

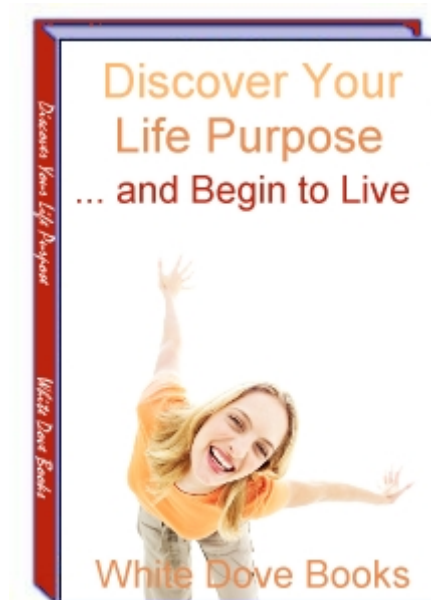
Discover Your Life Purpose

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“Resolve to be thyself; and know that he who finds
himself, loses his misery.” Matthew Arnold

Contents

What is a Life Purpose?	5
Life Purpose v Living Purposefully	8
How Do You Find Your Purpose?	10
I Still Don't Know What My Purpose Is!.....	18
How to Live Your Purpose	21
Your Purpose Isn't Just About YOU.....	25
It's Not All Up to You	28
Possible Challenges You'll Face	29
Surrendering to the Journey.....	35
About White Dove Books	41

What is a Life Purpose?

“The purpose of life is a life of purpose.” Robert Byrne

When you hear the term “life purpose,” you probably envision people who are following a higher calling, like priests, nuns, missionaries, doctors and scientists. In other words, people who are doing important work in the world.

People like this are certainly living a purpose, but you may be surprised to learn that a life purpose doesn't have to be so magnanimous either. In fact, throughout the pages of this e-book, I'm going to demonstrate that purposeful living can take virtually limitless forms – most of which you've probably never considered before.

The dictionary defines purpose as:

- 1) an object or result aimed at : INTENTION
- 2) RESOLUTION, DETERMINATION

What does this tell us? A “purpose” can be as simple as an intention or a resolution. So, a “life purpose” is really nothing more than a commitment or resolve to live in a certain way and achieve specific objectives. If that sounds a bit confusing, don't worry. We're going to clear it up in a hurry.

For now, just know that you DON'T have to have a deep inner “calling” in order to have a life purpose. You don't have to give away your worldly possessions and become a missionary in order to make a positive difference in the world.

In fact, you may be surprised to discover that realizing and living your life purpose will be a comfortable and enjoyable process. Bit by bit, you'll create life circumstances that are totally suited to who you are, your likes and dislikes, natural talents, and much more.

It's the kind of inner journey that changes everything – from emptiness to satisfaction, from boredom to passion, from aimlessness to unbridled joy and beyond!

Do you have trouble believing that's possible for you? Do you see your current circumstances as brick walls that you can't break through? Do you worry that you're stuck forever exactly where you are?

If so, I ask you to set aside any feelings of doubt and skepticism for now. Be willing to believe that your life DOES have meaning, and be open to the insights that are about to follow.

Where Does a Life Purpose Come From?

One of the reasons people often doubt that they have a life purpose is because they've been led to believe that a life purpose is akin to those "spiritual callings" mentioned earlier. If they don't feel an inner calling, they decide that there probably isn't a specific purpose for their life – or worse, that their life has no meaning at all.

If you ask enough people, you'll probably find that there are two basic schools of thought regarding life purpose:

- 1) Those who believe that a life purpose is something we are born with, that it is planted into our souls before we are born and we **MUST** achieve it. It's our destiny, so to speak, and we have no choice in the matter.
- 2) Those who believe that fate and destiny don't exist and we have the power (or "free will") to choose our life purpose and do anything we want with our lives.

Which group do you belong to? Fate and destiny, or free will? There are no right or wrong answers to this question; only what you feel in your heart is the right answer for you.

If you're still not sure, I'd like to propose a workable compromise for you. What if a life purpose is something you are born with, but you also have full control over how and when you achieve it? What if, with a little introspection and planning, you could move naturally and easily toward your life purpose without feeling like you "have" to do specific things?

Personally, I do believe that each of us has a pre-destined life purpose – **BUT** it is something that comes very naturally to us. It's not something that's difficult, unpleasant or burdensome. A life purpose, in my opinion, is realized by getting to know your authentic self, exploring your natural talents and interests, and choosing the best possible medium to share them with the world.

We'll be covering those concepts further shortly, but first, take a moment to decide how you feel about your own life. Do you believe you have a purpose, or that you can choose one?

How Do You Know If You Have a Life Purpose?

When it comes to life purpose, people usually find themselves in one of three places:

- 1) They don't worry about whether they have an official purpose or not; they simply live their lives doing the things they feel drawn to.
- 2) They know exactly what their purpose is, and they joyfully work at it each day.
- 3) They believe they have a purpose but have no idea what it may be or how to find out.

Which group do you fall into? Members of the first group probably would not be reading this book, and members of the second group would probably be too busy living their purpose to read about it.

