“I have had a love affair with Japan ever since I first visited the country at the age of five. Some 40 years later my relationship with Japan has never been more intimate. The older I get the more I seem to discover how unique, beautiful and wise the culture and people of Japan are.

It was in 1998 when I returned to Japan to teach English that I was introduced to the most amazing word when a co-worker asked me what my “ikigai” was. I hadn’t heard the word before and was astounded to discover that the Japanese language had a single word to encapsulate one’s reason for living.

Twenty years later, after stumbling upon the Westernized “Ikigai Venn Diagram” it became my personal mission to study and share with the world what ikigai means to the Japanese.”

Nick is a father, husband, ikigai coach, Japanologist and internet marketer.

In 1995 Nick was awarded a one year traineeship to Japan with the Daisho Corporation and worked at several izakaya restaurants in Tokyo as a trainee chef. This was a life changing experience for Nick, and was his first experience of ikigai - finding purpose and meaning in his day to day living

Nick returned to Japan in 1998 to teach English working at various commercial English conversation schools. After becoming frustrated with overly strict school policies that were designed to increase the school’s profit margins over student’s needs, Nick opened his own English school cafe in his wife’s hometown of Tajimi in Gifu-ken in 2004. Two years later Nick created his first information product Sandwich Eikaiwa - an English conversation course for Japanese learners of English.

Since his return to Melbourne in 2008 Nick has operated several businesses. He now dedicates himself fulltime to his IkigaiTribe community.

Nick regularly visits Japan and plans to “retire” there.

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What Makes Your Life Worth Living?

Let’s begin with a simple exercise to the thought provoking question: “What things in your day to day existence make your life worth living?”.

These are your **ikigai sources**, which we’ll discuss later.

Write out what comes to mind. Be completely honest with yourself and try not to force answers. I have offered some examples below to help you get started.

**Examples**

| My relationship with my son makes my life worth living. |
| Learning about Japan and sharing my knowledge of Japanese culture makes my life worth living. |
| Catching up with old friends makes my life worth living. |

| What things in your day to day existence make your life worth living? | makes my life worth living. |
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Ikigai Misunderstood

The Venn diagram below is what you will find on the internet when you google ‘ikigai’. This is **NOT** Ikigai. This is not what ikigai means to the Japanese. They do not use this framework. This framework is just one blogger’s interpretation (misinterpretation) of ikigai. In fact, in his own words:

“In 2014, I wrote a blog post on the subject of Ikigai. In that blog post, I merged two concepts to create something new. Essentially, I merged a venn diagram on ‘purpose’ with Dan Buettner’s Ikigai concept, in relation to living to be more than 100. The sum total of my effort was that I changed one word on a diagram and shared a ‘new’ meme with the world.” - Marc Winn, Meme Seeding, [http://theviewinside.me/meme-seeding/](http://theviewinside.me/meme-seeding/)

Listen to my podcast interview with Marc Winn - [Marc Winn On Merging Ikigai With The Venn Diagram of Purpose](http://theviewinside.me/meme-seeding/)

Ikigai Westernized

The Purpose Venn Diagram with the word IKIGAI as the centerpiece instead of PURPOSE.
Ikigai Is Not About....

**Ikigai is not about making money.**
Ikigai is not the pursuit of professional success or financial freedom. Most Japanese would not associate making money with ikigai. Success and the accumulation of wealth could be a by-product of your ikigai, but it should not be the focus.

**Ikigai is not about what you are good at.**
You don’t have to be good at something to find your ikigai. Ikigai can be a daily ritual you enjoy, or the practice of a new hobby. Ikigai is more about growth rather than mastery.

**Ikigai is not what the world needs from you.**
Ikigai is not about what the world needs from you. Ikigai lies in the realm of community, family, friendships and in the roles you fulfill.

**Ikigai is often not about what you love.**
Ikigai is more about finding purpose and living your values, rather than doing the things you love.
The Purpose Venn Diagram

The Purpose Venn diagram is a useful framework for evaluating your career. It is a simplistic overview to understand what your current work situation is. It is used by career advisors to help people create a more balanced work-life situation, but it was originally inspired by a natal chart, and is the work of Spanish astrologer and author Andrés Zuzunaga. Full credit should go to him for this framework.

Propósito

Created by Andrés Zuzunaga in 2011. Published in 2012 in Borja Vilaseca's book ¿Qué harías si no tuvieras miedo? (What would you do if you weren't afraid?) and later translated into English on hundreds of websites and ended up associating itself with the Ikigai concept,
The Purpose Venn Diagram

- That which you love
- Mission
- That which you are good at
- Profession
- That which the world needs
- Vocation
- That which you can be paid for

PURPOSE
What Is Ikigai?

