

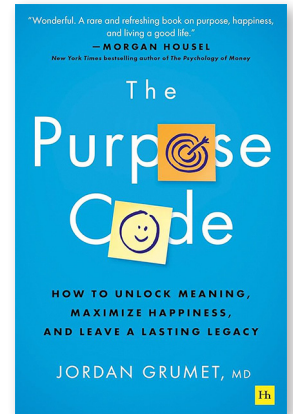


Executive Book Summaries®

The Purpose Code

How to Unlock Meaning, Maximize Happiness, and Leave a Lasting Legacy

by **Jordan Grumet**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Are you worried that you will go through life without ever finding your true purpose? You are not the only one. Having a clear sense of purpose has been scientifically proven to help people find happiness, longevity, and health. But paradoxically it is also one of the biggest causes of anxiety. So how can we make sure we find our purpose and get rid of anxiety to attain happiness and leave a lasting legacy?

In *The Purpose Code*, veteran hospice doctor Jordan Grumet proposes that finding happiness is never about aiming for “bigger-than-life” goals that we may not be able to achieve. Instead, we can find our happiness in going after little P Purposes where the actual journey is what matters, more than the destination.

Grumet believes that true happiness comes from enriching activities that will help you connect with others and build communities. Instead of going after a big P Purpose that typically leads to disappointment and anxiety, try going after a little P purpose that will lead you to meaningful connection and a legacy to be proud of.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Distinguish between two distinct kinds of purpose, revealing why one path consistently leads to deeper fulfillment than the other.
- Identify your authentic purpose and how to climb to reach your meaningful goals, no matter your starting point.
- Understand the fundamental human insights behind meaning and purpose, in order to discover lasting happiness.
- Begin shaping a legacy that continues to make a difference well beyond your lifetime.

Introduction: The Triumph of the Little Beckonings

Most people struggle to find their sense of purpose, and struggle even harder to integrate this vision into anything they would call happiness. Even though having a sense of purpose can increase lifespan, health, and happiness, it is also associated with anxiety in over 91% of people at some point in their lives.

For most people, purpose has become a kind of indecipherable code, sealing away true fulfillment and lasting happiness. But the purpose code is one that can be cracked. And anyone can do it.

The first step to cracking the purpose code is realizing that the purpose that brings meaning and contentment isn't that kind of purpose at all. It's not Purpose with a big, shining capital letter; it's purpose with a little "p." Small—but with a bigger, better, more meaningful impact on your life than the grandest imaginable all-consuming PURPOSE in bright lights. This purpose is found in small beckonings to pursue the things we are passionate about.

Purpose doesn't need to be something glamorous or difficult to find. In fact, it doesn't need to be something you find at all, but instead something you create.

Part 1: The Duality of Purpose

Purpose is much more nuanced. We see that the search for purpose can be riddled with anxiety and loss as well as joy and happiness. To truly glean all the benefits, we must parse out these different aspects and differentiate between those which nurture us and those which hinder.

Chapter 1: Is Purpose a Four-Letter Word?

If you ever need more uncomfortable silences in your life, all you have to do is bring up the topic of purpose. My podcast guests love discussing the what and how of building a prosperous business or lifestyle, but are loath to discuss the why. Many see purpose as nothing more than a four-letter word—something one doesn't talk about in polite society.

The scientific evidence is clear: having a sense of purpose leads to greater happiness, increased longevity, and better health. Yet time and time again, I am reminded by my readers and listeners that purpose anxiety not only is real, but often makes people think that pursuing purpose is futile. How do we resolve this quandary?

By exploring the scientific evidence and breaking down the crucial role that purpose plays in most of our lives, we dive into the heart of the purpose paradox: the challenge that purpose can be both life-affirming and destructive at the same time.

Anxiety associated with finding meaning is not only real, but rampant in today's society. There are many reasons why. All too often, we make one of two bad choices at this point. We either give up on purpose, or we chain ourselves to never-ending treadmills that do very little to fill our souls.

The key to cracking the purpose code is to realize that neither of those choices will bring us what we are looking for. The only way to do this is to recognize that purpose, in its simplest form, is not one but two different entities.

Chapter 2: Why the Size of Your "P" Makes All the Difference

We fundamentally misinterpret the concept of purpose. It took many years and quite a bit of emotional heartache to reach the conclusion that I hope to convince you of now: when it comes to purpose, bigger is not better.