The majority of people who read this book probably fall into group #3. If you're not sure if you do, consider the questions below:

- Have you ever felt like you were supposed to be doing more with your life?
- Have you ever yearned to use your natural talents to contribute to the world?
- Have you ever felt like your current or previous jobs didn't use your talents fully?
- Do you ever feel like you are wasting time on things that aren't important to you?
- Do you desire to serve others in a bigger way but don't know how?
- Has your daily routine become predictable and boring?
- Do you ever wonder if "this is it"?
- Do you yearn for greater meaning in your work and other activities?

If you answered yes to most of those questions, you're probably ready to discover greater meaning and purpose in your own life – whether you see it as awakening a pre-destined purpose or choosing one you want.

Life Purpose v Living Purposefully

“It is never too late to be what you might have been.” George Eliot

There are many people who feel intimidated by or resistant to the concept of a life calling. Maybe you do too. Do you worry that having a life purpose means surrendering to a higher power and giving up control of how you spend your time? Do you worry that your life purpose will end up being something unpleasant or taxing? What if your life purpose turns out to be draining or boring? What if it demands more than you are willing or able to give in time, energy and commitment?

These types of fears are completely groundless. If you could poll everyone on the planet who believes they are living their true life purpose, I bet they would all say the same thing: “I’m so HAPPY!”

Everyone who dares to live their life purpose describes it along the lines of “coming home” or “doing what I was born to do.” They do what matters most to them, they enjoy it fully, and it fits perfectly with the rest of their lives.

That’s not to say that a few sacrifices won’t be necessary at times, but I think you’ll find that they are not overly painful or difficult. In fact, they may be downright freeing once you let go of your fear and doubt.

Please don’t worry that living your purpose means you have to give up control of your life. You are **always** in control of your own life, purpose or no purpose!

In fact, I want to encourage you to adopt a new outlook for your life – that of “living with purpose” rather than “having a purpose”.

Living purposefully means CHOOSING your purpose. Choosing how you spend your time. Choosing how you will use your natural talents to create more joy and meaning for yourself and others.

Even if you believe that your life purpose is pre-destined, this new outlook can still work for you because you’ll **automatically** choose the path that has already been laid out before you.

Do You Really Need a Purpose?

If you are one of those people mentioned earlier who doesn't worry about having a life purpose, you may wonder what all the fuss is about. Is a life purpose even necessary?

Some people would say that everyone has a purpose whether they know it or not. But is it a bad thing to be unaware of a higher calling in life? What if you feel content with your life as it is right now? Do you have to conceive some lofty purpose in order to feel content and make a positive difference in the world?

No. You don't need to have a specific purpose in life – unless you feel like something is missing. If you are content with your life as it is, you are doing something right. Either you're already living your purpose or you simply don't feel the need for one. And there's not a thing wrong with that.

However, since you are reading this book it is possible that you are seeking something – even if you wouldn't classify it as an actual “calling”. Maybe you simply crave more passion, meaning, fun, direction or any number of other qualities. And a life purpose (or living purposefully) can definitely provide those things and more.

Benefits of Living Purposefully

In fact, you may be surprised to discover just how rewarding a purposeful life can be!

Here are just a few of the benefits:

- Greater focus in your daily activities – rather than feeling adrift.
- Increased discipline when it comes to productivity and achievement.
- Passion and motivation! When was the last time you felt excited about your day?
- Personal empowerment – being in control of your own life.
- Meaning and fulfillment. Knowing that your life (and everything you do) matters.
- Energy and vitality! Purposeful living energizes your mind, body and spirit.
- Peace and contentment. Knowing you are exactly where you need to be.

I could go on and on, but these are probably the most notable benefits of living purposefully. If you've never felt strengthened, empowered or fulfilled by your activities before, you have definitely not discovered your purpose yet (or chosen one that resonates with you). Once you do, every moment of your life takes on greater meaning and passion – rather than seeming pointless and boring.

How Do You Find Your Purpose?

“Learn what you are, and be such.” Pindar

It's Already Within You!

“Finding” your purpose is a misleading concept because it's not something you have to go out and “get,” but rather something you need to **turn within and claim**. You've already got it – even if you haven't consciously realized or chosen it yet. Of course, whether you believe it is already within you or not, you still need to “find” it in some sense. How do you do that? By looking in the most obvious places – your passions and interests.

Your purpose will always be something that:

- You feel passionate about
- You are naturally good at
- You already love to do
- Is important to you

Remember earlier I mentioned that your fears about your life purpose being unpleasant are groundless? It's absolutely true. Why would you be given a life purpose that doesn't match the essence of who you are?

Would the universe expect a musical prodigy to spend his life crunching numbers in an accounting firm? Would the universe expect you to wait tables when your true passion is childhood education? How would these situations serve anyone? They wouldn't!

Your life purpose will ALWAYS utilize your greatest passions, talents and interests. No exceptions. Does that inspire a little sigh of relief for you? It should.

Identifying Your Passions

Before you can discover your true life purpose, you need to uncover the clues that lead to it. Namely, things you are good at, feel passionate about, love to do, and are important to you. Take a look at the worksheets on the next few pages and start filling in a few ideas for each of them. You don't have to completely fill them. In fact, you're looking for the most obvious answers here - even there are only a handful of them in

each category. Focus on things that have been a major part of your life or occupied your thoughts a lot - and it's okay to have the same answers on multiple sheets.

