

How does one figure out their purpose in life? Well I suppose that there could be entire books written on the subject, but today I want to share with you what I believe are the first steps to living your life to the fullest.

So first, what are you passionate about? If you know me at all, you know that animals are my passion. I have always love animals, and I have had an amazingly supportive family that has helped me to develop this interest, even at a young age. When I was little, I convinced my parents to let us take in the stray cat that lived in the back yard. Several years later not only did we get a dog, but my dad helped me make a full set of agility equipment so I could peruse my dream of training this dog. (Of course, this dog, Biscuit, had different ideas) They brought me to the animal shelter to volunteer countless times, we have fostered over 30 kittens, a rabbit who chewed up our carpet, and 12 sweet baby rats. In the recent years they even adopted two parrots so that I could be their official owner when I graduate. (Which I basically already am, but nevertheless I am so excited.) With each of these experiences, my love of animals has grown.

You probably have a very different passion than mine. Maybe computers and new technology is what you love. Maybe its art or history or writing. I know we all share at least a small passion for music, or we wouldn't be here today. Whatever it is, I want to encourage you to figure it out. Now is an amazing time for that. Especially for the freshman. College is a time to figure out what you love so take a new class or join a new club. You never know what may spark a new love.

Secondly, dream and go after those dreams. With whatever you are passionate about, there are bound to be dreams that go along with it. For me, it has been to work with animals and teach others about them. I was able to chase that dream in Chicago, where I interned at the Lincoln Park Zoo. This dream was way out of my comfort zone, but was so worth it. I was able to talk to people from around the world about animals. This was such an amazing opportunity. If you ever want stories of baby gorillas or want to know what a Takin is, talk to me because I would love to share my experiences with you.

So what is your dream? I can assure you that once you have found something you are passionate about, the dreams will come flooding in.

Finally, don't keep what you love to yourself, share with others. We are all here because we love music. But we don't just sing to ourselves, we go out and share our music to inspire others. Maybe by sharing whatever it is that is your passion, you can help someone else figure out theirs. There are so many interesting things in the world, so help the world see your niche.

By figuring out what your passion is, dreaming and chasing those dreams, and sharing them with others, I truly believe that you can find meaning, purpose, and direction to your life. Without meaning, purpose, or direction, we are likely to sit at home on our couches and let the world go by. So what I want to say to you is don't let the world go by. Get up and find your purpose.

My name is Rachel Braak, and I believe in finding my purpose.