

"What's the meaning of life?"

But, I'm going to adjust it to something more relevant and actionable:

"What's the purpose of being human—of being a living creature with a consciousness?"

The next few pages contain my answer.

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One more thing before we jump in:

In this document, I'm going to be using a term I made up: *"Macro Consciousness."*

Some people might call this "God." But, for me, I want to be very clear that *I'm not*

referring to a human-like entity who takes an active role in our lives.

I'm pointing to something more expansive.

Closer to a force of nature, or a combination of scientific laws far beyond our current understanding.

It's the precursor materials & forces that fueled the Big Bang.

It's the Hindu idea of an incomprehensibly vast, conscious One entity that split itself into fragments which became the raw material of the universe and ultimately the fabric of the consciousness that lives in each of us.

And if all this sounds too woo-woo for you, no worries (I'd have been in the same boat 5 years ago). Feel free to ignore this part and

keep any of the rest that does resonate with you.

Even if you completely disregard the whole "Macro Consciousness" thing, everything else I'll be describing should be 100% compatible with any brand of religion, spirituality, or atheism you subscribe to.

What's the meaning of life?

So many of us today struggle with depression, anxiety, and nihilism. **It can feel like we're filling our days with tasks that need to get done but don't make us happy.** Like it's always just one thing after another.

Like we're treading water. Waiting for something. Sometimes, it can feel like we're wasting our lives.

The purpose I'll be describing over the next few pages is the exact *opposite* of a wasted life. **I'll lay out the three core pursuits for living a life that feels fulfilling—at the deepest, most fundamental level.**

Deeper than the typical life concerns of being more productive, making a bigger impact, building wealth, gaining wisdom, or leaving a legacy.

I'm talking about imagining—philosophically, existentially, spiritually—**where meaning is to be found for conscious creatures that are born, get to live some number of years, and then die.**

My answer is informed by these relevant influences:

- Having been **raised Catholic** and then **turning strongly atheist** as a teenager;
- **Spending over a decade chasing (and achieving) the traditional markers of success:** receiving a full scholarship to do postgraduate research at the #1 university in Asia, working on some of the top-rated video games of all time, and getting paid a lot of money as a management consultant for famous Fortune 500 companies... **but, after all that, ultimately feeling depressed & empty;**
- Undertaking a very intentional journey to fill the existential hole inside me (e.g., **traveling to 30+ countries**, living in Japan, **carefully & mindfully exploring plant medicine & psychedelics**, attending a wide variety of personal growth workshops/retreats/trainings, etc.);
- **Meditating for 12+ years** and **deeply studying Buddhism** and other spiritual systems (in fact, I

wrote this and the next four pages right after returning from over 120 hours of meditating in complete silence at a 10-day Buddhist *vipassana* retreat);

- Completing rigorous training in multiple life coaching modalities as well as **three years of comprehensive training in counseling** (including a focus on **neurobiology**, systems thinking, equity, and **psychotherapy**).

Finally, I want to be clear: What I'll be describing is the purpose of life that I've come up with *for myself*.

You might very well find that it resonates with you too. That's my hope. But I don't know you, and **the last thing I want to do is imply that I've somehow found the answer that's exactly right for everyone.**

So, I invite you to retain the parts that resonate with you, be curious about the ones you're unsure of, and discard the pieces that don't feel right.

What's the meaning of life? (continued)

Awareness — Pursuit #1 (of the three core pursuits of being human)

Present-moment focus: Paying close attention to what's happening right here, right now. **Awareness of your mental/emotional state** as well as your **body/sensory state**.

Noticing when your attention wanders away, and consciously bringing it back to focus on the present moment.

Holistic health: Caring for your **body & mind** (e.g., nutrition, exercise, sleep, self-care, therapy, etc.) to help you continue that present-moment focus in a clear, easeful way.

Deeply connecting with your whole self—accepting and nurturing all your parts (e.g.,

not just your analytical mind, but also prioritizing emotional wellbeing, recovery from past trauma, and spiritual/existential health).

Appreciation: Maintaining gratitude toward yourself, toward the shared “Macro Consciousness” that we’re all part of, and toward the lineage of humans you’re descended from.

Regularly cultivating gratitude for all the privileges, people, beauty, and opportunities in your daily life. Recognizing how lucky you are to be born as a conscious being at this time in history when we have access to so much knowledge, medicine, safety, creativity, and opportunity.

Joyous celebration: Seeing how rare life seems to be in this universe. That this Earth might be it. That we might be all we have. **Continually remembering how precious it is that you’re going to die someday** (maybe tomorrow!) and you get to be alive until then.

Celebrating all of this through shared practices and rituals that feel enlivening (e.g., song, dance, art, contemplation, storytelling, gatherings to commemorate milestones & accomplishments, etc.).

Growth — Pursuit #2 (of the three core pursuits of being human)

Continuous learning: Increasing your accuracy of perception, better understanding how things work, and building self-awareness.

Seeking existential/spiritual truth: At the deepest level, including understanding the fundamental nature of the self and the forces & laws that govern reality (as well as human society and the culture you live in). Experiencing the deepest truth that all things are impermanent.

Designing & living your specific life mission.

Maintaining equanimity: Pursuing a sage-like state of groundedness as often as

possible by developing resilience and learning how to self-resource & observe challenging feelings without being controlled by them.

When agitation does occur, **improving your ability to shift states** and return as quickly as possible to equanimity (without simply repressing difficult feelings).

