

# *You define*

*The idea that:  
The only true meaning is the meaning you give.*

*In other words - You Define is the process of becoming aware of the meaning we create and the impact that it has. We each interpret and understand things in our own unique way. It is this, the meaning, our perspective, that influences our entire experience of life.*

*We all have different perspectives and view the world through our own unique lens. 'You define' highlights the power, autonomy and ability to create our own meaning in life. We create our life through meaning and it is only true to us, if we accept it.*

## **What does this mean?**

You create your version of reality based upon what you experience, perceive and accept. Take for example the condition of being colour blind (a person who struggles to distinguish the difference between colours). If two people (a person with and a person without this condition) were to look at the same colour, how could we be sure that what they were observing was the same? What they perceive may be different, but each would be true to the individual. There is no issue with having two different versions of blue, it's only an issue when you try to see someone else's blue rather than your own.

Everything we experience we attach meaning to. In a process that can be quite automatic and without conscious awareness, we action or store our perception of the experience by giving a particular meaning to it. To understand this, imagine for a moment a room of three people, all of which are subject to the same experience, say a learning experience, a classroom. The first person may disregard the experience, deeming it not important enough and as such 'zone out'. The next may become inspired by the information and make plans based upon it. The third person may relate to the information and share with other people. Each were given the same information, yet all applied different meaning and as such acted differently, generating different outcomes. This meaning that we attach influences how we act and therefore the life we live.

We create our life through the meaning we give. Often the issue with this is that we forget that we are able to actively apply meaning and instead accept that which is applied externally. This causes us to act and live on terms that are not aligned with our true selves. 'You define' encourages us to stop looking to the external for understanding and instead empowers us to recognise the inner resources we already possess. Being aware of and using 'you define' as a reminder, empowers us to take steps towards living a life on our terms.

## **Meaning**

To further understand the concept of 'you define', let's look at meaning:

Meaning is the understanding derived from the individualised interpretation of \*something.

\* 'Something' is a low quality use of words to describe 'anything and everything'.

## **Why we create meaning**

If we didn't apply meaning to subjects and situations, the world would be a sea of unknowable, disconnected data. We wouldn't be able to identify things as being different, nor would we be able to appreciate the individual functions in a fine work of engineering, the qualities that make a piece of art beautiful and most

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importantly, we wouldn't be able to experience the meaningful things in life, the things that give us reason for living.

We create meaning to make sense of our world, to see how things interrelate and in particular, how they relate to our experience of the world. We do it to remember things, to appreciate them, to contrast them against one another, to feel, to experience, to love, to enjoy. Meaning helps us to map together the individual elements that we experience in order to create our understanding of life as a whole.

### **How we create meaning**

Meaning making often occurs subconsciously through the interpretation of something based upon existing knowledge and experience. In other words, we not only use our immediate experience to develop our understanding of something, but also our existing knowledge, filtered through our lens at the time. This understanding is generally built upon the elements that help to create the overall picture of something, such as it's qualities, function, purpose and relationship to existing knowledge.

### **Meaning and Meaningful**

Through the process of creating meaning, we determine the significance of something, the value or importance that we give it. This is the way in which we determine whether something is meaningful to us, a status assigned to things that meet a certain threshold of importance. When we consider something to be meaningful, we have made the determination that it is truly important, that it is worthy of our time and energy. And it is these, the meaningful things in life, that give us reason for living.

### **Issues with the application of meaning**

Whilst meaning may seem positive on surface value, at times it can be quite the opposite. For example, we often place a great degree of importance on things based upon external opinions. What others claim to be important can soon seem to become important to us too. Internal conflict arises when we focus our resources (time and energy) on things that we do not inherently feel aligned to.

In addition to the issue above, if we believe in something strongly enough, we look for meaning that supports it, generally making us blind to anything that does not. This can cause us to miss out on information, experiences and opportunities.

### **Embracing You Define**

You Define is the process of becoming aware of the meaning we create and the impact that it has. We each interpret and understand things in our own unique way. It is this, the meaning, our perspective, that influences our entire experience of life.

