

*Know Your Purpose*<sup>™</sup>

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***Purpose Hunting***<sup>™</sup>  
***for Coaching Clients***

## What is a purpose?

Many people ask themselves the question, “does my life have a purpose?” Most people want to be inspired by what they do for a living, to feel that they are part of something larger. They want to feel fulfilled by what they do, and to know that their efforts make a difference. They search for meaning in work, in hobbies, in family, and in religion. Some people move through life with a strong sense of purpose, and others are drawn to and inspired by them because of it.

There are many flavors and connotations of meaning to the word “purpose.” Webster’s defines it as “an intention; something set up as an object or end to be attained.” When I say “life’s purpose”, I do not mean a goal or end to be attained in the usual sense. I mean it in the deepest sense of the word “purpose”, as an answer to questions like:

- ✧ Why am I here?
- ✧ Who or what am I?
- ✧ What am I meant to do?

The good news is that everyone has a purpose. The even better news is that it doesn’t have to take very long to learn what it is! You don’t need to go searching for your purpose; it is already inside you. It has been guiding you your whole life, whether you are aware of it or not. In this e-book, I will offer you a method for learning about your purpose, and give you ways to use that newfound knowledge.

## Why would I want to know my purpose?

Knowing your purpose can dramatically enhance your experience of life. Purpose-driven people experience more fulfillment, more success, and often greater financial rewards than other people. Paradoxically, people who set out to live their purpose often make more money than people who set out to make money! This is because we are better at doing our purpose than we are at doing anything else. We have been training our whole lives to perform our purpose, whether we know it or not.

For some people, their biggest incentive for knowing their purpose lies in the future. What do they want to remember when they get to the end of their lives? What mark have they left on the world? How will others remember them? From this point of view, finding and fulfilling one's life's purpose takes on more urgency. Friends of mine who have worked with dying people tell me that they rarely regret the things they did; they are much more likely to regret the things they did not do.

## Will this work for me?

Learning your life's purpose isn't for everyone. Just having this knowledge has consequences, and requires you to make choices. The two most important choices are these: Do I want to learn what my life's purpose is? And, having discovered my purpose, do I want to live my life in a way that is consistent with that purpose? These are very important questions, not to be taken lightly.

There are eight different methods for finding your life's purpose. This e-book offers a simple method you can use to gather information about your purpose. I recommend this method first because it works for people in a variety of life situations, ages, and levels of self-awareness. It can be used at any time, although it works best for people who are over the age of 35 because they have more life experience on which to draw. This method usually doesn't give an exact definition of your life's purpose, though it can give you a lot of information about it. To get an exact definition of your purpose, you may need to utilize a more direct method. Use this method first, even if you plan to try another method later.

It is very important that you work with your coach to evaluate your responses. It is impractical to expect that you can interpret your own results and find your purpose accurately.

## Where can I find my purpose?

In order to describe the means of finding your purpose, I will have to introduce some terms first. For some of you, these concepts may be familiar and simple to grasp. For others of you, these concepts may challenge how you view the world. Either way is fine.

The first concept is that of the ego. "Ego" is Latin for "I", and that is exactly what I mean by it. The ego is the part of us that we know, the part that we mean when we say "I". "I want more money," "I didn't like that movie," or "I want to know my life's purpose." All of these are the ego. Our thoughts, our feelings, our ability to make choices, are all contained within the ego. The ego is also sometimes

called the “conscious” or the “persona” in some psychological systems. It contains everything we know about ourselves and the world around us.

### *Ego Values*

The ego functions according to a set of values, which are intended to make us feel good and be safe. It is the ego’s job to protect us and get us what we need to survive and to thrive. The ego generally values these sorts of things and experiences:

- ✧ It wants you to be healthy.
- ✧ It wants money, the more the better.
- ✧ It wants you to be happy at all times.
- ✧ Egos usually avoid fear, pain, and struggle; they want everything to be easy.
- ✧ Egos crave particular life circumstances, like owning a home, a fast car, living in a specific place, and having a great relationship.
- ✧ Egos want acceptance, approval, admiration, and respect from others. They are concerned with how others perceive us and feel about us.
- ✧ Egos divide experiences into good and bad, like and don’t like. All of our experiences and all of our reality are divided up into categories by the ego. The ego has definite opinions about which things and categories of things it prefers!

Hopefully this is all familiar to you. I am speaking here of our

ordinary, day-to-day existence and patterns of thought and feeling. We are like this almost all the time.

“What else is there,” you ask? Well, psychologists have known for over 100 years that there are also parts of us about which we know nothing. Within each of us, there are the things we know about ourselves, and the things we don’t know about ourselves. The things we do not know are collectively called the “unconscious” or the “shadow”. (These terms come from Jungian psychology. Freudians call the unknown material the “subconscious”.) People often assume that there is something bad or evil about this side of our nature, but that is not necessarily true. All that is true is that it contains things we don’t know, whether they are good or bad. (Remember, “good” and “bad” are the opinions of the ego.)

