

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
COUNCIL ON ADOLESCENCE
COUNCIL REPORT NO. 3



Cultivating Purpose in Adolescence



UCLA
Center for
the Developing
Adolescent

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON ADOLESCENCE

NSCA Members

Jennifer Pfeifer, PhD

Co-Director, National Scientific Council on Adolescence; Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Oregon

Joanna Lee Williams, PhD*

Co-Director, National Scientific Council on Adolescence; Associate Professor, School Psychology, Rutgers University; Senior Director of Research, Search Institute

Andrew Fuligni, PhD*

Co-Executive Director, UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent; Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, UCLA; Professor, Department of Psychology, UCLA

Adriana Galván, PhD

Co-Executive Director, UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent; Dean of Undergraduate Education, UCLA Professor, Department of Psychology, UCLA

Ron Dahl, MD*

Advisory Board Chair, Center for the Developing Adolescent; Professor, Community Health Sciences and Joint Medical Program, UC Berkeley

Rhonda Boyd, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine

Anthony Burrow, PhD*

Director, Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research; Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Cornell University

Leslie Leve, PhD*

Professor and Department Head, Counseling Psychology and Human Services, University of Oregon

Allyson Mackey, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania

Jacqueline Nesi, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Brown University

Candice Odgers, PhD

Professor, Psychological Science, UC Irvine Research Professor, Duke University

Deborah Rivas-Drake, PhD

Stephanie J. Rowley Collegiate Professor of Education and Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan

Stephen Russell, PhD

Priscilla Pond Flawn Regents Professor, Child Development, University of Texas at Austin

Linda Wilbrecht, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, UC Berkeley; Associate Professor, Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute, UC Berkeley

Carol Worthman, PhD

Department of Anthropology, Emory University

David Yeager, PhD

Associate Professor of Developmental Psychology, University of Texas at Austin

Funders

The UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent is generously supported by the Bezos Family Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. Major funding is also provided by the Funders for Adolescent Science Translation (FAST), a consortium that includes the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Bezos Family Foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the Ford Foundation, Hemera Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Hopelab, Pivotal Ventures, Spring Point Partners, the Stuart Foundation, and Raikes Foundation.

PLEASE NOTE:

The content of this paper is the sole responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the opinions of the funders.

*Member of NSCA subcommittee responsible for initial report development

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The National Scientific Council on Adolescence (NSCA), housed at the Center for the Developing Adolescent at UCLA, was formed in 2019 to integrate and disseminate scientific knowledge about the rapidly growing science of adolescent development. The goal of the NSCA is to drive implementation and innovation in youth-serving systems in order to improve all young people's trajectories. For more information, visit developingadolescent.org/about/national-scientific-council-on-adolescence

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the significant contributions of this paper made by:

Carrie Masten, PhD, writer

Marisa Gerstein Pineau, PhD, FrameWorks Institute

Expert Affiliate

Patrick Hill, MA, PhD,* Associate Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences, Washington University in St. Louis

**Expert affiliate member of subcommittee responsible for report development*



UCLA
Center for
the Developing
Adolescent

SUGGESTED CITATION: Burrow, A., Hill, P., Williams, J. L., Leve, L., Dahl, R., Fuligni, A., Masten, C., and the National Scientific Council on Adolescence (2023). *Cultivating Purpose in Adolescence, Council Report No. 3*. Retrieved from <https://developingadolescent.org/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
INTRODUCTION	II
WHAT IS PURPOSE?.....	1
Sense of Purpose	1
Content of Purpose	1
Interdependence of Cultivating Sense of Purpose and Content of Purpose	2
Purpose Defined by One’s Environment	2
CULTIVATION OF PURPOSE.....	3
WHY FOCUS ON PURPOSE NOW?	4
Current Global Challenges and Purpose.....	4
The Dominance of Social Media.....	5
PURPOSE AND THE CORE SCIENCE OF ADOLESCENCE.....	6
TABLE 1: Purpose in Relation to the Core Science of Adolescence	7
BENEFITS OF PURPOSE DURING ADOLESCENCE	8
Purpose and Healthy Development During Adolescence.....	8
Benefits of Purpose for Youth from Underserved Groups	8
NURTURING ADOLESCENTS’ SENSE OF PURPOSE	10
Ways to Cultivate Purpose in Adolescence	10
Cultivating Purpose Within Specific Contexts.....	10
CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS	13
REFERENCES	14

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developing a sense of purpose—a self-organizing and forward-looking life aim*—is one of the key processes of adolescence. During adolescence, we undergo significant advances in cognition, independence, social relationships, and other domains that make up the [Core Science of Adolescence](#). These achievements are instrumental in supporting the development of purpose, and purpose can also support further growth in these core areas. It is crucial that during adolescence we have opportunities to successfully explore our unique talents and preferences, discover what we find most meaningful, and understand how we might make a positive difference in the world.

This report describes the process of developing or cultivating purpose and explains why purpose is one of the key aspects of healthy development in adolescence. Cultivating purpose is widely beneficial for adolescents, and it is particularly important for adolescents from traditionally underserved groups. Purpose is essentially a renewable resource that has the potential to benefit all adolescents. Just like any other resource (such as financial security, an abundance of food and rest, access to housing and healthcare, or a strong support system) purpose is a significant asset for anyone who has it, and many youth lack adequate resources to explore or develop this asset.

The report addresses how ensuring that all adolescents have the equitable opportunities, resources, and support to cultivate purpose can help offset the negative effects of discrimination, inequitable distribution of resources, and other

barriers faced by youth from underserved groups while also benefiting our larger society.

