Living with purpose & direction

Research and psychological theories tell us that having purpose, direction or a meaning to life can significantly reduce feelings of dissatisfaction and anxiety.

While there isn't a single cause, one contributing factor to our rising levels of anxiety is our lifestyles. Technology has simplified our lives; we find ourselves with more free time yet being less fulfilled. Many are falling into cycles of consumption or passive entertainment which is deepening feelings of restlessness.

In the context of farming and crofting, the inactive lifestyle theory may not ring as true. It's physical by nature and can absolutely provide a deep connection between personal fulfilment and societal contribution.

The decision to live with purpose and intention, conscious or otherwise offers benefits that go far beyond financial return, we call that, the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit.

When we choose convenience over meaningful activity, we inadvertently fuel unconscious feelings of dissatisfaction and unease.

An example of meaningful activity could be seasonal calving or lambing in tune with climate rather than market convenience. Working with ecological systems rather than overriding them for short-term efficiency or profit.

Purpose is the overarching "why" the deeper *meaning* behind anything we do, the values or aspirations that can give work meaning for us.

Direction points to the path, the goal or the strategy that maps out our "what". So, it's good to start with the why, then understand the what.

Motivation looks to answer the question, what will keep me going? Unlike external rewards or pressures, which can prompt short bursts of compliance related action, motivation grounded in the following three factors tends to be more permanent:

Autonomy - refers to the sense of having control and choice.
Competence - is the feeling of being capable, able, effective.
Relatedness - highlights the importance of connection with others, with belonging.

Use the following templates to discover your purpose, direction and motivation.

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1. Purpose (Why I do this)

Prompt: *What is at the heart of why I do this work or live this way?*

Think about your deeper reasons—values, beliefs, traditions, family, community, or the land itself. What makes your effort worthwhile? What would be lost if you stopped?

Use the **5 whys** template on the next page if you are struggling.

My purpose:

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The "5 whys" theory

A farmer says: ***"I want to expand my farm and increase production."***
This is a **goal** *not a purpose.*

Why 1: **Why do I want to expand and increase production?**
Because I want to make more money.

Why 2: **Why do I want to make more money?**
Because I feel financial pressure and want more security.

Why 3: **Why do I want more financial security?**
Because I don't want to constantly worry about bills, debt, and unexpected costs.

Why 4: **Why is reducing worry about money important to me?**
Because when I'm stressed about finances, I'm distracted, short-tempered, and not present with my family.

Why 5: **Why is being present and less stressed important?**
Because what really matters to me is providing a stable, happy life for my family and being a positive role model for my children.

The real purpose is revealed:

"Expand the farm" becomes: ***To create stability, reduce stress, and build a secure, positive family life.***

When purpose becomes clear, decisions may shift:

- Expansion might not be the only solution.
- Diversifying income could provide stability with less risk.
- Reducing debt may be more aligned than increasing scale.
- Improving efficiency may matter more than increasing output.
- Protecting time with family becomes a priority, not an afterthought.

The 5 whys theory can help you move from what you're doing to why you're really doing it

The 5 whys technique was originally described by Taiichi Ohno at Toyota Corporation as a method of root cause problem solving in production lines. It is now a common tool for use in Lean Manufacturing, Kaizen and Six Sigma.

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2. Direction (Where I'm heading, the plan or goal)

Prompt: *Where am I going with this work, and what do I hope to create in the future?*

Consider your goals for your land, livelihood, and life. What vision do you have for the next few years, or for future generations? If purpose is the soil, what do you want to grow from it?

Keep it specific and measurable "I want to diversify income" becomes "In 12 months' time I want to have investigated and chosen a new income stream and have it fully implemented"

My direction:

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3. Motivation (What keeps me moving, the energy or drive)

Prompt: *What helps me keep going, even when it's difficult?*

Think about the habits, people, beliefs, or rewards that give you strength to continue. What sustains you through challenges?

Consider the three factors: **Autonomy, Competence** and **Relatedness**

My reflections on motivation:

Motivation factors - Self Determination Theory co-founded by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1980s.