



Ikigai is a Japanese concept that means your ‘reason for being.’ ‘Iki’ in Japanese means ‘life,’ and ‘gai’ describes value or worth. It’s what brings you joy and inspires you to get out of bed every day “a passion that gives joy and value to life”.

The Japanese philosophy of Ikigai dates back to the Heian period between 794 -1185. Added to the fact that Japan ranks in the top 3 for life expectancy in the world certainly gives kudos to the concept.

Ikigai struck a chord with us as the fundamental concept is based on everything being connected and synergistic. We often feel conflicted in our lives with seemingly opposing wants and needs – for example wholesome family values versus the need for money!

Rather than view the different areas of our lives as separate, feelings of peace and happiness lie at the intersections and connect everything together as the diagram above depicts.

Apart from living a longer and happier life, the Westernised version of Ikigai says you’ve found your dream career when your career includes these four qualities:

1. What do you love?
2. What are you good at?
3. What does the world need?
4. What can you be paid for?

When you know your ikigai and understand its meaning it can help you:

- Design your ideal work lifestyle
- Create strong social connections at work
- Create a healthy work-life balance
- Pursue your career dreams
- Enjoy your work

...embracing the joy of little things, being in the here and now, reflecting on past happy memories, and having a frame of mind that one can build a happy and active life.” (Ikigai Tribe, 2019)

The 10 rules of Ikigai

1. Stay active; don't retire.
2. Take it slow.
3. Don't fill your stomach.
4. Surround yourself with good friends.
5. Get in shape for your next birthday.
6. Smile.
7. Reconnect with nature.
8. Give thanks.
9. Live in the moment.
10. Follow your Ikigai.

Deep Dive into Finding Your Ikigai

Part 1: In-Depth Reflection (30-40 minutes)

For each question, take at least 7-10 minutes of quiet reflection. Go beyond the surface and explore your emotions, past experiences, and deeper motivations.

1. What You Love (Passion)

This section focuses on the activities and experiences that bring you joy and fulfilment, even without external rewards. Push yourself to think deeply about the source of this joy.

Deeper Questions:

- *What are the activities or experiences that make you forget time? Think of moments when you're fully absorbed in what you're doing (a "flow state"). What were you doing? Why do you think these activities hold your focus?*
- *Reflect on your childhood dreams and aspirations. Are there parts of those dreams that still resonate with you? What changed, and what did you lose track of as you grew up?*
- *When you think about a day filled with joy, what are you doing? How do these activities align with what makes you feel most alive?*

Exercise: Make a list of the top 5 activities that bring you the most joy. Now, examine them: What common themes or patterns do you notice? Is there a deeper value or belief driving why you love these activities? Write a few sentences about each.

Activities that brings joy	Themes or Patterns	Deeper Value or Belief

2. What You're Good At (Talent)

This goes beyond your job skills and taps into your natural gifts and abilities. We often overlook our innate talents because we assume they come naturally to everyone. It's essential to dig into what truly sets you apart.

Deeper Questions:

- *What comes easily to you but is difficult for others? Think of times when people have told you, "You're so good at this!" or "I wish I could do that the way you do."*
- *Reflect on past successes. What did you do well, and how did it make you feel? Consider both professional and personal achievements—when were you at your best?*
- *Are there challenges or situations where you thrive? What about your personality, skills, or mindset makes you excel in those moments?*

Exercise: Identify 3 skills or abilities that people often recognize in you. Then, ask trusted friends or colleagues to share their perspectives. Compare their feedback to your self-assessment—are there strengths you didn't recognize in yourself?

Skills / Talents / Strengths	External input / anecdotes	Similarities

3. What the World Needs (Purpose)

Finding purpose involves identifying the causes or issues that resonate deeply with you. It's the element of Ikigai that taps into your sense of responsibility and service to the world.

Deeper Questions:

- *Think about the injustices, problems, or needs that stir something inside you. What issues make you feel upset, excited, or motivated to take action?*
- *Reflect on a moment when you helped someone or made a difference, no matter how small. What did that feel like? Did it give you a sense of fulfillment or purpose?*

- *If you could dedicate your life to solving one problem or contributing to one cause, what would it be? Why does that cause matter to you?*

Exercise: Make a list of the top 3 global or community issues that stir strong emotions in you. For each issue, write a paragraph about why you care and how you think you could contribute—even in small ways.

Issues	Why do you care?	How can you contribute?

4. What You Can Be Paid For (Profession)

This section explores how to align your passions and talents with work that provides financial sustainability. It's about finding practical ways to turn what you love and are good at into something that can support your life.

Deeper Questions:

- *Reflect on the industries, roles, or areas where your skills are valued. Are there unconventional paths or lesser-known opportunities where your abilities could meet market needs?*
- *Think about the people who make a living doing what they love. What do they do differently? Are there ways you could start small, or transition gradually into aligning your passions with your work?*
- *Consider the intersection between what the world needs and what you love. Are there emerging fields or trends that could allow you to make a living while contributing to something meaningful?*

Exercise: Brainstorm 3 possible career paths that blend your skills, passions, and market demand. Then, choose one and research what it takes to succeed in that field—whether it’s education, networking, or developing new skills.

Potential Career Path	What would it take?	Further thoughts / comments?

Part 2: Connecting the Dots (15-20 minutes)

Once you've explored these four elements deeply, the challenge is to connect them. The intersections of these elements reveal where your true Ikigai may lie.

