

Six Ways To Discover Your Life Purpose

By [MeiMei Fox](#)

There has been a lot of buzz in the press about how, when it comes to career, Millennials are driven more by purpose than money. Ninety-four percent want to use their skills to [benefit a cause](#). Half value a career aligned with their values enough to [take a pay cut](#).

“Great,” you may be saying to yourself, “but I don’t even know what my ‘purpose’ is. So how the heck am I supposed to find a job that aligns with it?”

Many of my coaching clients come to me with this precise question. In their 20s, 30s and even sometimes 40s, these ambitious, well-educated, kind-hearted people are dissatisfied with conventional corporate gigs. They feel a keen desire to make a positive impact on the world, but they aren’t sure how to go about it.

Our first objective in working together is to help these folks hone in on their passion. Then and only then do we begin the process of defining which specific job will fulfill their desires.

Discovering your purpose can be tricky. Here are some strategies I’ve found helpful.

1. Create a Vision Board

Ever since she was a teenager, Sally felt certain that she wanted to be a psychotherapist. She completed the training and embarked on her first job, counseling teens with a history of substance abuse. But after five years, she felt totally sapped of energy. “It just wasn’t as rewarding as I thought it would be,” Sally said.

Problem was, she’d never thought about doing anything else.

I suggested that Sally [create a vision board](#). You can do this online with the help of a website like [Betty Vision](#), or go to the art supply store and buy yourself a giant poster board, scissors and glue, and build your board the old-fashioned way: By drawing or finding images online or in magazines.

Now let your mind go wild. Don’t set too much of an agenda. Look for any pictures, photos, drawings or images that inspire you, that make you go “Hmmm, I’d like more of *that* in my life.” Clip, cut and paste.

See what story begins to emerge. Do you see any patterns? Are the pictures of outdoor places in nature, or of big cities? Of magical fantastical creatures, or of man-made machines? You can learn a lot about your soul’s desires by gazing at your vision board.

Sally gained tremendous clarity from her vision board. So many of the images were of cabins in the woods, people curled up with books, or even seated at an oceanfront café with a journal. She realized that her great passions were travel and writing, so she set out to find a career that allowed her to do both.

2. **Follow Your Hobbies**

John, 31, was bored of his advertising career. He got tons of praise for his excellent design work and had even been promoted recently. But his “soul felt hollow.” He wondered how many more brands of booze and internet security systems he could sell before he labeled himself a sell-out and collapsed into depression.

Even though he came to me saying that he had “no idea” what he wanted to do next, John spoke during that session at length about his passion for cycling. He raced semi-professionally on weekends, rode his bike up and down the hills of San Francisco, and hung out with other people who enjoyed the sport as much as he did.

“Why don’t you look for a career that is cycling related?” I asked.

At first, John balked at this suggestion. “There’s no money in that,” he replied. But after doing some internet research and informational interviews, talking with friends and spit balling ideas, he came up with a solution: He’d start an electric bike company, combining his knowledge of design and tech-based network in SF with his love of cycling.

3. **Notice What You Post About**

Whether or not you’re a [Facebook](#) junkie, you probably spend a certain amount of time each day on social media of some form. Take note of what you “like” and comment on, and what you yourself share. Do you find yourself engaging in rants about the state of politics today? Do you share every time you read an article about climate change? Are you heartbroken by the plight of the Syrian refugees?

The topics that get you talking are ones that you care a great deal about. You might consider a career that tackles one of them.

4. **Do Your Homework**

It sounds so simple, but when building a career, it’s important to do your homework. After all, you’re going to be spending a big chunk of your life at your job. Isn’t it worth your time to do your research and find something you really love?

Reading is a terrific way to tap into your purpose. You can read about people who do work that interests you. Research the companies that most value their employees and coach them in finding

a purpose. And check out career guidance books like the almost 50-year-old classic [What Color is Your Parachute](#) (which is still a bestseller and updated regularly). They contain great advice and quizzes to help you find your path.

5. **Be a Chatterbox**

Rather than burying yourself in your smartphone every time you're alone, take advantage of such moments to talk to people—the ones on the train with you when you commute to your boring job every morning, the ones who live next door, the ones who work at the coffee shops you frequent, the ones at the dog park or playground or schoolyard you visit daily.

Ask them what they do for a living, and if they love it, why? When approached with humility, almost everyone is willing to share. Many appreciate the opportunity to talk. You may discover a line of work that you never even knew existed.

This is how I stumbled into my writing career. After graduating from college, I'd spent two years as a management consultant with [McKinsey & Company](#). While I met amazing people and learned a great deal, it was clear this wasn't my calling in life. I needed to do work that made more of a difference in the world, and I longed for greater creative expression.

Chatting casually with an acquaintance who was a doctor, he mentioned that he wanted to write a health and wellness book. I said that I love to write but had never imagined I could "make it" as an author. He suggested we write the book together. I wrote the book proposal and we sold it to a New York publishing house.

After the book was complete, I found out from my editor on the project that I could freelance edit and ghostwrite non-fiction books for a living. Writing about health and wellness was totally aligned with my life purpose, and yet I'd never heard of ghostwriting as a career! Now I've happily been doing that, along with coaching people and publishing my own articles and blogs for over 15 years.

6. **Treat Your Life as a Daring Adventure**

There is no substitute for living your life with curiosity. Get out there and see the world. Visit other countries if you can. Ask your friends to have you over to their offices for lunch so that you can look around the place, discuss with people what they're up to, and see their company in action. Observe. Inquire. Take notes.

Always be asking yourself, "What inspires me? What makes my heart sing?" If you're paying attention, you'll notice a trill of hope, a shiver up your spine, a way your eyes light up, a quickening of breath and energy that signifies when you discover something that aligns with your purpose.

I feel strongly that each of us is born into this life with several potential paths to personal and career fulfillment. There may not be any "one" job that is just perfect for you. But there are

probably many careers in several different areas of interest that will make you feel like you're on fire. Like you want to get up and race out the door to work in the morning (or, in my case, stay at home in your PJs and snuggle up to the computer keyboard).

You can find work that has meaning to you. And figuring out your purpose is the first step.

