

# TRIFECTA – LIVING ON PURPOSE

A question that we often get asked: "What are you going to be when you grow up?" At its core, is what do we aspire to become? A difficult question to answer aged 5, but imperative in adulthood. So often people end up living lives of quiet desperation, lurching from one thing to the next, hoping that by some miracle they will stumble on their meaning. We need to own this question and definitively answer it. But before I show you how, let us start with two more questions: Q1) Do you have life cover? Q2) Do you have a written down Purpose or Mission statement?

If you answered "YES" to Q1 and "NO" to Q2, I contend that you are more prepared to die than you are to live!! If walked into a CEO's office and asked them whether they had a business strategy, and they replied they just wing it, they would be out of a job pretty quickly. But when we apply the same logic to our own personal lives, we are often guilty of rank negligence.

*Key outcome of this article is an integrated TRIFECTA (Purpose, Code and Goals) that reinforce one another, and provides direction, meaning and vitality.*

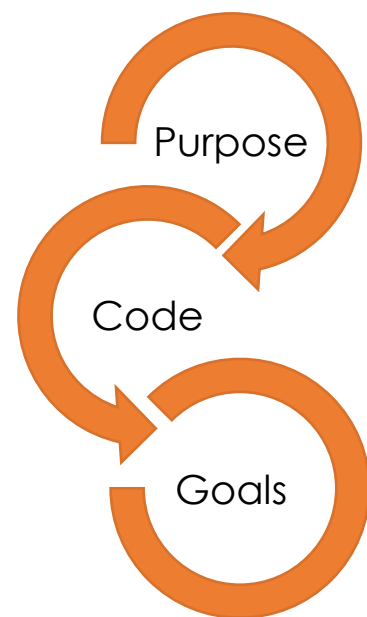
## **Purpose, Code and Goals - what's the difference?**

In travelling through life we have 6 trusty guides, they are: Why, How, Who, What, Where and When. In answering the BIG question we need to clarify our Trifecta:

**Purpose:** is an aspirational reason for being. It shapes your mindset, behaviour and actions. It is your "north star" in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world that keeps you on track. (WHY question.)

**Code:** how you will interface with the world as you pursue your Purpose. (HOW and WHO questions.)

**Goals:** is the tangible translation of your Purpose and Code into action. Meaningful goals cannot be identified until your Purpose and Code are clear. (WHAT, WHERE and WHEN questions.)



We are now going to unpack each of these TRIFECTA components and apply them into our own lives.

## PART 1: PURPOSE



**Purpose definition:** is an aspirational reason for being. It shapes your mindset, behaviour and actions. It is your “north star” in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world that keeps you on track. (WHY question.)

Ever tried completing a puzzle without looking at the cover picture? You would spend a lot of time staring at the pieces and trying to fit them this way or that, but it's the picture on the cover of the box that guides you. This is our metaphorical bigger picture, the meaning of your life, your Purpose. To successfully complete the puzzle, we need to reference that box top more often than we might expect.

### Power of Purpose

[People](#) who have a clear Purpose are physically healthier. They have a reduced risk of mild cognitive impairment, and a slower rate of cognitive decline. They are 240% less susceptible to developing Alzheimer's. They tend to be happier and more motivated, whilst also living longer on average.

Before we move into defining our Purpose we need to understand the underlying dimensions of this question. Most would understandably focus on success as the underpinning theme, but maybe there is something else we need to factor in? Some months prior to Einstein's death in 1955, he was interviewed by the editor of Time magazine and his son. The son was seeking life guidance and Einstein had the following to say: *“Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.”*

Value is the golden thread that weaves together meaningful lives and purpose. If you compare success and value, it is apparent that success is an outcome whilst adding value is an input. Creating value is therefore more achievable on a daily-basis and compounded over time leads generally to success. When there is lack of perceived value, we see how personal and work relationships unravel, people lack commitment and markets are unresponsive to the business's offerings.

If we can define value on a two-axis plane, one that incorporates achievement and one that includes character, we get closer to what I believe is real value.

## Real value: intersection of performance & character



Society is obsessed with success and achievement, but if you only use the performance-axis as your yardstick for success, heinous dictators could be considered successful as they clawed their way to power. However, when you add the character-axis they clearly fall short.

