

Ikigai: A Life Worth Living

A Japanese idea about meaning, connection, and everyday purpose.

IKIGAI | JAPANESE:

生きがい

Pronounced: ee-kee-guy

iki: to live or living

gai: worth or value

WHERE DOES THE IDEA COME FROM?

Ikigai is an established Japanese word, not a system invented by one teacher or author. It describes the people, activities, and commitments that make life feel meaningful or worth living.

It can be something important and ordinary: making music, caring for family, practicing a craft, spending time with friends, helping someone, or enjoying a daily ritual.

WHO HELPED EXPLAIN IT?

In 1966, Japanese psychiatrist Mieko Kamiya published *Ikigai ni tsuite* (On Ikigai / On the Meaning of Life). She explored both the sources of meaning in people's lives and the experience of feeling that life has meaning. She studied the idea; she did not invent it.

NOT A CAREER TEST

The familiar four-overlapping-circles diagram is a later Western adaptation, not a traditional Japanese diagram. Ikigai does not need to become a job, earn money, or provide one permanent answer.

BRING THE IDEA INTO YOUR CREATIVE WORK

Think about these questions before completing Purpose & Fit in your Personal Creative Needs Assessment workbook (pages 9-10). There is no single correct answer, and you do not have to share a personal answer aloud.

- 01 What activity, relationship, or creative moment makes a day feel worthwhile to you?
- 02 What part of making, learning, or helping would still matter without a grade or payment?
- 03 What small action could you continue or explore this month?

THE POINT

You do not need to choose your entire future. Begin by noticing what makes life meaningful now.

Further reading: JapanGov, KIZUNA (2022); JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles (2024); Mieko Kamiya (1966).