



Week Four: Choose and Act from Purpose

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The essence of resilience is making choices, in the moment, about what we focus our attention on and what we organize ourselves towards. This can, of course, be hugely challenging. At the same time, it is fundamental to building agency in our lives: the capacity for action, no matter the circumstance.

President Obama, in a fascinating 2004 interview, said that he frequently asks, “How does this connect with a larger sense of purpose?” He explained, “The most powerful political moments for me come when I feel like my actions are aligned with a certain truth. I can feel it. When I’m talking to a group and I’m saying something truthful, I can feel a power that comes out of those statements that is different than when I’m just being glib or clever.”

We can access a different feeling about a particular activity by connecting it to a larger sense of purpose. We can ask ourselves “For the sake of what am I doing this?”

For example, I generally don’t get excited about marketing. The message that you are reading has a marketing intention; hopefully readers like you will become interested in my work and we will develop a deeper relationship. Yet, my motivation and passion gets ignited by writing these little pieces for people that I know and care about, and who I believe will derive something of value that they can use in their lives. The real purpose for this is to support people in waking up, in the fullest sense, in their lives. If it generates business, of course, that’s great. However, first and foremost, I orient towards the purpose of accelerating the development of people in my network. Connecting the writing to that purpose is much more energizing for me, and is what allows me to produce this message (and coach leaders and even write whole books!)

Ask yourself this: ***For the sake of what are you doing what you’re doing?*** Find the purpose, deeper and more meaningful than the immediate goal, that a given activity serves. Connect the dots:

- “I am hiring a professional video producer in order to deliver this message in the most powerful possible way and make a tangible difference for viewers.” (That’s different from “keep me on track in the project.”)
- “I am exercising for the sake of feeling fully alive, energized and creative for my clients.” (Different from “losing weight.”)
- “I am letting my assistant go because she will be more fulfilled in a different job and I need a different level of support in order to do mine.” (Different from “she’s incompetent.”)

Experiment with this. Consider a current task or project with which you are struggling for motivation and focus. Describe, on paper if you wish, why you are doing it. Note the reasons... which reasons feel like “should’s?” Which reasons feel mobilizing and inspiring?

Now, organize your attention around the latter. Center yourself in those purposes, connecting, in your awareness, the activity to the purpose it serves. Note how your relationship to the activity changes as you connect it to purpose.



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