Topics or Subjects I'm Passionate About

These would be topics or subjects you feel passionate about, like personal growth, education, arts and crafts, music, pets, spiritual development, business, poetry etc. Anything you think about and enjoy quite often.

Activities I Love To Do

These would be tangible activities like sports, working out, painting, singing, writing, reading, cooking and so on.

Things I Am Naturally Good At

On this sheet, list all of your best talents, skills and experience. Focus on actual activities that you do easily and well, either because you're naturally good at them or because you have a lot of experience with them.

Things That Are Important to Me

World events, situations, groups, causes, people, animals and more that are important to you. Focus on things that impact the world in general, not just things that pertain to your own life, your own family, etc.

Putting the Pieces Together

Now that you've identified some of your strongest passions and interests, look again at the worksheets. Do you see any connections or patterns between the items you listed? You may not yet have a full picture but more like a handful of puzzle pieces - you see that they could fit together but you're not sure how.

Here's a good way to make the big picture clearer:

Imagine that you are preparing to take a journey. What do you need? First, you need to establish a clear destination. You need a map that shows you how to get to your destination. You need a method of transportation to travel there; and of course, all modes of transportation require fuel to power them.

Your life purpose is very much like a journey.

- The things you love to do are the vehicle you travel in.
- Your natural talents are the map that shows you how to get to your destination.
- The things that are important to you ARE the destination.
- Your passion is the FUEL that powers the whole operation.

With every purpose, you need:

- 1) A passion for it. (Your passions)
- 2) A commitment to it. (Important to you)
- 3) A tangible way to share it with the world. (Activities you love to do)
- 4) The ability to do it well. (Your natural talents)

When these things come together, you've got a virtual explosion of passion, meaning, fulfillment, empowerment – and purpose!

Do you see now why it's important to get clear on the four worksheet categories? Every item you write on those lists offers a possibility and each of those possibilities contain still more possibilities!

Of course, you won't be following all of them right away, but more likely choosing one to start with. You can always incorporate others later if you want to. For now, I strongly encourage you to start with the ONE that speaks most powerfully to you, the one that makes you feel excited and joyful.

Let's use an example to show how this all comes together:

Things I Love To Do	I'm Passionate About	I'm Naturally Good At	Things of Importance
Cooking	Health	Giving advice and encouraging people	Children
Working out	Fitness	Writing	Women's issues
Writing	Alternative healing	Problem solving	Domestic violence solutions
Teaching	Helping people	Blogging and web design	Environment preservation

This is just a partial collection, but you can see at a glance that there are obvious connections between the items here. Perhaps your lists won't have such obvious connections, but the more you study them they'll start to jump out at you.

What kind of life purpose could this person choose? Here are just a few possibilities:

- Writing and publishing books on health and fitness
- Empowering women through conscious living
- Publishing a children's health and fitness magazine
- Establishing a "Mommy and Me" fitness/educational center
- Speaking in schools about fitness for children
- Writing cookbooks with healthful recipes
- Becoming a licensed dietician
- Becoming a personal trainer

There are truly endless possibilities here. In fact, every item on the list above could be narrowed down even further. For example, this person could become a personal trainer specializing in children's fitness, and combine that with speaking engagements and demonstrations at schools, churches and other community events. He or she could also expand later by writing and selling cookbooks geared toward existing clients. Do you see how many directions this could go?

Your own lists are also ripe with limitless possibilities – you just need to narrow down the best choice for you. How do you know which is the best choice for you? You'll feel your creative juices start to flow! Your heart rate will speed up, your mind will start racing with neat ideas and you'll feel excitement bubbling up from within you. **When that happens, you are on the right track!**

But . . . what if you still don't know what your purpose is? What if your worksheets are blank and you have no idea what to write on them?

I Still Don't Know What My Purpose Is!

“Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is Enlightenment.” Loa-tzu

Most people will have some solid ideas about their passions, interests and talents – but not everyone will. If you found yourself struggling to come up with items to write on the worksheets, take comfort in the knowledge that you're probably not alone!

Maybe you've spent your life doing what was expected of you and you never had the freedom to explore your passions before. Maybe you are so saddled with responsibilities that even now you can't find time to do the things you love – even if you knew what they were!

The good news is that it's not going to be difficult to find out. And once you get that ball rolling, your only challenge is going to be choosing between the many choices you have available. To discover your passions, talents, interests and important issues, try one or more of the suggestions that follow.

Think Back to a More Magical Time

Children naturally gravitate toward things they enjoy, have you ever noticed that? If you have children of your own, each of them probably has very different personalities, likes and dislikes. This uniqueness is obvious even when observing children that aren't your own.

The question is: what did you like and dislike when you were a child? What types of television shows did you watch? What toys were your favorites? What costumes did you favor for holidays and special events? Who did you dream of being when you grew up?

All of these memories hold clues to your authentic self. Even though your actual activities have changed since childhood, it's likely that you still gravitate toward the same preferences.

Make a list of your favorite memories, the ones that bring back a warm glow of happiness or pleasure. Then look closely at them and try to identify their core essence. Why did they make you feel so happy? Can any of that essence be brought into your current circumstances?

Windows to Other Worlds

Another great way to find clues about yourself is to visit the bookshelves in your home. Books have often been described as windows looking into other worlds, but they can also be windows looking into you!

