

The *Pillars* of Purpose

Building Your WHAT



The Pillars of Purpose (WHAT)

We know that our story of purpose is found at the intersection of these three questions:

1. **What am I good at?**
2. **Who am I serving?**
3. **What is the world asking of me?**

With our WHY established, we now move on to constructing our pillars of purpose. These pillars are the core values that put the WHAT behind our WHY. The purpose driven leader is the architect of his own purpose, constructing a firm foundation with a set of core values.

One of the core characteristics of a purpose driven leader is the ability to build a life that is meaningful. Meaning is the result of being confident in your pursuit of the right ends by the right means. **It is not something that can be pursued, it's something that must *ensue*.** It is the byproduct of pursuing the right things, for the right reasons, at the right times.

We are architects of our own purpose so long as we are deliberate in making commitments to use our lives to serve others. When our lives reflect our core values (i.e. our pillars of purpose) we find that meaning inevitably follows.

Meaning is something that comes upon you, of its own accord. You can set up the preconditions, you can follow meaning, when it manifests itself, but you cannot simply produce it, as an act of will. Meaning signifies that you are



in the right place, at the right time, properly balanced between order and chaos, where everything lines up as best it can at that moment. (Jordan Peterson)

As architects of our lives, we must be deliberate in the construction of our purpose. Our beliefs ultimately drive our decision-making. Boiled down to its essence, life is nothing more than thousands and thousands of decisions that must be made over and over again.

Some researchers estimate that we can make up to 35,000 different decisions every single day.

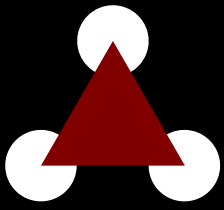
The direction of our lives closely follows the pattern of our decision-making, and the pattern of our decision-making is driven by our values. As we make decisions, the purpose driven leader will use their core values as a compass to guide them.

Finding Your Aim

Building a set of core values starts with finding the right thing to aim for.

You build a meaningful life when you are in pursuit of the right aims - and those right aims are always pointed in the direction of helping someone other than myself.

But, to have an *aim* at all requires forethought and intentionality. It requires us to select a target and develop the skill needed to hit that target. Think back to when our ancestors lived in tribes and hunted for food. They were wired to meet an objective (i.e. find food to eat), pick a target (i.e. kill that lion), and come up with a plan to successfully accomplish our mission.



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You are created to pick a destination, to select an aim, and accomplish an objective. You are wired to find satisfaction in the process of making meaningful progress towards a goal.

In order to move forward, you have to create an environment for growth. Embracing a growth mindset is learning to view every situation as an opportunity. Every circumstance becomes a chance to learn, receive valuable feedback, readjust your aim, and move forward.

Commonly termed a “growth mindset”, this perspective helps re-orient ourselves in the world that can easily leave us confused and aimless. A growth mindset teaches us that there are no true failures, unless we fail to learn.

What Hangs in the Balance

The purpose-driven leader keeps their eyes on the prize as they move daily in the direction of their purpose. They remind themselves of what hangs in the balance in their decisions to choose a life of purpose over a life of convenience. When you fail to follow your purpose, you never know the true cost of your decision. You will never know whose life could be altered for eternity when you take the easy way out.

Course Corrections and Core Values

To summarize, life is a series of small course corrections (decisions that you make each day). When you make the right decisions, you are implementing small course corrections towards a life filled with purpose. As you constantly reassess your path, two questions should stay at the forefront of your mind:

1. *What am I working towards that is deeply meaningful?*



2. *What am I aiming for?*

To help guide us in our journey, we must build a foundation of core values that helps refine, clarify, and solidify our mode of operation. When we take the time to clarify what we believe, we will elevate some values over others. These values come to define who we are and how we live in the world. To select a group of core values means we must decide which ideas, principles, and beliefs are more important to us.

A system of values helps us to progress towards meaningful goals by clarifying and focusing our behaviors along the way.