Imagine if organisations transformed their thinking regarding the traditional 9-block talent management (Potential/Performance) matrix into this simpler, but powerful lens that captures: What (performance) and How (character) we do things. Now do a little self-reflection: where do you place yourself into these 4 value quadrants? Is it different for your home vs. work life?

We are often erroneously chasing success when we should be focussed on adding value. When you understand how you contribute value, you will attach meaning to even the smallest things you do and “connect the dots between your efforts and a larger purpose.”

So how do we find our purpose? By answering all 4 components in the following table. People well-intentionally say just follow your passion. That is not always realistic as you might not have the skills/talent to perform well in this domain, despite lots of hard work.

# What's your Purpose?

## LOVE DOING:

- When do you come alive or feel in flow-lose track of time?

“WHERE THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD AND YOUR TALENTS CROSS, THERE LIES YOUR VOCATION.” —ARISTOTLE



## WORLD NEEDS:

- What is the opportunity/challenge you are seeing in the world/community?

## GOOD AT:

- What are you truly excellent at doing? (Get others to tell you.)

## PAID TO DO:

- What are your material expectations in terms of wealth?



In 4 words or less, capture your Purpose:

### Some famous Purpose statements include:

- “Make a dent in the universe.” Steve Jobs.
- “Serve my people through humble contribution to their freedom struggle.” Nelson Mandela
- “Live your best life.” Oprah Winfrey.

### Is this YOUR transformative Purpose? Does your Purpose:

- clarify your performance-axis criteria,
- provide you with a sense of direction,
- and ultimately create meaning.

When we don't have Purpose it [feels](#) like this...

## Living on Purpose hacks – from good intentions to reality

- Know your purpose – *Limit it to four words*. Clearly define it so you have absolute conviction about your reason for being.
- Prepare your mindset – each day, live consciously by putting YOUR Purpose at the forefront of all your decisions. “Am I moving closer or further away from my Purpose by doing this....?”
- Accountability buddies – tell others about your Purpose and get them to hold you to account.
- Take action - create an action plan and act on it. (See Goal setting section in this article).
- Track your progress – once a week reflect on your progress in turning Purpose into reality.
- Recalibrate – what's that one simple thing you can do to create forward momentum on your Purpose.

## PART 2: CODE



**Code definition:** how you will interface with the world as you pursue your Purpose. (HOW and WHO questions.)

If impact was only determined by performance-axis (see pg.3), some truly heinous individuals would be venerated. By including the character-axis we acknowledge that we are not just human doings, but human beings as well. As a human being what a) character strengths/principles will you epitomise and b) for whom? This character-axis clarity is imperative if you want to become a transformative person that elevates the game.

Step 1: Identifying your character aspirations

Answer the following questions, keeping in mind your own personal goals of what you want to be and do.

1. Who have been the most positively influential people in my life (can be known personally by you or purely inspirational)? Which characteristics do you admire most in these people that you would like to build in yourself? (Aspirational).
2. Which character-virtue strengths do you know you already have. (See next page and choose 3 max). (Free online survey: <https://www.viacharacter.org/www/>). Think how you can include them (point 1 & 2) into your lasting contributions on page 7.
3. What 3 principles do you fundamentally hold true that guide how you think and act. E.g. you reap what you sow. Include on page 7 principles section.

Wisdom (strength of head)	Courage (strength of heart)	Humanity (strength of others)	Citizenship (strength of community)	Temperance (strength of self)	Transcendence (strength of spirit)
Creativity	Bravery	Love	Teamwork	Forgiveness	Appreciation of beauty and excellence
Curiosity	Persistence	Kindness	Leadership	Humility	Gratitude
Open-mindedness	Integrity	Social Intelligence	Fairness	Prudence	Hope
Love of Learning	Vitality			Self-Regulation	Humor
Perspective					Spirituality

(from VIA Institute on Character Strengths)



## Step 2: Crystallising Your Code:



My Purpose in life is:

The principles by which I would like to live my life are:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

The lasting value contribution I would like to make to:

- Myself:
  
- Family:
  
- Friends:
  
- Work/clients:
  
- Society:

### **Code example (My example in blue)**

My Purpose in life is: *"Be Lite."*

The principles by which I would like to live my life: *lead by example; pain of discipline is preferable to the pain of regret; always stay curious.*

