

Focus on the Little Things

One of the goals and pillars upon which ikigai stands is recognizing and experiencing joy in little things (Mogi, 2018).

Central to this is the search for mindfulness (feeling present) and curiosity in all that we do.

Whether working on a spreadsheet or enjoying a cup of tea, ikigai and similarly a sense of flow is present (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Mogi, 2018).

You soon realize that nothing is mundane and that we can find pleasure in the simplest of things.

Use the below worksheet to explore some seemingly innocuous activities we perform daily and how they can become more ikigai so that you feel more present and engaged.

On the night before, make a list of four activities that you will perform mindlessly during the next day.

Visualize each in great detail, for example, making a cup of tea:

- Fully attend to making the cup of tea rather than daydreaming.
- Focus on the smoothness of the cup in your hands, the smell of the tea, and feel the heat of the water.
- Watch as your hands move as you make the tea, and watch the water as it swirls and moves in the cup.
- Be present in what you are doing and creating.

In the columns to the right, make a note of what you might experience while you carry out each one the next day: smells, sounds, touch and movement, and even taste.

In the morning and throughout the day (before each activity listed), read what you may observe and perform the operation mindfully, staying present and engaged.

	Activity	Smells	Sounds	Taste	Touch	Sight	Movement
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							

Recognize the complexity of each action as it is performed, and its effect on yourself and the environment.

Being more present can be helped by focusing on the sensory aspects of the experience. Noticing touch, taste, smell, color, and noise can ground you and release you to the joy of the moment.

References

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). The contribution of flow to positive psychology. In J. E. Gillham (Ed.), *Laws of life symposia series. The science of optimism and hope: Research essays in honor of Martin E. P. Seligman* (pp. 387-395). West Conshohocken, PA, US: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Mogi, K. (2018). *The little book of ikigai: The secret Japanese way to live a happy and long life*. London: Quercus.

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