

**10 COPING STRATEGIES**  
When You Feel  
Your Life Has No  
Meaning Or Purpose

# Table of Contents

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Introduction.....	1
Signs You May Lack Purpose .....	3
The Coping Strategies .....	4
Avoid Unhealthy Strategies.....	4
Find Yourself - Find Your Purpose .....	5
Acceptance .....	7
Stress Management .....	8
Reach Out .....	8
Find Your Home .....	10
Engage Your Spirituality .....	11
Increase Self-Esteem .....	12
Routine And Schedule.....	13
Adjust Expectations .....	14
Summary .....	16

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# Introduction

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The dictionary defines purpose as,

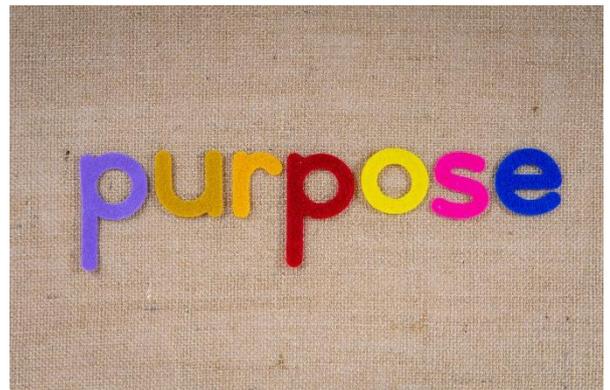
Noun • the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

Verb • *have as one's intention or objective.*

Synonyms include motivation, grounds, reason, intention, objective, ambition, and function.

You will find hundreds of interpretations of what purpose should be.

Psychology Today states, *“what is the purpose of life? This question is as old as the human race itself. Some argue that our purpose is to find happiness. Others say our purpose is to love others, to become the best version of ourselves, or to follow God’s will. Still others say there is no purpose to life at all.”*



The truth is purpose is a highly personalized decision. Each one of us has to decide what our purpose is, but we can agree on the purpose of purpose and what it gives you.

**A purpose gives you direction.** When you find meaning it guides you, it helps you achieve your goals. When your life has a purpose, you are less likely to give up when you are faced with challenging situations.

When you run into an obstacle purpose gives you the wisdom to recognize it as a learning opportunity. It's not an obstruction, it's simply a hurdle to growth.

Having a purpose is important, it's important to your mental health and wellness and when you lack a purpose it feels as though life is unfulfilling.

The challenge with a lack of purpose is the feeling it leaves you with. It feels as though you can't plan your future, build relationships, or even choose a career. How can you make big decisions when you have no idea where you're going? For some people, that feeling can lead to anxiety and depression. The sense of uncertainty can be overwhelming.

## Signs You May Lack Purpose

- You don't know what matters to you and you don't feel like trying new things.
- You feel as though you've tried everything so, nothing else matters or seems important.
- You feel anxious when thinking about the future.
- You struggle with decisiveness.
- You feel alone.
- You spend a lot of time wondering about the meaning of life.
- You feel bored or discontented with your life.

Your life's purpose doesn't have to be to *save the world*. It's not always that big.

So, what do you do when you feel your life has no meaning or purpose? You find a healthy coping strategy. Let's discuss ten of them.

# The Coping Strategies

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## Avoid Unhealthy Strategies

It might seem odd to enlist a coping strategy that is avoiding coping strategies, but it's an important one. There are plenty of unhealthy coping strategies you can fall back on, from avoidance and distraction to substance abuse. It's the latter that is most concerning in terms of those struggling with finding purpose in life.

When you feel helpless and hopeless as though you're a plastic bag floating through the wind, then there is a good chance you find it easy to pour another drink, smoke another cigarette, or pop another pill.



Substances take many forms and if you use any of them excessively it's not good news. If you notice you're buying a new pack of cigarettes more often than normal, if you look forward to getting home to pour a drink, then you're flirting with tragedy.

Those substances *will* provide you with relief. The problem is the relief is only temporary. Crutches create new problems. It's going to provide you with relief in the moment, but it isn't going to help you find your purpose and it isn't going to make you feel better about the meaning of life. It's a contributing factor to the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness you are experiencing.