Embracing You Define is a learned ability to challenge perceptions from a place of accountability. Through this, we are able to consciously influence the meaning we create and in turn, the outcomes that this has.

The initial step in embracing 'you define' is being aware that we apply meaning to subjects and situations and it is through this awareness that we can alter our actions. This awareness can be developed through simple questions in regards to specific subjects and situations. The below are examples of such questions that assist in becoming aware of the meaning that you create:

- What meaning am I giving this (*subject/ situation*)?
- Why is this meaning important to me?

- How is this meaning affecting me?

In answering these questions:

- You become aware of the meaning you have given the subject or situation (the overall interpretation)
- You become aware of the individual significance of the meaning to you (why you made this determination and whether it is meaningful)
- You become aware of the impact that the meaning has (the effect that it has on you)

*Note: This is not intended to be a rigid process involving particular steps to reach an outcome, rather it's a process of becoming more aware over time.*

In developing this awareness you are able to assess the meaning you give and take the autonomy to either accept or alter it if needed.

Let's look at the impact that meaning can have from two different angles:

1. Take a book on philosophy. Physically, it is a bunch of pages glued together, filled with wise words and perspectives of the world. But to an individual, it may represent the moment in their life that they decided to become a writer and as such, they appreciate it as their favourite book. To them, philosophy is a core interest in their life.
2. Now take the exact same book with the same physical nature as above. But this time the individual may have this book on their bookshelf because they enrolled in a philosophy unit at school and all the 'smart' people rave on about it. So they begin to rave on about it when they are with other groups of friends and soon enough they tell themselves that philosophy is the path that they must pursue in life.

In looking at the above scenarios, whilst the second may not be entirely negative, it highlights the opportunity for us to influence the meaning we give and the role this meaning plays in our lives. In understanding the ideology of 'you define', you are able to bring this process to your conscious awareness and influence the meaning that you give to things. This meaning in turn influences your actions and the life you live.

### **Now meaning**

To understand the application of meaning, we need to remove the filter of 'right and wrong'. This linear 'black and white' approach forces us to think that things are fixed and removes our ability to change. Beliefs, what we deem as being truth or fact, change over time. Think of some of the beliefs you had as a child, say that Santa was real. That was true to you at that time with the information you had, it was your reality. Or think about when we believed that the Earth was flat. This was portrayed with absolute certainty only to be later proven wrong. We have an obsession with 'right and wrong', with proving, with creating certainty. Yet with all this information and certainty, we still have a choice, of whether to accept something as true or not.

We cannot be sure that we can ever know anything for certain, but we can apply meaning, meaning to something as it is now. This idea centres around holding the meaning that you apply lightly, knowing that it may change through time, however is 'right for now'. Holding this understanding of 'now meaning' gives you the flexibility to adapt with new information at any given time, whilst also reaffirming purpose and meaning in the moment.

## **How do we know if meaning is 'right'?**

If this is the case, how do we know what exact meaning is right for now? Only you can determine this, and you will establish your own measure to know if it is 'right'. \* *A measure is a tool used to assess something in accordance to a particular outcome or specific guidelines.*

A great measure for this is analysing whether or not the meaning 'serves you'. When referring to 'serve' it is not intended from a selfish sense (such as just looking after yourself) but from a value driven sense of what's important to you.

By being aware of what 'serves you' when consciously applying meaning, you are more able to decide whether or not it is 'right' for you at that given time. Just remember that the idea of meaning being 'right', means that there is no right or wrong, just 'right for now', made with the resources (information, knowledge etc) you have at the time.

### **Summary**

So why is this all important? It's a reminder to be aware that the meaning we give influences our experience of life. When we are aware of the meaning that we give and the impact that it has, we can accept it or alter it if needed. Through this process we learn to hold our meaning lightly, knowing that it is right for now but may not be in the future.

You Define is the process of becoming aware of the meaning we create and the impact that it has. We each interpret and understand things in our own unique way. It is this, the meaning, our perspective, that influences our entire experience of life.

You may choose to believe in this or not, that's your choice, that's the beauty of it, 'you define'!

'You define' - the only true meaning is the meaning you give.