

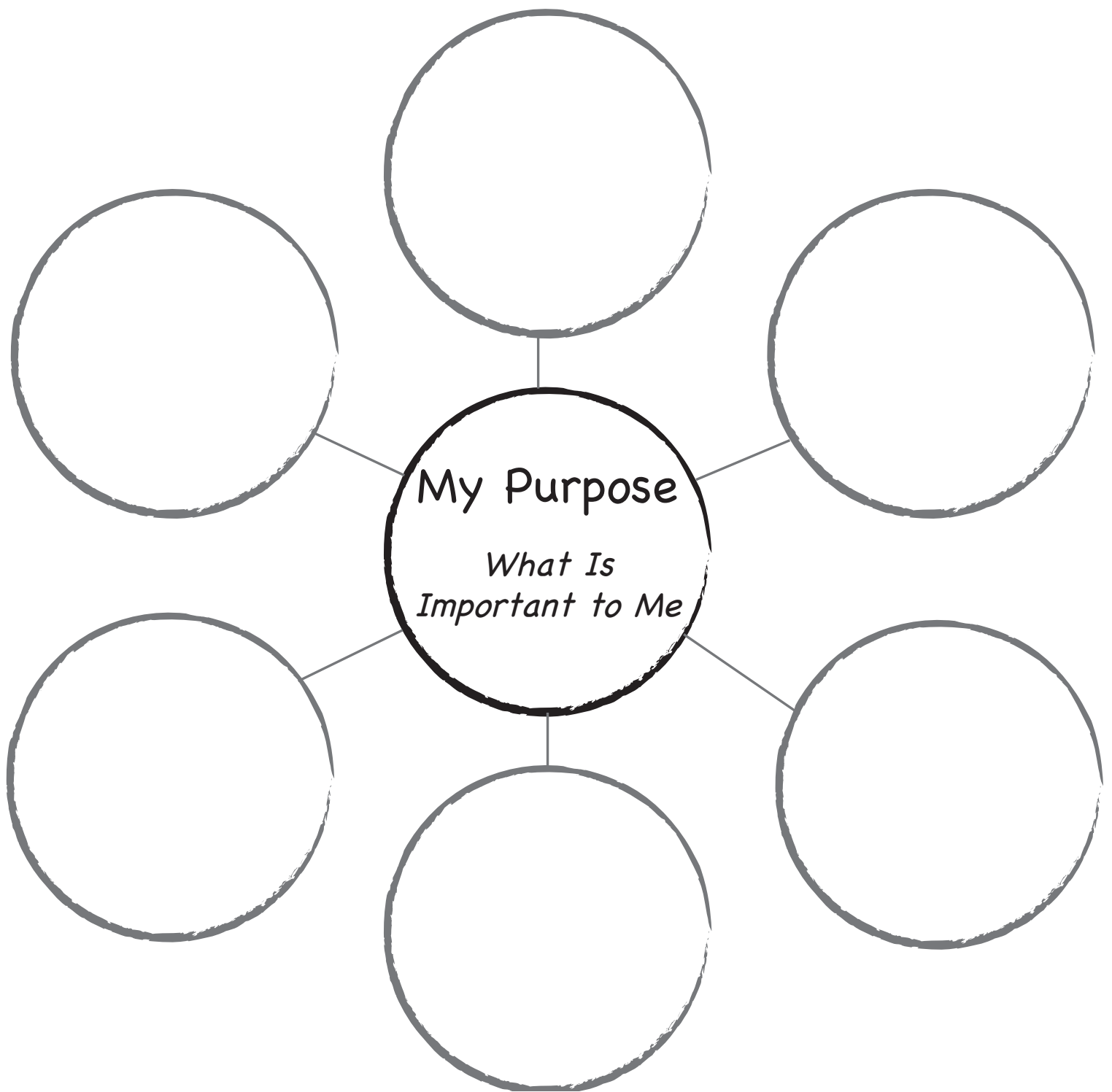
# learning who you are

At a stage of life when you are going through the challenging process of figuring out your identity, trying to be the person your friends and family want you to be and comparing yourself with people you see in the media are likely to cause you additional stress. The more you learn about who you truly are, who you want to be, and what is most important to you, the better equipped you will be to cope with stress that comes from trying to meet others' expectations of you.

You can begin to learn more about who you are by asking yourself, *What is my purpose? What is important to me in my life right now?* Of course, each person will have different answers, but these sample responses can start you thinking:

- spending time with my friends
- spending time with my family
- being in a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend
- succeeding in school
- spending time on my extracurricular activities, hobbies, or interests
- getting better at a sport
- learning a new musical instrument
- playing video games
- taking dance classes
- expressing my thoughts and feelings through writing or drawing
- following my dreams
- figuring out a major
- figuring out my future
- career or vocational training

Use this downloadable diagram to help you look at yourself. In each blank circle, fill in something that defines who you are. Your entries can be as simple or complex as you like. For example, you might write things you like to do: "spending time with friends" or "gaming." You might write down aspects of your personality: "honest" or "outgoing." Write whatever comes to mind as qualities you consider to make up who you are and what you are all about.



Is your purpose mostly about one area of your life? Or is it a balance that includes such areas as school, career, family, friends, and relationships, among others?

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What, if anything, did you come up with that you had not thought of before?

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Do you want to change any parts of your life? If so, what?

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Of the parts that you want to change, which can you change? Which parts are out of your control?

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mindful takeaway    Figuring out who you are and who you want to be is a lifelong process that will continue for years to come. It is great to start now and reassess as needed.

## something more

There can be a difference between your purpose and what is important to you, and what is put on you by others (friends, family, and society) or that you have to do.

How do your friends and family see you? Print copies of the diagram and give them to a few of your closest friends and family members. Ask them to fill in the circles to describe how they see you.

How are your friends' views of you similar to your own?

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How are they different?

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Would you like your friends to see you differently? If so, what would you want them to see differently?

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How are your family members' views of you similar to your own?

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How are they different?

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Would you like your family members to see you differently? If so, what would you want them to see differently?

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Thermostats balance temperature by turning heating and cooling devices on and off. Imagine that your body gives off information that lets you know when you aren't in balance and then, like a thermostat, takes action to get itself back to the desired set temperature.

Are you able to notice when your body and mind are out of balance? How can you tell?

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What things in your life get you out of balance?

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What temperature is your emotional thermostat set at?

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How far from that temperature do you need to be before you realize your air conditioning or heat should be on?

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