



DISCOVER

7 Ways Your Soul Holds the Key to Living Your Purpose

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Disclaimers

This book does not replace the advice of a medical professional. Consult your physician before making any changes to your health plan. I have changed some names to protect individuals' privacy.

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Introduction

Why is it important to discover and live your purpose?

- Are you feeling emotional pain or vulnerability, despair, helplessness, guilt, fear, anxiety, loneliness, apathy, confusion or a disturbed sense of integrity, but you don't know why?
- Are you finding yourself depending more and more on drugs, alcohol, food, gambling or other coping mechanisms to numb your feelings?
- Are you unable to take action or move forward?
- Do you feel dissatisfied with your life or vocation?
- Do you experience recurring themes that you aren't able to resolve?

If one or more of these conditions applies to you, chances are that you may be experiencing an “existential crisis” because these are all symptoms of lacking fulfillment, meaning or purpose in your life. And this may have been triggered within you over the past couple of years as we've all experienced the effects of the global pandemic due to the coronavirus.

What is an existential crisis?

It's a state of disharmony experienced when people question the foundation upon which they've built their lives and “question whether their lives have any meaning, purpose, or value” (Wikipedia, 2022). It's when you question the meaning of your existence.

This typically occurs when you experience some sort of conflict or feel discontentment which propels you to look within and examine yourself and your life. Types of conflict or discontentment may be:

Feeling dissatisfaction with yourself or your life

- Experiencing guilt for something you did or didn't do
- Bottling up your emotions
- Feeling isolated from others and socially unfulfilled



Experiencing the effects of the pandemic certainly qualifies as a type of conflict or discontentment that has propelled many people to look within and examine themselves and their lives. The major changes forced upon us during this time have resulted in grieving the loss of jobs, income, financial security, homes, friends, family members, and social connection.

We lost our freedom to go to the places that have brought us joy—to extracurricular activities, restaurants, entertainment venues, shopping, social gatherings, or places of worship. Many were not able to go to their place of employment, so they had to work remotely from home. They've mourned the camaraderie of collaborating with their coworkers. Children haven't been able to attend school, so they've had to be home-schooled. They've missed being with their friends and the routine that the normal, pre-pandemic school day and school year had provided.

Many lost the freedom to make their own choices. There have been disagreements on how to be most effective in combating the pandemic. The use of masks, vaccinations, and social distancing have been disputed because of varying opinions about them. It's been challenging to determine which sources are providing facts and truth and which ones are spreading disinformation. How do we know who to trust? Who do we listen to? Which guidelines, rules and regulations do we enforce or comply with? Conflicting viewpoints have caused family members and friends to take sides and place judgment on each other. There's a difference in opinion of what each person's responsibility is for doing their part to stop the spread of the virus. All of this has caused a crisis of freedom and responsibility.

The inability to connect in-person socially with our family members and friends during lockdowns for such extended time periods has been difficult. Holidays were especially difficult in the first year of the pandemic when social gatherings were very limited. This has been especially challenging for the elderly. We are social beings and relationships with those we love most often bring us satisfaction and inner joy. When those relationships can't be nurtured, especially with in-person contact, a crisis of isolation, disconnection and loneliness can develop. Life can feel pointless.

By now, most people know someone who has either experienced severe, life-threatening symptoms from the virus or who has died from it. They've grieved not being able to be with their loved ones when they died a lonely death or were all alone in the hospital fighting to stay alive. Experiencing a significant health challenge ourselves, facing our own death, or having a loved one die causes a crisis of death and mortality. It forces us to question what happens to us after we die.

Dealing with the emotional effects of the pandemic has also been challenging. It has stirred up fear, anxiety, boredom, and depression. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that "Researchers have observed increases in substance use and drug overdoses in the U.S. since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a national emergency in March 2020" (National Institute on Drug Abuse, n.d.).

Addictions have been one method used to block out, numb or cope with uncomfortable emotions and feelings. One of the businesses that was deemed an "essential business" during the pandemic was liquor stores. Therefore, alcohol was easily accessible. When we try to block out our pain and suffering by not allowing ourselves to feel our negative emotions, it can cause a crisis of emotion, experiences, and embodiment. This is referring to the natural ability for us to embody our emotions and to experience them. When we block out our negative emotions, it can also affect our ability to feel the positive emotions of love, peace and joy.

This pandemic has caused many people to reflect upon their lives and decide what's important to them. Some have used it as an opportunity to make changes that improve their lives. Some examine themselves and feel like they haven't accomplished anything significant. They don't feel like they've made a positive difference in anyone's life, and they don't feel their existence has had any meaning. This causes a crisis of meaning or meaninglessness and can lead to despair and hopelessness.