Most of our anxiety actually stems from what I call "big P" Purpose. Big P Purpose is overly focused on outcomes. "Little P" purpose, on the other hand, is the true creator of the wonderful health and longevity benefits that all those researchers have proven with their studies. It focuses not on the destination or the outcome, but rather on the path or process.

Purpose With a Big "P"

- It is goal oriented, as opposed to focusing on process.
- It often depends on an all-or-nothing equation. You either succeed or you don't.
- The bigger the goal, the easier it is to fail. These types of goals often rely on some mix of luck, timing, and good genetics.
- The anxiety that comes with such goals defining our purpose robs us of any enjoyment there might have been in the process of their pursuit.
- It is fleeting. The newness of a major accomplishment is only felt once. And once attained, the excitement of gain is replaced by endless worry over its loss.

Because of these shortcomings, it becomes obvious that when you embrace big P Purpose, you are actually embracing a scarcity mindset. Big P Purpose turns out to be pretty small minded.

Unlike the big audacious goals we try to steal from other people, little P purpose is created and not found.

How to Embrace Abundance with Little P Purpose

Little P purpose embraces an abundance mentality. There is room for everyone—I mean everyone—to pursue that which brings them inner joy and happiness.

Little P purpose centers on you as an individual.

Little P purpose doesn't deny or detract from the joy of setting and achieving goals; it just doesn't depend on them.

Although we can choose what activities to fill our lives with, we can't always choose the outcome. Because of this, little P purpose is anything but all or nothing. In fact, it is all or all. There is no way to fail. And if you find these activities no longer fulfilling, there is no reason whatsoever not to do something else.

Little P purpose espouses the idea of incremental change. It recognizes that humans like the idea of progress.

And finally, little P purpose recognizes that people, as well as what they find meaningful, can change.

The ultimate outcome of focusing on little P purpose is that people have fewer regrets when they die. Instead of wishing they had achieved that which they didn't have the energy, courage, or talent to pursue, they can point to many daily activities that brought them joy and created meaning.

Chapter 3: You Can't Find What Isn't Lost

Some of us are lucky enough to happen upon our purpose in an unexpected way. If this is not the case for you, however, there is no reason to feel distress. It turns out that average, everyday people like you and me can identify these important purpose anchors and build a fulfilling life.

Unlike the big audacious goals we try to steal from other people, little P purpose is created and not found. We create this type of purpose by concentrating on that which fills our souls, and then being intentional about taking action.

To do this, we will begin with an old hospice technique called the life review. This is simply a structured list of questions that helps people assess the important moments and themes in their lives. It also touches on regrets.

Sometimes we get so anxious about searching for purpose that we forget that we might have created it already somewhere in our lives. I challenge you to look at what you spend most of your time doing—even those things that you say you loathe. Are the embers of a flame hiding in plain sight?

Maybe they need just a wee bit of oxygen.

The Spaghetti Method

There are several other techniques to identify little P purpose in our lives. The first is to pay attention to the crazy ideas and inspired moments that pop up in the most inopportune times. I do believe that this is our subconscious urging us to pursue that which is really important.

If you find yourself still struggling, it is time to call for some help. The first and easiest solution is to ask family and friends. If family can't provide the answers, it might be time to bring in the professionals.

These techniques may not yield results. If this is the case, there is one more technique to try. The spaghetti method. That's right: throw a bunch of spaghetti against the wall and see what sticks. This is a shotgun-oriented trial-and-error process. Open yourself up to the universe and see what happens. This means saying yes to people and activities that you normally wouldn't say yes to.

Chapter 4: Money Can't Buy Love, Purpose, or Happiness

As with the concept of purpose, the relationship between money and happiness is paradoxical—the evidence points to two opposite conclusions.

Research showed that more money makes us happier except past a certain level, and definitely not in poor countries or places where everyone equally enjoys the same economic boon. And furthermore, as income goes down, it is meaning and purpose rather than money that predict happiness.

A prospective study that has been ongoing for decades found that when it came to happiness, it was not money, achievement, career choice, exercise, or a healthy diet that

made respondents happy. It turned out, after 85 years of studying, that one and only one thing was a strong predictor of overall happiness: positive social relationships. Those who felt more connected to others lived longer and happier.

We feel fulfilled when we help people and are helped by them. When we nurture others and are nurtured by them. When we smile and laugh and teach and learn.

It is a virtuous cycle. Happiness leads to more meaning and purpose. Purpose leads to community and connections. Personal connections and social relationships create more happiness and longevity.

