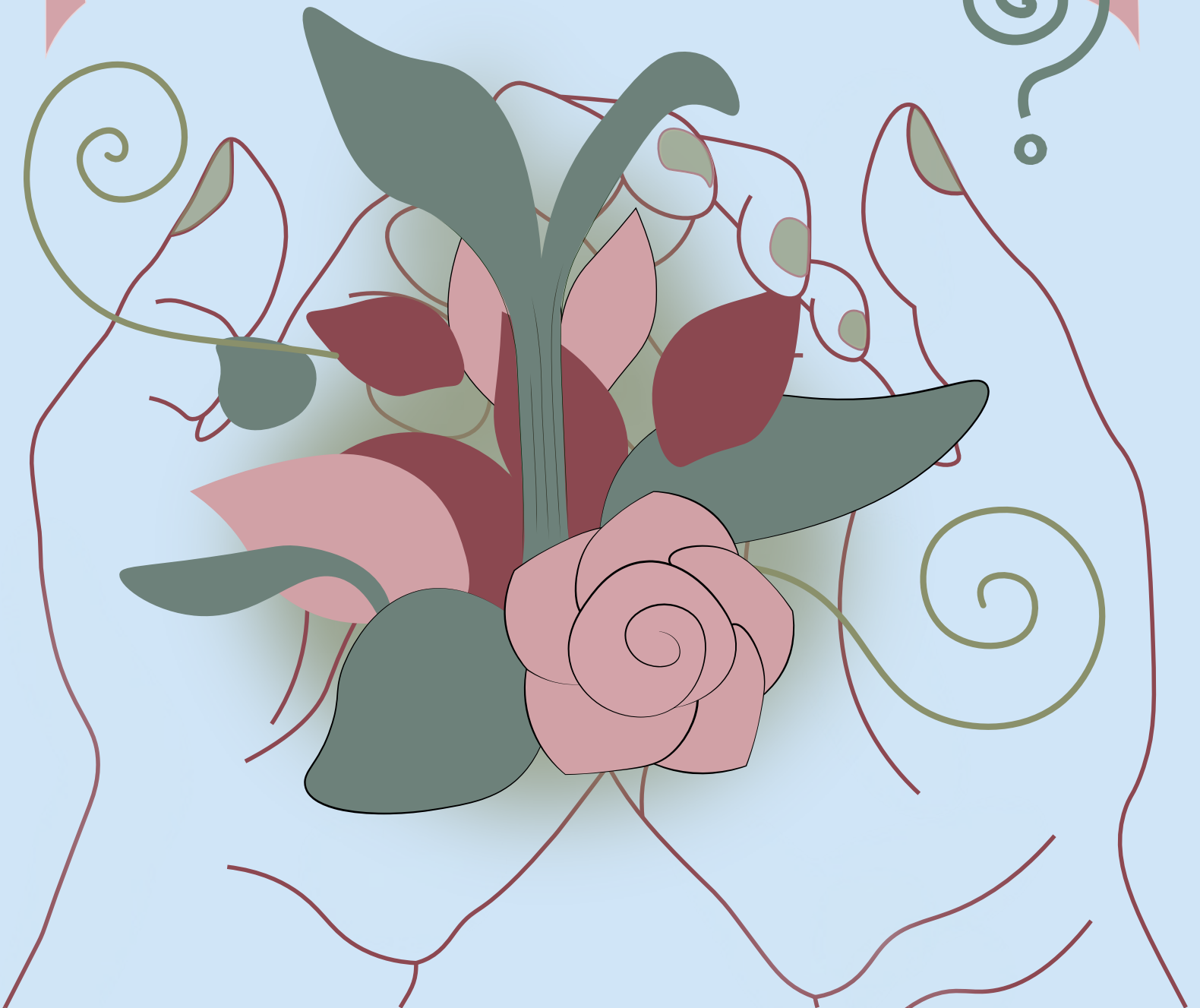


Mentality

M A G A Z I N E

Volume #13

PURPOSE



Mentality

M A G A Z I N E

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disclaimer:

Some of our content could be emotionally triggering to those who can relate or have experienced similar struggles. If you find yourself becoming uncomfortable while reading, please take a moment for yourself. If you would like to speak to a professional, resources are listed at the end of our magazine.

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W W W . M E N T A L I T Y

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

The inspiration for this print edition was professor Dr. Victor Strecher and his class on purposeful living. I approached the class without much of an idea of what purpose was, at least not in the strictest sense. It seemed to be a loaded word, saying so much while still not revealing anything. I have to admit I still don't entirely understand it, but the word doesn't feel as daunting as it once did. Purpose for us college students seems more necessary than ever. We are at a time in our lives when we are supposed to decide the next steps and make big decisions. Yet, if you are like me, you feel lost while making these decisions.

