

Askesis IV - DEFINE YOUR ITHACA

Formulate Your Personal Mission Statement

Background: We face tough decisions everyday. As a parent, spouse, business professional, you encounter several circumstances each day which test your patience, your character and your peace of mind.

A Personal Mission Statement is a *tool that can guide you and help shape your decisions, priorities and reactions, based on your values and the vision you have for your life*. It is a condensed, focused representation of your Ethos. *A helpful reminder from the person you want to be.*

"Give me a place to stand, and I shall move the world" - Archimedes

Clarifying your life purpose makes it easier to navigate through life, when you have a sense of where you want to go. Your psychological well being is empowered, when your actions and words are aligned with your core values. Life is generally good and you feel more content, confident and satisfied. When your behavior doesn't match your values, you develop a sense of uneasiness that swells inside of you preventing you from reaching your state of eudaimonia.

Externally, leaders are aligned and connected to the mission values and goals of their organization. But internally, leaders must be aligned with a set of personal values and character traits that drive their ultimate success..

In this Askesis you can formulate your Personal Mission Statement, based on your values.

Name: DEFINE YOUR ITHACA

Purpose: To clarify our core values and what this translates into as a personal mission statement, which can guide us through difficulties as an inner compass or GPS.

Instructions: Stage 1. Clarify your Ethos

Answer these 10 questions below to determine your Ethos:

1. Look around your personal and professional spaces. Make a list of 3-5 things that are dear and important to you. Next to each item, write which of the values (from the list below, these things represent. For example: Your University Degree & Certificates of Attendance to Seminars represents 'life-long learning' or 'achievement'. Your Montblanc pen represents 'effectiveness' at getting big contracts or 'elegance'.
2. How do you spend most of your time? Make a list of 3-5 things and next to each item, write which value (from the list below) each thing represents. For example: Working long hours on your computer may represent 'wealth creation'. Going to the gym represents health, wellness. Travel may mean adventure for you.

3. What activities energize you? You do these 3-5 activities and you feel *great* afterwards? For example: Jumping on a trampoline represents joy, euphoria. Speaking in front of an audience may represent success or strength. Spending regular time with friends could mean loyalty.
4. Where are you spending or investing most of your money?
5. In which area of your life are you most organized, professional, competent, focused and reliable?
6. What are you most obsessed about?
7. What sorts of goals do you set and are then able to realize (or notice significant progress over time)?
8. What topics of conversation do you bring up often, or have you taught on. What kind of topics 'energize' you?
9. Who are the celebrities, politicians or people in your life who inspire you?
10. What do you like to learn, listen, study or read about?



Next to each of the 10 above questions, take note of which of the six core human values these things/activities represent.

The 6 Core Human Values (CHV)

1. **Certainty:** Assurance you can avoid pain and gain pleasure, safety, security.
2. **Uncertainty/Variety:** The need for unknown, change, new stimuli, adventure
3. **Significance:** Feeling unique, of value, important, special or needed, independence.
4. **Connection/Love:** A strong feeling of closeness or union with someone or something.
5. **Growth:** An expansion of capacity, capability or understanding.
6. **Contribution:** A sense of service and focus on helping, giving and supporting others.

Now **arrange these Core Human Values (CHV)** in *order of importance* to you, from most important (#1) to least important (#6)

For example, your final list should look something like this:

1. "I love improving lives of others" >> CHV: Contribution
2. "I love traveling." >> CHV: Variety/Uncertainty
3. "I love working in a team." >> CHV: Connection/Love
4. "I love being the boss." >> CHV: Significance
5. "I love to save my money." >> CHV: Certainty
6. "I love taking online courses." >> CHV: Growth

The above are a 'distillation' of your most important values. It reveals to you what experiences really drive and inspire you, 'underneath it all'.

Now, with the above set of your deepest values, you have a clearer picture of “Who you really are...” (Ethos). In order to find fulfillment and to thrive i.e. eudaimonia, you need to live according to these, in that order of priority. This means to live with **integrity**.

Once you have done the above inner work, only then are you ready to become clear on your personal mission, i.e. what you are here to do, what has meaning and for whom. Contributing and serving society, your family, your team, your clients, your company, is something that will provide you with a sense of purpose, self respect and self worth. The stuff of which self-leadership will be the natural result, not something you have to strive for.

In his book “*The Leader Who Had No Title*” top management guru, Robin Sharma demonstrates how *we can all work with and influence people like a superstar, regardless of our position. You don't need to be a CEO or a world leader to be a leader from within; You just need to figure out what it is you are skilled at and love to do, and where you can make a difference!*

Instructions: Stage 2 Finding your Mission Statement

Before we proceed to writing your personal Mission Statement, it's useful to gain some clarity on your life's professional mission and purpose by answering these questions:

1. What do I (love to) do? What are my skills and talents? If you could teach someone something, what would that be? (See Stage One above).
2. Who do I do it *for*?
3. What do those people or causes actually **want** and **need** that I can provide? (What is the **deficiency** or **lack** that you are trying to fulfill? How will it change or transform as a result?)

