



Element 2

Purpose-Inspired Learning

Learnlife encourages individuals to journey towards their life's purpose, their '*ikigai*'. We design and facilitate purpose-inspired learning experiences, recognising that passion is the fuel to drive purpose.



Purpose-Inspired Learning

Learning can be fun. It can also be hard work. So often perceptions of our own experiences of learning will dictate how we feel about it. But learning should be empowering, helping us become stronger and more capable. It needs to make sense and have meaning. It needs to have purpose.

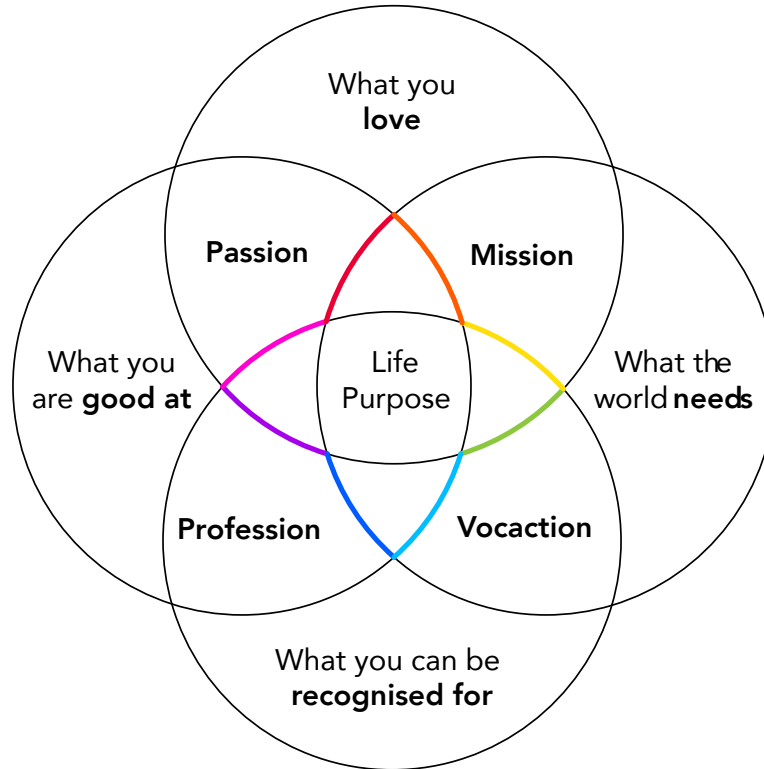
Any learning paradigm should enable purpose-inspired learning opportunities if all students are to achieve self-fulfillment through their learning journey.

In this context the *ikigai* concept is useful as a tool to consider what our own individual purpose in life might be. *Ikigai* originated in Okinawa, Japan - a combination of *iki* - meaning life and *gai* - meaning value or worth. It roughly translates to mean 'a reason for being'.

The *ikigai* process is ongoing and actively encourages students to consider;

- i) their personal and potential professional talents;
- ii) the things they love;
- iii) what the world needs and;
- iv) what they might get recognition for.

All these considerations can merge to foster powerful learning that derives its strength from an individual sense of purpose. The *ikigai* process is usefully revisited on a continuous basis, in order to spark continual reflection and enable young people to explore and discover diverse learning opportunities as they continue to grow.



Enabling students to understand and articulate their *ikigai*, or purpose, is a way to motivate and inspire learning pathways that foster self-determined, lifelong learning. Having a sense of purpose can equip the students of today with the skills required to navigate an ambiguous tomorrow. A learning paradigm that inspires purpose sets students on a path of deep learning, wellness and a lifetime of wonder in pursuit of the discoveries that can inspire them towards success and fulfillment.

Then	Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning based on external pressure • Learning based on compliance • One system and purpose - universal basic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-determined learning • Purpose-inspired learning • Personal learning pathways

Starting Questions

1. What do you and/or your learning community believe should be a core driver of learning? Is it the need to prepare for certification via examination and assessment processes, or is it more personal?
2. Do people arrive at a sense of purpose and that remains for life, or does purpose evolve and shift?
3. How does purpose motivate?
4. Are all components of the ikigai model of equal significance? (i.e. what you are good at, what you love, what the world needs and what you can be recognised for)
5. Does mandated curriculum effectively negate any sense of individual purpose?

