How to Find
YOUR LIFE PURPOSE

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(Though e-mailing a copy to a friend is probably more efficient than singing it out loud to random strangers.)

Of course, I would appreciate if you link back to my blog - Alive With Passion - whenever you use material from this e-book. But only if you want to.
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1. Introduction

Imagine waking up in the morning. You yawn, stretch, and then check how you’re feeling.

And you notice that you feel really well. You feel excited about the day ahead of you. You feel a deep sense of motivation, and energy. (Okay, the energy might be hiding below a few layers of “this bed is soooo cozy, I just want to lie around”, but you can feel it underneath.)

Then you go through your day, with a clear sense of purpose. You know what you’re doing with your life.

You go to sleep happy and content, feeling a deep sense of satisfaction - you know you’re doing something worthwhile to make the world a better place.

That is what it means to have found your life purpose.

This definition is so crucial that I will put it here in big, bold letters:

**When you feel a deep sense of satisfaction about what you’re doing with your life, you have found your life purpose.**

It takes no more, and no less.

A lot of people get very confused and think finding your life purpose means a lot more than that. So let me clear up some misunderstandings.

A large part of that is thanks to movies we have all seen. The problem is, movies present a highly dramatized version of reality.

In movies, finding your life purpose always involves a huge “Ah-ha!” moment, with intense violin music in the background and the camera panning around to look at your stunned face. One moment you’re meandering about like a lost puppy, and the next moment everything is crystal clear, and you’re like an old, bearded sea captain, commanding a galleon
to a distant port. You suddenly know exactly what you’ll be doing from that moment until the end of your life.

**Real life does not work like that.**

Finding your life purpose is rarely one big “Ah-ha!” moment. It’s more akin to a game of “Hot, warm, cold”. You might have a rough idea of what your life purpose is (or no idea at all, that’s fine too). Then you try doing various things, and notice how fulfilled they make you feel. And you slowly zero in on your life purpose - on the things that make you feel like you’re doing something truly worthwhile with your life.

Next - your life purpose rarely involves doing the same thing your whole life.

That might go against your idea of “life purpose”, but again we’re hitting the problem of dramatized reality.

The people you’re most likely to hear about are precisely those very exceptional people who have found a single life purpose and followed it for years.

That’s not at all common. But we humans love stories, and such cases make for the best, most coherent stories. So we like to talk about them the most.

In real life, you are likely to follow a single path for just a couple of years. Then your interests change, and you go do something different, possibly related.

There are two main schools of thought concerning this phenomenon.

One school insists that there is an underlying common thread running through all the instances of your life purpose. That you have one overarching life purpose, and all the various things you do to fulfill it are just different faces of the same thing.

The second school says that you may or may not have a common underlying thread. It doesn’t really matter, as long as you find what currently makes you feel a deep sense of fulfillment about your life.
As you go through this book, you may discover an underlying thread common to all the things that make you feel fulfilled. Or you might not. Either way is fine.

You’re looking for something that makes you feel a deep sense of satisfaction with your life.

Once you have found it, don’t keep second-guessing yourself. It’s okay if others don’t understand how this could be your life purpose. It’s okay if you can’t explain why it feels so right for you. As long as it works for you, that’s all that matters.

1.1 Short-term enjoyment vs. long-term satisfaction

In this book, I will sometimes use phrases like “doing things you enjoy”. I want to clear one thing up - there’s a difference between things that you enjoy in the moment, and things that give you a long-term, deep sense of satisfaction. They sometimes coincide (especially when you’re following your life purpose), but not always.

You might enjoy doing something in the moment, but later that day, when the rush of emotions has passed, you might lie around feeling miserable, wondering what you’re doing with your life.

That would be chasing short-term pleasure rather than long-term satisfaction.

On the other hand, you might find that working on your life purpose sometimes involves work that’s not that pleasant in the moment. You have to grit your teeth and push through it. But you make it through, get to the more enjoyable parts, and feel a deep sense of satisfaction and achievement.

That’s following your life purpose.

Don’t confuse these two concepts. And when in doubt, always follow your long-term satisfaction. It’s the more lasting and fulfilling of the two.
1.2 How to get the most out of this book

Finding your life purpose is not a 5-minute matter. It takes time.

But even more than time, it takes focus.

A lot of the techniques in this book involve hard thinking. Thinking along lines that you normally avoid. Plowing through the surface layer of your usual thoughts, until you finally strip them all away and get at the deeper layers of what’s truly important to you.

So take plenty of time for each exercise you tackle.

As an example, let’s take technique 5.2 - “Exhaustive list”. That one involves writing down short phrases that might sum up what your overarching life purpose is.

With that exercise, it usually takes at least 15 minutes to get past your usual thought patterns and come across things that you never realized were truly important to you. If you’re not used to much self-reflection, it can take longer than that, even 60 minutes.

During that time, you’re likely to encounter an urge to stop and go do something else. It feels exactly like procrastination.

That’s a great sign, because it means you’re getting at something deep. Something that’s not quick and easy to think about. You’re getting past your usual thought patterns, and into new territory that will help you get new insights about yourself.

*Do not follow your first impulse to quit the exercise.* Stick with it, and you will get to the true gold.