Contained within the unconscious is the part that already knows what your purpose is. I use the term “soul” to refer to this part. I do not intend to carry this conversation into the realm of religion by using this term; it is simply the most commonly used word for the part of us that guides us along our life’s path. Others may define “soul” differently, or attach more meaning to it. Here I mean only this one thing: your soul is that part of you that already knows your purpose.

### *Soul Values*

The soul, too, operates according to specific values, which are very different from the ego’s:

- ✧ It is concerned with being, not doing.
- ✧ It has a long-term view, sometimes beyond a single lifetime.  
(I am not espousing a belief system here; this is what people’s

souls often say when I talk to them.)

- ✧ It has no attachment to the form in which we manifest our purpose (“it’s all good”). We can fulfill our purpose in many ways; all are fine with the soul.
- ✧ It has no preference for what experience the ego is having; it doesn’t divide experiences into good and bad. In fact, it doesn’t do any of the dividing things up into categories that egos do so frequently.
- ✧ It sees a person’s life as a “work of art” or journey. There is no specific success or failure in life, no destination or “there” to get to.
- ✧ It sees all our experiences as teachings along a path, no matter how the ego experiences them. It is concerned with how we learn and grow from our experiences, not with whether or not we like them.

It is not necessary to believe in life after death or reincarnation in order to use this method; I am not making any claims about what happens after we die. You don’t even have to believe that you have a soul; all that is necessary is that you accept, for the sake of argument only, that some part of you already knows what your purpose is.

## How this works

Okay, now that we have a couple of terms defined, let me describe how this method works. The soul’s main function is to guide the development of the ego. In order for us to manifest our purpose, we

must be properly trained. The soul develops and executes our training plan. It does this by influencing our decisions and helping us to choose things that will develop us in ways that serve our purpose.

I can remember at some critical junctions in my life hearing a quiet voice whispering in my ear, telling me which way to go. I wasn't sure where the voice was coming from, but I trusted it implicitly. This process is represented in a very explicit way in the film Field of Dreams, in which Kevin Costner is coached at different points to make choices that seem outrageous to his family and neighbors (and to his ego). In the end, of course, it all makes sense.

The soul also "arranges" experiences for us that will cause us to grow and develop. These experiences can often be unpleasant, such as car accidents, being fired or laid off, and losing loved ones. But it is often our worst experiences that teach us the most. The soul doesn't "cause" these things to happen in the normal sense, but often steers us toward learning opportunities that our ego would naturally avoid.

Along the way, as we try out different things, we act in ways that are in alignment with our fundamental purpose, and also in ways that are not. While we are usually unaware of the purpose itself, these two ways of behaving feel very different to us when we reflect on our actions and the results they produce.

## Purpose Hunting

The method used in this e-book makes use of our experiences of being on- and off-purpose. By looking back over our lives, we can see the times when we were on purpose. By looking for similarities in those

times or events, we can draw conclusions about our purpose. I call this process “purpose hunting”. Again, this is much easier to do with the help of your coach!

When we are doing things in our life that support our purpose, our soul gives us positive feedback. We often feel fulfilled, passionate that we are making a difference. Things happen easily. Chance coincidences seem to support our goals and projects. (This is called “serendipity”.) Our efforts produce results. Many people refer to this state as one of “flow”.

When we are out of alignment with our purpose, it feels very different. We find obstacles at every turn. We have to muster up energy and will to complete things. We are not satisfied by our accomplishments, or the satisfaction is fleeting. We wonder why we’re doing what we’re doing, and imagine greener pastures. I call this experience “slogging”.

## Journaling Exercises

As I said earlier, we can make use of this difference in our experiences. Looking back over your life, it’s possible to identify times when you were in the flow, and identify commonalities in these experiences. These commonalities can give you important information about your purpose.

The questions that follow are divided into two different journaling exercises. The first exercise looks for the places in your life when you have experienced flow. The second exercise seeks to get additional information from other kinds of journaling questions. Do

both exercises completely before working with your coach to draw any conclusions about your purpose.

### **First Journaling Exercise: Flow Experiences**

Choose two or three of the following questions that are easiest for you to answer. For example, I'm not a particularly passionate guy, so when I think about when I've felt most "passionate" not a lot comes to mind. On the other hand, when I think about when my life has had meaning, I immediately can think of jobs and periods of time when I had that experience. (A friend of mine says that he falls in love four times on the way to his seat on an airplane. The "passion" question probably isn't the best one for him, either.) Give specific examples of events or periods of time, not generic patterns ("In the winter of 1984 when I went skiing on Whistler," not "when I'm skiing.") They can be work-related or not.

It's best not to use events like the birth of your child, your wedding, having sex, or being in a beautiful natural setting as answers to the questions. Although these may well be expressions of your soul, they tend to be universally moving experiences and won't give you information about your unique and distinct purpose.