Key Initial Actions

1. Initiate a whole team conversation around the concept of purpose-inspired learning. Tackle the issue of what it might mean if learning experiences were linked more to purpose than curriculum statements.
2. Create a strategy that seeks to interpret the concept of purpose and, if used, Ikigai, into age/stage meaningful interpretations. Create tactics for keeping the notion of continual reflection on purpose current for all the community.
3. Have all the adults go through a process of using Ikigai as the basis for discussion about their own purpose.
4. Share narratives around purpose among all key actors in the community. Research should be included in this sharing process and should include individual and community examples of lived purpose.

On-going Actions

1. Promote the language of purpose in visible and active ways. Bring the word purpose into posters, messages and dialogue.
2. Ongoing training of teachers/learning guides/leaders to talk about purpose in ways that will bring the concept alive to everyone in the community - whether they are adults or children.
3. Provide continued mentoring and coaching for students around purpose, recognising that individual purpose might be constantly evolving.
4. Discuss ways to measure the impact that a foundational emphasis on purpose may (or may not) be having.

Further Reading

[Is this Japanese concept the secret to a long, happy, meaningful life?](#)

[The Great Power Of Connecting Passion With Purpose](#)

[Ikigai: Reflection on life goals optimizes human performance and happiness](#)

Books

[Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life](#)

[The Little Book of Ikigai: The Essential Japanese Way to Finding Your Purpose in Life](#)

Watch

[The Ikigai Concept](#)

[Dan Buettner Ted Talk; How to Live to be 100+](#)

[David Yeager: How teachers can use youth Purpose](#)

Find out More

In an effort to create as many non-formal learning contexts at a school in Sydney, I recall seeing some brilliant innovative work undertaken by a pair of 12-13 year old students. They selected a challenge that would inspire them on a week-long project. The challenge they set themselves was to find a more cost-efficient way to capture footage of a bushfire to lower the expenses (and danger) of using a helicopter and camera crew. The research they carried out suggested it cost roughly \$6000AUD every time a helicopter flight was needed for aerial surveillance.

Their solution?

Use a drone with a video camera and modify it. They added heat sensors to the drone, which automatically lifted it upwards when it was close to melting point. The two students made a workable prototype within a week!

I am convinced that if much of the clutter created by mandated curricula was removed, our students would accelerate in their learning, inspired by authentic and creative purpose.



“Make your work to be in keeping with your purpose”

Leonardo da Vinci

Key Ideas

1. A sense of purpose is crucial to fostering self-fulfillment and a concept which should be explored in all learning communities.
2. The ikigai concept encourages lifelong self-fulfillment and can be used to support a lifelong, purpose-inspired learning journey.
3. Ikigai can be viewed as a process individuals can use to inspire a journey of purpose.
4. Examples of purpose-inspired accomplishments are evident throughout history and contemporary society.

Questions

- How might a learning community create a culture that fosters individual purpose for learning?
- How is the Ikigai philosophy relevant outside of its cultural surroundings?
- Can you think of any purpose-inspired narratives that are relevant to your cultural context?
- How might journeying towards one's purpose for learning inspire them towards self-fulfillment?

1. Having a purpose is crucial to fostering self-fulfillment and a concept which should be explored in all learning communities.

We live in an era of transition, and welcomed or not, it continues to challenge foundational traditions firmly rooted. The advent of the world wide web, for example, education by removing the need for teacher-centred classrooms and ushering in student-centred learning. Embracing this potential is where the idea of purpose can come alive in learning communities.

'Purpose' is a concept which supports how we ought to live our lives and a key ingredient to self-fulfilment. It is observable in many places; in people with a positive sense of self; those striving for personal or career development; or in personal passions which display unique skills.

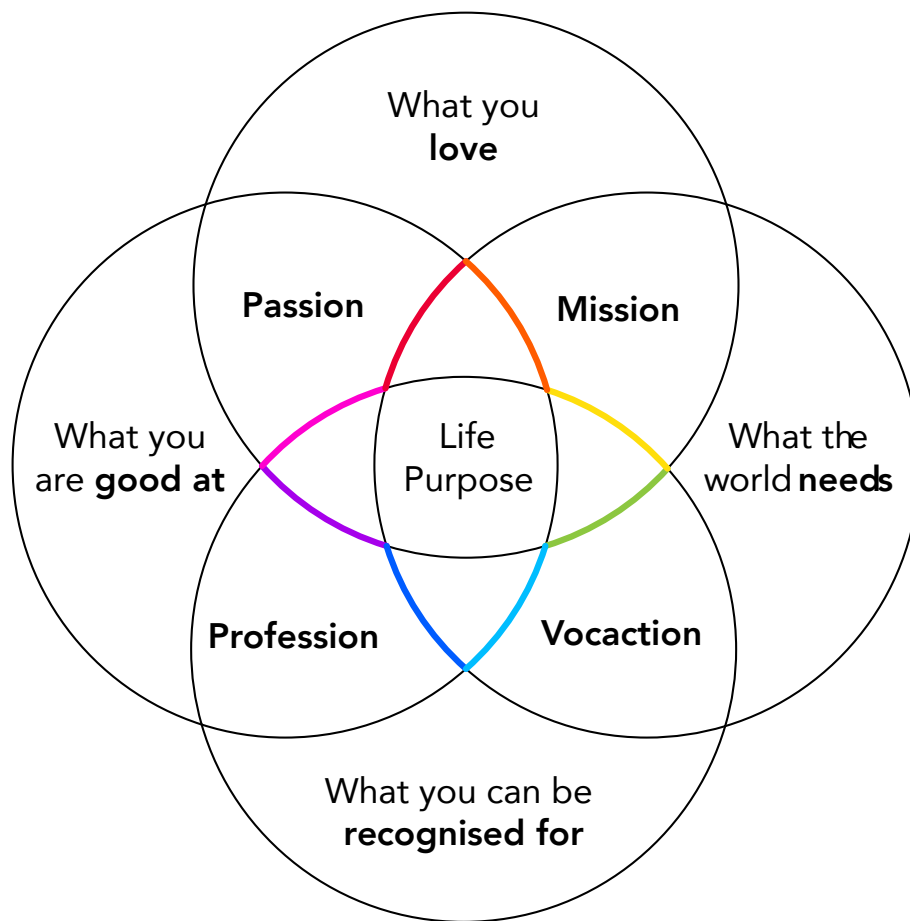
Purpose inspires the habits of humanity.

At Learnlife, purpose is central to helping students envision their future. A well-understood sense of purpose inspires students to seek out learning experiences that are self-fulfilling. The advancement of technology means education can deliver a learning paradigm that supports individual purpose within a learning community.

2. The *Ikigai* concept encourages lifelong self-fulfillment and can be used to support a lifelong, purpose-inspired learning journey.

The Japanese concept *ikigai*² reinforces the role that purpose plays in our lives. The word *ikigai* originated in Okinawa, Japan - a combination of *iki* - meaning life and *gai* - meaning value or worth. It is a lens through which to view life and to support fulfillment. While the *ikigai* concept might focus on general life, viewing it through an educational lens can play a fundamental part in increasing motivation, momentum and focus. It is essentially a pathway that can lead to individual purpose.

²which translates as 'a reason for being'



3. Ikigai can be viewed as a process individuals can use to inspire a journey of purpose.

As learners are led through a purpose-inspired *ikigai* process, they are encouraged to consider;

- i) their personal and potential professional talents;
- ii) the things they love;
- iii) what the world needs and;
- iv) what they might get recognition for.

Using the *ikigai* process leads students to a more profound understanding of themselves. As conversations around *ikigai* are repeated, learners can establish and perhaps cultivate an understanding of their life's purpose and how this might fit into the world around them. It is through these intersections where an awareness of purpose can emerge. Finding purpose helps individuals become more engaged in learning, more connected with the surrounding community and more inspired to make a difference in the world around them.

It makes sense to begin a purpose-inspired learning journey as soon as a child is capable of asking questions about themselves and their world.

“If you can’t figure out your purpose, figure out your passion. For your passion will lead you right into your purpose.”

Thomas Dexter Jakes, bishop, author and filmmaker

4. Examples of purpose-inspired accomplishments are evident throughout history and contemporary society.

One need not look too hard to find narratives of purpose-inspired accomplishments. A clear sense of purpose can energise, provoke action and in many instances start social movements or lead to new discoveries. Marie Curie exemplifies this well. Purpose fuelled her passion for science, leading her to discover polonium and radium.

English politician, William Wilberforce, is another great example. Wilberforce was passionate about ending the colonial-era slave trade. His sense of purpose drove him to see the Slavery Abolition Act become law in 1833, just before he died.

Psychiatrist, David Viscott, wrote of purpose and a life of purpose. In 1993 he was published stating that the “purpose of life is to discover your gift. The work of life is to develop it. The meaning of life is to give your gift away”³.

An individual’s purpose or ikigai can span across any number of genres; the arts, science, politics, technology, innovation, food, health, literature, music, mathematics, sport and languages, to name a few.