## Find Yourself - Find Your Purpose

The best coping strategy is a problem-focused one and that is to take action by finding yourself and thereby finding your purpose. How do you find purpose when you feel like your life has no meaning?

**First, you need to take active steps to be a happier, healthier person.** If you are unsatisfied with *any* aspect of your life, then you are in need of change. You can start things off by eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and getting plenty of sleep. Those three are the holy trinity of managing stress and difficulty in life. You will feel more in control.

**Now is the time to identify negative thoughts that are holding you back.** In life, you always want to move forward and if anything is holding you back you have to deal with it. Be honest, is anyone harder on you than you are? It's unlikely.

Our brains seize on negative thoughts much easier than positive ones which is why you have to train it to recognize positivity. You can start influencing your brain by actively thinking positive thoughts.

When you notice yourself slipping into a negative thought process, correct yourself by coming up with a few positive things in your life (pet, home, food, etc.).

**A lot of people believe that if they could find their purpose and turn it into a career that they would feel more fulfilled.** If that's true for you, then this is your opportunity to explore what type of career path you believe would leave you fulfilled.

Feeling fulfilled in your career can give you a sense of purpose in life so it's always positive if you enjoy what you do. If a job change isn't possible, then look at the areas of your job that make you unhappy. How can you incorporate positivity in those specific tasks to help you feel good about what it is you're doing?

**You possess a wealth of experience and have plenty of skills.** We are all unique individuals and therefore we have unique skills and abilities. If you enjoy public speaking, then you should seek out more opportunities to do so (Toastmasters, anyone?).

If you are passionate about music, then reach out to your community to see how you can use those skills (in church or other organizations). No one has the exact same set of skills that you do and even if they come close to matching your skills, they don't possess your personality and lived experience. You have something that no one else has. Use that to your advantage!

**Introspection and self-reflection offer you a wealth of insight.** Begin the process of introspection so you can gain self-awareness and find your real self. This is a lifelong process but begins to reap rewards right away, where by as you self-reflect and learn who you are, your purpose and life meaning can become much clearer. A key element of introspection in regard to finding your purpose is identifying your values and beliefs, which are always at the core of our purpose and general meaning in life.

**Now that you have completed all the work above you can sit down and make a plan.** Create a list of achievable goals and put them into a plan of action.

It's always good to have goals, but if you don't put it into action then it will be for nothing. Putting those goals on paper helps you see your progress and those small steps lead to big changes and *seeing is believing*.

## Acceptance

It doesn't matter what type of situation you are faced with, there will *always* be aspects of it that you do not have the power to change. As difficult as it is, the best thing you can do for your mental health is to accept what you cannot change. However, don't leave it at that.

**By accepting what you cannot change you are not throwing in the towel. You are shifting focus and putting your energy into the things *you can control*.** For example, if you are facing layoffs at work there is not much you can do about saving the company. What you *can* control is where you go from here, which means you should accept that a layoff is inevitable and begin the search for a new job now.

When we're talking about your life feeling as though it has no purpose or meaning, then you have to look at the areas of your life which you feel are out of control.

- Why do they feel as though they are out of control? Is it because you *can't* control them or is it because you have let everything go?

Sift through the issues and separate them into what you can control and focus on that, leave everything else behind.

## Stress Management

On the back of the last point, stress management comes into play. All of those things you let go of because you can't control... they can still cause you stress. In fact, that's often the biggest problem with them. They stress you out *because* you have no control over them. So, letting go is great in theory, but it's not as simple as that in practice.

Self-care takes many forms and any act of self-care should help alleviate stress. If anxiety accompanies your stress, then breathing exercises are a great place to start. Time management is another.

One great way to manage stress is by doing the things you enjoy. It's good for your mental health and it's good for your emotional wellbeing. Activities like bubble baths, talking to a friend, or even watching sports.

Or do something you're great at like playing a video game, dancing, baking, or cooking. Do things you excel at is a way to relieve stress *and* get a sense of achievement.

