

Why Are You Here?

WHY ARE YOU HERE?



A Fresh Look at Life's Oldest Question

*Adapted from the teachings of
the "Why Are We Born?" series*

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The Question You Can't Google

At some point, it hits you.

Maybe it's a Tuesday morning and you're staring at your laptop, coffee getting cold, and a thought breaks through the noise: What am I actually doing here? Not at this job. Not in this meeting. Here. On this planet. In this life.

Maybe it comes after a big win—the promotion, the house, the relationship—and instead of the expected flood of satisfaction, there's just... a quieter version of the same emptiness.

Or maybe it's 3 a.m. and you can't sleep, and the question just sits there, impossible to dismiss: Why am I here? What's the point of all this?

You're not broken for asking. You're actually paying attention.

Here's what's wild: across every culture, every century, every continent, human beings have asked this exact question. It doesn't matter if you grew up in Bangkok or Baltimore, whether you're a software engineer or a schoolteacher—the question finds you. It's practically hardwired.

Why Are You Here?

Most of us push it away. We get busy. We scroll. We optimize. We hustle. And the question waits patiently, like an unread message from someone who actually matters.

This little book isn't going to hand you a bumper sticker answer. It's not going to tell you what to believe. What it will do is share a perspective—one that's been tested by millions of people over thousands of years—that might just shift how you see your Monday mornings, your relationships, and that persistent feeling that life should mean something more.

No membership required. No beliefs you have to adopt. Just some ideas worth sitting with.



Chapter 1

The Hamster Wheel Question

Let's be honest about the default life script most of us are running:

Get educated. Get a job. Get a relationship. Get a house. Get promotions. Get stuff. Retire. Hope it was worth it.

There's nothing wrong with any of those things. But here's a question worth asking: if you ask ten people what their goal in life is, you'll get ten different answers—doctor, musician, entrepreneur, world traveler. And almost without exception, everyone wants some version of “rich and happy.”

But how many people who actually get what they wanted feel fully content? Being rich and famous doesn't guarantee happiness. There are plenty of people with everything who are still miserable. You probably know some of them.

If our entire life amounts to looking for food from sunrise to sunset—just a more sophisticated version of what every squirrel, bird, and bee does—then is that really all there is?

A ship without a captain gets lost in the ocean. A life without a purpose finds no destination.

This isn't meant to be depressing. It's meant to be liberating. Because once you see the hamster wheel for what it is, you can start asking better questions.

What If There's a Bigger Game?

Here's where things get interesting. An ancient framework—one that predates modern psychology, philosophy, and self-help by about 2,500 years—suggests that life actually has three levels of success, not just one:

Level 1: Success in this life. This is the practical stuff—earning a living, being self-sufficient, staying out of debt, building a stable foundation. It matters. You can't build a temple on quicksand. But by itself, it's incomplete.

Level 2: Success beyond this life. This one takes a bigger view. What if your actions—your kindness, your generosity, your inner work—carry weight beyond your current circumstances? What if how you live now shapes what comes next, whether you think of “what comes next” as karma, legacy, or something else entirely?

Level 3: Ultimate success. Freedom from the cycle entirely. This is the deepest level—the idea that there’s a state of being where you’re no longer at the mercy of craving, aversion, and confusion. Different traditions call it different things. In this framework, it’s called Nirvana—not extinction, but liberation.

You don’t have to buy all three levels right now. But consider this: most people are only playing at Level 1 and wondering why the game feels hollow.



Chapter 2

A Young Man's Impossible Question

In 1957, a thirteen-year-old boy in Bangkok wrote something in his journal that most teenagers never think about. While his classmates dreamed about careers and girlfriends, he was asking: Why are we born? What is the real goal of life?

His name was Chaiyaboon, and he was obsessed—but not with the things you'd expect. While other kids hung out after school, he spent his free time at secondhand bookstalls, devouring biographies of great leaders, books on meditation, anything that might contain a clue about what life was actually for.

He read Buddhist texts that said knowing the theory wasn't enough—that without direct experience, you're like a blind person trying to describe an elephant. This bothered him. He didn't want someone else's answers. He wanted to know for himself.

For years, three questions consumed him:

Why are we born? Where do we go when we die? Do our actions truly matter?

He would gaze at the sky for long stretches, turning these questions over in his mind, while his peers played sports and chased girls. Something in him refused to accept that life was just a random series of events with no deeper pattern.

The Clue That Changed Everything

One day, Chaiyaboon found a book about a meditation master who had discovered a profound inner practice—a way to directly experience the answers to these questions, not just think about them. The book described a path where you don't have to take anyone's word for it. You train your mind, and the answers reveal themselves.

He tracked down the master's most accomplished student—an unassuming elderly woman named Khun Yay, who looked like an ordinary person but whose eyes, he said, shone with a clarity he'd never seen. Though she had no formal education, she could answer questions about the deepest aspects of life with stunning precision.

