. In essence, you need to add value to the world but you don't need to move mountains to do this.

Enhancing life is all about making this world a better place for you and for others. Everywhere we go and in everything we do, we have the opportunity to improve the people and places around us, to leave them in the same state we found them, or to make them worse. If we left every little thing that we touched in a better state than we originally found it, our world would be a dramatically better place. Essentially, we're adding value to the things in our midst.

Value can come in any form. It might be helping out in an orphanage or just folding an unfolded newspaper on the train that you found and read. Just imagine if all of us understood this concept and followed it. What a great place the world would be! Unfortunately, there are people who destroy life, which is very disheartening. Terrorism, for example, falls in the extreme end of this spectrum. But there are situations when destruction of life happens in very subtle ways. Corruption diverts resources from systems that support life for a country's people. Opposing the people responsible in those situations could be another way of enhancing life.

Each of us can help to enhance life, and we can do it in our own small way. It might be giving a dollar to help someone in need or offering some comforting words to someone facing a difficult challenge. Enhancing life doesn't have to be directed to a stranger. It can be your wife, husband or child. Surely, we're already enhancing the lives of our loved ones, but we all can do a better job at it. Everything we do helps builds the big picture. What we do helps build a better world today and tomorrow.

Every grain of sand is needed to build a world. What if all the grains of sand say, "We are going our own way"? Would we have a world? Each of us has a small part to play in the big picture. Enhancing life in our own little way helps in the overall scheme of things in this world.

Not only can all of us do it, but we can also do it anywhere we want. It can be at work. You can leave your workplace in better shape than when you started. You could improve something that you have inherited from someone else. That's just one example. I'm sure you could come up with many creative ways to enhance life for others.

Putting Your Purpose in Action

Mission and strategy are closely connected. You cannot have one without the other. Though it is important to have a purpose, it's only a fancy statement until you do something about it.

Most corporations have visions and purposes, but they rarely do anything with them. Employees come to work and go back home without much motivation. Their mission statements are merely lip service.

Apply this concept to your personal life; if you have a mission and a purpose, you need to believe in it and execute it. If you have a purpose but don't do anything about it, you might as well not have a purpose. If, after years of soul searching, you learn the true purpose of your life, you need to act on this purpose.

And in order to act on your purpose, you need a strategy. Strategy allows you to connect high-level dreams with actionable plans. Strategy takes this purpose and divides it into actionable plans. It then helps you take these plans and further organize them into actionable projects you can work on daily.

To give you a couple of examples of how to bring your purpose to action, let's look at a charitable organization whose mission is to help hungry children in developing countries. It's a small organization that carries out its mission through specific projects. It has two types of projects:

1. Fund-raising projects to obtain the funds required for second type of project.
2. Charitable projects that distribute the collected funds to the needy.

The charity might have two fundraising projects under the first category that aim to generate \$2 million through various fundraising activities in the current year. Each project would have its separate strategy. Furthermore, the organization might have two charitable projects, one in Sri Lanka and another in Uganda. Each project would have its strategy for assisting children in each country.

Similarly, a man who has a mission to aid others through his knowledge might execute that vision in the following ways:

1. Running day-to-day life: You cannot execute your purpose if you don't have a means to live. This class



of projects would ensure his survival. Sub-projects might include:

- Getting promoted to manager.
- Buying a decent house to live in.

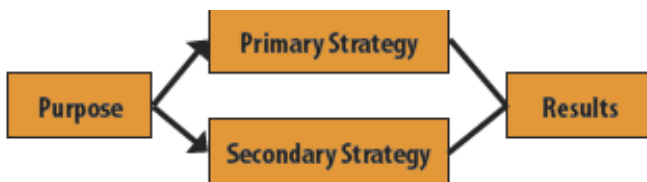
Though these projects are not directly related to his primary mission, they support the primary mission. Without these support projects, he cannot execute the primary mission.

2. Adding value to others' lives: Now that he has a platform to sustain him through the first class of projects, he can execute the following projects to achieve his mission.
 - Write a book to share his knowledge.
 - Work part-time helping at a retirement home.

Similarly, when it comes to executing your primary purpose, your strategy might have two or more classes of strategic priorities:

1. Primary strategy: This strategy is directly related to your primary purpose. The strategy would have specific deliverables that would impact forward movement against your purpose. There may be several projects or strategies under this category.
2. Support strategy: In order to support your primary strategy, you need to sustain yourself. Projects under this category would ensure that your sustenance is maintained. Though they don't directly impact your purpose, without these projects you would not be able to work on your mission and purpose.

Thus, you need to have a strategy to support your mission. Strategy takes your purpose and mission to the next level. The relationship would be depicted with the diagram show below.



You get a fulfilling feeling when you actually do progress on these projects and strategies. Because they are connected with your purpose, no matter how difficult these projects are and how much work is involved, you get a sense of accomplishment when you work on them. Most of us procrastinate on the most important things in life because we have difficulty figuring out the action plan to implement them or the next action to take. By doing a strategic-planning exercise, you can figure out the details behind your purpose and act on them.

Creativity is also an important factor in trying to enhance life. All of us are born with the ability to create, and there are many ways in which we could enhance life. We just have to think of them. Making that effort is also part of our responsibility to enhance life.

A lot of people give money to charities to help others. This is certainly one way of enhancing life, but you don't need money to help others. You could sit with a lonely senior and spend time with him. Another creative example comes from the movie Pay It Forward. In it, a small boy invents the concept of paying it forward: He does something good for three people that he comes across. In return, he asks those three people to do something good for three other people. It is like a chain letter, but it is a chain letter of good deeds. It has an exponential effect.

We need to make things better for others. We do it, not to gain benefit, but purely to enhance the life of others. The return that we get is that we feel accomplished.

Conclusion

We all live for a purpose. The purpose we each live for is unique to us and defines us; however, the most difficult challenge is understanding this purpose. We can think about it for years and years and yet not find the answer that we are seeking. If you really look at life, the three aspects to our purpose can help us understand things better. As stated earlier, they are:

- To be happy with the life that we have.
- To ensure continuation of life.
- To enhance life.

Need Help? Have a Question?

Call Greg's "Wonder Woman" assistant Christal. She will assist you in with booking information or answering your questions. Call her at 304.400.4703

Find Your
Passion
Chase Your
Dreams