



# A Guide to Unlocking the Power of Purpose

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## **A sense of life purpose promotes physical, mental, and spiritual health. Purpose is fundamental.**

People who seek meaning beyond themselves are healthier, happier, and live longer. So, it's vital to our well-being that we maintain a strong sense of purpose.

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

Not everyone feels the need for a written purpose but we all need to be needed. Mattering matters.

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

At some phase of our lives, we might feel stuck, going nowhere, drifting without direction, wondering "what is the point of it all?"



## Reflection #1: What is Purpose?

The dictionary defines purpose as:

1. An object or result aimed at:  
INTENTION

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

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

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

We’ve already got it — even if we haven’t clarified it yet!

How do we unlock it? By looking in the most essential places — our gifts, passions, and values. Why would we be given a life purpose that doesn’t match the “authentic essence” of who we are?

Our purpose will always be something that:

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

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

Before we can create our life purpose statement, we need to believe that we have one. No guide, of course, can convince you of this. You must arrive at your own decision.

## Action #1: Seven Ways to Begin Unlocking Your Purpose

There are no rigid formulas for how to write your purpose statement, but there are many helpful techniques to assist you. Here are seven mind-changing ideas that have brought powerful results to many people over the years. Use them to see what you can discover about yourself and your dreams.

**1.** Think about this sentence for a moment: "From family and friends who knew me when I was very young, I have heard that my "special gift" is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_." How have these "gifts" persisted in your life?

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**2.** Imagine being on your deathbed, still clear and coherent, when your best friend drops in to visit you. Your friend asks, "Did you give and receive love?" "Were you authentically you?" "Did you make a small difference in the world?" How did you answer the questions?

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**3.** Get out your calculator and do some “life math.” Multiply your age x 365 (\_\_\_\_\_). Then, subtract that number from 30,000, an average life expectancy. Divide that number by 365. Once you get clear that you have (\_\_\_\_\_) more years to wake up, it might inspire you to live more courageously now. How do you feel about how you are spending your most precious currency — your time?

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**4.** How did you wake up this morning? Did you resist getting up or did you get out of bed with energy and purpose? Think about the way you wake up, these days, and you will learn something about your life’s purpose. Your “mood” getting up most days?

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**5.** Write the question, "What are my gifts?" on five index cards. Give them to five people who know you well and ask them to write their response to the question on the card. Put them all together in a place where you can see them. What theme or thread do you see?

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**6.** Are you curious? What are you most curious about, these days? Here are some clues that will help you answer:

- a.** Time passes quickly when you're exploring this.
- b.** It's so interesting, you can't help spending time on it!
- c.** A bad day doing this is better than a good day doing most other things.

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## Reflection #2: Born with Purpose, or Choose One?

If you ask enough people, you'll probably find that there are two basic schools of thought regarding life purpose:

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

Which group do you belong to?  
Destiny? Or, choice?

There are no easy or perfect answers to this question. So, if you're still not sure, I'd like to propose a workable compromise for you. What if a life purpose is something you are born with, but you also have full control over how and when you act on it?

What if, with a little reflection and choice, you could move naturally and easily toward your life purpose without feeling like you "have to" do specific things?

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

Destiny and choice. Choice is the power in purpose. Each of us is an "experiment of one." Each of us has an embedded destiny — gifts to add value to the world. And, we were born with free will to choose how we think, act, and react.

## Action #2: Purpose Clues

The purpose question is answered from the inside out. It's only from inner questing that you can answer the big *quest*-ions. When you pay attention to the key indicators in your life, not the superficialities, you can then name, work, and live on purpose. Here are two clues:

### *Clue #1: What are my strongest beliefs?*

Jot down your thoughts on the following:

**Community:** What do you think your responsibility is to others?

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**Service:** What is life asking of you, today?

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**Values:** What do you stand for?

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**Legacy:** What do you think your life's legacy will be?

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**Wisdom:** Who are the wise elders in your life? What have you learned from them?

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**Compassion:** What do you think is its nature and importance?

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**Source:** If you have a concept of God, Supreme Being, or Higher Power, what do you think the Source is urging you to do?

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**Clue #2: What are my passions?**

Using the strongest beliefs you just reflected upon, what curiosities or passions emerged for you? What moves you? What do you feel needs doing in the world?

What I'm really curious about...?

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What I really care about...?

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Using your beliefs and passions as clues, draft your own purpose statement. Write out a number of statements to see how they look and feel to you.

The reason I get up in the morning is...to awaken, to ignite, to organize, to teach, to support, to empower, to develop, to accept, to encourage, to help, to inspire, to learn, to enhance, to serve, to lead, to act upon, to ..., to ...,

Examples: I get up in the morning.... "To bring out the best in my colleagues." "To help people become as much as they can be." "To make the world a little greener and kinder."

My purpose draft:

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## My Purpose

Reflecting on your draft purpose statement, write a single sentence which expresses your reason for getting up in the morning.

I get up in the morning to: \_\_\_\_\_

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Writing a purpose statement is challenging and requires much thought. If you find it difficult to write your purpose statement, don't be discouraged. View it as your quest — an exciting journey to unlock your purpose within you.

