

ACTIVATE
YOUR SENSE OF PURPOSE



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JUST DO YOU

The all-consuming-self has an endless appetite for attention. If that weren't bad enough, the culture seems to validate and reinforce the idea that your self satisfaction is all that really matters. As a result, just about anything you do in the name of "doing you" is justified in the court of public opinion. You can find an almost endless supply of books, blogs, and websites that will help you "do you" better than ever. Doing you is synonymous with happiness. Over the years, however, experience has shown me a very big difference between two kinds of happiness;

happiness that comes from gratification and
happiness that comes from a sense of purpose

Happiness that results from gratification usually focuses on events, products and experiences that feel positive in the moment.

The downside of "do you" happiness is that unless it is tied to something sustainable, you eventually end up feeling worse than when you started. Stated differently, the world will certainly celebrate your impulsive spending, excessive sexual indulgences, unhealthy food choices, or substance abuse in the name of "doing you." And while plenty of businesses profit from making it convenient to "do you," nobody bears the consequences of having done so... but you. In the end, you'll come away with some cool stuff and a handful of good stories. Unfortunately, these experiences are balanced out by some intense feelings of emptiness and regret.

The truth is, the majority the people I have worked with over the years really have more than they need to live comfortably. In spite of the fact that they're doing well financially, they are also struggling daily to connect with a deeper sense of meaning.

So let's take a look at how can you find meaning in a world that is flooded with messages that constantly reinforce the idea that every need can be fulfilled through purchasing something. This is where we turn away from instant gratification and materialism and focus upon happiness that results from a sense of purpose. Ironically, purpose-driven experiences might not be purely pleasurable, but they do increase your sense of connectedness to deeper values. Consider volunteerism, for example. Studies have shown that volunteering helps people who donate their time feel more socially connected, thus warding off loneliness and depression. [1] Altruism in many forms, from donating money to a worthy cause to random acts of kindness, have been shown to light up the same reward centers of the brain associated with food and sex. Helping others is a natural high our brains are wired for. [2] Again, these activities may not always be easy or convenient, but they will intensify your reasons for living.

PURPOSE IS PERSONAL

By now, you might be getting the message that self indulgence is bad and service to others is good. Beyond good and bad, however, I want you to pick up on what will work best for you over time and under a variety of circumstances. That is, your purpose is what some people call your True North. "Are you all you want to be? Do you have a path to fulfilling your dreams? You can do so just by being yourself, and developing the gifts already inside you. Can you recall a time when you felt intensely alive? A moment when you could say with confidence, "This is the real me?" That is when you are in sync with your True North. [3]