### Methods of stress control include:

- Manage stress because when you are stressed you are not in a good place and so you it will be difficult to reflect, ponder and find meaning in life or your purpose.
- Do the things you enjoy
- Do things you excel at is a way to relieve stress and get a sense of achievement
- Exercise
- Healthy diet
- Spend time with friends and family just enjoying life

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Aromatherapy
- Listening to music
- Relaxation
- Aromatherapy
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

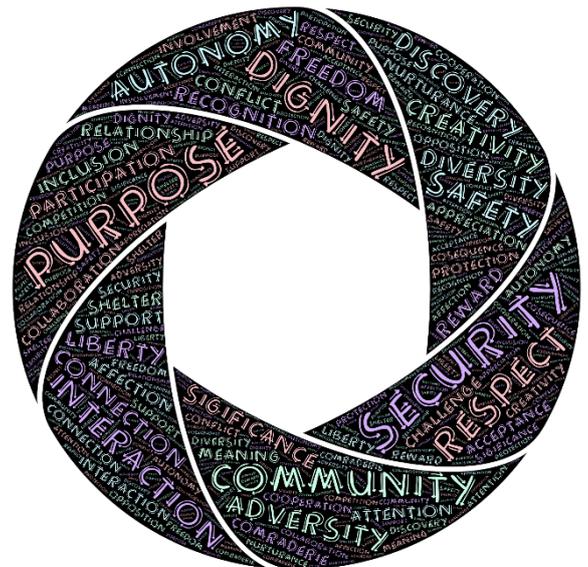
## Reach Out

Do not bottle your feelings up. It's just as unhealthy as obsessing over your emotions (which is something you should also avoid). Instead, reach out to a close friend or family member who you trust. By getting it off your chest and communicating your feelings and what you are going through you are taking a positive step toward processing those emotions.

When you bottle it up you are avoiding the feelings. You're putting them aside and embracing the idea that you can move forward regardless. This is untrue.

You might think you're moving forward, but what you don't realize is those feelings are tied around you like a weight that's slowly dragging you into quicksand. The further forward you try to move the deeper you slip into the mud.

While avoidance is technically a coping strategy it's a maladaptive one that will drag you down.



- Choosing to obsess over those emotions is also a maladaptive coping strategy but in a different way.
- By obsessing over them you aren't resolving them. You are reliving the negativity you experience from the emotions that are upsetting you.

The remedy for both is open and honest communication that leads to resolution.

## Find Your Home

Do you have a community of people who make you feel at home? Being part of something bigger than you are can help you overcome a feeling of lack of purpose.

**A sense of belonging and recognition will provide you with a feeling of validation.** It will make you feel valued. It might be an online community filled with people who love the same video game as you, a board game, an app, a television show, or going through a similar crisis in life.

The reality is that not everyone in your immediate circle will understand what you are feeling, thinking, or going through.

And, as important as it is to maintain your social network, it's even more important to recognize when you have to go beyond that network.



From social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to the more fluid ones like Reddit, there are communities of people who use subcategories and hashtags to find like-minded people.

While there is a lot of negativity on the internet, you can find hope if you seek it out directly. You can find a community of people you fit into. If you're not a big internet user or you know that social media negatively impacts your mental health, then try a local community group instead. Whether that means you volunteer at a shelter or you join a sewing group.

## **Engage Your Spirituality**

Feeling a spiritual connection or closeness is a valuable way to find purpose or meaning in life. Understand, that while religion can play a part in spirituality it goes far beyond the idea of religion (organized or otherwise).

First of all, when we talk about spirituality what does it mean if it's not related to religion? It can mean a lot of things. Broadly, it means you feel as though every living thing in this world is connected.

It may also mean that you recognize that it's an idea, belief, or feeling that there is something greater than you in this universe. There's more to the human condition than a mere sensory experience, you are part of something bigger, whether it's nature or cosmic.

In all cases, spirituality is an individual journey. What you believe is personal to you. You do not have to be a religious person to engage your spirituality. There is a multitude of ways in which you can nurture a spiritual connection, such as yoga, meditation, deep breathing, communing with nature, etc.

If you are a religious person, then your path to spiritual connectedness might be a bit more straightforward. You have a holy book where you can study the messages given to you by your higher power, you have prayer with which to commune with that power, and you likely attend church or some variation of it where you can connect with like-minded worshippers.