I gain a sense of purpose when: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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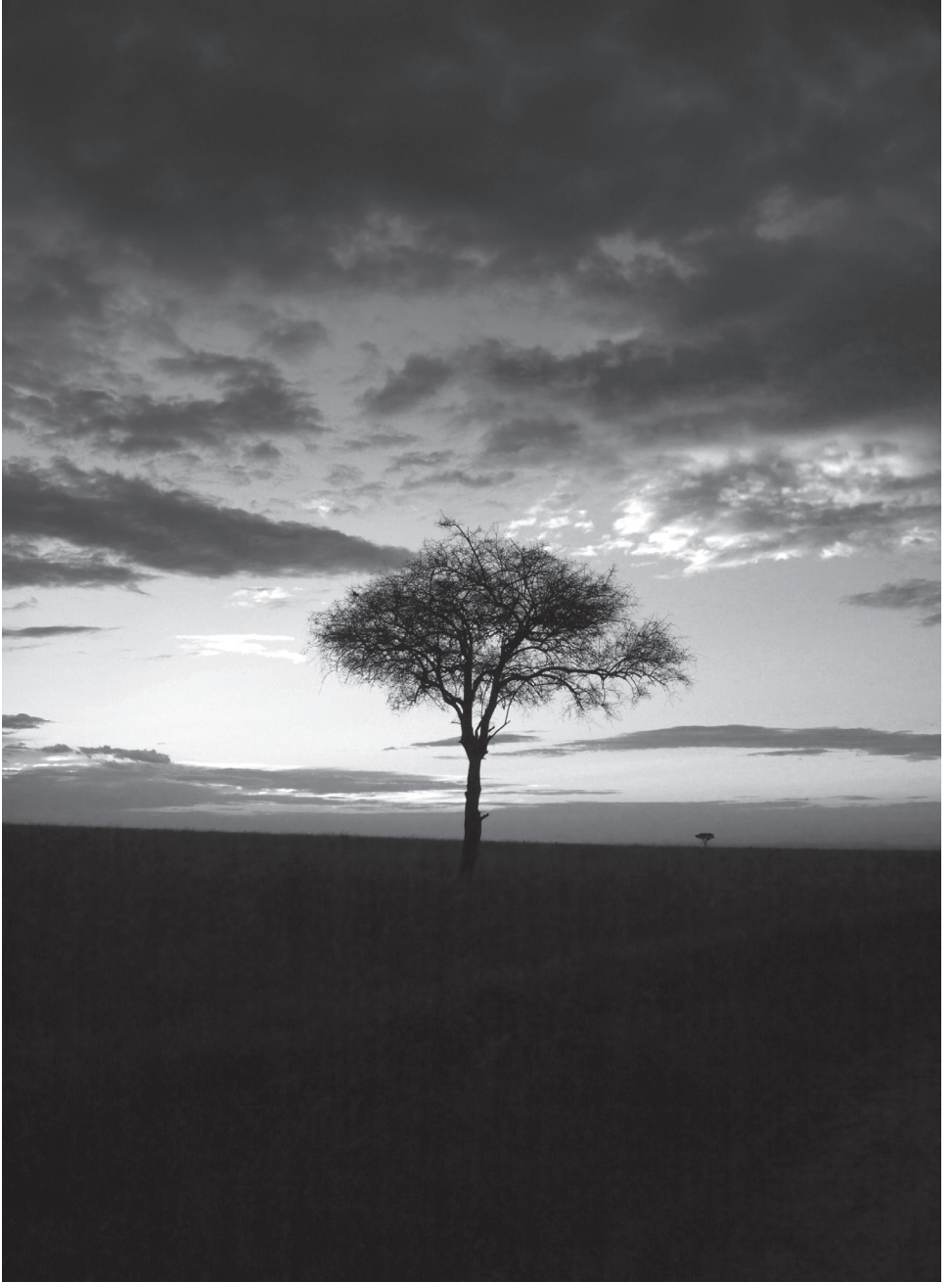
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## Reflection #3: Having a Purpose or Living Purposefully?

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

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

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

Which group do you fall into?

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

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

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

If you answered “yes” to these questions, you're probably ready to write your purpose statement.

## Action #3: The Process Works...If You Work the Process

Use the following chart for one week to aid you on your quest to unlock your purpose. First thing each morning, capture your ideas and thoughts about why you got up that day. At the end of each day, write what “purpose moments” made you feel as if you were living or working on purpose.

**This morning, I got up to**  
(write in your purpose statement)

**This evening, reflecting on my day,**  
I felt “on purpose” when I:

**Monday** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tuesday** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Wednesday** \_\_\_\_\_

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**This morning, I got up to**  
(write in your purpose statement)

**This evening, reflecting on my day,**  
I felt "on purpose" when I:

**Thursday** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Friday** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Saturday** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Sunday** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Reflection #4: Our Default Purpose

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our growth determines our capacity to give.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Action #4:** **Read *The Power of Purpose***

Take a look at the blogs, videos, and upcoming purpose events on this website:  
**[richardleider.com](http://richardleider.com)**

Don't be put off by the work of unlocking your life purpose. There's nothing mystical or mysterious about it. Yet, it does require some work. It's rarely revealed to us without some digging.

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

Richard Leider is the author of nine books, including three best sellers, and his books have sold over one million copies. Visit [richardleider.com/books](http://richardleider.com/books) for more details:

*The Power of Purpose: Find Meaning. Live Longer, Better.* (3rd Edition)

*Life Reimagined: Discovering Your New Life Possibilities*

*Work Reimagined: Uncover Your Calling*

*Repacking Your Bags: Lighten Your Load for the Good Life* (3rd Edition)

*Claiming Your Place at the Fire: Living the Second Half of Your Life on Purpose*

*Something to Live For: Finding Your Way in the Second Half of Life*

## The Purpose Quest

The start you've made here will continue to evolve. The process will work if you work the process. When your purpose statement comes from that place of deep gifts, passions, and values, you should be able to relate it to any part of your life: your work, your relationships, your learning, your spiritual development, and your choices around time and money.

Give yourself the freedom to refine, edit, and change your purpose statement until it reflects you. Interview someone about his or her purpose. Read about people's purposes as revealed in biographies, magazines, and newspapers. Note how they expressed their purposes and the paths that led to them.

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