We can easily become distracted by personal preference, external noise, or cultural narratives as the world feeds us the notion that life is fundamentally about *me*. Values are the pillars of meaning that keep us grounded in our day-to-day life, they keep us from forgetting our purpose. You become more truly *yourself* when you define who you are and what you stand for. Your core values are the building blocks of your purpose, they are the core principles that you will return to again and again in times of difficulty.

Core values become indistinguishable from who we are, as they challenge us to live a life of accountability and responsibility to who we want to become.

Finding the Right Restrictions

To truly appreciate something, you must confine yourself to it. There's a certain level of joy and meaning that you reach in life only when you've spent decades investing in a single relationship, a single craft, a single career. And you cannot achieve those decades of investment without rejecting the alternatives. The act of choosing a value for yourself requires rejecting alternative values. (Mark Manson)



The rejection of certain values in favor of others is crucial to developing a creed that governs your life. The compounding interest of purpose only accrues when it's deposited consistently in the right places. The multiplication effect of making the right investments is simply a function of limiting yourself to focusing on the right things.

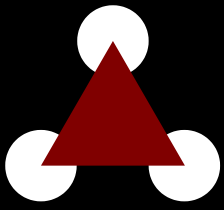
This is the crucial job of creating a life of discipline.

You create a hierarchy of values when you give yourself artificial constraints. Selecting a set of core values allows you to discover the liberating restrictions that fit with your natural gifting. They help to define and refine who you want to be and how you want to serve. They actively remind you how to live, give, and exist in the world.

A life of purpose requires constant reminders of who you are, what you stand for, and why you exist.

Finding the right restrictions requires the discipline to live by an internal code of selected values. Discipline is the path to freedom. As former Navy Seal Jocko Willink wrote:

In that, lies the dichotomy: discipline—strict order, regimen, and control—might appear to be the opposite of total freedom—the power to act, speak, or think without any restrictions. But, in fact, discipline is the pathway to freedom. (Jocko Willink)



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The Freedom of Discipline

So how does discipline actually lead to freedom?

First, when it comes time to make decisions your options are already limited (in a good way!). You have trimmed your choices by making a commitment to your core values. When it comes time to make decisions, you already have a good idea of the options on the menu. In other words, your identity (the person you say you want to become) holds you accountable for how you act in the world.

In many areas of life, freedom is not so much the absence of restrictions as finding the right ones, the liberating restrictions. Those that fit with the reality of our nature and the world produce greater power and scope for our abilities and a deeper joy and fulfillment. Experimentation, risk, and making mistakes bring growth only if, over time, they show us our limits as well as our abilities.

(Tim Keller)

Second, finding the right restrictions helps show us our limits. True, unlimited freedom is a dangerous thing. Presented with unlimited options we can easily travel into unsuitable and dangerous environments. Take the example of a fish: a fish is most free when it is confined to the water (the environment it was created to live in). Unlimited “freedom” for a fish would mean it is free to go on land and in water. This “freedom” of spending time on land would ultimately kill the fish!

Simply put, you are most free when you exist in the environment you were created for. Living a purposeful life in service of others sets the groundwork for a life of fulfillment, joy, and true contentment (because we are all meant to live lives of purpose!). This is the environment where you are created to thrive.



Finally, finding the right restrictions narrows our focus to help us live with excellence. These self-imposed boundaries are artificial limits that work to promote discipline in our pursuit of excellence. A strong personal commitment to a personal code of ethics is narrow and limiting in the sense that it limits our behaviors; it realigns our perspective towards a set of core activities that produce a life of purpose.

This approach is liberating because it neutralizes the tyranny of choice. Unlimited options can lead to inaction, lack of focus, and inattention to detail. However, when you set boundaries that define “who I am and what I do,” you successfully limit your options. This leads to greater focus and clarity. The pursuit of excellence always starts with saying “yes” to the right things (the things that align with your purpose) and “no” to the things that distract you from what you were created to do. You fight the incoming tide of personal preference by limiting yourself to the core values and behaviors that define your purpose.

