

## How to leverage the 3 foundations for spiritual wellness to flourish

Your mind has an operating system that can be thought of as a spiritual triangle.

You can visualize your triangle as an isosceles in which each of the three angles are equal in measure—

- your values — the self-chosen rules that guide your action
- your purpose — the goal of your action
- your self — your story

If you want to maintain your spiritual wellbeing, it's important to be clear about these three fundamental aspects of your spiritual health.

Being clear about these three fundamental elements of yourself will naturally help you give birth to a vision that will help direct your life. It will also serve as a standard for guiding you through times of transition when it can feel like you're in a storm with low visibility.

Still, these terms are rather abstract, so let's look at them in more detail: terms will be defined below.

### Values

Values guide action and behavior. They can be summarized as three to five core beliefs that you stand for — beliefs that you would rather experience physical discomfort for rather than violate.

For example, you might be asked to tell a lie at work, but you might value truth so much that you would rather be fired than lie. In this case your core value might be to be honest and truthful in all situations.

Other core values might be statements such as:

- No cynicism
- Encouraging individual ability and creativity
- Hard work and continuous self-improvement
- Profit, but profit from work that benefits humanity
- Creativity, dreams, and imagination
- Excellence in reputation or being part of something special

As you can see, there are many possibilities for values.

The important part is to be relentlessly honest about the three to five core values that you have (if you have more than that, it's unlikely that the values are core). These three to five core values constitute one of the three bases of your triangle.

It's also important to note that these values should already be reflected in who you are, what you do, and what irks your conscience. These are not *aspirational* values—values that you would like to have or to be. Rather, we are talking about values that you already have and live by. This part of the triangle involves observing yourself and taking an honest inventory of what you *do* value, which is actual as opposed to what you *want* to value, which is aspirational.

To determine whether you have a core value, you can run it through this stress test. For your value to qualify as a core value you must be able to answer 'yes' to each of the following questions:

1. If you were to change jobs or careers, would you build your new endeavor around this core value regardless of the industry or endeavor?
2. Would you continue to stand for this core value 200 years into the future no matter what changes in the outside world?
3. Would you continue to hold this core value even if it proved to be a competitive disadvantage — even if in some ways your environment penalized you for holding this value?
4. Would you continue to hold this core value even if you were not rewarded for it?
5. Would you change jobs before giving up this core value?
6. If you woke up tomorrow with enough money to never have to work again would you continue to apply this core value to your productive activities?

## **Purpose**

An effective purpose — which is a single statement about your reason for being — reflects your idealistic motivation for living. For Aristotle, the purpose of life is to live a virtuous life. For you it might be “to live a creative life.” Or “to make people happy,” or, “to be a role model to inspire people to change and to be their best selves.”

To determine whether you have a true purpose, you can run it through this stress test. For your purpose to be effective, you must be able to answer 'yes' to each of the following questions:

1. Do you find this purpose personally inspiring?

2. Can you envision this purpose being as valid in a thousand years as it is to you today?
3. Does the purpose help you think expansively about long-term possibilities for your life's work beyond the current list of things you're currently living, creating, or producing?
4. Does your purpose help you to decide what to eliminate from your list of activities, or what not to do or pursue?
5. Is this purpose authentic and true to what you're truly about as opposed to something that looks good or sounds nice on paper?
6. Would others be happy if you achieved this purpose?
7. Would you feel proud explaining to loved ones and the people you care about the work you do in terms of this purpose?

## **Self**

This self is a conceptual self—who and what you understand yourself to be in society, how you see yourself in your own life story. This is your identity.

Most of us have more than one identity. We are a boss or an employee or a mother, a sister, or lover.

By self we mean the main character or identity — the main plot line of your life. For example, you might be a writer seeking fame and glory, or a monk seeking enlightenment, a parent working to create a happy family, an entrepreneur looking to change the world with great companies, or a politician who wants to win the Nobel peace prize.

One thing to be clear about is that good stories have both plots and subplots. We are concerned here about your main plot. What are you striving to complete in life before you die.

When you have a clear self, you have a coherent narrative that connects the major events in your life. You may be successful at your endeavor or not, but either way your successes and failures are judged by whether you attain the so called 'holy grail' of your chosen life's quest.

In this final section, write out what your 'holy grail' looks like? What does your future self look like. If you'd like some help with this exercise, check out the Greater Good Science Center's powerful exercise Your Best Possible Self: [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best\\_possible\\_self](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best_possible_self)

To test whether your description is clear enough, you should be able to answer yes to all the following questions:

1. Does your description create a clear picture in your mind's eye?
2. Does it use specific, concrete examples and analogies to bring your vision to life, rather than bland platitudes and cliché language?
3. Does it express passion and intense emotion?
4. Does it make you think: "Wow! It'd be truly wonderful if I could make this all happen and I'm willing to put in significant effort to realize this vision!"

Once you have your values, your purpose, and a clear vision of your future self, send them to Soken at [soken@bodhiheart.com](mailto:soken@bodhiheart.com) and setup a short free consultation to determine the best first action you can take to realize the future self you want.