

Unlock the Power of Purpose

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A sense of life purpose promotes physical, mental, and spiritual health.

People who seek meaning beyond themselves are healthier, happier, and live longer.

It's vital to our well-being that we maintain strong feelings of purpose and community.

For some people, life purpose is a spiritual concept, or has a religious dimension. For others, it's a more secular notion, a need to be valued as a member of a family or group.

Not everyone feels the need for a philosophy of life purpose but we all need to be needed. Purpose is fundamental. Mattering, ultimately, matters.

As we mature through the phases of our life, experiencing various levels of psychological, emotional and, ultimately, spiritual growth, we may come to think more deeply about our life purpose and find ourselves yearning for deeper levels of meaning.

Many people, at some phase of their lives, feel stuck, going nowhere, drifting without direction, wondering "what is the point of it all?"

Here are some ways to unlock the power of purpose and answer that question.

Do you believe you have a purpose, or you can choose one?

Consider choosing a new mindset – that of "living purposefully" rather than "having a purpose." Living purposefully means choosing how you will use your gifts and talents to create more meaning for yourself and others.

When it comes to living purposefully, we usually find ourselves in one of three places:

- 1) We don't worry about whether we have a formal purpose or not. We simply live our lives doing the things we feel drawn to.
- 2) We know exactly what our purpose is, and we positively work at it each day.
- 3) We believe we have a purpose but have no clue what it may be or how to find out.

Which group do you fall into?

Members of the first group probably wouldn't be reading this article and members of the second group would probably be too busy living purposefully to read about it!



The majority of people who read this article probably fall into group #3. If you're not sure if you do, reflect on these questions:

- Have you recently felt like you'd like to be doing more with your life?
- Do you often yearn to use your gifts (natural talents) to contribute more to the world?
- Do you feel like you're "majoring in the minors" – wasting time on things that are too small for you?
- Do you desire to "major in the majors" – serve others in a larger way but don't know how?
- Do you ever wonder if "this is it?"

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, you're probably ready to unlock the power of purpose.

Two Schools of Thought

If you ask enough people (like I do!), you'll probably find that there are two basic schools of thought regarding life purpose:

- 1) Those who believe that a life purpose is something that we are born with, that it is planted in our souls before we are born and we must embody or achieve it. It's our embedded destiny, so to speak, and we have no choice in the matter.
- 2) Those who believe that fate and destiny don't exist and we have the power (or "free will") to choose our life purpose and do anything we want with our lives.

Which group do you belong to? Fate and destiny? Or, free will?

There are no easy or perfect answers to this question. So, if you're still not sure, I'd like to propose a workable compromise for you. What if a life purpose is something you are born with, but you also have full control over how and when you activate it? What if, with a little reflection and choice, you could move naturally and easily toward your life purpose without feeling like you "have to" do specific things?

You might be surprised to discover that unlocking your life purpose can be a fulfilling and enjoyable process. It's the kind of "choice" that changes everything – from emptiness to fulfillment, from boredom to passion and beyond.

Humans were created for choice. Choice is the intention – power in purpose. Personally, I believe that by a loving Source (God), we were given free will to choose how we think, act, react. America, in fact, was founded on the idea that people have the freedom and the responsibility to make choices.

Personally, I also believe that each of us is an "experiment of one." Each of us has an embedded destiny – a life purpose – but it is something that comes very enjoyably and naturally to us. It's not something that's difficult, unpleasant, or burdensome.

Unlocking Purpose

The dictionary defines purpose as:

- 1) An object or result aimed at: INTENTION
- 2) RESOLUTION, DETERMINATION

What does this suggest? A “purpose” can be as simple as an intention or a resolution. So, a “life purpose” is really nothing more (or less) than a choice or intention to live in a certain way.

A life purpose is realized through “attention” – by getting to know your authentic self, exploring your gifts or natural talents and passions, and “intention” – choosing the best possible expression to share them with the world.

“Finding your purpose is a misleading concept because it’s not something we have to go out and “get,” but rather something we need to turn within and “unlock.”

We’ve already got it – even if we haven’t clearly realized it yet!

How do we unlock it? By looking in the most obvious places – our gifts, passions, and values.

Our purpose will always be something that:

- We feel that we are naturally good at and enjoy doing
- We feel passionate and care deeply about
- We feel fits our values and ways we prefer to operate in the world.

Recall earlier I mentioned that your ideas about your life purpose being unpleasant are groundless? It’s true. Why would we be given a life purpose that doesn’t match the “authentic essence” of who we are?

Would the universe expect a gifted artist to spend her life crunching numbers in an accounting firm? Would the universe expect us to wait tables when our true passion is environmental education?

Our life purpose will always express our true gifts, passions, and values. No exceptions. Does that inspire a little sigh of relief for you? Hopefully it will.

Before we can discover our true life purpose, we need to “unlock the clues” that lead to it. Namely, things we love to do, feel passionate about, and are important to our way of being.

What’s Calling?

Take a look at the Calling Cards™ exercise on these websites. The exercise will help you unlock your purpose.

- Richardleider.com
- Lifereimagined.org

Don't be put off by the work of unlocking your life purpose. There's nothing mystical or mysterious about it. It's natural to seek meaning in our lives. And it's important for our health and happiness. Yet, it does require some work. It's rarely revealed to us without some digging.

The search for life purpose is far more straight-forward than we might expect. Getting it wrong, over and over, is part of the process. It's how we grow.

What is Purpose?

In simple terms, our life purpose is to GROW and to GIVE!

In no sense is any life meaningless. We all impact those around us.

Let's begin at the beginning. From the standpoint of evolutionary biology, the ultimate purpose of life is to sustain life. To "sustain life" means much more than just to survive and reproduce. Survival requires constant "growth."

Nature doesn't stand still; change is the only constant. This is a fundamental law that we can't avoid. To change is to either "grow and survive" or to "decay and die."

We humans don't just grow physically. We also experience "inner growth." We grow intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

Community connection is vital for survival. The needs to "grow" and to "give" are essential elements to our evolutionary survival strategy (along with intelligence and choice). Our early ancestors learned the wisdom, in survival terms, of personal growth, and of giving today because you might need help tomorrow.

Our growth determines our capacity to give.

Through our inner growth as individuals, we collectively contribute to the advancement of the community as a whole. The greater our individual growth, the greater the clarity of our gifts serving those around us. Through them in turn, our impact extends indefinitely, ever rippling outwards.

The quality and individual reach of our service to others is what differs. We give to our family, community, and world in accordance with the quality of growth we project.

As we grow, this impact becomes more subtle, refined, and more powerful. The power of purpose.

Inner "growth," then, is essential to our capacity for "giving."

The gifts we give will be framed and scaled by the phase of our life, and by our present roles, responsibilities, and maturity. We may for example be a parent, a business person, a teacher, a student, a caregiver, an employee, a retired person, or be in any number of these or other roles. Each of our phases and roles in life carries choices for us to "give" and to "grow."

Our life purpose involves a quest for personal growth and a search for meaning through personal contribution. Our purpose evolves as we grow through life phases. Purpose grows and develops with us.

A progressive unlocking of purpose is essential to our health, happiness, and longevity.

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Richard Leider is a bestselling author, keynote speaker, and executive coach. He is the author of nine books, including three best-sellers, and his work has been translated into 20 languages. Repacking Your Bags and The Power of Purpose are considered classics in the personal development field. His newest book, Life Reimagined has recently reached the bestseller lists.