“The wealth of options we face today has extended personal freedom to an extent that would have been inconceivable even a hundred years ago. But the inevitable consequence of equally attractive choices is uncertainty of purpose; uncertainty, in turn, saps resolution, and lack of resolve ends up devaluing choice. (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi)

A System of Core Values

How you behave is always a result of what you believe, and what you do is always tied to what you think. Put simply, you are the combination of what you consume.



Our lives and actions are one big cycle of inputs and outputs. If we aren't careful, we can develop a philosophy of life that can easily be characterized by the wrong things. The word *system* is derived from the Greek word "systema", which means "*an organized relationship between any set of components to achieve some common cause or objective*".

What you consume (inputs) informs a system of beliefs that organizes your interpretive framework for how you act and live in the world (outputs). What you consume has a massive impact on the type of people you become. We must take seriously the task of curating what we listen, watch, think, and read with the hope of infusing our system of beliefs with positivity. As author James Clear wrote:

Your actions are a consequence of your thoughts. Your thoughts are a consequence of what you consume. And in the modern age, what you consume is largely a consequence of how you select and refine your social media feed. Choose better inputs. Get better outputs. (James Clear)

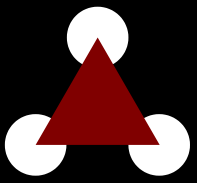
A system is an interrelated set of components that work together to achieve an outcome. You must be deliberate about constructing this system to produce the results you want - better inputs leads to better outputs. A set of core values will help you live purposefully in the world when it exists within a systematic hierarchy of meaning.

The organization of a meaningful life is found by constructing a system that regulates, organizes, and unifies your impulses towards purposeful ends.

Author Jordan Peterson writes, "*meaning emerges from the interplay between the possibilities of the world and the value structure operating within that world.*"

The "value structure" is made possible in the explicit statement and development of a creed of ethics. I believe the best way to do this is to craft a personal mission statement that is built around a set of core values - that are then defined by a set of your core behaviors.

A Portrait of Purpose



Abraham Lincoln's greatness consisted of the “integrity of his character and moral fiber of his being.” His commitment to a set of core values allowed him to become “a man of profound feeling, just and firm principles, and incorruptible integrity,” wrote Civil War general and politician Carl Schurz. This strong moral compass allowed him to lead the country through a brutal Civil War, which ultimately abolished the institution of slavery. Despite numerous personal and professional setbacks early in his life, Lincoln was able to cultivate a strong inner commitment to the core principles he believed to be true. This allowed him to change millions of lives for the better.



Here's the step by step process for how to do this.

Building Your Core Values

Building a set of core values starts by clarifying your WHY, your WHAT, and your HOW. You were made to live a great story, lead with excellence, and love others unconditionally. Your certainty of purpose is confirmed through a firm foundation of core principles that are your guiding light during life's darkest times. The structure of living a purposeful life is found by identifying the values and principles that you can believe in whatever the circumstance.

Purpose driven leadership happens when a leader's philosophy flows from their convictions—not their feelings, emotions, or subjectivity. Leaders will ultimately lead most effectively when the strength of their convictions unleashes them to be purpose driven leaders. Your most firmly held beliefs (that sustain you through the ups and the downs) are grounded in the values you believe in the most.

As leaders, we struggle for certainty of purpose when we spend too much time wading through the noise that demands our immediate attention. In order to lead effectively, you need a clear set of guiding principles that will help you navigate life's many twists and turns.

An authentic set of core values will flow out of three areas:

- 1. Your vision**
- 2. Your convictions**
- 3. Your legacy**



The reflective leader must investigate his/her own background and history. You must probe key areas of your life and distill common life themes. This process of reflection will help you grasp convictions that will define your leadership. To do this, you need to ask yourself three questions:

- 1. What is my hope for the future? - MY VISION**
- 2. What do I believe in regardless of circumstance? - MY CONVICTIONS**
- 3. What do I want to be known for? - MY LEGACY**

My Vision

Your core values will flow from your vision.

