



FINDING YOUR **IKIGAI** EXERCISE



Welcome

Do you wake up excited to go to work—or already wishing it was Friday?

People who enjoy going to work often have jobs that align with their interests, values, and strengths. When that alignment happens, it brings more motivation, a sense of purpose, and better resilience against stress.

Recently, I came across a simple tool called Ikigai—and after exploring it, I found it really helpful in reconnecting with what truly drives us.

It's a great way to reflect on what we love, what we're good at, what the world needs, and whether we can get paid for it. When these four areas align, we don't just find more passion—we also create value that can lead to a **better income and a more fulfilling career.**

I'm sharing this with you in case you, too, want to rediscover that spark in your career or life. Feel free to use it and pass it along to others who might benefit.

All the best,



Edmund Mun
Purpose Finder

Finding Your Ikigai

Finding purpose is one of our deepest human needs. We all want to feel that our life matters, makes sense, and is moving toward something meaningful.

In Japan, this idea is captured by the word *Ikigai*, which roughly means “a reason for being.” It’s about finding the sweet spot where what you love, what you’re good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for all come together.

When we discover our *Ikigai*, we feel more motivated, less anxious, and more resilient. Studies even show it can improve our health and extend our lifespan.

Ikigai isn’t something you find overnight—it takes reflection and honesty. But once you start exploring it, you’ll gain more clarity, confidence, and direction in both your work and life.

Goal

This exercise helps you find your *Ikigai*—where your passion and skills meet what the world needs and will pay for. It’s a way to reconnect with your passion for work, so you don’t burn out and can achieve work-life integration, not just balance.

Advice

Finding your *Ikigai* takes time—it won’t happen overnight. It’s a journey of self-reflection that evolves as your life changes.

Take your time with each part of the exercise. Be honest with yourself and focus on things you actively do, not just what you like passively.

Look out for overlaps in what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. These overlaps reveal your passion, mission, vocation, and profession—and bring you closer to your *Ikigai*.

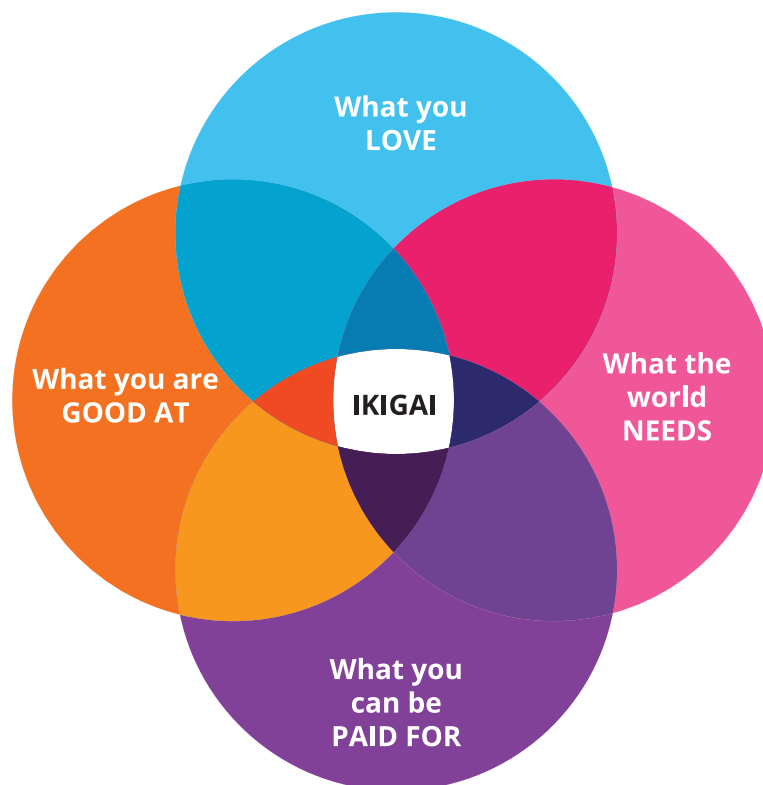
You might find more than one *Ikigai*, and that’s okay. Revisit this exercise whenever you feel stuck or out of alignment.

