

Finding and Fulfilling Your Life Purpose



Amazing People

It's absolutely fascinating to watch what happens when people figure out why they were put on the planet. They have more energy than they've ever had. They operate with more confidence and clarity. They are more focused, more driven, more resilient, more creative, and more effective—on and off the job. Boldness shoots out of them like never before and perhaps most apparent of all, they are really happy. They actually do those things you hear people near the end of their lives say they wish they'd done. They live life with no regrets, and they inspire us.

The world needs more of these people.

Wasted Time

Most approaches people take to finding and fulfilling their life purpose are surprisingly unfocused, consisting of little more than trial-and-error tactics along with some encouragement to “keep searching until you find it.”

The internet is one of the most common places people turn for help, but it contains a dizzying array of resources of varying levels of helpfulness. While all seem to be well-intentioned, they are at best highly fragmented sources of information that require their own form of trial-and-error. When an occasional gem of helpful guidance is located, it still must be pieced together with previous resources and insights to create meaning.

These relatively haphazard approaches can be very costly. At best, those who discover meaning often seem to do so with much more time and effort than is necessary. At worst, people get tired and give up. They stop searching for very long stretches of time, often until reaching a milestone age or a new phase of life (e.g. empty nester) when nagging questions about purpose and identity return to the surface.

All great achievement is “pre-seeded” by intensity of purpose.

Just as a farmer treats the seeding process with great care and effort, the investment of time and energy required produce a clear and compelling purpose is no less important to cultivating a significant, meaningful contribution from your life.

The key to speeding up the process is to follow a structured, systematic approach--one that shows where to start, quickly narrows the search field, points out common pitfalls along the path, and contains checkpoints to help navigate and measure progress along the way.

The NYCH™ System

Your life purpose is called many things—your mission, your calling, your passion, etc. We call it your “NYCH” in life—an acronym containing the 4 critical elements that point to why you were put on the planet:



Natural Gifts - *What you're good at doing*

Yearnings - *What drives you to keep doing*

Conscience - *What's right for you to do*

Human Needs - *What others need you to do*

The purpose of the NYCH system is to help you find and fulfill your life purpose much more quickly than you could without it.

Hardware and Software

To help understand this approach, consider for a moment that you are like a computer that requires both hardware and software to function properly. Your NYCH in life represents your "hardware"—the way you're hard wired. It's how you were built, and it doesn't change much in a lifetime, even if you try really hard. The "software" represents your training, mindsets, habits, etc., or the stuff you can change when the conditions are right.

In a perfect world, people would discover their NYCH early in life so they can spend their remaining years installing the right "software" to build a well-balanced, purpose-driven life of significant contribution doing something they are amazing at and totally jazzed about—in short, *delivering* their NYCH. Too often though, people make decisions about degrees, careers, affiliations, and so on without knowing what hardware they're installing all that software onto.

The NYCH system is a lightweight, easy-to-use framework designed to elicit the greatest possible return on your time investment. It consists of the model outlined above and a simple three-phase process outlined below to help you get on with the business of making your unique, meaningful contribution with this brief and precious life you've been given.

THREE PHASES OF THE NYCH™ SYSTEM

1 - **DISCOVERING** YOUR NYCH IN LIFE

The first phase of the NYCH system offers a road map and some helpful tools to focus your search and help identify your clear, compelling life purpose as quickly as possible. Objectives for phase 1 include:

- Apply the 4-part NYCH model to identify how you are hard-wired, or your “hardware”
- Identify a general direction to help focus your time and effort
- Develop a clear, compelling life purpose

2 - **DEVELOPING** YOUR NYCH IN LIFE

Knowing your NYCH in life is not enough; you are expected to do something about it! In phase 2, Developing Your NYCH, you’ll learn how to take the “hardware” of your NYCH and combine it with the right “software” of knowledge, skills, mindsets, and experience. Objectives for phase 2 include:

- Turn raw talents into true strengths
- Use habit-building principles to build new and better behaviors (and break bad ones)
- Increase your capacity to serve others and make a meaningful contribution

3 - **DELIVERING** YOUR NYCH IN LIFE

All that discovery and development in phases 1 and 2 is meaningless if it doesn’t get translated into the real world effectively. Phase 3, Delivering Your NYCH, is where the rubber meets the road by acknowledging your present environment and aiming to positively influence it to align your life for maximum contribution. Objectives for phase 3 include:

- Develop a strategy for contributing your highest and best
- Become a master builder of high-quality relationships
- Gracefully assume new roles, let go of others, and in some cases implement significant career change
- Remain well-balanced, purpose-driven, and beat procrastination

Self-Guided Activities for Phase 1 - Discovering

The objective of this white paper is reflected in its title: to help you find and fulfill your life purpose faster. Chances are you've already started anyway, so we offer the following guidance and insights for using the NYCH system on your own.

