

# LIFEPRINTS

# LIFEPRINTS

Deciphering Your Life Purpose  
from Your Fingerprints

RICHARD UNGER



CROSSING PRESS  
Berkeley | Toronto

Copyright © 2007 by Richard Unger

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except brief excerpts for the purpose of review, without written permission of the publisher.



Crossing Press  
an imprint of Ten Speed Press  
PO Box 7123  
Berkeley, California 94707  
www.tenspeed.com

Distributed in Australia by Simon and Schuster Australia, in Canada by Ten Speed Press Canada, in New Zealand by Southern Publishers Group, in South Africa by Real Books, and in the United Kingdom and Europe by Publishers Group UK.

Cover design by Nancy Austin and Chloe Rawlins  
Text design by Laura Milton

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Unger, Richard.

LifePrints : deciphering your life purpose from your fingerprints /

Richard Unger.

p. cm.

Summary: "A guide to discovering one's life purpose by decoding the map revealed in our unique combination of fingerprints, based on twenty-five years of research and fingerprint statistics for more than fifty thousand hands"—Provided by publisher.

Includes index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-58091-185-6

1. Fortune-telling by fingerprints. 2. Fingerprints. I. Title.

BF1891.F5U54 2007

133.6—dc22

2007016834

*To Alana*

Printed in the United States of America  
First printing, 2007

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 — 11 10 09 08 07

# CONTENTS

---

Foreword by Frank R. Wilson, MD	viii
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction: The Next Extraordinary Map	xii
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> <b>LIFE PURPOSE, LIFE LESSONS, AND SOUL PSYCHOLOGY DEFINED</b>	  1
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> <b>IDENTIFY YOUR FINGERPRINTS AND FIND YOUR SCHOOL</b>	  19
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> <b>DECIPHER YOUR LIFE PURPOSE AND LIFE LESSON</b>	  51
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b> <b>DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING</b>	  69
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> <b>CREATE YOUR LIFE-FULFILLMENT FORMULA AND LIVE A LIFE ON PURPOSE</b>	  151
Appendix I: Archetypal Combinations and Case Studies	165
<i>Famous Fingerprints:</i> Susan B. Anthony 243, Ted Bundy 227, Walt Disney 231, Amelia Earhart 192, Albert Einstein 190, Dwight D. Eisenhower 188, Lyndon Baines Johnson 86, John F. Kennedy 228, Martin Luther King 202, Charles Manson 189, Richard Nixon 215, Lee Harvey Oswald 241	
Appendix II: Fingerprint History and Research from Medical and Hand Analysis Perspectives	269
Index	282

## FOREWORD

---

NOT QUITE TEN YEARS AGO, while I was working on the manuscript for a book considering the evolutionary connections between the human hand and brain, a friend urged me to meet Richard Unger, “a person who looks at people’s hands and says things about them.” Palmistry was nowhere on the list of research topics for my book, but since I was very much interested in people whose working lives are strongly dependent on the hand, curiosity overcame my professional misgivings; I contacted Mr. Unger and we arranged to meet. A soft-spoken, thoughtful man brimming with Brooklyn wit and enthusiasm, Richard answered a number of questions about his background and work; then, during a moment of quiet when I was trying to account for the somewhat unexpected feeling that I was talking to a highly intelligent man with interesting things to say, he asked me, “Would you mind if I look at your hands?”

Of course you *know* his reading of my hands unmasked me in a trice, but as I subsequently learned, any hand reader worth his salt can do that in his sleep. What mattered more, and what explains why I eagerly accepted his invitation to write this foreword, was that he also agreed to an informal, private test of his interpretive system by reading the hands of a few of my close friends. I was surprised when he said they would not have to meet with him personally; he would only need to see their handprints and fingerprints. He showed me how to prepare an ink print of the hand and its individual fingerprints and told me to bring these to him for a reading as soon as I had collected them.

I returned with the prints about a week later, full of anticipation but totally unprepared for what happened. It was as if I had delivered a medical school quiz on chest X-rays to the chief of the radiology department. Richard didn’t tell me who was happily married or who owned a yellow T-bird; instead, he told me what

each person was instinctively good at and for each person how a chronic nemesis in his or her life might behave. When he was done, I told him briefly about each individual, still slightly disoriented by how accurately in each instance he had described something essential and distinctive. After my rendering of the life story of one of the five, he looked puzzled, shook his head, and said, “I really missed that one.” But I had withheld a piece of extremely personal information about this particular person, and the truth was that Richard had hit five home runs.

At this point I decided that I could not simply dismiss this demonstration; the readings certainly *could* have been a fluke, or a clever charade, but the tables had turned and the burden of explaining his “trick” was now mine. I would have to take my time and learn more about what this man was doing. I studied his system.

Ten years have passed since our first meeting, and Richard and I are now not only close friends but professional colleagues. What I have learned from him during the decade of professional interactions we have enjoyed since our first meeting has both refreshed and intrigued my sense of the hand as both an emblem and an instrument of the human spirit. What he has taught me has also had important consequences for my thinking about a whole class of perplexing disorders regularly encountered in both neurological and psychiatric practice and ultimately convinced me that there was at least a limited role for hand reading in my own practice. As you might guess, I was not merely dubious about offering hand readings to patients in a neurological clinic; there was good reason to expect criticism, or worse, from colleagues. But after the first timid trials, I realized the method was an easy fit with my own style of history taking and in fact could be a powerful catalyst for the airing of personal issues; understandably, patients tend to be cautious with a doctor they do not already know and trust. Yes, a few people balked at having their hands read, but as I gained experience the readings were increasingly welcomed by patients who, once they recovered from their surprise, expressed gratitude that a doctor would actually take the time to tell them what their hands said about them.

At the center of Richard’s work is the astonishing assertion that every human hand bears a unique pattern of fingerprints that can be decoded in a psychologically specific and meaningful way. I have been a reluctant, incomplete, and at times extremely difficult, convert to this claim, but I now largely accept it as fundamentally valid. We have had a number of discussions about designing a scientific proof of his method, but since the world is still waiting for any such demonstrations for a host of interpretive systems widely used in clinical psychology and psychiatry, I am content for now with the empirical evidence. Based on a decade of observation, I consider Richard Unger to have produced an objective and straightforward analytical tool with a breathtaking capacity to unmask the sources (and the potent, insistent dynamics) of many of the common frustrations and failures all of us experience in our daily lives.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

The single overarching theme common to modern psychology, classical mythology, fairy tales, great novels, and movies—and it is a theme that *everyone* understands—is some version of the narrative concerning what we like and do not like about ourselves. What Richard has found in fingerprints is not simply a fresh way of referencing this inevitable inner dichotomy—what we commonly think of as our strengths and weaknesses—but a compelling argument for treating them as complementary, inseparable, and in fact equally essential agents for healthy psychological development.

As a physician, the most impressive benefit I find in Richard's readings is the implicit invitation to discern in our most intimate and intractable frustrations (and, for some, in unexplained physical disabilities) not bad luck but a unique and intimate code of personal meaning. Learning to read that code can yield entirely unexpected self-understanding and a clear vision of what any particular person, irrespective of life history, can do to move toward a life of real and progressive fulfillment.

Richard's use of fingerprints to unmask the healthy dynamism of inner conflict seems absolutely unique to me, and I think it is not an overstatement to suggest that he may have developed one of the most accessible and fruitful constructs in the history of human psychology. Although I am utterly at a loss to explain how fingerprint patterns could possibly provide such a compass, I am satisfied that the interpretive system he describes in this book is not only psychologically wise but profoundly constructive.

This book represents an extraordinary effort, and achievement, by its author. He may have been working at this for decades, but he is the first to say that it is a work in progress. So be it: if only a beginning, it is already a very mature beginning.

