

# 8 tools for creating

A MEANINGFUL AND FULFILLING LIFE



Contradictory to what you may believe, you have a great deal of control on how fulfilling and meaningful your life is. The key to living a more meaningful and fulfilling life is not so much about your circumstances as it is about how you perceive and respond to those situations. A meaningful life is a concept that is subjective in nature. What is meaningful to one person, may not be to another. Each individual's experiences and the meaning they attach to those experiences is unique.

Discovering meaning and fulfilment is a key component of happiness in life. Finding our meaning in life leads to improved health, relationships and behaviour. Here are some suggestions that can help in our efforts to live a more meaningful and fulfilling life:

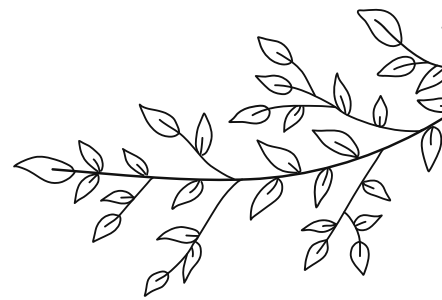
1. Reflect frequently and regularly
2. Establish your daily goals
3. Show your gratitude with intent
4. Be self aware and conscious
5. Be truthful and authentic
6. Practice self compassion
7. Connect with others
8. Face your fears for growth



## 1. Reflect frequently and regularly

Perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of leading a meaningful life is reflection. We should set aside enough time every day, week, or month, to acknowledge the things, places, people, lessons, and other things that life reveals to us. In these situations, how are you responding? What would you like to change? What would you like to stay the same?

Writing a letter to our future self is a helpful exercise for maintaining objectivity towards any life experience. In this manner, you can most effectively record your feelings, however unprocessed they may be, and then read them back with crystal clarity. You can observe how you've overcome challenges and made progress over time. While progress may seem insignificant in the moment, it is a continuous process.



## 2. Establish your daily goals

List three objectives that are relevant and gratifying to you in the morning before you begin your day. Make certain they follow your set of values and ideas. Avoid making this list overly lengthy. Trying to work on too many goals concurrently tends to cause us to feel overwhelmed and results in us being unsuccessful when we are unable to complete all the tasks we planned on achieving. By keeping the list short, we are more likely to complete the tasks we set for ourselves and experience mastery and success.





### 3. Show your gratitude with intent

When we focus on what we don't have, it's impossible to truly live a meaningful life. Practicing gratitude emphasises the value of being thankful, and helps us to connect with others and feel better equipped to cope with tough times. Take time each day to consider 'What am I grateful for?' As an example, we may take a moment to appreciate having a morning coffee, or being physically well enough to go for a walk with a friend. We all gain knowledge from our personal struggles, setbacks, disappointments, and heartbreak. We accomplish a significant feat at the very least by surviving it.

### 4. Be self aware and conscious

We can cultivate and develop healthy self-awareness by drawing our attention to who we are and what we are doing. Self awareness requires us to monitor our thoughts and actions and consider whether these are in line with our morals, values, and passions.

To facilitate increased self awareness we can review our daily actions and identify any that deviated from our intended course. We can also practice mindfulness which causes us to focus on our purpose and the present moment.



### 5. Be truthful and authentic

If we disagree with the notion that each person's life has a unique purpose and meaning, then can we possibly have a meaningful life?

We often find ourselves trying to present as a person that is not the 'real' version of ourselves in an attempt to fit in or be accepted. Over time this becomes damaging. When we consider what we have left after this forcing - we might be living in the wrong place, working the wrong job, or slumming it in the wrong relationship. We are left feeling exhausted, miserable and less capable of realising our potential.

On the other hand, being our authentic 'real' selves means being content with and proud of who we are. Showing others who we really are allows us to find true friendships, and be supported by others in times of need. It allows us to enjoy preferred activities and connect with likeminded people. It allows us to use our strengths and pursue our interests and be the best version of ourselves.



### 6. Practice self compassion

We all have an 'inner voice' or internal monologue that shapes our mental wellbeing. Sometimes this voice is critical and judgmental, and can lead to strong negative feelings and unhelpful behaviours.

Do you find you are highly critical of yourself? Would you speak to a friend the way your inner voice speaks to you? If you find this is the case, here are two tips to keep your inner critic in check. Practice self respect and self compassion. Self respect means that we see ourselves as having the same basic rights and dignity as others. Self compassion requires us to give ourselves the same kindness we would give a friend.





### **7. Connect with others**

As humans, we are wired to connect with others. Developing and maintaining social connections is a biological process that is fundamental to safety and wellbeing. We know that social connection is a protective factor that brings with it many benefits.

Social connections make us physically healthier, happier, protect against illness and stress, increase our life span, improve our mental health and foster safety. Consider what social groups you identify with. Which friends and family members energise you and uplift you? Invest in the relationships that are important to you and be thoughtful and intentional within those relationships. Set regular time to connect with those you are close to and make conscious effort to communicate with them. Create a daily habit of connecting with someone who brings you joy on a daily basis and show your appreciation of those individuals through your actions.

### **8. Face your fears head on**

Fear of failure is a barrier to leading a meaningful and enriched life. Fear is a natural part of our existence. Changing our mindset and approach to fear is the first step towards overcoming it. Failures and mistakes help us to learn important lessons that promote self growth. While it can feel disappointing, it is also a pathway to learning new skills. What we know is that if you don't change anything, nothing changes.

When we allow our fear to stop us from doing the things that can move us forward to achieve our goals we experience lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy. Taking some risk and stepping outside of our comfort zone is daunting but regret for not trying is worse than any potential failure or mistake that may occur. When we don't try, we never know what the outcome would have been. In the endeavour to live a meaningful life strive for progress rather than perfection, and find comfort in knowing that fear and failure is an expected part of the process.