What types of books are in your home? Do you prefer fiction or non-fiction? What topics are most of your books about? Which books have you read over and over again until they are well-loved and dog-eared? These quiet companions will tell you a lot about your interests and passions.

If you're not a big reader or don't have any books of your own, take a trip to your local library. Walk around and look at the shelves of books. Which categories make you want to stop and browse some more? Take notes on the types and subjects of books that seem to capture your attention most. You can also use this same technique with magazines, music CDs, and videos/DVDs you have around your home.

World Wide Possibilities

The world wide web is also a fantastic storehouse of clues about your passions! Take a trip through your Favorites folder. What types of websites do you visit frequently? Do you belong to any forums or groups?

You can also visit large, general-interest websites and browse their topics. Click on things that catch your attention and keep a running list so you can explore the topics further later on.

Social Clues

Also be sure to take a closer look at your social life. What do you like to do with friends? What types of activities do you enjoy, with friends and by yourself? Most of us do have a social life, even if it is limited to a few outings a year!

If that doesn't yield any clues, try making a list of activities you always WISH you had time to explore. Have you always been fascinated by photography? Do you feel a twinge of longing when you walk through an art museum? Do you have a hard time tearing your gaze away from a gorgeous garden?

Keep a running list of activities and subjects you feel even the slightest interest in, and little by little they may blossom into full-blown passions!

How to Live Your Purpose

“Simply give others a bit of yourself; a thoughtful act, a helpful idea, a word of appreciation, a lift over a rough spot, a sense of understanding, a timely suggestion. You take something out of your mind, garnished in kindness out of your heart, and put it into the other fellow’s mind and heart.” Charles H. Burr

Once you’ve awakened to the many possibilities that exist for your life purpose, you might feel a bit overwhelmed by it all. So many choices! So many great ideas and not enough time to put them all into action! How do you know which one is the right one? Or are all of them equally right?

There is no easy answer to that question except to say that you’ll know it in your heart. The best choice for you will just “feel right.” You’ll be thrilled by the idea of doing it and you’ll be eager to get moving right away!

Again, remember that you don’t have to take on all of the possibilities right away. There’s nothing wrong with starting on one small aspect and then gradually branching out. In fact, I strongly encourage you to do that.

As exciting as it is to discover a new purpose for your life, you may still have fears and doubts you’ll have to work through, as well as physical actions that need to be taken in order to make it all come together. That will take time in most cases.

Work at your own pace and don’t try to rush the process of transformation. Remember that for every outer transformation you make, you’ll also be making some inner transformations!

This is especially true if your current life circumstances have moved you far away from your true life purpose.

Whether due to external influences or inner fears, you may have created a life that doesn’t even come close to including your true passions and interests.

In fact, that’s much more common than you might think!

Sometimes we don’t know what we want to do with our lives, so we allow others to direct us. Perhaps your parents or your high school guidance counselor chose your

current career. Maybe you followed friends and modeled your activities and goals after theirs because you didn't know what else to do.

No matter your unique situation, it's possible to change it all – one step at a time. First, let's talk about career and life purpose.

Does Your Purpose Have to Be Your Career?

Did you notice that our example chart was geared toward a life purpose that is also a career? Many people do choose to turn their life purpose into a career, but you don't have to. Maybe you already have a job that pays well and you enjoy it, but you also feel a need for something more. Maybe you are retired or financially independent and don't want a job or business but you want to serve others in meaningful ways.

The form your purpose takes is completely up to you, whether you turn it into a paying career or use it as a vehicle to serve others freely.

The Steps that Lead to Fulfillment of Your Purpose

Once you're clear on the form you want it to take, you'll need to begin planning and preparing for action. This is where many people stall. They know what they want to do, but putting it all together seems like a monumental task.

Living your purpose is no different than achieving any other kind of goal. You need a detailed PLAN to put it into action. With most goals, there are clear steps that lead to the final outcome.

Using the same example from earlier, let's look at some possible steps that would be needed to put this life purpose into motion:

- Receive training and certification for dietician/personal training
- Write the book(s) that will be published
- Decide on a location (will it be done from a home office, leased space, etc.)
- Create a website, blog or newsletter
- Learn marketing and promotion
- Network with others in the industry
- Secure financing for business start up

Depending on the form this person chooses for his or her purpose, there will be specific tasks that need to be completed before the desired outcome can take place.

The same will apply to your own purpose. You don't have to complete everything at once – you simply take one step at a time and move each puzzle piece into place. Gradually, the whole picture becomes visible and before you know it, you are living your purpose.

Take a few moments right now to list the logical steps you'll need to take in order to move forward on your own purpose. Include things like education and training, skills and experience you'll need to have, lifestyle changes, external help, resources or financing you'll need, and so on. If possible, try to list these things in chronological order, starting with the things that need to be done first before you can move on to the next items.

Steps to Be Taken

Once you've got some clear steps outlined, it's a simple matter of taking them one by one! When you do that, you keep moving forward and everything falls into place.

Do you feel doubtful about that? In fact, right now are you besieged with thoughts like this: "Who am I kidding? I don't think I can do this. I love the idea, but it's just not realistic. My job is so demanding and I don't have the money needed to start a

business, not to mention the time investment needed . . .” – **Stop right there.** There’s something important you need to know.