The thing about purpose is that it doesn't have to be singular and grand. You can have many purposes. Our lives are not one-dimensional. We are not just students but also sisters, sons, artists, writers, friends and so much more. I understand feeling lost in life, and that's okay. Being lost means part of you is searching, but that doesn't mean another part can't be grounded. I encourage you, readers, to take this time to think about your different purposes, and what is grounding you. For me, it is the people around me showing me they have my back when things get tough. They are also the Mentality Staff that made this semester's print edition possible. Thank you Paul for making sure we had a time and place to give out these magazines. Thank you Vibha for editing and helping me with planning Print. Thank you Esha for putting everything together for design. Finally, thank you Dr. Strecher for inspiring me to explore what it means to be purposeful.

I hope you enjoy the insight our authors have to offer. Mentality Magazine is committed to making sure people don't feel alone in their struggles. Life is difficult, and that can take a toll on our bodies and minds. Feeling lost is easier said than done. We at Mentality want to say that is okay, and that we support you through those struggles. In the meantime, we hope you can find little ways to make your lives more purposeful.

Enjoy,

Vaishnavi Katta

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light beige background. The signature reads "Vaishnavi Katta" in a cursive, flowing script.

M A G A Z I N E . O R G



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Purpose Is...

Written and designed by Paul Silaghi

It seems like everywhere you turn, someone is asking about your purpose. “What do you want to be when you grow up?”, “Did you study for that test tomorrow?”, and “What are you going to do today?” are all questions that get at one’s goals, intentions, and, ultimately, purpose. At its best, a strong, internal sense of purpose can provide motivation and a drive to persevere past challenges. However, daunting goals and objectives can also quickly spiral into feelings of anxiety and doubt. Having pondered this dichotomy, it is difficult to pinpoint purpose and constrain it to a single definition, but that does not negate the value and impact of living with purpose. As such, I would like to share my five takeaways on what I believe purpose is.

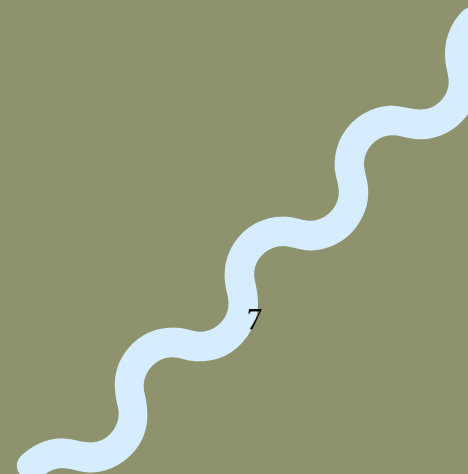
Purpose is in the mind: Your purpose really can be anything you want it to be. It is firmly rooted in each person’s individual perspective and values; no two people will have purposes that are exactly the same. Each person’s unique life experiences inform what they perceive as noble and worthy of their effort, which is the underlying framework for purpose. However, most overarching, life purposes share a similarity: they are rooted in a quest for positive impact. This can be especially potent when coupled with a personal, meaningful connection to the people whose lives you are striving to improve or the differences you are working to bring about as a result of achieving your purpose.

Purpose is motivational: Purpose is truly a powerful force for moving oneself forward. It is each person’s individual “why” that can push them to new heights. In achieving life’s goals, whether big or small, I believe it is equally as important to have a realistic and organized plan as it is to have a firm and powerful feeling of aspiration. This can be especially useful as a student, with so much uncertainty and so many major decisions to make. For an aspiring doctor, this “why” can be the patients they will heal. For a future engineer or scientist, it can be the advances they will strive to make in the field they are passionate about. For one studying to be a psychologist or therapist, this purpose can be rooted in the people they will bring into a life that is more fulfilling. Our purpose can help us rise above our most difficult and daunting obstacles, simply by reminding us of why we are striving to achieve our goals in the first place.

Purpose is adaptive: While major changes in our goals or life trajectory can be intimidating, it is essential that our purposes adapt with our dynamic values and priorities. Such priorities can coexist but be more or less pronounced at different times. For instance, a parent's purpose one day may be to organize an exciting birthday party for their child. This is likely not a life purpose, but it is a purpose of significant importance to the person in the context of their goals. If the child comes home after a hard day at school, this purpose may shift to also include cheering up the child for their birthday. Our daily purposes often change and adapt as we take in new information, and this is the case for larger, more encompassing purposes as well. Ideally, this adaptation should not be feared, but accepted as an opportunity for embracing a purpose that is tailored to who we are.

Purpose is unique: Just as each person will go through life with a unique purpose or set of purposes, finding one's purpose can come about in individually distinct ways as well. For some, simply engaging in a mental detach from life's constant worries can bring some clarity in the quest for purpose. For others, personal or guided meditation can bring the inner peace needed to reflect on where one is in their journey toward achieving their purpose, as well as understanding what is still left to accomplish. Oftentimes, engaging with people in the present who you hope to positively impact in the future can also be an influential experience that sheds light on purpose. There is no magic formula for discovering your purpose and setting about achieving it, but most advice simply boils down to asking yourself what you love doing and who you are doing it for.

