



Finding Your Personal Purpose Factsheet

Have you ever asked yourself “*Why do I exist?*”

It is an extremely important question to ask ourselves as we go through life, in order to determine our purpose, and to evaluate our actions towards this purpose.

Why is personal purpose important?

Gandhi’s famous quote “*Be the change you want to see in the world*” epitomised the notion of Personal Purpose. However, we do not all have to be as noble as Gandhi to find our own purpose.

According to researcher Patrick Hill, having a purpose can add years to your life, as purpose:

- Gives you focus
- Improves energy levels, and
- Leads to better wellbeing

Research by UCL, published in the Lancet, shows similar results to Patrick Hill.

A study of over 9,000 English people with an average age of 65 used questionnaires to measure a type of wellbeing called ‘eudemonic wellbeing’, which relates to your sense of control, feeling that what you do is worthwhile, and your sense of purpose in life.

The research showed that those in the high category of eudemonic wellbeing were 30% more likely to live longer than those in the low category.

Now, imagine being on board a ship with no rudder meandering through the seas.

Occasionally we will stumble on land, but we do not know where we are and if the inhabitants will be hostile. We also cannot avoid a big storm.

This is just like life without purpose; the purpose is the rudder that keeps us on course.

Whatever it is, our purpose should be the reason we get out of bed in the mornings!

Are we Really Following our Purpose, and do we Actually Know What it is?

Many of us are simply going through the motions of life. We go to work to earn money, to pay the bills to survive, but not necessarily to thrive. We bumble from decade to decade, without a plan or reason.

Is this you?

Now I know it is good to do that from time to time, just see where the world takes you. Indeed, in our younger years, when we perhaps have yet to discover our true purpose that is probably exactly what we should do. However, if we are still bumbling through life at 50 maybe it is time to sit back and reflect:

Why am I here?

Finding your Personal Purpose

No one can tell you what your purpose is, or must be (although if we follow some guidelines in life, e.g. from a Religion, then these might influence our purpose!), therefore it is up to each of us individually to find our own purpose and to fulfil it in our lives.

If we decide to lead with more purpose then this will bring immediate benefits to our wellbeing and could extend our life.

Tal Ben Shahar talks about how to find your personal purpose in his book Happier (<http://www.talbenshahar.com/>) and you can define it by asking yourself these simple questions:

1. What do you care about in life/what gives you meaning?

- a. What is important to you?
- b. What are your values?
- c. What gives you purpose?

2. What do you get pleasure from in life?

- a. What do you enjoy doing?
- b. When are you just lost in the moment of an activity?
- c. What do you look forward to the most?

3. What things are you good at/where do you have strengths?

- a. Work strengths – e.g. Project Management, Accounting
- b. Personal strengths – e.g. Listening, persistence
- c. Core strengths e.g. I am organised, numerical

Finding common traits in your answers will help you to define what your purpose REALLY is.