



# WELLBEING

## *With Heart*

### Meaning and Purpose with Ikigai

*What is the purpose of school? What is the meaning of life?  
Why was I put on this earth? What does it all mean?  
What do I want with my life? Who am I?*

These are some of the big questions that humans grapple with, and have to sit with because there's not one definitive answer. Through reading Positive Psychology literature on meaning and purpose and watching the [Netflix series Secrets of the Blue Zones](#), we have come to know about the Japanese concept of ikigai. Simply, ikigai means 'that which gives your life meaning and purpose'.

Japanese psychologist Michiko Kumano (2017) has said that ikigai is a state of wellbeing that arises from devotion to activities one enjoys, which also brings a sense of fulfillment(1).

Michiko further distinguishes ikigai from temporary pleasure (hedonia, in the ancient Greek sense) and aligns it with eudaimonia – the ancient Greek sense of a life well lived, leading to the highest and most lasting form of happiness(1).

At school, we can become caught up in all the busyness, there is so much to do! Often, we can be busy with all the *what* we need to do, but lose track of the *why*, the *purpose*, which is a fundamental human need.

Ikigai is the convergence of passion (what you love), profession (what you get paid for), mission (what the world needs) and vocation (what you are good at). For some people, their meaning and purpose can be obvious, others may take some time finding it and for some, theirs change and evolve over a lifetime.

Go explore...Adolescence is a great time to explore so many opportunities for self-discovery; to try many things on for size and see which ones fit and which ones certainly do not. It is through multiple experiences that we get to discover our own sense of meaning and purpose.



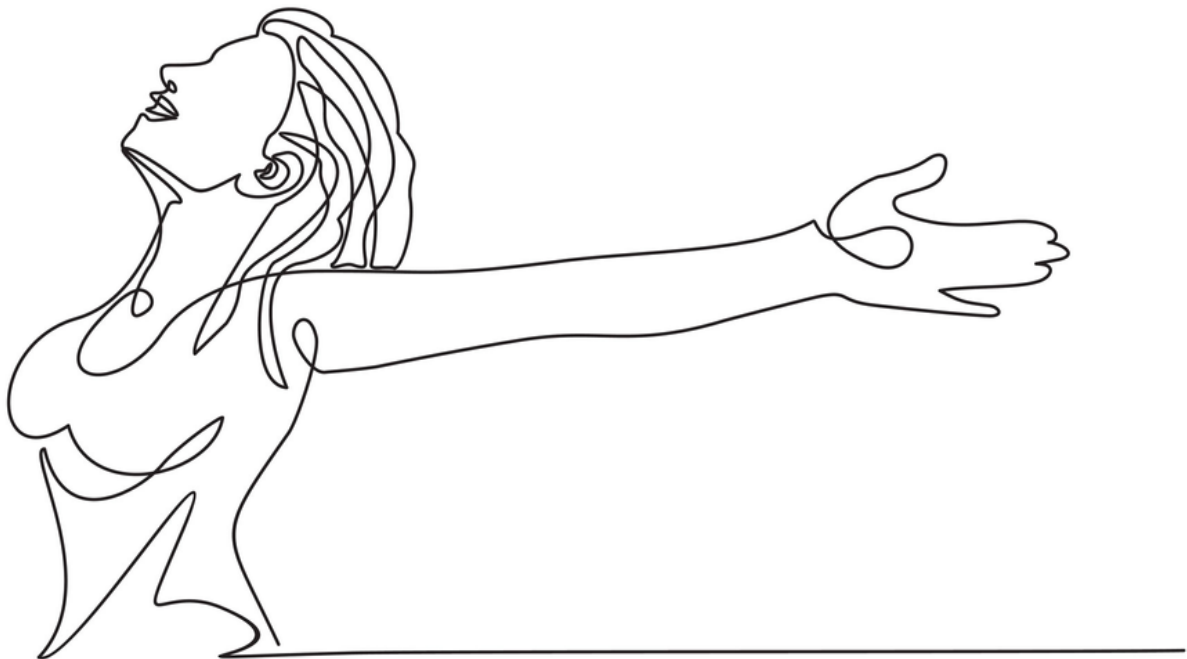
The adolescent brain is wired for new experiences. Neuropsychiatrist Daniel Siegel explains that in adolescence, the base level of dopamine – the happy neurotransmitter which acts in areas of the brain responsible for the reward centre, feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and motivation – is lower than in children or adults(2). However, yet another superpower of the adolescent brain, is it's also the time when the brain's ability to release dopamine is at its highest. And, the best way to release dopamine is through novelty and new experiences as the "new stuff stimulates dopamine release" (3).

No one can give you your sense of meaning and purpose, that is the exciting part. You get to discover! Below are some prompts to help you on your way to discovering your ikigai, to help discover what a meaningful life is for you.



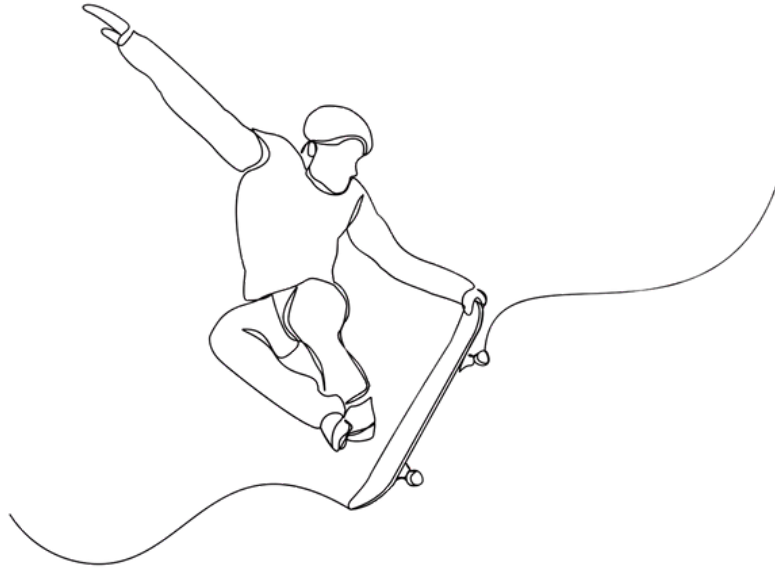
## What do you love?

- What energises you?
- When do you feel the happiest?
- Who are the people you love spending time with?
- What can you talk about for hours on end?



## What are you good at?

- What skills do you lose track of time when doing them?
- What do you excel at, even when you aren't trying?
- What makes you feel good about yourself?
- What achievements are you most proud of?



## What can you get paid for?

- Which jobs have you done which come naturally to you?
- What job can you do that people need?
- Which jobs, positions or tasks spark your interest?
- What would you be doing if you were not in your current job?



# What does the world need?

- What does your local community need?
- What changes/solutions would you like to be a part of in the world?
- How do you/can you help others?
- How could you be more involved in your community?



## References

- (1) <https://positivepsychology.com/ikigai/>
- (2) [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_to\\_help\\_teenagers\\_find\\_purpose](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_help_teenagers_find_purpose)
- (3) [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/why\\_teenagers\\_seek\\_novelty\\_and\\_danger](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/why_teenagers_seek_novelty_and_danger)

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