I promise you that if you take Richard at his word, your sense of wonder and appreciation for your own life—not as a sugary confection but with all its foibles, its clumsiness, its retreats, and even its most spectacular crashes, just as they were and are—will grow enormously. Some of you who will read this book will even find, to your great surprise, that your appetite for your own life has become insatiable.

—FRANK R. WILSON, MD, AUTHOR OF *THE HAND: HOW ITS USE SHAPES THE BRAIN, LANGUAGE, AND HUMAN CULTURE*  
AND FORMER CLINICAL PROFESSOR OF NEUROLOGY, STANFORD  
UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN a labor of love, the actual writing of which has spanned fourteen years. During that time, thousands of people have shared their life stories with me, from their highest aspirations to their most hidden secrets. Thank you all for allowing me into your private domain. Your fingerprints are on every page.

Any book of this kind must be a collaboration, and there are many who contributed to the publication of *LifePrints*. To my students who insisted I explain the LifePrints system more clearly and who tested out its principles on tens of thousands of their own clients, family, and friends; to my fellow vision holders: the faculty of the International Institute of Hand Analysis (Alana Unger, Ronelle Coburn, Terry-Linn Snider, Pascal Stoessel, Roberta Coker, Mary DeLave, and Janet Savage); to my colleagues Barbara Schmid, MD, Andre and Teres Studer, Frank Wilson, MD, and John Ward, who supported me in too many ways to list here; to Zen Player, whose ideas ignited my imagination, including the title *LifePrints*; to my friends who generously offered to read and critique early versions of the manuscript, including Harvey Landress, Elijah Nesenboim, and Sandy Lillie; to my editors, including Laura Kennedy, who climbed so deeply into the material that she used it to change her own life, working with you has changed my life as well; to Julie Bennett at Ten Speed Press and to my agent, Rosalie Siegel, thank you for all your efforts and thank you for believing in me; and to my wife, Alana, especially you Alana, not only for loving me and being by my side through this whole process but also for your direct contribution to *LifePrints*: your incisive input courses through the entire book. Thank you all for helping me to see myself more clearly and to live my own life purpose.

## THE NEXT EXTRAORDINARY MAP

---

*“It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats of Zanzibar,” says Thoreau. “Be rather the Lewis and Clark . . . of your own streams and oceans, explore your own higher latitudes. . . .” With this metaphor, Thoreau extends the purview of mapping . . . to the self and solitude and the soul. Perhaps the next extraordinary map is not of galaxies or the interior of atoms but something quite different, something Thoreau called “home cosmography.”*

—STEPHEN S. HALL, *MAPPING THE NEXT MILLENNIUM*

I am a professional hand analyst.

I estimate that I have read over 52,000 pair of hands thus far in my hand reading career. About half my clients are therapists, counselors, or their clients; the other half are businesspeople, artists, housewives, candlestick makers—anyone who wants to learn more about their life purpose and life lessons.

I know there is an image problem associated with hand reading. “Cross my palm with silver. I see a tall, dark stranger. . . .” When people think of hand reading, if they think of it at all, the image is that of a roadside fortune-teller. Certainly, some fit this description, but most modern hand readers have long since left their crystal balls behind. As far as I have been able to determine, your hands do not know how many children you will have or how long you are going to live. Your hands do, however, have a very specific picture of your life purpose printed out in your fingerprints.

### THE BIRTH OF LIFEPRINTS

In the summer of 1969, having just finished the active duty portion of my National Guard commitment I needed something to revive my spirits. Neil Armstrong was about to take “one small step for mankind,” but I had a different adventure in mind. I set out to explore America.

On that trip, in a little bookstore in Boulder, Colorado, a used palmistry book somehow caught my attention. According to its diagrams, I was the type of person who needed a mission in life. You could say that about anybody, I thought, but I bought the book anyway thinking it would be fun. Two days later, I was totally hooked on hands.

I was amazed at how accurate hand reading was, even if only 10 percent of what was visible in someone’s hands made sense to me. I was delighted to have such meaningful conversations with people with whom I probably wouldn’t have talked for more than five minutes otherwise. More importantly, reading hands gave a part of me that I barely knew an opportunity to emerge. The more hands I read, the more this “me” came forward and I liked the way that felt.

Returning to college that fall, I devoted myself to studying hands. I would carry around *The Laws of Scientific Hand Reading* by William Benham, cut classes, and read hands in the snack bar for hours at a time. My sparse knowledge of the subject didn’t stop me from being convinced there was something to it, and in the proper spirit of collegiate inquiry, I set out to learn as much as possible. Looking at hands every day, I would tell people a thing or two and ask them to fill in the blanks about their interests, relationships, etc., comparing what they told me to the differing versions presented in my small collection of palmistry books.

---

### ALONE WITH HISTORY

The two concrete lions guarding the Forty-Second Street library stared straight ahead, unconcerned with the passing traffic or the heavy New York City rain. Gaining the entranceway, I proceeded to the main hall, my wet shoes slipping and squeaking on the polished marble floors. The enormous vaulted ceilings always brought out the reverential side of me, so I tried to unload my jacket and notebooks as quietly as possible. Serious thinkers, aged philosophers, and sleeping street people shared the reading tables as I settled in for another day in the archives.

The eyes of Katherine St. Hill, founder of the London Cheirological Society, were staring back at me from the nineteenth century when a woman older still interrupted my reverie. The folded note said I had received permission to view the rare Indagine Book of Palmistry and Physiognomy from 1676.

1676!

To enter this special reading room in the bowels of the library, I had to fill out a three-page questionnaire, wait a day, then swear in writing to not bring pen or pencil with me. I faced possible search and seizure and, I suppose, a lifetime ban on reading if caught *In delicto*.

I made the appropriate vows and signed on the dotted line. The ancient woman, choosing from among fifty two-inch keys, opened the wire caged doors that allowed me into the sepulchral chamber.

I was alone with history.

---

I felt I was making progress on understanding the message carried in our hands, but I needed to know more. Traveling to the giant public library in New York City, I spent ten glorious days poring through every last word I could find on the subject.

By 1979 I had read more than twelve thousand pairs of hands and had tested the information in pretty much every palmistry book ever written in the English language. Despite holding an honored place in the great universities of Europe through the late sixteenth century, and though taught by scholars from Aristotle to Paracelsus, by the time I got to the literary legacy of this once-grand study, what remained seemed little more than a hodgepodge of outdated opinions, wrong guesses, and intermittently accurate observations. I longed for a palmistic Rosetta stone, some consistent and coherent set of guiding principles that in one elegant swoop would make sense of it all, but it felt as if I was working on a giant jigsaw puzzle without a box cover picture for guidance.

The problem was not a shortage of data, quite the contrary. I had discarded or confirmed numerous interpretations of line formations and hand shapes, using feedback from those whose hands I had read to add to my growing database. The problem, it seemed, was that everybody I met was a mass of contradictions. Whenever I thought I had accurately correlated another hand marking with its specific character trait, the next client's life story would ruin my carefully crafted theory. Either there was another variable in the mix or hands did not offer a full and accurate model of human behavior. Could it be I wasn't playing with all the puzzle pieces?

With no more palmistry books left to read, my unquenchable thirst for hand data eventually brought me to the Texas Medical Center library, part of Houston's huge medical complex. There, nestled in my cubicle, with lab coats and green scrubs passing by in my peripheral vision, I eagerly devoured the extensive literature on hand morphology, palmar lines, and fingerprints.

It wasn't long before a growing city of haphazard piles grew up around me: medical books and genetic journals, anthropological studies and JAMA articles in dizzying towers that threatened to tumble down with each new addition. I moved quickly through article after article. There were thousands, including tantalizing titles not yet translated from German, Chinese, and other languages. The medical literature documented links between fingerprints and lupus disease, Alzheimer's, tuberculosis, heart disease, and cancer. I found numerous studies on fingerprints and mental disorders, hyperactive children, retardation, and schizophrenia. There were twin studies in abundance. Researchers were unanimous: various medical and psychological conditions have certain fingerprint traits in common. Lobbying for an expanded role for dermatoglyphics, researchers had proposed more studies with larger subject groups.

