



***'Find Your Exceptional Excellence & Live Your Purpose
- The Secret For A Happy Life!'***

Or Put Another Way

"Monotony collapses time - Novelty unfolds it - But having Purpose makes it livable"

These are strange times. Unprecedented times.

But are they times without compare?

Perhaps not if taken over just the past 100 years.

Because pandemics aren't the exception in human history, they are the rule.

Modern humans have existed for about 200,000 years, whilst the oldest bacteria have been around for billions of years and viruses for at least 300 million years.

And since the late 1950's, we've seen an Asian Flu pandemic (1956 - 8), an Influenza pandemic (1968), the HIV pandemic starting in Africa in the mid-1970's and tearing through the rest of the world through the 1980's and early 1990's. Then in 2002 came SARS followed by a Flu pandemic in 2009.

You might say we were due another, **but certainly not on the scale of COVID_19** which has led to more than one third of the world's population going into lockdown whilst traumatising the healthcare systems of countries, continents and sub-continents.

But in terms of deaths it isn't on the scale of the worldwide influenza pandemic in 1918 - 19, better known as 'Spanish Flu', which is believed to have killed more than 40 million people globally.

Too afraid to live or die?

Thanatophobia, or a **fear of death** is a common thing. It's natural for someone to worry about their own health as they age. It's also common for someone to worry about their friends and family after they're gone.

J K Rowling wrote, "*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*".

But we don't want Thanatophobia to be the cause of our death, do we? **We must not be afraid to live.**

Ikigai, the latest lifestyle trend to cross from East to West may hold the key – & just like another Japanese practice *Shinrin-Yoku* it's not new.

The term *Ikigai* is derived from two other Japanese words – **Ik**i meaning to 'live', and **Gai** meaning 'reason'.

And as well as being about finding and having a purpose it's also about happiness, because if you are able to find joy in small things through *Ikigai*, you will have the frame of mind to build an active, happy, fulfilled and exceptional life.

So what is an *Ikigai*?

It might be as simple as:

- *drinking that morning coffee*
- *talking on the phone with someone you love*
- *walking the dog*
- *reading a book*
- *tending the garden*
- *going for a bike ride*
- *cooking a meal, or*
- *playing a board game*

And you'll note these are all things you can do as part of self-isolation, or in lockdown!

However small, or seemingly insignificant sounding, it really doesn't matter.

What is important though is to recognise and appreciate both the intrinsic and extrinsic value of each wee thing.

And no one *Ikigai* is more important than another – There is no hierarchy and they will all add up to give your life its purpose.

Of course, having purpose is more than moving 20 steps in one direction, rather than one step in 20 directions – And it's more than having 20 *Ikigai*'s and then having to find 20 ways to fit them into each and every day.

It's essential to keep things simple

To think small and allow yourself to slow down and enjoy the things that you usually rush through, barely notice, or just do because you must.

And in this way it has much in common with *Mindfulness* and using *Mindful* practice to help slow down, cut through the constant motion and commotion of everyday life, create some space and objective distance, &, see life through a different lens.

But it's not just about happiness and having a purpose either

On the Japanese island of Okinawa, living a healthy and happy life to well into one's 100's is commonplace and any indigenous centenarian will be able to readily name their *Ikigai*.

In a 2013 TED Talk, [Dan Buettner](#) suggested *Ikigai* was one of the reasons people in the area lived such long lives, and this is also supported by a recent [study](#) that found *Ikigai* can be an important supportive element for health among the elderly.

Whilst another [study](#) involving 43,391 Japanese adults aged 40 – 79, discovered that those who answered 'No' to the question "*Do you have Ikigai in your life?*", were more likely to be unemployed, have poorer physical and mental health and at greater risk of developing cardio-vascular disease.

The Bank of Life

Do you know you take 22,000 breaths and have [86,400 seconds](#) deposited into your account every day by the Bank of Life. No refunds, or stock piling allowed.

So, spend wisely and maybe combining the discipline of *Ikigai* with the practice of *Mindfulness* will not only help you find your exceptional excellence and purpose, but also boost your self esteem, general happiness and life satisfaction, whilst providing you with the dividend of some added years as well. Mai Oui!

I think we don't just need to hear more about *Ikigai*, we need to start doing it too!

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