WHY IT MATTERS
THE SHERPA GUIDE TO WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

BRENDA CORBETT AND JENNIFER CHLOUPEK
Do you ever slow down long enough to think about why you do the things you do? Truthfully, your life most often runs on autopilot. When you are not required to pay attention, you can become increasingly unaware of why you behave the way you do. Knowing your Why It Matters can be a compass, guiding you to what you are looking for.

This compass will direct your life journey. Your Why It Matters will keep it focused. On this journey to find your personal Why It Matters, you will study the art and science of human behavior.

In the last 20 years, knowledge about how we think, the ways in which the brain works, has multiplied exponentially. Experts previously believed that we were creatures totally driven by our biological urges. Then, experts studied how we react to rewards and punishments. This added an extra layer to our understanding. In the workplace, rewards and punishments are now common ways to deal with good and bad behavior.

More recently, scientists have focused on a third drive, internal motivation. This internal motivation, what drives people, can be identified and harnessed. Now, in the workplace, we offer executive coaching to help people figure out what is really important to them and how to be at their best.
To arrive at your Why It Matters, you have to explore four things about yourself. It is helpful to think about a compass as you take this journey. You can remember the four things you have to explore by remembering north, south, east, and west. Each point of the compass will introduce a new way of looking at your Why It Matters.

The points of the compass are each accompanied by a key word that represents part of your life.

- **NORTH: EXPOSURE**
  (your upbringing and experience)
- **SOUTH: EVIDENCE**
  (the basis and foundation for your choices)
- **WEST: EXCITEMENT**
  (you might think of the American Wild West)
- **EAST: ESSENCE**
  (the wisdom of the East, your spiritual side)

Let’s look at this in a different way:

- **NORTH: EXPOSURE**
  (stories you have learned from)
- **SOUTH: EVIDENCE**
  (stories you tell to other people)
- **WEST: EXCITEMENT**
  (things that encourage your passion)
- **EAST: ESSENCE**
  (things that give you peace)

We associate these four elements: exposure, evidence, excitement, and essence with points of the compass to make them easier to remember. Let’s talk about each one of these briefly before we offer more details.
We begin by exploring the North, Exposure. Exposure refers to things you have learned, things you were exposed to as you grew up, from your parents, your school, and your community. We associate exposure with the north. You might remember the television series ‘Northern Exposure’ as a way to associate ‘exposure’ and the northern point of the compass. Think of the Aurora Borealis and how vast it is. Think about your experience, and how vast that is. Think about the collection of social, familial, and environmental experiences that have made a mark on your life.

Next is the South: Evidence. Evidence refers to the things you tell other people. It represents strengths, weaknesses, stories, and words that form who you are. We associate evidence with the southern point of the compass, the foundation of the world. Evidence is what you say and how you say it. Evidence is the basis upon which people judge you. In our visit to the south, we will look at the way you present yourself to others.

West means Excitement: Where do you find your passion? What truly excites you, brings your energy to a higher level? To help us remember, we associate excitement with the western point on the compass. In the 1800s, the western United States was called the Wild West. It was filled with excitement. In our visit to the west, we will explore things in life that make you happy, energized, and fulfilled.

Essence is represented by the East. This is where we find Eastern philosophy. When you look to find what is important to you, you must embrace your relationship with the world. You must come to understand the indispensable qualities that determine your character. This might include your spiritual side and your sense of wonder and mystery.
We will look at EXPOSURE, the stories you have learned from. We will explore EVIDENCE. That’s what you tell people about yourself. We will look for EXCITEMENT and ESSENCE and find what is most meaningful in your life.

All together, these elements will help you discover your Why It Matters. Let us look at the four points of your personal compass and continue our climb.
You are now ready to do your own deep dive into finding and identifying your Why It Matters. You have everything you need for success.

Your Why It Matters is what drives you, your internal roadmap, your inner GPS. There are four ways to make your search easier and find your Why It Matters.

North: Exposure is what is ingrained in your experience.
South: Evidence is your shield, your armor, your good and bad.
West: Excitement is what fulfills and thrills you.
East: Essence is your internal guide and spirit.
If you have any other questions, any other thoughts around finding your Why It Matters. This chapter should answer every last one of them.

**Benefits of knowing your Why It Matters:**

**PLEASURE & PAIN**

The two big reasons for knowing and owning your Why It Matters are these: pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain are the embodiment of motivators. Neuroscience and your own experience have proven that you will always move toward pleasure and away from pain. You are wired to seek pleasure and disconnect from pain.

Learning your Why It Matters will move you toward pleasure. It will provide pleasure by maintaining a peaceful balance in life. It opens up opportunity for rewards.

