



Statement of Purpose

We all have unique skills and character traits born of our nature and our history. These may give an immediate list of areas we are most likely to excel at and others where much more work is needed to succeed. Notice this is about likelihood not destiny.

I reject the notion that purpose is something that is to be found or uncovered. The idea there is one unique purpose assigned to you is limiting and ignores the vast adaptability present in all of us.

Purpose is created, crafted by your hand and maintained, modelled, modified on a daily basis. This exercise aims to be the clay on to which you will begin to shape your direction.

It is just one of many paths to help you clarify your thinking and more will need exploring before you can really feel your vision come to life.

In a study by **Lockwood and Kunda*** on a small number of college students it was found that reading about an outstanding peer significantly increased the aim of those students' goals. Without having that first example most students' objectives were perfectly ordinary. **Their aspirations were elevated by the thought of a role model.**

What we aim for here is reminding ourselves that people out there have done amazing things with their lives. Things that they themselves may not have thought possible at the start. For this exercise you must suspend disbelief and allow yourself to dream as big as possible. We can start doing that by thinking of how big others have dreamed before us.

1. Write down 3 names of role models, mentors, or people you admire and respect. For each list a few of their dreams and accomplishments. *These can be both people in your life or ones you have read about. The more different they are from each other the better.*

2. If you were to ask them what their purpose has been in life, what would be the most general statement they would give you?



* The scientist in me feels obliged to mention that the study consisted of only 43 students. I first came across it in a popular social science book (*Originals* by A. Grant) and, as is often the case with popular books, the strength of the studies cited can be underwhelming. I chose to include it anyway because it is still consistent with a larger body of work on **priming** (an effect in which exposure to one stimulus can increase or decrease response to a later stimulus). Another reason is that the study is freely available online and cites more articles within its introduction you might find interesting, here it is: Penelope Lockwood and Ziva Kunda, "Increasing the Salience of One's Best Selves Can Undermine Inspiration by Outstanding Role Models" *Journal of personality and social psychology* 76 (1999): 214-28