

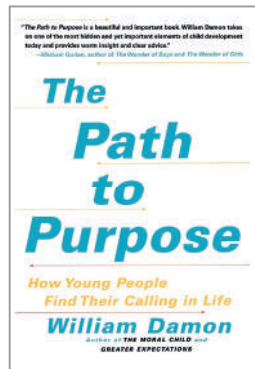


**THE PATH TO PURPOSE:** HOW YOUNG PEOPLE FIND  
THEIR CALLING IN LIFE.

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## THE BOOK

**The Path to Purpose**  
How Young People Find Their Calling in Life

by William Damon



## INTRODUCTION

With *The Path to Purpose*, Parent's Choice Award winner William Damon lays out why having purpose is so vital to the growth of our young people. Drawing heavily on the results of a groundbreaking study into the subject, Damon breaks down the issues that today's youth struggle with the most.

Many of today's youth lack motivation and forward momentum. Even many of those who appear to be succeeding don't really understand where they are heading. Direction is nothing without purpose but today's youth are struggling to understand why they should succeed past the most superficial of reasons.

Damon brilliantly and engagingly breaks down what these issues mean to today's young people and how we might go about remedying them. With evident care for young people and their futures, Damon's *The Path to Purpose* is an essential roadmap to guiding the young people in your life to a more fulfilling future.



## 5 BEST QUOTES

"Life, much like so many athletic events, is largely a game of recovery."

"The most pervasive problem of the day is a sense of emptiness that has ensnared many young people in long periods of drift during a time in their lives when they should be defining their aspirations and making progress toward their fulfillment."

"Without a sense of direction, opportunities are lost, and doubt and self-absorption can set in."

"From gratitude springs not only an enhanced appreciation for our own blessings but also a desire to pass such blessings along to others—the heart and soul or purpose."

"One of the defining features of highly purposeful youth is their entrepreneurial manner of pursuing objectives"



## 7 BIG IDEAS

### 1. PURPOSE BRINGS MEANING

The biggest idea in *The Path to Purpose* is clearly the importance of purpose itself. Purpose means having a far-reaching goal, one that is more stable than lower-level goals such as ‘having a good time tonight’. It plays a strong part in finding personal meaning but also goes beyond that and implies a desire to make a difference to the world itself, beyond the self.

A good sense of purpose should be altruistic while also staying true to the individual. Purpose can be anti-productive if it is found in the wrong places, as Damon recounts with the stories of the 2005 London Tube bombings and the 1999 Columbine Highschool massacre.

A decent sense of purpose, however, is a guiding light for young people to find their place in the world.

### 2. YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY LACK PURPOSE

Young people today are often struggling to find purpose. Life is fast and confusing and it seems very difficult to grasp a purpose beyond getting good grades or having fun. Young people know they should get good grades but are often at a loss as to exactly why.

### 3. THE CORE SELF AND ITS OUTER LAYERS

This lack of understanding is why adults should demonstrate a sense of purpose in their own lives. Teaching is a good example; students are told they must know maths but are rarely instructed as to exactly why. Teachers are there to do a job but it is often hard for students to understand what it is all about.

If teachers demonstrate what it is they love about teaching and how it fulfils them, young people can start to understand. This also applies to any profession. People who are happy in their work have often discovered its purpose. Sharing this joy with young people is essential for the future.

### 4. KIDS FALL INTO FOUR TYPES

In his research, Damon discovered that young people tended to fall into four categories; the disengaged, the dreamers, the dabblers, and the purposeful.

The disengaged have no motivation or sense of reason for moving forward.



## 7 BIG IDEAS

The dreamers are young people who have lofty thoughts and ideals and want to change the world but haven't really found any concrete way to do this.

The dabblers tend to have goals and interests but fail to understand all of the ins and outs of their goals. They fail to find a deeper reason for pursuing them beyond having a job and earning money or status.

The purposeful are the kids who already have it together. They know what they want and where they are heading and why.

The purposeful are on their way, the dabblers and dreamers need some more guidance, but the disengaged need serious help.

## 5. TODAY'S CULTURE ISN'T HELPING

Money and status are so heavily promoted in today's media and culture that it is easy for young people to misunderstand what is important in life. The portrayal of instant millionaires and the suddenly famous gives the wrong impression.

It is vital to teach kids the difference between what they see online and real life.

## 6. HELP THEM FIND THEIR OWN PURPOSE

This means being open-minded and willing to listen.

It is important that you help your child or student find her own path and not the one that you think is right for them. While guidance is still very important, avoid getting lost in your own aspirations for your loved ones. Take the example of 'Ben' in Damon's book; he says his mother "wants me to have my own choices as long as my choices are science or maths".

Ben's mother is not a bad parent, she wants what is best for Ben, but she is losing sight of what Ben wants.

Take the time to find which sense of purpose that suits your child or student. Help them to find the spark that motivates them and then nurture the flame. Encourage them to seek out mentors in their field and to have an entrepreneurial mindset. Most of all, be positive and encouraging while maintaining a sense of realism when offering guidance.



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**7. ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF AGENCY**

Finally, it is key to foster a sense of self-agency in your young ones. Too many feel that the world is beyond them and they can simply ride the waves.

Disengaged kids often feel like trying hard is futile, that whatever happens will happen, whatever they do. Help them to understand that they do have power in their own lives.

That the decisions they make do have consequences in driving them forward. Instil in them the knowledge that they do have the potential to bring about changes and to find the purpose that will fulfil them.

**3 ACTION STEPS**

The Path to Purpose outlines a number of action steps to find the best path for the young people in your life but these are the three most important:

**NURTURE THE SPARK**

Look for the spark, that one interest that really engages your child or student and fan the flames. Nurture their passion and find opportunities to let it grow.

**CONVEY YOUR OWN SENSE OF PURPOSE**

Let your young person know how you find purpose. Make sure they realise that they need not have the same purpose but demonstrate how having your own purpose makes life more fulfilling. If children understand that there can be purpose in any work, it will be easier for them to discover their own.

**INSTIL A SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT**

Many young people today feel like everything is out of their hands and trying is fruitless and pointless. Teach them that this is not the case. Help them to understand that they do have the power to drive their own lives.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of The Path to Purpose is that fulfilment comes through a sense of purpose. Purpose can be found in many different places and is unique to the individual while always being equally important. When you explain the importance of finding purpose, you have taken a step to help your child or student feel fulfilled.

Ensure that they know the difference between purpose and desire. Desire is a short term goal and purpose is the end in itself.

Once young people find a sense of purpose, they have a much greater chance of finding their way in the world and finding where they belong. Life satisfaction is much greater in those with a sense of purpose and, as parents and carers, we should be working to help young people discover a purpose of their own.



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# The Path to Purpose

by William Damon

Damon studied why so many young people drift. His answer is purpose, a reason that reaches beyond the self, and the practical way adults can help a teenager find one.

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