Your Purpose Isn't Just About YOU

“If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.” Emily Dickinson

It's Your Gift to the World

Before you allow your mind to run amok with excuses, fears, doubts and the like, I want to stress that this isn't about you. Yes, living purposefully is a fantastic way to get more meaning and satisfaction from your life. Most people start seeking a life purpose just for that reason. They feel empty and aimless, sick of living a life that doesn't fulfill them. There's nothing wrong with that, even if it may seem a bit self-serving at first glance.

But an interesting thing happens when people discover their life purpose and begin living it: they realize that their greatest joy and satisfaction comes from **serving others**. Their focus begins to shift away from what they might receive and moves steadily toward what they can share.

When you start seeing your life purpose as a GIFT you can give to others, you'll find that much of your fear, doubt and hesitation will fade away. You'll stop worrying whether you have what it takes to live your purpose and focus more on doing the best job you can do, simply because it's important to the people you're serving.

There's Something Special About You

Furthermore, it's important to realize that as grand and intimidating as your life purpose may seem from where you're standing now, you already have what it takes to achieve it.

When it comes right down to it, you ARE your life purpose. Your purpose is a perfect blend of the best parts of you: your passion, your talent, your interests, and the things that are very important to you.

You are meant to share these parts of yourself – this ESSENCE of yourself – with the world.

No one else on the planet has what you can offer. No one else will create the things that you can create. No one else has the power to touch people's lives exactly like you can.

Everything you touch, everything you do, everything you create is infused with your unique essence.

People Need What You Have to Offer

Not only is everything about you unique and special, but right now even as you read these words, there is a person (or more likely a large collection of people) who desperately need what you have to offer.

Do you have trouble believing that? Is it hard for you to imagine having something that others really need and want?

This is a common blockage because most people tend to see themselves as “average.” Nothing special, just an average Joe or Jane.

If you take away nothing else from this book, I want you to know how limiting – and even destructive – such a mind-set is. You are one-of-a-kind, and seeing yourself as anything less will detract from what you have to offer.

Seeing yourself as special and unique is not vain. The point isn't to believe that you are better than anyone else – just different and equally as valuable.

And here's where it gets even better. By awakening to your own brilliance and power and sharing them with the world, you will be encouraging other people to do the same. In fact, you've probably already experienced that from the other end of the spectrum.

Have you ever seen someone doing something really well and felt an inner stirring? For example, perhaps you were feeling down and you heard a song on the radio that seemed to rekindle your inner fire, encourage and inspire you? Even better, have you ever seen someone doing something and thought to yourself, “I could do that! I've got a natural talent just like that, why aren't I using it?”

These people are living their own purpose(s), but at the same time, they are serving as living examples that will awaken you to YOUR purpose. Those experiences are not accidents. Whenever you feel a strong resonance with something or someone you see, hear or read – it's there for a reason.

Pay very close attention to that inner resonance because it holds clues to your own talents, passions, abilities – and ultimately, your life purpose. And once you begin living

your purpose and sharing it with the world, you will be providing the same kind of wake-up call for others who resonate with you.

It's Not All Up to You

“Learn to do thy part and leave the rest to Heaven.” John Henry Cardinal Newman

Just like your purpose doesn't affect you alone, you probably won't be fulfilling it all on your own either. As mentioned earlier, you may feel a tad overwhelmed or intimidated by what you've discovered is your life purpose.

Your mind may be swirling with thoughts like these: “How on earth will I be able to do this myself? What if I can't do it? What if I screw it up and let everyone down? What if I can't secure financing? What if I can't find the resources I need to make this happen?”

These worries are completely normal, but also unnecessary. Here's why: the bigger and more powerful your life purpose is, the more help you'll receive to achieve it.

There are two ways to look at this:

- 1) If you believe that your life purpose is pre-destined, then you also have to believe that the universe (or your choice of governing divinity) would not give you an important purpose and abandon you without a clue about how to complete it.
- 2) If you believe that you choose your own purpose, then you also have to believe that you have the resourcefulness, ingenuity and smarts to make it happen.

Both scenarios mean one thing: that you are not undertaking this journey without tools or guidance! Either you already have what you need to complete your life purpose, or it will come into your life at the exact moment you need it. That might include meeting other people who have a similar or related purpose and want to team up with you, or it could mean having the perfect opportunities appear right when you need them most!

In fact, there is a little thing called “synchronicity” that will surprise you again and again once you begin following your true purpose. If you are standing at the threshold of something new and exciting and you're terrified that you can't do it all on your own – get ready to be awed and amazed!

Everything you need to complete your purpose will appear right when you need it – or you'll at least know how to get it, if it doesn't come directly to you. Your job in the meantime is to set aside your fears and doubts, and simply begin moving forward. Take one step, then another. The rest will all fall into place beautifully.

Possible Challenges You'll Face

“Conquering any difficulty always gives one a secret joy, for it means pushing back a boundary-line and adding to one’s liberty.” Henri Frederic Amiel

That last paragraph may have intensified a sense of doubt in your mind. Is it REALLY true that “the rest will fall into place beautifully” if you just keep moving forward?

Yes - and sometimes no. It's important to understand that you may face a few challenges while you're working toward your life purpose. Sometimes these challenges will come from inside your own mind (negative thoughts, doubts, and the like), and sometimes they might be external obstacles you didn't expect to encounter.