## DERMATOGLYPHICS OPENS THE DOOR

*Dermatoglyphics*: (dermato = skin, glyphs = carvings), a name coined by Harold Cummins, MD, in 1926, is the scientific term for the study of fingerprints and related line and hand shape designations. Its main uses are in population studies, genetic research, and medical diagnostics. Dr. Cummins is commonly referred to as the father of dermatoglyphics, and his seminal work with Dr. Charles Midlo, *Fingerprints, Palms, and Soles*, is considered the standard in the field. Examining embryonic hands, Dr. Cummins documented the emergence of eleven ball-like structures at the eighth week after conception. These "volar pads" will later become the thumb, fingers, and the six sections of the palmar surface. At the fourteenth week, the skin corrugations (fingerprints) begin to appear, forming a topographic-like map of the developing fetal hand.

What? Fingerprints are arranged like a topographic map? I almost fell out of my chair. It was almost too obvious—human fingerprints look like a map. A map is a tool that tells you where you are and how to get where you need to go. How could this have been overlooked for so long?

For ten years, I had been deciphering the personality components of my hand reading clients by comparing the size and shape of their thumbs, palms, and fingers (plus looking at their lines). Each of these factors is subject to change over time. I had gotten pretty good at finding hidden talents and behavioral tendencies, but I still couldn't tell why people with the same traits sometimes behaved so differently. Now, in the medical stacks, I was reading that the fingerprints form *a topographical map prior to birth, a map that will remain unaltered throughout life*. Could this map contain the hidden variable for which I had been searching?

Dermatoglyphics and palmistry both derive from comparative hand topography. Both seek the inner condition based upon outer signs, but there the similarities end. One employs the scientific method, the other is based on folklore and thousands of years of anecdotal experience. One is high tech, the other, ancient wisdom. Arising as they do from such divergent cultures, could a marriage of the two disciplines be possible? When I overlaid the two systems and tested my findings in the human laboratory, it turned out they were made for each other.

## DOWN TO THE CORE

After years of searching for isolated jigsaw puzzle tidbits, being in the Texas Medical Center library felt like having access to a giant puzzle-piece warehouse. Ca-chunk, ca-chunk: one new interlocking piece after another! Hours passed in an instant. I couldn't believe the library was closing and I would have to wait until 7:00 the next morning to resume. I was at the door at 6:45.



I learned that each fingerprint is composed of between fifty and one hundred lines, each line having its own signature. There are stops and starts to the lines, forks, and bubbles, a series of easily classifiable formations called pattern minutiae. The FBI does not need all ten of your fingerprints to identify you. Comparing the pattern minutiae of one line of one fingerprint may well do the job. The fact that each fingerprint is unique and unalterable but easy to categorize is what makes fingerprint identification the useful tool that it is.

Interestingly, the same patterning system that appears on fingerprints shows up elsewhere in nature: on sand dunes, for instance. Sand dunes are not smooth; they are ridged, and these ridges have stops and starts, forks and bubbles, just like fingerprint lines. So too at the beach. When the water recedes, we see a ripple pattern in the sand with markings just like those on sand dunes and our fingerprints. Apparently, the ocean waves have left their imprint on the shoreline. Is it only a coincidence that these patterns share the same characteristics with those on our fingertips?

As I stared at the diagrams in *Fingerprints, Palms, and Soles*, a shudder went across my shoulders and up and down my spine. The experience was similar to waking in the middle of the night from the power of a Technicolor dream. I felt sensationally calm, profoundly alert, as though I was remembering something long forgotten. The entire system of fingerprint identification appeared in my brain, whole, intact. And I knew, as I know now in my bones, that fingerprints are a soul-level imprint.

The LifePrints system joins the fingerprint census and arch, loop, whorl sequence of medical literature to the mythic interpretations of hand analysis. The result of this union is a tool as precise as a scalpel and as meaningful as a philosopher's stone: a life-purpose map that can be used as a daily compass to life-scale meaning and fulfillment.

*Five months before you were born, a pattern appeared on your body, one with design characteristics similar to the wave impressions left on a beach. Call it a soul map, a holographic image, or a DNA printout, a bar-coded peek at the biological legacy of your ancestors. Consider it your transcript as you begin a new semester at the Earth University.*

There are many ways to think about fingerprints, but it doesn't matter how or why fingerprints operate as a map to our core psychology. The fact is they do. The LifePrints system works. It works for me. It works for the thousands of people who have used it already. It will work for you as well.

## THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HAND ANALYSIS

Since that life-changing day in the Jessie Jones Medical Library, I have talked with more than forty thousand people about their life purpose. After honing the LifePrints system in these thousands of readings, I then taught it to more than one hundred

psychiatrists, counselors, and therapists with various backgrounds and training, who replicated my results. Confident that I had an accurate and specific life-purpose assessment tool, I founded the International Institute of Hand Analysis (IIHA) in Northern California. This was the culmination of a life dream that had its first glimmer when I began reading hands during that trip around America in 1969.

The IIHA began offering yearlong certification trainings in 1985; we had five eager students. Today, the IIHA has five full-time faculty members, dozens of practitioners, and classes in several cities in the United States and Europe. The LifePrints system has been used in a variety of settings: a child development clinic in Switzerland, an inner city high school in Oakland, and in businesses large and small.

---

Years after my experience in the medical library, a student told me that the Navajo Indians have a saying about fingerprints:

"It was the wind that gave them life. It is the wind that comes out our mouths now that gives us life. When this ceases to blow—we die. In the skin at the tips of our fingers we see the trail of the wind. It shows us where the wind blew when our ancestors were created."

How elegant.

---

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Using information from the study guide that I refined in hundreds of IIHA workshops, *LifePrints* will lead you step by step through the construction of your own life-purpose map. As your life purpose comes into full view, prior events and current circumstances will take on new significance and future prospects will appear in an entirely different light. As you will soon find out, knowing your life purpose will permanently change your outlook on who you really are and where your life is going.

- Chapter One: Life Purpose, Life Lessons, and Soul Psychology Defined—explains the terms and principles you will be using throughout the book to understand your life purpose and life lesson.
- Chapter Two: Identify Your Fingerprints and Find Your School—gets you started on the construction of your life-purpose map.
- Chapter Three: Decipher Your Life Purpose and Life Lesson—helps you translate your fingerprint types into purposes and lessons.



CHAPTER ONE

# LIFE PURPOSE, LIFE LESSONS, AND SOUL PSYCHOLOGY DEFINED

- Chapter Four: Deepen Your Understanding—outlines the significance of each fingerprint's location on the hands. This chapter—along with extensive references to Appendix I: Archetypal Combinations and Case Studies—is where you'll find the book's (and your fingerprints') core information.
- Chapter Five: Create Your Life-Fulfillment Formula and Live a Life on Purpose—brings everything together and presents some journaling exercises to help you integrate this knowledge into your life.

Reading hands is my passion. I have read the hands of babies just born and hands nearly one hundred years old. From successful businesspeople to shamanic healers and from mass murderers to movie queens, each pair of hands presents a sharply focused window into the inner workings of another unique human being. The most unusual work I have done is the study of hands left behind by those no longer on the planet: the petroglyphs of the American Southwest, the Cave of Hands in Argentina, the hands in concrete in front of Mann's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles, old photos in history books and *Life* magazine, and personal collections—all offer a fascinating record, a Biography channel of their own. Using some of the sources mentioned above, I've read and interpreted the life purpose and life lesson of some very famous people. These are included in Appendix I: Archetypal Combinations and Case Studies and are indexed in the table of contents.

