

LIFE CRAFTING

Difficulty: **MODERATE** | Frequency: **VARIABLE** | Duration: **1 HOUR**

WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Defining your sense of purpose in life can feel daunting or even overwhelming. This may be especially true after the COVID-19 pandemic, when so many of us lost the routines, people, places, and experiences that helped to give our lives meaning.

This practice can help us sharpen our sense of purpose in life and break the process down into a series of more manageable steps. By encouraging us to reflect specifically on the values and activities that provide us with meaning and motivation, it can help to renew certain passions or help us see new possibilities that were previously invisible to us. In the process, it can help us work through stressful situations with greater clarity and resolve.

TIME REQUIRED

20 minutes.

HOW TO DO IT

Life crafting is a way to better define your goals in life and chart a path to achieving them. While honing your sense of purpose in life can feel daunting, this practice breaks it down into the following steps—a series of short writing prompts.

1. **Identify your deepest values and passions—what’s most important to you.** Write a list of your greatest values and a separate list of what you most like to do in life. If you need help, write about the qualities you admire in others, skills you would like to build, or personal habits you both like and dislike.
2. **Reflect on your ideal future.** Write a paragraph envisioning how you’d like your social life or your career path to turn out if you had no constraints. What do you want your ideal life to look like? What kinds of personal and professional relationships do you want to have? What do you want in an ideal job or volunteer experience? To help you elaborate on your passions, you can describe what kind of career you want or how you’d like to spend your time outside of work (either after hours or in retirement).
3. **Write down how you’ll attain those goals.** Prioritize your goals and, in another paragraph, identify obstacles in the way of those goals, describe your strategy for overcoming those obstacles, and explain how you will track your progress toward those goals.
4. **Make a public commitment to your goals.** Communicate these goals to others in your community, including friends, family, and coworkers.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Schippers, M. C., Morisano, D., Locke, E. A., Scheepers, A. W., Latham, G. P., & de Jong, E. M. (2020). [Writing about personal goals and plans regardless of goal type boosts academic performance](#). *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 60, 101823.

College students who completed the Life Crafting exercise showed a 22% increase in academic performance. Significantly, it didn’t matter whether they focused specifically on academic goals: The general process of defining

their goals in writing seemed to have spillover benefits to their academic goals and achievement.

WHY TO TRY IT

Researchers define purpose as something that is both personally meaningful and socially valuable. By reflecting on your present and future life, this practice can help you make sense of your priorities in life, better articulate the values and passions that are important to you personally, and also possibly make a contribution to the wider world. It breaks down the search for purpose and meaning in life into concrete steps, making our goals and sources of meaning more salient to us.

Past research suggests that people who find meaning and purpose in the aftermath of traumatic events tend to have better mental health. What's more, a substantial body of research suggests that writing about thoughts, feelings, and goals can help support mental health and goal attainment.

SOURCES

[Michaéla C. Schippers, Ph.D.](#), Erasmus University Rotterdam

This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

