

Creating Authenticity and Purpose in Our Lives

Finding in our purpose in life can be incredibly rewarding. Living authentically with our purpose is the highest achievement.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Is there a reason
we're living here on Earth?

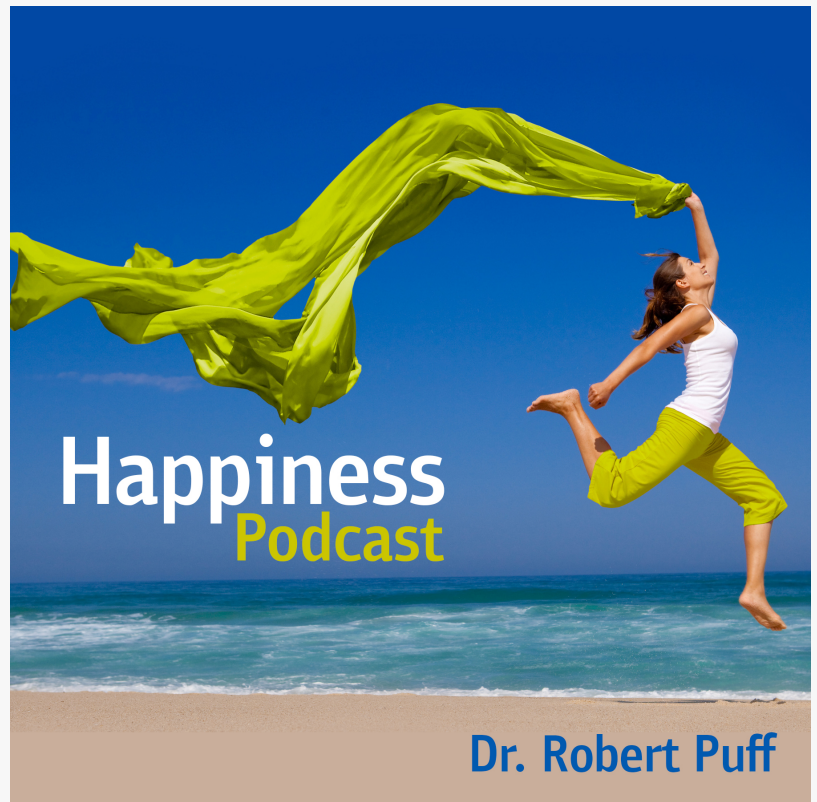
Whatever form we occupy, from a computer programmer to a goldfish, is there something we're supposed to do, so that when it's all over, we can say, "Well done"?

There are really two ways of thinking: Either we are here to live for a purpose, or we are here just to live. Either can strive to live life well while they're here.

For those people who feel there is no purpose to life, what is a life well lived? Perhaps it is to enjoy life and make it as pleasurable as possible, getting through it with more positives than negatives. It's sort of like a vacation: time spent without true purpose that we just try to enjoy as much as possible.

I'd estimate that about 10 percent of people actually believe this — that life has no purpose. These people have the luxury of being able to live authentically without worry about whether they are falling short of something called purpose. Each day is an entity all its own, outside of external measures.

The other 90 percent probably believe that there is some purpose to life. It may be a result of their religious or spiritual beliefs or some other guiding principle. But even if they claim a



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purpose, I suspect that 90 percent of those people don't actually live by it. This majority of people believe that there is a purpose, but despite their belief, they're just living life, trying to get by.

People of faith have a belief that there is a reason for their existence here on Earth. In theory, all people of faith have things they should be working toward — things they should be doing or improving. But in practice, we just live life without thinking about purpose at all.

It's kind of like students at a university. Maybe 10 percent of them believe college is unimportant — just something people do, unconnected to any meaningful outcome. As for the others, they claim to believe the university is important if they are to learn, grow, become cultured, or plan for a career — but despite this, some drop out along the way, while others reach graduation — their commencement — and nothing meaningful commences; there is no next step of any importance. Perhaps many of these just want to find a new way to have fun.

