

A Reflection on Opposites

There is no single ikigai for all people, writes Yukari Mitsuhashi (Mitsuhashi, 2018).

Instead, we must each search for our own path to joy, curiosity, passion, and our reason for getting up each morning.

We can achieve this through reflection.

The following template encourages you to look at a series of opposites to understand whether your actions are focused on the present, your relationship with others, your feelings, and whether you approach life with a fixed mindset.

Reflect on the following sets of opposites. Pay particular attention to how you could move things from the second column to the first by making subtle changes.

Reflection	More ikigai (activities)	Less ikigai (activities)
Do most of your activities (those connected with your value and meaning) focus on the present or the future?	Daily life (present) <i>I enjoy art with my children.</i>	Lifetime (future) <i>I save as much as I can for my retirement.</i>
Do your hobbies, pastimes, and other actions exist only for you, or do you share them more widely?	External world <i>I share my art with friends and family.</i>	Internal world <i>I have created a beautiful garden for only me to enjoy.</i>
Do you connect with the world mostly through giving or receiving? Can you improve the balance?	Giving <i>I support a local food bank financially and with my time.</i>	Receiving <i>I receive money from my parents for my education, so I don't work.</i>

Reflection	More ikigai (activities)	Less ikigai (activities)
Do you approach life with a fluid or a fixed mindset?	Fluid <i>I spend time getting to know people from different backgrounds and cultures.</i>	Fixed <i>I prefer to spend time with only those people I already know.</i>
Is your thinking only logical, or do you engage with your feelings?	Emotional <i>I show my family how much they mean to me.</i>	Logical <i>I make sure my family has everything they need.</i>
Do you only help people you do not know, or do you also help those close to you? Note that both are important, but it is sometimes easier to only engage with causes removed from our lives.	Specific <i>I help my sister with childcare; she has had a difficult time recently.</i>	Abstract <i>Once a year, I give money to a global charity.</i>
Are you actively pursuing your goals or waiting for them to happen?	Active <i>I want to become a writer. I am writing daily and engaging with several editors.</i>	Passive <i>I want to become a writer but will wait a while longer until I feel ready.</i>

Use the act of reflection, along with the answers given, to form a more complete picture of your ikigai and how you could live more in the first column.

Could you focus your life more outwardly and adopt a change mindset while embracing your emotions?

References

- Mitsuhashi, Y. (2018). *Ikigai: Giving every day meaning and joy*. London: Kyle Books.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton