

HOW TO FIND YOUR LIFE PURPOSE

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How to Find Your Life Purpose: Introduction

*This is **part 1** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



"The biggest threat to our well-being is the absence of moral clarity and purpose." — Rich Sherman

"The unexamined life is not worth living." — Socrates

"Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't." — Richard Bach

Have you ever wondered what is the meaning of life?

What is your life purpose? Do you know what you are here on Earth for?

Most people don't think about their life purpose.

For many, they see life as doing what they are told and living out a pre-defined existence. Life is about studying, working, starting a family, having kids, going for a holiday once in a while, and then dying from sickness or old age at some point.

To them, the idea of having a purpose is dumb or even "hippy." They are more interested in following the latest fads, following what the media says, shopping, and following the life path as defined by society and government. Questioning things is just being silly.

For the apathetic who are jaded about life, life is just... life. Eat, sleep, wake up, get things done, rinse and repeat. They don't see the point about thinking deeper or creating a meaningful life.

For the nihilistic who find no meaning in life, they feel that it is pointless to find a life purpose. To them, life has no intrinsic meaning or value. Why find a purpose if something has no meaning?

But what if I were to tell you that you have a specific purpose in life? One that's different from what you have been taught all this while? One that's greater than anything you have ever imagined?

What if the meaning of your life is far greater than anything you've been told about yourself and the world, but you just can't see it yet because you've been repressing your true and highest self?

How to Find Your Life Purpose series

If you

1. are looking for your purpose,
 2. aren't sure if you are living your purpose right now,
 3. aren't interested in finding a purpose yet you are reading this page for some reason, or
 4. don't believe that you have a purpose or that life has a purpose,
- then this series is for you.

For some of you, you may be skeptical about this series. For the nihilistic of you who believe life is meaningless, you may think that this series is utter rubbish. For the apathetic of you who don't care about whether you have a purpose or not, you may view this series with scorn. *Life purpose? Who cares?*

That's fine. The point is that you're here at this blog, and you're reading this now for a reason. To you, I invite you to read this series with an open mind, without bias. Do not approach this series with judgment, scorn, or expectation, but simply with an open intent to learn. For it is when we adopt an open mind that we learn the most, as opposed to evaluating things with a closed mind and skepticism.

At the end of the day, there's no harm in reading this series, except an hour or so of your time invested. If you don't like what you read by the time you are done, you can close shop and move on. If you hate the content, you can leave and never come back. If you disagree with some of the content, you are welcome to embrace your own views, without obligation to change any opinion. I do not expect you to change anything about yourself.

But, let's say that somehow, through the course of this life purpose series, you discover something new about yourself and your life.

What's going to happen? Firstly, you'll be able to take this knowledge and apply that right away. You'll be able to use this nugget of information to further yourself in your journey. Secondly,

you'll become wiser than before you read this series, which is the goal of everything I write on this blog.

And let's say... through this series, you find your life purpose. Your life purpose that has eluded you all this while, but becomes so clear all of a sudden.

What's going to happen?

Suddenly, life as you know it will be different. Suddenly, you discover a whole new spectrum of life that you never knew before. Suddenly, you wake up each day with a new-found zest of what's to come, and what you're about to do — **more than you have ever done before.**



(Image: [Iakov Kalinin](#))

I'm not saying that you'll find your life purpose just by reading this series. That depends on how far along you are in your self-development, how much thought you put into this series, and how

far you take the content and exercise that I'll be sharing in the next few parts.

All I'm saying is, having a purpose is a part of living a conscious life. I want to support you in living your best life ever. By keeping an open mind (and heart), you allow yourself to gain new insights, in turn accelerating your path toward living your highest life.

If you feel that you have full clarity of your purpose, I invite you to read this series with an open mind and see what comes out of it. Sometimes, it's possible that what we think is the truth isn't the truth, in which it's by adopting an open mind that the *real* truth will come to us. If what you think is your purpose is truly your purpose, it'll come back to you by the time we're done.

My hope is that by the end of this series, you'll be several steps closer toward finding your real purpose — in turn, living a conscious life of your creation. Whether you find your purpose or not is a secondary effect that happens when the right things are in place. Like I often share with my clients, progress, not perfection, is the key.

Here's my hand — I'm stretching it out to you now. In the next few parts of this series, I'll be walking you through the journey of finding your purpose — your highest mission in life.

Proceed to Part 2: [5 Reasons You Should Have a Life Purpose](#), where we look into what is a life purpose and why it's important to have one.

5 Reasons You Should Have a Life Purpose

*This is **part 2** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



(Image: MichelleWalz)

“When a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind.” — Seneca

“Having a purpose is the difference between making a living and making a life.” — Tom Thiss

“Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.” — John F. Kennedy

What is a “life purpose”? Is it some woo-woo thing that only people who meditate and chant in a cave get? Is it some religious term for holy saints? What exactly is it?

Well, there are multiple interpretations of what a “life purpose” is. For the spiritual folks, they may see it a higher calling. For the religious, they may see it as an instruction from God.

Beyond religious connotations, a life purpose is simply **your life’s message**. It is the message you wish to drive in the world during your time on Earth. An example of a life purpose is “To inspire everyone to greatness” or “To touch every human on Earth” or “To relieve every living being of suffering.” Having a life purpose applies to all of us, whether we are religious or atheists.

Other terms for life purpose are “life direction,” “purpose statement,” and “life mission.” They are all the same thing.

It doesn’t matter whether you’re 10 years old, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, or older. **As long as you wish to live a more meaningful and conscious life, a life purpose is for you.**

Why Have a Life Purpose?

Some of you may ask, “Why have a life purpose? Why not just live life as we know it and ignore everything else? Why not chill out and relax until we die?”

Here are 5 reasons why you need to have a life purpose.

1. Life purpose is the starting point of life



(Image: [Chiot's Run](#))

I assume you're reading this blog not because you're looking for shopping tips or gossip. Chances are, you're reading this blog because you see the importance of personal growth... your personal growth. Deep inside, you are passionate about living your best life, and you feel that the content here may help you do that.

A life purpose is the **first step to live your most conscious life**. While you can be busy with a million tasks every day, when you don't have a clear purpose, you may be heading down the wrong path. That's because your goals may have nothing to do with your purpose, which means that you can pursue your current goals for the next 10, 20 years, only to realize that this isn't what you wanted after all. As Stephen Covey once said, "If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster."

On the other hand, when you have a life purpose, that's when conscious living begins. While it doesn't mean that all your problems disappear, at least you know what you want to drive in this world. With a clear purpose, you can then set the right goals and plans, and take the right daily steps to create your most meaningful life.

In short:

No purpose → Vague goals or no goals → Vague plans or no plans → Random daily actions, Procrastination, or Constantly busy with others' agendas ✗
Clear purpose → Clear goals → Clear plans → Clear daily actions ✓

You want to make sure that your ladder is leaning against the right wall first, then climb up the ladder. Make sure you get the big picture right first, then perfect your goals/ plans/ daily actions. This big picture is your life purpose.

2. Clarity on what's important vs. unimportant

When you know your purpose, it helps you differentiate between the important and unimportant. Most people today are so caught up with so many things that ultimately do not make a difference in their lives. *Earn more money! Get a house! Get a second house! Get a car! Get a second car! Get a fleet of cars!* When you have a purpose, you can immediately see which goals are important and which aren't vs. your long-term life path. You can cut through the BS and get right to the things that matter.

For example, after I found my purpose, I realized that almost all the goals that I had been working toward previously were pointless in the grand scheme of things. Rather, the most important thing for me

is the ability to raise the world's consciousness and help others grow. I share more in my purpose story in part 4 of the series.

The great thing is that investing a few months of my life to discover my purpose allowed me to work on it right away. Rather than waste some 20, 30 years of my life pursuing things that I thought I wanted and needed, I could start paving the path toward my highest life — even if I couldn't act on it right away. Two and a half years after I found my purpose, I started my blog, PersonalExcellence.co. Today (2017), it's been a decade since I started the site and PE grows bigger than ever. We have a million pageviews at the blog every month, with readers from over 200 countries/territories. The great thing is, I feel like I'm just getting started and I can't wait to see what the next few years will bring!

I often talk about [the 80/20 principle](#), where you focus on the [20% big rocks](#) to get maximum change. However, you can't know what your 20% big rocks are unless you are clear about what's truly important to you. This starts from knowing your life purpose. When you discover your purpose, you can direct your focus to the real important things. Instead of wasting your time on the inconsequential stuff, you can focus on your 20% big rocks. Big rocks that matter not to others, not to the society, but to *you*.

3. Live a life of meaning



(Image: [Daxiao Productions](#))

When you pursue your purpose, your life becomes filled with direction and meaning. As opposed to wasting your time in a job you don't love, now you can work toward a career that better fits your purpose. As opposed to being around toxic people who are incompatible with you, now you can find people who share the same values to build your highest life. As opposed to living a random existence, now you can create your life of the highest meaning. This in itself is magic.

This is what happened to one of my coaching clients, Anna. After she found her life purpose, she began to transit to her ideal life. Even though she started off in an unideal place (she was working in a job she didn't like, IT security), we quickly identified her long-term plan to pursue her purpose. From there, she took a certification course to build the right skills, started her Facebook business page, built her blog, gained traffic, got her first clients, and found her tribe. Just recently, she submitted her resignation to pursue this full time.

In Anna's words, “I feel like I was born a fish and for the first time in my life, I’ve jumped in the ocean to swim with my fish friends. :)” This is a stark contrast from when I first met her at the beginning of our sessions, where she was very frustrated as she wasn’t doing what she loved.

Like I mentioned above, it doesn't mean that life becomes peachy and filled with roses once you find your purpose. You still need to put in the hard work to make things happen. But now you have the right direction to set you forward. :)

4. Constant drive and passion

When you pursue your purpose, you gain an incredible burst of energy that keeps you going.

The ability to pursue my life purpose fills me up with so much energy and passion that I’m excited every day. :) Every morning, I get out of bed, excited at what I'm going to create. At night, I dread going to sleep because I would much rather be living my purpose than spend 6-8 hours asleep!

On the other hand, when you aren’t living your purpose, days become a drag. Weekdays come and you do what’s needed; weekends approach and you look forward to them. Then the week starts and you wake up to Mondays with resistance, waiting for weekends to come again.

This was what I experienced in my last months at my previous job, prior to pursuing my purpose. While I did everything with perfection, I didn't go to work excited to get to my task list. In fact, my day job became increasingly painful as I didn't feel that it was relevant to my life’s message.

If you look forward to weekends and vacations as opposed to what you do each day, it's time to think about whether your work is something you really care about, or whether it is simply a means to an end. Pursue something of the highest meaning to you. To do this, you need to first start with, "What is my purpose?" (which we'll get to later).

5. Achieve success (in your terms)

Many people look for success as an end in itself. However, I want to highlight that success is an *effect* of doing what you love (and having clear plans, goals, skills) vs. something you aim for as an end in itself.

What do I mean? If you've read my article [10,000 Hours To Develop Talent](#), you'll know that "talent" isn't inborn as much as it is something that's cultivated through time. Whether it takes 10,000 or 20,000 hours of hard work, the point is that everyone starts from somewhere, and it's through consistent work in honing our craft that we become "talented" in an area.

Now, clocking 10,000 or 20,000 hours in something is no easy feat. If you consider that we are productive for mostly 4-5 hours a day (not including admin work and distractions), that's about 8.5 years to clock 10,000 hours. 8.5 years! That's 8.5 years to develop talent, which *may* help you achieve success in your field. Who would have the energy to turn up for work every day and thrive in a field that he/she doesn't care about for 8.5 years? Maybe a robot, but even robots need to recharge!

Rather than aim for success as an end in itself, wouldn't it make more sense to first identify what you truly care about, and then direct your energy to make this a reality? This is where your purpose comes in. When you discover your true purpose,

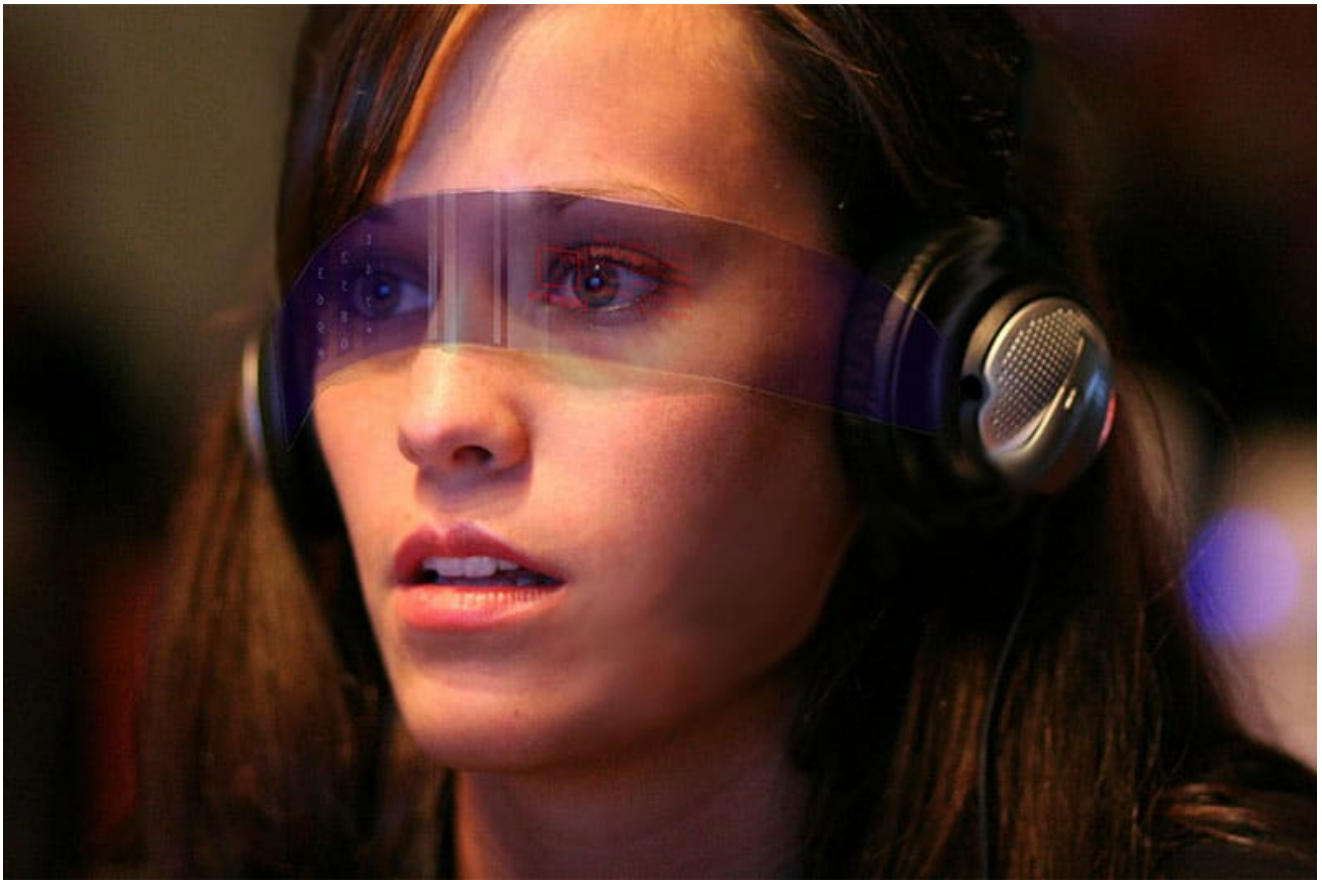
- You will naturally want to devote your life to pursue it, because it gives you the most fulfillment.
- You will naturally want to spend time doing it, because you care.
- You will naturally get better at it, even if you are starting from ground zero, because the time you spend on it will give you the experience and skills to succeed.

Because of that, success is imminent. You will excel in whatever you set out to do.

Now that I have shared the 5 benefits of finding your life purpose, in the next part, I'll talk about false purposes. It's crucial to know this as we work on your purpose discovery later in the series. Read [Part 3: Why Earning Money Is Not Your Real Purpose \(And How to Know What Is\)](#)

Why Earning Money Is Not Your Real Purpose (And How to Know What Is)

*This is **part 3** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



(Image: [Leonard Low](#))

*"It is never too late to be who you might have been." —
George Eliot*

When you were a kid, were you told by your parents, teachers, peers, or religious leaders what you should do in life? It may be to earn a lot of money, to be successful, to be respectable, to be a filial child, to contribute to society, or to serve a higher entity.

Whatever it is, what role did you play in identifying it? Did you have a say in determining this goal? Did you brainstorm and think about all the things you want to do or who you want to be, before deciding on what you want to do?

The likelihood is that somehow, somewhere, people decided how you should lead your life on your behalf without including you in the decision-making process. What seemed like a choice was no more than a series of suggestions and conditioned messages that you received since young, creating the impression that your life choices were *your* choices, when they were really just instructions that you were asked to follow, or at best — a small subset of "choices" you were made to pick from.

These are false or imposed purposes — purposes imposed on you by others. False purposes are not your true purposes. They have been glossed over and packaged as unquestionable truths. Because of the way they are subtly pressed into our lives, and because of all the structures that seem to support these beliefs — from media reports to religious structures to school textbooks — few people challenge these beliefs. To them, this is the gospel truth. To them, this is the way of life.

For example, if people tell you that your life purpose is to grow up, get married, and have kids, and every person around you is doing

the same, then it's pretty hard to question this. When you watch dramas, you see the same thing — discussions about marriage and having kids by the lead characters, aspirations of the same. This is especially so in Taiwanese, Japanese, and Korean dramas.

Likewise for purposes to earn a lot of money, to fit society's definition of success, to work in a major financial institution, to be a celebrity, and or to follow a religion blindly. When every aspect of your reality supports this path, you simply accept this as the gospel truth, even when life can be much more than that.

I grew up pursuing false purposes, such as to earn money, to be successful, to respect my religion (Buddhism), and to be a good citizen of society. After over a decade of unconscious adherence, I finally discovered my life purpose and began to live life consciously (I share my full purpose story in part 4).

I need to clarify that I am not undermining the merit of the paths above. For what it's worth, these paths could be true purposes for other people, and that's fine. Even though I am now non-religious, I am more conscious and appreciative of the teachings in Buddhism than when I was a Buddhist. For what it's worth, when you trace back to the early teachings of many religious gods or entities, many of them never wanted to be worshiped as a god or to turn their teachings into a religion.

All I am saying is that unless you're pursuing a path that is the result of your conscious evaluation and choice, your life has not begun. Having lived on both sides of the coin, I can say that there is a very big difference between living a conscious life and an unconscious life.

Here are the differences between a false purpose and a real purpose:

Traits of a False (or Imposed) Purpose

- **Inculcated since young.** A false purpose is often inculcated in you since young. This direction can come from being part of a larger community, such as a family unit, culture, society, religion, or nation. It's something that everyone parrots, so there's little room to question this or think differently. This is particularly so in Asian cultures such as the Indian culture and the Chinese culture, which are very conformist by nature. The intention of such cultures is to shape a person to fit the identity of the community, rather than to focus on self-actualization.
- **Unconscious.** A false purpose is unconscious. You do it because that's what you have been told to do all along. You've never thought deeply about what you want to do and all the possible options you can follow. You simply do this because that's what everyone is doing, and what's expected of you.
- **Part of an expectation.** A false purpose is part of an expectation. Everyone says to study and do well in school, so you study and do well in school. Everyone says to get a well-paying job in a good company, so you get a well-paying job in a good company. Everyone says to get married and have kids, so you get married and have kids. Everything you do is part of an expectation, be it your parents' implicit expectation or society's expectation.
- **Driven by fear.** A false purpose tends to be driven by fear or obligation to live up to others' expectations. You follow it because you want to avoid repercussions. For example, anger or disapproval from your parents. Rejection by your community. Shame from society. Being left out. Being seen as not living up to your duties.
- **Is empty.** A false purpose will not satisfy you in the long run. While you may feel fulfilled in the short run, such satisfaction comes from pursuing any goal. In the long run, you will start to feel dissatisfaction, like you can be doing more or that there can

be more to life. For some people, their consciousness never grows beyond [a sleepwalker's](#) so they never come to this realization but live life in a mechanical way each day.

Examples of false purposes are earning money, continuing a family business simply because you're born into the family, following a religion because you were born into it or that was what you were taught in school, achieving certain social statuses, and any life direction that you never questioned but simply took as your own.

A false purpose doesn't have to fulfill *all* the characteristics. It can fulfill one of the traits and still be a false purpose.

Traits of a Real (or Liberating) Purpose

- **Conscious choice.** A real purpose, on the other hand, is something you consciously adopt. It's not something that you assume as a result of your race, culture, or birth. It is not something you choose because you have no other choice. It's something that you consciously choose to follow.
- **Comes from within.** A false purpose is often from outside → in, meaning it is something you were taught or repeatedly told since young, after which you adopt as your life path. A real purpose comes from inside → out, meaning it is something that you decide on your own, independent of outside influence or pressure.
- **Not an expectation.** A real purpose is not the result of an expectation. You do it because you want to. You were not told to do this. You are also not expected to do it.
- **Driven by love.** A real purpose is driven by love. You do not do it because of expectation or because everyone else is doing it. Neither do you do it out of habit nor routine. Rather, you do it because you want to.

- **Inspires you.** A real purpose resonates with every fiber of your being. It does not make you feel pressurized or fearful. Instead, it inspires you.
- **Lasting meaning.** Pursuing your purpose fulfills you intrinsically. This fulfillment does not come from the reward that comes from doing it, but from simply being able to pursue your path.

Examples of real or liberating purposes are anything that you have consciously decided to do, such as growing and helping others, environmental activism (saving Mother Earth), bringing positivity to the world, advocacy of peace, helping the poor and less fortunate, and non-cruelty pursuits.

Can you see the difference between the two? As you read these traits, some of them probably resonate with what you have experienced in your life.

What is your current path in life? What is the life path that you have been expected to follow since young? What are the life decisions that people around you constantly tell you to follow?

Whatever they are, question them. Question the basis behind those beliefs. How did they come to be? Who determined that this is the best thing for you? Why should these people determine your life path — have you thought about that? Have you ever thought about what you *really* want to do? Questioning and consciously thinking is the first step to being an active, conscious creator of your life.

In the next part, I share my story of how I found my life purpose and the two important things that helped me discover my purpose. Read [Part 4: Two Important Things that Led Me to Discover My Real Purpose](#)

Two Important Things that Led Me to Discover My Real Purpose

*This is **part 4** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



(Image: [Mike Baird](#))

In this article, I share my experience pursuing **false purposes** for over a decade and how I found my real life purpose. It is a very long article (almost 7,000 words) which chronicles the earlier stages of

my life and what I did in each stage. In the process, there were two important things that led me to my real purpose, which you will find out as you read along.

The article is long as I wanted to fully capture the essence of my purpose discovery so that you can understand my experience living in a societal matrix and how I eventually broke out of it. I recommend to read it in different sittings so you can better digest the info.

As you read, you will find that my experiences are specific to my upbringing and the place I grew up in (Singapore). This doesn't mean that they aren't relevant to you. My story simply reflects how I was brought up, which reflects one way in which society force fits people into a mold.

Your upbringing may be different, such as being brought up in a deeply religious environment, living in a different society, or being taught different values. Simply transpose my experience to your own life experience. Focus on the message and use my experience as a reference in your learning.

To live your best life, always adopt an open attitude, develop a curious and questioning mind, and evaluate everything you see. This way, you will discover the highest truth for yourself.

Inculcated with certain purposes as a kid

When I was a child growing up in Singapore, I was constantly told by peers, teachers, and parents that our objective in life was **to be successful and earn a lot of money**. People who have achieved such statuses are seen as aspirational figures that we should model after, such as celebrities, successful businessmen, corporate leaders, and local politicians.

Not doing well in school meant jeopardizing that end outcome — it was linked with failure and our eventual downfall in life. Students with poor results or in less reputable schools were frowned and looked upon with shame by everyone. This thinking was consistent across students, teachers, and society.

Among us students, our conversations generally revolved around studying, preparing for exams, and project work. Life's biggest highlights were finishing exams, scoring well, and having holidays. During the holidays, some of my friends who were more competitive would start studying for the next semester. Almost everyone had private tuition, on top of the extra classes that school teachers provided. Life as a child was all about studying and doing well in school.

The equation was simple: Get good grades => Get a good job => Earn a lot of money => Success

Since I was too young understand what was a path of real meaning, I trusted in the judgment of those around me and followed suit. Furthermore, we were taught in school that asking questions was a sign of defiance, and we should never ask questions. This is very typical of the Chinese culture which is very much about conformance (Singapore is a Chinese dominant society, with many aspects influenced by the Chinese culture).

So this was what I fixated myself with. Get good grades, so I could earn lots of money. Earn lots of money, because it is the key indicator of success in society. These goals became deeply ingrained in me.

It became like a mantra over time.

While I was set on achieving these material goals, I continued to wonder about the meaning of life sometimes, starting from when I

was 9 or 10. I tried talking about it to one or two friends, but they didn't understand what I was talking about. I would think deeply about this question, but since I could never find an answer, I would park it aside.

That was just a temporary fix as the question would always be floating in my mind. Since I didn't have a real answer, I continued to seek refuge in what I was told by others to be the purpose of life — earning money, achieving material wealth and social statuses, and going through the daily motions.

My first experience living out my false purposes

Throughout my schooling life before university, I was regarded as a top performer. I was consistently the recipient of many academic awards, was one of the top students in my cohort, and a model student. If you were to extrapolate my results when I was a kid to adulthood, it was safe to say that I was on my way to live out my intended purpose to earn money and to be extremely successful in the Singapore society.

In 1998, I was 15 years old. I had my own computer for the first time. At this point, one of my friends told me about this online dude who was earning money through his website. I was immediately intrigued since I knew that earning money was an important goal, based on what I was taught.

So at the age of 15, I started learning web and graphic design by myself, outside of school. At that time, the school curriculum in Singapore (before tertiary education) was very fixed — there was little choice in what you could study, and you don't learn "fringe" skills like web/graphic design in school as they had no relevance to increasing the GDP. (Now web development does have relevance, so I won't be surprised if there are school classes on these.)

I started to learn to make websites by myself by reading up online. I would spend late nights tinkering with code, graphics, FTP, and consulting others in web hosting chat rooms.

I developed a site on the same topic as that guy (desktop enhancements), since it was a proven success model. I created my content from scratch and learned about online marketing and monetization. As my site grew in popularity, I used my skills to create other sites, including a wallpaper competition site, a voting site, an anime site, and a forum for wallpaper designers. I also reached out to other web owners to socialize and build a positive community for everyone.

By 2000, I was the owner of a network of 5 sites, with each site being highly successful and well-regarded in its niche. By 2001, I had created a total of 10 sites, something that I shared [here](#). My sites soon reached half a million visitors a month, an extremely high traffic milestone then (and today). I was getting checks from advertisers in the mail on a regular basis.

If earning money and being successful were supposed to be my life purpose, I was achieving it in my own way. While peers around me were busy studying, I was earning money and partly living out my purpose. As a 15-16-year old, I was very satisfied with my achievements.

Increased alignment with these purposes

When I was 18, I made the arbitrary goal to earn \$1 million dollars and get a convertible when I was older. In Singapore where I live, a car is regarded as a symbol of luxury and success due to its exorbitant price here. The limited land area in Singapore and government policies have artificially inflated car prices and turned them into luxury goods.

Singapore, being a very material society, further prizes the importance of cars in one's social standing and worth. Convertibles are a different, higher league of luxury goods compared to regular cars. When I was 18, there was a time when a friend drove me around in his Toyota Celica (a convertible which was regarded as very slick then), and this inspired me to get a convertible when I grew up.

The education system in Singapore is very cleanly segmented into phases. The conventional route is to move from kindergarten to primary school, to secondary school, to junior college (if grades permit), to university, and finally to the workforce. This makes up nearly two decades of schooling. The objective of each stage is to graduate with top results so that you can enter into a good school at the next stage. The ultimate objective of the education system is to get a reputable, high paying job.

When it was time to choose my university course, I decided to enter business school as it represented to me the pinnacle of wealth and success. This was the most logical thing that my 18-year-old self could conjure, as someone who had been repeatedly told about the importance of earning money. This was the only thing pummeled in my mind since young, and the only thing I knew since Singapore was the only place I grew up in as a child.

After entering business school, the importance of wealth and success was further reinforced. Everyone's focus was to get a high GPA, build resumes, secure internships, and ultimately gain employment in top companies. The buzz topic was about how to secure a position in a top company — preferably an MNC with excellent growth opportunities, attractive benefits, and a top reputation. On campus, there were plenty of recruitment talks, career seminars, networking events, and company-sponsored

competitions. All of them were invariably linked to getting hired by a top MNC.

During university, I kept myself busy. Studies-wise, I focused on what helped me get the best results, spending time on assignments, tests, and projects, and skipping lectures that were a waste of time. I was on the [Dean's List](#), an honorary roll for top students. I eventually graduated as the top student in Marketing and was honored with accolades for being the most outstanding Business student. In the school, I was actively involved in core-curricular activities, building my resume with leadership skills. Outside of school, I was running my graphic and web design business. I also gave private tuition to kids, as part of my drive to earn more money.

When I was a second-year student, I applied for a summer internship with the most prestigious Fortune 100 company for brand management – Procter & Gamble, also touted as the dream company for marketers. Because a placement with them is highly coveted, I was vying with nearly a thousand candidates for that internship, including high flyers in the region. After 6 rounds of qualifying tests, including personality tests, behavioral interviews, and a qualitative test, I was awarded the internship. After the internship, I received a pre-placement offer due to my strong performance. This was two years before my intended graduation.

Overall, I felt that I was living true to the societal purpose to earn money and to be successful. I became more confident in my abilities and I knew that as long as I worked hard on my goals in life, I would definitely achieve them at some point.

Taking a step back from everything

As I felt that my learning curve in school was plateauing, I decided to opt out of the honors program and graduate one year earlier with

a Bachelor's Degree. I was 20 then. Since I had already achieved the widely established goal of education (to secure employment in a top company), I wanted to spend my last year of school relishing in life. I stopped my graphic design business and tuition assignments.

For the first time in my life, I wasn't looped in any pursuit. As everyone around me was busy working on their resumes, studying, applying for jobs, and attending recruitment talks, I was just sitting and watching. This got me thinking about my life and my place in everything.

Thinking about life

Everything was seemingly in the right place — my grades, my employment offer, and my life.

Yet I felt like I was a missing bigger picture. Sure, I was completing my education, regarded as the first major hurdle in life. I had secured a promising career with the best company for my specialization. I was a top performer in school. While achieving these goals gave me a huge gratification at first, they felt strangely empty after a short while.

Have you ever thought about your future before? Not just one, two, or five years into the future. Not just 10 years into the future either. I'm talking about 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 years into the future — even to the point of death, and beyond. If you have seriously thought about this before, you would find it an extremely consciousness-raising event.

My free time gave me a lot of time to think. As a very goal-oriented person, I started to think about my future. I started to plan for what's next, on how to live a meaningful life.

I started thinking about the present. I looked at what I had carved out so far — in school, in my work, and in my other endeavors such as my design business. I felt satisfied. There were things that I felt I could have done better in, but overall I was happy.

I thought about 5 years later. *Where would I be if I continue my current path?* In 5 years, I would probably be excelling in my career, moving up the rungs of the corporate world, earning good money, achieving material goals (nice house, nice car), and enjoying a comfortable life. Basically, things viewed highly in Singapore society. I started imagining the amount of money I would be earning then, and the thought of earning a lot of money was quite inspiring. In Singapore and many parts of the world, to earn a lot of money is to live a rich life.

I thought about 10 years later. In 10 years, I would likely have earned a few million dollars. I would be more well-off – snuggled in material possessions. Career-wise, I would be well ahead, in a high, leadership position. I would want to have traveled across a large part of the world then, whether as part of my work or for leisure. I might be married then. Given my wealth, I would be able to give my parents an early retirement.

By most standards, the scenario looked pretty good. It fitted society's picture of an ideal life to a tee. I wondered what would be needed to take things to a higher level, but my mind drew up a blank. I didn't know what else I should aim for beyond that. Maybe I could switch industry, such as to consultancy, or switch to a different corporation, to expose myself to a different environment. In the corporate world, management consultancy is a highly aspirational career due to the high perks, the exclusiveness, and the intense challenges. Maybe I could set higher goals to earn even more money since wealth is a measure of worth and power. Maybe I could start planning for kids as a next step beyond marriage.

Then I projected 20 years into future. *What if I have achieved those goals then? Worked and thrived in a consultancy, earned even more money, gained new social statuses, and had kids? What's next?* I thought I could switch my focus to my family. Perhaps my family and I could migrate to a quiet countryside where we could enjoy a peaceful, relaxing lifestyle. For some reason, I always thought that I would migrate to a western country and this looked like a perfect time to do that.

With that in mind, I projected 30 years into the future. What would be in store for me here? My children would be teenagers by then. What would I be doing? What should I do? I couldn't think of anything much. The only recurring goals were to earn more money, to gain recognition, and to build a loving family. After all, these are the things repeatedly shown to us in dramas, on television, and in the media. These seemed like safe goals to pursue since they are endorsed by almost everyone in the world.

Then I thought about 40 years later. More money, more success. Possibly grandkids by then. Enjoying the bliss of family life.

50 years later. Relishing in a life of luxury, surrounded by symbols of success.

60. Same thing.

70.

80.

At the point of death.

After death.

This was when the whole picture looked different.

When I started to project beyond death, beyond the physical world, everything that I had been taught to see as important, such as money, nice apartment, nice big car, material goods, career, status, accolades, and even good looks, suddenly lost their significance.

Missing a bigger context in life

When I started looking at life beyond the context of death, it made no sense to me that our deepest purpose is to create physical possessions and dedicate ourselves *only* to a few specific relationships until we die. I projected the same scenario for many purposes that I had been conditioned with, but they just crumbled when placed in the bigger context of life and death.

For example, **to earn money and be successful**. Money was clearly important to me then. I was taught to see that [in a materialistic society that is Singapore](#). Here, there are huge billboard ads of flashy possessions everywhere, very extravagant malls dominating the entire city area, and the ethos of the societal consciousness is all about material goods, earning money, etc. Everything is expensive here and increasingly so over the years. All people talk about here is money; the center of most people's existence here is earning money. Try talking to any local here and that's the sense you'll get. Money or the lack of it is the general thing people talk about.

Money would be even more important to me in 10, 20 years' time, as I pursued other goals like traveling, starting a family, and buying a house. It's also good to have a lot of cash for rainy days. Having money would determine my quality of life on some level.

But when I thought about the future — beyond physical existence, money stopped mattering anymore. No matter how much money I visualized myself having, I couldn't take it to my afterlife. It did not

matter if I had \$1 million, \$5 million, \$100 million, or \$10 billion dollars — they would all be worthless after death. All the money that I had spent my whole life earning and surrounding myself with would be nothing more than a fluffy accessory that looked good, but served no deep meaning. Its impermanence made me realize its hollowness as an end goal.

Sure, money would be important *during* my life on Earth, but I'm talking about life in the bigger spectrum of things. Our entire spiritual existence. I believe that we are souls that live forever, and our time on Earth is merely a small part of our entire existence. Our death on Earth merely demarcates the end of our current physical life, not our life as a spirit (and I don't mean this with any religious connotations). When physical death comes, you can't bring your money with you since it is a physical, man-made creation. And if you spend your entire life focusing on earning money as the ultimate end goal but it has zero bearing on your spiritual existence, doesn't that become pointless?

It isn't just about money either. This also applied to other commonly extolled goals, such as **fame, recognition, or to own expensive possessions**. I simulated different scenarios in my mind and pictured myself achieving the highest level of success in them. Each time, the situation looked good in the physical world, only to crumble when I projected beyond death. All the things which I would spend so much time and energy building up (in my imagined world) stopped mattering beyond our physical existence.

Say if I were the CEO of the largest consumer goods company, earned \$100 million dollars a year, lived in a huge 4-story mansion, or owned 10 Ferrari's. **It wouldn't matter at all after death. It would be nice during my short 80-90-year human existence. But it would be pointless, say, in my entire ten-thousand or**

hundred-thousand-year existence as a spiritual being who is being reborn into different lives.

Another example is in the area of **relationships** — such as being filial, starting a family, or fostering strong relationships with friends. A relationship is essentially a dyad between two individuals. When the individuals are gone, the relationship itself is lost as well. I will die someday, and so will the other people in the relationship. This applies whether it's with my kids, parents, friends, sibling, spouse, etc. Our memories and awareness of our time together become lost, and the relationship disappears. What is the place of relationships in our spiritual existence of say a million years, if we keep forming relationships but lose them each time we die, then rebuild them when we return to the world? Furthermore, how about all the other 7 billion lives on the planet? Do they not matter just because we were not born into those families, because we have no familial ties with them, and/or because we don't know each other?

In addition, I didn't understand why we are part of this cycle of life and death which has seemingly no end. **Why are we brought into this world, if we are to die? Why is new life constantly being created only to end at some point? Why is there life and death? What is the real point of life? Is there an endpoint to this cycle?**

The more I thought about it, the more confused I was. Everything was bringing more questions, not answers.