Going deep is where the true benefit is. **You’re far better off focusing on one exercise for 40 minutes, rather than giving 20 minutes to four different exercises.**

Take the exercises one at a time. Give each one all the time it deserves. There’s always another day to tackle the other exercises, so don’t feel rushed.
Also, **there is no pressure to do every exercise in this book.** Some might seem more interesting to you than others, so feel free to tackle those first, and leave the others for later, if you’re still not satisfied with the answers you’ve found.

And if you do find an answer that speaks to you? Then run with it!

This book includes two main section about finding your life purpose - the **deductive approach**, and the **inductive approach**.

While the first one is centred around sitting in a quiet place by yourself and taking the time to think about your life, the second is very much action-based. Doing things with your life, and noticing how it makes you feel.

And it *always* comes down to taking action. No matter whether you spend days meditating on your life purpose or simply jump straight to taking action to change things - the action-taking step is always there.

Turning your ideas into action isn’t always straightforward. That’s why chapters 7 and 8 help you do exactly that - take your newly discovered life purpose, and start aligning your life with it.

No matter how much time you spend sitting around and thinking, your life won’t really change until you use your new insights to change your behaviour.

So how do you get the most out of this book?

- *Take the time to do each exercise that you do thoroughly and deeply.*
- *Once you’ve found a new direction to pursue, take action!*
2. The Three Cornerstones of Living With Passion

Before we get to the various method of finding your life purpose, I wanted to take a moment to zoom out and look at the big picture.

Although finding your life purpose is a big part of living a life of passion, it is not the only part.

Rather, it comes down to three cornerstones:

- The fundamentals of living with passion
- Aligning with your core values
- Finding your life purpose

You already have a pretty good idea what finding your life purpose is all about, but let me cover the other two points too.

Imagine that you’re planning a road trip. You might be all excited and pumped to just jump into your car, plan the exciting destination you’re going towards and then set off. But if you forget to check whether you have gas in your car and a charged battery to start the engine, you won’t get very far.

The fundamentals of living with passion are your equivalent of those basics for your car. They involve things like managing your body, managing your mental energy levels, and practicing self-observation. And although they’re not quite as exciting as finding your life purpose (few things are), they’re still pretty damn neat, and very useful for living a passionate life.

I’ve actually put together a free e-book on the topic, called *The 5 Elements of Living With Passion*. You get a copy if you sign up for the free *Alive With Passion* newsletter.
I highly recommend you grab a copy. It’s fairly light reading (it involves nowhere near as much heavy thinking as this book will), but it will make a big difference to how much passion for life you feel in your daily life. Plus you will learn some neat things about your mind and body. Pinky promise :-) 

Next, your core values are what’s guiding you through life.

In the car analogy, it would be a bit like the roads. You could pick a very exciting destination, but if you try driving through a thick forest and over a foaming river, you’ll have a hard time getting there.

If you travel along roads, on the other hand, your journey will be fast, smooth and easy.

That’s the difference between living aligned with your core values, and trying to go against them. When you go with them, your actions feel easy and natural. When you go against them, every step is a struggle.

What exactly are your core values?

They’re what’s important to you, on the deepest level. They’re unique to you, and different from everybody else’s core values.

Granted, you probably value some of the same things as other people. But not in the same order, and not in the same amounts.

Some example core values include freedom, security, connection, family, honesty, peace, and power.

And although you might generally agree with some people that some thing are important - you probably differ wildly in what is the most important to you personally. I’ve never worked with two life coaching clients who had the same top three core values.

Aligning with your core values is a very important complement to finding your life purpose. (Remember, finding your life purpose without knowing your core values can sometimes feel like trying to drive to an exciting destination through a swamp.)
Yes, you might get lucky and stumble onto a life path that aligns with your core values. But it’s still much better to do so consciously. Because that way, you not only have a better chance of finding a path to your passion that you find comfortable and natural. You’re also less likely to suddenly find yourself running out of passion and having no idea what to do about it.

Luckily, I’ve put together a basic guide to finding your core values. It’s just a single blog post, so do get around to clicking through and reading it. (Though you can bookmark it for later. No hurry.)

If you want to dig deeper into the topic of core values, I share a few more resources at the end of that post.

And finally, to finish the road trip analogy - your life purpose is like having an exciting destination to go to.

It doesn’t matter if you have a solid road network, and a car with a tank full of gas. If you have nowhere to go, you will sit around in one spot, and feel bored.

Remember, the three cornerstones of living with passion all link together and support each other.

In this book, you will discover a bunch of neat ways to discover your life purpose. So let’s get to it!
3. The bane of your passion – being “realistic”

I recently worked with a client who was unhappy at work.

I got him to figure out what’s important to him in a job, and then to brainstorm some ideas for what he could do that aligns with that.

One of the things he said was “travel writing”, but he immediately followed that “but I should stay realistic”.

Hang on, how is that not realistic?

There are plenty of people all over the world who earn their living through travel writing. And even if there weren’t, he could always be the first. There’s absolutely nothing unrealistic about that! He also had no mortgage or family obligations tying him down to his current location.

And yet he automatically dismissed this idea as “unrealistic”, out of habit of thought.

This knee-jerk “But that’s not realistic!” reaction is what you want to banish while reading this book.

Most people are conditioned to think a certain way of what constitutes a “proper job”, and what, on the other hand, are just “foolish dreams”.

Most of those definitions are utterly bollocks.

Yes, there’s a time and place to bridge the gap between your dreams and your current reality. We’ll tackle that in chapters 7 and 8.