When considering how we cultivate purpose during adolescence, it is crucial to understand concrete ways that parents, educators, community leaders, policymakers, and youth-facing organizations can support this process. This report discusses what adults can do to support youth in developing their purpose, and what adolescents can do to cultivate their purpose with adult support. It provides examples of how the cultivation of purpose can be promoted in a variety of different contexts, and highlights the importance of providing equitable opportunities, resources, and support for all adolescents. Helping young people to cultivate purpose will promote their healthy development and benefit our whole society as we navigate global challenges now and in the future.

* Purpose is self-organizing in that it provides structure for unifying one's motivations, identities, and goals. It is forward-looking in that it is always aimed toward the future and what one hopes to accomplish.

INTRODUCTION

Developing a sense of purpose—a self-organizing and forward-looking life aim—is one of the key processes of adolescence. Adolescence begins approximately at the onset of puberty at around 10 years of age and ends in the early 20s. During our adolescent years, we have increasing opportunities to develop our identities and figure out who we are, what we believe in, and what viewpoints and values we align with most. We become more independent, make more of our own decisions, and become confident enough to take more risks. Our ability to think critically, abstractly, and long-term also increases during this time, which leaves us better able to consider the consequences of our choices and engage in future planning. All of these advances set us up with opportunities to successfully explore our unique talents and preferences, discover what we find most meaningful, and understand how we might make a positive difference in our communities and the world.

Together these developmental milestones support the cultivation of purpose during adolescence, and a growing sense of purpose benefits continued healthy development. Adolescents with a greater sense of purpose are happier, healthier, and more motivated to achieve a wide range of positive developmental outcomes. These outcomes can be particularly beneficial for adolescents from traditionally underserved groups who experience challenges including poverty, racism, and other forms of discrimination. For these adolescents, opportunities to develop purpose can be protective and help reduce the negative consequences of experiencing these challenges. As a whole, science tells us that cultivating purpose is a positive endeavor in life, and the benefits are particularly striking for young people.

In this report, we highlight the value of purpose during adolescence. Given the current global and domestic challenges (see [Council Report 1: The Intersection of](#)

[Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism](#)) facing young people and our world, it is particularly important to recognize the power of purpose and ensure that we provide equitable opportunities for all adolescents to cultivate it. Helping youth to explore their identities and values and engage in meaningful, purposeful work will promote their healthy development and benefit our whole society as we progress in a rapidly changing world.

WHY IS CULTIVATING PURPOSE IMPORTANT DURING ADOLESCENCE?

Most researchers who study purpose have found that the roots of purpose develop during adolescence. Science shows that many of the processes associated with developing purpose emerge and solidify during our adolescent years, including our ability to have a future-focused perspective, the formation of our identity, and an understanding of our talents, skills, strengths, and values. During adolescence, our independence and exposure to diverse opportunities and contexts also increase, and these milestones further expand our ability to cultivate purpose. As we cultivate purpose over time, it becomes interdependent with many of these other important processes in adolescence and promotes our continued positive development across many domains. The reciprocal relationship between purpose and so many other key aspects of healthy adolescent development (see [TABLE 1: Purpose in Relation to the Core Science of Adolescence](#)) make purpose a critical aspect of this developmental period.

WHAT IS PURPOSE?

Researchers define purpose as a *self-organizing and forward-looking life aim, that serves to stimulate goals and help one manage behaviors.*¹ Purpose is self-organizing in that it provides structure for unifying one’s motivations, identities, and goals. It is forward-looking in that it is always aimed toward the future and what one hopes to accomplish. Thus, feeling purposeful means having a sense of direction and an alignment of goals that can be pursued in order to support one’s ultimate aspirations. Having purpose can help people identify which goals are most important to them personally (for example, volunteering, creating works of arts, succeeding in science, achieving in sports, getting promoted at work, or being active in social justice movements) and in turn motivate them toward success in short-term goals that will help them progress through a lifelong cultivation of purpose.

Sense of Purpose

Identifying a purpose for one’s life can seem quite big and daunting. Therefore, it is worth noting that even very goal-directed and motivated people can have difficulty when asked to articulate their purpose. Individuals can feel a deep *sense of purpose* even if they do not feel deeply committed to a particular purpose. A sense of purpose is the perception that one has a direction in life that guides them day to day toward personally important activities.²

Most research focuses on sense of purpose. It is not dependent on one’s pursuit of a specific activity, and most youth make great strides in developing a sense of purpose across the adolescent period. Having a sense of purpose benefits adolescents by providing direction, shaping decisions, and influencing feelings and reflections about leading a purposeful life, regardless of one’s specific interests and goals. In general, developing a sense of purpose is valuable in and of itself and crucial for promoting healthy development across the lifespan.³

A sense of purpose is the perception that one has a direction in life that guides them day to day toward personally important activities.

CAN SENSE OF PURPOSE CHANGE?

A growing literature shows that an individual’s sense of purpose has the capacity to change over time. Part of the reason that we consider a sense of purpose to be critical during adolescence is because it may go on to evolve and grow across the rest of an individual’s life. While sense of purpose is relatively, but not perfectly, stable during adolescence⁴ and adulthood,^{5,6} great potential for change still occurs across the lifespan. These changes can begin with small steps. For example, long-term increases in purpose may start with engaging in activities in daily life that matter to an individual.³ If that activity makes one feel purposeful in the moment, it can lead to building routines and habits around purposeful action and ultimately lead to long-term change in cultivating a purpose for life.

