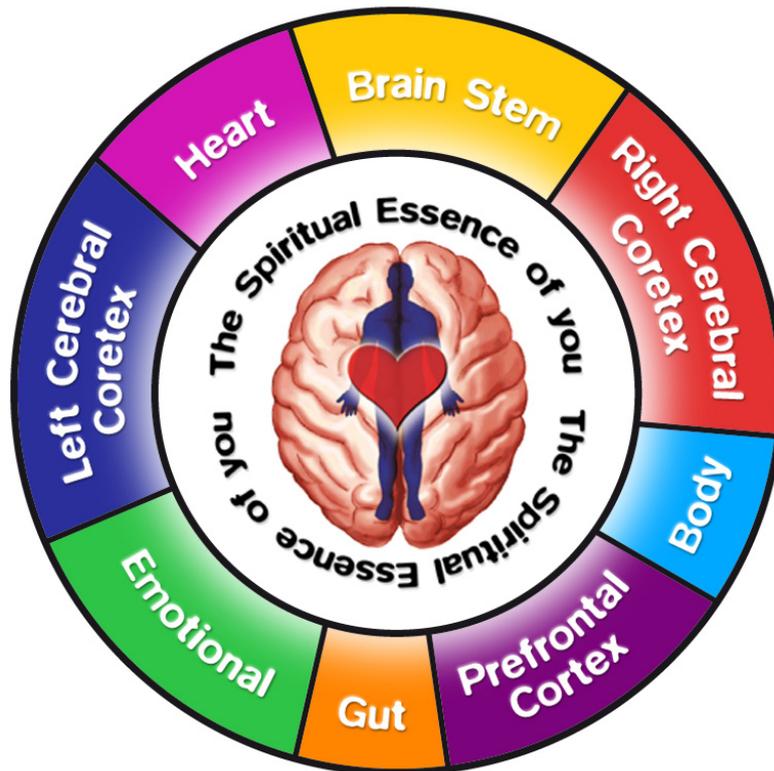


# LIFE PURPOSE



“BECOME THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE.”  
*Gandhi*

Course developed, written & facilitated by Ilze Jaunberzins & Carolyn Hastie



# LIFE PURPOSE

**“There are two great moments in life. The first is when you are born.  
The second is your answer to the reason why you were born”**

**Keith Abrahams**

Everyone at some time in their life asks themselves “why am I here?” The question may be asked early in life. Some people seem to know the answer from when they could talk. For others, it takes a sense of yearning for something more, a deep dissatisfaction for what is happening now in their life to prompt them to ask this question. Some people never waver. They have a deep inner knowing and every action they take is deliberately chosen to further their dreams and desires. For many, their life purpose becomes clearer and develops as they learn and grow.

Having a sense of purpose provides a focal point to aim for and gives a sense of meaning to one’s life. A sense of purpose is a guide to help us choose the activities that are aligned with that purpose. When we are aligned, we have a sense of well being which leads to wellness and health.

However it is for you, the important point is that having a sense of meaning is associated with mental health and resilience in the face of difficult circumstances. Viktor Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist who was interned in a concentration camp, explained why some people survived such stark and brutal conditions and quoted Nietzsche’s words, “he who has a why to live for can bear well almost any how”. Frankl discussed situations in the camp which demonstrated how those who lost faith in the future became morose, angry and eventually gave up hope, with disastrous consequences. Frankl discovered by observation that those who survived were those who had a clear vision of their return home. They imagined putting the key in the lock and the look on their wives’ faces when they returned home. Frankl spent his time being grateful for the tiny things he had and thinking about life when he was home. He imagined himself giving a lecture on the psychology of concentration camps to academic audiences. He used all his senses to make his imagined experiences as real as possible. Frankl was one of the few who did survive Auschwitz and did return home. He also lectured extensively on psychology and concentration camps to academic audiences. His experiences led him to develop Logotherapy and to head the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy.

Initially, Frankl was distracted by the numerous and continual irritations and huge distressing events that occurred moment to moment in the concentration camp. He found that allowing such things to occupy his mind led him to be dispirited and angry. He found that when he turned his thoughts to his life and his purpose after internment, he was able to be objective and to view things differently. He found he was healthier and happier. Like Frankl, when we focus on what is wrong in our lives, our physiology is adversely affected and our immune system is compromised. When we have a dedication to a cause greater than ourselves, we are able to deal effectively with challenging or difficult conditions in our life and keep going towards our goal.

The human yearning for understanding and ability to make meaning is a central theme in Zohar and Marshall’s work . Drawing on current research in diverse fields such as neuroscience, physics and psychology, these authors suggest we are “hard wired” to make sense of what happens to us in life. They also contend we create our destiny through determining and expressing our values whilst striving to achieve our goals.

# HOW IS IT FOR YOU?

**Do you know your purpose in life?  
Are you just drifting?  
Is your vocation in line with your life purpose?**

What about your work colleagues – how aware are they about their life purpose? It is suggested that approximately 10% of the world population ever think about their life purpose and about 3% of the population ever actually do anything about it.

And what about your family? Is your family focused in achieving its core values? Stephen Covey in his book *Seven Habits of Effective Families* repeatedly emphasises the importance of consciously choosing behaviours that are in alignment with your purpose and values.