Now find your Ikigai

Step 1: Understand what ikigai means

The secret to a long and happy life is having a clear purpose each day. In Japanese culture, this is known as Ikigai—your “reason for being.” To discover your Ikigai, you must first identify what you love, what you’re good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. Ikigai exists at the point where all four elements in the circle overlap together, helping you achieve work-life integration and avoid burnout. (refer figure 1)

Fig. 1. The four ingredients of ikigai



Important notice :

If your answers don’t clearly show something you love, believe in, are good at, and can earn from—don’t worry. Finding your Ikigai takes time, reflection, and practice.

Step 2: Filling in your ikigai chart

Finding your Ikigai is a continuous journey of self-reflection. It may change as your life changes, so it's helpful to revisit this exercise regularly.

In this activity, you'll answer four simple questions. Take a few minutes to think about each one, then write any words, phrases, or ideas in the relevant circle of your Ikigai chart (Appendix C). Your Ikigai is where your answers to all four questions overlap.

Need help? Extra prompts are available in Appendix A.

Circle 1. What do you love?

Passion is essential to finding your ikigai; without it, one might argue that you cannot find your reason for living. What do you genuinely feel passionate about? Take a few minutes to think of the things you love in any aspect of life: your work, your family, volunteer activities, or personal interests and hobbies, for example. Perhaps you have a passion for science, gardening, or traveling.

Write your answers in the section of your ikigai chart labeled 'What you love.'

Circle 2. What does the world need?

Humans are social animals - when we know that we are needed by others, we feel useful, valuable, and full of purpose. This question will help you discover what you can give to the world. Thinking about what the world needs globally might seem like an overwhelming task, so take a step back from the big picture and think about this question in smaller, more local terms. Think about what your friends, family, and immediate community need. These needs can include just about anything: a product, a service, or something as simple as helping one single person.

Write your answers in the section of your ikigai chart labeled 'What the world needs.'

Circle 3. What can you get paid for?

The concept of ikigai is also related to finances because when you can get paid for doing something that you love, you have the foundation for a happier, more fulfilling life. Yet, finding a job where you can apply your talents, share your passion, and get paid for is often difficult to achieve. Consider your previous employment positions: What were you good at? Did you excel at anything in particular when employed in those roles? Think about the specific skills you have that could make you money today.

Write your answers in the section of your ikigai chart labeled 'What I can be paid for.'

Step 2: Filling in your ikigai chart

Circle 4. What are you good at?

Figuring out what you are good at involves a lot of self-evaluation. This question will help you think about your talents and skills. Before answering, take some time to think about your skills, your strengths, and all the things you are capable of doing well - no matter how big or small. Perhaps you have a particular skill or talent that comes naturally to you, that people find helpful, or that you have worked hard to achieve.

Write your answers in the section of your ikigai chart labeled 'What I am good at.'

Step 3: Find overlapping responses

Now that you've filled in your Ikigai chart, take a moment to look for answers that appear in more than one circle or seem closely related.