All these made me realize that **there is a much bigger context to life than what society and people around me kept painting.**

While society and people around me kept focusing on shopping, buying things, food and eating, gossip, earning money, and statuses, there is something bigger out there. The purposes I had been pursuing in the past decade seemed to be flawed. I do not deny that there are merits behind these objectives, but they clearly

have no role as a singular life purpose. It seems that there is a bigger framework that holds all these together, a bigger framework I was not privy to yet.

I started sounding out my friends. I tried to share with them my revelations about the hollowness of the goals we had been pursuing. I tried to trigger them to think further about their lives.

To be honest, no one cared about me. Everyone was too busy studying, sending resumes, and securing interviews. While some understood what I was talking about intellectually, there was no emotional resonance. **To be honest, no one really cared about what I was saying — they probably thought I was crazy.**

Everyone was more interested in continuing on in the loops of society, rather than really thinking about the deeper meaning of their life and the point of what we were striving for.

Suddenly, I felt all alone in the world. It was a kind of loneliness that I had never experienced before.

Pursuit to discover my real purpose

In hindsight, it was only when I stopped getting caught in the whole frenzy of pursuing a societal purpose that I realized how drone-like it was. As I observed others from the sideline, everyone was caught in a race of some sort. They were busying themselves to achieve a certain outcome (be it earning money, getting XYZ job, getting good marks for an exam/assignment, etc.), but did not really stop to think about whether this outcome was what they wanted. They kept worrying day-in and day-out about their results, interviews, and job placements. Nobody thought about their life beyond that.

What kind of life were they looking at after school? What kind of life did they want to live in 5, 10, 20 years? No one really thought about

that. Their life objective seemed simplistically narrowed down to 1) getting a good GPA, and 2) getting a job offer. It was if they were [sleepwalking through their lives](#).

Ironically, that was probably a very adept descriptor of me before I stopped to think about my future.

Interestingly, despite all the time we spend in school, there is never any formal education on discovering our life purpose or even discovering ourselves. Despite all the time we spend living, the fraction of time people spend thinking about their purpose is minuscule, even non-existent.

Compare this to the time we spend doing other things instead. Say, study, eat, make money, buy things, chat, watch TV, discuss news, go out, and sleep. Surely something of such fundamental importance deserves more attention than anything else! Everyone seems more involved in going through the motions every day than to find out why they are here. This is especially so in Singapore, where life is essentially a drone existence, where the whole point of life is just to earn money, work, and die. Basically to live a template existence. To be honest, this is probably the same in places like Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, or places where human rights are low, individuality is devalued, and people are treated as dispensable cogs in the wheel.

[Reading books on purpose](#)

I tried reading books on purpose. Many of them give half-baked answers without tackling the question at its core. Instead of helping the reader to discover his or her purpose, the authors declare what their purpose is (along the lines of 'serving the highest good of all,' 'unite with god,' 'be happy,' or 'live life to the fullest') and assume it should be the reader's purpose as well. While their purposes have

merit, I was not looking for them to 'tell' me what my purpose was just like everybody else. I was looking for pointers on **how to find it**. I was running into another dead end.

Reading different sites and materials

I also started becoming an avid reader on various consciousness-raising sites, such as Zaadz (now known as [Gaia](#)) and Global Mindshift (site now defunct).

One noteworthy piece I read was this winning essay from World Bank. World Bank has an annual essay competition where participants write about their passion and conviction in various world causes, stemming from their real-life experiences. (This depends on the topic for the year.) The piece that struck me was written by this person whose whole life changed when she witnessed her best friend dying in a terrorist bombing. At that point, I was just 20. While I intellectually knew that there were many unjustified mortalities in this world, to read the personal account of someone who had lived through it is totally different.

I also watched a series of videos talking about our human story (the site is gone but a kind soul has uploaded them to YouTube [here](#)), which I found a refreshing change from the low-level messages I kept getting fed with in school and by the media.

Seeking meaning in religion

How about my religion? I was born into Buddhism; my parents are Buddhists and my mom is a particularly devoted Buddhist. I would go to the temples whenever expected to do so by my parents. But beyond that, I did not have any understanding or strong emotional attachment toward Buddhism. A funny thing I observed was that whenever I tried to make any comment or ask any question regarding Buddhism, my parents would deem me as being deviant

and would immediately shut me up. It was bizarre and made no sense whatsoever. I have no question of doubt that my parents had personal experiences which strengthened their faith but I felt that they are overall unconscious followers.

As I was growing up, I remained largely a detached Buddhist. Most of my friends were like me; they were born into their religion and adopted it as part of their lives, rather than it being a choice made consciously. I assume religion is more of an outlet for people to seek solace in life.

Regarding other religions, I never paid much attention to them since it was a widely known fact that religious texts have been written, rewritten, and modified over the ages by people with their own set of agenda. I was also not able to reconcile with how all the different religions in the world claim that what they advocate to be the *single* truth. Shouldn't there should only be one single truth in the world? Which religion represents the real truth? Who is right and who is wrong? If there can only be a religion that is correct, how can all the people following different religions be blind to the truth? Since there were only questions but no answers, I kept the topic of religions in the back burner and never thought about it much.

Over time though, my curiosity for the truth started nagging at me. The need for an answer became stronger when I was trying to figure out the actual purpose of our life. While it is easy to write off religions and claim that the followers are unconscious or disillusioned, there are way too many people for this assumption to stand (for example, we are talking about [at least 400 million people for Buddhism \(fifth largest religion\)](#) and [over 2.2 billion people for Christianity \(the largest religion\)](#)!). For a certain religion to survive and withstand the test of time, I truly believe there has to be a certain level of truth behind it.

I started examining different religions and their beliefs. When I compared them, I observed **many commonalities and underlying themes** such as the existence of a certain larger power we can tap into; advocacy of values like love, compassion, selflessness, wisdom, and courage; use of meditation to attain a peace of mind; observed affirmative phenomena arising from positive beliefs; etc. While the religions come under different names and have different practices/rituals, I realized **they are really the same in essence!** I started to realize that there *is* one single universal truth, with each religion being the result of viewing that truth using different cultural lenses.

Instead of writing off religions, I realized that **everyone in this world with their own set of faith and beliefs are essentially believing in the same thing.** They are just doing it in a different manner and with a different interpretation.

Subsequently, I found out that there is an existing movement (New Age) that aligns with what I had concluded (New Age is about seeking the universal truth and the attainment of the highest individual human potential), as well as everything I have experienced in life thus far.

With that, I broke away from being a Buddhist, since it no longer reflected my new understanding of the world. Me being a non-Buddhist does not mean that I do not believe in Buddhist teachings. In fact, my revelation made me more closely connected to Buddhist teachings, as well as beliefs of all other religions, than when I was a Buddhist. Buddhism actually expounds many principles that are in alignment with what I believe in, and it's a much more conscious "religion" than what some followers may make it out to be (to blindly believe the Buddha, the Buddha is always right, etc.). To everyone

who believes in their religion, we are really all believing in one and the same thing.

Discovering my real purpose

While my revelation on religions shed light on one of my big questions about life, it still did not answer my fundamental question: *What is the point of (human) life and my life?*

I started examining what would last through time and space, throughout human existence. The answer that continuously came up was this: **consciousness**. Our consciousness is our state of awareness and the existence of our being. To put it in simple terms, consciousness is our soul. When we die, we lose our physical bodies. But our consciousness remains in this universe and moves on to a different plane. Depending on your beliefs, you may or may not agree with this — a discussion on this will take quite a lengthy article, which is outside the scope of this piece.

So if consciousness is the one thing lasts through time and space, it is also the single thing worth developing in our lifetime. And let's say we keep developing our consciousness. What is the outcome of its evolution? We can't keep growing and growing, can we? There has to be a certain end point to it. There has to be a certain tangible result that we reach.

I imagined myself evolving to a higher level of consciousness. I also imagined everyone else doing the same thing. The highest, ultimate point I could fathom from scaling up on this goal is the unity of the world. This goes beyond the normal "world peace," "utopia," and "uniting the world" proclamations you typically hear. This is the pure unity of everybody's consciousness — of every single person in the world.

For us to achieve that state, the individual consciousness has to at its pinnacle level first — probably Enlightenment. This isn't enough too. Beyond that, we have to enable others around us to reach the highest level of consciousness. When everyone attains that, that's when our consciousness can ultimately merge and become one single whole. As to what happens after that, we will probably know when we get there.

This made me realize that perhaps the reason we are trapped in the loop of life and death is that everyone is still vibrating at different levels of consciousness. Many people are still stuck at lower levels such as fear, apathy, anger, guilt, and grief. The average consciousness level of the world is currently Fear, Desire, and Pride, which are 9-12 levels below the highest possible level of Enlightenment. If all the individuals in the world attain our highest level of consciousness one day, the cycle of life and death can probably end, since we are all united as a single whole.

So that's it. This was when I realized my life purpose. To reach my highest level of consciousness and to help others do the same (i.e., achieve our highest potential, which is actually my mission for [Personal Excellence](#)) — so we, all of us, can eventually be united as one whole one day.

