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FINDING PURPOSE AND FULFILLMENT

A Personal Purpose & Fulfillment Guide

Taking a Closer Look at What Gives Your Life Meaning

Finding purpose does not necessarily mean discovering one important thing you were meant to do.

Purpose can develop from your interests, experiences, abilities, relationships, beliefs, and the ways you use them. It may come from your work, family, faith, helping others, creating something, sharing what you know, supporting a cause, or becoming involved in something that matters to you.

Your purpose can also change during different stages of your life.

Something that gave you purpose earlier in life may no longer have the same meaning today. New experiences may lead you in a different direction.

Use this guide to take a closer look at the things that may contribute to a sense of purpose and fulfillment in your life.

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1. What Interests You?

Purpose often begins with something that gets your attention.

It may be something you enjoy, care about, want to understand, or simply find yourself drawn to.

You don't have to know where the interest will lead.

For example: You may enjoy working with young people, care about animals, be interested in your community, enjoy working with your hands, feel strongly about helping people in need, or have an interest in a particular subject.

Ask yourself what naturally gets your attention.

What interests me?

What subjects or activities do I naturally enjoy?

Are there people, issues, or causes I particularly care about?

Is there something I find myself wanting to know more about or become involved with?

2. What Have Your Experiences Given You?

Your life experiences are part of what you bring to anything you choose to do.

Think about what you have learned through work, family, relationships, responsibilities, accomplishments, disappointments, difficulties, and everyday life.

Some experiences may have given you knowledge or skills. Others may have given you patience, understanding, compassion, or a different way of looking at life.

For example: Someone who spent many years managing employees may have knowledge that could help a new business owner. Someone who raised a family may have experiences that could help a younger parent. Someone who worked through a difficult period in life may understand what another person is going through.

What experiences have shaped me?

What have those experiences taught me?

What knowledge or abilities have I developed?

Is there something I have learned that could be useful to someone else?

3. What Do You Feel Connected To?

Purpose often has a connection to something that matters personally to you.

That connection may be to:

- Family
- Friends
- Your work or profession
- Faith or spirituality
- Your community
- A cause
- An organization
- A particular group of people
- An interest or activity
- A personal experience
- Something you believe is important

For example: Someone may feel connected to education because a teacher made a difference in their life. Another person may feel connected to a health-related cause because it affected someone they care about. Someone else may feel strongly connected to their neighborhood, profession, church, family, or cultural traditions.

What do I feel personally connected to?

Why does this connection matter to me?

Is there something in my own experience that makes this particularly meaningful?

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4. Where Could You Make a Contribution?

Purpose does not necessarily require doing something big.

Sometimes it develops from recognizing that something you know, do, or care about can be useful.

Contribution can take many forms.

You might:

- Help someone
- Teach or mentor
- Volunteer
- Share your knowledge
- Support your family
- Create something
- Solve a problem
- Become involved in your community
- Support a cause
- Encourage someone
- Use a skill where it is needed
- Simply be there for another person

For example: A retired carpenter might teach someone basic home-repair skills. Someone with business experience might mentor a new entrepreneur. A person who enjoys cooking might prepare meals for people who need help.

None of these has to become a career or major commitment to have meaning.

What could I contribute?

Is there something I know how to do that could help someone else?

Who or what might benefit from my experience, time, or abilities?

Is there a way I would enjoy contributing?

5. What Feels Meaningful to You?

Interest, experience, connection, and contribution can begin to come together in ways that feel meaningful.

Meaning is personal.

Something can be important to another person and mean very little to you. At the same time, something relatively simple can have great meaning because of your connection to it.

For example: Helping a young person prepare for a career may be especially meaningful if someone once helped you. Volunteering in your community may matter because you have lived there for many years. Passing along a family tradition may matter because you want another generation to experience it.

What activities or responsibilities feel meaningful to me?

Why do they matter to me?

When have I felt that something I was doing really mattered?

What made that experience meaningful?

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6. Put the Pieces Together

Now look back at what you identified.

You may begin to see connections among your interests, experiences, abilities, and the things that matter to you.

For example:

Interest: I enjoy working with young people.

Experience: I spent many years working in accounting.

Connection: I remember how difficult it was when I was first starting my career.

Contribution: I could help accounting students or people entering the profession.

Meaning: Helping someone get started would allow me to use what I have learned in a way that matters to me.

That combination could become a source of purpose.

Now think about your own life.

Something that interests me:

Experience or knowledge I bring to it:

Why I feel connected to it:

How I could contribute:

Why this might be meaningful to me:

Could this become a source of purpose in my life?

☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ I'm not sure yet

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7. Explore the Possibility

You don't have to decide immediately that you have “found your purpose.”

Try something.

Purpose may become clearer through experience rather than simply thinking about it.

For example, if you learned to cook because you had to rather than because it interested you, the purpose and depth of the experience may be completely different from someone who developed a genuine interest in cooking.”

It is the experience—and the connection you develop with it—that can create a sense of purpose.

What could I try?

What would my first step be?

When could I do it?

What do I want to learn from the experience?

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8. Does It Bring a Sense of Purpose or Fulfillment?

After you have tried something, take another look. Did it give you a sense of purpose? Was the experience fulfilling?

Purpose and fulfillment are related, but they are not necessarily the same.

Purpose can give you a reason for doing something that matters to you. Fulfillment may come from knowing that what you are doing has meaning and is worthwhile to you.

My Check-In

What did I try?

What was the experience like?

Did I feel connected to what I was doing?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat

Did I feel that what I was doing mattered?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure

Did I find the experience personally fulfilling?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat

Take a Closer Look

What did I enjoy about the experience?

What didn't feel right for me?

Did I learn something about what gives me a sense of purpose?

What's Next?

Reflect on what you learned.

You may want to continue, become more involved, try something different, or explore another interest, experience, or connection.

What do I want to do next?

My Commitment

Something that may give me a greater sense of purpose is:

I want to explore it by:

My first step will be:

A Final Thought

Purpose is not always something you suddenly find.

It can develop from your interests, experiences, abilities, connections, and the ways you choose to use them.

You may find that something you have done for years has become a routine and no longer gives you the same sense of purpose it once did. Or a new experience may introduce you to something that becomes important in your life.

Purpose can also change as you change.

Stay open to what interests you, what you have learned, what you feel connected to, and where you can make a contribution.

Purpose gives meaning to what you do. Fulfillment comes from experiencing that meaning.

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