Content of Purpose

While adolescents are exploring their interests and values and developing a sense of purpose, many will focus on one or more individualized purposes. Individualized purpose—that which is uniquely

important to each adolescent—can grow or become more specialized over time, or it may evolve into something new as other interests are discovered and explored. We refer to this individualized purpose as the *content of one’s purpose*.³ The content of an adolescent’s purpose includes what their purpose will focus on (for example, contributing to others, community activism, fine arts, sports, or an educational or career specialization) and the setting(s) where they will pursue their purpose (such as within their family, community, school, church, or larger society).

The majority of adolescents cultivate purpose in ways that are beneficial for healthy development. In rare cases, however, adolescents may choose to pursue a purpose that might be considered antisocial (for example, gang activity). While an adolescent might reap benefits (such as peer belonging, confidence, independence) from pursuing this kind of purpose, the potential costs can outweigh these benefits.⁷ As discussed below, all adolescents need a range of opportunities and supports to cultivate purpose.

Interdependence of Cultivating Sense of Purpose and Content of Purpose

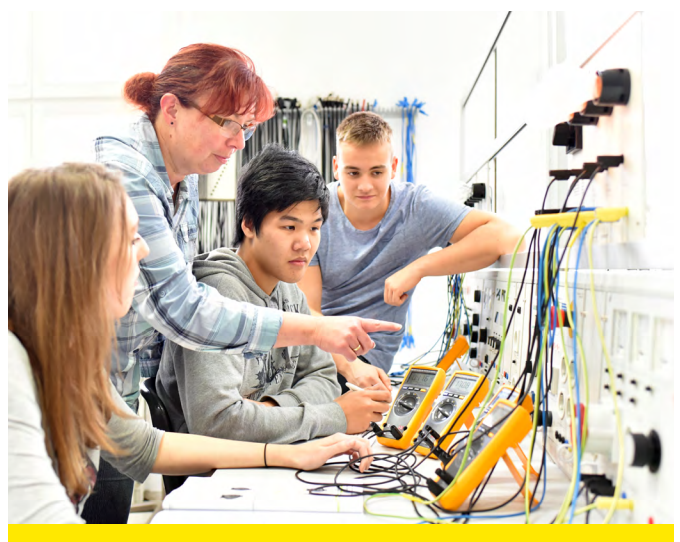
Developing a strong sense of purpose and narrowing in on the content of one’s purpose can both be beneficial. While adolescents tend to feel a stronger sense of purpose over time, many may not feel committed to any specific content or individualized purpose. Just thinking about purpose, discovering new interests, and exploring new activities can greatly benefit one’s sense of purpose. For those adolescents who do focus on specific content early on, cultivating their individualized purpose can even further benefit their growing sense of purpose.

Purpose Defined by One’s Environment

Purpose involves an exchange between an individual and their environment. Developing purpose during adolescence is directly impacted by young people’s environment, and this interaction typically benefits both adolescents and the people

and settings around them. Adolescents reap the benefits of cultivating their purpose, and the recipients of their efforts benefit from their contributions, skills, and other purpose-driven work. Settings are essential to defining purpose for adolescents.

When the content of an adolescent’s specific purpose is a good match with their environment (that is, a good fit with their family and community values and/or supported by their culture), then its pursuit may be more beneficial and promote a greater sense of purpose than pursuing other options that are less compatible with their environment.^{8,9} For example, an adolescent interested in writing poetry might find it easier to cultivate their purpose if they are part of a larger community with libraries, poetry reading events, writing classes, and adult and peer mentors with shared interests. In contrast, this cultivation might be more challenging in a community where access to these opportunities is more limited. Pursuing a specific purpose may feel more worthwhile if it is feasible and supported by available opportunities and resources.⁸ In general, pursuing a purpose that is accessible and realistic makes it more likely that an adolescent will reap benefits from their pursuits and develop a deeper sense of purpose over time. This highlights the need for investment in policies and programs that can ensure a range of opportunities and resources to help young



CULTIVATION OF PURPOSE

Purpose development is perhaps best understood as a process of cultivation. Many people tend to think of purpose as something that is “found”—that as part of growing up, young people go off into the world and discover a purpose awaiting them. But adolescents do not just find their purpose as if it were an object already assembled. Rather they cultivate their purpose through a process of discovering and actively exploring their unique interests, skills, and values. They may try new extracurricular activities or clubs, volunteer for a cause, or learn a skill outside of their standard school curriculum. Importantly, they pursue this cultivation with help from supportive adults, schools, and communities (see a detailed discussion of [Nurturing Adolescents’ Sense of Purpose](#), below). Over time, adolescents are able to cultivate purpose by interacting with the opportunities, resources, places, and people that are a part of their daily lives.

Part of cultivating purpose in adolescence is learning *how* to discover the content of what one’s purpose will be. Adolescents need support and access to diverse opportunities so that they can explore their interests, try new experiences, and learn through trial and error. This process of discovery allows adolescents to narrow in on what their purpose is so that they can continue to cultivate that purpose over time.

A key consideration for adolescents’ development of purpose is whether individuals have equitable access to supports and resources that will help

Adolescents need support and access to diverse opportunities so that they can explore their interests, try new experiences, and learn through trial and error.

cultivate purpose. Access to diverse opportunities, financial resources, high-quality education, safe spaces with supportive adults, free time, and other crucial resources determines how realistic it will be for an adolescent to explore their interests, values, and goals. Particularly in the United States, adolescents’ access to these resources is largely inequitable due to current and historical discrimination based on race and income. These systemic barriers result in inequitable opportunities for generational wealth, housing, education, job opportunities, childcare, and many other domains. This makes it challenging for many adolescents to explore and engage in their desired purpose. As we discuss in this report, the well-established benefits of developing purpose mean that it is essential to understand and reduce existing inequities so that all adolescents can develop a healthy sense of purpose, pursue their long-term goals, and contribute their skills and talents to our greater society now and throughout their lives.