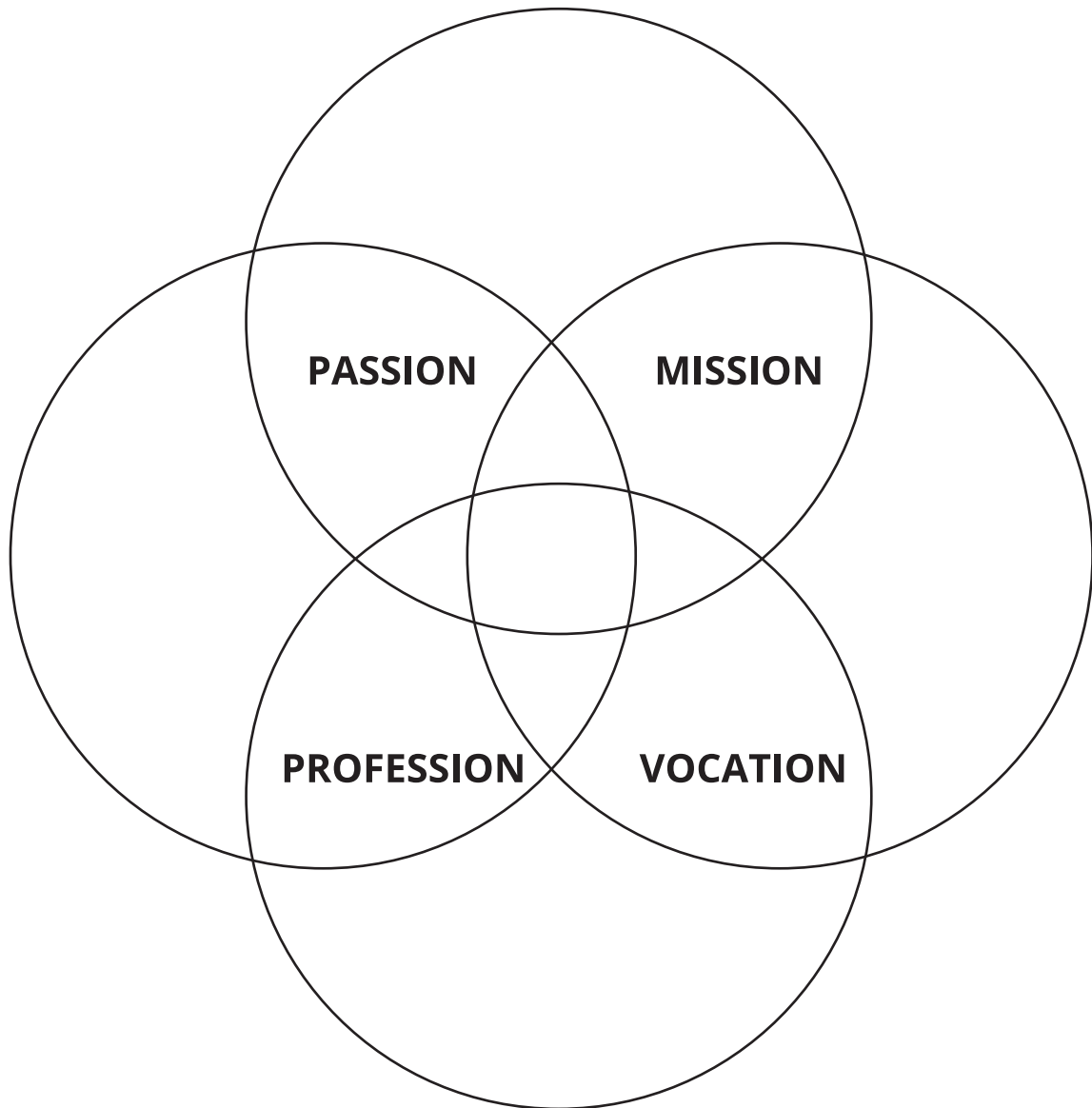
Any responses that fit into two adjacent circles should be written in the overlapping area between them (see Figure 2). For example:

- If something appears in what you love and what the world needs, write it in your mission.
- If it appears in what you love and what you're good at, write it in your passion.
- If it appears in what you're good at and what you can be paid for, write it in your profession.
- If it appears in what the world needs and what you can be paid for, write it in your vocation.

Write any response that fits into all four circles in the center of your Ikigai chart (see Figure 2).

This may be your Ikigai—your key to a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

Fig. 2. Mission, vocation, profession and passion in the ikigai chart



A clearer explanation of each overlapping area in the Ikigai chart is provided below:

What you love + what you are good at = your passion

If any item listed in 'what you love' also appears in 'what you are good at,' then you have found your passion. When activities fall into these two categories, you might experience a feeling of satisfaction, but you might also feel that you are not contributing as much to the world as you could. Importantly, no matter how passionate you are about something, if you receive no financial reward for it, it is not sustainable in the long term.

What you love + what the world needs = your mission

If any item listed in 'what you love' also appears in 'what the world needs,' then you have found your mission. When activities fall into these two categories, you are likely to experience delight and fullness, but you are also likely to notice a distinct absence of income and financial stability.