It's quite an ironic realization too. When I was young, I always thought that people who proclaim about uniting the world, pursuing humanitarian causes, helping other people, etc. were ambitionless. It's something to do with the average societal consciousness in Singapore, which is very focused on material success and defining success in the form of having a cushy job in a financial institution, while downplaying other paths in life. Discussions on helping people, giving back, and contribution were never big in school or in banter. Yet by an interesting twist of fate, I now realize that helping others grow is the core reason for my being because it is

fundamental to achieving my end goal of uniting the world. There is nothing of higher meaning to me than to pursue this with full fervor and passion.

To crystallize my purpose into a mission statement:

- *"To raise the world's consciousness and unite the world as one."*
- *"To achieve my highest potential and live my best life."*

A new-found meaning and passion in life

From then on, I started to embark on my new purpose. This purpose gives me so much clarity, joy, and fulfillment each day. The thought of being in action, helping every single person achieve their highest consciousness, fuels me to no end. It is like an energy reserve that never runs out.

Whenever I see people living lives that are less than what they are capable of, I would be charged up with trying to wake them from their trance. I would think about how to release the mental shackles they place on themselves and their worth. Whenever I succeed in doing so, I would feel a sheer sense of joy and satisfaction that overflows my being.

As simple as these two purpose statements are, **they guide me in my everyday actions and decisions**. Whenever I am faced with a dilemma, I look back at my purpose to renew my clarity. For example, when [I quit my job](#) on Sep 30, 2008, people around me reacted with shock. Some could not fathom why I would make a decision like this. But when I looked at my purpose, it was a very simple and easy decision. My purpose is to help others achieve their highest potential and live their best lives. The career I was in was not in direct alignment with that.

I personally believe that one day, when everyone achieves their highest consciousness, the world will unite and we will move to our next level of existence. It may not happen in the near future, but I believe we are getting there. Just look at the increase in global movements and mind shifts that have been taking place in the past decade — it's undeniable that humanity as a collective has reached a new level of consciousness and maturity. A recent poll 'Is Humanity Growing Up?' (link now defunct) on the perceived maturity of humanity points that we are at the adolescence stage right now. This will no doubt change in years to come.

Note on Jan 2018: Today, 12 years after originally discovering my real purpose, I continue to live fiercely in alignment with it. The journey in these past decade has affirmed what I thought. My purpose has also driven me to do things I would otherwise never have done.

Two Most Important Things That Led to My Purpose Discovery

As I look back, there were two key things that supported me in discovering my real purpose.

1. Discovery of Real Purpose <-> Your Self-Discovery

Firstly, **I was able to discover my real purpose because I had achieved a certain level of awareness.** The discovery of our purpose is tied to our self-discovery. Without first knowing yourself, you can't know what you want to define as the meaning of your life. You have to first know yourself to get the answer to your life questions.

Since I was young, I have been **actively embarking on my personal growth.** I would set and pursue many goals, be it

academic, business, recreational, or financial. I opened myself to learn and explore. No matter what I was doing, I would set the highest standards. As a teen, I was expected to just study in school. But I was curious to learn and explore, and went online to learn web design, graphic design, and coding by myself. At that time in 1998, the internet was at its infancy. Most people did not use the internet, and my few classmates who did were using it to play LAN games or to chat on IRC.

When I was running websites online, I didn't just stop at one website — I started many websites in many niches, turning each website into a leader in its field, and making money at the age of 15-16.

When playing games (I was a serious gamer as a kid), I would go all out and perfect every game, be it fighting or RPG or racing game. Each game I played was an entire universe in itself, and playing and completing every game so fully helped me learn many new things in a short time.

I went all out in everything I did, and still do. Of course, I faced many obstacles along the way, but these helped me learn and grow. These obstacles were growth enablers. If it had been a smooth sailing path, I would still be the same person today.

Even the active pursuit of my false purposes were lessons in growth. As I started to live in line with goals like to earn money, to get a great job, and to have a good social status, I realized they were not what I wanted. Or rather, they are not goals of the highest meaning. If I had not actively pursued them, I would not have found that out. I would still be seeing them as the meaning of life.

All these experiences helped me calibrate and differentiate between meaningful pursuits and non-meaningful pursuits. By knowing myself, I could then discover what I really want to do in life.

2. Your Purpose Should Be Timeless and Universal

Secondly, I learned that **a real purpose should be universal and stand true across time and space**. Time, meaning it should hold true whether you are looking at your purpose 10,000 years ago or 10,000 years later. Space, meaning it's still what you want to do no matter where you are in the universe.

Things like money, material possessions, recognition, etc, are only relevant to our present, physical reality. They lose significance when we start seeing life as something that exists beyond our current physical plane, and our current lifespan. Say, if I were to die today, all the money, material possessions, recognition, statuses, etc. would no longer matter, since they don't exist outside of this reality. To relentlessly acquire them as ends in themselves would be the equivalent of building a candy fort around you — one that would crumble sooner or later. This made me realize my previous purpose to earn money and gain success were not my real purposes.

By viewing life through an entirely different lens, I was able to identify my purpose that is timeless, ageless, and limitless. My purpose of achieving my highest consciousness and helping others achieve their highest consciousness will never be obsolete because at the end of the day, we *are* consciousness. This makes my purpose one that is permanent, unshakable, and impervious to anything, and thus makes it an empowering one to live with.

In the next part, I share 6 important guidelines to consider when identifying your purpose. Your purpose will guide you through every act in life, so it is critical that you define it accurately. Read Part 5: [6 Things to Consider Before Discovering Your Purpose](#)

6 Things to Consider Before Discovering Your Purpose

*This is **part 5** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



(Image: [CarbonNYC](#))

Some self-help authors recommend thinking about your purpose by imagining you are listening to your eulogy at your funeral. What do

you want others to say about you when you die? What is the legacy you want to leave behind?

Personally, I do not agree with this method for two reasons:

1. **Ego-based.** By basing yourself on others' perceptions of you, you are tapping into your ego and fear. A purpose is not about leaving a legacy or making others remember you positively. It is about living your life in a way that you will be proud of.
2. **Short-term.** Our existence between now and physical death is merely a small speck in the spectrum of our spiritual existence. By defining our purpose in the context of our *current* physical life only, we are not living our lives in the fullest possible way.

How to Define My Purpose Then?

Your purpose will guide you through every step in your life, so it is crucial to define it properly.

In part 6 of this series, you will be doing an important deep-dive to uncover your life purpose. Before you do so, let's lay down proper guiding principles on how you should approach your purpose, as they will set the stage for everything. Here are my 6 principles to define your purpose.

1. Resonates with who you are

What do you love doing? Your purpose should reflect your passion and values. This requires a certain level of self-awareness because you can't know what your passion and values are unless you have ventured out before. Ask yourself: *"If I have to do something for the rest of my life, without getting paid a single cent, what would I want to do?"* This is something true to you — it is your purpose, not other people's purpose.

2. Limitless in entity, time and space

You should anchor your purpose on ageless principles. Do not base your purpose on a particular entity (e.g., your family, partner, job, or country), time (e.g., your physical life span), or space (e.g., a geographical location), as this will make your purpose one dimensional. Meaning,

- Instead of basing your purpose on your family, ladder it to a higher order group, such as all human relationships or relationships with all living beings.
- Instead of basing it on religion, ladder it up to spirituality.
- Instead of defining it within your life span, look at the entire spectrum of life — human life or life on Earth as we know it.
- Instead of fixing it on a specific location, look at the entire world, universe, or even the galaxy.

Your purpose should span across (a) entity, (b) time, and (c) space. It is a message, not a medium. You can be more specific when you set goals based on your purpose. For starters, recognize that you are living at a point in the 13.7 billion life span of our current universe (which is one of the many universes out there). You are one of the 7.4 billion lives to walk Earth right now. *If you can live forever, and you're not bounded by geography, what would you want your purpose to be in the context of the entire universe?* What would be the most meaningful thing you could do?

Money and statuses do not withstand this test because they are impermanent things that do not matter in the larger span of human existence. By using this principle, I was able to accelerate the discovery of my life purpose, rather than only waiting 10, 20, 30 years later to realize I was chasing a moot point. This is something I shared in [my purpose story](#).

3. Visionary

Think big. Your purpose is your compass to achieve your highest potential and best life **beyond your wildest imagination**. It should **inspire, energize, and stir your soul!** Forget the social, physical, and mental constraints in your life currently. What would you do if you would definitely succeed? "To be happy" is a cop-out answer because it hinges on subjective emotional states as the determinant. You can force a smile and make yourself happy now if you choose to, without doing anything. "To enjoy life" is a non-answer because the nature of a life purpose should fulfill you. Your purpose should be something that requires your concrete action to fulfill.

4. Specific (not Vague)

"To live life to the fullest" or *Carpe diem* is a looping answer. What does it mean to live life to the fullest? It does not say anything — our purpose should be inherently fulfilling! Your purpose should **identify the specific thing that will allow you to live life to the fullest**. What gives you the greatest gratification and meaning when you do it?

5. Direction (rather than End state)

Avoid defining end states as your purpose. Your goal is your milestone or destination. Your purpose is the **direction you want to travel in**. Antarctica is a destination while North is a direction. Likewise, becoming a teacher, president, or singer are goals. Educating and helping people is a purpose.

6. Rooted in Love, not Fear

Your purpose should **liberate you and be aligned with the highest level of emotion, which is love**. Purposes like "to become

wealthy," "to be successful in endeavors," or "to acquire social status" are fear-based and rooted in externalities, as we have discussed in [Part 3: Why Earning Money Is Not Your Real Purpose \(And How to Know What Is\)](#). Your purpose should emanate from within, from your inner state of being. It should not require affirmation from the outside world, such as physical possessions or statuses. Refer to [part 3](#) for the differences between false and real purposes.