If you want to decipher your life purpose and life lesson as quickly as possible, read chapter one and enough of chapter two to identify your school. Read the section of chapter two that pertains to your school, then skip ahead to chapter three. Decode your life purpose and life lesson, then proceed to chapter four, reading those sections that pertain directly to you as well as the cross-referenced entries in the appendix. You will need to understand the material in chapter five to pull all the parts of your life-purpose map together, and the journaling exercises will help you use what you have learned to bring your life purpose directly into your everyday life.

Or read *LifePrints* straight through.

Either way, I suggest keeping a life-purpose journal as a reference point as you work your way through the book. It will allow you to have your fingerprint chart handy and will offer a home for your thoughts and impressions as you do the journaling exercises at the end of chapter five.

No matter how you use *LifePrints*, whether for self-discovery, to better understand family or friends, or just as a primer on soul psychology, one thing is for sure: knowing your life purpose will change your life in ways you can at this point only barely imagine.

*Every one of us knows that the content of his life is somehow preserved and sacred.*

—VIKTOR FRANKL, *THE DOCTOR OF THE SOUL*

Knowing your life purpose means being clear about your big picture: what your life has amounted to so far and where things are headed. More than a set of core values or a worthy goal, your life purpose is your right life, your reason for being. Finding and living your life purpose is the single most important thing you can ever do.

Robert Goddard, father of modern rocketry, knew his life purpose. At the age of nine, sitting in a tree staring at the moon, he imagined himself building machines that would fly into space. For the next fifty years, on each birthday, he sat in that same tree to re-invigorate the vision that had instilled his life with passion and direction.

Young Geronimo didn't know his life purpose until one day, after fasting and praying naked for two weeks, dehydrated and near exhaustion, he saw a dream deity that promised him battleground invincibility if he would lead the Apaches. Geronimo accepted his call to duty, often invoking his spirit guide for strength and stamina throughout the rest of his life.

Do you know your life purpose?

What if you don't have a tree to stare at the moon from or don't like the fasting-in-the-desert option? What if you are twenty or forty or sixty and have not as yet had any such life-altering revelation; how in this world are you supposed to find *your* life purpose? And say a map with your life purpose on it mysteriously appeared before your very eyes, a life-purpose map with absolute proof of your identity. Would you have the good sense to follow where it led?

Luckily, you do not have to be as smart as a world-class scientist nor as brave as Geronimo to find and pursue your true path. Instead, you can read the life-purpose map printed on your body five months before you were born—your fingerprints. Long associated with identity, your fingerprints contain another level of personal information infinitely more fascinating. Like examining the acorn to know the

type of oak tree that may emerge someday, by looking at your fingerprints you can see a coded picture of the person it was always in you to become.

Your life-purpose map is literally at your fingertips.

## LIFE PURPOSE IS . . .

Before we look at your life-purpose map, let's start by looking at what life purpose really is. The first thing to know about life purpose is that it is not about getting your life into some ultimately optimal arrangement. Nor is it about matching your capabilities and inclinations to the marketplace. Life purpose is bigger than that. It goes beyond improving your circumstances or even improving yourself. Living your life purpose means developing a state of consciousness that naturally and regularly unfolds into right life.

To illustrate, let's assume that your life purpose is one of the service-oriented ones discussed later in this book. There are four main categories of life purposes that you will learn about in chapter two; service-based life purposes are one of the four. Assuming that you are in a service-oriented life purpose, does that mean that doing something for your family is on purpose for you? Maybe yes, maybe no, maybe maybe. Imagine this scenario: you are the mother of three and you accept an invitation to go out on Tuesday night with some friends. When you announce your plans, your entire family complains. Under pressure, you decide to stay home.

A month later another invitation arrives, and this time you are determined to accept it. As you prepare for your night out, your family unleashes the big guns. "If you don't help me with this most-important-of-all-time homework assignment, I'll know for sure what a bad mother you really are." "Honey, you aren't leaving me alone with the kids when the Smith proposal is due this Friday?" Since your life purpose is service based, does that mean it is in your best interests to stay home again? Absolutely not. Stay home if that is what you decide to do, but staying home under duress is not service. It is servitude.

So you make it out the front door, a chorus of "I never did like your apple pie anyway!" following you to the street. Surprise, the sun rises as usual the next morning. A new attitude starts to pervade your life, and from now on, if you decide to do something for your family, it is much more likely that it will be a real honest-to-goodness service rather than a guilt-motivated obligation. As this simple story demonstrates, it is not what you *do* that makes something on purpose. It is not the outcome engendered. It is the mind set, the attitude involved in the doing that is the difference between (in this case) a life-affirming service and a life-numbing burden.

Looked at this way, all experiences—those that have a happy ending and those that don't—all experiences that bring you closer to a clear recognition of your life

purpose are absolutely on purpose for you. Agonizing over how much to do for spouse and children and feeling guilty no matter what you decide are just as much a part of a service-oriented life path as devoting your life to a cause and receiving a Lifetime of Good Deeds Award. Like everyone else, you are not getting into your right life without going through the requisite training program.

## Life Purpose Is Ongoing

The second crucial concept about life purpose is a logical outgrowth of the first. If life purpose is a consciousness to inhabit as opposed to an action to take or a set of circumstances to arrive in, then life purpose is a process, a life-sized journey, rather than a final destination. Like Goddard reaching to outer space or Geronimo fighting for freedom, each day you are alive presents new possibilities for discovery and self-expression. Life purpose is always a work in progress.

Already present before your birth, your life purpose is continually being refined and shaped by your experiences. Recognizing your life purpose in its nascent form allows you to take advantage of opportunities you might otherwise miss. Consider Divaldo Franco's story.

At the age of sixteen, this young Brazilian had a dream in which he was shown a photograph of an old man surrounded by smiling children. He was told to look carefully at the photograph and remember it because this was his life purpose: to assist those who had no one else to help them. Although deeply moved, the young man could make no sense of the dream and it soon receded into a corner of his mind.

Five years later, while walking down an alley past a garbage dump, Divaldo heard an infant's cry. There, wrapped in rags, was an abandoned baby boy. Shocked and confused, he picked up the child and, looking into its eyes, remembered the dream from years before. Not knowing what to do, he took the baby home. Months passed. Incredibly, he came across another infant in similar circumstances. What else could he do? He took this child home as well.

Word of his caring and compassion spread, and within a few years his household of orphaned children had grown to five, eventually evolving into a children's center with dozens of abandoned boys and girls. Now, over fifty years later, that first child from the garbage dump has become the doctor of that center, and the boy who dreamt his life purpose is the old man in the photograph, surrounded by smiling children.

Divaldo, Geronimo, and Goddard; a humanitarian, a warrior, and a scientist: one found his heart, another his power, the third the clarity upon which to build a career. Like the Blues Brothers on their Mission from God, things didn't always work out as planned, but knowing their life purpose meant that at least they had an idea of where they were trying to go.

## Life Purpose is Non-Circumstantial

Life purpose is a lifelong process devoted to increased self-awareness and the pursuit of meaning. As such, living your life purpose is possible no matter what circumstances you find yourself in today. For instance, if your fingerprints reveal your life purpose to be The Leader, it does not matter if you are too young to be president of the United States or too short to be captain of the basketball team. Your life assignment is to inhabit your leadership consciousness right here, right now, dealing with whatever life sends your way. That is what you came to do in this lifetime. That is where you can find your greatest fulfillment.

Living a leadership life purpose can occur in any number of ways: a prison philosopher holding court in C block, a CEO running a major corporation, a child stopping a fight in a school yard. Leadership can thrive in any environment. You were only a fetus when your fingerprints took form; you've had those same fingerprints all through your life, and you'll have them until you die. The ability to live your life purpose is never a function of current circumstance.

## Life Purpose Seeks Meaning

Does my life have significance?