All of these crises can prompt us to look within and examine the meaning of our lives. This personal introspection is likely to occur in relation to a significant life event, like the pandemic. The event will cause you to look at your beliefs about life, and how you choose to define your own meaning and purpose through the choices you make. These life events can be viewed as either positive or negative.

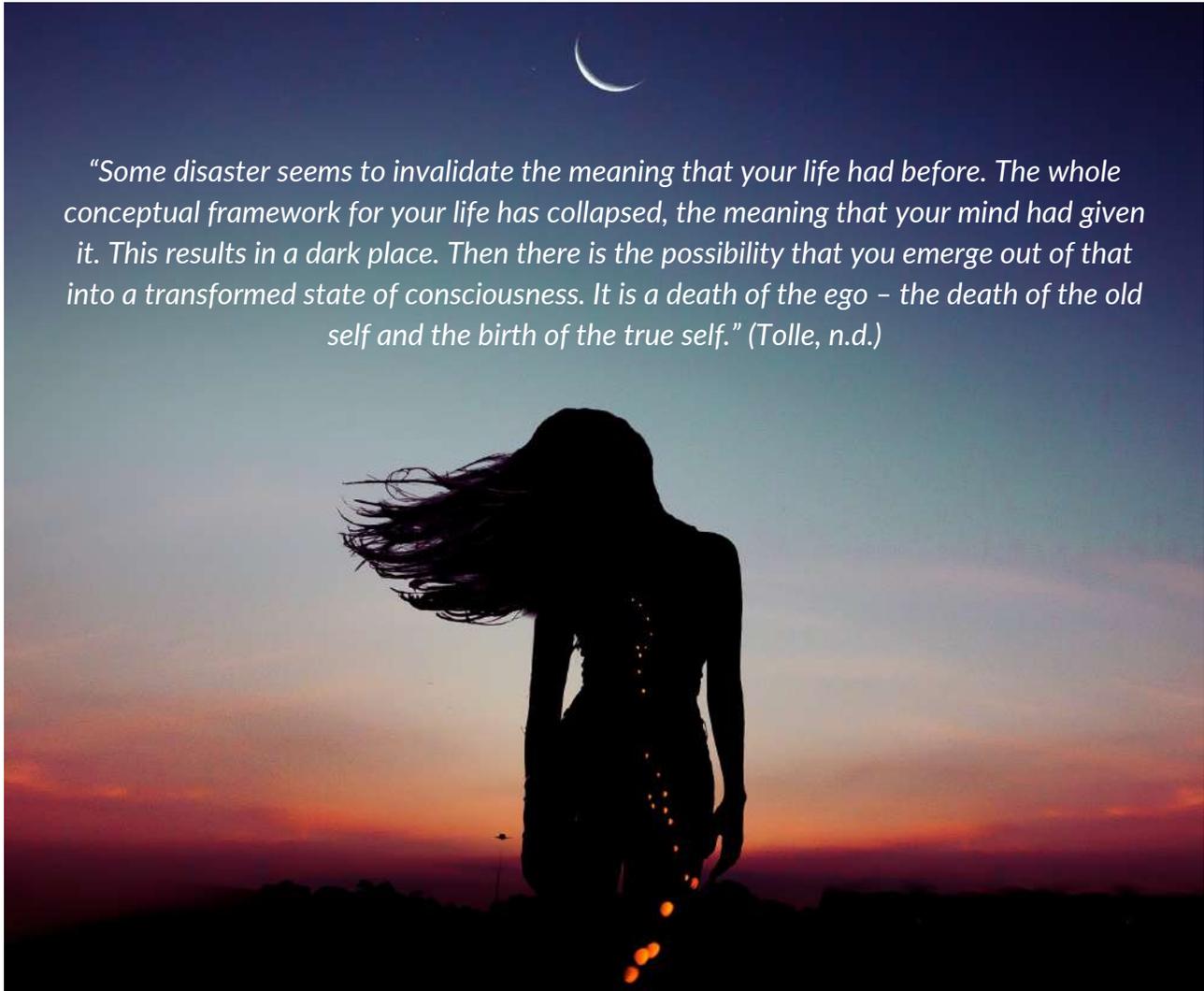
Negative events typically shatter your concept of how the world works and might include:

- Life experiences that cause you to face the reality of your own death and question the afterlife such as experiencing a major illness or experiencing the death of a loved one.
- Suffering from a trauma such as PTSD, abuse, neglect, violence or a health crisis.

