

Ikigai

A JAPANESE CONCEPT MEANING "A REASON FOR BEING"



SOURCE: dreamstime

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC

Ikigai (生き甲斐, pronounced [ikigai]) is a Japanese concept that means "a reason for being." The word "ikigai" is usually used to indicate the source of value in one's life or the things that make one's life worthwhile. The word translated to English roughly means "thing that you live for" or "the reason for which you wake up in the morning." Each individual's ikigai is personal to them and specific to their lives, values and beliefs. It reflects the inner self of an individual and expresses that faithfully, while simultaneously creating a mental state in which the individual feels at ease. Activities that allow one to feel ikigai are never forced on an individual; they are often spontaneous, and always undertaken willingly, giving the individual satisfaction and a sense of meaning to life (Wikipedia, n.d.).

What is Your Ikigai?

Take a moment to draw your own version of the overlapping circles of the *ikigai* symbol and consider the following:

- **What do you Love?** What aspects of your life bring you into your heart and make you come alive?
- **What are you Great at?** What unique skills do you have that come most naturally to you? What talents have you cultivated and what do you excel at even when you aren't trying?
- **What Cause do you believe in?** What breaks your heart or pulls at your gut? What change would you most love to create in the world? What would you give your life for?
- **What do people Value and pay you for?** What service, value or offering do you bring, or could you bring, that brings real value to others? Something people need and are happy to pay for or share some value in exchange?

Take a few minutes to write whatever key words, phrases, and ideas come up for you in each circle, then look for areas of natural overlap. Reflect on the sum of these elements and how they may relate to each other. Bring yourself quietly to the center of the circles and leave space in your mind for whatever impulse or calling may emerge naturally in the coming days... What is one simple thing you could do or be today that would be an expression of your *ikigai*?

(Richards, 2019)