

Your MEGAgigNormous Rules – SAMPLE CHAPTER

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What Exactly Do We Mean By PURPOSE?

The supreme question that occupied the immortal Greek philosophers – Socrates, Plato, Aristotle - and hundreds of others in the last 2000 years, was “What is our purpose?”

A starting point for their contemplations was the belief that, above all else, it is man’s purpose to “live well”. The actual meaning of this phrase requires a bit of explanation. Aristotle described in his classic *Nicomachean Ethics*, a particular kind of life that is the perfect example of “Being a human being well”.

Consider an oak tree. If there is an expression of “being an oak tree and being it well”, we could imagine as Aristotle did, that such a tree would be strong and tall and produce an abundance of acorns. It would live many years and provide shade and nesting for animals and humans, perhaps for centuries.

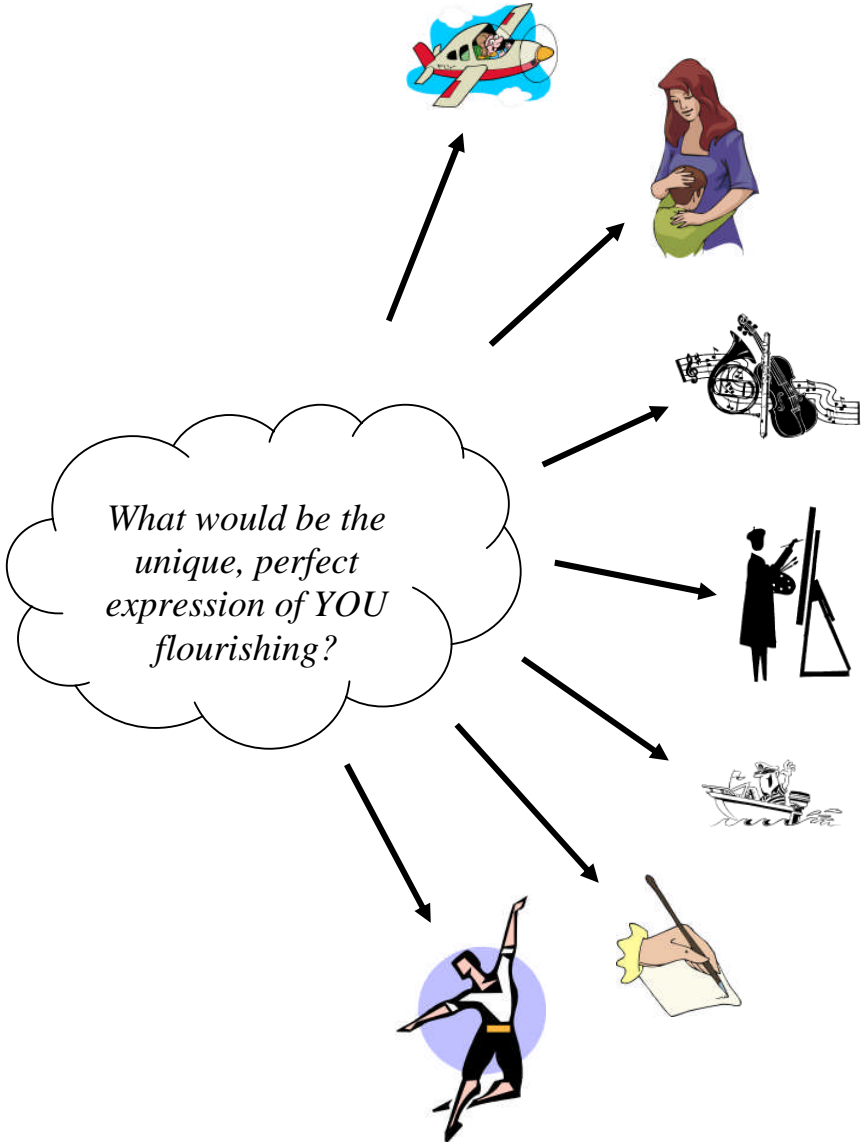


The **PURPOSE** of this acorn is to
“Be an Oak Tree” and be it well.



