

# FINDING YOUR NORTH STAR: WORKING WITH PURPOSE

How to find your north star and how to identify and prioritise your values

WHO HAS EVER FELT LOST OR  
UNSURE OF YOUR NEXT STEPS?

ALL OF US!

WE ALL NEED A NORTH STAR...

# WHAT IS A NORTH STAR?

# A NORTH STAR IS A...

- guiding principle or long-term purpose that helps individuals stay on track, make decisions, and shape their careers and lives.
- a personal mission that shapes decisions and career moves.
- your deeper motivation—the impact you want to make, the values you live by, and the strengths you bring to the world

# A NORTH STAR IS NOT A...

- a specific job title or role. It's not *"I want to be a CEO"* or *"I want to be rich."* Unlike short-term goals, a North Star is constant and acts as an internal compass, keeping you aligned with what truly matters.

# CASE STUDY: MALALA YOUSAFZAI



# Malala

- **Who?** A Nobel Peace Prize-winning activist who survived an assassination attempt for advocating girls' education.
- **Her North Star** - "To fight for every girl's right to an education"
- **How did it guide her decisions?** As a child, she blogged anonymously about education rights.
- Even after being attacked, she continued speaking out.
- She co-founded the Malala Fund to promote global education
- Malala's North Star wasn't "to become famous" or "to write a book." It was driven by values and a deep sense of purpose, shaping everything she pursued. Her success is a byproduct of her North Star.





# HOW I FOUND MY NORTH STAR

KIRAN SETHI



# KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM FINDING MY NORTH STAR

## — 1. It's Okay to Feel Lost at University (Or in life!)

- Many students feel disengaged or unsure about their path.
- Even if you're doing "okay" academically and socially, it doesn't always mean you're fulfilled.
- Feeling this way isn't failure—it's part of the process.

## 2. Small Moments Can Reveal Your North Star

- A single volunteering experience sparked a shift in perspective.
- Pay attention to moments that make you feel **energised, alive, or truly yourself**—these are clues to your North Star.
- Your North Star isn't always obvious at first—it can start as a “seed” that grows over time.

## — 3. Purpose Can Shape Your Career Path

- Once you find what truly motivates you, career decisions become clearer.
- Choosing work in **education, social mobility, and impact-driven roles** wasn't just a career move—it was about **aligning with purpose**.
- Your North Star helps you **persevere through challenges**, even on bad days.

## 4. Your North Star Can Lead to Real Impact

- I have now helped directly and indirectly 1000s of people built from this purpose.
- Over £1 million raised for a range of charities I've worked with to create opportunities for others.
- You don't need to have it all figured out at university—but being open to experiences can lead to something bigger than yourself.

# WORKING WITH PURPOSE

How to identify and prioritise your values

# WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A VALUE?

# DEFINITIONS

## VALUE

/'valju:/ Noun

Principles or standards of behaviour,  
one's judgement of what is important in life

# DEFINITIONS

## VALUE

Values are the core principles or beliefs that guide how we live, decide, and relate to others.

They represent what we consider meaningful, worthwhile, and good —shaping our actions, character, and purpose across time and cultures.

# DEFINITIONS

## VALUE

Values are the enduring inner commitments—shaped by reflection, experience, and culture—that guide how we live with integrity, relate to others, and pursue what we believe is good or meaningful.



# FAMOUS DEFINITIONS OF VALUES FROM MODERN DAY THINKERS

1. Values are the core beliefs that guide your decisions, relationships, and sense of fulfillment—especially when incentives or outcomes aren't immediately obvious - **Naval Ravikant**
2. Your values are what you consider important—**the qualities and standards that guide how you behave in life.** - **Ray Dalio** (*Principles*)
3. The **moral commitments** and **life meanings** one chooses in the face of suffering or freedom. - **Viktor Frankl** (*Man's Search for Meaning*)
5. It is better to live your own destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else's life with perfection - Bhagavad Gita
6. "The superior man understands what is right; the inferior man understands what will sell." – Confucius
7. "The unexamined life is not worth living." Socrates

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF  
VALUES?