Purpose is limitless: The only constraint to your purpose is the boundaries you set around it; as such, a purpose can be anything from life's ultimate goal to a few objectives to be completed today. One's purpose can be thought of as the goalposts set around their goal. These goalposts determine what is considered a victory and what is considered an outcome with room for improvement. Naturally, this will be distinct down to the level of the individual, and it is up to each person to consider their purpose, adjust it according to their experiences and takeaways, and interpret their path in life through that lens. As cliché as it may sound, never underestimate the power of your own willpower. Whatever your purpose is, I hope you hold it close to your heart as you take on life's challenges and strive towards a brighter tomorrow.



Not Just A Student.

But What Else?



Nic Kodkany

In a school such as ours, it is so arduous to focus on oneself because the focus is always on oughts. I ought to be studying right now. I ought to be exercising. I ought to be social tonight. I ought to go to class today. While these parts of life are, of course, important, being young and in school makes us forget what we want out of our lives because we are spending so much time thinking about what we need in our lives. In my experience, working hard in high school to get into Michigan and working hard to do well in Michigan have completely taken over the time I could use to explore my interests and desires.

I have spent so much time being good at school that I do not know what else I am really good at. By the end of the day, my brain is too tired to indulge in any hobbies or fulfilling activities, so I spend my small amount of free time mindlessly consuming media. On the weekends, I force myself to socialize with friends and return to my bed practically just as exhausted as I was during the week. In high school, we were allowed more time to spend on our own interests, but even that I feel was just to encourage some extracurricular activities for college applications. Regardless, I had so much more motivation to pursue hobbies in high school; I played guitar, sang in an a cappella team, and wrote poetry. What happened to that energy and zest for fulfillment? Will it return once my college career comes to a close? Or rather than expecting to wake up one day with that mysterious drive, should I force it back into my life?

When thinking about my own faults in the ambiguity of my personality, wondering what I truly enjoy as opposed to what I force myself to do, I feel guilty that I struggle so much with something as simple as engaging in a hobby. I have incredibly talented friends who make art and music, play sports, and write creatively. It is obvious that I should not compare myself to others because we are all individuals dealing with life in different ways – Finding oneself in college is no exception. In response, I have been thinking back to the things I used to enjoy and push myself to try them out again. I used to spend hours reading, so I recently purchased some books that piqued my interest and had fun discovering them (particularly *The Storyteller* by Dave Grohl and *The Noon Demon* by Andrew Solomon).




But the issue then comes back to the heavy workload of Michigan. Finishing up homework and studying for midterms, the thought of even skimming through more text makes my head ache. Can I sacrifice time spent on school for personally satisfying activities? The voices of a strict mother and father reverberate in my mind, curtly answering, “Not a chance”. The emphasis today on academic rigor and competition, I believe, is why school has been so detrimental to mental health for students within the last decade. We are so willing to give up the enrichment of our identities for a degree.

To belittle a degree is not necessarily what I mean, as many people find fulfillment through their degree. Michigan Math students not so much, maybe, but the more fortunate majors are probably able to find some silver lining in why they are attending this school. I am a Psychology major, and pursuing psychology has been a dream of mine since I was 12 years old. Why am I complaining about lacking a sense of identity or personal fulfillment then? My hypothesis is that the real work in Psychology does not start until grad school; Until then, it is all taking a plethora of introductory courses and playing the stereotypical intern for a research project. While both of these are things I find enjoyment in, they are still a part of school. Psychology is not a hobby or recreation. It is a major in school. I have to be more than school, I tell myself. I have to be.

I am only a sophomore, and I know the work only stacks up more from here. All I can do is hope that the amount of free time after homework during the school year combined with the amount of free time after work during summer break will eventually add up, and I'll learn something about myself. My mind has always been fixed on responsibilities – what I ought to do. But if I can tilt it, just enough, and find some time in the cracks, I will find something that I can eventually be proud of myself for. I used to love to write, and I am writing this piece now. I consider that progress. Will I be able to keep that momentum going as I push on through college? Glossing through forums online from students desperate as me for solutions, people suggest to be mindful throughout the day and use your time wisely. If you are truly present in class and truly present in a spare hobby, you can find value and meaning in any amount of time you spend on it. Picking what hobby you want to indulge in matters, too. Inexpensive hobbies like reading, drawing, cooking or playing sports are viable options, to name a few. The goal, it seems, is to be practical and conscious of what is worth your time at that moment. It may seem difficult, but what in college is easy anyways? Maybe using the same effort I use for academics can be shifted towards hobbies during my menial free time and add more breadthful meaning to my college experience.





Giving all of myself to Everyone

By Victoria Treder

I think it's impossible to be sure of my direction in life. No matter how confident I think I am in my current situation, there will always be what-ifs, self-doubt, and discouraging thoughts to drag me down to the depths of uncertainty.


Personally, I am nowhere near knowing where I'm going in life, but this is something that I have learned to make peace with. I direct my energy on the here and now, day by day. Specifically, I like to focus on giving. The generosity in living for others is the one way that I can ensure a purposeful life path, even amidst the unwavering uncertainty of existence.

Now, this may sound unhealthy, and maybe it is. I'm working on finding the perfect balance between people-pleasing and lack of self-care. But for me, there is nothing more gratifying than helping others.