Standing in the belief of purposelessness is a way of living authentically in the world, because in thinking this way, we truly believe that when life is over, it's over. But we are inauthentic to ourselves and our greater purpose when we stand to be counted among the believers, the purpose-filled, and we do nothing to achieve our desired end. We, the supposedly purposeful, are living without purpose — and that is much less authentic than life for those who don't believe a purpose exists but who strive to make the most of each



Dr. Robert Puff



moment.

But the fact remains: Some 90 percent of us — and I'm one of these people — believe that life has a purpose, and there is a reason for our efforts, our connections, our suffering, and our striving. The key question, then, is what is that reason, and how do we live authentically if we believe we're here for a purpose?

A person who practices Judaism, a Buddhist, a spiritualist — these people all may have different perspectives, but at their core, most faiths have very good foundations of purpose. They tend to be about love, or lovingkindness, or growth, and the leaders they follow — Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad — have lived beautiful, meaning-filled lives. Whatever the path we're on, we believe what we do because the people who went before us lived lives that were nothing short of astonishing.

We need to ask ourselves how we can live authentically if we are among the majority of people who claim to believe that there is a purpose to our lives. Most people don't try to live authentically. Even if they believe they have a purpose, they live as if they are on Earth to have a good time. They figure they'll start living according to their life's true meaning someday — that it's too hard to rise toward their purpose, or to rise toward the highest level of self they can achieve.

All faiths have examples of people who lived life at the highest level according to their purpose, and they are astonishingly beautiful. So how do we live authentically within our belief system?

As we think about this question, we can even include those 10 percent who may believe that their life has no real purpose. Even these people can look to exemplars with the observation that they have lived their lives well. They don't need to have had an ultimate purpose to want to live their life well and to say with their dying breath, "That was a good life." Those who live without other purposes can still turn to examples and live their lives that way. Maybe a good life for these people is one that was full of great times and positive relationships. If they lived a life like this, who can say it was not a good one?

For those of us who believe life has a purpose, we can look to people who we recognize to be living lives well and try to emulate them, since it is our desire to do the same. We believe that we are here to grow and to grow as far as we can because within our belief system there are people who have lived wonderful lives.

This is where things get tricky. We sometimes compare the process of striving toward fulfilling our life's purpose with the growth processes we experience in our physical lives. Typically, we reach our physical peak at around age 30, though of course there are many who go beyond that, perhaps up to age 40. But we don't see Olympians or professional athletes who are able to perform at their maximum capacity in their 50s or 60s. These people are not going to the Olympics and winning gold medals. To even try to get close to that level would be so

astonishingly difficult that most people would rather not try.

However, when it comes to growth and purpose, I believe we actually can grow and keep developing a sense of purpose until the day we die. We can become wiser, kinder, and better as a human being. We see examples of this around us. At the time I'm writing this, Pope Francis is 83, and the Dalai Lama is 85. I'm sure that you, too, know someone who has reached an advanced age and is still an example of an amazing human being who strives always to be better.

So how do we live authentically within our sense of purpose, for those of us who do subscribe to the notion that life has intrinsic meaning? I think the answer is to keep working at it. Of course we're going to have off days when we don't rise to the level of our purpose, but that's when we have to declare each day to be a brand new one — a brand new chance to live according to our life's true meaning.

It's helpful to ask the question, "How do I live like the people I look up to?" We can think of many amazing examples of lives well lived, and we can dedicate ourselves to working to become more like them. All the way to our last breath, we can keep developing our sense of who we are, and we can keep living a purposeful life until the day we die. There is nothing keeping us from this but ourselves.

Someone I look up to greatly is St. Francis of Assisi. This was a man born to wealth and commercial prospects, but who instead took a different path. He was always known to be joyful, and this was true when he was part of an aristocratic family, and it was also true later, when he renounced wealth and pride of place to live simply in nature, which he revered. He had many followers who dressed in rags as he did, but they were all known for their infectious joy and generosity.

St. Francis of Assisi is someone I can look to as an example of a way to live according to my purpose. I don't have to be poor, but I can find the joy that he knew even when he was in prison following a bloody civil war between Assisi and the nearby town of Perugia. St. Francis was in a dungeon in Perugia for a year, yet during all of this time, he never lost his optimism and [happiness](#). It's clear how that example resonates for someone like me, who has devoted his life to studying happiness.