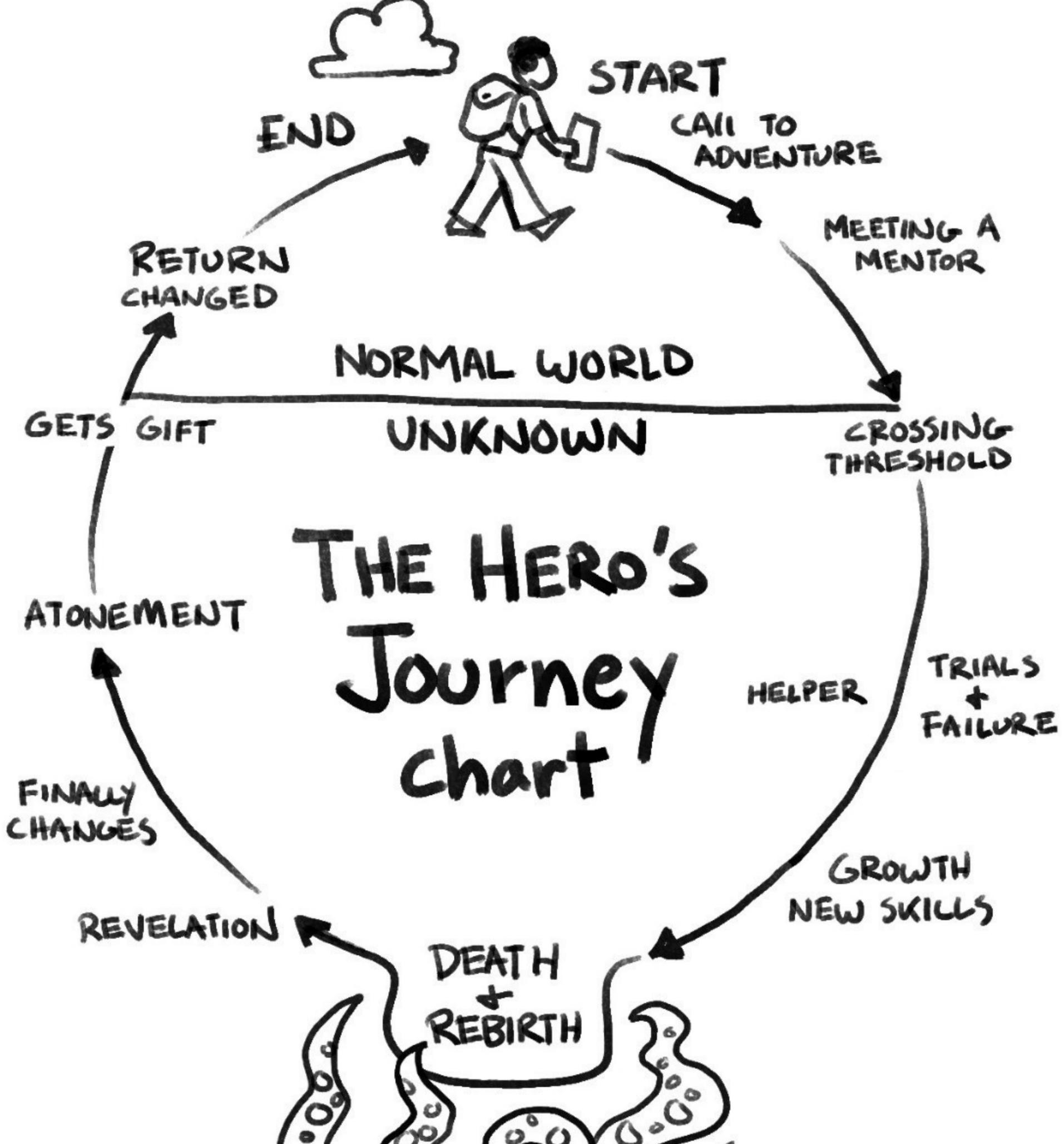
There are many reasons why you may not know your purpose (i.e., True North). Sometimes it's because the world's problems seem too big. Other times, you might think you're just too small. But if you want to change all that and find your life purpose, follow these steps:

What are your natural gifts and talents? What comes naturally to you?

Who do you serve? Who seeks you out for advice, services, support or products? What problem do you help them solve? How do you know when they are satisfied with your contribution?

What have you been doing? Recall a job you did very well. What was your role? What did you accomplish? What was your greatest difficulty? How did you make it? Who were your supporters? What did you learn from the experience overall? Why did you leave?

I encourage you to pause momentarily and synthesize the main ideas we have covered so far, from happiness to service to innovation. Together, they set the stage for you to recall and practice your purpose at will.



As you recall your responses to the questions I posed above, juxtaposed against the image of the Hero's Journey, you will likely see some overlap. The hero - like Harry Potter, Bilbo Baggins, or Luke Skywalker - represents the quest to discover and master your identity, which is synonymous with destiny. The process of becoming a hero then, is what we call Ijo L'aiye, the journey of life. Each segment of the journey is an invitation to show up more fully and demonstrate your ability to focus relentlessly and perform effortlessly. The ways in which you answer those questions will become the laws of your personal priesthood. Your life story is your sacred text in this regard. Every day, you contribute to another chapter.