Before You Begin

Your expectations about the process can substantially impact the results you get from following it. Others have found the following tips and lessons learned helpful for setting the most productive frame of mind:

- **You don't "create" or "invent" your NYCH—you discover it.** Your purpose has been there all along. So we encourage you to consider the entire span of your life, not just who you are today. In some cases, the clues were more visible earlier in life. In other cases, later.
- **It may require more work than you think it should.** While the process involves a lot of thinking work, it is *real* work that will be difficult and feel awkward at times. Although the NYCH system is designed to save you time, it should not be thought of as a quick fix or a shortcut (sorry, they don't exist). Rather, consider it more like a trusty guide to help you keep a good pace while minimizing wasted time and effort.
- **Don't rely solely on analysis.** The discovery of life purpose is a highly introspective activity requiring both analysis (breaking whole things into parts) and synthesis (putting parts together to form a new whole). While analysis is important, you also have a powerful intuition and conscience that takes all that analysis then synthesizes it into something new. You probably won't discover your NYCH without the synthesis piece, which partly explains the significance of the "C" piece of the NYCH model (conscience).
- **Atmosphere is important, and nature seems to help.** People report good results from doing this work at the beach or in the mountains or forest. For people who aren't near those types of places, it may help to just go outside and sit on the front/back step.
- **Get it on your calendar.** This is without a doubt some of the highest-leverage work you will ever do. It can enrich and enhance your effectiveness in nearly every dimension of your life. But it won't happen by accident, so be deliberate. Determine where and when you will spend time working on it, then protect these precious appointments with yourself just like you would a doctor's appointment.

With that, let's dive into some activities for discovering your NYCH by walking through each piece of the model--Natural Gifts, Yearnings, Conscience, and Human Needs.

Discovering Your Natural Gifts

Your natural gifts are the seeds of your greatest strengths and most significant contribution. They show up in many forms and are called many different things, such as talents, strengths, behavioral disposition, personality profiles, spiritual gifts, etc. Your natural gifts provide the most insight into your uniqueness and the type of meaningful contribution you can make. As their name suggests, they are gifts. You cannot take credit for them any more than you can your ethnicity or shoe size.

Keep in mind that you can perform well in activities that you're not naturally gifted in as a result of good training or coaching, or from having a lot of life experience in an area. The reverse can also be true. Sometimes gifts can be masked by your environment or by bad life experiences.

To discover your natural gifts, look for tasks in which you learn very rapidly, situations where you are working hard but it doesn't feel like hard work, and times when you feel you are operating at your absolute best. Consider taking time to answer the following questions:

- What would the people closest to me say are my primary strengths?
- In what ways do I feel I am truly special?
- In what area(s) do I feel qualified to teach others?
- Is there anything I feel I could one day be the best in the world at (or "world class")?
- Who has had the greatest influence on my life, and why? (It's often because they shared your natural gifts).

Discovering Your Yearnings

Your yearnings represent your deepest wants and desires--the things you are (or can become) very passionate about. They are the seeds of genuine discipline and consistent action because they are an abundant source of energy. They have a gentle, steady pull, nudging you to use them. And because their pull is gentle, it's also fairly easy to push them aside or ignore them, even for long periods of time.

Keep in mind that it is virtually impossible to be consistent long-term in an activity without also finding some enjoyment in it. And among those who are talented in an area, it is often the one who has been the most consistent for the longest time that accomplishes and contributes the most--hence the importance of this piece of the model.

Discipline's true meaning is found in its root word, *disciple*, which means *follower*.

It requires slowing down long enough to decide where we most want to end up, choosing a path that leads toward it, and following.