## **Personal Growth & Integrity**

**Honesty**

**Courage**

**Self-awareness**

**Discipline**

**Wisdom**

## **Relationships & Community**

- **Kindness**
- **Empathy**
- **Respect**
- **Trust**
- **Loyalty**

## Work & Achievement

**Excellence**

**Ambition**

**Perseverance**

**Impact**

**Focus**

## Freedom & Autonomy

- **Independence**
- **Creativity**
- **Freedom**
- **Adventure**
- **Authenticity**

## **Social Good & Leadership**

**Equality**

**Inclusion**

**Responsibility**

**Vision**

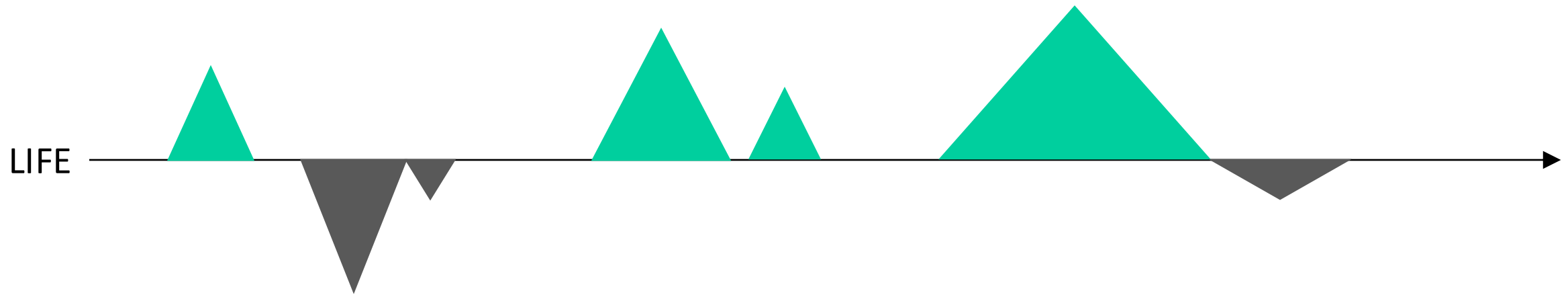
**Courage to Speak Up**

## **Health & Wellbeing**

- **Vitality**
- **Resilience**
- **Presence**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Rest**

# DEFINING CORE VALUES

In order to open up our thinking about values, we are going to work through some questions about our **previous experiences** that relate to 'peak moments' and 'suppressed values'



# DEFINING CORE VALUES

1. Consider a moment in your life that was meaningful for you in some way – a stand out experience.

What was happening to you?

What does this tell you about your values?

2. Think about a time that you became upset, angry or frustrated.

What was happening then and why did you feel that way?

What personal values were being violated?

# DEFINING CORE VALUES

3. What's your code of conduct about how you live your life?

What do you need to be in place to feel a sense of fulfilment? What are the personal values that are important to uphold?

4. What themes emerge from your answers?  
What do these tell you about your core values?

Following these reflections, complete the values activity and identify your top 3/5 values



# IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES

Identifying our core values is step 1

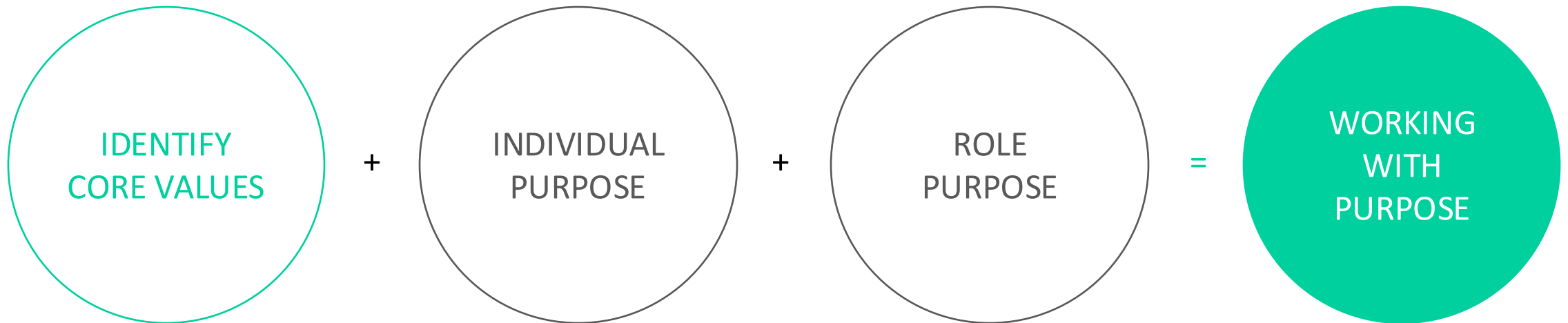
From this point, we need to work on:

2. Articulating them clearly and often
3. Reflecting on the impact of working with / against our values
4. Testing them through our daily decision making

# WORKING WITH PURPOSE:

## WHY?

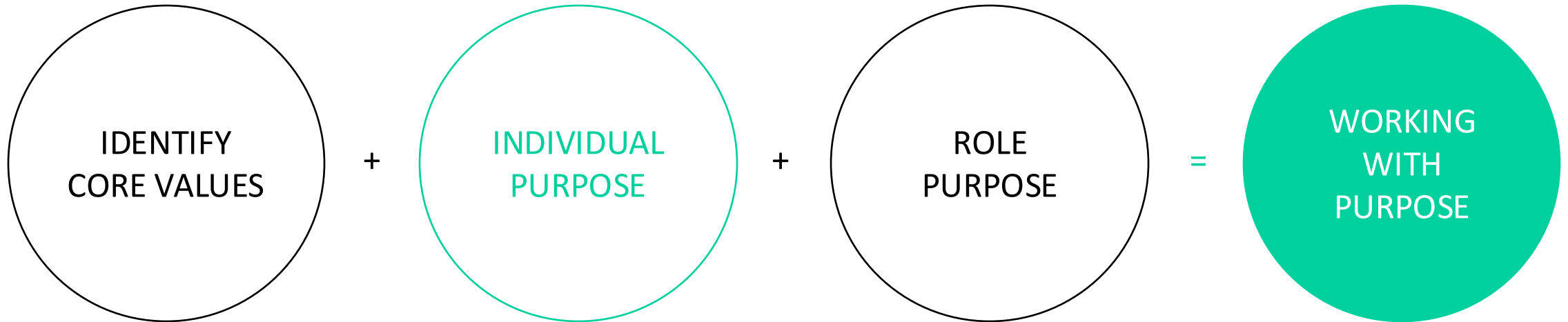
Gaining clarity on our individual purpose and working with our core values in mind means that we are able to move in a direction that helps us to simultaneously achieve on both personal and professional levels



# INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE

Other people's actions and choices can have a significant impact on our own choices and behaviour due to 'social contagion' – this is particularly prevalent whilst at university!

