

# Discovering Your Life Purpose

## Objective

To identify your purpose through connection with others.

## What to Know

Some people spend their entire lives wondering what they are meant to do. Life purpose is unique for everyone, and yours may change throughout life in response to shifting priorities and experiences. Your life purpose:

- guides life decisions
- shapes the goals that motivate you
- influences your behavior
- offers a sense of direction
- creates meaning
- might be connected to your vocation; or, meaningful and satisfying work
- might be expressed through spirituality or religious beliefs

Questions you might ask when you reflect on your life purpose:

- Who am I?
- Where do I belong?
- What fulfills me?

You might hesitate to pursue your life purpose because you worry it is self-serving or selfish. However, true life purpose is about recognizing your gifts, talents, and abilities, and using them to contribute to others. Studies indicate that having a sense of purpose is associated with better physical and mental health, and that it grows from your connection with others. Here are six activities that can help you discover your life purpose.

**1. Read.** Research shows that reading connects you to others across time and space—and that it is closely linked to developing a sense of purpose. Purpose becomes an act of the imagination, and it can inspire you to focus on what matters in your life.

**2. Turn hurt into healing.** Sometimes purpose grows out of suffering or trauma. If you have difficult experiences in your past, or you have overcome obstacles, perhaps you can tap into the strength and resilience you have gained from these life events to help others.

**3. Cultivate awe, gratitude, and altruism.** Emotions and behaviors that promote wellbeing can build your sense of purpose.

**4. Listen to what other people appreciate about you.** Gratitude strengthens relationships—the people around you are often the source of your purpose.

**5. Find and build community.** If you have trouble remembering your purpose, look to the people around you.

**6. Tell your story.** Writing can help you find your purpose because it helps you make sense of your experiences.

This worksheet will help you identify your purpose through connection with others.

**What to Do**

First, fill in each statement.

When I was 10 years old, I loved...

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I lose track of time when I...

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If I knew I couldn't fail, I would...

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I feel great about myself when I...

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If money wasn't an issue I would...

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I know I'm good at...

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Three things I appreciate about myself...

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If I weren't afraid of what other people thought, I would...

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Three things I can do for three different people...

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My favorite things to do in my free time...

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Five people who inspire me...

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Five people or groups I can connect to that will help me identify my life purpose...

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Something from my past that has made me stronger and more resilient...

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If I DON'T do the following things, I will have regrets...

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Now, review your answers. How do you feel? Circle the ones that light you up or make you feel alive.

Look at the people around you. Are you part of a community? What do you have in common with these people? What impact do they have on the world? Is it positive? What do they need, and what can you offer them?

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What obstacles have you encountered? What strengths helped you to overcome them? How did other people help you? How have your strengths made life better for others?

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Date	Activity	Write about it? Y / N

Did this exercise help you identify your life purpose? Why or why not?

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What did you find most difficult about this exercise? Explain.

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What else can you do to define your life purpose? Explain.

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### Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this activity?

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