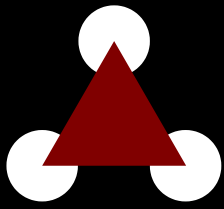
Your vision is your preferred picture of the future, it is about where your mission in life is supposed to take you. Vision is a picture of the future that stirs up your passion! It is the shining light at the end of the tunnel and the hope for a better tomorrow. Vision fuels you, propels you, and drives you towards a meaningful destination.

To help refine and DEFINE your vision, use these questions to guide your reflective process:

If I were to change the world how would I want it to look?

If I imagine myself 5/10/15 years in the future where do I want to be?

What wildly important goals do I want to be constantly working towards?



***An authentic set of core values will
flow out of three areas:***

Your vision

Your convictions

Your legacy



What gets me out of bed in the morning and keeps me up at night?

What problem stirs my heart to empathy?

What is my hope for the future?

***The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.
(Helen Keller)***

***Mission is what you do today. Vision is about where the mission takes you.
(Horst Schultz)***

My Convictions

Your core values flow from your convictions. Your convictions flow from your character, and your character is the culmination of your habits, decisions, and experiences.

As author David Brooks wrote, “the essential drama of life is the drama to construct character, which is an engraved set of disciplined habits, a settled disposition to do good.”

Convictions come from the truths that are deeply ingrained on your heart as you battle through the challenges of life. To help refine and DEFINE your convictions, use these questions to guide your reflective process:



Based on your character, the formation of your inner fiber, and the beliefs you hold most sacred, what are the convictions that rise above the rest?

What do you believe in regardless of your circumstances?

When life has beaten you up and tested you, what lessons did you come to believe on the other side?

What habits have you cultivated that you will carry with you for the rest of your life?

If things don't go exactly how I want them, would I still consider myself a success if I was faithful to my convictions?

“The road to character often involves moments of moral crisis, confrontation, and recovery. When they were in a crucible moment, they suddenly had a greater ability to see their own nature. The everyday self-deceptions and illusions of self-mastery were shattered.” (David Brooks)

My Legacy

Your core values flow from your legacy. We leave living legacies in the lives of the people we choose to invest in. Your legacy is shaped by the contribution you make and the lives that you shape. Your legacy is the story of your life intersecting with others for a better tomorrow.

Your legacy is leaving your team, your organization, and your family in a better place than when you started. To help refine and DEFINE your legacy, use these questions to guide your reflective process:

What do you want to leave behind?



How do you want to be remembered?

At your eulogy, what do you want people to remember you for?

What is your legacy now?

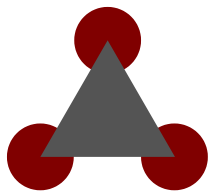
What do you want it to be?

If I am successful in my leadership, what should people say about me?

***“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, ‘but what is woven into the lives of others.’
Your legacy is that which you teach.” (Pericles)***