WHY FOCUS ON PURPOSE NOW?

Current Global Challenges and Purpose

Today's world presents many challenges. Young people will face the consequences of these challenges for decades and will be largely responsible for generating solutions over time. In many cases, young people are particularly motivated to pursue a sense of purpose during societal or global challenges, even when these hardships make the process of cultivating purpose more difficult.¹⁰ Fortunately, this means that we as a society have the opportunity to support adolescents' well-being and healthy development and harness adolescents' pursuit of purpose to gain new understanding of global challenges and generate new solutions moving forward.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Today's youth are grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. After three years of research, we have a solid understanding of how

this uniquely challenging time has intersected with adolescents' development of purpose. Overall, research findings offer good news—for many youth, purpose has been protective in the face of the pandemic's challenges. While the pandemic has put adolescents at risk for poor mental health (as seen through increases in depression, anxiety, and suicide^{11,12,13}), having a sense of purpose may have helped promote more positive mental health for many adolescents.¹⁴ The pandemic has also promoted the cultivation of purpose for many adolescents. This global crisis has inspired many young people to engage in more prosocial behavior (helping, supporting, or connecting with others in beneficial ways) and more positive action.¹⁵ In general, the unique circumstances of the pandemic have provided new insights about why a sense of purpose is important for adolescents and how challenging circumstances can promote motivation to cultivate purpose.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The changing climate is at the forefront of young peoples' minds. They are facing a lifetime of potentially irreversible changes to the planet, and their generation will carry the burden of addressing climate disasters and related humanitarian crises in the decades to come. Globally, over half of adolescents and young adults are “very” or “extremely” concerned about climate change.¹⁶ They view climate change as a crisis, and it has negative impacts on their mental health that are disproportionately higher than those seen in other age groups.¹⁷ One silver lining is that when adolescents have anxiety about climate change, this can in many cases promote their feelings of purpose related to protecting the planet.¹⁸ Ultimately, youth want to take actions to address this global threat.¹⁷

GLOBAL CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD

Many global challenges continue to plague our country and world. Climate change and the recent pandemic are only two of these challenges. It is likely that today's adolescents will face sustained or even increased hardships moving forward. By investing in opportunities that promote purpose, we can help to support healthy development during adolescence. Ultimately, we can benefit from the purposeful work of our youth to help address continued global challenges going forward.

The Dominance of Social Media

Social media is the biggest source of mass communication and influence in today's world and young people are its leaders (see [Council Report 2: Engaging, Safe, and Evidence-Based: What Science Tells Us About How To Promote Positive Development And Decrease Risk In Online Spaces For Early Adolescents](#)). The dominance of social media and other digital technology platforms, particularly in the lives of adolescents, makes online spaces a primary setting where youth can discover and cultivate their purpose. Social media gives young people the opportunity to connect with those who share a similar purpose and gain inspiration from other

Social media gives young people the opportunity to connect with those who share a similar purpose and gain inspiration from other youth who are already making a positive impact on the world.

youth who are already making a positive impact on the world. Particularly for traditionally underserved youth who experience discrimination or those from more isolated communities, social media can provide access to like-minded peers, support groups, and communities that would not otherwise be available. Online resources give youth access to information and opportunities to discover and explore new interests, collaborate with peers and mentors, and set goals. More than ever before, youth are able to educate themselves and connect with others in ways that are not feasible locally in some community and cultural settings. For many adolescents, social media is how and where they develop a sense of purpose and contribute to the world.¹⁹

Not only does social media increase opportunities for youth to cultivate purpose, but having a sense of purpose also protects adolescents from being negatively impacted by social media. For example, adolescents who have a greater sense of purpose feel less dependent on social media for self-validation and are less vulnerable to online indicators of peer acceptance (that is, they have less concern about “likes” on social platforms.²⁰ Many adults still worry about the potential dangers of social media (most of which are matched, if not outweighed, by potential benefits^{19,21}). Adults should recognize the power of social media to help young people discover and cultivate purpose and leave room for youth to continue innovating and leading in online spaces.

PURPOSE AND THE CORE SCIENCE OF ADOLESCENCE

At the Center for the Developing Adolescent, we describe key developmental milestones as the [Core Science of Adolescence](#). This core science describes the most essential aspects of adolescent development and provides a framework to understand key ways in which adolescents grow and interact with the world around them. Developing a sense of purpose is one of the important advances described in the core science of adolescence, and it intersects with

many of the other processes that characterize this period of life.

In [TABLE 1: Purpose in Relation to the Core Science of Adolescence](#), we describe the core aspects of adolescent development that are most related to cultivation of purpose, as well as some key milestones within these domains. We also describe ways that adolescents' progress through these milestones intersects with their cultivation of purpose.