'Going with the flow' can take away our sense of purpose and autonomy



# KEY ELEMENTS TO INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE

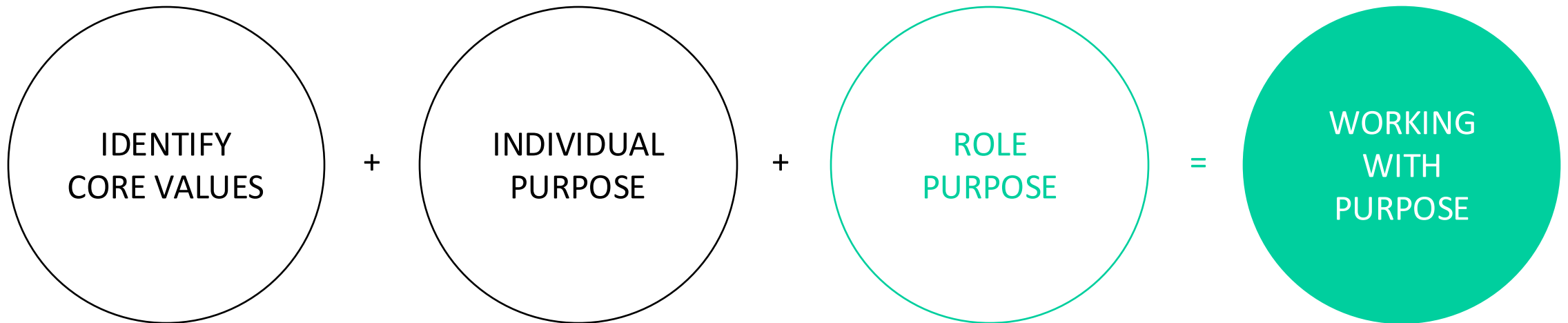
## SELF – ASSESSMENT

- What are you passionate about?
- What are your core beliefs?
- What are your top three strengths?
- Are you a leader? Doer? Follower?
- What matters to you?
- What do you want to be known for?
- What are you known for?

# ROLE PURPOSE

Our purpose at work can be difficult to define beyond why our job exists. **Only 28% of people say their work gives them a sense of purpose.**

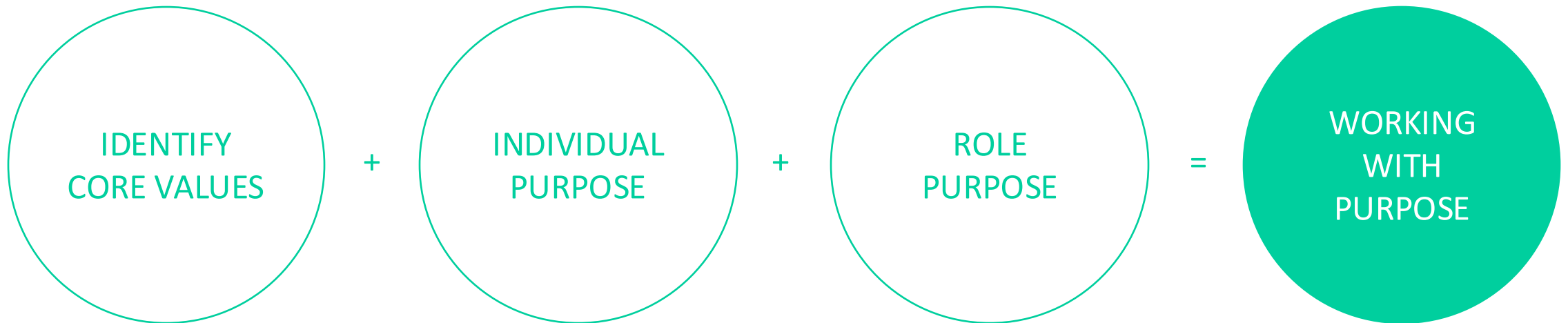
Breaking down our purpose at work can help us to establish clarity in how we fit into the bigger picture and who benefits from our contribution



# WORKING WITH PURPOSE:

## SUMMARY

Gaining clarity on our individual purpose and working with our core values in mind means that we are able to move in a direction that helps us to simultaneously achieve on both personal and professional levels



• PAUSE

# SPEAKING YOUR NORTH STAR INTO EXISTENCE

CREATING YOUR OWN MISSION STATEMENT



# WHAT IS A MISSION STATEMENT?

A **mission statement** is a clear and concise declaration of an individual's or organisation's core purpose, values, and goals. It defines **why** they exist, **what** they aim to achieve, and **how** they intend to do it.

