

HOW TO LIVE YOUR LIFE ON PURPOSE

Look behind every championship team and you'll find an extraordinary coach. That's why men like John Wooden, Vince Lombardi, Bear Bryant, Don Shula and Phil Jackson are household names.

The same phenomenon exists in business. What would Apple have been without Steve Jobs or Berkshire Hathaway without Warren Buffett?

In our own lives, we face personal challenges too. We often get off track or struggle in our personal relationships. Wouldn't it be great if someone could consult with you and guide you, to lend encouragement and practical advice to help you live the life you've always dreamed of living?

Well, in fact, it *is* possible. There are now hundreds of licensed psychotherapists and family counselors in the United States who work as certified life coaches. I know. I'm one of them.

As a life coach, my goal here in these *Virtue of Happiness* columns – for 12 years now in *To The Point!* – is to show you:

- How to maximize your wellness.
- How to live your life *on purpose*.
- How to design and create the life you desire.
- How to be a catalyst for others' growth and development.
- How to be a better spouse (or partner) and effective parent.

Let me begin by explaining a little bit about what I do...

Psychotherapy, Marriage and Family therapy and other forms of clinical counseling have become a prominent means of getting help with psychological, emotional, and behavioral challenges.

There has been a shift in this particular branch of helping people, and it is a very good shift made almost entirely through market forces working their creative destruction on the world of counseling and psychotherapy. Without negating any of the positive benefits of psychotherapy – which are substantial - this shift has opened up a more flexible and adaptive profession of Life Coaching.

Coaching is not regulated by any government - there are ethical standards through private organizations such as the [International Coach Federation](#) (ICF, of which I am a member and by which I am certified), but there is not a government licensing body for coaching.

This offers great flexibility as a business - for better or worse. There are people in the field who have very little training or ability, and there are people who are exceptionally skilled and gifted. The judge of a person's competence, aside from organizations such as ICF, is ultimately the marketplace.

I am a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFC28877) with a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. For the past 36 years I have spent my working life studying psychology, human performance, and a vast array of techniques, theories, and experiences involved in human growth and flourishing; and focusing my understanding and abilities toward helping clients who want to change some aspects of their lives.

There is a limitation, though, with psychotherapy: It is a medical model of diagnosis and treatment, and it still holds a degree of intimidation for many people. Because of this, people often wait a very long time to see a counselor or therapist.

Couples commonly wait until they are so bitter and in so much pain that it's just too late; individuals wait to see how much they can work out for themselves before resigning to the idea that they are "broken" and "need help."

This was a source of frustration for me for many years, because I could see that so much of the pain that my clients had suffered could have been avoided, if only they could have felt comfortable getting some ideas and support earlier on.

Just imagine if we waited until our car engine cracked before replacing our oil, or until our tires went flat before getting new ones. Life coaching is about taking care of our psychological and emotional concerns and our personal, career, and relationship goals *before* there is an overwhelming crisis.

Reaching our life's goals - whether those goals are a happy marriage, a fulfilling and productive work life, or a life that is in general more happy and satisfying - should be an exciting and expansive experience, not a desperate struggle to catch up.

An athletic coach looks for the strength in an athlete, and designs a training program and motivation that will nurture those strengths and bring out the best athletic performance possible for that particular athlete.

Life coaching is similar; the focus is on our goals and strengths, and finding ways of practicing the skills and abilities that we want to develop until those skills and abilities become habits. Once they become habits, we don't need to use our willpower for these things in the same way, and that frees up a lot of energy for other things - other challenges, other triumphs.

Using our willpower takes energy - in fact, let me suggest a simple experiment that can profoundly improve your effectiveness and quality of life: If you want to accomplish something, or change a habit, instead of slogging through it using willpower every time you act, use your willpower *to arrange things strategically* so that you don't have to use your willpower for every little thing.

If you're trying to cut back on sweets or fatty foods, remove those foods from your home instead of

having to actively avoid them every time you walk through the kitchen.

If you're trying to exercise more, instead of having to use your willpower to get on that treadmill or bike all by yourself each day, arrange an appointment for a group exercise, or in some other way establish an external expectation, where others will notice if you're not there (and will let you know about it).

Willpower takes energy and that energy gets depleted. Effective people actually use *less* willpower than less effective people; but they use their willpower more *strategically*.

We are complex, magnificent, strange, flawed, and wonderful beings. There is a much broader range of human experience and behavior than is often appreciated in our modern world. This is human nature. It is up to each of us to understand and master our own nature; to learn to channel our energies, feelings, and impulses in a useful direction, and to use our willpower strategically to develop habits *that work for us*, so we don't have to work *against* our habits.

This is not trivial. Taking our most meaningful goals and values seriously, and pursuing them with integrity and passion, with the support we need to see it through, is fundamental to a life well lived.

Life Coaching can be the crucial support we need to overcome the inertia of our bad habits, to learn to master new habits, and to set and reach our most cherished goals... and we don't have to wait until we are in overwhelming conflict or desperate pain to take advantage of it!

P.S. To reach me for Life Coaching, visit my website at www.drjoelwade.com; and my new, in depth [Master's Course in Happiness](#) is designed to help you learn the skills and habits that will help you build a flourishing life now – with focused, practical lessons each month so you can build and sustain your mastery over time. For a limited time for TTPers, I'm offering this at a special one time, discounted payment for you or your loved ones. Just enter promo code **MH1PROMO** for \$100 off the regular price.

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