But do not dismiss any idea out of hand while working through the first few parts of this book.

Remember, you are not committing to anything yet. You are just working with ideas.
For example, let’s say you’re working through the “Venn diagram” technique (see chapter 5.1). You’re making a list of all the things you’re good at.

It would be directly counter-productive to immediately think “Oh, I’m good at singing, but I can’t get any career related to that! Let me not write that down.”

This is for two reasons.

Firstly, your knee-jerk reaction to dismiss something as unrelated to finding your passion will likely happen for the wrong reasons. There is a time to narrow down your ideas, but the idea generation phase is not it.

Secondly, that state of mind is directly contrary to the expansive, idea-generating state of mind you’re trying to reach.

Think of your mind as a narrow street, where cars can pass only from one direction at a time.

The two directions are **creativity** (expanding your mind, making connections, thinking of new things) and **focus** (narrowing down your ideas, editing, cutting things out).

Your thinking will be way more effective if you separate the two as much as possible.

It’s like first letting all the cars from one direction of the street go through, and then all the cars from the other direction. Pretty fast, smooth, and there’s only a bit of downtime in the middle where you’re switching over.

On the other hand, if you try mixing the two ways of thinking, it’s like trying to let cars through the narrow street randomly from each direction. They get stuck against each other, one or the other have to back up, and you spend most of your time waiting for the direction switches, rather than letting cars through.

So while you read this book, **forget about being realistic**.

Be a child again. Allow yourself to dream. Note down things that sound exciting to you, even if they seem silly.
It’s okay, nobody else will see the things you write down. Allow yourself to write down the things you truly mean. Putting them down on paper might just make them a little bit more real.

We’ll get to being realistic later, don’t worry about it. But for now - don’t be realistic! Be wild. Let your hair down. Allow yourself to dream.

Most people with amazing life stories started by doing things that seem crazy at first. That’s how progress happens.

Allow yourself to find your true passion. It might sound crazy and unrealistic at first... until you start figuring out the specifics, and find out that yes, you might just be able to make it work.

That’s one of the most exciting parts of finding your passion.
4. The two main ways to find your life purpose – deduction vs. induction

When you try to find your passion in life, you have two main approaches to choose from. Deduction and induction.

**Deduction** is about narrowing down a field of possibilities. Like when a detective is at a dinner party and somebody gets stabbed. The pool of possible murderers consists of the people who were present at the party. The detective then proceeds to narrow down the field of possible suspects, until he dramatically reveals who murdered the victim, what their motive was, what the murderer had for breakfast last Tuesday and how many hairs they have in their nose to within a tolerance of three hairs.¹

When finding your life purpose, this means narrowing down the field of where your passion lies, to point you towards things to try.

**Induction**, on the other hand, is about noticing a small number of cases, and then trying to generalize from there towards underlying rules. Like when Newton noticed that falling objects always fell towards the centre of the Earth, and formed his theory of gravity from that.

When searching for your life purpose, this means noticing things you’ve enjoyed doing in the past, seeing if there’s an overarching theme, and using that to point you in the direction of new things to try.

Although deduction is highly useful, you could theoretically do without it. You could just keep trying new things, noticing what you enjoy, and let that lead you towards your passion.

On the other hand, it’s pretty much impossible to do without induction.

¹ Or something like that. I haven’t read a detective novel in years.
You can spend a year on top of a mountain meditating on your life purpose. But if you don’t take action on it, you’ll never be quite sure if it truly is your life purpose.2

But the two approaches work best combined together.

There are so many different things you could be doing, it could take you years to stumble across something close to your life purpose, if you chose completely randomly. When done right, deduction helps you vastly reduce the field of possibilities, and it points you towards things to try doing.

Then it’s time to apply induction. Keep taking action and trying things related to your life purpose, and notice which ones make you feel happy and fulfilled.

To make this idea clearer, let me give you an example from the TV series *My Little Pony*.

In one episode, Twilight Sparkle (the main character of the show) wants to help the ponies of Ponyville wrap up winter.

It’s a local tradition where they do all the tasks to wrap up winter and make spring arrive. They disperse the clouds, prepare nests for migrating birds and bring them in from the south, wake up hibernating animals, plough and sow fields, and more.

Twilight is new in Ponyville, so unlike all the other ponies, she doesn’t yet know how to best contribute to the common effort.

She has an overarching goal - “Help wrap up winter in Ponyville”. And then she goes and tries to help out.

The first few attempts end up as a complete disaster. But she keeps trying different ways of helping wrap up winter, and eventually she does find a way to contribute.

This is very similar to how a typical search for a life purpose goes.

2 Also, if figure out what your life purpose is but don’t take action on it, that kind of defeats the whole point.
First you narrow it down a little (deduction). How little or how much is up to you, but generally you think for a while until you get an idea of what area you will try to find your life purpose in.

Then you go and try different things (induction). From each experience, you learn something about yourself, until your experience eventually guides you to your life purpose, and you find something that makes you feel like you’re truly making a difference in the world. You feel deeply satisfied with your life and go to bed every day with a smile on your face.
5. Deductive approaches to finding your life purpose

In this chapter, you will discover four different approaches for narrowing down where your passion in life lies:

- **5.1 The “Venn diagram” technique**
- **5.2 The “Exhaustive list” technique**
- **5.3 The “Wound of wisdom” technique**
- **5.4 The “Eulogy” technique**

Some of these approaches will work better for you than others. That’s okay.