At the center of each person is an essential, irreducible ME that yearns for deeper meaning. Whether this presence is the material-world expression of an eternal spirit or merely the result of bio-receptors triggered by chemicals in the brain, Living on Purpose means being in direct and continual contact with this part of yourself.

Hidden or known, this ME is the guiding force behind all the events of your life, the voice of your destiny calling out to you from your soul. This ME lies within you, constantly seeking to awaken you to its message. It is elusive, it is always there; it is oceanic, it is concrete; it is real, it is a dream. When this ME fully infiltrates your life, a whole new level of satisfaction becomes available and an unselfconscious aliveness takes over. Ray Charles singing, Amelia Earhart flying, your Aunt Mathilda baking her apple pie—like true art, life purpose in action is not easy to define, but you know it when you see it.

James Hillman, psychotherapist and coauthor with Michael Ventura of *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy*, knows what life purpose is:

*If [Jung is right and] at the soul's core we are images, then we must define life as the actualization over time of that original seed image, what Michelangelo called the imagine del cuor, or the image in the heart, and that image—not the time that actualized it—is the primary determinant of your life.*

*Do you see what this means?*

*It means that our history is secondary or contingent and that the image in the heart is primary and essential. If [this is so]. . . then the things that befall us in the course of time (which we call development) are various actualizations of the image, manifestations of it, and not causes of who we are. I am not caused by my history—my parents, my childhood, my development. These are mirrors in which I may catch glimpses of my image.*

This *imagine del cuor* is your life purpose. It is not only visible in fleeting images but is printed right there in full view on your fingertips. And the problems you face, the problems that can make a life so difficult, many of these can now be understood as essentially uncaused, the natural outcome of your life purpose seeking expression. As such, they are not to be changed or overcome as much as to be accepted, integrated, reframed as allies. *LifePrints* is full of stories of people doing just that (or failing to).

## Life Purpose Is Objective, Life-Scale, and Personal

There are many ways to learn more about your inner nature. You can go at it from the inside out: meditate, keep a dream journal, take self-development courses. All of these have something to offer, but each is subjective. None offers independent verification, a source outside your inner dialogue with which to measure your own picture of yourself. None guarantees that the insight you've gained will still feel relevant ten years from now.

In search of objectivity, many have turned to the Meyers-Briggs Personality Test. Millions are done every year, and Meyers-Briggs has a reputation for accuracy. But what will it tell you about life purpose and the search for meaning—what Viktor Frankl calls the ultimate human motivator? Nothing.

Historically, religion has claimed this territory. But, if every true believer shares the same call to cosmic duty, then at best all we have is a mass-produced life purpose, identical for millions of people. How then shall we make decisions about this invisible, hard-to-quantify realm of human experience? Is truth merely what any person chooses to believe?

For a life-purpose map to be useful, it needs to be specific to each person, yet it must address the universal question: Why am I here? It needs to resonate with personal experience yet not be too subjective. It must be life-scale yet pertinent to current circumstance. *LifePrints* offers just such a map.

## Life Purpose Is Practical and Specific

At the beginning of every life-purpose workshop I teach, participants are asked to write *My Life Purpose Is . . .* at the top of the page and see what written response comes forward. Let's peek in at one workshop and see how everyone is doing trying to define their life purpose.

“Okay, pens down. Tina, please read out loud what you’ve written about your life purpose.”

“Ahem . . . my life purpose is to be a good wife and mother and do everything I can to make my community a better place to live . . . oh, and to visit all the continents before I die . . . but not Antarctica.” Tina is glowing, proud of her work. She takes a deep breath and sits down.

“Mathilda.”

“My life purpose is to love everyone and to shine my light.”

Smiles abound, except for Jim, who sits curmudgeon style, arms folded. When it is his turn, he rises into a Bill Murray stance, somewhat above it all. Everyone is curious to hear what he has to say. “My life purpose is to just once beat my brother at chess.” Nervous laughter ricochets around the room. No one is exactly sure what to do about Jim.

Carol is next. She also wants to love, grow, and be a good person. Carson’s number one priority is his family. Jules wants to go public by March of next year and canoe the entire Yukon River. Donna is a multidimensional evolving enterprise. Jean is just trying to be happy.

At this point in the seminar, people are shifting in their seats, staring out the window, cleaning their eyeglasses. What can it all mean? Each person’s statement seems sincere enough, but when you put them all together they sound repetitious, pleasant but vague, like a junior high school essay contest.

This kind of discomfort often surfaces whenever I lead a life-purpose workshop. The responses you have read are a composite from classes in California. New York participants tend to include more business goals—not as much being and evolving in the Big Apple. Texans often focus on family themes. I get a slightly different set of answers in Europe, but overall the effect remains the same. An unsettling recognition fills the room as it becomes clear that no one has a good answer to the question *What Is My Life Purpose?*

By the end of the opening exercise it is clear that those in attendance are going to be asked to consider their life purpose in an entirely new way: a way that is practical and specific, one that brings clarity to life choices. We all want to continue growing as people, to have healthy finances and loving relationships. That said, is there any *particular* reason *you* are on this planet?

I believe there is.

## Life Purpose Defines What Is Important

Where did we come from and what are we doing here? Whole civilizations were born, grew up, and died around their answers to these two questions. From the ancient Egyptians through the Renaissance, from Romeo and Juliet to you and me, each person and each society defines what is important, and therefore how to order life and resources.

Context is everything.

Imagine the commitment of time and energy necessary to build the pyramids. Did the Egyptians (or their captives) gladly march to Giza, eager contributors to their Pharaoh’s immortality, or were they coerced, baking miserably in the Saharan sun? For one each day was slavery, while another exalted in the culmination of a life’s dream.

And you, are you baking or exalting? On a macro scale, the governing ethos defines a civilization; on a micro scale, life purpose defines what is important in an individual life.

Look around you. A new worldview is aching to emerge, and with it a new definition of what is important. Like all preceding worldviews, from Cleopatra’s to Newton’s, our current version, advanced though it may be, has been found confining and incomplete: confining in that too many people live with little or no connection to their life purpose; incomplete in that the current worldview has disregarded or politicized humanity’s universal hunger to contribute to something greater than ourselves, to connect to soul, both collectively and as individuals.

Adapt or perish. Any country, company, or person that cannot or will not acknowledge this emerging spiritual reality is doomed. The Information Age will self-destruct, stillborn, choking on a glut of lifeless data if it cannot help individuals better define and manifest that which has lifelong meaning, if it cannot help us all to a higher standard of self-realization.

It is time for humanity to get to its right life before it finds that it is too late to do so. Getting to your own right life is your contribution.

## YOUR LIFE LESSON

Knowing your life purpose is your first step toward achieving it. The second step, integrating your life lesson, is where the magic happens.

Like a treasure map torn in two, neither half having the full picture, your soul-psychology map has two components that must be viewed together for its message to become clear. These two halves are your life purpose and your life lesson. Your life purpose is you, effortlessly living the life you were made to be living. Your life lesson is the shadow aspect of your soul psychology, your blindest blind spot, your weak backhand in the Wimbledon of Life. Since your life purpose cannot flourish without your coming to terms with your life lesson, *learning to turn your life lesson from nemesis to ally is the secret passage to life-purpose satisfaction.*

To get a clearer picture of what life lessons are all about, consider this analogy. You are in a hallway with thirteen mirrors—truth mirrors, each one a bit more difficult to look into than the last. “Mirror, mirror on the wall, show me something about myself that I have not been willing to see before.” When you get to the thirteenth mirror, the mirror after which there are no more parts of yourself left unexposed—you see revealed the part of you called your life lesson.



Though commonly experienced as an embarrassing inadequacy, this oh-so-human, can't-get-rid-of-it part of your soul psychology is actually an essential contributor and dynamic organizer of your life. Without stumbling into the "problems" your life lesson sets in motion, how would you ever have the growth experiences your life purpose requires?