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Indeed, there is a perfect expression of *everything* in the universe, including man. The ancient Greeks wondered, “what is the perfect expression of a man?” The Greek word for this was *eudemonia* - a state of flourishing. So, part of the answer to man’s journey toward living well is to flourish. What does it mean for a human being to flourish?



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According to Aristotle, one must be “... *fully in life... harmoniously constituted ... a lover of truth ... absence of malice or cowardly behavior ... given to preserve the beauty, goodness and justice in all things...*” But even that left an unanswered question: “Toward what end?” What do we aim for? Aristotle did not claim to know the answer, other than to assert that our most important undertaking in life is to discover that end for ourselves. Seeking the answer to the challenge of “living well” was a high virtue, even if one never achieves it.

The starting point for thinking from the Super Reality is to have a purpose for yourself that is big enough to get you out of the starting gate AND big enough to move you beyond the various plateaus you will reach along the way. After all, whatever purpose you have for your life right now is only sufficient to get you to do what you’re already doing. It is a purpose suitable for your Current Reality. You need something bigger.

If You Have to Work At It, It’s Not Your Purpose

I frequently recommend reading *Extraordinary Golf* by Fred Schumacher. Not because my clients are interested in golf, but because they’re interested in *extraordinary*. Schumacher has been teaching the art of playing golf for years to novices and pros alike. He is credited with causing remarkable progress in his students’ games in a very short period of time. There are two particular points in his book that relate to discovering one’s purpose in life.

First point: Schumacher has his new students go through a series of ball hitting exercises in which he videotapes their motion. This is shown to the student and analyzed by a pro. What’s revolutionary about this series of exercises is the part where he asks them to toss their club instead of hitting the ball.

He instructs the student to take her normal stance, but with no ball in front of her. The student takes several easy, half speed swings, like we’ve all seen the pros do on TV just before they tee up. Then he has the student release the club as the swing moves forward. This motion is also videotaped. Much to the surprise of many of his students, the club goes

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off in all different directions. Very few times does it go directly in front, toward the hole. He has his students repeat this process over and over until the club is routinely placed in the same general area, regardless of where that is in relation to the hole. All the while he is videotaping the swing.

Remarkably, what is getting discovered in this process is the student's *natural* swing. Schumacher doesn't try to correct that swing, he gets the student to relax and consistently deliver that swing. Makes a lot of sense. This is how that particular student's body and posture want to address the ball. It's a unique swing, one that takes advantage of the particular physical characteristics of the student. Most importantly, it doesn't require a lot of work! Most golf pros would walk you through a long list of proper things to do with your stance - where you line up, how you hold your head, how you move your shoulders, etc, etc, ETC. No wonder it's so hard for some people to get good at the game. The amount of work and attention required to do it the "right" way is a huge distraction.

In Schumacher's case, once students have *discovered their natural swing*, he just teaches them to stand over the ball in such a way that their natural swing delivers the ball where they want it to go. Voila! Can it really be that simple? Apparently so. A friend of mine shaved about 12 strokes off his game after one lesson! (For those who are not golfers, that represents about a 15% improvement almost overnight, something that usually takes months to accomplish!) It doesn't happen by working harder, it happens by relaxing and doing what comes naturally, which actually takes less energy and concentration. (Remember coherence?)

Second point. On the first day of his school, the students are asked to make a list of all the things they love about playing golf: being outdoors, being with their friends, the beautiful courses, fresh air, the camaraderie in the clubhouse after the game is done - whatever it is. He then has them make a second list of what they want to learn while in the school. Students list getting rid of a slice or hook, improving their skill with a particular club, improving their long game or their short game, etc.

Revelation #2! Schumacher then points out how disconnected the two lists are. It's worth noting, he says, that very few people want to celebrate and

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expand the things they love about the game. Instead, they want to focus their attention on the things that vex them about the game. He makes the point that focusing your attention on what you think you *should* be doing, rather than what you *love* doing, diminishes your experience of the game and (get this) SLOWS DOWN THE LEARNING CURVE!