That's just for starters. There will likely be additional meetings in smaller groups that you can connect with if you haven't already. While a lot of people simply attend a weekly service, there are more options if you want to feel a deeper connection.

## **Increase Self-Esteem**

The basic definition of self-esteem is simply the way you feel and think about yourself. When you lack a sense of purpose, when you feel as though life has no meaning, there's a good chance you also struggle with your self-esteem.

You don't value what you have to offer which is why you're in the position you are now. It's hard to cope with daily life when you feel as though you're not worthy of finding happiness.

You can start making changes by thinking about how you treat yourself during times of difficulty versus how you treat your friends in the same situation. If a friend came to you struggling with the meaning of life and trying to find their purpose, how would you respond?

Likely, you would empathize because you know exactly how that feels. More importantly, you would extend compassion to your friend. You wouldn't put them down, you wouldn't call them stupid or dumb, you wouldn't suggest they are a failure.

But that's not always what you do to yourself, though is it? You beat yourself up over missing out on a promotion. You put yourself down for not getting a new job. That isn't going to help you find purpose, it's only going to make you more frustrated and despondent.

As you move forward, I want you to remember or think about how you would react to a friend going through what you're going through. I want you to treat yourself with kindness. Treat yourself with respect.

I want you to consider what you would say to a friend and I want you to offer yourself that same level of kindness and compassion. Instead of putting yourself down or beating yourself up, give yourself a positive message to focus on.

## **Routine And Schedule**

When you are struggling with meaning and purpose, a routine is going to be your new best friend. As you complete tasks and achieve things throughout your day you will experience a strong sense of accomplishment which will promote a sense of purpose or meaning.

**Sit down and create a routine for yourself.**

You can start from the moment you get up and add in your shower and morning routine, as well as how the rest of your day proceeds. As you finish a task give it a little tick. At the end of the day, you can review everything you have accomplished.



While it might not seem like much, it's a lot. We already highlighted how a lack of purpose can lead to anxiety and depression. So, by taking the steps to create a routine and ticking things off you're helping manage symptoms of anxiety and staving off depression. The idea behind a routine is that you will aim a little bit higher every day. Which brings me to the scheduling aspect of this point.

While it's important to congratulate yourself on every task you complete, it's just as important to consider the goals you give yourself. So, you created a routine but you don't want to over-schedule yourself and set yourself up for failure.

The purpose of routine and schedule is to help manage stress, to build confidence, and boost your self-esteem. So, it's vital that you be realistic with your time so you are sure to achieve it.

Once you are regularly achieving your daily routine and schedule, you can aim higher in increments. You want to boost your motivation and confidence, not tear yourself down.

## **Adjust Expectations**

Finally, you have to learn to adjust your expectations. With every event or circumstance comes a variety of outcomes. Any situation where you have to make active decisions means that you choose a path and there was another outcome down another path (or perhaps multiple paths).

However, there may be various outcomes that stem from *one* decision. So, you may make one choice and expect a particular outcome only to find a different outcome altogether. Sometimes in life, the ability to expect the unexpected is key to managing stress and dealing with change.

Build your ability to adjust expectations because when things go differently than you anticipated it can feel like a train derailing before your very eyes. Once you're on track and feel as though your life has meaning or purpose, you want to stay on that track which means adjusting your expectations.

Just because something looks different than you expected it to doesn't mean you made the wrong decision. All you can do is use the information available to you to make decisions that you believe align with your values and are guiding you on the path to find or live your purpose.

## Summary

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Life is for living and until you find meaning or purpose then you aren't living it right. Follow the advice above to get started on your coping strategy journey. Any of the strategies above should help you on your way, but you may find a combination that is more suitable.

However, if you try everything and you are still struggling do not hesitate to seek the advice of a professional. A counselor or therapist will help you learn more about yourself and once you have a clearer understanding of who you are you will find it easier to find your purpose.

It's a journey of discovery where you explore your fears, needs, and wants to overcome the obstacles that you believe are standing in your way. This journey will help you find your path.

