

## **IKIGAI!**

Ever felt that your work is not fulfilling enough? Or perhaps that you're not good at it which makes climbing in pay and position harder? Or your just feeling an emptiness inside.

Ikigai could be the answer.

Ikigai is a lifestyle philosophy created in japan. It's about finding something in your life that is a blend of what you love, what you're good at, what you can get paid for, and 'what the world needs'.

The passion you feel for doing something you love wakes you up every morning with a bang, the combination of what you're good at and what you can get paid for gives you recognition and self-worth (not to mention an income) and 'what the world needs' allows you to feel that you have a place in the larger design of things.

Ikigai has changed the lives of many. Not only do proponents live fulfilling lives in service to society, they live longer and have fewer chronic illnesses than other populations. The rate of dementia is also significantly lower.

In Japan, there is no word for retirement in the usual sense. Japanese folk work for as many years as they feel healthy, there is no traditional retirement.

The philosophy of Ikigai also suggests 'Hara hachi bu', which loosely translates into 'eat only until your belly is 80% full'. This is perhaps the reason for their immense vitality which lasts into old age. This prevents overeating which wears the body down due to the long digestive process that accelerates cellular oxidation. All the little snacks we consume, desert, extra fries, might make us content in the short term, but having better health and vitality will make us happier in the long term.

Service to the community is also considered important to well-being. In places like Okinawa, where proponents of Ikigai are aplenty, people form close bonds with local communities called *moai*.

This is an informal group of people with common interests who look out for one another. Members of a *moai* make a set monthly monetary contribution to the group. The payment allows them to participate in meetings, dinner, games and hobbies together. Being part of a community, and being in service to one another, fosters a sense of selflessness which feeds into the concept of Ikigai. Without other people, you are not that important. Without your help, other people suffer. This concept enables people to not only live a life of fulfilment through doing something you are good at and which you can be paid for, but through feeling the value of putting others' needs before yours.

Your Ikigai is hidden deep inside you, and finding it requires intent and patience. You must have intent to find it, to find something that you are good at, can be paid for, and is of value to the world. And you need patience. It takes time and trial and error to find it.

The combination of 4 elements must be complete. For instance, if you choose to do something that only you can be paid for and you are good at, you will be disconnected from the heart of humanity and will suffer an emptiness inside you. The law of attraction will also fail to apply, in which existence provides things (and work) to those who can utilize it for both their own and others' good. If your work is of service to the community, but you're not good at it, it won't fulfil you through self-improvement and the attainment of excellence. It will also not be good quality work that the community deserves. Hence, it is important to spend time and develop skills, and try a variety of jobs through trial and error, to find something that fulfils all 4 elements of Ikigai: being paid for what you are good at, what can be of service to the community, and something that deeply fulfils you because you love doing it.

The Japanese concept of Ikigai has been responsible for making many lives in regions such as Okinawa long lasting and fulfilling. It has created communities based on mutual respect and service to one another. Lives of Ikigai practitioners are typically healthier, longer, and more fulfilling. Find your hidden Ikigai and watch the world expand at your fingertips!