What you can be paid for + what the world needs = your vocation

If any item listed in 'what you can be paid for' also appears in 'what the world needs,' then you have found your vocation. These activities can have a positive influence on the world and have the bonus of providing an income. However, not being good at your job can create anxiety, and without love for what you are doing, the experience can feel empty and unfulfilling.

What you are good at + what you can be paid for = your profession

If any item listed in 'what you are good at' also appears in 'what you can be paid for,' then you have found your profession. You might feel comfortable during these activities; however, doing something that you do not love and that the world does not need can make your work and efforts feel trivial.

All four circles = Your ikigai

Does something appear in all four circles? When any response appears in what you love, what you're good at, what you can be paid for, and what the world needs, you have found your ikigai. Discovering your ikigai means that you have found something that is meaningful, fulfilling, and sustainable.



Step 4: Find the missing circle(s) of your ikigai

Step: Identify What's Missing in Your Ikigai

1. Review your Ikigai chart from the previous step.
2. Look for any activity or theme that appears in more than one circle.
3. Fill in the table as follows:
 - **Column 1:** Write the activity or theme you noticed.
 - **Column 2:** List the circles it appears in (e.g. What you love, What you're good at).
 - **Column 3:** List the circle(s) where this activity is missing.
4. Please refer to Step 5: Addressing Missing Ikigai Circle.
5. Take one small action toward strengthening the missing part. This helps move you one step closer to finding your Ikigai.

Activity / Action / Work	(A.A.W) Appears in which Ikigai Circle	(A.A.W) Missing in which Ikigai Circle
e.g., teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ what I love■ what I am good at■ what the world needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ what I can be paid for

Step 5: Address the missing circle(s)

For every activity/theme listed in the table of step 4, consider the circles that are currently missing (your responses in the last column). The questions below are designed to get you thinking about how you can develop the specific circles so that the activity/theme at hand can become your ikigai.

1. I do not love this activity/theme

Your love for an activity/theme will motivate you to keep going, especially during challenging times. When you do not feel passion for an activity, it can leave you feeling unsatisfied and unfulfilled, so it is now time to think about how you can turn this activity into something you enjoy and love to do.

What aspects of this activity do you dislike? Why?

Is there a way to make these aspects more enjoyable or less of a problem? For instance, you could work together with someone, let others take care of these aspects, or develop enough skills so that they require less effort.

List 3 positive things about this activity.



What aspects of this activity do you enjoy and feel a connection with? What steps can you take to do more of these?

What aspects of this activity are you curious about? Are there any areas you are interested in learning more about?

In what ways does this activity benefit you?

How has this activity helped you grow and develop as a person?

What skills have you developed by doing this activity?

2. I am not good at this

While it is great to be naturally talented at something, with some activities, it is necessary to commit the time and effort required to improve an existing skill or master a new one. When you become more skilled at something you love to do, you will enjoy it even more. If you are not quite as skilled at this activity as you would like to be, your ability can always improve over time. Now is the time to think about how you can enhance your skills, techniques, and knowledge necessary to carry out this particular activity.

Why do you think you are not good at this activity?

Excessively high standards can be counterproductive. Is it possible that you are more skilled than you give yourself credit for?

What skills would be most useful for this activity?



Which of these skills do you possess? What actions can you take to improve these skills further?

Which of these skills do you not possess? What actions can you take to learn these skills?

Make a list of people who excel at this activity. What skills or strengths do they possess?

Which of these skills do you possess?

Think of someone who would be a good mentor, how might they help you improve your skills?



3. I do not make any money with this activity

While the financial aspect is less important for some in terms of their ikigai, for others, it is crucial to work out how you can monetize an activity so that it provides a desirable - yet realistic - income. If financial compensation is stopping you from finding your ikigai, it is time to get creative and find new ways of gaining revenue through this activity. Imagine your chosen activity is drawing: you love to draw, are good at your craft, and people like what you do, so perhaps you could work on this missing aspect by working towards becoming an illustrator.