Some guidelines for the formulation of your statement:

- It should be short, preferably contained in one sentence, so that it can be focused, concise and easy to follow.
- It should not be a general, vague or predictable statement. Try to be as *specific* as possible.
- It should be in the present or present-continuous tense. (As if it has already happened.)
- If you are a religious/spiritual person, you may include your faith within it, if that's what inspires you.

Here are some examples of mission statements adopted by very successful CEOs.

- “*To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference.*” - Denise Morrison, CEO, Campbell Soup Co.
- “*To have fun in my journey through life and learn from my mistakes.*” - Sir Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group
- “*To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be.*” - Oprah Winfrey, OWN

Write your own Personal Mission Statement..

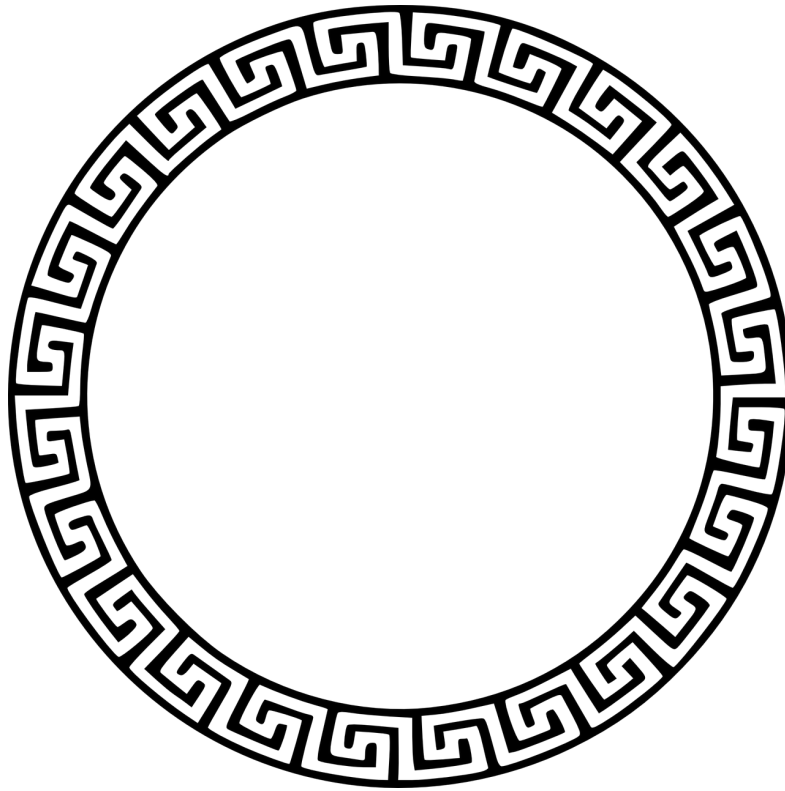


When you repeat your Personal Mission Statement, you should, ideally, feel confident about it. It's your personal 'credo', 'motto' or 'maxim'.

Remember that this is a concise distillation of what it takes to make you happy, to allow you to reach your state of Eudaimonia.

You should undertake to repeat your mission statement to keep it current and relevant in your mind. A great way to do that is through guided meditation as explained in the next Askesis "*Morpheas Mind Mechanics*". You should also re-formulate it at regular intervals throughout your life, to update it and adjust for changing circumstances, realities and priorities.

Once you are done, write it on your 'Shield' (below), which you can also 'decorate' with other symbols such as a lion, a sun, a laurel, a crown, anything that will inspire you.



Suggested to also think about:

What will your obituary in the newspaper look like?

Take a moment to write your obituary or *epitaph*; what you would want written about you when you have passed away many, many years from now. Use words, phrases and sentences. Don't over-think this exercise. Do not edit, censor, analyze or critique your thoughts. Take 10-15 minutes to complete it. You can revisit it again in the future, so do not try to perfect your answer now. Questions you should ask yourself as you do this exercise are:

- What and/or who did you impact or change? Why?
- What character traits and values did you consistently demonstrate over your life? At your core, who were you?
- Who did you care for? How did you impact or change this person/these people?
- What were major accomplishments in your life? At the ages of 40, 50, 60, 70?
- What did you show interest in? What were you passionate or enthusiastic about?
- What was your legacy?

Think BIG. Imagine possibilities. Ask yourself: *Why not?*