A second book I like to recommend is entitled *Now Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton. Based on a Gallup study of over 2 million people, the book shows readers how to identify and develop their unique strengths and talents.

Buckingham and Clifton put forth the theory that the key to producing great results is to discover and develop your strengths and talents rather than trying to fix or improve your weaknesses. They suggest that those characteristics we often call “weaknesses” are really just the absence of certain other strengths. For example, the weakness of being disorganized is the absence of the strength of *Focus* or *Discipline*. The weakness of not being a strong leader is perhaps the absence of the strength of *Command* or *Self Assurance*.

The authors assert it’s a fool’s game to criticize or diminish yourself for not having strengths you don’t have. That’s like criticizing yourself for being a certain gender or race. They suggest that it is way more productive to focus your attention on the strengths you do have, and learn to optimize them.

Of course, if there is a particular strength that is needed for us to flourish, then we need to somehow get it. If we can learn it, great, we should do that. But if we can’t learn it, or if we’re truly not the least bit interested in learning it, then we have to find someone who has that strength to compliment us. We have to be *responsible* for our weaknesses, and manage them, but *we don’t have to fix them*. In fact, trying to fix them may very well be like paddling against the rapids.

When I first read *Now, Discover Your Strengths* five years ago and took the online test that goes with the book, I discovered I had the strengths of *Strategic Thinking*, *Adaptability*, *Intellect*, *Input* (which means I collect all kinds of stuff, including ideas) and *WOO* (Winning Others Over). Nowhere on my list did I have the strengths of *Discipline*, *Focus*,

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Harmony, Achiever, Fairness, or Command. I can't tell you how much time and energy I've expended trying to become more disciplined and more focused or a more effective achiever. Today, in spite of all that effort, I'm about as disciplined as I've always been and my focus is probably on par with a high school teenager during Spring Break.

Several years back, I worked for a consulting company that delivered a very good consulting model to business leaders and CEOs. Try as I might, I just never got particularly interested in prospecting to business owners and CEOs. I was much more interested in sports, and even in that area I wasn't particularly interested in prospecting and selling. But I was GREAT at designing programs and delivering the programs I designed (using my strengths of *Strategic Thinking* and *Intellect*). I also LOVED writing about what I thought, and I did a lot of that. Every time I encountered a new challenge or got a new idea about how to approach an existing challenge, I immediately wanted to figure it out and write about it.

Alas, that's NOT what my company wanted me to do. At one point, one of the senior consultants told me I needed to avoid writing *anything* for at least a month because it was distracting me from my real job, which was to prospect and make sales. I tried, but....

I sometimes shudder to think what it would have been like if I'd spent the last several years of my life trying to fit in and develop the strengths the company wanted me to have rather than go out on my own and figure things out and write about it. It would have been much less pleasant for me (and them) and I never would have researched and written this book. Now THAT would be a shame!

Stop Trying to Force It

Schumacher, Buckingham and Clifton understood a basic principle of human accomplishment – *it's natural!* That's right. It is natural for us to accomplish things. It's natural for us to be extraordinary. It is part of the eternal energy of the cosmos for us to flourish. An eloquent and brilliant part of that design is something called *diversity*. If mankind was designed in such a way that everyone did everything the same way – YUCK!

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We are SUPPOSED to be different and do things in different ways. Some of us are supposed to be disciplined and focused. Others of us are supposed to be artistic and adventurous. It's all perfect in the cosmic sense. But, sometimes we find ourselves in situations or environments that don't place a premium on our particular strengths. As we said in **Chapter 1**, the reality we are living inside of labels certain things as problems!

General George Patton was a magnificent warrior, perhaps the best military leader in history for fighting a global war. But he was a disaster at compromise and diplomacy! Fine, let's use him to fight when there is fighting to be done, and let's get someone else in there when we need to build consensus or nurture people.