TABLE 1: Purpose in Relation to the Core Science of Adolescence

Core Developmental Needs	Milestones During Adolescence	Intersection with Cultivating Purpose
Exploration, responsibility, & risk-taking	During adolescence, we are primed to discover new interests and master increasingly complex skills. Novel opportunities, greater responsibility and independence, and new social connections offer challenges, chances to take risks, and support to pursue individual values and interests.	<p>Core adolescent milestones promote the cultivation of purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exploring ways to help others and contribute to family, community, and society and thinking about the benefits and costs of these prosocial behaviors can help us define our purpose. ● As we develop a greater capacity to reflect on complex situations and engage in abstract, theoretical thought, we become better at considering our purpose and its associated long-term goals and planning. ● Our growing ability to feel motivated by and committed to specific interests and values can help strengthen our sense of purpose. ● The discovery process inherent in our adolescent years promotes prioritizing interests and increasing effort to cultivate purpose. <p>Cultivating purpose promotes other core adolescent milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having a growing sense of purpose may help us home in on how we want to contribute to others and the world. ● Cultivating purpose can support and motivate our process of exploration and discovery. ● A greater sense of purpose is positively correlated with a greater sense of perceiving ourselves as an adult. ● Having a sense of purpose propels us forward and enhances specific educational and career directions.
Prosocial behavior & contribution	Social interactions become more complex as we consider relationships, closeness, and benefits/costs of interactions that go beyond basic childhood rules of how to treat others. Opportunities to contribute to family, peers, community, and society support our growing needs for independence and offer space for social learning.	
Abstract thinking, decision making, & motivation	Throughout adolescence, we are increasingly able to reflect on ourselves and others, make complex decisions, and set long-term goals.	
Support from parents & other caring adults	Unconditional adult support is critical as we explore and focus our interests, test limits, and make personal choices about our actions, values, and future goals.	
Developing values, goals, & identity	Questions about identity abound. Who am I, separate from my family? How do I fit in with my friends? Who am I attracted to? What am I good at? Our developing identities are linked to our attitudes, values, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors.	
Educational & occupational specialization	In adolescence, we are given more opportunities to choose our coursework, explore career interests, and have input into our own educational and job pursuits.	

BENEFITS OF PURPOSE DURING ADOLESCENCE

Generally, across the lifespan, purpose is associated with positive well-being, thriving, longevity, and leading a meaningful and long life.^{22,3} For adolescents, developing a sense of purpose is the most beneficial aspect of cultivating purpose and matters more than the particular purpose that is being cultivated. It is most important that youth feel purposeful and that they are supported by their family, schools, and communities in cultivating their purpose.

Purpose and Healthy Development During Adolescence

The positive outcomes associated with purpose for adolescents are well established. As summarized in [TABLE 1](#), having a sense of purpose is highly interdependent with many aspects of healthy adolescent development, including identity formation, happiness and satisfaction, pursuit of goals, and health.^{23,6,24,2} Intentionally discussing one's purpose and reflecting on one's values and life goals can increase goal directedness and life satisfaction.²⁵ Overall, reflecting on one's goals and values promotes feelings of purpose.

Feeling purposeful is also related to many types of prosocial behavior. For adolescents who are particularly committed to helping others, purpose is associated with greater personal growth and integrity over time.²⁶ Purposeful adolescents are less likely to engage in dangerous risk-taking and they are more motivated.²⁷ Research suggests that this higher motivation may be part of what leads to many of the other aspects of healthy development that are associated with purpose. Having a greater sense of purpose may increase motivation to commit to and achieve a range of other positive outcomes.²⁸

With regard to mental health, purpose is broadly protective.¹⁴ Purpose supports adolescents' mental health in the face of challenges—especially for

youth from traditionally underserved groups, as we discuss below. In general, having a sense of purpose contributes to adolescents' resilience and can prevent declines in mental health as young people navigate adversity.

Over the adolescent years, a growing sense of purpose is beneficial in many core areas of healthy development, and strengths in those areas also promote further cultivation of purpose. As a whole, the research to date indicates that cultivating purpose, having a sense of purpose, and living a purposeful life are highly beneficial for adolescents. Purpose is a goal that we should support and celebrate in young people.

Benefits of Purpose for Youth from Underserved Groups

Given the clear benefits for adolescents who cultivate a strong sense of purpose, it is crucial to return to concerns about equitable opportunities and resources for youth from underserved groups.



As we have discussed, all adolescents need access to opportunities, resources, and support to explore their interests, discover what purpose is most meaningful to them, and reap the associated benefits of living purposefully. Unfortunately, this ideal does not reflect current reality.

Not all adolescents have equitable opportunities to cultivate their purpose. For example, many young people do not have the financial resources to explore their interests through specialized extracurricular activities or summer programs. Those who have to work after school or on weekends to support their family may have limited time to pursue their interests. These youth may have fewer opportunities to cultivate purpose, and consequently, they may miss out on the positive outcomes associated with purpose. Having a greater sense of purpose is in and of itself a resource. Just like any other resource (such as financial security, an abundance of food and rest, access to housing and healthcare, or a strong support system), purpose is a significant asset for anyone who has it, and many youth from underserved groups are not provided with adequate resources to explore or develop this asset.

The lack of equitable and inclusive opportunities for adolescents to cultivate purpose is especially concerning given that purpose is particularly beneficial for youth from underserved groups. In other words, the adolescents who face the most challenges cultivating purpose are also among those who could benefit from it the most. For adolescents from underserved groups, purpose serves a protective role. It can protect youth from the negative effects of poverty; for example, youth in poverty who have a greater sense of purpose are less likely to engage in negative behavior that can be associated with the stresses of poverty.²⁹ It can also limit the negative consequences of daily experiences with racism; for example, the mental health consequences of experiencing racism (for example, suicide ideation) are less severe for young people who

It is especially important that we support young people whose cultivation of purpose is limited by adversity or a lack of equitable opportunities available in their daily lives.

have greater purpose in life.^{30,31} Of course, while purpose can serve this protective role, it is important to continue to prioritize and address the inequities that many adolescents experience.

