

What makes you tick? Finding your values and purpose



Work
Life
Tools



Having a purpose is something we hear a lot about. But what does it mean? And how easy is it to achieve, particularly at work?

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What is a 'purpose'?

Essentially 'purpose' means doing something, whether that is at work or outside of work that is both meaningful to you and has an impact on others. The actual thing that you do, whether it is volunteering, working in a caring environment, sharing your knowledge or being an activist, is in some ways less important – it's the meaning that it gives you and the drive to do it, that matters the most.

What are the benefits of having a purpose?

From a health and wellbeing perspective, individuals that have a sense of purpose and a feeling that what they do is worthwhile tend to live longer and have more positive health outcomes. Evidence¹ has also shown that, particularly for adolescents and young adults, finding a purpose directly relates to increased life satisfaction.

How to find your purpose

The good news is that finding your purpose isn't something that's fixed or time-limited, it's more about a process that will change and adapt over time. Finding your purpose requires patience, self-reflection and application. This [quiz](#) can help you to get a snapshot of where you are currently and what can help you in finding your purpose. Some useful strategies are also outlined in this [article](#). See also our video resource on coaching, which is another great tool, especially before you start looking for work.

1. Claremont Purpose Scale: A Measure that Assesses the Three Dimensions of Purpose among Adolescents: Research in Human Development: Vol 15 , No 2 - Get Access (tandfonline.com)

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Think about your values

To understand more about your purpose, you first need think about your values, as these help to drive your purpose, ie why we do (values) what we do (purpose).

- Start by identifying your values, at least five if you can. This **article** provides a lot more information about different value categories and includes a selection of different key values.
- Once you have found your top five values, try to define them. For example, if one of them is curiosity, how would you define this? For example, 'curiosity for me is about finding out as much as I can about xxx.'
- Next, think about how you would apply this value, ie what action would you take to live this value? For example, 'knowing more about xxx helps me to change yyy.'
- Once you have identified your values, it's also helpful to think about how much of your time is spent living these values. If you're not living them all of the time, what actions can you take to change that?

Values in your working life

Our values can also be context specific, so something that matters to us in our personal life may be less relevant in our working life. However, given that we spend approximately 90,000 hours at work over our lifetime, finding work that is meaningful, aligns with our values and gives us a sense of purpose is also important.

Unfortunately, this isn't something that's routinely discussed during careers talks or at graduate fairs, but finding what matters to you, i.e. your values, and trying to align them with the values of your employer, can help you have a greater sense of satisfaction and connection with your work.

Matching values when applying for a job

If you are looking for a job, some key things to consider are:

- Reflect on your personal values.
- Consider industries or types of employers where the services or products match with all or some of your personal values. Have a look on the company's website and review their mission statement/value proposition to see if there is a fit for you.
- Equally, check if any of their values directly contradict your own. Reflect on whether this would be something you'd find difficult or whether it could be interesting to see how this value is practised in action.



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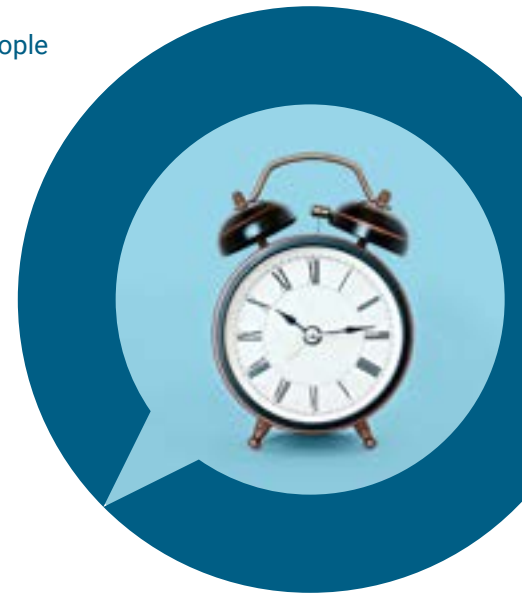
 **Video transcript**

Questions to help you find a fulfilling job

If you have found a role you are interested in, some questions taken from this [article](#) can help you to identify if it will meet your values and fulfil your purpose:

- How is this work important?
- What can I contribute?
- What excites me?
- How can this work challenge me in an ongoing way?
- Would I do this work even if I didn't get paid?
- How does this address my passions?
- Would I think about my work even when I'm not working?
- Does this work make me feel proud?
- Can I achieve excellence at this?
- Can I forge true friendships with the other people who work here?

The key thing to remember is that your values and purpose will naturally change over time, but living a life that connects as far as possible to these will enable you to be fully engaged with and gain meaning from your work, your community and the world around you.



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