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DISCOVER YOUR LIFE PURPOSE WORKSHOP

Hand Out

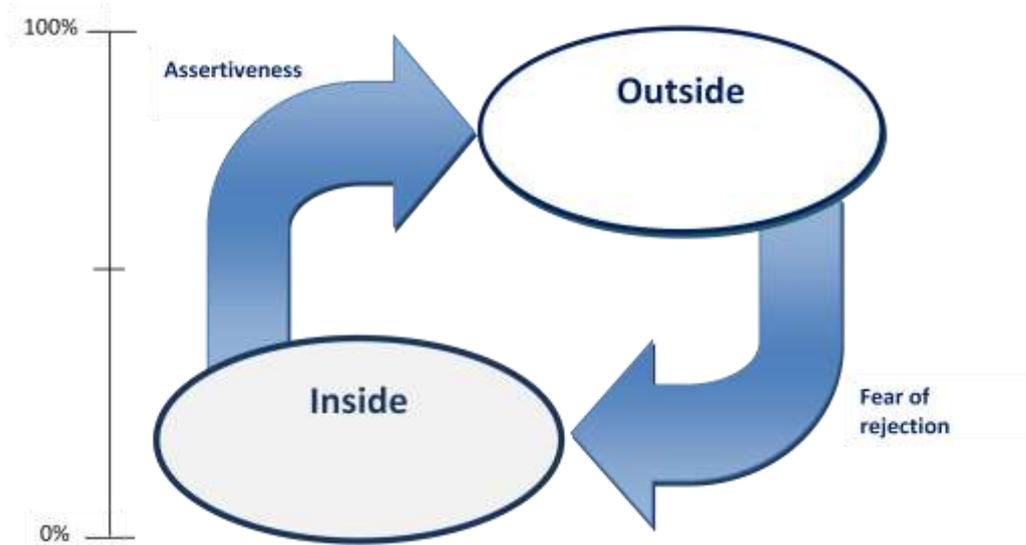


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DISCOVERING YOUR LIFE PURPOSE WORKSHOP TAKE HOME NOTES

INSIDE OUT / OUTSIDE IN



How much of your life do you live inside out versus outside in? When we live outside in, we're allowing the outside world to influence us. This is not a bad thing; after all it's important to live by some of the expectations laid out by our society. But how much of outside in is too much?

To what extent are you allowing outside influences to impact on your dreams and what constitutes success? To find your life purpose, you may need to be just a little more inside out.

Because you are responsible for deciding what gives your life meaning and what success looks like.

THE 7-STEPS TO DISCOVERING YOUR LIFE PURPOSE

1. Find your external and internal dreams

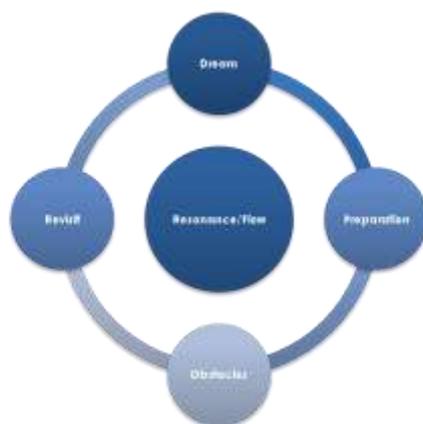
When we talk about dreams we often talk about goals. For example: 'I'd like to be a successful public speaker' or 'I want to be a famous doctor' or 'I want to be an Olympic gold medal swimmer'. These are what we call our external dreams. External dreams are about what we dream to become and the goals we have attached to those dreams such as success, fame, money.

What we're often not aware of is our internal dreams; or our 'experiential' dream. This is the dream driven by feel. It's about the feelings we attach to working towards the dream. It is this 'feel', the internal dream that ultimately propels us and drives us to achieve our dreams. Think of how often an Olympic Gold Medalist or winner of a tennis Grand Slam has said after their race/match: "I just felt really good, I felt really comfortable out there; it felt like an easy pace". What they are speaking of is the feeling that has driven them to succeed and which has impacted their success more than the goal of the gold medal (note: there has been multiple studies over decades that confirm this, for more information contact Robynne at Berg Consulting).

Sometimes we're not sure what our external dream should be (ie. I know I'd be really successful at something if only I knew what it was!). Understanding our internal dream can help us 'feel out' or discover our life purpose. And it's worth being patient, sometimes finding your internal dream may take a while.