Now that you know the 6 principles to define your purpose, we are now ready to discover your life purpose! :) Read Part 6: [How to Discover Your Real Life Purpose in 30 Minutes](#)

Discover Your Life Purpose in the Next 30 Minutes

*This is **part 6** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



(Image: Pat Dalton)

"Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love." — Rumi

"Decide upon your major definite purpose in life and then organize all your activities around it." — Brian Tracy

In [part 3](#) of the series, you learned the differences between false and real purposes. In [part 5](#), you learned my 6 guiding principles to define your purpose.

In this article, I share an exercise to discover your real life purpose. Are you ready? :) Let's go!

Set aside at least 30 minutes before you start. You should have no distractions during this time. If you feel that you are too busy to spare even 30 minutes, consider that 30 minutes is a tiny investment for something that will transform your life. It is from consciously taking the time to think about my life purpose that I live with such clarity today. If you have time to surf/chat/watch TV/do random activities, you have time for this. Cut out the time from other stuff and do this exercise.

Exercise: Discover Your Life Purpose

This exercise to discover your purpose is really simple and can be summarized in 4 easy steps.

1. Equip yourself with a pen/paper or word processor. Do this when you are by yourself.
2. Answer the question: "What is my life purpose?"
3. Write all thoughts that pop in. All the thoughts, including miscellaneous ones. For every thought that pops in, continue to ask the same question.
4. Keep doing this until you reach the answer that makes you cry.

This is the same exercise that I used to discover my life purpose in 2006. Many of my 1-1 clients and readers have discovered their life

purpose from doing the same.

Some readers face difficulty when doing this. Here is a partial extract from Day 16 of [Live a Better Life in 30 Days Program](#):

- **Write whatever comes to mind.** Even if you get answers like “I just want to do nothing,” “I want to watch TV,” or “I want to sleep,” write them down and keep going. If you have any doubts, write them down and keep going too. Whatever you write here doesn’t matter at all. It is the final answer you're looking for.
- **Get past social conditioning.** Having been living in the physical world for a while, our initial answers will be related to the physical world, like earn money, get a car, be rich, get your dream job, lose weight, look good, be loved (by someone), etc. Just keep writing. New answers will start to appear after you dig deep enough.
- **Vary if necessary.** You can vary your question as you go along, such as “What is my life mission?” or “What is my ultimate purpose in life?” or “Why am I here?” If you get answers that get you thinking, probe deeper. Follow up with, “Why did I say that? What does this mean?” Then, return to the root question, “What is my life purpose?”
- **Get to the root message.** You can write about things that you like to do, be it writing or drawing or cooking. Get to the root message of these activities. Why do you like [X] so much? Is it because it lets you grow and become a better you? Is it because it lets you utilize your creativity? Is it because you get to connect with people through it? What is it? Focus on the message, not the medium.
- **Keep going until you reach the point of resonance.** As you write, you will get answers that resonate more than others. Focus on these answers and see where they lead to. Sometimes they may lead to nothing, in which case you restart by asking “What is my life purpose?” Keep doing this **until you get to the answer**

that resonates with the depth of your soul. It can take as short as 30 minutes or as long as an hour. Time is not the key here.

- **Do this in multiple sittings if need be.** If you feel tired midway and you can't continue, take a break and do it later. Don't be frustrated if you are not getting anywhere. It's normal to take a while. Keep doing this and you'll eventually find the answer. It's there inside you, waiting to be uncovered.

Some of my clients ask: "How do I know when I get the answer?" When you get to the answer, you'll know. You'll feel a strong burst of energy that overwhelms you. Many of my course participants burst out crying. Some have tears streaming down their face. Some are so happy that they cry, laugh, and grin all at the same time. It's that powerful.

If you don't know whether it's the answer or not, it's probably not the deepest answer you can get. Dig further. Separately, do it at separate sittings, without attaching yourself to the answer you just uncovered. If it's truly the answer, it'll come up again.

My Experience

When I did this exercise in 2006, my first set of answers were social-conditioning junk, like to earn money, to become slim and pretty, to become successful, to become married, etc. They started to disappear as I progressed through the exercise.

The first signs of my purpose started popping in at answer #20, though a truckload of conditioned purposes appeared after that. That's an important thing about this purpose exercise — sometimes you may get a new answer, only to revert to a bunch of previous answers. That's normal. Just keep going, without bias or resistance.

I finally arrived at an answer that fully resonated with me at #80, after which I refined it. When I got to my answer, I felt such a strong

wave of emotions that I started to cry. I just felt extremely touched, humbled, and grateful when I received the answer, that I'm able to pursue this purpose, and I have the opportunity to be here on Earth to do this. This feeling is very pure, without any skepticism, ego, or fear surrounding it. And then when I did the exercise again a few days later, just to verify that it's the right answer, the same thing happened.

Some of you may find your answer at answer #200 or #500. For me, I was introspecting on my life and the meaning of life for two entire months before I did the exercise. I was also flushing out a lot of mental waste before that. These helped facilitate the exercise and get to my answer quicker.

Some Possible Outcomes

Here are some possible outcomes from this exercise:

1. You get an answer that connects with your heart and soul. For some of you, you may be so overwhelmed that you cry. (I did; many readers experienced the same thing. They felt so emotional that tears just streamed down their faces.)
2. Your answer gives you an "aha!" and connects on some level.
3. You get an answer that's like "Uhhh... okay. What does this mean?"
4. All your answers don't connect at all.

When you reach #1, you'll know. If so, proceed on to the next section of this article (on mission statement).

If you get #2, continue on with the exercise. There are deeper layers to be uncovered.

If it's #3 and #4, you have not gotten the real answer yet. Keep going, or take a break and try again later. The way the exercise

works is that you're actually talking to your inner self, to uncover your real purpose from him/her — because he/she has the answer to your life purpose. Follow the instructions above and keep probing beyond the answers you get. Your mind is like an ocean, and the answer lies at the bottom of the ocean. All these in-between answers are the water we are scooping out to get to your final purpose at the end.

Note that whether you get to #1 depends on the following:

a) [Your breadth and depth of experiences up till this point](#)

The more contexts you have been exposed, the easier it is to progress in this exercise. By context, I mean anything that's outside of what you normally see. For example, immersive traveling and living in different countries (I'm not talking about touch-and-go traveling or vacation visits) exposes you to different ways of life. Pursuing goals in different areas puts you in new situations. Working in different career fields exposes you to new schools of thought.

As I have shared in [my story on how I found my purpose](#), it was from actively pursuing my personal growth and exposing myself to different contexts that helped me realize what I truly want to do in life.

If you cannot generate a meaningful answer from looking within, try looking outward to the world. What have you not explored or seen? Go wild and open yourself to all kinds of things possible.

The more situations you expose yourself to, the more likely you are to find what sets you off on the inside. This is the same as the concept of heuristics, which is the process of continuously searching to find the optimal solution to a problem. In a matter of time, the process of trial and error will lead you to your real purpose which resonates with you.

b) Your consciousness level

The level of your consciousness is a result of your self-awareness. This is extremely important because it sets the stage for your purpose. If you have a limited understanding of reality, you will have a limited purpose.

By properly understanding the universe you live in, you can identify your purpose more accurately and build it on an unshakable foundation. It's like getting a bird's eye view of a maze as you define the best path to move forward.

Here are some ways to increase your consciousness:

1. Adopt a worldview, rather than focusing on a particular time and space.
2. Constantly challenge social constructs and beliefs.
3. [Work on understanding the root cause](#) rather than dealing with effects.
4. [Meditation](#) and [brain dumping](#) help too.

At the end of the day, **there is no right or wrong answer**. There is only the answer that is truest for you. To date, I have never had a client with the same purpose statement as another. Some of their purposes are: "To love myself and others unconditionally," "To live my best life via being persistent and taking continuous actions on my goals," "To do the right things right," and "To be my best and touch others' hearts." All of you are unique individuals and thus your purpose will be totally unique to you. It is what matters to you.

These articles will help:

- [How to Know What You Want To Do In Life](#)
- [How to Know If Your Life Purpose is For Life \(and Not Short/Medium Term\)](#)

Create Your Mission Statement

Now that you have discovered your life purpose, now it's about framing it into a mission statement. A mission statement is a statement that states your life objective. It's meant to be concise and to the point, so it's usually just a few lines long. You may have heard about companies having mission statements, and it's the same thing here, just applied to your life.

I have some pointers for you:

1. **Keep it to 1-2 lines.** Your statement should (a) precisely convey what you want to do in this world, (b) resonate with you, and (c) be easy enough to remember. If you have several lines, pick out the key essence and trim it into 1-2 lines. The reason is that if you have a 6-7 line statement, it'll be very difficult for you to remember, much less live by it. With a 1-2 liner, it forces you to prioritize and pick out the essence of your purpose, and hence makes it easier to live by it.
2. **Action form.** Frame your purpose as an action, such as "To live to my highest potential" or "To bring love and joy to everyone in the world." Your purpose statement is meant to put you into action mode vs. it being a passive statement like "Love, Truth, and Courage" or "Happiness and Joy." These are descriptors vs. something you act on.
3. **Charge you up.** What do you feel when you see your statement? Do you feel excited? Or do you feel nothing? Your mission statement should make you come alive when you see it, which means that each word should resonate with you. If not, tweak it until you do. If necessary, revisit the exercise and consult your higher self again.
4. **Direction, not destination.** Your purpose statement should reflect an ongoing journey, not an endpoint. For example, "To live

to my highest potential and be the best I can be” means to constantly grow and become better. There is no single endpoint for growth because human potential is unlimited and there is always room to be better.

