

# Self-Actualization

**Self-actualization isn't a single destination,** but a lifelong journey that develops and changes over time. It's not hedonistic or superficial success. It's the process of working toward meaningful success, focused on achieving goals you consider important, in ways you feel you've earned, and doing so by applying the things you're innately good at.

As people become increasingly self-actualizing, they increasingly realize their potential—a potential unique to each one of us. Your process of becoming self-actualizing will be different for you than it is for anybody else. That said, even though it is deeply personal, there are commonalities across individual experiences that can help us lay a general pathway for how we think most people can become self-actualizing.



## DEFINING "SELF-ACTUALIZATION":

Self-actualization is the process of finding meaningful, justified success through the betterment of ourselves and others. It is most likely to occur when we embrace a mindset that helps us discover our passions, develop our unique aptitudes, and contribute to the lives of others.

## DEVELOP YOUR UNIQUE GIFTS.

Each person has unique talents and strengths—we are all innately good at certain things. Though it can be difficult to identify what these are, the process of discovering and developing your gifts, or aptitudes, is critical for people to become self-actualizing. This process requires a trial and error approach to doing different things and doing things differently. It requires a sense of humility to figure out the areas where you do and do not have aptitudes. An aptitude is more than just a skill—it's deeper and more lasting. It's the difference between having the self-awareness of being narrowly good at writing op-eds and the broader realization of having a gift for language, which could be applied to myriad activities. As people develop a fuller understanding of the things that make them light up, they'll be better positioned to leverage their unique talents in ways that can make the greatest impact on themselves and others.

## IDENTIFY YOUR PASSIONS.

Your passions are the things you're interested in and think are important. They're the things that provide deep meaning in your life. As Viktor Frankl said, "Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for." For most people, finding meaningful ways to contribute to improving the lives of others is critical. This also includes developing self-awareness about what motivates us. From big things like one's moral compass to smaller things, such as whether you prefer working indoors or outdoors, in a loud open office space or in a quiet corner. Knowing these motivators can help individuals more fully understand why they like some things but not others, enabling them to find more opportunities they'll deeply enjoy. And by working on things they enjoy, they'll be more motivated to continue to grow and contribute.

**CONTRIBUTE TO WHAT WILL IMPROVE OTHERS' LIVES.** People naturally like helping others. So to be self-actualizing—to feel that sense of deep meaning and fulfillment—it's important for individuals to contribute to the betterment of others. If you do things you're good at and passionate about but that don't help others, you'll likely feel frustrated in the long run. But, on a more basic level, contributing to others is a critical component of being able to engage in mutual benefit and therefore being able to cover the basics. To earn money for food or shelter, to collaborate with others, or to get along with friends or loved ones—among other things—we must gauge what others value to find ways to contribute.

**MINDSET.** Our mindset—the values and beliefs that guide our actions—has a large impact on how likely we are to work toward self-actualization. It begins with a belief that we can take steps to improve our situation and will benefit from continual transformation. It's also important to approach our development with a mindset of humility, curiosity, and perseverance so that we continually stay open to the benefits of continual improvement, continually seek new knowledge and ways

to develop, and continue on what can be a challenging lifelong journey. While not presuming to have the perfect list, we've found that the MBM Guiding Principles is a useful guide to developing a good mindset. Without such a guide, it can be easier to destructively spiral toward jealousy, arrogance, or an entitlement mentality.

As you develop a mindset that helps you become self-actualizing, you'll do more to help others succeed and help society flourish. You'll improve your life. This isn't suggesting that with the right mindset everything will be better. There are still external barriers that we should help remove. By focusing your social entrepreneurship on helping yourself and others overcome internal and external barriers, we ensure that more people can go beyond the bare minimum necessities of life and find deeper success. This lifelong journey of self-actualization, of developing a mindset that helps you identify and discover your passions and strengths so that you can contribute to others in a meaningful way, is one of the greatest challenges and opportunities that each of us face in our lives. On the bright side, it is also one of the most rewarding.