My intention is in no way to portray a holier-than-thou attitude, and I would never expect anyone to follow in my footsteps or even understand where I'm coming from. As individuals, we all find ourselves drawn to different pursuits. Mine just happens to be giving; I feel that a meaningful life would include not only the betterment of myself but also that of those around me as well. Contrary to popular belief, this is not unrealistic; I can do both.

During my career as a college student, I have found joy not only in helping others but in understanding them too. Majoring in Psychology and Spanish increases my comprehension of those around me from personal and a linguistic standpoint. With this, I find myself considering a career in human services, specifically as a therapist or mental health counselor. In addition to the passion I feel for the act of generosity, I have a specific affinity for the pursuit of mental wellness. I constantly see those around me struggling with such issues, and it often feels like I can't do anything to help them. But with my goals in mind, maybe there is something I can do.

So, although I can never be certain of where I'm going, I can be sure of what I want. I want to help others. I want to leave the world better than I found it. I want to give. So, I know that as long as I give everything I have to everyone else, I myself will never be lost.





My Life has Meaning

Freda Frimpong

I did not realize how much a sense of purpose meant to me until I didn't have any.

Battling depression painstakingly sucked out all of my ambition until I was left an empty shell of myself, simply operating on autopilot. But inevitably, my engine gave out. I spent sleepless nights lying in bed, trying to cling to why I should care. The only reason I could muster was, "that's what I am supposed to do." For years, that has been a driving force behind my actions. I was no longer the girl with the zest for life. Before I knew it, "this is what I want to do" and "this is who I want to be" had transformed into "this is what I should do" and "this is who I should be."

Every time I fell short of the expectations I imposed on myself - which was often - I fell deeper into a dark and hollow space. Mundane days turned into drawn-out weeks, turned into dreary months. I approached each day with numbness and apathy so overwhelming that I no longer recognized myself. Finally, not sure how much longer I could survive living like this, I hit my breaking point and began to work toward change.

Reforming my mindset from "this is who I should be" to "this is who I want to be" was slow and painful. I felt lost and alone while navigating this intermediate stage of rediscovering myself. I had been detached for so long that I no longer knew what I was passionate about, what I loved, and what made me unique. I needed an idea of these things to begin unveiling my purpose. This was a gradual process of inhibition, gripping tightly onto any inkling of interest and chasing it wholeheartedly, no matter how small. Over time I began to find more avenues of joy, discovering more about who I am and what I like.


This journey helped me assign meaning to my actions and uncover a sense of purpose that I longed for. The feeling of purpose began translating into my academics, extracurriculars, social life, and more. I found ambition, developed dreams, and envisioned a future - all things I never thought I would feel again. While I still struggle to find motivation at times, I have more fundamental reasons to keep trying. Although I have just brushed the surface of discovering and living in my purpose, embarking on this journey has reminded me that my life has meaning.

SCALING BACK YOUR IDEA OF PURPOSE


written & designed by jade crosby

People often conflate purpose with career goals and impact. One might say that their purpose is to be a doctor and help others. Maybe someone else wants to be a politician and create groundbreaking legislation that truly changes lives, that is their purpose. In college especially, many people view this time as a stepping stone to one's true career and inherently their purpose. We spend our entire lives preparing for this end goal of establishment, and college, of course, supports the commonly held belief that "career + impact of said career = purpose." We are born to be therapists, doctors, politicians, artists, and economists and change the world in some beautiful and unprecedented way. This is a beautiful sentiment, surely, and many people are quite content to believe that their true purpose is their career and all of the wonderful things that they might do. Others yet will hear this belief and recoil in fear. My concern lies with those that do not yet know their career goals or aspirations, those who feel a sense of purposelessness in that uncertainty and exploration. To them, I offer this advice: scale back your idea of 'purpose,' and find meaning and depth in your current actions.

We must move beyond this belief that early life experiences are mere filler periods to our overarching, grandiose purpose that we hope to serve and alternatively, find a sense of meaning in the little acts that we do. Essentially, we need to separate concepts of meaning and purpose from our work alone. Maybe you don't know what you are working towards in college, what future career role or "purpose" you might serve in society: this does not mean that your current life is aimless. Think of all of the things that you do, without a platform or official title, that impact those around you. Maybe you volunteer or maybe you're just an excellent friend. This may be your current purpose: to offer support to others in even seemingly mundane ways. You might not think much of these acts, all you did was lend an ear to them when they needed it; however, this could mean a world of difference to your friend. The ways that you impact and uplift others, in even minimal forms, could be your purpose.

A cluster of five pink line-art flowers of varying sizes is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page. The flowers are stylized with five petals each and a central stem with small buds.

Maybe you don't buy into the idea that your purpose is to support others. Regardless, your life still holds meaning and purpose. You may not be the most sociable person (perfectly acceptable), so that might not resonate with you. Perhaps your current purpose is to explore the world and pathways around you. You don't know what you want to do or will do in the future, that's fine! Taking classes, joining clubs, or simply existing and interacting with the world all feeds knowledge that can be used to better your life or others. This may be your current purpose, not to contribute but to learn.

