



PURPOSE STATEMENT GUIDE

LIVING HEALTH WEEK | SPRING 2023

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Living a Life of Purpose

Having a sense of purpose in life is positively correlated with physical and mental health benefits. This Living Health Week, join Emory University Purpose Professor Dr. Christine Whelan on a journey to create your personalized purpose statement. This can be a daily purpose statement or a purpose statement for the semester, the year, or even your college career. What matters is that you are embracing a purpose mindset for your health.

When you have a clear sense of what matters most, why it matters, and how to make it happen in life, research shows you're more likely to sleep well and more likely to take care of yourself. For young adults in particular, a sense of purpose in life is positively correlated with improved mental health, better academic outcomes, increased resilience, improved relationships, and better decision-making.



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

STEP 1: VALUES

Values guide all of our decisions. Taking the time to clearly state what matters most to us is an important first step on the path to purpose. To help you clarify your health, social, and academic values, examples from Shalom Schwartz's Universal Values research may be useful.

Pick three values you want to guide you for this purpose statement exercise.

Pick a value for your educational life, your physical health, and your social life, for example. Considering some values specifically focused on your health can serve as a motivation to make positive changes, seek help when needed, and prioritize self-care, each of which can increase the likelihood of being physically and mentally healthy.

Studies on purpose and health abound. For an accessible overview of the health benefits of purpose, see epidemiologist Dr. Vic Strecher's book, "Life on Purpose: How Living for What Matters Most Changes Everything," which includes many citations and descriptions of the best studies to date.



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

Authority	Curiosity	Accepting one's portion in life
Leadership	Choosing your own goals	Humility
Dominance	Broadmindedness	Devoutness
Success	Wisdom	Respect for Tradition
Capability	Social justice	Moderation
Ambition	Equality	Self-discipline
Influence	Peace	Obedience
Intelligence	Beauty	Cleanliness
Self-respect	Unity with nature	Family security
Pleasure	Protecting the environment	National security
Enjoying life	Inner harmony	Stability of social order
Daring activities	Helpfulness	Reciprocation of favors
Varied life	Honesty	Health
Exciting life	Forgiveness	Sense of belonging
Creativity	Loyalty	Spirituality
Freedom	Responsibility	Love
Independence	Friendship	

STEP 2: STRENGTHS

You have superpowers!

We all have strengths. Your strengths are gifts to use on purpose, and research finds that when we use our strengths, we build a sense of agency which leads to more energy and a drive to accomplish what matters most to us. Part of embracing a purpose mindset is to identify our skills and check that we're using them in keeping with our values to benefit ourselves and the lives of others.

Owning your true strengths is good for your mental health: When we focus on our strengths, we feel more positive about our experiences and those positive emotions can contribute to a sense of purpose and fulfillment. This builds resilience. When you have a sense of what you're good at, it allows you to cope with challenges and stress in a more effective way.

Today, pick three strengths you'd like to use...on purpose. Embrace those superpowers for a healthier future!



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

Adding humor

Advancing ideas

Analyzing information

Awakening spirit

Breaking molds

Bringing joy

Brining out potential

Building relationships

Building things

Composing things

Creating dialogue

Creating things

Creating trust

Designing things

Discovering resources

Doing the numbers

Empowering others

Exploring the way

Facilitating change

Fixing things

Getting participation

Getting things right

Getting to the heart of matters

Giving care

Growing things

Healing wounds

Helping overcome obstacles

Instructing people

Investigating things

Making connections

Making deals

Making things work

Managing things

Moving physically

Opening doors

Operating things

Organizing things

Performing events

Persuading people

Processing things

Putting the pieces together

Researching things

Resolving disputes

Seeing possibilities

Seeing the big picture

Selling intangibles

Shaping environments

Solving problems

Starting things

Straightening things up

Translating things

Writing things

STEP 3: IMPACT GROUPS

Embracing a purpose mindset allows you to think big – think about people and causes, and ideas that transcend you personally. This prosocial thinking not only benefits others but is good for our own health and emotional well-being. Increasing feelings of self-esteem and self-worth while improving social connections and relationships, prosocial behavior is associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Think about purposeful prosocial behavior and ***pick three groups you would like to have a positive impact on.*** Consider how you want to transcend yourself, using your gifts in keeping with your values, to positively impact the health and well-being of the world around you.



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

Children and youth

Animals

The less fortunate

Local commerce

Retirees

The marginalized

My clients

Veterans

My personal growth

My family

My spiritual group

Fellow citizens

My friends

The environment

My school/alma mater

My work

My community

My team

The climate

My country

The planet

The global community

STEP 4: ANXIETIES

A major issue for many college students right now is “Toxic Perfectionism” – holding one’s self to unreasonable standards while fearing failure. Taking a proactive approach to health, or prioritizing your values for personal wellness, may be asking you to consider a change, provoking that voice in our heads that is full of “yeah-buts,” criticisms, and excuses, adding to the anxiety.

Rather than trying to avoid and outrun fears and anxieties, today we’re inviting you to name them. Rather than letting them stop you in your tracks, challenge them with positive self-talk and use them as teachers on this path to purpose. Prosocial living and finding a purpose that focuses on progress for something bigger than ourselves can be an antidote to our fears and anxieties. Living purposefully and proactively empowers us to take small steps toward what matters most to us.

We invite you to take a deep breath and ***pick three fears and anxieties most likely to trip you up along the way to your purposeful living vision*** and add them to your purpose statement.



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

STEP 5: COMMITMENTS

Turn your purpose into action with purpose-based commitments: statements of specific and measurable goals that are in keeping with your values, and turn an idea for “something I might do someday, later, maybe” into action steps that put your health and well-being goals front and center in your life.

Ask yourself how you can use your gifts in keeping with your values to positively impact the groups and people you care most about and ***pick three purpose-based commitments – three goals that are in keeping with your purpose mindset.*** Choose goals that are important to you and that you care about enough to work on the behavior change necessary to accomplish them.

You might consider sharing your purpose statement with your friends, your loved ones, your mentor or your counselor. Post it somewhere you can see each day.

Here’s to a life of health, happiness, and purpose ahead!



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

_____’S

PERSONALIZED PURPOSE STATEMENT

Because I value _____ ,

_____ and _____

today I will use my gifts for _____ ,

_____ and _____

to positively impact _____ ,

_____ and _____ .

I accept my anxieties about _____ ,

_____ and _____

and still make conscious, purpose- based

commitments to _____ ,

_____ and _____ .

The Purpose Statement Exercise is shared with Emory University for academic use with permission from Christine B. Whelan, LLC

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