Find Your Why

Knowing your WHY can help you act with purpose. Your Why is born from past experiences, it’s the sum total of your lessons learned, experiences and values.

Follow this 5-step process outlined in Simon Sinek's book Find Your Why.

1. **Gather your stories.** Bring to mind 5 stories that are the most impactful in your life. They should have a specific time, specific place and specific moment and should invoke an emotional response. Write them down.

2. **Share with a partner.** Other people can help us find meaning we can’t see, offer objective, open-minded insight. Let your partner identify the themes. You are the storyteller, they are the interpreter.

3. **Circle 1-2 themes** that seem the biggest, ones that inspire you or seem to define you. Choose one for unique contribution and one that capture the impact you want to make.

4. **Both you and your partner will draft your WHY statement.** To (contribution), so that (impact). (spend about 5 minutes each)

5. **Refine your WHY using the Friends exercise**

Gather your stories

Before meeting with your partner, you need to do a little prep work. Think of specific experiences and people in your life that have really shaped who you are today. If an event meant something to you, helped become who you are, taught you something or made you proud, write it down. As you think of the people who have been the most influential in your life, try to recall specifics about what they said or did that made a difference to you.

The goal of the story-gathering exercise is to come up with **at least five stories** that you consider the most impactful in your life. Don’t overthink the process and don’t worry about writing down all the details. A simple line or two for each is enough. You just want a starting point for sharing the stories with your partner.

If you have a hard time picking stories out of thin air, read the following prompts and see what memories they spark.

- Who in your life has helped make you the person you are today (coach, mentor, teacher, family member)? Write down a specific time when they exemplified what you admire most about them, whether they were interacting with you or someone else. How did hearing their words or watching their actions make you feel? Who else helped shape who you are today?

- Think of a day at work when, as you headed home, you might have said to yourself, “I would have done that for free.” What happened that day to make you say that?

- Think of your worst day at work - the kind of day you hope never to go through again. What happened?
• What is the earliest, specific, happy childhood memory that comes to your mind?

• At school, what was an experience you loved?

• What has been a pivotal moment in your life, one when you realized nothing would ever be the same?

• What happened that changed the way you think about the world and your role in it?

• What was a time when you gave of yourself to help someone else, after which you felt unbelievably good-like you had done something that mattered?

Tip: Circle the three most impactful stories you have and tell those to your partner first.

Share with your partner

Set aside one hour with a partner to share your stories. Share only the stories you feel right about sharing. But when you do share, allow yourself to be vulnerable enough for the process to work.

Specificity is key to the process. Tell your stories in as much detail as you can.

As you share your stories, your partner should take notes about the situations and circumstances you describe and the feelings they evoke. The goal is not simply for you to describe things you did but to uncover who you are.

Spend as much time as you need to tell each of your stories fully. As you share you may remember experiences you had forgotten. Tell these stories too. All roads lead to your WHY.

Identify your themes

The next step is to identify themes: recurring ideas, words, phrases, and feelings that emerge from your stories. Your partner should take the lead during this part of the process. Remember, your partner has an objectivity that you don’t have simply because you’re too close to see the patterns.
Your partner is focusing on listening and recording and has the benefit of objectivity. They are often hearing the stories for the first time, free of complicating factors such as personal history, insecurities or ego. That’s the reason the themes tend to be more obvious to them.

### Draft your WHY

Once you’ve identified your overarching themes, it’s time to turn them into a draft of your WHY statement. Follow this format:

\[
\text{To } \underline{\text{contribution}}, \text{ so that } \underline{\text{impact}}
\]

This is the easiest way to ensure that your statement is simple, actionable, and focused on how you positivity affect other people.

Spend about 5 minutes each (both you and your partner, working separately) working on your own statements. Then rejoin your partner and share your respective drafts. You can either choose to go with one or the other or to combine them.

Remember, the goal of this draft is not perfection. The goal is to get it in the ballpark, to come up with something that feels right. The actual words can, and likely will change as you continue to spend time with your WHY, reflect on it and, most important, put it into action.

### Refine your WHY statement

After you have a draft, the final stage of the WHY discovery process is testing and refining your WHY statement. One fun way to validate your WHY statement is to do the **Friends exercise**.