The purpose at Learnlife is to grow communities committed to a common good - to inspire lifelong, purpose-inspired learning. This journey begins with every unique individual. For a learner to truly thrive, they must have a strong sense of purpose, something that can help grow the resilience and self-determination to succeed.

At Learnlife, students are inspired to find and build their why.

³David Viscott (1993), Finding Your Strength in Difficult Times: A Book of Meditations

Act Now

Purpose shapes the culture of any organisation, and culture emerges from the sub-cultures of a community. So having a clear sense of individual purpose is important. To implement a culture of purpose, or ikigai, the first step is to evaluate whether a learning community inspires its individuals to find their own purpose.

The following steps can help create a purpose-inspired learning community:

1. Understand purpose

Understand the importance of purpose. Choose a model such as ikigai to help cultivate this understanding and process.

2. Align

Allow a shared understanding of purpose to align the community around its importance.

3. Share experiences

Share narratives around purpose among all key actors in the community. Research should be included in this sharing process and include individual and community examples of lived purpose.

4. Train and talk

Train leaders to talk about purpose in ways that will bring the concept alive to everyone in the community - whether they are adults or children.

5. Organise repeated workshops

Learners will benefit from continued mentoring and coaching around purpose. It should not be a 'one-off' topic. Purpose can change over time so revisiting it will keep the concept fresh.

6. Promote

Promote the language of purpose in visible and active ways.

7. Measure

Every community is different. Discuss ways to measure the impact that a foundational emphasis on purpose may (or may not) be having.

8. Strategise

Create strategies that can strengthen individual and collective perceptions of purpose. The above points are useful strategies to begin with.

Examples in Action

When an individual discovers their 'why' or 'reason for being,' the journey of purpose begins. People who have discovered their ikigai have a clear understanding of the following:

- *What they love;*
- *what they are good at;*
- *what the world needs from them and;*
- *what they can get paid for.*

This short video clip beautifully captures the ikigai concept:

[The Ikigai Concept](#)

Dan Buettner, National Geographic fellow and New York Times best selling author explains that the success of ikigai lies in putting purpose into action:

[Ikigai: the secret to a longer and happier life](#)

[Dan Buettner: How to live to be 100+ \(Ikigai - 10.31\)](#)

The World Economic Forum, similar to Dan Buettner, explains that ikigai involves not just finding what your purpose is, but actually putting it into practice:

[Is this Japanese concept the secret to a long, happy, meaningful life?](#)

Academic research carried out by David Yeager demonstrates the impact that purpose-inspired learning has on academic performance. When a learner realises the purpose for carrying out a task to completion, it creates increased motivation and academic self-regulation⁴:

[David Yeager: How teachers can use youth Purpose](#)

The Rockwood Leadership Institute, an environmental activist group, inspires purposeful leadership and equips individuals with the tools and skills to help change themselves, their communities and the world:

[Rockwood Leadership Institute](#)

Their list of 132 questions provides a framework for catalysing purposeful change. These questions can be fastened seamlessly to learning contexts. Below are a list of some of them:

⁴David S. Yeager et al. Boring but Important:
A Self-Transcendent Purpose for Learning Fosters Academic Self-Regulation (2014)

- What excites you?
- What difference do you want to make?
- What brings you joy?
- How do you want to make others feel?
- What would you do if no one needed [insert your job here] anymore?
- What problem do you want to solve?
- What do you wish you had more time to do?
- When do you feel most like yourself?
- What makes you lose track of time?
- What motivates you when you're most productive?
- What's something you'd do even if you never made any money?

Below is a link to the full list of questions:

[132 Of The Best Questions To Help You Reflect On Your Purpose](#)

Further reading

[David S. Yeager et al. Boring but Important: A Self-Transcendent Purpose for Learning Fosters Academic Self-Regulation \(2014\)](#)

[Carol Dweck Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential \(2012\)](#)

[Ikigai 4.0—Flourishing Me](#)

[Seven essential elements of a lifelong-learning mind-set](#)

[BBC Report: A Japanese concept to improve work and life](#)

[World Economic Forum: Is this Japanese concept the secret to a long, happy, meaningful life?](#)

[The Great Power Of Connecting Passion With Purpose](#)

[Rockwood Leadership Institute](#)

Watch

[How to live to be 100+ - Dan Buettner](#)

[Ted Talk, Bernie Dunlap: The Lifelong Learner](#)

[The Japanese Formula For Happiness - Ikigai](#)

[The Ikigai Concept](#)