Again, use whichever questions work for you. You need a total of 3-5 examples (from all of the questions in this exercise, not 3-5 for each question). Okay, now for the questions.

When are the:

- ✧ Times in your life when you've felt most passionate
- ✧ Times in your life when you've felt most fulfilled

- ✧ Times when you've felt your life has had the most meaning
- ✧ Times when you've felt most aligned
- ✧ Times when you've experienced ease, flow, synchronicity and serendipity

### **Second Journaling Exercise: Additional Purpose Information**

Also answer all of the following questions. They will provide additional information that can be used to discover features of your purpose. In order to get the maximum benefit from these questions, it will be useful to approach them from a specific perspective: assume that everything that has happened in your life up until now has been a deliberate training plan, designed to prepare and hone you for your purpose. You do not need to actually believe this; it will just be helpful for you to adopt this point of view while answering the questions.

- ✧ What did you always want to be or do when you grew up?
- ✧ What are you uniquely designed and prepared to do?
- ✧ List the things to which you're consistently drawn. What about them draws you?
- ✧ If you had a year to live, what would you spend your time doing?
- ✧ You have lived to a ripe old age, and you are lying on your deathbed. You look back with satisfaction over a long, fulfilling life. You feel satisfied and fulfilled, because you did or were what?

- ✧ You have won the lottery, and all your financial needs are handled. You spend a year traveling, buying expensive toys and having fun, then get bored and decide it's time to do something meaningful with your newfound freedom and resources. What do you do?
- ✧ Imagine that all the issues and wounds from your childhood were chosen deliberately by your own soul in order to develop and hone you. How have your psychological issues trained and developed you? What skills or gifts have you received or learned from them? \*

\*Only answer this last question if you have done a significant amount of work on your own psychology, through therapy, workshops, or some venue that directly approached your childhood woundings and your psychological development.

Give your journaling responses from both exercises to your coach. Now the two of you can work together to interpret your results!

## **I found my purpose, now what?**

First of all, take a little breather. Learning the specifics of your life's purpose can be a rattling experience. Give yourself a few days to integrate and chew on the information before you do anything.

Next you have a very important decision to make: do you want to live your life as an expression of your purpose? Although your purpose will not change or go away, your ego has the power to ignore it. There are pros and cons to living a purposeful life, and pros and cons to

ignoring your purpose.

If you choose to live your life as an expression of your purpose, you still have another important decision to make: how will I incorporate my purpose into my life? In very broad terms, there are two ways:

- ✧ You can incorporate your purpose into how you are in everyday life. You can *be* your purpose while *doing* almost anything.
- ✧ You can choose activities and a profession that are a direct expression of your purpose. This is generally more fulfilling, and can be more frightening to the ego as well.

I strongly recommend that you work with your coach to help you integrate your purpose into your life. Even though you may be much clearer about your fundamental purpose, it may not be apparent what to do about it. This can be an exciting time of transition, and you will likely need help and support to reconstruct your life in light of your new knowledge. The world is waiting for you to manifest your true self. Enjoy the process!

## **I didn't find my purpose. What's wrong?**

Purpose hunting isn't an exact science. Remember, this method often doesn't yield the exact purpose itself, although it can give you a lot of useful information about your purpose. The success of this particular process depends on a number of things, including your age, your life circumstances, and the number and type of examples you

chose. If you are unsatisfied with the results, consider asking your coach to use a more direct method of finding your purpose.

Above all, don't give up! Trying to find your purpose can be frustrating. Get help, and keep moving along your path. The experience of knowing why you are here, and the fulfilling life it creates, are well worth the effort!

## What's next?

Whether you found your purpose or not, it may be possible to get much more specific information. The other methods that are used to clarify life's purpose yield much more detail, as well as a greater volume of information. They also only work on particular people. For this reason, it requires a brief interview process to choose the appropriate method for further exploration, if any. It is up to you and your coach to determine whether the information you have gained through this process is adequate for your needs as a leader.

## About Tim: Who is he?

Tim Kelley is an acclaimed speaker and author. He is coauthor of the best-selling book Wake Up and Live the Life You Love: Living on Purpose. Tim has helped many leaders find their life's purpose, and he has trained dozens of coaches and consultants. He has

transformed entire organizations by working with their executive teams to bring passion and inspiration throughout the work force. Before beginning his career as a speaker, author, and consultant, he was a development director at Oracle Corporation, where he worked for eight years. His clients include Hewlett Packard, American Airlines, Deloitte & Touche, Charles Schwab, Bayer, and numerous smaller companies and startups. Tim is certified by Helen Palmer to teach the Enneagram, a Certified Dream Coach<sup>®</sup>, and also a trained Voice Dialogue facilitator.

Additionally, Tim is Commanding Officer of a 120-person submarine repair unit in the Naval Reserve. He holds a bachelor's degree in theoretical mathematics from MIT.