Summary

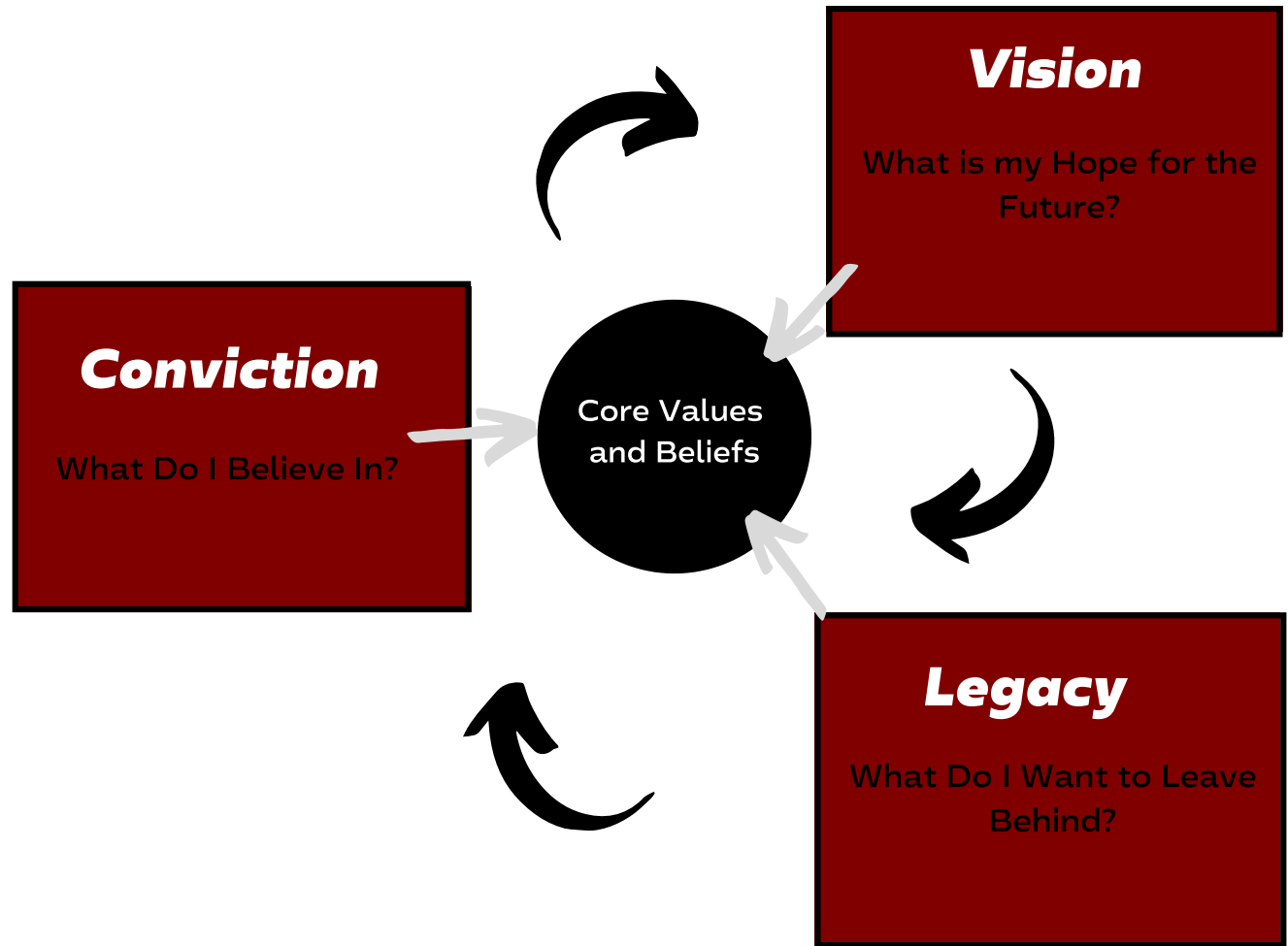
1. You are the architects of your own purpose, which is answered by two key questions:
 - What am I working towards that is deeply meaningful?
 - What am I aiming for?
2. The answer to these questions is found in the construction of your core values.
3. Core values are:
 - Liberating constraints
 - A system for your beliefs that flow from your:
 - Vision
 - Convictions
 - Legacy

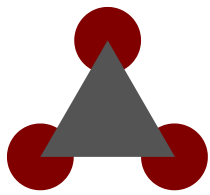


The *Pillars* of Purpose

Try not to become a man of success, but rather, try to become a man of value.

- **Albert Einstein**





My Pillars Of Purpose

Building Your WHAT

Vision

What is my hope for the future?

This is your preferred picture of the future, it is about where your mission in life is supposed to take you.

Vision

Convictions

Convictions

What do I believe in?

These are the truths deeply ingrained on your heart that align with your character.

Legacy

Legacy

What do I want to leave behind?

This is the contribution you make and the lives that you shape. It is leaving your team in a better place than when you started

My Core Values