I’m sharing all four of them, because different people think differently, and have different life situations. So although for example approach 5.3 might not really work for you at all, it might be exactly the right thing for somebody else.

I recommend you have a quick look through the four approaches, and pick the one that makes the most sense to you.

Then go through it thoroughly. Think about it deeply, resist your first urge to quit, write down all your ideas, then have a good look at them and think some more.

You will get far more benefit out of that than if you gave all four approaches a half-hearted try.

You’re trying to dig deep into your subconscious, into thoughts that normally hide from you.
If following your usual, habitual thought patterns would lead you to the answer, you would already be living your life purpose!

So pick a technique, and give it your full, undivided attention.

You can try other techniques later, that’s fine. But whichever one you pick first, give it your full focus while you’re working through it.
5.1 The “Venn diagram” technique

This technique is based on a simple idea. Your life purpose is usually:

- something you enjoy doing
- something you’re good at
- something that improves the lives of other people

By thinking about your life, and finding out where all three of those areas intersect, you have a good chance of narrowing down your life purpose.

3 “Venn diagram” is the mathematical term for fancy-looking intersecting circles. (Okay, it means a bit more than that, but that’s the essence. Feel free to google it if you want a rigorous definition.)
These are probably things that you’ve thought about before.

But the trick here is, again, to dig deeper than your usual passing thoughts.

So instead of trying to think of all three things at once, which would encourage skipping from thought to thought and just skimming the surface, here’s the focused approach:

1. **Pick one of the three areas above to start from**

   Generally, you’ll want to pick either things you’re good at, or things you enjoy doing. The third area - making the world a better place - is too broad to help you pinpoint your life purpose effectively.

2. **Grab a big sheet of paper, and start writing down EVERYTHING you think of that falls under that area**

   So, for example, let’s say you picked things you are good at.

   Note down EVERYTHING you are good at.

   I don’t care if it’s brain surgery, tying your shoelaces, or even picking your nose. If you think you’re good at it, write it down.

   Remember how thinking “realistically” too early shuts down your creative pathways? This is the same principle. Don’t worry about whether the things you write down have any realistic applications. Just write down everything.

   After writing down the things that come to mind easily, you might sit in front of the page for some moments, letting your mind search. And then you will start to think of things you normally overlook. There are things you are good at that come so naturally to you that you don’t even think about them.

   You can also later ask other people for input. They might give you interesting new insights.

   For example, a few years back, I asked this of a friend. He responded that one thing he admires about me is how I can always stay upbeat and optimistic.
That’s something I’d never thought about before. Staying positive honestly comes as natural as breathing to me, so I never even considered that there are in fact people who don’t find it easy or natural.

3. When you think you’re done, look at a clock, and take at least 5 more minutes of focus

Usually, when all the easy answers have come out, you will feel a natural impulse to stop and go do something else, or move on to the next step.

Don’t give in to that impulse.

It means you have stripped away all the easy, surface thoughts on this topic. It’s quite possible that your life purpose is hiding there, in plain sight. But it’s also quite likely that there’s some buried gold still eluding you.

So when you reach this point, look at a clock, and give yourself at least 5 more minutes, by the clock, before you move on to the next step.

Simply sit in front of your paper, and think a bit more. You can prompt yourself with a few guiding questions, like:

- “What else haven’t I thought of?”
- “What comes so natural to me that I haven’t thought of writing it down?”
- “If I had more things to write down here, what would they be?”

You may or may not discover more great answers. But give yourself the chance to dig them up before you move on.

4. Narrow down the list based on the other two areas

Only once you’ve done the creative step to the full, then it’s time to switch to narrowing down your list.

Have a look through it, and note down any elements that are both something you’re good at, and something you enjoy doing. (Make a little mark next to them, or highlight them in some other way.)

Then from all those, have a good look at them. Are there any of them
that you could use to make the world a better places? To improve the lives of other people?

If so, you may have just found your life purpose.

You will know when this happens, because you will feel a surge of excitement and motivation.

The answer there in front of you will feel right. Your mind will start racing, thinking of ways to apply this in your life. You will see yourself doing this in the future, and feel excited about the prospect.

Congratulations! Give yourself some time to daydream.

Then it’s just time to take this life purpose, and turn it into specific actions (see chapters 7 and 8).

I tried this approach myself a few years back. After going through the whole process, I narrowed it down to “helping others learn”.

I felt a surge of excitement, because yes, that’s been the common thread through dozens of different things I enjoyed in the past.

My mind started racing, and thinking of different ways to apply this in my life. I was already writing a blog about personal development, but I started having tons more ideas about how to align my life better with that purpose.

You will feel the same when you find your purpose.

This approach works well, because your life purpose is almost guaranteed to require all three of those aspects of the Venn diagram. And the step-by-step approach allows you to stretch your creativity, and capture ideas that might elude you if you think about it in an unfocused way.

One last note - if this approach doesn’t lead to any ideas you feel really hopeful about, you can try starting by making a list of things you enjoy doing, rather than a list of things you’re good at. (Or vice versa.)

Sometimes, one way will lead your thoughts in the right direction a lot more easily than the other. So if the first try doesn’t work, try thinking about it from the other angle!
5.2 The “exhaustive list” technique

The credit for this technique goes to Steve Pavlina.

