Do You Know Your Purpose?

Do you know what gets you up in the morning — besides the dog, the alarm clock, or the need to get to the bathroom? Your purpose! According to a webinar called "Purpose Across the Lifespan," hosted by the Greater Good Science Center, purpose is described as an abiding intention to achieve a long-term goal that is personally meaningful and has a positive effect on the world. Purpose can also be as simple as your intention to live a certain way. It will be something you feel naturally good at and enjoy doing, something you are passionate about and care deeply about, or something that fits your values and the way you prefer to operate in the world. Your sense of purpose will most likely change over your lifetime as you move through different life stages.

Research has shown that living with purpose can foster hope, life satisfaction, happiness, better cardiovascular health, better sleep, and enhanced longevity. A study by Robert Butler that followed people ages 65–92 for 11 years found that those who expressed having clear goals or a purpose lived longer and better than those who did not.

How do we identify or practice our purpose? There are several ways to do it, including volunteering. Volunteering is an important way to stay socially connected and promotes good health by helping you stay active and connect with others. It can also help combat loneliness or depression. Helping others can give you a sense of mission and purpose in life. People who live with purpose look beyond themselves and find true joy in giving to others.

Volunteers are needed in many ways, including delivering meals to homebound residents, offering rides to those who no longer drive, and sending notes to people who are ill. You can also volunteer with Illinois Extension as a Master Gardener or Master Naturalist.

Practicing gratitude and appreciating the small pleasures in life can also be part of your purpose. Being grateful has positive effects, including improved physical and psychological health, reduced anxiety, increased optimism, and even reduced aches and pains. An easy way to practice gratitude is to take a few minutes each day to reflect on three things you are thankful for. When you get in the habit of doing this, you will start to see and feel those benefits physically and mentally.

What do you feel your purpose is at this time in your life?

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Richard Leider, a top executive life coach and author of many books on the power of purpose, developed a self-assessment tool called The Purpose Checkup. This tool measures the power of purpose you are experiencing in your life. For some great resources on purpose and to take this assessment, visit bit.ly/4qS0MPO.

Cold and Flu Season

The flu and many colds are caused by viruses, which cannot be treated with antibiotics, since those kill bacterial infections. However, preventing a cold and relieving its symptoms may be a high priority. Here is how nutrition plays a role in preventing illnesses:

- **Vitamin C:** Studies show that taking vitamin C daily will not prevent colds, but it may shorten the duration of the virus in your system if taken regularly before getting sick. Sources include kiwi, citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit, etc.), tomatoes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, potatoes, etc.

- **Zinc:** Research does not clearly support taking zinc for cold or flu prevention or symptom reduction. We need zinc for healthy growth, development, and repair of our bodies. Sources of zinc include beef, beans, nuts and seeds, cheese, and more.

- **Supplements:** Cold and flu supplements often combine antioxidant vitamins, such as vitamins A, C, and E; minerals, such as zinc, selenium, and magnesium; and other plants, such as echinacea and ginger.

Check with your doctor before taking any supplement to ensure it will not interfere with any medication.

Spam Calls and Identity Theft: What You Need to Know

Do you receive calls from unknown numbers? Sometimes, these calls are identified as potential spam. When you receive calls like these, what do you do? The best practice is to let the calls go to voicemail, but it can be tempting to answer when the call appears to be local. If you answer a call from an unknown number, be aware that phone calls were the second-most-commonly reported method of fraud, behind email, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

According to FTC data, consumers reported losing more than $12.5 billion to fraud in 2024, 25% more than the previous year. Identity fraud is becoming increasingly sophisticated, including generative artificial intelligence (AI) voice cloning.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has provided some tips to protect yourself, including:

- Create a secret word or phrase with your family to verify their identity.
- Look for subtle imperfections in images and videos, such as distorted hands or feet, unrealistic teeth or eyes, or indistinct or irregular faces.
- Listen closely to tone and word choice to distinguish between a legitimate phone call from a loved one and an AI-generated voice clone.

- Limit online exposure of your image or voice, keep social media accounts private, and limit followers to people you know to reduce fraudsters' ability to use generative AI software to create fraudulent identities for social engineering.
- Verify the identity of the person calling you by hanging up and calling the phone number directly.
- Never share sensitive information with people you have met only online or by phone.
- Do not send money, gift cards, cryptocurrency, or other assets to people you do not know or have met only online or by phone.

If you have received a suspicious call, report it to the FTC to help prevent and fight fraud at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

References

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). Criminals use generative artificial intelligence to facilitate financial fraud. Public Service Announcement.

Federal Trade Commission. (n.d.). Report fraud.

Federal Trade Commission. (n.d.). Report identity theft and get a recovery plan.