The same approach applies to you and me and everyone else on this planet. In some areas we are naturally brilliant; in others, we suck. **WAKE UP!** Stop trying to fix or compensate for where you suck and focus your energy and passion on where you are brilliant. Sometimes that means you need to reevaluate your environment and the structures you have created around you – such as your relationships, your job, even your hobbies.

Given the irrational nature of our hairball and the evolution of all its rules, a person could find himself in an environment that is completely incoherent with his strengths and talents. A person who has done this unconsciously could deceive himself into **believing the propaganda** that there was something wrong with him.

Discovering your purpose is a matter of getting in touch with whatever it is that makes your heart sing, and that may take some time and contemplation. Give it the space to express itself and it will. I guarantee it. It's how we are designed. Start listening to what is calling you and begin to respond to that voice.

Man's Search For Meaning

Viktor Frankl was a German psychotherapist who endured almost 4 years in Nazi death camps. He wrote about his experience in the death camps in his book, *Man's Search For Meaning*, published in 1947. During and after his imprisonment, Frankl was very impressed by the ability of some of his

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fellow prisoners to endure horrific conditions and yet remain positive about life. He noticed that, given the opportunity to survive, those who had some unfinished work to complete or who held some unshakable possibility of being united with loved ones endured and even found inner peace. Others, those who had given up hope, died.

He concluded that the key difference was the *meaning* that the prisoners had for their lives. After the war he embraced a new school of psychotherapy, which he called “logo-therapy”. The name was based on the Greek word “logos”, meaning *future, spirit, God, or meaning*. Frankl understood from his horrific experience and the loss of his wife, parents, and siblings, that the real tragedy of a life is not what happens to us, but what we say about what happens to us. In his therapy practice, which was heavily focused on death camp survivors, he worked with his patients to discover a meaning they could embrace for their lives despite what they had endured.

Frankl knew that there was virtually no way these survivors could ever sort out the accumulated feelings and responses to their horrors. It was impossible to make sense of it. The only way they could return to anything close to a normal life was to arrive at some purpose for living and growing. He later concluded that this longing for meaning was paramount in all people.

He coined the metaphor “existential vacuum”. If meaning is what we desire, then “meaninglessness” is a hole, an emptiness, in our lives. Whenever you have a vacuum, of course things rush in to fill it. Frankl pointed out that, when given the chance to do what they want to do, most people don’t know what to do! People go into a tailspin when they retire; parents are suddenly adrift when their children go out on their own; students get drunk every weekend. We become addicted to the structures and habits that shield us from our lack of meaning and purpose.

We attempt to fill our existential vacuums with “stuff” that, because it provides certainty or some answer to our vexations, we hope will provide ultimate satisfaction as well. We might try to fill our lives with pleasure, acquiring power or wealth, or careers. We might fill our lives with “business,” conformity, or conventionality. Maybe we join clubs or political

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parties or churches. Some people will fill the vacuum with anger or frustration or resignation and spend their days attempting to figure out who, or what, has damaged them. The defining quality of these vicious cycles is, whatever we do, it is never enough.

Frankl's understanding of the existential vacuum helped him explain why so many prisoners just gave up in the Nazi death camps. As the day-to-day things that offer people a sense of meaning -- work, family, the small pleasures of life -- were taken from a prisoner, his future would seem to disappear. Man, says Frankl, "can only live by looking to the future. The prisoner who had lost faith in the future -- his future -- was doomed."

*"He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how." -
Friedrich Nietzsche*

How much of your "stuckness" in life is a result of really traumatic events and how much is a result of a general lack of purpose and inspiration? More than ever, people today seem to be experiencing their lives as empty, meaningless, purposeless, aimless, adrift, and so on, and seem to be responding to these experiences with unusual behaviors that hurt themselves, others, society, or all three.

Many of our perceived problems in life, and virtually all of our stuckness, comes from an overemphasis on ourselves and our own dissatisfaction. Many people are focused on "How can I be happy, how can I be successful, how can I be fulfilled?" This keeps the focus on our lack of the very things we seek. Ultimately, the reasons we are dissatisfied or unhappy or fearful is because our lives lack sufficient meaning. There just isn't a big enough reason for us to end the self-indulgence. Focusing on ourselves serves to turn us away from finding any authentic meaning!