A large, stylized illustration of a plant with three flowers is located on the left side of the page. The plant is rendered in a yellow-green color. It has a long, thin stem that branches out into three separate stems, each ending in a flower. The flowers are simple line-art designs with five petals and a central stem.

Ultimately, we need to separate ourselves from the idea that our true intended purpose is our career; rather, we should consider that our purpose is individual and dependent upon what we hold as important. Our purpose does not have to be specific acts or services, it can simply be to grow and learn or lend support to others. We are not purposeless if we don't have a formal title, as we still impact the world around us and improve upon ourselves as we move through life.

It's Okay to be Unwritten

By Katie Good

My parents are die-hard fans of Counting Crows, BarenakedLadies, Prince, Queen, India.Arie, and so many other iconic artists, and made sure that all car rides were filled with their favorite tunes. So it's no surprise that some of the songs that bring me the most comfort are the ones that are burned onto the CDs that are accumulating dust in our basement. But of all the songs that I've belted since I was 3, one that's always on my playlist is "Unwritten" by Natasha Benningfield. It's not just because it's a fantastic song and an earworm; once you listen to it, it'll be stuck in your head all day. But for my entire life, "Unwritten" has been there to remind me of who I am and why I'm here. I am currently in the first semester of my senior year at the University of Michigan, and lately, I've been feeling a lot of uncertainty and fear when thinking about my purpose in this world. And since this print is all about purpose, I figured I would use this song to remind you (and myself) that our purpose in life is determined by no one but ourselves, and that having any purpose, even the purpose of being, is enough.

The song starts with Benningfield defining herself as unwritten, undefined, and unplanned; her whole life is in front of her, and she has no idea what she's going to do or where she's going to go. I think we've all felt this way at some point in our lives; lost, confused, and afraid of what's to come. In my junior year of high school, I had reached a breaking point and my stress overflowed, dumping me into a sea of anxiety and depression. I was expected to tour colleges and think about my future while struggling to make it through each day. I saw no future, no brighter days; everything was dark and cloudy. At the end of my first year at U of M, COVID hit and we were all in the dredges of quarantine; I was terrified of what was to come, and what our world would look like as we learned more about the disease. Today, I am applying for graduation next spring, and trying to decide what path I want to take in my gap years. The entire world is in front of me, but instead of feeling free, the options are overwhelming and the stakes have never felt higher. This feeling comes and goes in waves throughout our lives.

The song then encourages us to "open up the dirty window" and let ourselves look at our future opportunities without any inhibitions and fear; it asks us to understand our power and control over our own lives. What this looks like is different for everybody. In 2018, that meant exploring colleges around the country and understanding what I could do with the topics I was passionate about. In 2020, that meant imagining a future in which COVID still existed, but did not control our lives. Today this could mean applying for a new job, looking at new apartments, or even downloading a dating app. All it takes is one step to open up countless new opportunities. The step can be any size; even getting yourself out of bed could be the step that changes your life.

However, there's a catch that Benningfield reminds us of: no one else can take these steps and feel the repercussions for you, and no one can take your feelings and decisions away from you. We have to "feel the rain on our skin" ourselves; we have to allow ourselves to be ok with being washed over by the opportunities or consequences that our steps bring. We have the power to determine our own purpose, but as Uncle Ben said in Spiderman, "With great power comes great responsibility." That responsibility can feel suffocating sometimes, and that's okay. Whether that's working late on a project, or even brushing your teeth, it's okay for things to feel hard, and it's okay to even fail sometimes. At the end of the day, just being and existing is fulfilling your purpose in your own way. At the same time, though, no one else has the right to decide your purpose for you. You are in control of your own life; never let anyone open or close windows for you without your approval. Only you can decide what your purpose is each day, and whether that purpose changes or stays the same.

The song goes on to explain that sometimes our decisions, our opportunities, or our purpose falls outside of what is determined to be "normal" or "right" in our community, and we are often ridiculed when that happens. But in reality, living our lives inside the boundaries of what is "right" and "normal" isn't why we are here. We were put on this earth to mold ourselves into the person we want to be, and we have a right to do that on our own terms and on our own time. Some people might not like this. But like I said before, only we have the power to open ourselves up to opportunities, determine our purpose, and decide what is right and wrong for who we want to be. Those who support you and want to see you succeed will love and accept you for that; those who don't, don't deserve to be a part of your life.

I don't know whether Natasha Benningfield knew the magnitude of the impact that her song would have on those who listen. But I do know, as I sit here writing this article, that I wish I had realized the power I have over my purpose sooner. Philosophers spend decades trying to find the perfect answer to the question, "What is our purpose?" But honestly, I don't think the answer needs to be that complicated. Our purpose is to exist. We are here because we deserve to be. We may choose to change our purpose over time, and open and close different windows of opportunity as we see fit. But in the end, we were all put on this earth to exist how we want to, and I am so glad that you are here.



What are your

Be happy and successful and
to help people; I want to do
this by possibly being a
therapist
-Victoria

I hope to go to grad school
someday and live in New York
City as a clinical psychologist. I
also hope to study abroad in my
future here at Michigan!
-Nicole

I hope to pursue either a
master's in clinical psychology
or a PhD, I am really interested
in going into clinical
psychology in some capacity.
-Jade

r future goals?