Part 2: Meaning + Purpose = Happiness

Understanding purpose doesn't necessarily mean that we will be happier people. Here, I will completely redefine Aristotle's concept of happiness. While the ingredients are the same—meaning and purpose—we will turn them from abstract concepts into daily opportunities to take action.

Chapter 5: Meaning and Purpose—Two Sides of the Same Coin

Meaning and purpose form two sides of the happiness coin.

Meaning is focused on cognition and our ability to connect ideas and make sense of our past. It is more thought oriented and less action oriented.

Purpose, however, is much more geared to action. Unlike meaning, purpose is present and future oriented. It's about both being in the moment and helping us project ourselves into the unknown.

To improve our sense of meaning, we need to come to terms with our past and draw connections between what seem like disparate events to feel a sense of connection and meaningfulness. When we struggle with such things, we can often find help through therapy and mental processing.

Once we move past the victimhood mindset, the present and future become limitless. We need this limitlessness as a backdrop for exploring a framework that can help better build purpose into our lives. Just knowing how to create purpose is not enough: we must then use that purpose to create happiness. The way we do this is called the climb, and it is the key to mastering the second half of the happiness equation.

Chapter 6: The Climb

Although we may just be starting to take notice of our own

internal whisperings urging us to a more gratifying way of living, it doesn't make taking action any easier. The climb will provide a template to help you transition smoothly while minimizing fear and providing guidance.

The climb depends mainly on two aspects:

- Filling our time with activities that are joyful or important to us. The nature of these activities is completely up to you. Every person can have a different anchor, and one person can have many anchors. The key is to identify those themes that light you up and then build climbs around them.
- Leaving room for incremental gain. Unlike a larger goal or destination, "incremental gain" means finding controllable ways to feel like you are making progress. The goal of improvement, again, is greater enjoyment or pleasure in your skill set. The goal is not to reach a higher peak or travel to another destination.

The Five Commandments (the Rules of the Climb):

- Your climb should never be goal oriented.
- Being on your climb must bring you joy.
- You cannot fail your climb.
- Climbs can incorporate incremental gain.
- Monogamy is optional when it comes to purpose.

There are several signs that a climb is no longer serving you. If you encounter any of these, it is time to re-evaluate if this climb is still a good use of your time:

- You are regretful of time spent on a particular climb because you would rather be doing something else.
- The climb becomes too goal oriented, and happiness depends on attaining that goal.
- The climb loses something irreplaceable as a result of factors that have nothing to do with you yourself, or even the activity.
- You may realize that pursuing this climb has not led to building a community and better connections.

Chapter 7: What If You Can't Afford Climbing Shoes?

Naysayers will argue that pursuing purpose or engaging in the climb is a privilege that mostly belongs to the well-off. How do you start the climb if you can't afford a good pair of climbing shoes?

The benefit of becoming aware of your purpose and practicing these climbs is not only your own happiness, but also the happiness of those around you.

While money and time are not the only reasons people feel unable to pursue purpose in a meaningful way, they certainly magnify the contrast between those who are more and less privileged.

Why should this be so? While I don't have scientific data to back this up, I do have a theory: it all comes back to happiness. Happiness consists of both meaning and purpose. If you are struggling to make ends meet, trapped in a job you don't love, it is hard to find meaning in past struggles. You end up having more of a victim mentality.

How are you supposed to be able to climb? I humbly offer two opinions:

- First, try to embrace a single tiny climb, no matter how small. Use a few spare moments to do something that fills you up.
- Second, apply narrative therapy. Though you may not be able to afford a therapist yourself, how can you evaluate the major negative narratives that affect the way you think about yourself?

The benefit of becoming aware of your purpose and practicing these climbs is not only your own happiness, but also the happiness of those around you. This is how you will change the world. But you have to believe that you can. You have to let go of the excuses.

Part 3: Small but Mighty—How Little P Purpose Changes the World

When I say “legacy,” I am talking about the things you do today which last long after you have died, living on in the people who knew and loved you. How do we create legacy in a way that doesn't make us anxious, but also stands the test of time?

Chapter 8: How the Little P(urpose) Supports the Big P(eople)

We have spent much of our time discussing big concepts like meaning, purpose, and happiness. Now I have to drop

a bomb: I have misled you. Meaning and purpose are not the goal. Happiness is not the goal. What I really want for you is connections and communities. They are what winning truly looks like.