Conversely, the experience of being part of an underserved group can sometimes increase adolescents' feelings of purpose. For example, a strong ethnic identity can promote a sense of purpose, which in turn, promotes self-esteem, academic adjustment, and daily well-being.³² Furthermore, adolescents from immigrant, Asian, and Latinx backgrounds who contribute to their family feel a greater sense of purpose and are more confident making decisions.^{33,34} In general, experiences as a member of a traditionally underserved group can provide a pathway for resiliency through which adolescents can shape their future priorities and goals.³⁵

Purpose is essentially a renewable resource that has the potential to benefit all adolescents. As parents, community leaders, teachers, clinicians, and a society, we must make a concerted effort to support adolescents' development of purpose. It is especially important that we support young people whose cultivation of purpose is limited by adversity or a lack of equitable opportunities available in their daily lives. On a societal level, we must address inequities (including in education, vocational opportunities, and access to resources) in order to ensure that all youth have opportunities and support that enable them to cultivate purpose.

NURTURING ADOLESCENTS' SENSE OF PURPOSE

We have a collective responsibility to support purpose in youth. Youth have skills, desires, needs, and values through which they are primed to seek purpose. It is our role as adults (as parents, caregivers, teachers, policymakers, or members of community organizations) to collaborate with youth and support their process of cultivating purpose. We can also help adolescents understand what they themselves can do to cultivate their purpose. Through these processes of intentional support, we can enable adolescents to engage in more purposeful work, build their sense of purpose, and find out what is most important to them.

Ways to Cultivate Purpose in Adolescence

Based on the known associations between purpose and many aspects of positive healthy development, we propose specific ways that parents and caregivers, educators, community leaders, policymakers, and youth-facing organizations can help nurture adolescents' cultivation of purpose.

What we as adults can do to support youth

- Create equitable and inclusive educational, extracurricular, and vocational opportunities that invite young people to explore their purpose in healthy and safe settings.
- Provide financial resources to the greatest extent possible and advocate for additional resources to support adolescents' exploration of opportunities and interests.
- Provide emotional support, particularly during the challenges of trial and error, achievements and setbacks that youth face while cultivating their purpose.
- Help youth find and connect with online and community resources that provide opportunities to cultivate purpose (such as through local clubs or volunteer opportunities).

- Prioritize programs and policies that support parents to provide a healthy and safe environment to help their children explore purpose within their family and home life.
- Increase opportunities for vocational training and living wage jobs.
- Create and support opportunities for youth to reflect on and share their purpose with others.

What youth can do to cultivate purpose with the help of adult support

- Take advantage of opportunities available in the community, at school, online, and through friends and family.
- Explore a variety of activities and discover new interests.
- Volunteer and give time to see what types of purposeful work feel most meaningful.
- Support peers and engage in mutually beneficial discussions about what is interesting and meaningful; help each other brainstorm ways to cultivate these interests.
- Ask parents, teachers, community leaders, and other mentors for help throughout the processes of developing and cultivating purpose.
- Develop and reflect on one's identity, which may precede deeper purpose cultivation.
- Think about, explore, and share values and purpose-driven goals.

Cultivating Purpose Within Specific Contexts

As adolescents cultivate their purpose, they engage in specific settings that match their interests and goals. In the [Core Science of Adolescence](#), we highlight the important contexts in which healthy adolescent development takes place, as well as the key people within these

contexts who support healthy development. For example, adolescents can cultivate purpose within their family, at school, or through their community, church, or extracurricular activities. Many youth may pursue their purpose in multiple contexts; for example, youth engaged in athletics may play for school- or community-based sports teams with their peers and with the support and engagement of their families.

These influential contexts and the people within these contexts can impact the trajectory of purpose development and scaffold the process of cultivating purpose in different ways. These settings and the adults, siblings, and peers within these settings can impact adolescents' access to opportunities and resources, offer emotional support during achievements and setbacks, promote mental and physical wellness, and provide resources to assist with decision making and goal setting. Where and with whom adolescents choose to spend their time will have a formative impact on their process of cultivating purpose and provide essential opportunities to scaffold this process.

For some adolescents, spending more time in the spaces that are most relevant to their interests can lead to a natural process of specialization. Specializing in purposeful work within specific settings can allow adolescents to focus their interests and set goals. For example, an adolescent who plays an instrument may spend more time in settings related to music (for example, attending concerts, taking lessons, performing, or joining a band or orchestra) and interact more with peers and mentors within these musical settings. They will be able to finetune their skills and home in on specific musical pursuits as their experiences within these settings expand.

This process of purpose specialization benefits adolescents and also helps the people and communities where they are dedicating their efforts. Adolescents gain more access to opportunities, resources, mentors, and a place to belong. In return, the contributions of adolescents'

purposeful work give back to the people who they are working with and projects to which they are giving their time. For adolescents who go through this kind of specialization, the process of doing so can help them cultivate purpose across important settings and ensure that they continue to build relevant skills, set goals, and prioritize their future plans.

Here we discuss a few of the key contexts where adolescents are likely to cultivate their purpose: family, peer relationships, school, and community. We describe ways that we can support adolescents' cultivation of purpose within these spaces and consider how this cultivation process can benefit healthy development more generally.