I want to help bridge the gap between neuroscience and psychology as well as make mental health a common topic of conversation in the Indian community.

-Vibha

I'm not actually sure what my future looks like, but I do want to be able to travel, explore what the world offers and feel content with my life.

-Vaishnavi

I want to go to a good graduate school and find a good job. I hope to earn lots of money so I can travel and eat around the world.

-Chuxuan




The Dangers of Goal Setting


Vaishnavi Katta

Recently, I've begun to notice how often we're negative about things. Don't get me wrong, venting your problems and expressing yourself is a healthy process. It's just that we've taken it to the extreme. Socially, it feels like it's acceptable to talk about the bad. We're humans and love to commiserate; it makes us feel like we belong. That's why we go around airing our grievances to one another. Commiseration has become an essential part of how we communicate. There's no easier way to start a conversation than mentioning our anxieties about an upcoming test or our frustration with a professor. There's value in this: it takes these burdens off ourselves and allows us to share our negative experiences with other people. The problem is when we only share these negative feelings. This culture of commiseration makes us feel guilty towards sharing the positive.

Think about how often you tell people you're tired or stressed without actually being tired or stressed. I could be having the most amazing day and if someone asked me how it went I'd say "Yeah, just getting through it." Personally, the more I sink into this negativity, the more unconscious it becomes. Soon enough, it feels like I am complaining for the sake of complaining. It's snowing outside? Dang, now my shoes will get wet. We haven't had snow for a week? Well, now everything looks gray and ugly. My first instinct becomes seeing what's wrong instead of seeing what's right. This cycle continues unconsciously, and frankly makes me feel more like a miserable person.

However, it's hard to break away from this point of view because of the guilt associated with expressing positive emotions. For example, I could be perfectly happy with a grade I got on a test, but someone around me is sad that they didn't do well. I'll then feel guilty talking about my success so I keep quiet and nod my head along when they talk about how the test was unfair. In isolation this is okay, but this doesn't just apply to tests. I feel guilty saying I'm not stressed when other people have things on their plate. Our tendency to hide our positive feelings means soon enough, we only hear the negative. Negativity becomes the norm and we default to it. From school to politics to the weather, we find a way to find the negative in everything. When people voice these negative feelings, we agree and internalize these complaints and continue the cycle. At least, that's what I've found myself doing quite a bit and it's caused life to seem seeped with the negative. At the same time, being overly positive only serves to invalidate yours and other people's feelings. There are times when you need to admit that something is wrong or acknowledge a bad day, but this bad day doesn't have to be every day.





One of the hardest things as an individual is breaking away from this pessimistic hive mind. We shouldn't invalidate other people's negative feelings, but personally, the constant stream of negativity has impacted my empathy. I feel like I don't have enough proper energy to listen to my friends' problems when all I've heard all day have been other people's problems. This is truly a problem when I need to employ empathy for situations that deserve it. If I have been exhausting my emotional energy all day by participating in the stream of negative thought, then I won't have enough energy come the end of the day. This makes it harder to take care of my own mental health and support the mental health of others.

It's not all bad though, and part of getting yourself out of the negative stream is recognizing you're in it in the first place. I've been trying to spot this myself and recognize when I am saying things I don't even feel. Ever since I've started keeping track, I've surprised myself by how often this occurs. In addition to that, I've tried expressing my positive feelings more, which helps me acknowledge them and lifts me up. Expressing a little gratitude for good things can go a long way. It gives you the emotional energy needed to carry on with the rest of your day. It also helps you be a source of positivity for those around you. Although it is important to avoid dismissing other people's negative feelings, acknowledging the good and showcasing gratitude for all that around me has helped me handle my emotions in a more productive manner and I am happier because of it.





My Purpose is All of the Above

Vibha Moorthy

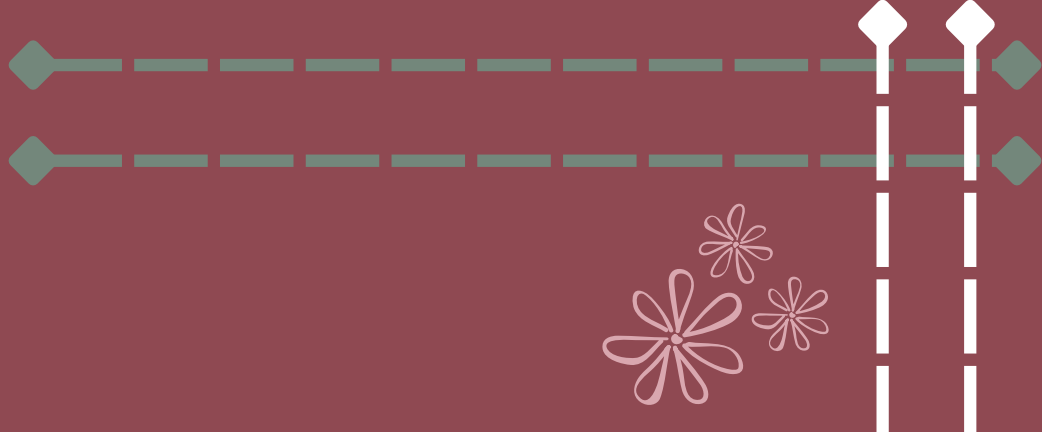
I joined Mentality because I had something I wanted to say, and I needed a place to say it. So when the writing last year came so easily, I gladly embraced it. Did I need to rave about the understated potential of poetry? Great, new piece. What about maneuvering boundaries and toxic friendships? Check. As the semester of unstoppable writing progressed, I realized I was happy. I felt this intimate sense that I understood what it meant to live with purpose. When friends told me that my pieces resonated with them, I felt validated: my problems had turned into art. There was something disturbingly pleasing about that sentiment: I could get fucked up by something, and yet my story would be applauded. And so I was proud that I could add “writer” to my repertoire. But after I had turned in my print piece last semester, I began dreading coming to the next club meetings because I didn’t know what to write next.