- Reaching a personally significant age that may result in a “mid-life crisis.”
- Major life transitions such as divorce, separation, change in employment status, or adult children moving out of the home resulting in “empty nester’s syndrome.”

These events may result in what some call the “dark night of the soul.”

Here is how Eckhart Tolle describes it:



How about you?

Do you find yourself in the midst of a dark place right now? If so, there is a light at the end of the tunnel that is prompting you to keep searching until you find what your soul is longing for you to know.

The types of positive events that can prompt us to look within and examine the meaning of our lives might include:

- An extremely pleasurable experience
- A profound spiritual experience
- A new love partner
- A new or different perception of your life and existence

The pandemic has also provided opportunities for positive experiences as well. As a result of being unable to gather in public places, activities were halted that caused family members to disperse in many different directions. Instead, they abruptly stepped off the “treadmill of life” and its fast pace. They now were together long enough to have more meaningful conversations. They pursued new hobbies or interests. They spent more time exploring nature and the outdoors. They developed previously dormant gifts and talents that they didn’t have time to express before.

One of the positive experiences that the health crisis has provided us is that it has given us time to look within and discern if we are really satisfied with our lives. It gave us a new or different perception of our lives and our existence. Some sought out more fulfilling vocations or careers. Some moved to a new home and, in some cases, in a new region. Many were able to spend less time commuting due to the ability to work remotely. This gave them more time to do other things they enjoy. Some people who were single took this time to evaluate the qualities they were looking for in a partner. They made it a priority to search for someone with whom they were compatible to share their lives with.

The inability to attend public worship has changed our religious or spiritual lives. It has prompted some to take more responsibility to meet their own spiritual needs within. People are searching for and establishing spiritual practices that are meaningful for them.

The pandemic has affected each and every one of us. None of us are immune from the mental, emotional, or spiritual effects of it. And many have experienced the physical effects of it as well. It has provided us with the opportunity for personal introspection and to evaluate our lives, lifestyles, choices, values, and what’s important to us. And then we can decide what we will do with this new information. Will we use it to transform our lives?

The reason it’s important for you to discover how to live your purpose is so that you can recognize the symptoms of an “existential crisis” and be aware of what you might experience as a result of significant life events. With this new awareness, you can make new choices that transform your life and the meaning your mind has given it.

As Tolle described in the “dark night of the soul,” you can use positive or negative life experiences as an invitation to emerge out of that dark place by dying to your ego—dying to your old way of being that no longer serves you. You can use it to construct a new conceptual framework that works more effectively for you. And you can emerge out of that dark place by transforming your state of consciousness. As you do, you’ll give birth to your true, authentic self. And you’ll be empowered to create a more meaningful and fulfilling life through the choices you make.

Life isn't about finding
yourself. Life is about
creating yourself.

~ George Bernard Shaw



Why Listen to Me?

I was a 16-year-old teenager who didn't fit in with the others my age. While most people my age spent their weekends dating, drinking or partying, I was pondering the answers to the questions, "Who created us, how did we get here, why did we come here, what are we supposed to do with our lives, and what is the purpose of life anyway?"

The only sources I knew to search for those answers was either within the American culture or within the religious tradition in which I was raised – the Roman Catholic Church.

The message I received from my American culture was that the purpose of life is to pursue "the American Dream." This meant the freedom to seek opportunities for prosperity, success and upward mobility regardless of social class or circumstances of birth. It is to achieve this through hard work.

The message I received from my faith tradition of traditional Christianity promoted that what you need to do with your life is to declare that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. If you do, you'll go to heaven and if you don't, you'll go to hell. I struggled with believing that God would restrict us to one way of thinking and believing.



I also struggled with the doctrine of Original Sin. This concept says that everyone is born sinful and that this is the normal spiritual and psychological condition of human beings. Even a newborn baby who hasn't done anything at all is damaged by original sin. It means people have a built-in urge to do bad things and disobey God. This explained why there is so much wrong in a world created by a perfect God, and why people need to have their souls "saved" by God.

They believed it stemmed from Adam and Eve's disobedience to God. This is a concept that Saint Augustine wrote about in the fourth century and whose writings influenced the development of Western Christianity (BBC, n.d.)

These teachings and messages caused me considerable inner conflict even at a very young age. I didn't know who to believe—these experts or authorities or my own gut feeling that there was something more to life than this.