PURPOSE WITHIN THE FAMILY

As adolescents cultivate purpose, families play a key role in providing support for this process through financial support, emotional support, role-modeling, and assistance with decision making and goal setting.^{36,37} Family can also be an adolescents' purpose. Adolescents have and benefit from a need to contribute to others, and contributing provides a sense of purpose to the adolescent while simultaneously benefitting the recipients of the contribution.³⁸ When adolescents feel that they are contributing to their family (such as by studying, helping with chores, babysitting siblings, caring for grandparents, or staying out of trouble), they feel a greater sense of purpose and are more confident making decisions and acting on them.^{39,33,40,34} Overall, families are one of the most important social supports that adolescents have for all areas of healthy development, including purpose. **We must prioritize systems that support parents in providing a healthy and safe environment in which their adolescents can cultivate purpose.**

PURPOSE THROUGH PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Peer groups are another key space in which adolescents cultivate purpose.³⁶ In particular, feeling needed and useful to one's friends³⁹ and

having high-quality peer relationships (those with high rates of mutual engagement, empathy, authenticity, and empowerment⁴¹) both result in greater feelings of purpose. Peers can also play a significant supportive role just by sharing the spaces in which adolescents are pursuing their purpose. Spending time with like-minded peers who share the same purpose can give adolescents a place to learn and belong where people will accept their interests and view their pursuits as inherently valuable. Peers can also serve as relatable and positive role models with different levels of experience within an adolescents' chosen field of interest.⁴² Peers provide real exemplars of how purpose can be cultivated and can also provide mentoring and support over time. **As adults, we should support opportunities for adolescents to engage in positive peer relationships, peer mentoring, and peer group activities as a way of scaffolding their cultivation of purpose.**

PURPOSE AT SCHOOL

Typically, it is outside of school settings where students have opportunities to explore and learn in new, independent ways that promote development of purpose.^{43,44} But schools are still a key setting where adolescents cultivate purpose.³⁶ School-based programs that provide guidance and education about developing purpose⁴⁵ and interventions that provide students with purpose-relevant feedback⁴⁶ both promote adolescents' cultivation of purpose. While these types of unique programs are not common in traditional academic curricula, all schools can help promote purpose by providing support for identity exploration, a rich peer culture, and access to extracurricular opportunities. For example, school-based clubs and sports provide key avenues through which adolescents can explore non-academic activities and interests. Sense of purpose is also strongly related to a greater desire to pursue one's goals.⁴⁷ Thus, promoting purpose in schools has the potential to boost student engagement in learning—particularly in cases where specific curricula topics are related to a student's personal

life direction. Ultimately, engagement at school and adolescents' cultivation of purpose play mutually beneficial roles that can help adolescents succeed across many domains. **All adolescents would benefit from a greater and more equitable investment in school-based programs that help cultivate purpose.**

PURPOSE THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community-based programs offer a setting that is well-established as a positive space where adolescents identify and explore their purpose. Many adolescents cultivate their purpose through community involvement (such as youth service programs, volunteering, advocacy, religious involvement, or club membership)^{48,49,50,51,52} and benefit from this involvement just as much as the people or community that they are serving. In most cases, for community programs to benefit youth, they need to be sustained over time. A long-term commitment offers rich learning experiences that allow adolescents to practice navigating obstacles, adhering to goal-directed deadlines, and managing the complex emotions that often accompany purposeful work and accomplishment.⁵³

Community service programs are particularly important because they commonly promote equitable opportunities for adolescents to pursue purpose. Many volunteer and advocacy programs serve as free or low-cost ways for young people to broaden their experiences and access diverse groups of peers and adults. For example, 4-H programs expand the opportunities and resources that are available to youth by providing unique activities, access to older peers and mentors, and life skills that would not otherwise be readily available.⁴² **Expanding youth programming and mobilizing community involvement would be one effective way to increase access to equitable resources so that more adolescents have opportunities to cultivate their purpose and achieve other healthy developmental outcomes over time.**

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Cultivating purpose is one of the most beneficial pursuits that an adolescent can take on. Pursuing a sense of purpose is associated with positive outcomes in almost every domain of adolescent development. The cultivation of purpose is a developmental task that we should support in all adolescents.

Now is the time to allocate more resources toward research on purpose. The positive associations between purpose and a wide range of healthy developmental outcomes are well established; however, more work is needed to understand what processes can increase adolescents' sense of purpose and help it grow throughout this transitional period. In other words, do core aspects of adolescent development that are positively related to purpose also cause improvement or progress in adolescents' cultivation of purpose? For example, the relationship between having more meaningful social connections and having greater purpose is well-established, but can intentionally expanding social networks actually give rise to gains in sense of purpose? Similarly, positive emotions are reliably associated with greater purpose, but additional research is needed to determine whether, and to what degree, positive feelings can actually lead to greater purpose over time or whether positive feelings are a consequence of purpose.

It is important that we determine the types of adult support and specific settings or contexts that are most critical for supporting equitable opportunities to cultivate purpose. The supports and settings that are most important may also vary across individuals. Understanding how to tailor these resources will further promote equitable outcomes for young people and help us better harness the unique talents, skills, and experiences of adolescents from a variety of diverse backgrounds. Better understanding of the direct precursors to adolescents' cultivation of purpose will allow us to create more specific recommendations to support this process. This understanding will help policymakers to prioritize resources to support parents, schools, communities, and other youth-facing organizations so that they can champion adolescents' development of purpose over time.

Supporting adolescents will result in positive outcomes for them, and it will benefit the people and communities who support and receive their purposeful efforts. Given current global challenges including rising income inequality, barriers to reproductive healthcare, systemic racism, growing global unrest, and climate change, now is the time to harness the power and energy of young people to innovate and eventually solve these pressing needs. Helping to engage youth in purposeful action now will help our society and planet thrive now and in the future.