On their first meeting, he asked her directly: "Do heaven and hell exist?"

Why Are You Here?

Her answer was unlike anything he'd heard: "Yes, they're real. I've been there. Would you like me to teach you, so you can see for yourself?"

No hedging. No theology. Just: here's a method. Try it. See what you find.

After practicing meditation with her, the young man found what he'd been searching for his entire life. The answer, as he came to understand it:

We are born to grow—to cultivate our highest qualities and realize the full potential of the human mind.

Chaiyaboon eventually became a monk, dedicated his life to teaching this path, and helped millions of people discover the same thing: that life isn't random, and you aren't here by accident.

But here's the thing—you don't have to become a monk to take this seriously. You just have to be willing to consider the possibility that there's more going on here than meets the eye.



Chapter 3

Your Invisible Bank Account

Here's a concept that might reshape how you think about your day-to-day life. In this framework, every good thing you do—every act of kindness, every moment of patience, every time you choose generosity over selfishness—generates a kind of spiritual capital.

Think of it as an invisible bank account. You can't see it on your phone. No app tracks it. But it's working behind the scenes, influencing your circumstances, your state of mind, and—if this framework is right—your trajectory far beyond this single lifetime.

Americans already have an intuitive version of this: you reap what you sow. What goes around comes around. The Golden Rule. These aren't just nice platitudes—they might be pointing at something real.

How It Works

This spiritual capital comes from three main sources:

Generosity. Not just writing checks (though that counts). It's sharing your time, your knowledge, your attention. It's buying coffee for the person behind you. It's mentoring someone who can't repay you. Every act of genuine giving adds to your account.

Ethical living. Being honest when it's inconvenient. Keeping your word. Not cutting corners that hurt other people. This isn't about being perfect—it's about having enough integrity that you can look at yourself in the mirror without flinching.

Mental cultivation. This is the big one. Training your mind—through meditation, reflection, or any practice that develops focus and self-awareness—isn't just stress relief. It's the most powerful investment you can make. When your mind is clear and still, everything else gets better. Your decisions improve. Your relationships deepen. Your capacity for kindness expands.

The flip side is also true: every time you act from anger, greed, or willful ignorance, you're making a withdrawal. Not as punishment—as natural consequence. The same way eating junk food doesn't "punish" you; your body just responds to what you put into it.

The Practical Upshot

If this framework is even partially right, the implications are enormous:

Your kindness isn't wasted. That time you helped a stranger, forgave someone who hurt you, or sat quietly with someone who was grieving—it counted. It's still counting.

Your inner work matters more than your job title. A billionaire with a chaotic, unkind mind is poorer than a schoolteacher who's cultivated inner peace.

You're building something every single day—whether you know it or not. The question is whether you're building intentionally.



Chapter 4

Ten Ways to Invest in Yourself—Starting Today

If you're intrigued by the idea of spiritual capital, here's the actionable part. An ancient tradition identified ten specific ways to build it. None of them require special equipment, a guru, or a plane ticket. You can start any of them today.

- 1. Give generously.** Start where you are. Buy someone lunch. Donate to a cause you care about. Share your expertise freely. Generosity rewires your brain away from scarcity and toward abundance.
- 2. Live with integrity.** Not perfection—integrity. Be the person who keeps their promises, tells the truth kindly, and treats people the way you'd want to be treated. Simple, but not easy.
- 3. Train your mind.** Even five minutes a day. Sit quietly. Focus on your breathing. Let your thoughts settle like snow in a snow globe. This is the single highest-leverage activity available to a human being.
- 4. Show genuine respect.** Not flattery—authentic appreciation for the good in others. Acknowledge the

barista, your partner, your parents. Respect is a form of generosity that costs nothing.

5. Be of service. Look for ways to make someone else's day easier. Volunteer. Help a coworker. Hold the door. Service gets you out of your own head, which is usually a good thing.

6. Share your good fortune. When something good happens, don't hoard it. Dedicate it. Send good wishes. This is a real practice: mentally offering the positive energy of your good deeds to others. It multiplies the benefit.

7. Celebrate others' wins. Instead of envy, try genuine happiness for someone else's success. This is harder than it sounds and more powerful than you'd think. It's an instant antidote to jealousy.

8. Share what you know. If you've learned something that helps you live better, pass it on. Not by preaching—by living it and sharing when asked. Knowledge hoarded is knowledge wasted.

9. Stay curious. Keep learning. Read. Listen. Be open to perspectives you haven't considered. Some of the most transformative insights come from the most unexpected sources.

10. Check your assumptions. Be willing to update your beliefs when the evidence changes.

Why Are You Here?

Rigidity isn't strength—it's fragility. The clearest minds are the ones that can say: I might be wrong about this.

Notice something about this list? Not one item requires you to join anything, believe anything specific, or change your religion (or lack thereof). These are universal principles that work regardless of your worldview.