# MISSION STATEMENT, WHAT IS IT?

- A formal summary of your aims and values
- You can have as many as you want
- Try and make it 8 words or less
- It will define the work you do and create

# MISSION STATEMENTS

## (COMPANY)

- MMU: “TO PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH THAT TRANSFORMS STUDENT’S LIVES AND BENEFITS SOCIETY.”
- TED TALKS: “SPREADING IDEAS.”
- COCA-COLA: “TO REFRESH THE WORLD.”
- GOOGLE: “TO ORGANISE THE WORLD’S INFORMATION.”
- UBER: “EVOLVING THE WAY THE WORLD MOVES.”

# MISSION STATEMENTS

## (PERSONAL)

— OPRAH: “TO INSPIRE OTHERS TO BE MORE THAN THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD BE.”

— RICHARD BRANSON: “TO HAVE FUN AND LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES.”

— WALT DISNEY: “TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY.”

— STEVE JOBS: “TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD BY MAKING TOOLS FOR THE MIND THAT ADVANCE MANKIND.”

— THE ROCK: “MANA.GRATITUDE.TEQUILA. AND NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER.”

# PERSONAL COMPASS: EXERCISE

## — **VALUES** - What principles matter most to you?

- Examples: Creativity, fairness, empowerment, innovation, sustainability.
- Prompt: *"What do you stand for? What kind of world do you want to help create?"*

## — **Strengths** – What are you naturally good at?

- Examples: Writing, problem-solving, leadership, empathy.
- Prompt: *"What skills or qualities do people praise you for?"*

## — **Passions** – What excites you?

- Examples: Music, social justice, business, technology, storytelling.
- Prompt: *"What topics or activities do you lose track of time doing?"*

## — **Impact** – How do you want to contribute?

- Examples: Educating others, improving mental health support, tackling climate change.
- Prompt: *"What's a problem in the world that you want to help solve?"*

## ACTIVITY

### CREATE YOUR OWN MISSION STATEMENT

**VERB + AUDIENCE/GROUP + OUTCOME**

ACTIVITY

PERSONAL BRANDING

TO CONTRIBUTION

SO THAT  
IMPACT



## ACTIVITY

### CREATE YOUR OWN MISSION STATEMENT

WHAT + **WHO** + HOW

## MY PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

TO HELP PEOPLE FROM LESS  
ADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS TO  
FULFILL THEIR POTENTIAL VIA FREE  
EDUCATION