To discover your yearnings, think of activities that “draw you in,” where you become so intensely engaged that you easily lose track of time. Look for scenarios where you are surprisingly bold and courageous, or unusually disciplined. Consider taking time to answer the following questions:

- What activities always make me more energetic, excited, or emotionally involved when I do them?
- If there were a secret passion in my life, what would it be?
- What activities do I miss doing the most?
- What would I do with my life if I knew I could not fail?

Discovering Your Conscience

Your conscience is the “still, small voice” that offers internal guidance for what’s right or not right for you. It is the seed of true contentment. Like your gifts, your conscience goes by many different names, such as your intuition, your internal compass, or your gut feel. Like your yearnings, your conscience is gentle, quiet, and easily pushed aside.

Keep in mind that it is possible to be good at something and enjoy it (i.e. it is both a natural gift and a yearning) that still does *not* line up with your conscience. In other words, the achievement of positive results in the external world isn’t the only thing we should pay attention to. Some activities may still be “not right” for you to do. In some cases, it’s a timing issue, or a matter of “not right now.” On the flip side, consider that what is *right* for you to do may not always seem *logical* for you to do. A well-trained conscience doesn’t always conform to our expectations!

To discover your conscience, consider a time when you stood up for something or someone despite the risk of opposition. Look for moments when you felt pulled in a certain direction, even if it didn’t make logical sense. And if there’s something you feel like you should do, but the main thing holding you back is not knowing *how* to do it, pay attention to it. Consider taking time to answer the following questions:

- What must I accomplish during my lifetime to have considered my life well lived—with a “clear conscience” and no regrets?
- What do I feel I really should do—even though I may have dismissed such thoughts many times?
- Is the fear of criticism, or of the unknown, holding me back from trying something? What is it?

Discovering Human Needs You Can Meet

This last piece of the model represents the service you provide and value you add to others. It is the seed of true fulfillment. We were built so that we must *pour* our lives into others to be *filled*. When we give to others in a way that aligns well with our NYCH, the “giving” is also replenishing, and our supplies never seem to run out.

Keep in mind that the first three pieces of discovering your NYCH call you to focus primarily on your natural gifts, your yearnings, and your conscience. For this last piece however, the focus shifts to *others'* needs and how you can contribute to or meet the needs that exist around you. While your own needs are not to be overlooked (e.g. “can I make a living at this?”), the search for your NYCH must start with others' needs you may be able to fill. Putting your needs before others in this phase tends to obscure and obstruct the discovery process.

You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.

Winnie the Pooh

To discover the human needs you can serve best, consider when you were most proud of the ways in which you helped other people. Look for scenarios where you are given a lot of sincere, positive feedback from others. Pay attention to times when you experienced a strong sense of fulfillment from something you did, or unfulfillment or regret from something you avoided. Consider taking time to answer the following questions:

- Who has needs that may go unmet if I don't meet them?
- What type of needs (or pain) do I seem to see more clearly than others?
- When have I felt like I was participating in something that was much bigger than me?
- What opportunities to make a difference have I thought about numerous times?

With this information you now have more than enough to get started. Set some appointments with yourself, apply your best effort, and see how it goes. If your use of this system has you spending more time *in* introspection than reading *about* introspective activities, both of us will have a much higher chance of making an impact—us in our mission, and you in yours.

Should we be talking?

You are the expert on your life, your environment, and your challenges, and so you may find this information useful for leveraging that expertise in facilitating the discovery/alignment process. But for some of you, this material could also be the very last thing you need. You may have already tried a lot of things on your own and may be ready for more.

The NYCH system is not a white paper, a website, or a book. It's a coaching framework, intended for use by an experienced life purpose coach and a willing client. The value of a skilled coach simply cannot be replaced by a one-way flow of text and images from a document or web page. Even if it could, there are great masses of people who just don't learn well that way.

If you feel stuck, or otherwise feel you could benefit from having a coach help you through the process, give us a call at (404) 969-5323. Our objective is simply to help you advance at a much faster rate than you could on your own, and the initial consult is free.

About the Author

Jimmy Parker is a leadership coach and organizational development consultant with over 15 years of experience developing leaders, teams, and organizations. As a Naval Academy graduate, former Marine Corps pilot, and former nationally-ranked gymnast, Jimmy brings perspective, passion, and insight to real-world challenges. His collaborative style stimulates positive change, unlocks potential, and equips people for high performance.