For me that my external dream is to become a great speaker on life purpose and self-leadership. Ideally I'd even like to make some good money in the process. And my internal dream, the dream that compels me to go out in search of achieving my external dream is the inspiration and energy that comes when I am learning and discovering new things, and where I'm engaging meaningfully with people in what I am learning. It is that 'learning and engagement' that really inspires me.

It seems such a cliché but there really is no greater truth than it's not the destination but the journey. In other words, it the internal dream that inspires us. The realisation of the external dream is simply an external measure of what it is we love doing.



Anatomy of a dream (adapted from Clawson 2007)

2. Take Responsibility, Commit And Prepare

One of the most important steps to finding and living life purpose is taking responsibility. Nothing externally is going to change your life or achieve your life purpose: it must be driven by you.

And you need to accept that where you are right now is where you chose to be; insofar as where you are this day is the result of the series of choices you have made throughout your life which has landed you here.

To achieve dreams you must make a genuine commitment. No dream is realised without it being taken seriously. If your commitment is half hearted or you're waiting for 'affirmations' or opportunities to magically deliver your dreams to you; you'll be left with nothing. Because nothing exists until you act on it.

Preparation is the key to the realisation of any dream. Someone doesn't decide their life purpose is to climb Mt Everest and hitch the first flight, in their shorts and a backpack. All dreams require the same level of preparation as climbing a mountain; only the terrain is different, not the effort required.

To prepare you need to ask yourself, in order to achieve your dream, what do you need to learn? Who do you need to know? What are the tools of your trade and how to you hone them? How do you ensure you are prepared enough to meet the inevitable obstacles that will greet you along the way?

3. Manage Your Energy

The way to achieving our life purpose is less time management, more energy management. A combination of commitment and energy. What are you willing to work for? What are you prepared to do to ensure you have the energy to achieve your dreams?

In order to manage our energy we need to tune into how we are feeling and understand our energy and how it's affected by the many aspects of our lives. Getting to know what increases our energy and what drains it is an important step to building the energy resources required to achieve our dreams.

When thinking about what increases and diminishes your energy think about your whole life.

Become aware of how your energy is affected by:

- Food
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Your leisure activities
- Your relationships

4. Reframe Your Life Story

One of the most important activities we can undertake to liberate ourselves from what holds us back, and develop our capacity to identify and achieve our life purpose, is to write our story.

Our values, beliefs and behaviours all stem from our life story. Yet, how often do we check in with our life story and see if our story is congruent with where we are in our stage of life? Our life story is not the facts of our lives, but rather how we chose to view the events in our life.

When we take some time to check in with our beliefs and values and analyse where they stem from in our life story, we can sometime identify 'stories' that no longer serve us well, well not if we want to achieve our life purpose anyway.

This is a sometimes confronting but very liberating task. Most of our ideas about the 'facts' our lives are simply the judgement/meaning we place on it. Is there a way you can reframe a story that is limiting you so as you can be liberated from it?

5. Learn to find more Flow/ Resonance

Flow is closely connected with optimal experience and performance a. 'Flow' was first studied and coined by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, former chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago. The genesis of his theory took place when, as a teenager, he spent time in a Nazi concentration camp and observed that while some people became despondent and died quickly, others seemed to find purpose even in these most bleak of circumstances. This experience led to his life's work, an enquiry into this phenomenon which he called 'flow' and a research project spanning several decades.

Flow has been observed as the key difference that separates the world's highest performers from their peers. Which is to say, high performers mention being in 'flow' states more often than the rest of us. Numerous bodies of research into peak performance have found the ability to experience 'flow' as the defining characteristic of high performers.

But that's not to say we can't all achieve it; flow is something we've all experience at some time or another. And it's an experience that, once we understand how to create it, we can develop in order to optimise our own performance and potential.

So what is flow?

Flow is also termed resonance, 'being in the zone', being engaged, or simply being in a state of exceptional enjoyment.

Flow typically takes place when we are working on something that gives us a great sense of energy. Key characteristics include:

- A sense of intense concentration and focus on the task at hand
- A loss of self-consciousness, coupled with a greater sense of our ability to achieve our task

- A sense of effortless whilst at the same time sensing we are working at the very peak of our capability (ie. in a state of optimal performance)
- A sense of timeliness, which often feels like time has flown, but in some cases can feel like time has slowed down (rock climbers in particular have described the sensation of time slowing whilst navigating the cliff face where every step is critical)
- Its intensely satisfying
- After the experience we often have a heightened sense of ourselves and our abilities

When does flow happen?