ACTIVITY

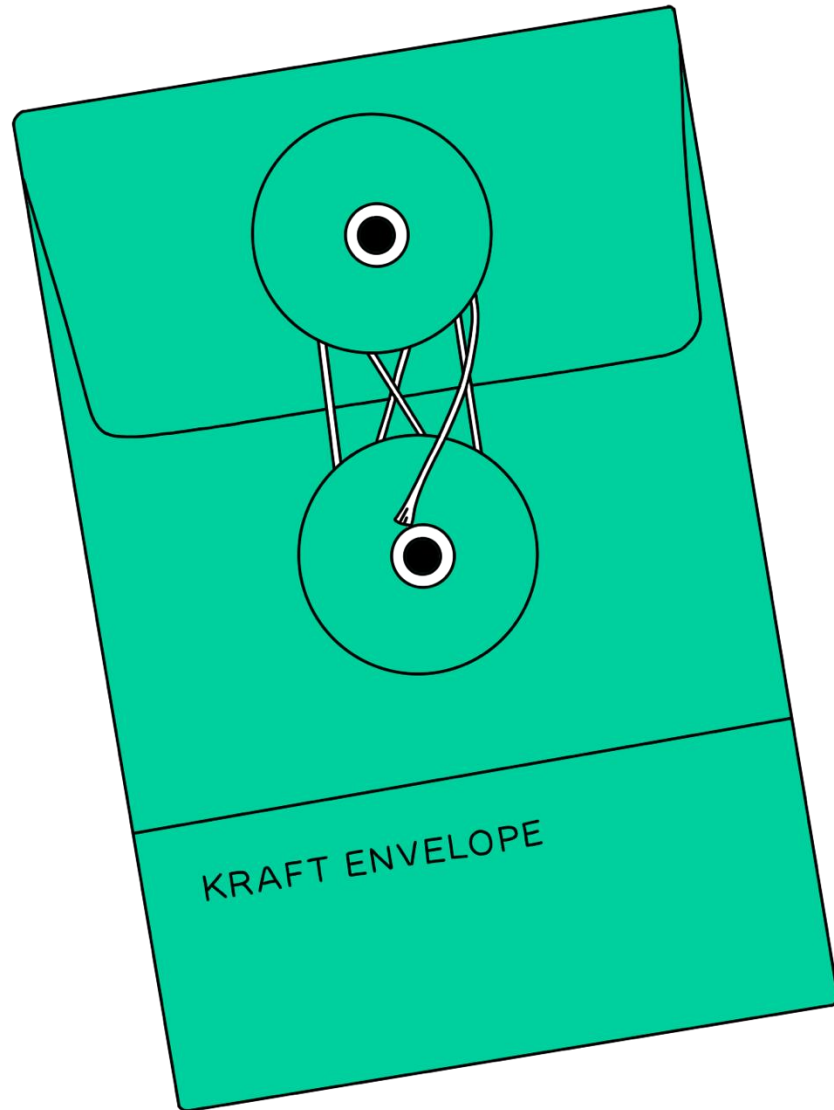
OVER TO YOU!

# NEXT STEPS AND ACTION PLANS FOR FINDING & FOLLOWING YOUR NORTH STAR

- **1. Reflect** – Look back at moments that made you feel **energised & engaged**
  - *What activities make you lose track of time?*
  - *When have you felt the most fulfilled?*
  - *What causes or ideas do you care deeply about?*
- **2. Explore** – Step outside your comfort zone
  - *Try volunteering, internships, or side projects.*
  - *Say yes to opportunities that align with your interests.*
  - *Meet people doing work that inspires you.*
- **3. Align** – Start shaping your path
  - *Does your degree or career direction align with your values and strengths?*
  - *If not, what small changes can you make to get closer to it?*
  - *What's one step you can take this week to explore your interests?*
- **4. Persist** – Your North Star will keep you going
  - *Bad days and setbacks will happen—remind yourself why you started.*
  - *Your North Star can evolve—keep checking in with yourself.*
  - *Surround yourself with people who support your growth.*

WHAT'S ONE (MORE) THING  
YOU'RE GOING TO DO IN THE NEXT  
MONTH TO MOVE YOU CLOSER TO  
YOUR NORTH STAR?

# INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE



Write a letter to your future self...

- Write about the person you are now
- What topics are important?
- How do you see your life?
- What will you be doing in six months time?
- What goals will you have achieved?

# USEFUL RESOURCES

## — BOOKS

- The Alchemist – Paulo Coelho
- The Power of Now – Eckhart Tolle
- The Concise Mastery – Robert Greene
- Atomic Habits – James Clear
- Grit – Angela Duckworth

## — ARTICLES

- [Hunter S Thompson](#)
- [The Japanese Concept of Ikigai & How It Can Help You Find Purpose](#)
- [16Personalities Test](#) – Helps identify strengths & motivations
- [Purpose Compass Tool](#) – Free guide to clarifying your purpose

## — VIDEOS

- [How to Create the Life You Want \(And Find Your North Star\)](#)
- [Carl Jung – How to Find Your Purpose](#)
- [How to Find Your Purpose – Robert Green & Dr Andrew Huberman](#)

## — APPLICATIONS

- HEADSPACE
- TRELLO
- NOTION