



# Unveiling the Secrets of Ikigai: A Study on the Japanese Philosophy of a Meaningful Life

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## Abstract

*Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life* demonstrates the art of living through the concept of 'Ikigai', which translates to "Reason for Being" in Japanese. Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles through the book explores the Japanese philosophy that focuses on finding purpose and meaning in life. The article delves into the various aspects of ikigai, including its origins, principles, and practical applications. It offers insights and guidance on how to discover and cultivate one's own ikigai, leading to a more fulfilling and joyful existence. The research emphasizes the importance of aligning one's passions, talents, values, and contributions to society in order to live a purpose-driven life. It draws inspiration from the Japanese belief that having a purpose and eating healthy are the key ingredients to individual success. Through real-life instances and anecdotes, the authors illustrate the transformative power of ikigai and its potential to bring joy and fulfillment to individuals of all ages and backgrounds. The article explores the concept of ikigai as a life precept of the long life of Okinawans and as a form of logotherapy or the "joie de vivre of life." Ikigai and occupational therapy are similar as both are based on the idea of finding a purpose in life and engaging in activities that one enjoys and is competent at. Discovering and nurturing one's ikigai is an ongoing process, but it has the potential to unlock a deeper sense of contentment and fulfillment that transcends the mundane challenges of everyday life.

Keywords: ikigai, Japanese , purpose, logotherapy

## Introduction

Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles are the co-authors of the book *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*. They are both passionate about exploring different cultures and philosophies that promote well-being and happiness. The article focuses on how Ikigai can help us find purpose and fulfillment in our lives. Hector Garcia, a Spanish author, has a deep interest in Japanese culture and has written extensively about it. Francesc Miralles, a Spanish writer as well, is known for his works on mindfulness and personal development. Together, they bring their unique perspectives and insights to uncover the wisdom of ikigai and share it with readers around the world. They talk about finding flow in everything done by the people. Flow is a state of complete immersion and focus in an activity, where time seems to fly by and one tends to experience a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. When a person incorporates flow into everything, including the pursuit of ikigai, it enhances overall experience and brings oneself closer to a state of optimal living. The research offers practical advice to discover one's own ikigai and live a more meaningful life.

### The essence of Ikigai in one's life

Ikigai is a Japanese word that can be broken down into two parts: "iki," which means life, and "gai," which means worth or value. It is deeply ingrained in Japan's cultural heritage, and goes beyond a mere "reason to live." The Japanese have embraced it naturally, emphasizing a purposeful life without the need for ostentation or self-aggrandizement. It's a holistic approach to well-being that focuses on the intersection of four core elements:

1. **What One Loves (Passion):** This aspect revolves around identifying the activities and pursuits that genuinely bring one joy and enthusiasm. It's about discovering true passions, hobbies, and interests that make oneself feel alive.
2. **What One is Good At (Profession):** This element involves recognizing strengths, talents, and skills. It's not just about what one can do, but what one excels at. This can often be related to career or vocation.
3. **What the World Needs (Vocation):** Discovering what the world needs is about finding ways to contribute positively to society. It's the recognition that actions and efforts can make a meaningful impact on the lives of others.
4. **What One Can Be Paid For (Mission):** This dimension considers the practical aspect of sustaining oneself financially. It's about finding work or activities that not only align with passion and skills but also provide a means for earning a living.

The concept of Ikigai is often visualized as a Venn diagram, where the overlapping area of these four elements represents your "Ikigai." It's the sweet spot where your passions, talents, societal impact, and financial stability converge.