On the other hand, it will also keep you away from pain. When your Why It Matters runs amok, your relationships weaken. Your situations become more challenging. You experience discomfort. You feel pain.
NEW LEARNING

• Helps you choose things in which you will be successful.
• Gives you a vantage point from which you can be self aware.
• Allows you to accept yourself the way you are and forgive yourself for things that do not go well.
• Allows you to explain yourself and create better relationships.
• Helps you step away from potential conflicts.

NEW RESULTS

• Teaching your children from your own experience.
• Looking at yourself differently in your current relationships.
• Connecting to new relationships.
• Using your time more effectively.
• Validating yourself in front of others.
• Choosing your battles.
• Constructing meaning in things.
• Making positive choices when deciding on a behavior to use.
• Understanding your blind spots.
YOUR JOB

Do you want to guide your career to a place that makes you feel excited, enthusiastic, and motivated? These questions will help you figure out whether you are in the right place. Think about your current job. With each question, look beyond the details of what you do; focus on who you are.

What do I like most about working?

______________________________________________________________________

If I don’t do this during the day in a job, I am not happy:

______________________________________________________________________

This makes me happy at work:

______________________________________________________________________

Success in a work day looks like:

______________________________________________________________________

What does my future look like? What excites me about the opportunities?

______________________________________________________________________
What do I want to learn?

What do I want more of in a job?

What would provide peace for me in a job?
To define your Why It Matters, you will need to be specific and personal. Everyone wants to leave a legacy. You can do that, of course. Your Why It Matters is not something you share in common with everyone else. Why It Matters is not something that just happens. It is an accumulation of all your experiences, thoughts, and ideas.

Avoid clichés. Stay away from things other people say are important. Identify things that truly resonate with you. Be genuine. If you want it to sound noble, you might come up with statements about your Why It Matters like this:

- *I want to make a difference.*
- *I want to help people.*
- *I want to support my family.*
- *I want people to remember me.*

These are all good and noble thoughts, but they don’t provide your Why It Matters. These are the results of your Why It Matters. You make a difference when your Why It Matters is in full working order.

Here are a few things that might get in the way of naming your Why It Matters:

- *It can sound egotistical when you say it out loud.*
- *The process of naming it might ‘feel’ contrived.*
- *Reflecting might be uncomfortable for you.*
- *It takes work.*
- *It takes time.*
- *It might be hard to figure out.*
- *You might not like the result.*

Your answer won’t necessarily come to you immediately. It might come to you at the strangest and most fortuitous time.
WHY IT MATTERS EXAMPLES

To accomplish
To adapt
To adjust
To anticipate
To appear knowledgeable
To avoid failure
To be a catalyst
To be a dominant force
To be a guiding light
To be accepted
To be better than average
To be comfortable
To be considered the expert
To be included
To be loved
To be noticed
To be perfect
To be recognized
To be relevant
To be respected

To be safe
To be secure
To be the focal point
To be the hero
To be understood
To be worthwhile
To belong
To connect
To contemplate
To finish
To judge
To make things right
To nurture
To protect
To prove my competence
To satisfy
To serve
To stay in my comfort zone
To teach
To win
FINDING MY WHY IT MATTERS

Now it is your turn to put all four points of the compass together and to be the subject and scientist in determining your own Why It Matters. Meticulously piece together your exposure, evidence, essence and excitement. The work you have done so far can be brought to this page, so you can see it all in one place:

What is your life story telling you?

EXPOSURE

VALUES

---
---
---
---

EVIDENCE

STRENGTHS

---
---
---

WEAKNESSES

---
---
---

WORDS AND STORIES I USE

---
---
---
---
EXCITEMENT

ESSENCE

MY WHY IT MATTERS IS:
AM I RIGHT?
A checklist for your Why It Matters:

1. Your ‘weaknesses’ are your Why It Matters run amok. To validate your Why It Matters, simply see whether your weaknesses are connected to your Why It Matters as it is stated. Look at your weaknesses. Do they appear when your Why It Matters is threatened or cornered?

2. You know you have it right if you ‘own’ it and can defend it. You have to be comfortable as the owner of the word or phrase you have come up with. You have to be okay with it.

3. This is a personal journey. Your Why It Matters must be clear to you, even if others might disagree about it. It has to be something you can embrace. It has to be a word that resonates with you. It has to make perfect sense when you say it and when you explain it.

Circle your answers as you ask yourself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do I ‘own’ it?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am I okay with it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I able to push back if someone disagrees?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I clearly explain it?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does my behavior consistently connect to it?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>