“By organising around your deepest priorities, you are creating alignment. You’re setting up systems and structures that support – rather than get in the way of – what you are trying to do. Organising becomes an enabler – literally transforming restraining factors into driving or enabling factors on the path from survival to significance.” (p 333)

## **We offer two processes to clarify your life purpose.**

### **Firstly, become still – body and mind. Take a small booklet to record your thoughts.**

Be confident that your inner wisdom will reveal the answer to your question.

Remember there is no “wrong” answer, what is – is perfect. Be in a place of peace and beauty and ask yourself “What is my purpose on this planet?” Allow your heart and your inner spirit to answer. Write the answers – let the ideas and thoughts swirl out like a spiralling mind map. Be patient. I have mused over this question and now over four years my latest statement is “To have fun (i.e. fully enjoy life) on the planet and cocreate a place of beauty and respect.” (Ilze 2003)

### **Our second process was designed by Phil Ross**

Please go through the steps one at a time. When doing each step, put the folder down and complete that activity. Please do not read ahead, as it may affect the accuracy of your outcome. Undertake this process regularly, as your purpose will evolve and gain clarity as you change, grow and develop.

### **Create a place for reflection**

Ensure your surroundings are calm and peaceful. Give yourself enough time and put your favourite music on. Music will activate and enable you to access your right brain. Have something refreshing and nourishing to drink. Remember, our brains need at least 4 litres/day of fresh pure water for maximum alertness and functioning.

The first sign of a dehydrated brain is a headache.

# LIFE PURPOSE EXERCISE

## Step 1

Your first activity is to prepare a list – name it List # 1.

This is a list of seven Positive Attributes you have that you feel make you special. Please put down what you feel or think makes you special; it may or may not be what other people say makes you special to them. If more than seven come up – great, write them all down. Are you a great cook, friend, parent, nurse/midwife? Have you got persistence, courage, creativity, positivity, sense of humour ? Are you kind? Resourceful? These are some suggestions to start your thinking.

## Step 2

Your second activity is to compile a list of seven Achievements you are capable of now at this moment, at this point in time. Name this List # 2. Remember, this is your life; take your time and recognise your uniqueness. Examples may be completing study; preparing a business/ life/home plan and progressing it to achievement; valuing yourself and setting clear boundaries; building your self esteem; being a supportive and positive workmate/neighbour/community member; undertaking spring cleaning; joining a community group of your interest; enrolling in a fun class – dancing, cooking, Tai Chi.

## Step 3

List # 3 focuses on your beliefs about seven Urgent Requirements for Planet Earth. What are seven thoughts, actions, experiences you feel would make the most significant and positive difference to our world and for the future? Examples may be: peace; harmony; positive parenting workshops for all parents; midwifery care for all childbearing women; all women in the UN; ecotourism; conflict management in school curricula; etc.

## Step 4

Your fourth and final list is seven of Your Life's Desires. What are the seven most important things you choose to have and experience in this lifetime? What would you be; do and have in this lifetime if you had all the resources and time possible?

Some examples may be: become a pilot; own a flower shop; do my Phd; spend time with the children/grandchildren; run a preschool; climb Machu Pichu/Mt Everest; learn ballet etc. You have now completed the first major step towards identifying/clarifying your life purpose.

## Step 5

Your next exercise is to go back to each of your 4 lists and put an asterisk beside the item on each list that is the most significant for you right now. Relax, breath deeply and trust your inner self. Look at each item carefully and pick the item that has the most “pull” for you. It may not be the item you think “should” be the “right” one. Go with your intuition.

# LIFE PURPOSE EXERCISE Cont.

## Step 6

Now that you have done that, you are ready to create your purpose statement. Use the following format to create that statement. When it is complete, you may find that you need to “tweak” the words a bit to make the statement flow. Feel free to do that making sure that you maintain the context and power of your statement. Complete the statement using the asterisked item from each list, Your purpose statement will read as follows:

Using my (asterisked item from List # 1)

I am (asterisked item from List # 2 )

To accomplish (asterisked item from List # 3 )

And so doing, also achieving (asterisked item from List # 4)

Read it over; roll it around in your mind and your heart. How does it feel? Feel free to go back over your lists picking out the second and third most significant items and create a second and third life purpose for yourself. It is recommended that you remind yourself of this as often as possible so that it “becomes the essence of you “ (Unconscious competent). Here are some ways to affirm your statement - make a banner and put it in your office space; put in on business cards; put in on your fridge, bathroom mirror, make a bookmark and laminate it; put in on your Dream Board; recite them regularly in your Hui Marama sessions.

## Step 7

Now think about the different roles you play in life. Are you a mother, father, son, daughter, sister, brother, partner, coach, clinician, manager, mentor, friend, spouse, lover, musician, artist, midwife, nurse? Spend some time assessing the time and energy you devote to these roles and check if they are in alignment with your life purpose. Are you actively choosing to fulfil these roles – or are you drifting along with established patterns and societal norms.

Remember, when we are aligned and we are authentic, we have a sense of well being which leads to wellness and health. When we are not, we have internal dissonance leading to distress and disease.

**Consider – what kind of role modelling  
are you giving to your children and work colleagues?  
What kind of inspiration are you to yourself and others?**