One last reference to Frankl. He believed that the most significant task for the therapist is to assist his patients in rediscovering the meaning that he believed exists in each of us. This cannot be pushed, however: "Genuine meaning must unfold in its own time. Never can anyone be forced to it."

Taking the First Steps to Discovering Your Purpose

Here’s a starting point, though there are many other ways that one could go about discovering this part of oneself. Make a list of what you would do if you had no concerns about money and time. Make another list about what you believe is missing in the world that you would LOVE to see everywhere.

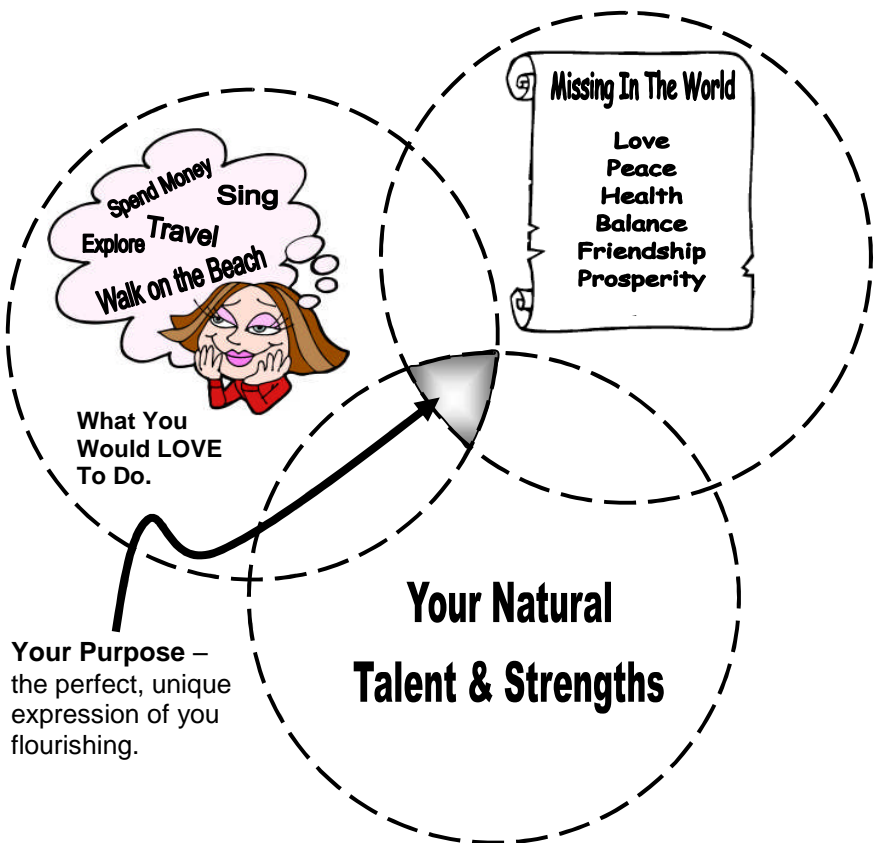
What You Would Love To Do If You Had No Concerns About Time or Money	What You Think Is Missing In The World That You Would LOVE To See Everywhere

If you have the chance, I highly recommend that you buy *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, and take the online test to identify your five strongest themes. Even if you don’t do that, you can probably identify what you would consider to be your natural talents. Don’t think about these natural talents in the context of whether or not they are useful or desirable in any particular situation, and try to avoid comparing your natural talents to other people’s talents. Just allow yourself to think about what you love and to celebrate the things at which you are naturally brilliant.

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Natural Talents & Strengths:

Once you've made your three lists (*What You Love*, *What Is Missing*, and *Your Strengths and Talents*) contemplate them for a while. Don't try to force anything, just allow yourself to let these different ideas mingle. There is a perfect balance between these three worlds, and if you allow yourself to contemplate it, you will begin to see the unique expression of YOU.