I grew up in a small midwestern U.S. town in a family that was not financially well-off. Despite this, I chose to attend a university, earned a bachelor's degree in business, and paid for it myself. I met my husband there who had a similar background and earned a bachelor's degree as well. We married at 24 years old. We both were able to secure employment that provided us with the ability to support ourselves. We built our first home and had our first child at 25 years old.

I worked for a Fortune 500 company right out of college but hated the culture of a large corporation. So, I then switched gears and went to work for a nonprofit organization that was a much better fit for me. I was using my gifts and was fulfilled in my work. But ... I still felt empty and unfulfilled. Why was this?

Even though I had accomplished many significant goals at a young age, I still felt that my life and existence didn't have significant meaning.



I was feeling emotional pain, apathy and confusion and I was dissatisfied with my life and vocation. The definition of the purpose of life provided by my American culture was not satisfying to me.

I didn't know it at the time, but I was having an existential crisis at 30 years old and asking, "Is this all there is to life? There has to be more than this." I was experiencing a crisis of meaning or meaninglessness. It caused me to look at my beliefs about my life and to search for a different definition of meaning and purpose. I needed a new conceptual framework.

During this same time in my life, I sought out traditional talk therapy to help me process and heal from trauma I had experienced. It was the pain and suffering that I experienced in my personal life that was the most influential in prompting me to pursue the answers to the bigger questions of my life. Talk therapy helped me mentally, but I was still holding onto emotions that triggered me. I was referred to a holistic healer who worked with me to release these emotions energetically from my body and this accelerated my healing journey.

Spiritually, I was struggling with my relationship with God. I wasn't finding satisfactory answers to my questions like:

- Why did God abandon me when I needed God the most?
- Why does God allow pain and suffering if God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent and is in control over our lives and everything that happens to everyone?

- Why would God purposefully put innocent people in harm's way if God loves us so much?
- If God created souls as eternal, why would we be given only one life to live? What's the point of that? Especially if a person dies at a young age.

Part of the liturgy during mass was to say these words during the Eucharist, "I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed." Why would God create us if God didn't think we were worthy of being loved? That feeling of being unworthy of being loved was embedded deep within me.

Then, when I was 43, I attended a Christian retreat that became a defining moment in my life. I experienced a profound spiritual healing that I describe as the beginning of my [spiritual awakening](#). It was a powerful experience with the Holy Spirit clearing and healing blockages within me that I didn't even know I had.

By the end of it, I felt a sense of profound joy and peace that I had never felt before. When people looked at me, they said, "You should see the look of peace on your face ... you are glowing!" I was a new person! I had a new lease on life. And then I wondered, "What just happened to me?"

This time instead of feeling emptiness, it was an extremely profound positive experience that was prompting me to look within. It caused me to look at my beliefs about my life and to search for the definition of meaning and purpose based on this new experience. My [search for more answers](#) then led me on a 12-year journey to understand how the Holy Spirit heals us. And I now felt that it was part of my life's purpose to facilitate this type of healing within others.

I sought out answers within my Christian tradition because that was the only place I knew to go. So, I attended a Christian University and earned a master's degree in theology and a graduate certificate in spiritual direction. After four years of formal study, I still didn't have satisfactory answers to my questions about how God heals us and how that fits in with the purpose of our lives. But it didn't stop me from opening my own private practice as a spiritual director and beginning my vocation supporting people on their spiritual journeys.

Then I was led to discover more about the spiritual healing I had experienced. I enrolled in two different holistic healing programs and began to learn how the Spirit heals. I was finally starting to get answers that satisfied me. I learned how to be a channel for spiritual energy to flow through me to others to address issues mentally, emotionally spiritually and physically. And I added this modality to my private practice.



I had spent decades of my life searching for answers to the meaning of life through different mainstream methods. I had searched for answers in mainstream talk therapy, life coaching spiritual direction, formal religion, holistic healing, formal education, informal education, and self-help books since I was 16 years old.

I experienced all of these methods and they each helped me to a degree. And I even became a practitioner in some of them and applied these methods with my own clients. It was all part of my soul's journey that led me to the next step.

But I intuitively knew that there was a perspective that I hadn't yet found. I couldn't stop searching until I finally found answers that resonated as Truth to me. It wasn't until I discovered the meaning of life from my soul's perspective that I finally received satisfactory answers to my questions about God and God's role in our lives. This was the turning point for me.

I now had the higher perspective that made sense to me and resonated as truth to me. So, I learned how to access this perspective from my own soul. Then I learned how to do this for others.

This is the perspective that I will share with you in this book with the intention that it may be the perspective you've been searching for, too. It's a compilation of many different people's viewpoints that works for me. Take what resonates as Truth for you and leave the rest.