“The word ‘ikigai’ is usually used to indicate the source of value in one’s life or the things that make one’s life worthwhile. Secondly, the word is used to refer to mental and spiritual circumstances under which individuals feel that their lives are valuable. There is a difference between ikigai and the sense of well-being. Ikigai is more concerned with the future: for example, even when one feels that one’s present life is dark, possessing a desire or goal for the future allows one to feel ikigai.” - Noriyuki Nakanishi

Ikigai Sources & Ikigai-Kan

The mother of ikigai psychology, Kamiya Mieko, defined Ikigai as:

- something that is a source of ikigai - **ikigai (source)**
- and the state of mind of when one is feeling ikigai associated to a source - **ikigai-kan**

“There are two ways of using the word ikigai. When someone says “this child is my ikigai,” it refers to the source or target of the ikigai,..... and when one feels ikigai as a state of mind - **ikigai-kan.**” - Kamiya Mieko

Ikigai-kan

Ikigai-kan can be translated as ikigai awareness. It is a type of happiness, but with three unique distinctions that general happiness lacks.

The Three Ikigai-kan Distinctions

1. Ikigai awareness is more future-oriented than happiness. If one is struggling with his or her present life, he or she can still perceive ikigai at that moment as long as he or she has hope or a goal in the future. This is what Kamiya calls **mirai-sei** - a bright future.

2. Ikigai awareness is related to one’s sense of self worth more strongly than happiness.

3. Ikigai awareness is **strongly linked with one’s personal values.**

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Your Ikigai Sources & Ikiga-kan (Feelings)

What do you think are some of your ikigai sources and the feelings you experience from these sources?

I have provided an example below.

**Ikigai source:** My son

**Ikigai awareness/feelings:** Love, joy, pride of the young man he has become, excited by what his future will bring, happy memories of the past, gratitude for the close relationship we have.

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**Ikigai source:**

**Ikigai awareness/feelings:**

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**Ikigai source:**

**Ikigai awareness/feelings:**

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**Ikigai source:**

**Ikigai awareness/feelings:**

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**Ikigai source:**

**Ikigai awareness/feelings:**

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**Ikigai source:**

**Ikigai awareness/feelings:**

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**Ikigai source:**

**Ikigai feelings:**
The Ikigai Framework

Below is a visual framework I have developed in consultation with Japan’s leading Ikigai researcher, Professor Akihiro Hasegawa of Toyo Eiwa University. Based on Mieko Kamiya’s definition of ikigai, I have created a framework using the Venn diagram we are all familiar with. In the top circle are Values, Kamiya’s third ikigai awareness proposition, at the bottom is presence and hopefulness (mirai-sei), Kamiya’s first ikigai awareness proposition, and then in the circles on the sides are ikigai sources. Where the circles intersect we can experience ikigai-kan.

And at the center is self-actualization, which Kamiya describes as the development of the core which takes a lot of effort and patience to realize.
The Four Ikigai-Kan States

Below are four ikigai-kan awareness states: where we can experience the feeling of ikigai.

**Life satisfaction** - in the practice of our craft, hobbies or interests that support our values.

**Harmony and connection** - where our values align with our roles and relationships.

**Purpose and gratitude** - when we are hopeful of the future and present in our roles and relationships.

**Creativity and transformational experiences** - by expressing your creative self and in seeking new experiences.
Practising Ikigai

Living your ikigai is easy once you know where it lies. You just need to focus on and action the things that give your life meaning.

1. Savour small joys - find small things that make your life worth living and be present to enjoy them.
2. Pursue a hobby - make time for that hobby you have been neglecting, or start one you have always wanted to try.
3. Improve a relationship - communicate with a significant other and offer them help.
4. Find purpose - in a role you have always wanted to fulfill.

What areas of your life would you like to focus on?

Print out the Ikigai Spectrum template on the following page and write out areas of your life that you think would give you ikigai, everything from small daily joys to life defining goals.
My Ikigai Spectrum
DISCOVER THE COMPLETE IKIGAI FRAMEWORK

Developed in consultation with and recognised as an accurate translation of ikigai by Professor Akihiro Hasegawa, The Ikigai Framework offers a visual representation to understanding and finding ikigai.

FIND YOUR IKIGAI AT IKIGAITRIBE.COM