My Life Purpose

After doing the writing exercise with my subconsciousness and consciously evaluating my purpose, I arrived at my purpose below (as mentioned in [part 4](#)). My purpose is two-fold:

To raise the world's consciousness and unite the world as one.

To achieve my highest potential and live my best life.

Please do share with me your experience and the output you get from this exercise — I would love to read about it!

After Defining Your Purpose

The most important thing to note is that even after defining your mission statement, it will change in the future. Just as you evolve as a person throughout life, your perceptions of life's meaning will change too.

Be sure to **review** your purpose statement periodically (every 3 months at first, followed by 6 months, then yearly) to ensure that it resonates with who you are. It is possible that you have experienced changes or obtained new revelations in your worldview that make your purpose irrelevant to you. This is just like how companies regularly review their company mission statement to ensure that it is not obsolete.

Now that you have discovered your new found purpose in life, it's time to integrate it into your life. In the last part of this series, I will share how to reconcile your current path with your new purpose.

Read Part 7: [Living in Alignment with Your Purpose](#)

Living in Alignment with Your Purpose

*This is the **last part** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*



(Image: emdot)

“For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin—real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life

would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.” — Howland, Bette

Now that you [discover your purpose](#), it does not end here. This is when life truly begins! :D The next step is to set your life goals based on your purpose. This is very important as setting goals ensure that you get the most out of your purpose and creates accountability for yourself. Days 2-5 of my [Live a Better Life in 30 Days Program](#) are about goal setting and creating your action plan.

Managing Disconnects between Your Life and Purpose

Depending on how you have been living your life before discovering your purpose, your current life path may be at odds with your real purpose. Perhaps your purpose is to advocate for animal rights, but you are working in an industry that contributes to animal cruelty. Maybe you want to raise the consciousness of humans but you work in a beauty company that keeps the consciousness of women low, in levels of fear, desire, and pride, so that they will keep buying beauty products.

Instead of feeling liberated with your purpose, you may feel disjointed. Even though you have found your purpose and passion, you are now bound by your circumstances. You feel trapped and miserable because you can't do what you love.

Here, some people may subscribe to an "Ignorance is Bliss" belief. They block off their purpose, thinking that they are better off ignoring it. To them, this is better than the alternate scenario where they know their passion but cannot realize it.

This belief is a fallacy though. Notice the root word of ignorance is "ignore." By choosing ignorance, you are *ignoring* the real you. You live in your fears. You nest yourself in the false security created by your external possessions. Over time, you live the life of a timid mouse rather than being the bold, fearless lion you are meant to be. When you choose ignorance, you **live a life of denial**. You may feel happy denying the truth, but this is temporary. The truth will continue to blow at you like a great storm howling against the weak veneer of denial. In time to come, your falsehoods will come crashing down. Isn't it better to learn to deal with the truth now than be forced to do so later on?

Just because it is difficult to achieve your purpose **doesn't mean that it is impossible**. Some of the best things in life come from perseverance. The greater the challenge, the greater the reward. If goals are always easy to achieve, then what's the point in having them?

Recognize that your current life today was **built by you in the past**. Since you were not aware of your purpose before, there's no reason why you would be miraculously living your purpose now. All the external aspects of your life today, from your job to friendships to relationships, are a product of your thoughts, actions, and decisions from the past. They represent who you used to be, not who you are right now.

Detach yourself from them. **Just as you have created everything around you in the past, you can remove them and create a new life that reflects the new you**. For example, maybe you are in a job that doesn't reflect your purpose. Maybe your current relationships pull you down. Work on finding a new job that fits your purpose. Work on finding new relationships that support you in your new path.

Nothing in our reality is permanent. No matter how entrenched your current reality seems, it is a matter of time before it fades away and becomes replaced with new creations that represent the new you today.

How to Transition to Your Life Purpose

For some of you, maybe there is a huge gap between where you are now and your ideal vision. Maybe you **do not have the skills** to succeed in your goals. Maybe you cannot **make a living with your purpose** right away.

This is totally okay. Nobody said that you have to jump forward and be at your endpoint right away. No matter where you are, start by building the bridge to link your current position and your desired endpoint. Identify commonalities between the two points to facilitate the move. Build mini-steps that you can do every day. Do what you can, within your ability, within your context, in the best way possible.

Because life is not about reaching that endpoint. Life is about living in alignment with your purpose every day, to your best of abilities.

Say your purpose is to touch people's lives and inspire them. Your passion lies in music and your goal is to become a full-time pianist. However, you are currently working as an IT programmer. While these two jobs may be starkly different at first sight, start by identifying the gaps that stand between where you are now and where you want to be. Perhaps you do not know how to play the piano. Maybe being a pianist is not a practical job to make a living. While your end goal seems like a castle in the air, it is up to you to build the ladders to the castle so that you can reach it. Don't expect to quit your IT job and become a successful pianist immediately, because that is not logical.

Develop your strategy and action plan. Start taking up piano lessons after office-hours. Read books by pianists and musicians and their experiences as they formed their careers. Listen to music from your favorite pianists and musicians when you have the chance.

Remind yourself of your goal by placing relevant imagery prominently on your work desk and your room. Join musician communities in your local area. Look up resources on music and pianos. Make your own compositions and share them with people around you. Showcase your skills by playing in front of your friends and in parties.

When you are good enough, start playing (pro bono or otherwise) in lounges and bars. Even at your workplace, you can live true to your purpose in other ways. Remember, your purpose is to touch people's lives and inspire them. You can do that by being there for them, being kind and caring — without using music.

The most important thing is to live your purpose every day, to your best ability, within your constraints, because there is no better way you can do it.

In time to come, you will find that you have shed most of the old structures in your life. People start to associate you as a musician. People start to pay you to play at events. All of a sudden, becoming a full-time pianist does not seem such an unreachable goal after all. By then, you would have taken enough baby steps such that there is just one final step needed to reach your goal. :)

How I Transitioned to My Real Purpose

When I [discovered my life purpose](#) to help people in 2006, I had just graduated and was about to start working at a consumer goods company. It was conflicting for me because my passion is in human

development, whereas the industry I was entering is rooted in consumerism. To me, [consumerism perpetuates a negative phenomenon in the society](#). I felt disjointed.

Instead of taking drastic actions to change my job, I introspected and realized that being in the job puts me in a better position to help people – simply because it allows me to first grow, by learning the best-in-class practices in a multi-national corporation.

So after I started working, I focused all my efforts on growing. I constantly asked for more projects and responsibilities from my managers, while performing to the best of my abilities on the work I was given. I took both formal and informal training very seriously in the company. At the same time, I would read up on personal development during my spare time to better myself.

In line with living my purpose to help others grow, helping people with their problems and building my skills were always my priorities over work deadlines. I always made it a point to understand my teammates as individuals and friends rather than colleagues, which allowed me to build very meaningful relationships with them.

After two years of learning and growing, [I quit my job](#) to plan my next steps in accordance with my purpose. I decided to start this blog to reach out to other people online. I started to form coaching relationships with some friends to bring out the best in them while continuing to offer a listening ear and advice to my other friends.

Every day, I live my purpose to my best ability. I eventually turned my passion into my career, training and coaching full time through Personal Excellence. Before this happened though, I was already of the mindset that **reaching this end goal would not be matter hugely to me**. Why? **That's because I was already perfectly happy living my purpose, every day**. [I learned that it is not about](#)

reaching the end but living in the now. It's by achieving this inner peace that I could quietly and confidently build my business and take it to success.

As you pursue your purpose, remember that it is about living in alignment with it as best as you can now, within your ability and situations you are in. As long as you do that, take pride in knowing that you are living your life in the best manner possible. Nothing can take you away with this knowledge. :)

For more on turning a purpose into a full-time career/business, check out my [How To Pursue Your Passion](#) series.

*This is the **last part** of my **7-part series** on how to find your life purpose.*

- **Part 1:** *How to Find Your Life Purpose: Introduction*
- **Part 2:** *5 Reasons You Should Have a Life Purpose*
- **Part 3:** *Why Earning Money Is Not Your Real Purpose (And How to Know What Is)*
- **Part 4:** *Two Important Things that Led Me to Discover My Real Purpose*
- **Part 5:** *6 Things to Consider Before Discovering Your Purpose*
- **Part 6:** *How to Discover Your Real Life Purpose in 30 Minutes*
- **Part 7:** *Living in Alignment with Your Purpose*

ABOUT

Hi! I'm Celes and I'm the founder of [PersonalExcellence.co](https://www.personalexcellence.co), one of the top personal development blogs in the world with readers from over 200 countries.

The central goal of my work is to help you achieve your highest potential and live your best life. If you like this ebook, then check out my other free material at [PersonalExcellence.co](https://www.personalexcellence.co). Some reader favourites are



- [101 Ways to Live Your Best Life](#)
- [101 Ways To Be a Better Person](#)
- [8 Tips to Deal With Critical People](#)
- [How to Discover Your Life Purpose \(series\)](#)
- [How to Improve Relationship with Your Parents \(series\)](#)
- [How to Find Your Soulmate \(series\)](#)
- [How to Let Go of Anger \(series\)](#)
- [How to Deal with Disappointment \(series\)](#)
- [How to Stop Procrastination \(series\)](#)

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