I still remember the conversation that triggered it. We were lounging on my patio and eating froyo when my friend said,

You haven’t talked about your club recently. What are you writing next? I hesitated before I responded. Oh, I don’t know yet. I need to go through more trauma first.

I was half-joking, but she laughed loudly, so we moved on to other topics. But the more I thought about it, the less trivial my comment felt. I dwelled over it incessantly that night, wracking my brain for more things to share. I had already gotten the exec position, but frankly, I felt like a fraud. What good was being an editor if I never wrote more of my own pieces?





Having a one-track mind or embodying a focused attitude has helped me several times in my life. Writing, I realized, was just my obsession for the time being. And since I felt happy while engaging with it, I quickly equated writing with my purpose. But when I felt like I didn't have anything to say, that sense of fulfillment quickly disappeared. Writer's block had turned into a purpose block.

This, in turn, left me empty. But, I realized that writing had only felt like my purpose because I was doing something. Somewhere in my life, I learned to equate being busy with having a purpose. Because, well, if I was doing something, then it had to mean something. From September-May, my purpose was to be a good student. Then in the summer, it would become time to find another purpose. Sometimes, that entailed being a cultured traveler or simply staying still. However, this cyclical purpose recycling and renewing only left me more unfulfilled. In an effort to focus on one particular purpose, I had to ignore the other wonderful, contradicting parts of myself. So, as I sit here writing this article, I realize that my purpose is not to chase one passion or title, but rather to celebrate everything that makes me happy and a better person.

My purpose is to be a dancer.

My purpose is to be funny.

My purpose is to be a writer.

My purpose is to acknowledge.

My purpose is to listen.

My purpose is to love myself.

My purpose is all of the above.



Young Women

Vaishnavi Katta

Walking through a field of whey.
Yellow grains shine timidly in the morning light.
I stroll the path laid out for me,
watching as they are awakened by the sun.

I became a young woman not too long ago,
though I have lived much longer than this whey
and will die after generations of this crop.
And yet,
the stars will miss me if they blink.

I'm measured up by my face,
my proportions,
the degree I am pursuing,
The money in my bank account.
I am data.

Might I not be measured by my laugh?
Might I not be measured at all?
I have smiled, cried, loved, hurt, feared,
Lived.
Is that enough to be chronicled?

Still, I am a young woman,
I stand with my back to the light.
Turning away from a life well-lived,
trying to navigate these grains
still untouched by morning's sun.

I fear the monsters that lurk in the dark ahead.
Creatures of campfire tales.
Poverty, Mediocrity, Solitude.
I move with fists clenched,
bracing for attack.

I cannot see far in front of me.
I have no map to read off of.
Well except for the one on my face.
I trace its lines in the mirror,
seeing how time may stretch them
or carve out new ones.
In time,
I wonder
which way will fate pull the corners of my mouth?

I am a young woman,
continuing west,
feeling the sun rise to warm my neck.

I exercise my agency.
Greedy for time.
For life.
Until one day the big decisions are behind me
and I can see a way out of this field.

The day where I sit
and watch the other young woman,
as they walk in circles
and stumble at the sharp turns.
Wondering which way to go
and if they made the right choice.

This is a poem I wrote in response to an image I saw of a woman moving through a whey field; it is about the future and my fear of it. I am someone who often lives in the present, not always due to a conscious choice, but mostly because the future scares me. It is a big beast, and I have not quite figured out if it is dangerous yet. I am worried if the choices I'm making are the right ones, but I have learned that it is okay for me to not know where I am going. My purpose right now is to keep moving forward, handling life's challenges, hoping that one day I will be able to look back at them and smile.

When the Sun Stops Shining

Vaishnavi Katta

Inside me, there is a sun.
A ball of fire burning bright,
shining through to cast her light.

To protect her from public view.
I mute her melody,
change her tune.
Save her
from the judgment
of being true.

Safeguarded under crossed arms
and layers of black and gray.
Not burdened with taking center stage,
she is safe.