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There is *something* that you were put on this planet to do. There is some perfect expression of YOU “doing human being” and doing it well. It doesn’t matter if anyone else has the particular combinations that you have. What matters is that you begin to trust that YOU have a perfect expression, and your main job in life is to discover it and fulfill on it. Your purpose is a natural, effortless way of being for you, it’s not about fixing anything, getting better at anything, or trying to fit in to anything.

The Journey to Your Source

Imagine the mighty Amazon River. From its headwaters in the rugged mountains of Peru, the Amazon twists and turns down the mountains, through the jungles and the flatlands, thousands of miles across the South American continent until it reaches its ultimate destination – The Atlantic Ocean. While there are many ways the Amazon River impacts the world, its mission – its Purpose – is to return to its source, the ocean. Along the way, there are cities and fish and people and waterfalls and all that, but those are not its purpose. Those are just things that grew around it because the Amazon was there.

Think of yourself as a drop of water, and the majestic Amazon as the path to your ultimate unique expression. Your job is to flow with the river, no matter where it goes, no matter what pops up along the way, until you come to your ultimate source, whatever that is for you. Your source is whatever you were put on this planet to do. Some of us are here to lead, or to heal or to build empires. Others of us are here to create art or nurture the impoverished. You may not know where it’s leading, or what’s around the next bend, but if you stay in the flow, you will get there. Your job is the journey, don’t worry about the destination. Do the journey well.

Discovering PURPOSE is like discovering the “river” of your life’s journey. What is the path that you were meant to follow? While it may not be obvious to you now, you KNOW the answer. It’s inside you, in your heart, in your subconscious mind. It’s just overwhelmed and silenced by your hairball. The mass of your Current Reality is very big, and VERY familiar, constantly selling the propaganda. Your Current Reality will not keep quiet. It does not want you taking off on some crazy journey just for

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the sake of having your life be a quality, beautiful, and flourishing experience. There are “obligations” and “responsibilities”, it says. There are Rules to follow, by golly. How dare you think of turning your back on THAT!

The Amazon River deals with all kinds of natural and man-made interference as it moves along its path. But with all that interference, the river keeps on flowing. Just like the Amazon River, we all encounter obstacles and detours. We get polluted, used, dumped in, consumed by others with their own needs. Perhaps we are abused, or ignored, or maybe worshipped by some. All of that is just the natural flow of life doing what it does. Along the way we may be stopped or diverted, but we can be as powerful and as unstoppable as that river if we just trust ourselves. Our natural expression wants to flow out of us as surely as the Amazon wants to flow to the sea. Over time, if we don't allow ourselves to be dammed up, our environment will adapt to *us*, rather than us having to spend our lives adapting to what's going on around us.

“[That which is possible] requires no definite material, but it moves towards its purpose... and makes a material for itself out of that which opposes it; as fire lays hold of what falls into it, by which a small light would have been extinguished: but when a fire is strong it appropriates to itself the matter which has been heaped upon it, and consumes it, and rises higher by means of this very material.” – Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

When one discovers PURPOSE it will not feel like taking on an obligation. For example, it *could* be a truly inspiring calling for you to take on some noble or altruistic mission in life. But, if you feel obligated to do so, if you think that mission is something you *should* be doing, it's probably not your natural expression.

All of this may seem over-simplified and unrealistic. Well, many of the most profound concepts in life are the simplest ones. Left to our own devices, we humans will inevitably complicate things.

“The aspects of things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity.” - Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The Nitty-Gritty of The Chapter

- Everything in nature, including Man, has a PURPOSE to flourish. Accomplishment in this endeavor is part of the cosmic design.
- To flourish, we must discover and fulfill the unique natural expression that exists inside of us.
- Our unique expression is a combination of the things we love, the things we want to bring into the world and our natural strengths and talents.
- Living life in coherence with our purpose is not hard work. It is a natural, effortless expression.
- The job of a human being is to discover that purpose and then flow with it. Everything else gets taken care of in the journey.