

YOU: PART TWO

Finding your ikigai

Your purpose doesn't have to be grand. It simply has to be genuine and relevant to you.

It could simply be finding solace in nature. It is a well-observed fact that appreciation and enjoyment of the great outdoors reduces stress levels considerably. People find purpose in gardening. In being a grandparent. They find purpose in building a business. They find purpose in philanthropy. Purpose is not a one-size-fits-all deal. And it is certainly not a 'my purpose is better than your purpose' deal. Purpose is personal and there is no such thing as a bad purpose, a poor purpose or an inferior purpose – as long as it is real and meaningful to you.

Unless it does significant harm to others, even unintentionally. Then it's a shocker of a purpose.

'Fulfilment is a right and not a privilege,' is Simon Sinek's opening refrain in his book, *Find Your Why*.¹ 'Fulfilment is not a lottery. It is not a feeling reserved for a lucky few.'

In other words, we all have a Why; we just may need some help in working out what it is. To do that we have to be completely honest with ourselves. You can't fudge a purpose. And for help in finding your purpose, it may be hard to find a better place to start than the ancient Japanese philosophy of *ikigai*.

'Less stress, better health and greater happiness: it's all about the Japanese life philosophy *ikigai*,' read a headline in *The Times* in 2017.²

Ikigai means 'reason for being' and it is accompanied by a superb model that anyone could use to help unlock their very own 'Why'.

Japanese people live longer on average than anyone else in the world. While diet is a key reason for this, it is becoming widely regarded that fulfilment through *ikigai* is also one of the other secrets to their longevity.

Contentment through purpose helps us to live longer.

To find your *ikigai*, start with asking yourself:

1. What do I love?
2. What am I good at?
3. What can I be rewarded for?
4. What does the world need?

Once you have done that, you can plot them on the following diagram. The magic of *ikigai* lies in all the places where your four answers intersect.

¹ Penguin Random House 2017.

² The Times Newspaper, UK, in its review of Ken Mogi's book, 'The Little Book of Ikigai', Quercus, 2017.

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Your 'passion' can be found in the intersection between what you love and what you are good at. Your 'profession' should be located at the intersection of what you are good at and what you can be rewarded for. Your 'vocation' is described as being rewarded for doing something that the world needs, and your 'mission' is doing something you love that the world needs.

But the empty spaces in this diagram are the most profound. Read them slowly and deliberately.

If we are doing something that we are good at, but the world doesn't really need it, we will achieve a superficial level of satisfaction, but we won't feel useful.

If we are doing something that we are well rewarded for, but it isn't what we love, we may be financially comfortable, but we will feel empty and unfulfilled.

If we are doing something that the world needs but we aren't very good at it, we will feel uncertain and insecure.

If we are doing what we love but aren't getting properly rewarded for it, we are unlikely to feel content; we could even begin to resent the way the world works.

We all know people who are in every one of these intersections and, if you are anything like me, you have spent time in each one yourself.

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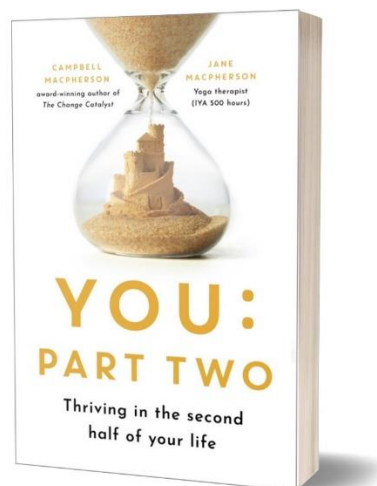
Ikigai is to be found at the centre of this diagram – when you are doing what you love and are good at it, the world needs it and you are being well rewarded for it: where your passion, your mission, your vocation and your profession all collide.

Japanese neuroscientist, broadcaster and author Ken Mogi says that *ikigai* is ‘about discovering, defining and appreciating those of life's pleasures that have meaning for you.’ He describes it as ‘a frame of mind where people feel that they can build a happy and active life.’³

Mogi has identified five ‘pillars’, which he describes as the foundations that will allow your *ikigai* to flourish:

1. Starting small
2. Accepting yourself (‘a low-budget, maintenance-free formula for being happy’ declares Mogi)
3. Harmony and sustainability through connecting with the world around you
4. The joy of little things
5. Being in the here and now

We like these pillars. They are very yogic.



³ <https://ikigaitribe.com/ikigai/the-5-pillars-of-ikigai/>