The idea is - you grab a big, blank sheet of paper (or open up a new file in your favourite word processor). You write at the top - “What is my life purpose?”

And then you write down any answer that pops into your head. Any short phrase that might answer the question.

Then you write another phrase. And another. And you keep writing.

Don’t censor yourself, don’t overthink it, just keep writing.

And, as Steve puts it, “[Keep writing down ideas] until you write the answer that makes you cry. This is your purpose.”

As you keep writing down ideas, you will inevitably find some that resonate with you more than others.

Feel free to follow them. Go with a train of thought that catches you, and write down 15-20 related ideas. Then, once you’ve exhausted this avenue of thought, feel free to switch to a completely different area of life where your life purpose might lie.

As you keep writing, you will slowly strip away all your usual, day-to-day thoughts on the topic.

You will start to feel resistance. You will want to stop writing.

But keep at it. If you feel stuck, just stare at the blank sheet of paper, take some deep breaths, and relax. Don’t force it, just let the ideas flow out as they come to you.

And as you push past this initial resistance, and past these surface layers of thought, you will start to dig deeper. Closer to what’s truly important to you, closer to what’s truly going on in your mind.

Depending on how well versed in living consciously you are, it might take
you 15-20 minutes, or even up to an hour in extreme cases, to get past this surface level.

But the results are so worth it.

Because as you dig down to what’s truly important to you, you will start to find answers that resonate with you deeply. Answers that make you well up with emotion.

You might come across an answer that’s almost your life purpose, but not quite.

Maybe it will take another ten minutes and dozens of ideas circling around it until you write down a phrase that truly aligns with you.

But when you have it, you will know it. You will feel a strong surge of emotion, as you look at the answer in front of you.

There you have it. You have found where your life purpose lies. Now you just need to turn it into action (see chapters 7 and 8 for that).

To give you an idea of what this leads to, here’s Steve’s answer:

“Here was my final answer: to live consciously and courageously, to resonate with love and compassion, to awaken the great spirits within others, and to leave this world in peace.”

...

That is the “exhaustive list” technique.

It’s a great technique. But your mileage may vary.

Maybe your life purpose isn’t that easy for you to sum up in words. Or maybe you don’t have enough experience yet to really realize what your life purpose is. (In that case, pay extra close attention to Chapter 6 - the inductive approach to finding your life purpose.)

If you decide not to try this method, fair enough.

But if you do try this method - then give it your full. Put aside your judgments and prejudices. Don’t feel silly for doing this. Nobody is going
to see you, nobody is going to judge you.

Go into it with a mindset of curiosity. Stay with it past the initial sticking point, and see what final answer you converge onto.

You may well be surprised by how effective this method is when you take the time to strip past your habitual thought patterns.

When I tried this method myself, this is the answer I got that truly resonated with me:

My life purpose is to live, love, and help as many people as possible live a passionate, deeply fulfilling life.

It didn’t make me cry. (I can’t remember the last time I truly cried, if you don’t count cutting onions or hitting my nose on a door frame.). But the answer does feel right deep inside, and gives me a warm feeling in my chest whenever I think of it.

Now go ahead, and make your own exhaustive list.
5.3 The “Wound of wisdom” technique

In some ancient tribes, people used to believe that wisdom enters a warrior’s body through wounds. As part of the ritual of becoming men, boys would give themselves deep cuts and then fill them with ash, to lead to big, obvious scars, as signs of wisdom.

This technique is a lot more specific than the last two. It definitely won’t work for everyone, but when it does work, it works really well.

If you’ve faced big adversity in your life, and managed to overcome it, you have probably learned a lot from the experience. And there are a lot of other people who could benefit from your expertise.

The “Wound of wisdom” technique comes down to two questions:

- What big adversity have I overcome in my life?
- How can I help others do the same?

As you can see, this requires two big things. Firstly, you need to have overcome some adversity in your life. And secondly, you need to want to help others do the same.

Granted, this isn’t for everyone. Not everyone wants to write a book, or give inspirational talks, or coach others.

But if you do enjoy helping others and sharing your knowledge?

Then give it some thought. What things have you overcome in your life that others are also struggling with?

It might just lead you to your life purpose.
5.4 The “Eulogy” technique

The following technique is useful in all sorts of situations.

It can get you motivated to take action to change your life. It can help you see whether you’re making the right decisions. And it can help you find your life purpose.

The idea is to imagine yourself in the far future, and use that as a lesson to take action now.

In the case of motivation, you could imagine yourself five or ten years down the road, and picture how your life would look if you didn’t make any big changes. Often, this leads to a “Hell no, I don’t want that!” moment, and drives you to finally make positive changes you’ve been delaying for a while. Whether it’s starting exercising, learning to talk to the opposite sex, or getting out of a dead-end job.

The flavour we’re going to use in this exercise is a little different. You’re not going to think forward just a few years. You will think forward *all the way* to your death bed.

Also, it’s not an “if nothing changes” scenario. Rather, I’d like you to imagine your *ideal* scenario:

- Imagine it’s the end of your life, and you’re on your death bed. You’ve lived a long, prosperous life. Who would you like to be there by your side? What would you like to say to them, and what would you like to have them say to you?

- As you’re on your death bed and think back to the life behind you, what would you like to have achieved? What are your fondest memories?