Chapter 5

The Mind: Your Most Underused Superpower

Here's something that might surprise you. Of all the things on that list, the most powerful—by a significant margin—is training your mind.

We live in an age where everyone's optimizing everything. We track our sleep, count our macros, hack our productivity, and upgrade our gadgets. But the one tool that processes all of it—the mind itself—most people never bother to train.

Think about that for a second. Every experience you've ever had, every decision you've ever made, every emotion you've ever felt—all of it happened in your mind. It's the operating system behind everything. And most of us are running it on default settings, never realizing there's an upgrade available.

What the Mind Actually Is

Here's a framework that's been around for millennia but sounds surprisingly modern: the mind has four core functions.

Perception — how you take in information from the world around you.

Memory — how you store and recall experiences.

Thought — how you process, analyze, and create.

Cognition — a deeper knowing that goes beyond thinking. Call it intuition, insight, or awareness itself.

In the age of AI, we've essentially built machines that mimic the first three functions: they perceive (sensors and cameras), remember (databases), and think (algorithms). But that fourth function—deep knowing, true awareness—remains uniquely human. It's what no algorithm can replicate.

And here's the kicker: you can train it. You can sharpen all four functions through a simple, daily practice of sitting still and letting your mind settle.

The Science Is Catching Up

Neuroscience has been quietly confirming what contemplative traditions have taught for centuries: regular meditation physically changes your brain. It increases gray matter in areas associated with emotional regulation and self-awareness. It reduces activity in the brain's "default mode network"—the part responsible for mind-wandering and that nagging voice of self-criticism.

But the ancient teachers would say the science is only scratching the surface. A truly trained mind doesn't just feel calmer—it perceives reality more clearly. And when you perceive reality more clearly, you make better choices. Better choices lead to better outcomes. Better outcomes build more spiritual capital. It's a virtuous cycle.

A Simple Starting Point

You don't need a retreat, an app, or a cushion. Try this:

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and let your body relax. Now gently bring your attention to the center of your body—roughly two finger-widths above your navel. Don't force anything. Just rest your awareness there, as lightly as a feather landing on water.

If your mind wanders (it will), no problem. Gently bring it back. That's it. That's the whole practice. Five minutes a day is enough to start.

What you're doing, in that simple act, is something profound: you're reconnecting with the part of yourself that's deeper than your thoughts, deeper than your emotions, deeper than your resume. You're coming home.

Why Are You Here?



Chapter 6

What If Life Isn't Random?

We started with a question: Why are you here?

Here's one possible answer, translated from a tradition that's been thinking about it longer than most:

You're here to grow. To become the best version of yourself. To cultivate qualities—kindness, wisdom, generosity, inner peace—that no one can take from you and that serve you far beyond this single lifetime.

That might resonate with you right now. It might not. And that's perfectly fine.

The goal of this little book was never to convince you. It was to get you to consider a different possibility. Because when you consider the possibility that life has meaning and purpose—that your actions truly matter, that your kindness counts, that training your mind is the most important work you can do—something shifts.

Why Are You Here?

You stop sleepwalking through your days.

You treat people differently—not because you’re supposed to, but because you see the stakes.

You invest in yourself—not just your career or your body, but your character and your inner life.

You start building something that lasts.

A Thought Experiment

Before you close this book, try this thought experiment:

Imagine you’re going to live this day as if everything you’ve read here is true. As if your kindness generates real, measurable positive energy. As if your patience at that red light, your generosity in that conversation, and your five minutes of quiet reflection tonight all add up to something meaningful.

How would you treat the next person you see?

What would you do differently this week?

What would you stop worrying about?

You don’t have to believe it to try it. Just run the experiment for a week. See how it feels. Notice what changes.

Why Are You Here?

Because here's the beautiful thing: even if you're not sure about any of this, acting as if life has purpose will make your life better regardless. Being kinder, more generous, more intentional, more reflective—these things improve your life whether or not there's a cosmic scoreboard.

And if there is one? Well, you're already ahead.



This human existence is nothing more than a transit lounge for those endowed with wisdom to accumulate the additional qualities they need for the journey ahead.

Your journey continues. Make it count.



Where to Go from Here

If anything in these pages sparked your curiosity, here are some next steps—no commitment required:

Try the meditation. Five minutes a day, center of your body, light attention. Give it two weeks before you judge it.

Pick one practice from the list of ten. Just one. Make it your experiment for the month. Notice what happens.

Read more. If you want to go deeper, check out “Your Inner Algorithm: Buddhist Principles for Navigating AI and Beyond” for a fuller exploration of how these ancient frameworks apply to modern life.

Connect with us. Visit chillandshine.com for more resources, guided practices, and a community of people exploring these ideas together.

This book is adapted from “Why Are We Born?” a series originally compiled from the teachings of Luangpor Dhammajayo, one of the most influential meditation teachers in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. The original teachings have been translated and culturally adapted to be accessible to

Why Are You Here?

*all seekers, regardless of background or belief
system.*