Figure 1 Ikigai Bodetree, Miralles

The pursuit of ikigai suggests that when a person finds a purpose that incorporates all four of these aspects, one is more likely to experience a deep sense of fulfillment, happiness, and well-being in life. It's a lifelong journey of self-discovery and balance, and it encourages individuals to seek harmony between these different dimensions rather than focusing solely on one aspect of their lives. The article, "Gender Performance on the Reinvigoration via Food", the author Suganya et al. describes the optimistic role of women in facilitating the multicultural environment, "Food consumption and the offering of comfort food by women shape an optimistic multicultural environment" (Suganya et al. 883). The research states that ikigai encourages people to lead purposeful and meaningful lives by aligning their daily activities and pursuits with one's inner values and aspirations, creating a sense of contentment and satisfaction. In a nutshell, ikigai is all about finding ways to make a positive impact on others, and living a life that truly lights you up from the inside out. In the article, "Communal Expectancy and the Authentic Self of Men and Transgenders - Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw and Birthday by Meredith Russo" the author Suganya et al. explains the pessimistic side of men and transgenders in the cultural perspective. "Social exclusion will remain as a bruise forever, a bruise which cannot be healed. Be it a man or a Trans, the fear of being ostracized will drag them from their authentic-self" (Suganya et al. 882).

### A Japanese view on the purpose of life

The purpose of life is a deeply philosophical and existential question that has been pondered by thinkers, theologians, and individuals throughout history. It's a question with a wide range of answers depending on one's cultural, religious, and philosophical beliefs. Some common perspectives include:

1. **Religious Purpose:** Many religious beliefs hold that the purpose of life is to serve a higher power, seek spiritual enlightenment, or follow a divine plan. For example, in Christianity, the purpose may be to worship God and follow His teachings.
2. **Existential View:** Existentialist philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre argue that life doesn't have an inherent purpose, and individuals must create their own meaning and purpose through choices and actions.
3. **Hedonism:** Some people believe the purpose of life is to seek pleasure and happiness. It is often associated with hedonistic philosophies.
4. **Human Connection and Contribution:** Many find purpose in relationships, personal growth, and contributing to the well-being of others and society.
5. **Philosophical Search for Meaning:** Philosophers like Viktor Frankl argue that the search for meaning is a fundamental human drive, and the purpose of life is to find meaning, especially in the face of suffering.
6. **Cultural and Personal Perspectives:** One's culture, upbringing, and personal values can greatly influence their perception of life's purpose.

Ultimately, the purpose of life can be a highly individual and subjective matter, and it may take a lifetime of reflection to arrive at a satisfying answer. Different people find meaning and purpose in various ways, and it can evolve throughout each individual's life.

## Logotherapy and Ikigai

Logotherapy is a form of psychotherapy developed by Viktor Frankl, a renowned psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor. It focuses on finding meaning and purpose in life as a way to overcome challenges and achieve psychological well-being. While logotherapy and ikigai share similarities in their emphasis on finding purpose and meaning, they come from different cultural backgrounds. Logotherapy is rooted in Western psychology, while ikigai originates from Japanese culture. Both logotherapy and ikigai can be valuable frameworks for individuals seeking to live a more fulfilling life. They provide guidance and tools for exploring personal values, passions, and contributions to the world. By aligning our actions with our sense of purpose, we can cultivate a deeper sense of meaning and satisfaction in our lives. Ultimately, whether one resonates more with logotherapy or ikigai depends on personal preference and cultural background. "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way." (Garcia and Miralles 38)

Logotherapy emphasizes the search for meaning as a central motivating factor in human existence. It suggests that individuals can find meaning in their lives even in the face of suffering or difficult circumstances by connecting with their values and beliefs. Ikigai is a Japanese concept that represents the reason for being or the source of value in one's life. The article states that finding one's ikigai is considered a path to a fulfilling and purposeful life. In summary, both Logotherapy and ikigai share a common theme of seeking meaning and purpose in life, although they come from different cultural and therapeutic backgrounds. Logotherapy is rooted in existential psychology, while ikigai is a concept from Japanese culture that combines elements of purpose, passion, and vocation. The important thing is to find a framework that resonates with oneself and supports the journey towards a meaningful and purposeful life.

