

# Discovering our life purpose

Reconnecting with our true self, creating the conditions to flourish and clarifying our life purpose



## It is easy for us to lose our sense of self

Within today's working world, our environment can be experienced as being challenging (Alejandro and Yolanda, 2015). We may feel pressures from external market forces, shifting organisational agendas and our own personal responsibilities at home.

In our work and life other people's expectations of us, may consciously or subconsciously shape our work decisions. Consequently, it is easy to overlook our own needs, and to lose our sense of self along the way.

Creating our own defences to such challenges can often lead us to feel disconnected within ourselves. We can be left feeling out of sorts.

"We sense that something is missing in our lives and search the world for it, not understanding that what is missing is us."

Parker J. Palmer, 2004: page 16



Awakening to this provides us with the opportunity to reconnect with our true self.

## What is our true self?

This is more of who we are when we are at our best and in flow. In other words, it is when we feel truly aliveness and is unique to each of us.

By stripping back and letting go of some of our defences, including our ego, we can recall some of who we were as a younger self.

"Hairline cracks begin to form upon the hard and shiny surface of our ego [...] signally that something new may now start to stretch and grow from deeper within."

Brian Draper, 2017: page 56

## How can we reconnect with our true self?

Being aware of this enables us to reconnect with this true, perhaps more authentic, self.



Whilst our 'true self' may seem tricky to understand and feel intangible to grasp, there can be different practical ways to help us to tap into this. Here are some different means to enable us to reconnect with our true self when we are at our best:

Firstly, have a think about the times and situations when you have sensed that people draw energy from you and are perhaps inspired by you. Recall a couple of situations when this was the case. What were you doing? How were you being?

Also, reflect upon when you have felt in the flow, where things have felt natural and easy for you. It may be when you have felt fully alive. When were these situations? Again, what were you doing? Where were you? Who were you with?

Another way in which you may be able to access your true self, is by recalling those occasions when you have felt strong emotions, perhaps even unexpected tears. When were these occasions? Where were you? What had triggered such emotions?

Finally, it may be helpful to consider how you'd like to be remembered by the people that

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you have come into contact with you within your life. Consider what you'd like to be remembered for? What difference would you like to have made?

## It is important to create space to flourish

Before embarking upon such work, it is important to recognise the conditions that will support such personal exploration.

We need space to allow us to reconnect with our true self and to find ways of expressing this. It may be creative and perhaps even take on different forms in a way that is unique to us

"Let the beauty of what you have be what you do."

Rumi, 2001

By having time to explore, it allows us to tap into our sub-conscious intuition, connecting us to wisdom beyond our rational thought alone. This is when our insightful gems can surface.

Consider where could you go to help you to explore and undertake such important work? What space provides the conditions for you to flourish?

## How can I discover my life purpose?

Here we can turn to the work of Simon Sinek to help us to clarify our unique life purpose.

"Make visible what, without you, might never be seen."

Robert Bresson, 2009

1. **Gathering stories** – identify up to ten moments in our life so far when we have felt we're at our natural best. Note these down, perhaps on a timeline. Write 2-3 sentences about each to help you to remember, the more specific you can be the better
2. **Choosing a partner and sharing** – working with someone who you trust will help you to do this important work. Choose someone who knows you and is independent and perhaps unrelated. Create some space and time together where you can share some of your stories that resonate most with you. Your partner can take notes, identifying both facts and also the meaning and emotions generated
3. **Identifying themes** – here your partner can identify the themes that emerged from your stories
4. **Creating your life purpose** – on reviewing these themes, it is likely that one theme will shine for you. This is the kernel of your life purpose. Both you and your partner can refine this into your one sentence life purpose statement, focusing on both the benefit and contribution
5. **Developing your how** – separate to your purpose statement, you can clarify your unique way of working. This is your 'how'. Typically you would have 4-5 parts; your remaining themes will be the source for these
6. **Clarifying current focus** – finally we clarify the 'what'; what are the practical ways of expressing our purpose in work and life. Overtime these may evolve

## How do I sustain living with purpose?

1. **Creating sustainable habits** – consider what habits can enable you to stay grounded and in flow
2. **Restoring your energy** – explore ways in which you can restore your energy levels in healthy ways
3. **Surrounding yourself with supporters** – spend time with those people who see you as your purpose and your best self

### Top tip



If you'd like to explore in more depth the topics that this article has raised, then I would totally recommend reading:

Soulfulness: Deepening the Mindful Life – Brian Draper, Hodder, 2018

Find Your Why: A Practical Guide for You and Your Team – Simon Sinek, David Mead and Peter Docker Portfolio Penguin, 2017



### About the writer

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Cathy Brown is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, consultant and author. She runs Evolve Consulting Services Limited which works with individuals, teams and businesses to manage transition and change.

She works as a transition coach and a career counsellor with individuals and teams. She is also a guest lecturer at University of Derby. In addition, Cathy is a founding trustee of the Evolve Transition Trust, which supports disadvantaged people through life transitions.