

Taking a look at our purpose in life

“Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.” Dalai Lama

Wise words indeed. He's right, you know.

My oldest daughter, as an offshoot of her own spiritual journey, asked me to reflect on a series of questions to help me heal.

“What do you think is your purpose in life, and how do you want to fulfill this purpose?”

Wow. We all have a *raison d'être* I suppose, but one's real, true purpose may be elusive. How do we know why we're here on earth? Some say there's a plan, it's just not revealed to us very often, if at all.

Many believe that all of our experiences and relationships are put in our path for a reason ?? purpose ??o help us learn.

And Joel Osteen noted that our fellow men and women won't reach their full potential without someone else believing in them.

In this piece, I've boiled down purpose to two main areas in our lives ? work and family.

Do we set out in life to make a difference; evoke change; encourage discussion and an exchange of ideas? Are these even possible today?

When I was in college taking journalism, we did believe our efforts could change the world, along with spreading knowledge and information. I still believe that today.

The written word can be powerful, beautiful, even magical.

“The written word is the only anchor we have in life. How extraordinary would it be if we had even three or four paragraphs written honestly about their lives by our ancestors?” asked Randy Wayne White.

I don't know if that was my purpose from the outset. I always had a fondness for the written word, poetry and literature. To me, “spreading the word” through journalism is honest, genuine, even wholesome. It's grass roots; it's where we live.

Some have asked me over the years why I didn't head to the Big Smoke and land a job with one of the big daily papers. I did apply early in my career. But as time went on, I really appreciated the heart and soul of the community newspaper. Reporting on local events ? recording history if you will ?'s important. It's what makes us who we are and it builds our sense of community.

What a shame it would be if we lost the local paper, the bastion of our “corner store” lives. We help breathe life into a community, filled with souls with common interests.

It's about sharing, shaping, documenting. Thanks to the internet, our local history can be filed forever, giving future generations much food for thought.

Is that my purpose, and the purpose of thousands of journalists across the country? Perhaps. Are we “born to procreate”?

Raising a family is never easy and it can be fraught with challenges, disagreements, and conflicts. I think what parents do is provide a loving, safe and comfortable environment for their offspring. They draw on their own knowledge and experiences and pass the vital components on to their children, arming them with a powerful arsenal to make it in this world.

Of course, you know what they say about 'best laid plans'?

Now, whether pursuing a career in journalism and giving our kids the best head-start possible can be considered my purpose, I really don't know. I sort of fell into both, and plowed ahead, yes, with a sense of purpose.

In all honesty, though, we humans kinda feel our way through the dark when it comes to life.

We're not total experts at either our jobs or our parental responsibilities. Our skills, in both areas, are honed through years of blood, sweat, tears and hard work.

In the end, we can only hope we are solid and comfortable in our roles. They say to become an 'expert' at anything, you have to put in 10,000 hours (90 minutes a day for 20 years). Of course, that number has been picked apart as it all depends on the quality of those hours putting our skills to the test.

Regardless, if we raise our children through adulthood, almost all parents can say we're 'experts,' but few will admit they are. I'm still learning.

In this area of life, there are so many aspects, influences, changes, nuances and individual characteristics that make it virtually impossible to become an 'expert' parent.

Authors and parenting pros have a lot to say about raising children through certain stages, and at certain ages. They will also point out there are differences between first-borns, middle children, and last-borns.

But back to purpose.

In a way, you can somewhat assume that humans were designed to procreate, to keep the species thriving. Through many previous generations, it was considered 'the thing to do,' no questions asked. Young men and women got married and raised families and worked to obtain the 'glue' to keep families together.

Easier said than done, of course, especially through war and post-war years. Each generation is fraught with its unique interpretations.

In the last decade or so, many have sought the ideal 'work-life' balance. The pandemic put us all to the test and expanded the parameters of the remote work model. Some loved it, others not so much.

While employers allowed leniency, the hammer has come down, particularly in government, to spend at least three to four days a week in the office.

I have always made it into the office for a number of reasons. It's pretty close to home and I find it more conducive to getting things done. At home there are too many distractions.

It's weird because even during my medical treatments for cancer, I still made it in. Somehow, I believe I would not be complete if I hadn't turned in at least a few hours of work per day in front of my office computer.

However, I will admit that these days, in contemplating mortality, I do understand that the minutiae of work doesn't really matter.

And it's a fact that we can all be replaced at work, but not at home.

They say home is where the heart is and that's where we really shine and make a difference.

Our purpose??Well, that remains to be seen. But counting our blessings and witnessing the growth and maturity of our offspring is certainly one for the books!

Dolly Parton advises us to ?Find out who you are and do it on purpose.?