### Mastering longevity through ikigai

Embracing ikigai can indeed contribute to mastering longevity. When one lives with purpose and a sense of meaning, it has a positive impact on overall well-being and can lead to a longer, healthier life. Ikigai encourages one to engage in activities that bring joy and nurture relationships, and contribute to the world around. By doing what one loves, one can reduce stress and increase overall happiness, which can have a profound effect on physical and mental health. Additionally, ikigai promotes a balanced lifestyle that encompasses not only work but also personal relationships, hobbies, and self-care. This holistic approach helps us maintain a sense of fulfillment and prevents burnout or excessive stress. It is through embracing ikigai and living a purpose-driven life, one can increase our chances of mastering longevity and enjoying a fulfilling and vibrant existence.

#### Ways to master longevity through ikigai:

1. **Discovering one's own Ikigai:** Begin by self-reflecting on what truly brings you joy, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose. Explore your passions, talents, and values to identify your ikigai.
2. **Combine Passions and Skills:** Ikigai often involves the intersection of what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. This can guide you toward a fulfilling career or vocation.
3. **Prioritize Health and Well-Being:** Maintaining physical and mental health is crucial for longevity. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and stress management are important aspects of a healthy lifestyle.
4. **Cultivate Strong Social Connections:** Building and maintaining meaningful relationships can contribute to a sense of purpose and happiness. Surround yourself with a supportive network of friends and loved ones.

5. **Continuous Learning and Growth:** Embrace a lifelong learning mindset. Developing new skills and gaining knowledge can keep your mind engaged and contribute to a sense of purpose.
6. **Contribute to Others:** Helping others or making a positive impact on the world can be a significant part of your ikigai. Volunteering or working in roles that benefit others can bring deep satisfaction.
7. **Balance and Stress Management:** Finding balance in life and effectively managing stress is crucial for long-term well-being. Techniques such as meditation, mindfulness, and relaxation can help.
8. **Live in the Present:** Mindfulness and being present in the moment can enhance the quality of life. Focusing on the here and now rather than worrying about the past or future can improve well-being.
9. **Retire with Purpose:** Even in retirement, finding activities that give you a sense of purpose and fulfillment can be key to maintaining a long, healthy life.

Ikigai is a personal journey, and what brings purpose and longevity can vary from person to person. It's about aligning your life with what truly matters to you and what brings you joy and a sense of meaning. Ikigai can act as a powerful source of resilience. "Fall seven times, rise eight" (Garcia and Miralles 165). When one has a strong sense of purpose and meaning in life, it helps to bounce back from setbacks and navigate difficulties with greater strength and determination.

## Conclusion

The research highlights the multidimensional nature of ikigai, emphasizing its role as a holistic framework that encompasses elements of passion, profession, mission, and vocation. From the study, one can uncover the far-reaching implications of incorporating ikigai into one's life. It has become evident that individuals who discover and actively pursue their ikigai tend to experience enhanced well-being, life satisfaction, and resilience. Additionally, the benefits of ikigai extend to mental and physical health, making it a potent factor in the promotion of overall human flourishing. From a psychological standpoint, ikigai can play a significant role in fostering self-awareness, achieving personal goals, and enhancing problem solving abilities.

Furthermore, this research has explored the cultural origins of ikigai and its adaptability across diverse cultural contexts. The universality of the quest for purpose and meaning underscores the cross-cultural relevance of ikigai, transcending geographical boundaries and serving as a source of inspiration for individuals worldwide. Through the research, one should understand that it is crucial to recognize that uncovering one's Ikigai is a deeply personal and introspective journey. It requires self-reflection, mindfulness, and a commitment to aligning one's actions with their true passions and values.

The insights shared in the article will not only contribute to the academic understanding of ikigai but also serve as a practical guide for individuals seeking a more meaningful and purpose-driven life. In a world where the search for meaning and fulfillment is a universal endeavor, ikigai stands as a beacon of guidance, offering a roadmap for individuals to embark on a journey of self-discovery and purpose attainment. It is a reminder that, regardless of the complexities of modern life, the pursuit of a life filled with joy, purpose, and fulfillment remains within reach through the timeless wisdom of ikigai.

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