This chapter is going to cover some of the most likely challenges you may face, and give you tools and strategies for overcoming them.

Fear of Change

This is a common challenge for people who are firmly entrenched in their current life circumstances. If you're in your forties, fifties or older, you may think it's too late to conceive a new life purpose now.

Perhaps you've already spent years building a stable career and you don't want to “rock the boat” now because you stand to lose so much.

Even if you're younger but have a lot of responsibilities or demands on your time, it may seem monumentally difficult to change directions now without creating a whole lot of havoc in your life.

No matter your specific situation, it's never too late to make changes that will contribute greater value to the world and create greater meaning and fulfillment in your own life.

Of course, you don't have to make a giant leap from one lifestyle to another, either. Start small if bigger changes overwhelm you. Spending even an hour a day on meaningful activities can create greater satisfaction that will seep into other areas of your life too.

Maybe later you'll decide to not only “rock the boat,” but jump out of it entirely and swim to another shore! Or maybe not.

The only thing you have to consider is what you want and what you're willing to do to have it. Small changes or big changes, it's completely up to you.

Lack of Belief

As mentioned previously, you may not really believe that there is anything special about you. You may not believe that you have the ability to create a meaningful life. Maybe you still don't believe that you have a purpose or can choose one, even after reading this book.

Whatever lack of belief you may have right now, it's okay. Understand that inner conviction usually comes from doing, not necessarily from trying to convince yourself.

If you have completed the worksheets on the things that are important to you, you are passionate about, interested in and naturally good at; you've already got a sense of the right direction to move in.

If you also took the time to identify some clear steps that will move you toward what you want, there is nothing left to do but start taking those steps!

As you do, you'll begin to believe little by little. With every success, every challenge you stare down, every obstacle you overcome, you'll begin to believe in yourself and the importance of what you're doing. Eventually, momentum will take over and the process will become a lot easier.

If You Do What You Love, Will the Money Follow?

This challenge applies to you especially if you intend to turn your life purpose into a career. One of the biggest obstacles people in this situation face is uncertainty about how to transition from their current career to a new one that relates to their life purpose.

For example, you might have a stable job with a reliable income right now, but don't have the financial freedom to quit and do something that may or may not be financially lucrative.

The concept of "do what you love and the money will follow" is often touted by self-development experts, but is it realistic? I love to sit on my behind and watch movies - but I can't see that bringing in a paycheck any time soon!

Unfortunately, it's usually not as simple as "doing what you love" and then watching the money roll in.

However, there is a grain of wisdom in this concept, with one notable difference: if you can find a way to serve others while doing something you love, you can make money from it at the same time.

If you really want to turn your life purpose into a paying career, you need to find a way to monetize your passions. Depending on your personal situation, this may be something you can do right away and quit your existing job, or it might be something you'll have to build up to gradually. It will be different for everyone, so take some time to determine what will work best for you.

Charging Money for Your "Gifts"

While we're on the subject of money, there is another challenge that may create conflict within you, and that is the question of ethics when considering whether to charge money for your contributions to the world.

Many people believe that gifts and talents (usually referred to as "God-given") should be shared freely with others and never exchanged for monetary gain. While I can appreciate this charitable attitude, I really have to disagree.

Modern day society is driven by money, whether we like it or not. As lofty as it would be to donate all of your time and attention to others for free, you are really limiting yourself if you do that, which means you are limiting the amount of people you can help.

If you don't charge money for your talents and services, you will have to earn an income some other way unless you happen to be financially independent. In most cases, that means you'll have less time and energy to devote to your true purpose.

Personally, I see nothing wrong with charging money for gifts and talents, whether they are those of a plumber, doctor, artist, spiritual advisor or anyone else. If you are providing something of value to others, you deserve to be compensated for that contribution unless you choose to offer it for free.

Not everyone will agree with this, of course. Don't be surprised if you encounter a few stray "freebie seekers" with an over-inflated sense of entitlement, but don't let them worry you either. If you are truly providing something of value, something that really

helps people, you are justified in expecting to be paid for your time, energy and expertise.

That doesn't mean you should focus heavily on the money, either. If you approach your life purpose with an attitude of "What's in it for me?" you could set yourself up for problems.

What kind of problems, you ask? For one, focusing only on what you stand to gain from your activities reduces the intensity of passion and joy you'll put into your purpose. You'll be so busy watching for the monetary returns that you won't be giving from a heart full of generosity and love.

Another problem that could arise is that you will gage your success by the amount of money you bring in, rather than the number of lives you are able to touch. In fact, you'll probably notice that the financial rewards grow naturally in proportion with the growth of your purpose. The more people you help, the more easily the money will come.

Finally, doing anything "just for the money" usually reduces your enjoyment of it. You can enjoy financial rewards, of course, but keep in mind that there are much more satisfying rewards to be had if you open to them

Overall, your main objective should be to serve – while also being open to the natural flow of abundance that comes along with success.

Of course, if you have no desire to earn an income from your purpose then this situation wouldn't apply to you; you would simply work at it as time and energy allows and call it good. There is nothing wrong with this approach either; it just depends on what your objective is.

Slow Progress

As you begin moving toward your life purpose, you may feel like you are moving through molasses. Maybe you'll bump into plenty of obstacles that will slow your progress, money might trickle in when you desperately need a waterfall, or you might simply seem to be moving at a snail's pace for no apparent reason.