I block their questions
behind the books
I hug close to my chest.
I let their titles
answer what they may.
Keeping the truth tucked away.

I ignore her cries and her pleas.
To be listened to.
To be seen.
Soon she stops asking me
and dims herself
so the world can't see.

One goal I am working on recently in terms of personal development is sharing myself more with other people. This poem is about some of my struggles I experience doing that. I consider myself a private person, someone scared of shining my light, but that is something I want to change. I am hoping to open up to the world and share who I am without fearing judgment.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Find us at:

-  @mentality_magazine
-  mentalitymagazingumich@gmail.com
-  mentalitymagazine.org

We're always looking for more people to help us!!

Writers: All the lovely pieces in these pages were written by students like you! Join Mentality to have your own pieces published on our website or in the next print edition!

Designers: Interested in how these pages are formatted and put together? Join our design team!

Business: We're constantly looking for ways to partner with other orgs on campus and for new events to participate in!

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!



CAMPUS RESOURCES

STUDENT SERVICES

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

3100 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Thurs: 8am - 7pm, Fri: 8am - 5pm

(734) 764-8312

(Press 0 for After Hours Urgent Support)

<https://caps.umich.edu>

Provides free, confidential services for U of M students including: counseling for individuals or couples, workshops and groups for support and changing patterns, Assessment of Substance Abuse Patterns (ASAP), online screening for mental health concerns.

MiTALK ("My Talk")

<https://caps.umich.edu/mitalk>

Offers online screenings for depression and anxiety, skill-building tools, and recorded workshops, lectures and relaxation exercises.

Campus Mind Works

<http://campusmindworks.org>

Provides resources for students who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC)

551 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am - 5pm

Office Phone: (734) 764-7771

24-hour Crisis Line: (734) 936-3333

<https://sapac.umich.edu>

Provides free confidential crisis intervention, advocacy, and support for survivors of sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking.

Spectrum Center

3200 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am - 6pm

(734) 763-4186

<https://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>

Provides a range of education and advocacy services that work to make campus a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQA students and staff. Also offers on-campus HIV rapid testing.

U-M University Health Service (UHS)

207 Fletcher St.

Hours: Mon-Wed: 8am-5pm, Thu: 9am-5pm,

Fri: 8am-4:30pm, Sat: 9am-12pm

(734) 764-8320

www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs

Provides medication and management of common mental health concerns.

U-M Psychological Clinic

500 E. Washington St., Suite 100

(734) 764-3471

<http://mari.umich.edu/psych-clinic/>

Offers assessment, counseling, and treatment for adults in the U-M community, including: anxiety, depression, couples issues, and problems with work and study.

EMPLOYEE SERVICES

U-M Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

1009 Greene St.

(734) 936-8660

Provides short-term counseling and coaching for staff, faculty and their immediate family members.

CAMPUS SAFETY

Division of Public Safety and Security

Emergencies: Dial 9-1-1

Non-emergencies: (734) 763-1131

Tip line: (734) 763-9180

NATIONAL 24-HR HOTLINES

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1 (800) 273-8255

The Trevor Lifeline

Trevor Lifeline: 1 (866) 488-7386

TrevorChat (available 7 days a week 3pm-9pm ET):

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now>

TrevorText (Thursdays and Fridays 4pm-8pm ET):

Text the word "Trevor" to 1 (202) 304-1200

Provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention to LGBTQ young people ages 13-24.

Veterans Crisis Line

Hotline: Call 1 (800) 273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>

Text: 838255

Connects Veterans in crisis and their loved ones with qualified, Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

U-M HEALTH SYSTEM

Note: Services at the U-M Health System are not covered by students' health service fee.

U-M Depression Center

(734) 936-4400

Dedicated to research, education, and treatment of depressive and bipolar illnesses.

U-M Collegiate Sleep Disorder Clinic

(734) 936-9068

Helps improve your sleep, daytime function and, hopefully, academic performance.

U-M Anxiety Disorders Treatment Clinic

(734) 764-0231

Offers treatment of problematic anxiety and stress.

U-M Ambulatory (Outpatient) Psychiatry Services

1 (800) 525-5188 or (734) 764-0231

Provides comprehensive evaluation and treatment for patients and families affected by mental illness.

UM Psychiatric Emergency Services

Crisis Line: (734) 936-5900 or (734) 996-4747

**University Hospital, 1500 East Medical Center Dr.
Emergency Medicine Reception**

Emergency walk-in consultation and phone service available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

U-M Neuropsychology Clinic

(734) 763-9259

Performs psychological evaluation to differentiate cognitive functioning.

U-M Preventive Cardiology

(734) 998-7400

Offers a "Power of Relaxation" program, as well as nutrition, weight management, exercise, smoking cessation and stress management programs.

If you or someone you know struggles with mental health, there are ways to get help. Use these resources to find help for yourself or a loved one.

Purpose is limitless: The only constraint to your purpose is the boundaries you set around it; as such, a purpose can be anything from life's ultimate goal to a few objectives to be completed today. One's purpose can be thought of as the goalposts set around their goal.

- Paul Silaghi