Is being paid for this activity important to you?

What are the main reasons you do not currently get paid for this activity?

How can you work on these barriers so that you might begin to earn an income?

Are you skilled enough at this activity? If not, how can you improve your performance to increase people's willingness to pay for your talents?



How have other people earned money from this activity or related activities?

What similar activities might provide an income?

In what ways could you earn money from this activity alongside your current job? For instance, if you love to create art, you might consider opening an online shop.

List 3 ways you could profit from your passion.

4. This is not what the world needs

Working to achieve something that contributes to society and the world at large can help create a sense of purpose larger than yourself. It is now time to think about how you can connect this activity with what the world needs and contribute to your society.

Can you think of a way in which your activity/theme could be of value to others? If so, how?

Can you think of applying your theme/activity in such a way that it could make a positive contribution to the world?

What do the people in your immediate society (e.g., your friends, family, and peers) need?

In what ways can you meet their needs using this activity?



Write down all the different ways in which you can share this activity with others. Try thinking outside the box; for example, you might choose to write a regular blog about the activity and share your passion with the world.

Is this activity something that you can teach others around you or online?

How might this activity contribute positively to those around you?

Appendix A: Prompts

Question 1: What do you love?

- What do you never get bored of?
- What makes you smile?
- When do you feel happiest?
- What 5 things do you cherish most?
- What were you doing when you last lost track of time?
- In the past, what has left you feeling energized?
- Who are the people you love spending time with?
- What did you love to do as a child?
- If you were financially secure, what would you do with your time?
- Is there an activity, person, or place that you never get bored of?
- What activities make you lose track of time?
- What aspects of your life make you feel alive and energized?
- What do you feel passionate about?
- What are your values, and how do you use them every day?
- Where do you find beauty?
- If you could be the best at one thing, what would it be?
- What can you not stop talking about outside of the workplace?
- What would you continue to do even if you did not get paid?
- What would you choose to do with your time if you did not have to worry about making money?
- How would you spend your perfect weekend?
- What excites you when you do it?
- What could you talk about for hours on end?

Appendix A: Prompts

Question 2: What are you good at?

- What skills do you spend time practicing?
- What do people approach you for help with?
- Have you ever won an award?
- What skills do you list on your resume?
- Is there something you would like to be good at?
- To what activities have you ever devoted over 100 hours practicing or learning?
- If you had to teach something, what would you teach?
- What skills or talents come naturally to you?
- What do you excel at even when you are not trying?
- What makes you feel good about yourself?
- What do other people compliment you about?
- What achievements are you proud of?
- Do you get excited about developing your skills in this area further?
- What parts of your current job come to you easily?
- In what activity do you excel in your social circle, workplace, or community?
- With some more education and experience, could you be among the best at what you do?

Appendix A: Prompts

Question 3: What can you get paid for?

- What have you been paid for before?
- What would you be doing if you were not in your current job?
- What do people need? Do you think they would be happy to pay for it?
- Can doing this give you the income you want/need right now?
- Can you make a good living doing this work in the long term?
- Are people willing to part with their resources to pay for what you have to offer?
- What does the competition look like - can you spot a niche?
- Which jobs, positions, or tasks spark your interest?
- Are you already making a good living in your line of work?

Question 4: What does the world need?

- What do the people in your immediate society need?
- Is there something about the way the world works that you want to change?
- How can you contribute positively to those around you?
- Think of 3 skills you have that are in high demand.
- What changes would you like to bring about in the world?
- What can you do or offer that would bring meaning to others?
- If you could get a message across to a large group of people, what would your message be?
- How do you help others?
- What can you teach others?
- What kind of contribution would you love to make in life?
- What problems in your society would you like to help solve?
- What issues in your community or the whole world touch you emotionally?
- Will your work still be relevant a decade from now?
- What would you like to see people do more of or differently?
- What is the world lacking?
- How could you be more involved in your community?

Appendix B: Example of a completed ikigai chart

IKIGAI YOUR REASON FOR BEING





Appendix C: Blank ikigai chart

IKIGAI YOUR REASON FOR BEING