It is not so easy to think this way when your life lesson is doing its job, as a recent client can attest. Carmen came in for her reading hoping for a clue that might put an end to the frustrating family upsets that (it seemed) were messing up her whole life. Instead, the reading she received challenged her to look at her life from a perspective she had never considered.

Carmen's life purpose was The Artist and her hands were certainly creative enough for such a life path. But her life lesson was Family Connection. As I looked up from her hands, I saw the sad eyes of someone resigned to either becoming a lone wolf or struggling forever with a family that didn't appreciate her special gifts. "I'll never have the family connection I want," the sad eyes cried. "Why can't they accept me as I am? What is wrong with me?"

Where did this terrible ache for family connection and the sense of its impossibility come from? Who knows the source, but there it was in plain view in her fingerprints. The truth is, Carmen felt a creative urge too strong to ignore. But, without a family to appreciate her efforts, something big was missing. Worse, in trying to connect to her family, she felt unseen, and that was devastating. What a dilemma! "Either be me and be alone or give up me so I can join my family. Either way, I lose." At least, that is how it looked to my client. Was there any chance she could see her struggles as a function of her own inner process?

Lights . . . Camera . . . Action. The delicious dilemma enters the stage. Carnegie Hall is on line one: "We want you for a one-woman show." But Dad is on line two: "Mom is sick. We need you at home." What to do? Without a life-purpose map as her guide, it appears as if Carmen's circumstances have put her in a terrible bind, but from the fingerprint perspective we can see that it is one more inescapable iteration of Carmen's soul psychology expressing itself in still one more disguise.

Seeing the seemingly paradoxical life quest (her family vs. her art) for what it is puts to rest the idea that there is some perfect solution that she must find that will end this tug-of-war once and for all. Carmen's fingerprints say it is her destiny to face recurring choices of this kind. The choices are hers to make, the consequences real. The only question is: what will she learn about herself from the choices that she makes? Recognizing this fact is the beginning of turning her life lesson from nemesis to ally.

## THE BENEFITS OF KNOWING YOUR SOUL PSYCHOLOGY

I have seen many people grasp the significance of their life lesson's role in their lives and, in so doing, access the fulfillment that only living their life purpose can bring. I am still surprised, however, when on occasion someone asks me, "What good is knowing your life purpose?" Isn't that self-evident, I wonder. Apparently not.

For me, knowing the life purpose in my fingerprints has confirmed my own sense of who I am and what my life is all about. The more choices that become available to me, the more often I check in on my life-purpose map to keep things in perspective. Knowing my life purpose has afforded me a certain grace under pressure; it has made it easier to take responsibility for life-size errors without being crushed by paralyzing self-criticism. Feeling on purpose has been a blessing, a golden anchor, my guaranteed safe harbor no matter what is happening in my life. Without getting too far ahead of ourselves, let's take a closer look at how knowing your life purpose can improve your life.

### Direction and a Sense of Purpose

Finding your life purpose has obvious benefits for your sense of direction, but there are some not-so-obvious directional benefits as well. Three different types of life purposes will serve as examples.

One group of life purposes is dualistic in nature: Tycoon Doing World Service, for instance. In a case like this, completely different skill sets must be used in tandem to find fulfillment. A life spent as a tycoon, without an accompanying element of service to others, is bound to frustrate such a person, as would a life of service to others without a chance to exercise his or her worldly abilities. It is like rowing with only one oar in the water. No wonder you feel you are going in circles. You are. Rowing faster is not going to get you to your destination.

Another group of life purposes is singular: The Teacher, The Artist, or let's say, The Therapist. Often, The Therapist will spend hours on the phone with his or her Aunt Mathilda, providing therapeutic services but without the sense of purpose and satisfaction promised by the fingerprints. Water-cooler amateur psychiatrists may find themselves in the same boat: already doing what their life purpose asks, but on the periphery instead of at the center of their lives. Maybe all you need to do is make it official. If you are on the brink of your life purpose, what will it take for you to make the leap?

For a third group, the life question is not "What?" but "How?" For example, if Live Your Passions is your life purpose, it doesn't matter what you do. Do whatever you want. Just make sure you really want to be doing it. (If you think this is a piece of cake, you obviously are not the owner of these fingerprints. You will find more about this and the other life-purpose possibilities in chapters two through five.)

## A Proper Estimation of Possibility

Lots of people tell me they already know their life purpose. Checking their fingerprints, hearing their life stories, sometimes I completely agree. Other times, my client is mostly on purpose, with a bit of tweaking perhaps all that is called for. Most often, however, those who tell me they are on purpose actually mean that they have a goal they are after, like Jules from the life-purpose workshop who wanted to canoe the Yukon. Or I hear something lacking in directional value, like Mathilda shining her light. Fingerprints point the way to the real questions at the very base of your existence.

Another issue that often impedes the discovery of life purpose is the habitual underestimation of possibility. “I am the fellow who couldn’t find my keys the other day. I have messed up X, Y, and Z in my life. What right do I have entertaining such a grandiose image of myself? Anyway, it would be egotistical to think I could . . . Besides, I am too young, too old, too tall, too short. . . .” Marianne Williamson put it nicely when she wrote, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” Perhaps you need to consider the possibility that you are capable of more than you ever imagined.

## Seeing Your Limitations in a New Light

LifePrints is a system of dynamic polarities in which personality inconsistencies and repetitious struggles (life lessons and delicious dilemmas) do not imply character defect or sin, nor is triumph the end point. Instead, difficulties and failure are integral parts of the quest for meaning, and success is measured by the awareness you have gained.

Carmen, The Artist, can’t know how long her current family difficulties will continue. But given her life purpose and life lesson, choices involving family and her creativity (whether debilitating or life affirming) are bound to be what she comes up against. Knowing this, perhaps she will not be so hard on herself upon her next encounter, one of those acausal moments that psychotherapist James Hillman suggests is a chance to catch her soul’s image peeking out at her from the truth mirror.

In the movie *As Good as It Gets*, Jack Nicholson tells Helen Hunt that being with her has made him want to be a better man. Maybe cleaning up your act because now there is a reason to do so is the true benefit of knowing your life purpose. Shortly, you will gain your own life-purpose map. You will track its path over earlier events in your life. You will consider your future possibilities and come to your own conclusions.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF SOUL PSYCHOLOGY

Soul psychology is a term I use to differentiate the information in your unalterable fingerprints, your life purpose and life lesson, from your personality psychology as revealed in the evolving lines on your hands and the ever-changing shape of your palms and fingers. The idea that each person has two psychologies, independent yet inextricably linked, underlies the LifePrints system.

One’s soul psychology is permanent, indelibly hardwired into the psyche. Its goals are life-scale. Meaning and fulfillment are its prize. Conversely, the personality is ego driven, as well it should be. With its shifting motivational patterns and learned behaviors, it is constantly in flux. The dance between these two psychologies makes life the interesting drama that it is.

*LifePrints’* focus is on the soul psychology side of the ledger. With this in mind, we now examine the three principles at the heart of soul psychology that will help you to understand your life-purpose map as you begin its construction in chapter two.

### Principle One: Experience Required

*Any experience is capable of unlocking your life purpose.*

This is a central tenet of soul psychology. To illustrate, let’s look at two people reacting in their own ways to a similar set of circumstances. Bob from Boise has a leadership-based life purpose and a history of abuse. His father beat him, physically and emotionally. At school, Bob got bullied by the bigger kids; even his parakeet showed him no respect. Twenty-five years later, while accepting the Citizen of the Year Award, Bob credits his early experiences as pivotal in his development. Having been on the wrong end of the stick in his early life, his threshold for stoic resignation gone, he could not sit idly by watching one more instance of injustice. Someone needed to set things straight. Surprising himself with his assertion, Bob rose to the occasion and took the actions that led to his award.