Deep personal growth: Working to heal your trauma, overcome your weaknesses, and purify your mind so you can:

- **Maintain the “middle path”** by rejecting (or at least reducing) strong aversion (e.g., hatred, disgust, etc.) &

strong craving (e.g., obsession, addiction, etc.) as often as you can;

- **Reach a state of love & compassion for all** (including yourself, and including people you don't like);
- **Act ethically**, including treating others as they'd like to be treated (including animals and nature);
- **Stay committed** to everything else in these three core pursuits.

Relationship — Pursuit #3 (of the three core pursuits of being human)

Deepening connection: Seeing & understanding others as they truly are, and attempting to be seen & understood by them. This includes people you're judgmental of (e.g., believing they're unlike you, hard to understand, ignorant, etc.).

(Here's an optional, more spiritual perspective on this point:

Remembering that we're all fragments of the "Macro Consciousness." We're all made of the same stuff. We're all part of a cosmic-scale consciousness experiencing itself—and indeed that's the whole point of this universe.

This is why liberation for all is just as important as liberation for yourself. When one person suffers, we all suffer.)

Finding & supporting your people: Building & maintaining a loving & supportive web of community—especially with others who are moving along similar life paths and who share your values & spiritual goals (or who you admire and want to emulate).

Being of service: Acting through selfless love & compassion to help others along their life paths. Supporting the awakening, growth, and liberation of all beings (again, including people you don't like or agree with—or at least working toward that). Using your gifts & talents to do the most good possible for all creatures (including animals and nature).

Taking an active role in reducing suffering: Regularly cultivating a state of profound empathy so you appreciate just how wrong it is to cause harm to others—and how wrong it is to allow injustice & suffering to happen without trying to prevent it.

Not just passively observing or *feeling bad* that suffering happens, but **putting significant time & effort toward actively stepping up to do something about it** (including making reparations for past harm you've committed, even unintentionally).

The three core pursuits of being human (summarized)

I. Awareness

Present-moment focus: Right here, right now. Awareness of both mental/emotional & body/sensory states. Noticing attention wandering away, then bringing it back.

Holistic health: Caring for body & mind. Nurturing all your parts (analytical mind, emotional wellbeing, trauma recovery, spiritual/existential health).

Appreciation: Gratitude for self, Macro Consciousness, lineage. Gratitude for day-to-day privileges, people, opportunities. Recognizing how lucky you are to be alive today.

Joyous celebration: Seeing how rare and precious life is. Remembering you might die tomorrow. Celebrating all this through enlivening practices & rituals.

II. Growth

Continuous learning: Increasing accuracy of perception, how things work, self-awareness.

Seeking existential/spiritual truth: Understanding fundamental nature of self, forces & laws that govern reality (and society/culture), experiencing the deepest truth of impermanence, designing & living your life mission.

Maintaining equanimity: Pursuing sage-like groundedness as often as possible by developing resilience and self-resourcing. When agitation happens, learning to shift states back to equanimity (without repressing feelings).

Deep personal growth: Healing trauma, overcoming weaknesses, and purifying your mind so you can: maintain the “middle path” (avoiding both aversion & craving), feel love & compassion for all (including self), act ethically (treat others as they want to be treated), and stay committed to all of this.

III. Relationship

Deepening connection: Seeing & understanding others as they truly are, and being seen & understood by them (even people you judge negatively). Remembering that we’re all made of the same stuff—all fragments of the same Macro Consciousness experiencing itself.

Finding & supporting your people: Building and maintaining a loving & supportive web of community (especially with people who have similar goals or who you want to emulate).

Being of service: Acting through selfless love & compassion to help others along their life paths and support their awakening, growth, and liberation. Using your gifts to do the most possible good for all (including animals & nature).

Taking an active role in reducing suffering: Not just passively observing. Regularly cultivating empathy so you appreciate how wrong it is to cause harm or to allow suffering to happen through your inaction.

**Finally, I'll add a fourth bonus pursuit:
Creating meaning out of meaninglessness.**

I believe that reality is, in many ways,
inherently meaningless.

You could choose to see that as terrifying and
depressing, and as a license to do horrible
things.

Or, as I do, you could see it as wonderful—
liberating, and full of possibility.

Indeed, I look at this cosmic meaninglessness
from two perspectives:

**1. Reality is a blank canvas, and you get to paint it
with whatever you want.** You have permission
to create your own meaning. To leave your
creative mark on the world and exult in self-
expression. It's a waste of your potential to

compare yourself to others, or to feel boxed
in by the standards and expectations put on
you by society. Instead, you get to live your
truth according to your values. You get to
create your own purpose.

**2. You can also play your part in making reality
just a little bit better for everyone involved.**
We're lucky enough to be here on this
precious ball of gas and dust that formed into
a planet and eventually developed the
ingredients for humans to appear. I believe
that gives us some responsibility. We're all in
this together. If we each do our small part to
make this world better for all of us, we
collectively imbue meaning into an existence
that might have begun as meaningless but
need not remain that way.

So: awareness, growth, relationship, and
creating meaning out of meaninglessness.

Those are my purposes for living.

This core is the basis for all my work in the
world.

Thanks for reading.

Now, where can you go from here?

Try these:

- **You only have a limited time to be alive. What should you do about that? I've helped many clients navigate this. Here are my top tips in 3 big areas.**
- **Meditation Part 1: The #1 skill you should learn as a Thinker type to get the most out of your life (it's like getting root-level access to your operating system)**
- **5 years ago, I was waiting for my "real" life to start. Here's the lesson that changed my life (& helped me realize why I'd been so depressed)**