The lasting value contribution I would like to make to:

Myself: *Light-en workload...nurture all 4 NB aspects of my life: Physical, mental, socio-emotional and spiritual.*

Family: *Light the fire....love of health, knowledge and proactive attitude.*

Friends: *De-light... sow memories by having fun.*

Work/clients: *Shine light...on people's unique strengths.*

Society: *Create light... through research insights.*

### **Writing your Code hacks**

- Keep your pen moving! Do not get into analysis paralysis around the words used. The first draft is just that....
- Enjoy and respect the quiet time. Avoid distractions and invest in this worthwhile process.
- Trust the process. Ensure you cover all 5 components, don't leave yourself out. If you don't look after yourself it will be hard to look after others in a sustainable manner, and you may become depleted and cynical.

### **Embedding your Code hacks**

- Make it as visible as possible:
  - Vision boards
  - Laminated reminders @ home/work
  - Capture it on cell phone
- Memorable: Mnemonics or guiding themes e.g. "Light" in my Code example.
- Actioned: Have accountability buddy, WhatsApp each other, each week your progress.



## PART 3: GOAL SETTING



**Goal definition:** is the tangible translation of your Purpose and Code into action. Meaningful goals cannot be identified until your Purpose and Code are clear. (WHAT, WHERE and WHEN questions.)

If all you have is a Purpose and a Code you have good intentions. If all you have is Goals, and no Purpose you have a haphazard life filled with trivial action.

When you combine:

- Purpose (a clear performance objective), with
- Code (high character conviction) and
- Goals (actionable plan)... you have a:

**Transformer: someone who elevates the game.**

### Not all goals are created equal: Approach vs. avoidance goals

How do you construct your goals? Where possible construct them as approach goals.

Approach	Avoidance
Want mindset-possibilities and opportunities.	Should mindset –threat/self-protection.
Elicits positive memories and triumphs. Play to win. Less procrastination and higher excitement.	Elicits negative experiences, play to not lose. If have greater no. of avoidance goals - less satisfaction with progress on personal goals and life, decreased self-esteem, personal control and vitality and feeling less competent in relation to goal pursuits.
Useful when longer-term success, goal and task mastery.	Useful in the short-term: combatting immediate gratification moments e.g. don't eat that extra muffin!
Example: I will move the company forward. Going to gym to get strong and fit.	I will avoid having the company fail. I am going to gym to avoid heart disease.

(Based on insights from [Andrew Elliot](#) and [Ken Sheldon](#), respected researcher in the approach - avoidance goals domain).

## Goal structuring

In my 25 years as an organisational psychologist in high performance environments, these are the insights I have gained regarding what really works in terms of goal setting....

### a) Goal value

Purpose driven: many people are quite driven, but the real question should be: "To what end?" If the goal does not serve something that is truly valuable to yourself or others, what is the point?

Emotions invoking goals: so often we set goals that are quite cerebral, but we need to also acknowledge that for long-lasting change we must appeal to the heart as well. Prof Kotter, the granddaddy of change management from Harvard has been preaching this philosophy for years.

Commitment levels litmus test: if you score below a 7/10, then it is likely you will not persevere, put this goal to the side until it becomes more important to you.

Confidence: when people doubt the likelihood of success, they decrease their efforts. Realistically boost your chances by looking at what skills, knowledge, experience or support you need to have a realistic chance at succeeding. Ensure you capture these in the antidotes section of the table. Only assess commitment and confidence once you have completed all other sections on the next page.

### b) Goal structuring

Action plan: write your steps down in granular detail, using a process step approach.

Measure success: this can be a combination of qualitative (I feel more positive about my body) and quantitative metrics (I lost 10 kgs in 3 months).

Punishment and reward: we know from behavioural economics that humans are influenced by loss aversion. For sustained change we need BOTH upside (rewards) and downside (punitive). Make sure people know of these so you cannot fudge them.

### c) Reality check

Key obstacles and antidotes: I often hear from delegates: "Back in reality, I didn't implement because..." Why would you detach yourself from reality in the first place!! By identifying, and then creating action plans for these potential obstacles we mitigate decision-making fatigue and leverage off "If then psychology" pioneered by [Peter Gollwitzer](#).