Fred from East Frasalia had a similar childhood; however, Fred moved in the opposite direction: he became a power abuser. He was too controlling in relationships. He had power battles with legitimate authorities in the world and at work. He treated his parakeet badly. Then an incident occurred that turned his whole life around. “Oh my God, what have I done?” It hurt Fred deeply to realize the pain he had caused. He made amends where amends needed making. He became particularly sensitive to any possibility that his actions might cause discomfort in others. When life presented him with leadership opportunities, Fred, having learned from past mistakes, was still assertive but now he was empathetic as well.

In these two examples, similar origins led to the emergence of a leadership-based life purpose in different ways. Of course, there is always the alternative possibility: Bob and Fred might learn nothing from their earlier experiences. Unconsciously trudging through life, they might make no progress toward the leadership

purpose they share in common. If this were the case, Bob and Fred would both live in their life-purpose inverses (powerlessness for Bob, tyranny for Fred).

Life being the messy business it is, rarely does a straight-line diagram describe a person's life. In retrospect, we can see The Leader slowly going through its developmental phases in both Bob and Fred's lives, while in the short term, each zig and zag seems random and all consuming. The thing to remember is that any experience can serve a person's progress.

**Problems Are Part of the Process** Let's say that you do learn from your experiences sufficiently for your life purpose to clearly emerge. Like Picasso discovering his passion for art, you have opened the door into the main sequence of your life purpose. You are gaining satisfaction points on a regular basis.

Congratulations. Does this mean that everything is now automatically rosy? No. You have problems (or you do not) like everyone else in the world. However, now, Picasso, when you have a problem you have an Artist problem, the exact type of problem you are supposed to have.

Let's put Jacques Cousteau into our illustration, assuming he was right on purpose with his life. Was Jacques Cousteau's existence trouble free? What do you think? As the world's most famous ocean explorer, he got to explore the toughest ocean environments, to address challenges beyond the scope of anyone else. Difficulties abounded. Nor did Jacques want a life free of all difficulties. When he got to the Gates of Heaven (however you interpret that phrase), Jacques would have wanted a good story or two about how tough things were in his day so he could hold his own with the ancient mariners already there. "We had to make our own boats," one would say. "That's nothing," an even more ancient one would suggest, "We had to invent sailing itself."

The point is that for Jacques boat problems were the type of problems that he was supposed to have. Factory problems ("I can't take another day on this assembly line") were not problems that would have moved Jacques's life purpose along. If he were lucky, an old salt might have set him straight. "The problem, Jacques, is that you are in the wrong life here. Go find you a boat."

So *you* find *your* boat. Are you done now, is your life purpose complete? Not at all. You are just beginning. Welcome to your right life. Now, what are you going to do about the mutiny in the Miami office? What about time for your family now that you are so busy? And so on. Similarly, when Picasso unlocks The Artist within, has he finished his life purpose? Of course not. Now it is his job to have a lifetime of Artist experiences and express this life on his canvas of choice.

*The more consciously you gain in experience, the more your true self emerges. The more your true self emerges, the more your life purpose blossoms. The more your life purpose blossoms, the more you will like the life you are living.*

**The Goldilocks Rule: Too Much / Too Little Leads to Just Right** You know the fairy tale. Goldilocks is lost in the woods and comes upon a house. Going inside, she finds a table set for breakfast: three bowls of porridge, steam rising. (What, no cappuccino?) Hungry, Goldilocks tastes the first porridge: too hot. The second is too cold, but the third is just right. She goes into the next room where she finds three beds. The first one is too hard, the next is too soft, but the third is just right. If you don't know what happens when the three bears come home to find her asleep in their bedroom, you can look it up on the Internet.

Goldilocks, though only a child, is a true master of this three-dimensional plane. Look at her experimental method: she tries something out. It is too this or that. She tries again, this time going to the opposite extreme. Again she goes too far. But she perseveres and finds that which is just right. Too much, too little, just right—that's the master's formula.

To gain experiences, humans go too far and not far enough on their way (hopefully) to just right. The trick is to learn from your experience, to follow the Goldilocks Rule and not to get stuck forever playing ping-pong between uncomfortable extremes that represent inappropriate responses to circumstances. To make this as clear as possible, let's see if we can spot the Goldilocks Rule at work in the next story.

Gilda is totally infatuated with George. I guess that is why she agreed to give him the money she had been saving for college. The plan is for Gilda to meet up with George in Alaska in a few weeks, where he will be building a cabin for them to live in. They will start an organic farm and live happily ever after. Arriving in Alaska, Gilda finds no cabin, no George, no zucchinis. Maybe next time she won't be so trusting with someone she has just met.

Fast-forward fifteen years: Gilda has not had a serious relationship since George. In effect, she has locked the barn door after the horses have gone, but she's not complaining. "I don't need a man to be happy," she says, and who wants to argue with that? Then Phil shows up. Gilda helps Phil to sobriety. Phil is grateful. They fall in love. Phil moves into Gilda's townhouse. Somehow, Phil loses his job. UH-OH. One and a half years later, Phil is still not gainfully employed.

Did you spot the Goldilocks Rule working its inevitable influence over Gilda's life? Gilda's life lesson, it turns out, is Surrender Skills. As such, early attempts at surrender will be the attempts of a novice. Big errors are to be expected. So, fifteen years old, she surrenders to George. Sex, drugs, rock and roll; I guess Gilda surrendered too much. Phase II: fifteen years later, she finds she has been unable to say the words "I love you" to any man. Here is surrender error #2: surrender too little. She meets Phil: surrender error #3: surrender too much again. This is the Goldilocks Rule in action. Too Much, Too Little. Repeat as necessary.



Two years after breaking up with Phil, Gilda has resumed dating again. At least this time she didn't need a fifteen-year hiatus. She is still looking for her first good relationship, but the barn door is neither carelessly flung open nor is it nailed shut. This is progress, and progress on your life lesson is what opens the door to life purpose. After all, how is Gilda going to learn except through trial and error?

*As your experience level increases, your ability to make choices improves and your outcomes will be more in your favor. However, you cannot gain experience without trial and error. You are not supposed to get it right the first time. Progress is the key. You have permission to learn.*

## Principle Two: The Paradox Principle

*The quest for any life purpose automatically puts one into direct contact with its opposite.*

People come into my office. I read their hands. Inevitably, each personal history follows the prescribed possibility formula imprinted in the fingerprints five months before birth. As I listen to my clients' descriptions of their lives, it's easy to identify the life purpose *and* the life-purpose inverse in the events and circumstances they choose to share. That's it, each and every time. Incredible.

It is as if we are playing out our lives on a giant personal game board with the game squares preprinted. Your personality is like the top hat, race car, or other token. You roll the dice, move forward nine spaces. Boardwalk and Park Place, Go to Jail; as you circle the board, the squares stay the same and your chosen destiny, your life purpose and its inverse, come into focus. As your skills improve, time spent in your life-purpose inverse may decrease, but it never reduces to zero. Nor should it.

Gilda, our Prisoner of Love, needs to learn what love and closeness are *not* before she is ready for a fulfilling relationship. The path to power implies bone-crushing bouts with humility. Healers must deal with their unhealthful behaviors. The list goes on. As these examples suggest, the Paradox Principle pervades our lives just as assuredly as does the law of gravity. All life paths follow this route, as we will witness time and again throughout the remainder of this book.

## Principle Three: The Validity of the Personality

*It is incumbent upon each of us to let our personality emerge in its inherent form, to work with this personality on the goals that are selected from a soul level for this lifetime. Errors arise when we either attempt to ignore the personality completely or when we seem to forget that it is only the vehicle for our life purpose, not the purpose itself.*

For instance, you may have a business career, yet your life purpose asks you to become The Mentor if you are to find your highest fulfillment. In this case, being a successful businessperson fulfills the personality need, but by itself will not bring life-purpose satisfaction.