Take the time to daydream about this scenario.

It will show you some things that are truly important to you. It will prob-
ably also show you that some things aren’t *that* important to you, in the long run.

Then come back to the present, and find a phrase to sum up everything you’ve learned while imagining your eulogy. A phrase to sum up your life purpose.

Funnily enough, your life will probably end up being completely, *completely* different from what you imagine in this exercise.

But that’s okay. Because this exercise isn’t meant to fix your whole future for you from now until the moment you die.

Rather, the “Eulogy” technique shows you **what is currently truly important to you.** And that’s exactly what finding your life purpose is about. Aligning with what you *currently* value and find inspiring and motivating.

So take the time to do this exercise, because it’s a great way to strip away your short-term wants and desires, and get at what is truly important to you in the long run.
6. The inductive approach to finding your life purpose

And now it’s time for the inductive approach to finding your purpose.

No matter how much or how little time you spent on deduction, it always comes down to induction at the end.

I like to explain this concept with a metaphor from The Neverending Story:

In The Neverending Story (the book, not the movie), Bastian is taken to the magic land of Fantasia, where he is tasked with nothing less than saving the whole world.

The Childlike Empress gives him her magical amulet, which grants him the power to make any wishes come true. At which point Bastian is completely stumped. Until then, he had tons of ideas… but now that he can do anything, he’s overwhelmed by the idea of saving the whole magic world, and can’t think of anything to wish for.

So the Childlike Empress tells him – “Don’t worry about saving Fantasia. Just follow your wishes one by one, as they come, and they will eventually lead you down the right path.”

That’s exactly how it works in real life, too.

As I already mentioned in the introduction, having a clear, easily defined, persistent life purpose is extremely rare. Yet that’s what you hear about most often, because it makes for the best stories.

That sets unrealistic expectations.

Most people who find their life purpose, and live with a deep sense of fulfilment, follow Bastian’s approach.

They simply notice what they enjoy, and do more of it, or try other things
along similar lines. And eventually, they converge onto what makes them truly happy.

So, to apply the inductive approach:

◆ **1. Do something. Anything.**

Taking action is at the centre of this approach. If you do nothing (say, sit at home and passively browse the web, or watch TV), you will not find your life purpose.

But any kind of active engagement, where you do things, is part of the inductive approach to finding your life purpose.

◆ **2. Notice which parts you enjoy, which parts not so much.**

Practice self-awareness. You can easily get stuck doing something you hate, if you don’t stay conscious of your feelings, and if you don’t keep in mind that yes, you could be doing something else.

◆ **3. Try many different things, at least once.**

This gives you a broader perspective. The biggest weakness of the inductive approach to finding your life purpose is that it can get you stuck only finding a “local maximum”, as we mathematicians would call it.

In other words, it’s great for finding things related to what you’re doing, and eventually getting you to doing the most fulfilling related thing. But it doesn’t help you try out a completely different area of action, and see if you maybe like that better. Unless you consciously try many different things.

As an example, if you’ve always done carpentry, because that’s your traditional family job, then naturally, you would try many carpentry-related jobs, and find the one that fills you with the most passion. Say, designing tables.\(^4\)

But maybe there’s a completely different area that would make you much happier. Like working with kids in a kindergarten. Yet you would never find out if you kept your actions narrow.

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\(^4\) I have no idea what a modern carpentry job actually involves.
So - notice things that seem fun or interesting, and give them a try - even if they’re well outside your current life path.

4. Keep following the things you enjoy, and doing more of them.

Lastly, combine all the things you noticed you enjoy, and keep trying new tasks that align with them better and better.

Also, note that when I say “things you enjoy” here, I mean tasks that give you a sense of long-term satisfaction. Not things that merely feel good in the moment.
7. Transitioning to living your life purpose

All the previous chapters are designed to help you find your life purpose. While doing them, it’s good to think big, think crazy, and forget being realistic. That’s the only way you will find your true passion.

And only once you find your passion to pursue, it’s time to get a bit realistic.

Which is what this chapter is all about.

In here, you will learn how to transition from your current life to following your life purpose. Because it won’t happen automatically.

And also (again, compared to the dramatized version of reality you see in movies), immediately quitting what you’re currently doing, selling your house, putting your dog in a basket on your back, and driving off to pursue your life purpose is usually not the best approach. Instead, it takes a slow and deliberate transition.

The four approaches to transitioning to your life purpose

In general, you have four ways to transition from whatever you’re currently doing with your life, to your life purpose:

- 1. Keep doing what you’re doing, but do more and more of what you love, and less and less of what you don’t enjoy (a.k.a. the “main job” transition)
- 2. Keep working a side job while you slowly transition to your life purpose (a.k.a. the “side job” transition)
- 3. Quit everything and just make the leap
- 4. Keep working an eternal side job
The different approaches result from how your life purpose relates to what you’re currently doing.

7.1 The “main job” transition

This approach applies if you’re lucky enough to have (or if you find) a job that relates to your life purpose.

Then you can simply start to get rid of the tasks you don’t enjoy so much, and do more and more of what you do enjoy.

If you are truly following your life purpose, you should be able to do this. Because following your passion, you will be very good at your job. You will bring energy, enthusiasm, and results. And whether you’re working for yourself or for a company, this will make you one of the best at what you do. You will be able to choose how you spend your time.