Most of us believe we have a higher purpose for our time on Earth, and we should all strive to live life in line with that purpose we believe in. If we do not, we are likely to feel shame or guilt. We hold in mind and in our hearts an idea of all that is possible for us. What we aspire to become is firmly instilled in our very being.

So many people feel deep shame and disappointment in ourselves because we fall short of our idea of what we should be, yet we spend almost no time or effort in striving for that purpose. Maybe we subscribe to a religious or spiritual idea that we should reject conspicuous wealth, like

St. Francis, and give to those who are less fortunate, but we spend 12-hour days at the office, competing for the next raise or promotion. Or maybe we feel we are destined to make beautiful art, and we often tell others about our artistic life and work — but in reality we almost never pick up a paint brush, a pen, or a lump of clay. Our artist life is a high purpose, but it's a concept instead of a reality. Those who live authentically as artists spend hours in a studio, and far less time talking about being an artist or lamenting a lack of inspiration, ideas, or time to create. An artist who lives according to that purpose makes time for art — and anyone who aspires to that lifestyle should do the same.

If we believe we live for a purpose, we need to live in line with that purpose to avoid the negative feelings of falling short. We need to keep working at it, and keep working at it, and keep working at it, until the day we die — and that is when we can look back and say, "That was a good, purposeful life."

We can celebrate a life well lived if we do our best to live authentically. If we believe we have a purpose, we needed to dedicate ourselves to it and keep developing ourselves within that purpose for as long as we live on this Earth.

What I'm proposing is hard. There is no doubt that striving toward a purpose is a more difficult life than going with the flow and letting our lives live us. But when we choose to live our lives with direction and a sense of meaning, life can be beautiful and wonderful, and worth the effort. May we strive for this — and may we grow and experience richness and fulfillment in the process.

Living well has a look to it. We recognize it when we see it, whether or not the person we're observing has the higher purpose we've been discussing here. A good life is within the reach of any one of us, and all we have to do is keep working towards it, keep striving toward our life's highest meaning, until our dying breath.

Living toward our highest purpose

Maybe you recognized yourself in my description here of a life spent punching the clock and working toward a purpose that is somehow other than the one you feel deeply inside as your true reason for being here on Earth.

I know someone who is a poet, and she calls herself that, and she has achieved recognition beyond her wildest imagining — but despite this, she spends most of her days working her day job, keeping her house clean, tending to her family, and relaxing when she can with a steady diet of television or social media.

My friend can make different choices to live according to her purpose. No one really needs TV and Facebook, after all. But I would suggest that her distractions are not really her problem. My friend knows that she can be her authentic self by a shift in focus — by putting what she knows

to be her authentic purpose, poetry, at the center of her life and letting the rest of life fall into place around it.

What is your purpose? Think about who you know yourself to be deep inside. Ask yourself this simple question: What can you do to live a life of integrity, where who you know yourself to be matches the self you present to the world?

My strongest advice to you is that you start embracing your purpose and devoting your time and energy to it. You can start very small — even devoting more thought to your purpose is a step in the right direction. But you have this one life that you're currently living, and I implore you not to waste another moment of it.

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If you would like to learn more, the latest episode of the Happiness Podcast, hosted and created by [Dr. Robert Puff](#), is now available. It is titled, "#291 Happiness – Creating Authenticity & Purpose in Our Lives" and can be listened to at:

<https://www.happinesspodcast.org/291-happiness-creating-authenticity-purpose-in-our-lives/>

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About the Happiness Podcast hosted by Dr. Robert Puff:

Do you ever wonder what it takes to lead a peaceful, happy life? Are you curious about the specific steps involved in a self-actualized, limitless life? Are you struggling with anxiety or depression? Or are you just plain tired and want some help? We explore all these concerns and more every week on the Happiness Podcast, which has been downloaded over 8 million times since its inception. Happiness does not happen by chance, but because we take specific actions in our lives to create it. Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D., author of 13 books, TV show host, Psychology Today blogger, and corporate trainer, has been studying the actions it takes to reach the highest levels of human achievement for decades, and he wants to share what he knows with you.

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