

Find Your Why to Get Unstuck

BY STEPHEN WARLEY

If you are feeling stuck in your career it's because you have no momentum in your life forward or backward. You are stationary.

You are caught between the tension of knowing you no longer want to do the work you've been doing, yet you have no idea what you would like to do for work.

You are in limbo.

You may even know what you want to do for work, but the fear of taking a step forward into the unknown outweighs the fear of remaining miserable because at least its familiar.

You are in purgatory.

You also feel stuck because it might be the first time in your life you are recognizing your desire for "something more" than you have been doing. You are tired of doing what you are "suppose to do" and now want to explore what it is you "want to do".

There is a way out of your stuckness. Find your "Why".

What Is Your "Why"?

Your "Why" is a statement of purpose that describes why you do the work you do and why you live the lifestyle you do.

It is your calling.

It is your conviction.

It is your mission statement.

It is a vision of your life and work.

It is the thread of your career story.

It is your core source of motivation.

It is the reference point for all your decisions and actions.

It defines who you are and what makes you productive.

It's the reason for your life's work.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious or unfulfilled, it is because you most likely don't have a clear understanding of your "why". You are working to live up to someone else's "why" in the absence of your own why. You are out of alignment with your own unique purpose.

Right now you have infinite choices about the type of work you can do and how you can do it. If you want to feel fulfilled, successful and gain mastery, then you can really only choose one type of work.

Life Skills That Matter – Stephen Warley: <https://lifeskillsthatmatter.com/find-your-why/>

So of all the different types of work available to you, why did you chose to do what you are doing right now?

You might respond by telling me:

“I needed a job out of college to start paying off my student loans.”

“I didn’t know what else to do, so I just took this job because I needed one.”

“I just fell into this career path.”

“I do what I do because I felt pressure to follow in my mom’s (or dad’s) footsteps.

“I thought it was a career path that paid well and could offer me financial security.”

These are reasons for your decisions for the work you currently do, but they aren’t your “Why”.

They are perfectly valid reasons, but they are external pressures that forced you to make a choice that wasn’t on your terms.

Your “Why” comes from within you.

It is a feeling that compels you to do the work you want to do even if it requires short-term sacrifice. You’ll struggle with thoughts of self-doubt. You might not make much money right away. Your loved ones might not support your decision. You might suffer several failures before your experience success.

Regardless of those sacrifices, you still feel driven to pursue the work you really want to do because it gives you meaning. You can’t imagine doing anything else. This work is an expression of your true identity. It is your purpose in life.

That’s your “Why”.

Your “Why” provides stability and direction in the chaos of life. It makes your grow by giving you the courage and resilience to endure tough challenges.

Money is the result of our work, but it’s our “why” that fuels our work. Your why is the driving force behind why you want to redesign your lifestyle.

It provides an explanation about *why* you want to do the work you’ve always wanted to do.

How to Find Your Why

First, let me establish some expectations for you. If you have no idea what your “Why” is right now, you’ve not going to magically discover it in the next hour. For most people it takes months or years. It’s not like looking for your lost keys, it’s a process.

To find your “Why” you need to begin a [practice of self-awareness](#). My top recommendation for starting a self-awareness practice is by [writing about your thoughts, feelings and actions on a daily basis](#).

I truly believe everyone has a “Why”. It’s hidden in the patterns of your thoughts, feelings, behaviors and habits. The vast majority of the people who tell me they don’t know their “Why” haven’t put in the effort to track and analyze their patterns.

Everyone’s “Why” is hidden in a different place and can be uncovered in many different ways.

Here are the most common areas of your life to start looking:

Your Values

[Your values](#) as your personal code of conduct. They are your core beliefs that guide your actions, behaviors and your interactions with the world.

Your Motivations

Your motivations are the actions you feel compelled to take to express “your Why”. It’s what gets you excited to work without having to give into external pressure from others. They are actions you enjoy immensely and make you feel satisfied.

Your Passions

Your passions are your interests that constantly leave you wanting more. You want to spend more time experiencing them than you are currently able to do. You can’t stop thinking about them. You might even be considered somewhat of an “expert” by your friends and family.

Your Strengths

Your strengths encompass your natural abilities, your talents, marketable (hard) skills, people (soft) skills and other life skills. They are your natural tendencies for work. They are tasks that come easy to you and feel satisfying when you complete them. Sometimes you wonder how anyone else could have difficulty completing them because they are so effortless for you. (If you don’t have a grasp of your strengths, consider taking the [StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment](#).)

You can start sifting through those areas of your life to find your “Why” by:

Conducting Self-Experiments

I believe the most beneficial method of [learning about yourself](#) to discover your “Why” is through self-experimentation. It enables you to challenge your assumptions and gain new perspectives about yourself and your patterns.

I believe in them so much that [I send out Self-Improvement Challenges](#) every week! Here’s one to help you discover your “Why”.

Challenge: Describe Your Ideal Workday

The goal of this exercise is to empower you to design your workday on your terms. In order to do that you have to gain clarity about your “Why”. It will dictate how you spend your time and energy.

Provide as much detail as possible. Ask yourself questions like: When would you work? Where? How? With whom? What would you be working on? What motivates you? After you respond to each of those questions, ask yourself “why”.

Track Your Thoughts

As part of starting a [daily writing habit](#) to become more [self-aware](#), consider only tracking your most recurring thoughts. Often we have trouble keeping the stuff we care about most off our minds! You might even be surprised how frequently you are thinking about something. It could be your “Why” and you didn’t even know it!

Analyzing the Thread of Your Career

Look back over the course of your career and look for common threads like:

- the reason you were drawn to the jobs you held
- your most rewarding work accomplishments
- compliments colleagues gave you about your work
- circumstances that made you feel productive
- your favorite work tasks

Once you’ve made a list for each of the above, read each statement and ask yourself, “Why?”.

That simple question will get you to dig deeper, so you can discover your own “Why”.

Asking Your Inner Circle

Sometimes we are always the last to know something about ourselves. Our trusted inner circle of family, friends and colleagues often sees something in ourselves we fail to notice.

A word of caution: DO NOT ask them what they think your “Why” is or what you should do. You want them to merely shed some light on your patterns. Ask them what you think gets you most excited in terms of work or what they think your strengths are. Remember, only you can find your “Why”.

Questions to Ask Yourself

Find your why by asking yourself some of the following questions. You might want to continually be asking yourself them to get your subconscious mind to reveal your “Why”. A meaningful “Why” statement includes an emotional motivation behind the work you want to do.

1. What gets you excited or can’t stop thinking about?
2. Is there a problem or challenge that emotionally moves you to take action?
3. What kind of work would give you a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment?

4. What aspect of your career have you enjoyed across all your past work experiences?
5. What kind of work feels effortless to you, but drives your curiosity to learn more?

My “Why”

So I would be remiss if I didn't share my “Why” with you. It took my years to articulate, but looking back it was always there. That's the paradox of finding your “Why”. It's hidden in plain sight!

I want to help people find more meaningful work. I want to help people relieve their chronic work anxiety by helping them see patterns in their story, so they can design their lifestyle around the work they have always wanted to do.”

Go find your why!