If you work for yourself, this is pretty obvious. As you get more well-known and more successful, you will be able to outsource the work you don’t enjoy. Hire an accountant, hire a personal assistant, and so on.

If you work for a company, it might not be so obvious. But you can also continually align better and better with your life purpose. Since you’re following your passion, you will be great at what you do. As you bring the company results, they will realize how valuable you are. Then you can use that leverage to get them to give you more of the tasks you enjoy, and less of the tasks you don’t enjoy.

If, by any chance, you find yourself at a company that doesn’t understand this... you can always change companies. Which starts to border on the second approach to transitioning to your passion.

7.2 The “side job” transition

This approach applies when your life purpose is not related to your main job.5

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5 This is often the case if your life purpose is an art. For example acting, or drawing webcomics.
Sometimes you can’t just start from nothing and immediately be able to support yourself by following your passion. You might need to transition gradually.

In this case, keep working your regular job to support yourself, but start developing your life purpose on the side. Then, as your passion starts taking off, you will be able to slowly diminish the amount of time you spend on the regular job, until you can quit it completely.

This works great if your life purpose is something you can work on even if you only have a few hours spare per week at first. Whether it’s writing articles, or taking photos, or making fancy hairstyles for a few friends and people they refer to you.

You can also start learning skills related to your life purpose, and making connections with people who work in related areas. Whatever brings you closer to following your passion.

### 7.3 The “just leap” transition

In this approach, you just quit whatever you’re currently doing, and focus 100% on following your life purpose.

This is the most exciting, but also the most risky approach. It’s like racing against a clock, to see if your life purpose takes off in time to support you.

It still takes a bit of preparation if you don’t want to be reckless about it. You don’t just quit - you first make sure that you can support yourself for a while. For instance, it’s a good idea to save up enough money to survive at least 6 months without any income, before you quit your regular job. (Depending on your situation, you might take a serious hit to the lifestyle you’re used to. But it’s generally well worth it for a chance to follow your life purpose, rather than slaving away in a job you don’t enjoy just to maintain material comforts, which aren’t really that fulfilling anyway.)

If you don’t have that much money yet, you can still work on moving
towards your passion. Develop related skills, read books and articles that relate to your life purpose, and bide your time until you’re in a good spot to give it a shot, and make the leap.

**7.4 The eternal side job**

This one isn’t really a transition, but it definitely bears mentioning.

For the vast majority of people (over 90%), their life purpose is something they can earn a living through. It might take some time and work to get to that point, but they can do it.

But, exceptionally, *very* exceptionally, that does not apply.

You might simply find that your life purpose is something that you can’t - or don’t want to - turn into a job that supports you financially.

A good example of this is if you find out that your life purpose, the thing that gives you joy and meaning, is simply taking care of your family, and helping them grow up. That is not something you can turn into a job.

Now, don’t get me wrong. It’s also quite possible that you love spending time with your family and helping them grow up, but also really enjoy doing work that improves the lives of other people. That’s far more common. But it is possible you will find that your sole life purpose is something you really don’t want to turn into a job.

Yet you still need to survive. You might be lucky and find a partner who can support you, while you fully devote yourself to your life purpose.

Or keep a side job, forever. It might be complex, highly paid work that other people value, but if it’s not aligned with your life purpose, it’s still just a side job. And sometimes it’s okay to keep a job like that, while you follow your passion alongside.

That being said, don’t use this as an excuse.

For the vast majority of people, this does not apply. You can almost certainly fulfill your life purpose in a way that supports you financially.
8. How to turn this book into action

You now know a bunch of tools that can help you find your life purpose. But no matter how great tools you have, if you leave them idle in your mental toolbox, nothing will change.

The final step, from finding your life purpose to living it, is taking action.

Action is by far the most powerful way to change your life. Hell, it’s pretty much the only way to truly change your life.

Because no matter what changes you make on the inside, if you keep taking the same actions as you did before, your life will stay pretty much the same.

Yes, knowing where your life purpose lies and how to go about transitioning to it is pretty damn useful. There’s a good chance that just by itself, this knowledge will automatically compel you to take action and change your life.

But there’s something even better.

You can stack the odds in your favour by consciously taking action to align with your life purpose.

Don’t leave it to chance. Take the time to figure out what the gap is between your current situation and where you would like to be. And then bridge that gap.

Yes, turning big-picture goals into action is a big topic that could fill a book like this one all on its own. (Funnily enough, I did write a book on that topic. See below.)
So here’s a quick suggestion for how to turn all the content in this book into action. Then, at the end of this chapter, I will share a few resources if you want to learn more about setting specific goals and taking action.

**8.1 Turning this book into action - a rough plan**

Here’s a rough plan you can follow. Feel free to modify it according to your needs.

- **1. Try out as many of the deductive approaches to finding your passion (see chapter 5) as you want.**

  If you already have some ideas, you can skip this step. Or you can try every single one of the deductive approaches in this book.

  But chances are, you will try one or two, and they will give you some answers that resonate with you on a deep level. Answers that will get you all pumped and excited. You will immediately want to run off and turn them into reality.

  Run with it. When you have ideas for your life purpose that you want to follow, grab them and make them real.

  Note that in some sense this step counts as action, and in another sense, not really. Because although you’re *actively* thinking about this part of your life, you’re also really just sitting around and thinking. So, it’s a good first step, but you’ll want to follow it up. Say...