Czikszentmihalyi's research and that of many others studying world class performers and excellence have found that 'flow' takes place when the following factors are in place:

1. We're undertaking an activity that challenges us and our abilities
2. There's clarity about what we want to achieve (ie. a goal)
3. We believe that the task/goal that can be fulfilled/completed and in our ability to achieve it
4. An opportunity exists to concentrate deeply on what we are doing
5. We can receive immediate feedback – ie: steps achieved along the way
6. We are in an environment where we are learning (nb. learning is a key producer of flow)

Why it doesn't happen on weekends?

How often have you felt like you've struggled through a whole week just hanging for the weekend? I was talking recently with a former colleague – a successful writer and advertising man – who lamented that while he spent all week waiting for the weekend to roll around, by Saturday afternoon he was so frustrated he was ready to pick a fight with his wife (and sometimes did).

What is it with that?

This is where we get a true understanding of the concept of flow and its importance to enjoyment. If enjoyment is about having a challenging yet attainable goal, tasks that require intense concentration and facilitate learning it makes sense that many of us feel disillusioned and disgruntled with our weekends. Because while we think our reward for a hard week's work is doing 'nothing', the truth is 'nothing' is just that, it delivers nothing. And so it's unsatisfying.

And so for us to enjoy our weekends we need to find activities that generate an environment that facilitates flow.

So how can we achieve flow?

To learn how to bring more 'flow' into our lives, it's best to first think through when you've achieved flow in the past. You will generally find that many or all of the above factors were in place when you felt flow. If you can build a profile of the times you have felt it you will be able to get a sense of what helps you achieve flow. And you can then start to find ways to bring those factors into your work and life more often.

This may involve simply making the commitment to spend more time at your work, with the email off and other distractions removed so as you can give yourself an environment that facilitates flow. Or you may need to look at how you can change your working circumstances, be it a new role, a new organisation or a whole new career direction.

In terms of leisure time look at hobbies that offer challenges and allow you to achieve (most do). They may include anything from learning a language, to rebuilding a car engine or cooking. So many leisure tasks offer the opportunity for flow – we simply need to commit the time to do them.

6. Overcome Obstacles

There isn't a dream achieve that hasn't overcome obstacles. So from the very beginning of planning your life purpose, it's worth accepting that the obstacles will be coming your way, no matter how well you prepare. So how can we overcome obstacles?

Firstly, make sure your path to your dream is wide enough and flexible enough to manoeuvre around the obstacles along the way. Obstacles may be anything from delays in time, market crashes, realising you need more training/skills, or even something that permanently ends your first idea of your life purpose.

In these cases, remember to go back to your internal dream. What do you want to feel? And remember flow. How can you extend, move, or widen your view to see things differently and slightly (or significantly) change your idea of what the path should be. Quite often it's through widening our path to overcome an obstacle that we get even closer to our life purpose.

Don't allow yourself to get in the trap of feeling obligated. Feelings of obligation drain you of energy and disconnect you from flow and your inner dream. When obligation sets in, take a step back, remember your inner dream.

Take a look at your self-talk. Whose opinion of you do you listen to? If you're struggling with negative self talk that's impacting on you achieving your dream, don't just try and change your self-talk. Think back to the belief that it stems from and see if you can reframe that belief. That way it's not just the self talk, but the belief that feeds it that you've managed.

Take time to visualise. What does it feel like when you achieve your dreams? What are the sounds, sights, smells? But most important what are the emotions. Lie back, relax and enjoy... this stuff is fun, and it has been proven to work a treat when combined with responsibility, commitment and preparation.

7. Share and revisit

Dreams stay alive when we share and revisit them.

Ensure you share your dream (and your internal dream) with people who will support you and encourage you.



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Read books or watch movies or see talks from those who have achieved dreams and lived meaningful lives. Often we think we need to reinvent the wheel to make our success authentic. Why? We have thousands of years of stories of people who have achieved before us. There is so much to learn from them.

And finally remember of listen to, acknowledge and share the dreams of others. It's a great way to inspiration and energy increases.

And lastly? Enjoy!