When this happens, it's very easy to convince yourself that you must have been crazy to try living your purpose. If it was meant to be, wouldn't it be easier?

Don't do that to yourself!

First, understand that you are likely undergoing some major changes both within and without. There may also be external influences affecting your progress, and you have no control over those influences. Maybe it's a collection of factors, some of which you aren't even aware of.

No matter what is happening, do your best to make the journey itself the reward. In other words, don't get hung up on expecting a specific outcome in a certain timeframe. As long as you are taking the steps that you know will lead to your chosen destination, you are on the right track.

Instead, make it your mission to feel good about what you're doing right now. Trust that everything will work out exactly as it's meant to and focus only on doing your part.

When you do that, you avoid wasting time and energy on fear, doubt and frustration. You stop worrying about the end result and enjoy each step between here and there.

Balance and Responsibility

As great as it is to feel purposeful and passionate about your activities, it's also possible to become obsessive and take on too much, too soon. In fact, this likelihood increases the bigger your purpose is.

As much as we'd all love to change the world by 9:00am tomorrow, it may take a little bit longer.

When you first conceive your life purpose, you may find yourself wanting to hurry up and make it all happen overnight. Whether there are many people who need what you can provide or you feel desperate to change your own life circumstances, remember to take it slow. Keep balance with the rest of your life. Make time for proper self-care, rest and recreation. You won't be serving anyone if you end up burned out and exhausted.

On the flip side of this same coin is the importance of responsibility. Once you have realized your life purpose, you may need to do some substantial shifting around of your activities to make room for your new priority. And it IS a priority. It has to be.

If you don't make this new objective very important, you'll easily find reasons not to work on it. You'll complain that your kids are too demanding, your job is too stressful, you're too tired, you don't have enough time to yourself, and so on. And you'll go on feeling dissatisfied and unfulfilled for years, or even your entire lifetime.

In your own mind you'll have plenty of valid excuses for why you haven't achieved the dreams in your heart, but deep inside you'll know that you never fully committed to it and made it a high priority.

Finding a balance between these two extremes may not be easy at times, but with self-awareness and planning you can make the transition much easier for yourself.

Keeping Those Fires Burning

Self-motivation can be a tricky thing, no matter how passionate you are about your activities. Sometimes without realizing it you may find your attention waning or outer distractions interfering, which can throw you off track in a hurry.

You may find it helpful to come up with a mission statement to keep you on track. It can be a simple statement like, "My purpose is to educate and empower women in living healthier, more balanced lives," or it might be more detailed, such as, "I commit myself to writing, speaking and educating others on the subject of living purposefully. Every waking moment of my life will serve as an opportunity to inspire and awaken those who seek to be awakened."

Whatever kind of mission statement you choose, make it something meaningful to YOU. Something that will fuel your inner passion and keep you focused on your ultimate objectives.

Success in Dealing With Challenges

There are other possible challenges that could arise; it's impossible to cover all of them in these few pages. But no matter what kind of challenges you may face on your journey toward greater purpose and meaning, know that your attitude is going to make the biggest difference in the magnitude of the obstacles you encounter.

If you see them as daunting, overwhelming and immovable, guess what? You'll give up. On the other hand, if you choose to see them as temporary challenges that CAN be overcome, you'll do what it takes to get past them.

Rather than seeing these obstacles as threats, learn to see them as opportunities. Opportunities to strengthen yourself from within; opportunities to stretch your limits; opportunities to grow and develop as a person, and more. Challenges can be your best friends if you're willing to learn from them.

Surrendering to the Journey

“Today I know that I cannot control the ocean tides. I can only go with the flow . . . When I struggle and try to organize the Atlantic to my specifications, I sink. If I flail and thrash and growl and grumble, I go under. But if I let go and float, I am borne aloft.” Marie Stilkind

As mentioned before, each of us has the freedom to choose what we do with our lives, but there is also certain wisdom in learning how to surrender to the journey.

Through sheer force of will you can achieve much, but at what cost? Learning how to surrender rather than forcing things to go your way can not only make things much easier, it can also create outcomes that are far better than you alone would have created.

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you made it your sole mission in life to get it? Maybe you had to work extremely hard or keep hammering away at obstacles until finally, victory was yours! And then what? Probably you experienced a bit of letdown or fatigue, disappointment that what you thought you wanted wasn't so great after all.

That's because so much of what we think we want actually comes from our ego-selves. The ego is the spoiled, petulant child within each of us. The part of us that cares only about our own happiness, our own comfort, our own gain. When we set goals and objectives from this state of mind, inevitably we are disappointed by them later because they serve only our immediate whims and desires.

Letting Your Inner Wisdom Lead

There is a wiser and more patient part of us, however. This part of us could be called our spirit, higher self, inner wisdom, or many other names. When we set our ego aside and allow this part of ourselves to take charge, everything suddenly becomes much easier.

Not only are we able to choose more lasting and satisfying objectives, we are also led to the simplest and quickest ways to achieve them. Struggle evaporates. Fear dissolves. Impatience is transformed into confidence and trust. When you surrender to this higher part of yourself, the entire journey becomes smoother, more magical, and more deeply satisfying.

It won't always be easy to set your personal preferences aside. Sometimes you'll find yourself getting hooked on doing things a certain way, or seeing a specific outcome from your efforts.