- **2. Figure out a specific instance of your life purpose to pursue**

  So you have an idea. A rough area where your life purpose lies.

  What do you do with it?

  Let’s take my example of “helping others learn”. That’s a good starting point, but pretty vague.

  In my case, that could involve trying to work with schools (I did give that one a shot, but found that working within the current mainstream school
system isn’t really for me). Or it could involve writing books. Or giving talks. Or running workshops.

Whatever your area of passion is, brainstorm some ideas on how you could turn it into real-life action.

If you’re not too sure, ask.

You are bound to know somebody who works in a related area, or at least know somebody who knows somebody like that. Ask around.

You can also search on the internet, and find plenty of websites around your chosen area of passion. You might find forums, or other professionals’ websites, or whatnot. Then just ask people - what does it involve to work in that area? How can you best get started?

Whatever your life purpose is, there’s already somebody out there who’s doing it, or at least doing something very similar. I guarantee it.

◆ 3. Figure out specific actions related to your life purpose that you can take, then plan ahead to fit them in your schedule

One big problem people have with following their life purpose is that it stays just a dream.

That’s because there’s a big step between having a rough idea of what you want to be doing, or even having some specific actions in mind... and actually doing those actions.

This step is where the magic happens - where you turn all this stuff that you’ve been mulling over in your mind, and turn it into reality.

While working through all the content in this book, it can often feel like you’re not really in your own life. It’s almost like you’re lost reading a good book - a nice, pleasant work of fiction, but not really part of your life.

Until you take this step.

Because this is where you start to bridge the gap between your life purpose and your current situation. And you realize that, by gosh, this is real. You are actually taking action to start living your passion!
So, once you have done the steps above, and have some specific actions that will take you closer to your life purpose, sit down and plan the next good time when you can fit them in your schedule.

They don’t have to be huge, ground-breaking pieces of action.

It can be searching the web for information on how to get started in the area of your life purpose.

It can be arranging to talk to somebody who’s already doing something similar.

It can be developing a skill you need - taking the time to find a book on the topic, and scheduling the time to read it.\(^6\)

But whatever your action is, take the time to plan ahead how you will fit it into your schedule.

Because if you don’t, it will always stay in the back of your mind, but you’ll never get around to doing it. Things will come up. There will always be one or another urgent thing that you have to deal with.

And with all this urgent, yet not really important, stuff... you will never get around to doing the truly important things, like following your passion.

Take the time to schedule this action. It’s worth it.

If you want to know a lot more turning vague dreams into specific action, check out my series of articles about The GROW Model.

\(^6\) But don’t let “learning more about the topic” become an excuse for not taking action. Only do it as far as you need to - but always put real out-in-the-world action before reading books.
Learning a related skill is a kind of action. (To some degree. Don’t let it become an excuse for not taking other action.)

Dipping your toes in and trying your life purpose is a kind of action.

Whatever it is, keep your life purpose in mind, and keep working at it.

Sometimes, you will get particularly busy with life or your current work for a few days, or even two or three weeks. That’s okay. But as soon as your schedule eases up, turn your attention back to following your life purpose.

This last point is deliberately vague, because frankly, following your passion will take you through all sorts of twists and turns.

You might be going along a line of thought, talking to people, researching information... but when you finally try doing a bit of whatever you thought your life purpose was... you find out that it’s not really for you.

That’s great news! It means you’ve just learned more about yourself, and about where your life purpose truly lies.

It means you’re closer to finding your life purpose than where you would be if you didn’t take that action!

Yes, it takes time.

That’s okay. You’ve probably lived many, many years without following your passion.

You can manage a few more months, or even years, of transitioning from your current life to following a purpose that makes you feel deeply, passionately alive.

The journey will be an exciting ride in itself. Finding out more about yourself, trying out many different things, finally zoning in on actions that make you feel passionately alive.

And you might find that over time, your interests shift, and what used to be your life purpose no longer is.
That’s okay.

In the end, it always comes down to the definition I shared right at the beginning of this book:

**When you feel a deep sense of satisfaction about what you’re doing with your life, you have found your life purpose.**

No more, no less.

Now go ahead, and follow your passion.
9. Beyond this book

Aaaand... we’re at the end of this book. D’aww.

You now have all the tools you need to get started on your journey towards your life purpose.

It’s up to you to apply them.

If you want to know more about me, or read more of my writing, check out my blog - Alive With Passion.

I also send out a free e-mail newsletter once (occasionally twice) a month. I’d recommend you check it out, because it contains extra content not found on the blog, special life coaching offers when I run some, occasional free nifty e-books (like this one), oh, and you get a free e-book called *The 5 Elements of Living With Passion* when you sign up. That one makes a great complement to this book.

Finally, if you have any questions or comments about this book, e-mail me at me@vladdolezal.com.

I’d love to hear your feedback, your success story, or any questions you have about things that weren’t quite clear.

Also, I’m trying to help as many people as possible to find their life purpose. So if you enjoyed this book, please share it with others. Send a copy to a friend, or share a link to the download page with others.

To finish off, here’s a quote on the meaning of life from the ancient thinker Aristotle:

“Burp.”

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7 Translated to English by Anon. The original sound was a bit hard to transcribe.
8 Some people believe this was his commentary on the passing, non-permanent nature of life.
9 Others believe he just swallowed some air while swimming. I guess we’ll never know.