Or you may be hiding your true talents, like Will Hunting, the math genius in *Good Will Hunting*. For people such as these, life-purpose satisfaction is elusive. The validity of the personality says you must be the you that you really are for your life purpose to emerge.

Other people have life purposes and personality styles totally in harmony with each other, like Carmen, our Artist with family issues from a few pages back. She has all the talent in the world with which to manifest her life purpose and she is actively engaged in doing so. Still, there is a developmental process her personality must go through before her life purpose can take its ultimate form.

See if you can apply the validity of the personality to the character in the following case study.

***The Personality Is the Vehicle; The Soul Sets the Agenda*** Shelly was a slightly built woman, angular in appearance and serious in manner. Clearly, all unnecessary fat molecules had disappeared from her body years ago, banished in disgrace. A trace of mirth remained behind her eyes, slightly amused at the process of having her hands read. The rest of her face seemed haggard, as if she alone were responsible for taking inventory at the world's largest Wal-Mart.

Shelly's fingerprints revealed one of The Artist-type life purposes, and auspiciously enough her line markings revealed a Star of Apollo, the perfect sign in the palm for high creativity. Unfortunately for Shelly, her Star of Apollo was missing one of its six component parts. It is not easy to earn a Star of Apollo. To find one in your hand, even an imperfect one, is still good news, like finding a Lamborghini in your garage, only to learn later that it needs engine work. This particular five-sixths Star of Apollo was being towed to the garage because the line that represents discipline and due diligence was nowhere to be found. The irony was that Shelly couldn't be more exacting in her personal accountability if she were head time-keeper at Greenwich. What was going on?

***The Personality Is Attracted to and Resistant to the Life Purpose*** Here before me was a person with all the discipline she could possibly need, yet none of it was devoted to creative endeavors (hence the absence of one-sixth of the Star of Apollo). This might all be fine and dandy if Shelly's life purpose were not to express her creative nature. Since The Artist was Shelly's life purpose, as long as this aspect of her self was ignored, the door into her right life would remain shut, satisfaction would elude her, and she would spend her days in the big gaping hole (life without meaning). Shelly's Star of Apollo held the key to her life purpose, but would she use it?

***The Personality Can Animate the Life Purpose or Suppress It*** Imagine Shelly at the Cosmic Laboratory, mixing the ingredients into the cauldron that eventually would

be her personality makeup for this lifetime. “Let’s see, I’ll pour in a lot from the Jar of Creativity (after all, I want to devote myself to creative pursuits), but let’s add a solid dose from the Jar of Responsibility (I don’t want to just dabble, you know). Oops, maybe that’s too much responsibility. Oh well . . .” Next thing you know, Shelly is walking through Wal-Mart with a clipboard, light years away from the art classes that energized her in high school.

In this case, the personality has taken over. Instead of being the lieutenant to her creative side, keeping her studio neat, cleaning her brushes immediately after use, the conservative side of Shelly’s nature is acting like the General in Charge, making the big choices, defining her life. Then again, Shelly is only in her early thirties. There will be plenty of time for breakdowns and breakthroughs. We’ll just have to wait and see how this one turns out.

## ESCAPING THE BIG GAPING HOLE

The big gaping hole is the phrase we use at the International Institute of Hand Analysis to signify life without meaning, life without purpose. Most people have visited the big gaping hole at some point or other, but to feel stuck there with no possibility of escape—what could be worse? Perhaps one of the biggest benefits of knowing the life purpose revealed in your fingerprints is that it provides a way out of the big gaping hole.

In the first few months of my hand reading career, I was wrestling with my own big gaping hole. My dreams were particularly vivid during that time and in one of them I was at the end of my life, faced with a panel of judges. I had to prove that I had done enough, loved enough, learned enough to justify my life. Next morning, as I prepared for the first reading of the day, the judges were still staring down at me. Oh yes, I had made mistakes. I could have done any number of things better. And what hadn’t I done? I was gripped by the need to not waste this lifetime living in the big gaping hole.

The doorbell brought me back to reality. Time to read another pair of hands, another set of hopes and fears. I dissolved into the pattern of the hands before me and started to sense the life revealed therein. Usually I am the one to talk first, but that day was different. She was crying before anything was said. Catching her breath, she told me her story. The particulars are not important; more important was the wave of feeling that swept the room. Her dam had broken; words came flooding out, and I felt the overarching ache of her life—not lost love, as utterly painful as that can be; not lost direction or being overwhelmed at life’s difficulties, as deeply troublesome as those are; not the death of a loved one. No. It was the big gaping hole that was consuming her: life without meaning and the feeling that it would always be thus. Nothing would ever amount to anything—a wasted life.

That was what engulfed her and filled my office and half a city block for all I knew. I let it wash over me and held on to my chair, like Ulysses tied to the mast. Then it subsided. The storm had passed, though it would surely come again. I didn’t want to be glib; what use were words in the face of such emotion? But she had come for a reading, and it was my turn to speak. I revealed her life purpose, her life lesson, and her delicious dilemma. Her circumstances matched up, she informed me. We completed the reading. I wish it had been on video so she could have seen her before-and-after pictures. Believing that her life might actually have a purpose and that it was potentially within her grasp, she looked ten years younger.

Back at my desk, my judges were still there. They didn’t say anything, but I felt a lot better than I had an hour and a half before.

Every life has its own story, a life-scale battle royal in the inner theater of mind and soul. Nobody, it seems, just waltzes through life. Or maybe some do. I just haven’t met them yet.

And the by-a-fingernail escapes from the big gaping hole, the perseverance in the face of life-lesson dilemmas—we are all wrestling each day with such matters. On a different scale than my client that day perhaps, but the battle is just as real. Great men and women of history get their biographies written, but for the rest of us, where besides our fingerprints are such epic tales told of victory and loss?

## FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

It is time to move from theory to practice. In the next chapter, you will begin to construct your life-purpose map by identifying your ten fingerprints and finding your school, an essential element in both your life purpose and life lesson. Chapter three will teach you how to identify your life purpose and life lesson. Chapter four will give you a deeper understanding of your life purpose and life lesson by going into more detail on the meanings of the fingerprints and the fingers on which they appear. Chapter five will pull all the aspects of your soul psychology together in a life-fulfillment formula and offer exercises to apply what you have learned to your own life. At that point, as you look over your past and current circumstances, there is no telling what you might realize about yourself.

## IDENTIFY YOUR FINGERPRINTS AND FIND YOUR SCHOOL

---

*These new maps are charting the world all over again. They reinvent our idea of frontier. They push back the boundaries of what we know and what we might explore. They are changing our notions, not only of what the future might hold, but where we are likely to find that future, which in some ways is the most important geographic question of all.*

— STEPHEN S. HALL, *MAPPING THE NEXT MILLENNIUM*

Constructing and interpreting your life-purpose map requires that you complete the following five steps:

- STEP 1** Identify and record your ten fingerprints.
- STEP 2** Identify your school at the Earth University.
- STEP 3** Identify your life purpose.
- STEP 4** Identify your life lesson.
- STEP 5** Create your life-fulfillment formula.

This should take you about sixty to ninety minutes for the first set of fingerprints you look at, five to ten minutes for the next several sets, and less than a minute after you get familiar with the system. Chapter two covers the first two steps. Steps three through five are covered in the next three chapters. At the end of chapter five, there is a series of journaling exercises designed to help you use your life-purpose map as a daily compass to meaning and fulfillment.

### **STEP 1: IDENTIFY AND RECORD YOUR TEN FINGERPRINTS**

Your first assignment is to identify the type of each of your ten fingerprints. A good light and a magnifying glass will greatly simplify this process. Slowly rotate the tip of each finger ever so slightly from side to side and aim your eye to the middle of