Support: goals are often penned in a vacuum, not acknowledging certain key interdependencies. By identifying and gaining key peoples support, we increase the likelihood of meaningful change. Goal setting can be a team sport.

## GOAL EXAMPLE

What is my goal and why is it NB to me?

I will have exceptional vitality, in a sustainable and healthy way. This goal is crucial to me as it provides the energy for me to achieve my goals and deal with the obstacles I will need to overcome.

Achieving this goal would make a real difference to me emotionally (Y/N)?

I am 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 committed to achieving this goal.

I am 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 confident in achieving this goal.

	Action plan	How measure goal success	Completed by when and reward/penalty
Goal structuring	<p>Nutrition: balanced Mediterranean diet- 2000 cal. per day.</p> <p>Rest: sleep 7-8 hrs per day. Have one day off per week from all work and exercise.</p> <p>Exercise: be involved in a variety of physical activities, that amounts to 10 hrs per week. 6 hrs cycling (Mon, Tue, Thur), 2 hrs tennis (Sun), 2 hr HITT (Wed &amp; Sat).</p> <p>Work: write for first 2 hrs per day-passion.</p>	<p>Body composition: : body fat 12%. Measure monthly.</p> <p>Sleep: assess quality and quantity with sleep app.</p> <p>Exercise: track time and intensity with Strava (cycling) &amp; Apple Watch.</p> <p>Health: annual executive health assessment that independently checks all important physical parameters.</p>	<p>Interim reward(s): new cycling kit.</p> <p>Long-term reward: overseas trip to watch Roland Garros Grand Slam tennis with friends if effectively embed for a year.</p> <p>Punishment: donate same amount of money as overseas tennis trip to rival rugby supporters club.</p>
Key obstacles e.g. accessibility, affordability, attractiveness etc.	<h3>Obstacles</h3> <p>Scientific knowledge regarding latest physical exercise and nutrition practices.</p>		<h3>Antidotes</h3> <p>Go to a personal trainer once a week to ensure progress is tracked, and latest exercise techniques are learnt, specifically High Intensity Interval Training and functional training, dynamic stretching. Have a nutritionist assess my basal metabolic rate, and then develop a nutrition plan that will allow me to body fat in a sustainable and healthy manner.</p>
Support	<p>I need Wendy (wife) to modify what we eat for dinners to accommodate my new eating plan.</p> <p>Friends: socialise less around eating/drinking and more around healthy outdoor activities together e.g. mountain walks, surfing and the beach.</p>		

# GOAL

What is my goal and why is it NB to me?



Achieving this goal would make a real difference to me emotionally (Y/N)?

I am 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 committed to achieving this goal.

I am 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 confident in achieving this goal.

	Action plan	How measure goal success	Completed by when and reward/penalty
Goal structuring			
Key obstacles e.g. accessibility, affordability, attractiveness etc.	Obstacles		Antidotes
Support			

## Some closing thoughts on the TRIFECTA process

For individuals:

- Percolation: this Trifecta process takes time, there often are numerous rewrites as you refine your thinking.
- Purpose can and does often change over the course of your life e.g. Bill Gates, Allan Gray..highly successful business people that became philanthropists.
- Code: Savour the journey of life, not just the destination. Mindfulness is a useful practice ito gauging your impact on those around you.
- Goals: Failure is not the opposite of success, it's part of the lessons that life is teaching you if you are open to learning and evolving. Nobody has achieved anything substantial without failures along the way. Build your resilience resources.



For business leaders and managers:

- There is no more powerful way to influence than to lead by example.
- Apply this same Trifecta logic within your organization, by collaboratively building with your people a simple, congruent and memorable:
  - Purpose: 4-words or less.  
E.g. Google: Organise the worlds information. TED: Ideas worth spreading.
  - Code: less than ½ page. 30-page documents are impossible to remember, they make the legal guys happy but have low utility value.
  - Goals: max 3 key goals that a person must deliver on. Peoples ability to deliver excellence declines exponentially as their number of goals go up.
- The key question: how can we make this as simple and scalable as possible so people can be aligned and deliver excellence?

**In actioning the above, you create purpose-driven, people centred organisations. What a legacy!**