People themselves cannot be purpose. Although at times we will feel we are living for our parents, spouse, or children, becoming our best self means developing a sense of purpose outside of them. However, purpose does create strong bonds with those around us. Understanding and pursuing our purpose will automatically lead to the formation of community.

If we are intentional concerning our attempts, becoming part of various communities should be a walk in the park. Here are some suggestions about how you might go about doing that:

- Become your best you.
- Build what you want to see in the world.
- Sign up for a class.
- Volunteer.
- Become a fan.

It is in the building of community that we use purpose to establish legacy. We touch those around us and change them. And that change becomes like a pebble dropped into the ocean. The effects of the water displaced can be felt for miles and miles.

Chapter 9: A Pebble in the Vast Ocean

Oftentimes, poor coping behaviors come from past trauma, but we can also inherit growth and abundance-oriented scripts that help us become better, happier, and more adapted.

Using tools like narrative therapy can help overcome poor coping skills if you have them. And just because you haven't inherited any of these generational growth scripts, doesn't mean you can't write them anew (with little P purpose)—and pass them down.

What if the model you provide for friends and family is one not of fear but of intentional living, filled with purpose and joy?

Like a ripple created by a pebble dropped in the ocean, could the water displaced ebb and flow for many years and miles? This is the legacy you create by pursuing purpose.

How to Become Purposeful About Legacy

To mangle a quote from the movie *Fight Club*: the first rule of legacy building is—we don't talk about legacy. Legacy is a byproduct of living a purposeful life and engaging authentically in these climbs.

There are, however, some important considerations when it comes to having your purpose impact your family and others:

- Live Out Loud
- Create Communities
- Volunteer
- Offer Services for Free

Take a moment to think what you would like your legacy to be for future generations. Are you acting accordingly today by pursuing your purpose?

Chapter 10: Embrace Purpose, Erase Regret

No one wants to look back at their lives and wish they had behaved differently—acted with more courage and insight. Yet that is exactly what most of us do. Like purpose, regret is often a four-letter word.

For most of my hospice patients, it is unfortunately too late. For those not on their deathbeds, however, regret can be not only bearable, but a great motivator to living a more fulfilled life. Regret can be a gift.

Although we think of regret in pessimistic terms, there is quite a bit to be optimistic about. Regret grants us agency. Having agency has the potential to turn regret into purpose. We are one step away from beginning a new climb.

Failure and disappointment go hand in hand. When we set our goals so high that they are unachievable, we lose the agency to bring about the desired outcome. That's why I consider this disappointment instead of regret. Disappointment is actually worse.

By focusing on little P purpose, I was able to escape the mirage created by being a physician, and see clearly that there were true regrets (not disappointments) that I still had to address.

And that's exactly what I did. Years later, I can honestly say that I rarely feel regret in my life. Would I have any regrets if I died tomorrow? I can honestly say no.

Can you do the same? Can you recognize the disappointments in your life and differentiate them from the regrets? If so, can you start to accept the disappointments and act on those regrets today? There is no better time than the present. This is an essential step in cracking the purpose code.

Conclusion: Be Like Roman, Not Like Mickey

If you are not seeing little P purpose in your life and the happiness it brings people, then you are not looking hard enough. You are not paying close enough attention to the people around you. My life is so full of those who have been examples of such purpose.

One of them is Roman, who found his purpose in buying and selling baseball cards. Roman lost his battle with cancer over 30 years ago. Yet his effect on me was profound. Thirty years later, I am still talking about him and what his little store meant to me.

But you know who has had almost no impact on my life? Mickey Mantle, whose baseball cards I so zealously hunted for during childhood, who broke countless records and undoubtedly was one of the premier players to have ever played the sport of baseball. I rarely think of Mickey Mantle; and even if I did, he has had no positive effect on my life.

In closing, I wish for you to have a life of little P purpose. I wish for you to use that purpose to build communities of people you love and who love you. I wish for you to impact so many people that, like the pebble dropped in the ocean, your legacy will last decades and centuries after you have left this world. I wish for you to be like Roman and not Mickey.



Jordan Grumet's life took an unexpected turn after a profound personal loss reshaped his trajectory. The untimely passing of his father, an oncologist, sparked his journey towards a medical career. He completed his studies at the University of Michigan and earned his medical degree from Northwestern University. This path led him to specialize in Internal Medicine and ultimately to provide compassionate care for the terminally ill in hospice. Jordan's work weaves together medicine, finance, and the significance of purpose, making a profound impact on those seeking a meaningful life

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