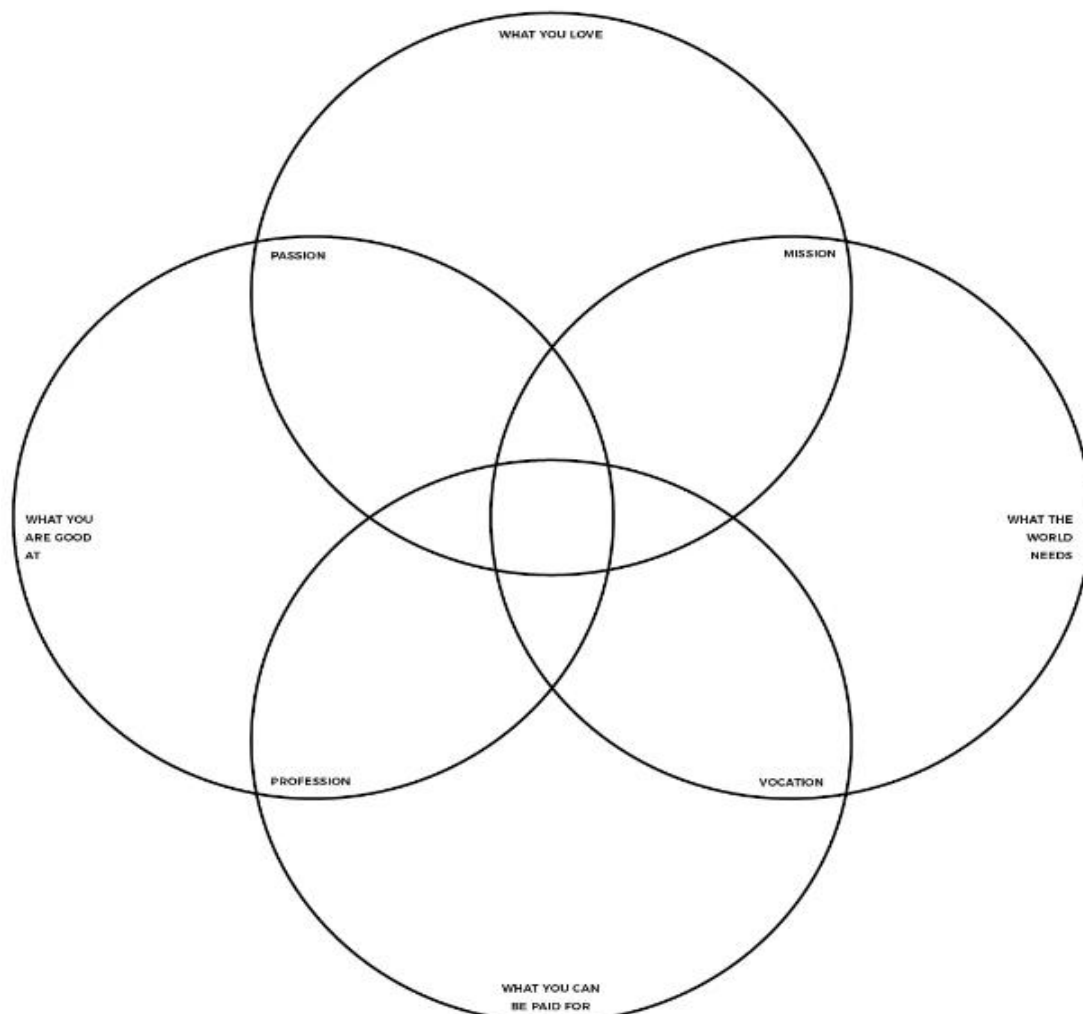
Intersections to Explore:

Passion + Talent: What activities bring you joy and also make use of your strengths? Write about a moment when you used your skills to do something you truly enjoyed. Can you repeat or expand that experience?

Talent + Profession: What abilities of yours could be in high demand, even in ways you hadn't previously thought of? Consider jobs, freelance opportunities, or entrepreneurial ventures.

Profession + Purpose: Are there careers or fields where you can make a living while contributing to a cause you care about? Even if they are currently far from your reality, write them down for consideration.

Exercise: Create a diagram with four circles representing the four elements (What you love, What you're good at, What the world needs, What you can be paid for). Start filling in ideas where these circles overlap. Reflect on what excites you most in those overlaps.



Part 3: Group Discussion (if in a Forum or Workshop setting)

Sharing with others allows for deeper insight and reflection. Often, hearing others' perspectives can help you uncover things about yourself that you might not have realized.

Deeper Sharing Prompts:

- *Share a time when you felt truly fulfilled in your work or life. What was it about that experience that touched the core of who you are?*
- *What has this exercise revealed to you about what's missing from your life or career? What changes or steps are you considering as a result?*

Part 4: Moving Forward (10 minutes)

Turning reflection into action is key to making the exercise meaningful. Here, you will focus on practical next steps to align more of your life with your Ikigai.

Deeper Questions:

- *What small, tangible step can you take tomorrow to move closer to your Ikigai? This might be taking a course, reaching out to a mentor, or dedicating more time to something you love.*

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- *How can you bring more of what you love into your current work or life, even if a complete change isn't possible yet?*

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- *Exercise: Choose one area of your life where you want to integrate your Ikigai more fully. Write down 3 actions you will take in the next month to move towards that goal.*

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