Self-awareness can help keep you more balanced in this respect, because you'll more easily notice when you're clinging, pushing or forcing circumstances, or resisting an easier way – even if you wouldn't have chosen it as “your way.”

Choosing the Easy Way

Remember that for every objective there is an easy way and a hard way of accomplishing it. When it comes to your life purpose, your inner wisdom will lead you to the easy way, every time.

That doesn't mean effort won't be required. In fact, you'll probably work more diligently on your passions than you've ever worked on anything before! But it won't SEEM like work. It will seem fun and easy – even blissful.

Surrendering to the journey has another benefit too; helping you to keep your expectations in check. Rather than pinning all of your expectations on some distant outcome, you'll be better able to enjoy what you're doing now. You'll make the journey itself your objective. That doesn't mean that amazing outcomes won't result from your journey – quite the opposite!

The more attention and energy you put into NOW, the more powerful LATER will be. But you won't have to focus so hard on it to make it happen. You'll just naturally create it from one moment to the next.

Allowing Your Purpose to Evolve

Believe it or not, your life purpose will continue to evolve for the rest of your life, just as you will personally, spiritually, professionally – in all areas of your life, really. That's why it's not so important to have a nitty-gritty detailed idea of what your purpose is, but rather to look at the pieces that comprise it and begin taking action on them.

As you learn, grow and develop throughout your lifetime, so will your purpose. In fact, don't be surprised if you're doing something completely unrelated to the activities on your worksheets twenty years from now. Those initial insights may prove to be mere stepping stones that lead to something much bigger and better. Or they might end up being all you want to do, forever. It can go either way.

That's another reason why it's so important to let your inner wisdom lead. By doing so you'll stay aware of inner changes that might be moving you in another direction than you initially intended to go.

Living Moment to Moment

More than anything else, I want you to understand that living your life purpose isn't about trying to become someone you are not, doing things you don't enjoy or taking on all of the worthy causes in the world.

It's about coming back to yourself – your authentic self – and awakening to the potential that already exists within you.

Many of us, for most of our lives have gotten used to “playing small.” We've been told over and over again that it's wrong to honor our uniqueness – let alone celebrate it.

We've spent a lot of time trying to blend in, be like everyone else and hide that glimmer of brilliance that wants to burst forth from us.

But doing so not only stunts our own growth, it deprives the world of something magnificent.

Through the exercises in this book you may have conceived a clearer idea of the specific activities that comprise your life purpose, or you may still be trying to figure it out – but understand that your purpose goes far beyond the things you do day to day.

When you believe that your life has meaning and make it your purpose to infuse that meaning into everything you do, you make every moment and every activity meaningful. Consequently, you are able to live with purpose no matter what you do, no matter where you go, and no matter how you and your purpose evolve over time.

You'll simply turn your entire life into a vehicle for positive change, growth, healing, awareness or anything else you decide to adopt as your mission.

Can you imagine a more powerful purpose than that? I sure can't.

May you enjoy ever-increasing passion, power and purpose in everything you do!

The Deepest Desire of Your Heart

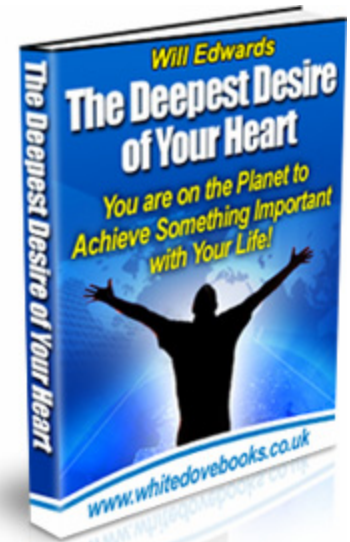
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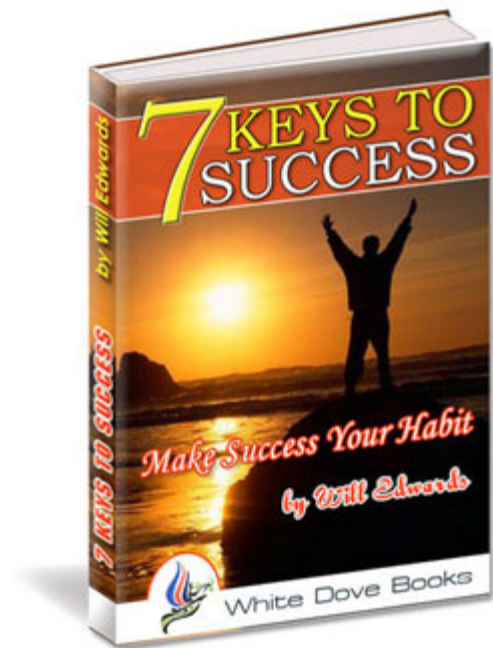
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Will Edwards is the founder of [White Dove Books](#) - the internet's leading website for Self Improvement and Personal Development. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, he develops and teaches Personal

Development workshops and is a published author.

Within its first three years, White Dove Books was recognised as one of the internet's leading sites for self help and personal development; breaking into the top 100,000 sites on the internet at the end of 2005.

The INSPIRATION newsletter was started in 2005 as a way of providing helpful information including tips, articles and free inspirational eBooks to our visitors.

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