



Ilene Berns-Zare
COACHING

www.ileneberns-zare.com

25 Powerful Questions for Awakening Meaning in Life and Work: A guide to awareness and action

By Ilene Berns-Zare, PsyD, PCC, CMC

Our lives are often measured in timelines and checklists. "It's Friday and I made it through the week." "This weekend I need to shop for groceries, get a haircut, and do laundry."

How meaningful are these tasks in the context of your life? When is the last time you created the time and space to pause and consider what's really important to you?

On some level we are always in the process of self-discovery. This probably occurs whether we are fully aware or not. Author and Life Coach Diane Dreher, PhD writes, "Seeking your calling is a process of discovery that continues throughout your life, informed by your questions, your conflicts, and your deepest dreams."

Many people spend significant energy searching for happiness. Exploring meaningful pursuits and reaching towards a purpose that is larger than one's self is a significant element of enduring happiness (Seligman, 2002).

When did you last take some time to intentionally look inside yourself and pay attention to the person you are and who you want to become?

Even though we may not pause to notice, our inner voice continues to call us to wake up and pay attention. Sometimes our callings are louder than others. These 25 Powerful Questions offer a spring board to help you begin to move forward on your journey of self-awareness. Gaining clarity and meaning is a unique path for everyone. This provocative inquiry can help you awaken with greater clarity to what is meaningful in your life.

25 Thought-Provoking Questions for Awakening Clarity and Meaning

1. If I were writing a book about my life's story, what would the title be? What do I *wish* the title of my auto-biography could be?
2. What is the most important lesson I have learned in my life?
3. Who are the 3 to 5 people I admire most? What do I admire about each of them? What commonalities do I notice among them?

4. Who do I need to be in order to be myself?
5. What is my number one priority in life?
6. If I could do anything I wanted, knew I wouldn't fail, and there were no obstacles, what would I do?
7. If I could be five times more courageous, what would I do?
8. What risks do I need to take in my life, and why?
9. What are my five greatest strengths?
10. What is my most significant achievement in life thus far?
11. What thoughts, beliefs, ideas, and actions feed my soul?
12. What question am I afraid to ask myself?
13. If I were to die tomorrow, what would I wish I had done that I haven't done yet?
14. How do I want to be remembered by others when I am no longer living?
15. How would I hate to be described by people?
16. When I listen to the small voice inside me, what do I hear, see, feel?
17. If I could change 3 things about my life, what would they be?
18. When do I feel most fulfilled? When am I least fulfilled?
19. What is my life's purpose?
20. What do I want to say to those closest to me?
21. What do I feel most grateful for? (Create a list)

Call Yourself to Action:

22. When is the "right" time to start working on a new goal that is important to me?
23. What is a small action I can do to become more of the person I want to be?
24. What goal would I like to set for myself and work on to completion?
25. What action step(s) am I ready to take today? This week? This month?

Tips to Stimulate Clarity and Action

There are many ways to work with these powerful questions. You might choose to reflect on one inquiry at a time -- maybe one question each morning when you awaken, or in the evening. Another option is to respond to a group of questions. Here are a few tips.

- Give yourself the gift of time for your process of self-discovery.
- Set a conscious intention to reflect and create clarity as you respond to each question.
- As you engage with these questions, it can be helpful to record your responses in a hand-written or electronic journal or other format. Return to these questions periodically to ponder, refine, or change your responses. As you change, your thoughts, energies, and ideas may change.
- Create a vision board and hang it where you can see it daily. A cork "bulletin" board, whiteboard, or poster work effectively. Add ideas, quotes, motivational words, visuals that inspire you. Include meaningful goals and messages. This process helps highlight objectives and ideas in daily awareness so you can circle back to them. For more information on creating a vision board, see the resources below.
- Develop a mission and vision statement for your life; let it be a work in progress that you return to frequently.
- Stimulate your thinking, self-exploration and awareness, learning and development. Seek out books, electronic resources and other materials. Create notes and other visuals to help you remember and make use of what strikes you as significant.
- Identify your positive attributes and strengths, and build on them.
- Make connections with other people who are involved in a process of seeking clarity and meaning in their lives.
- Give yourself space to slow down and become more aware of what's important and meaningful to you. Many people find practices such as breath awareness, meditation, visualization, spiritual processes, and time in natural surroundings to be helpful. Engage in a balance that includes pausing to be present and action.
- Breathe in clarity and breathe out confusion. Breathe in meaning and breathe out stress.
- Listen to your heart, mind, body, and spirit. Notice what you are feeling and where you are feeling it; Pay attention to your inner wisdom and knowings.
- Seek out mentors, advocates, and/or a professional coach to offer support, inspiration, and accountability.
- When you are ready, move forward from contemplation to actions!

Resources

Berns-Zare, Ilene (2016). *Nine smart strategies to grow in life*.

<http://ibzlifecoaching.com/2016/07/>

Dreher, Diane (2008). *Your personal renaissance: 12 steps to finding your life's true calling*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press.

Jones, Laurie Beth (1996). *The Path: Creating your mission statement for work and for life*. New York, NY: Hyperion.

Levoy, Gregg (1997). *Callings: Finding and following an authentic life*. New York, NY: Harmony Books.

Rath, Tom (2007). *Strengthsfinder 2.0*. Gallup Press, New York, NY.

Rider, E. (2015). *The reason vision boards work and how to make one*. The Huffington Post, 3/14/2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-rider/the-scientific-reason-why_b_6392274.html

Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York, NY: Atria Paperback.

About Ilene

Ilene Berns-Zare, PsyD, PCC, is a Certified Professional Coach, Psychologist, Educator, and Speaker. She helps people live their best lives by bringing mind, body, and spirit into flow with their strengths, purpose, and potential. As a life and leadership coach, Ilene inspires people to find fresh perspectives and access their full potential as creative, resourceful, whole persons. Email Ilene at ibzcoaches@gmail.com – Find her Psychology Today blog at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/experts/ilene-berns-zare-psyd>