REFERENCES

- 1 Kashdan, T. B. & P. E. McKnight (2009). Origins of purpose in life: Refining our understanding of a life well lived. *Psychological Topics*, 18(2), 303–316.
- 2 Ryff, C. D. (1989). Beyond Ponce de Leon and life satisfaction: New directions in quest of successful ageing. *International journal of behavioral development*, 12(1), 35–55.
- 3 Hill, P. L., Pfund, G. N., & Allemand, M. (2023) The PATHS to Purpose: A new framework toward understanding purpose development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, in press.
- 4 Hill, P. L., & Burrow, A. L. (2012). Viewing purpose through an Eriksonian lens. *Identity: An International Journey of Theory and Research*, 12, 74–91.
- 5 Hill, P. L., Sumner, R., & Burrow, A. L. (2014). Understanding the pathways to purpose: Examining personality and well-being correlates across adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(3), 227–234.
- 6 Hill P. L., & Weston, S. J. (2019). Evaluating eight-year trajectories for sense of purpose in the Health and Retirement Study. *Aging & Mental Health*, 23, 233–237.
- 7 Taylor, C. S., Smith, P. R., Taylor, V. A., von Eye, A., Lerner, R. M., Balsano, A. B., ... & Almerigi, J. B. (2005). Individual and ecological assets and thriving among African American adolescent male gang and community-based organization members: A report from wave 3 of the “Overcoming the Odds” study. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), 72–93.
- 8 Burrow, A. L., Agans, J. P., Jeon, H. J., & Creim, M. (2021). Are all purposes worth having? Integrating content and strength in purpose research. *Human Development*, 65(2), 100–112.
- 9 Moran, S. (2014). What “purpose” means to youth: Are there cultures of purpose?. *Applied Developmental Science*, 18(3), 163–175.
- 10 Bronk, K. C. (2023). Discovering and Pursuing Purpose in Trying Times. In *Emerging Adulthood in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Other Crises: Individual and Relational Resources* (pp 9–23). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- 11 De France, K., Hancock, G. R., Stack, D. M., Serbin, L. A., & Hollenstein, T. (2022). The mental health implications of COVID-19 for adolescents: Follow-up of a four-wave longitudinal study during the pandemic. *American Psychologist*, 77(1), 85–89.
- 12 Kuhlman, K. R., Straka, K., Mousavi, Z., Tran, M.-L., & Rodgers, E. (2021). Predictors of adolescent resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. (2021). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(5), 729–736.
- 13 Magson, N. R., Freeman, J. Y. A., Rapee, R. M., Richardson, C. E., Oar, E. L., & Fardouly, J. (2021). *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50, 44–57.
- 14 Fuligni, A. J. & Galvan, A. (2022). Young people need experiences that boost their mental health. *Nature*, 610(7931), 253–256.
- 15 de Leeuw, R. N. H., van Woudenberg, T. J., Green, K. H., Sweijen, S. W., van de Groep, S., Kleemans, M., Tamboer, S. L., Crone, E. A., & Buijzen, M. (2023). Moral beauty during the COVID-19 pandemic: Prosocial behavior among adolescents and the inspiring role of the media. *Communication Research*, 50(2), 131–156.
- 16 Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R. E., Mayall, E. E., Wray, B., Mellor, C., & van Susteren, L. (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *The Lancet. Planetary Health*, 5(12), e863–e873.
- 17 Dooley, L., Sheats, J., Hamilton, O., Chapman, D. & Karlin, B. (2021). Climate change and youth mental health: Psychological impacts, resilience resources, and future directions. Los Angeles, CA: See Change Institute. <https://seechangeinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Climate-Change-and-Youth-Mental-Health-Report.pdf>
- 18 Wray, B. (2022). Generation dread: finding purpose in an age of climate crisis. Knopf Canada.
- 19 Odgers, C.L., Allen, N.B., Pfeifer, J.H., Dahl, R.E., Nesi, J., Schueller, S.M., Williams, J. L., and the National Scientific Council on Adolescence (2022). Engaging, safe, and evidence-based: What science tells us about how to promote positive development and decrease risk in online spaces, Council Report No 2. doi: 10.31234/osf.io/rvn8q
- 20 Burrow, A. L., & Rainone, N. (2017). How many likes did I get?: Purpose moderates links between positive social media feedback and self-esteem. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 69, 232–236.

- 21 Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory [Internet]. Washington (DC): US Department of Health and Human Services; 2021. PMID: 34982518.
- 22 Cohen, R., Bavishi, C., & Rozanski, A. (2016). Purpose in life and its relationship to all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events: A meta-analysis. *Psychosomatic medicine*, 78(2), 122–133.
- 23 Burrow, A. L., & Hill, P. L. (2011). Purpose as a form of identity capital for positive youth adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, 47(4), 1196.
- 24 Lewis, N. A. (2020). Purpose in life as a guiding framework for goal engagement and motivation. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 14(10), 1–11.
- 25 Bundick, M. J. (2012). The benefits of reflecting on and discussing purpose in life in emerging adulthood. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2011(132), 89–103.
- 26 Hill, P. L., Burrow, L., Brandenberger, J. W., Lapsley, D. K., Quaranto, J. C. (2010). Collegiate purpose orientations and well-being in early and middle adulthood. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 31(2) 173–179.
- 27 Hill, P. L., Burrow, A. L., & Sumner, R. (2013). Addressing important questions in the field of adolescent purpose. *Child Development Perspectives*, 7(4), 232–236.
- 28 McKnight, P. E., & Kashdan, T. B. (2009). Purpose in life as a system that creates and sustains health and well-being: An integrative, testable theory. *Review of General Psychology*, 13(3), 242–251.
- 29 Machell, K. A., Disabato, D. J., & Kashdan, T. B. (2016). Buffering the negative impact of poverty on youth: The power of purpose in life. *Social Indicators Research*, 126(2), 845–861.
- 30 Gaylord Harden, N. K., Burrow, A. L., & Cunningham, J. A. (2012). A cultural asset framework for investigating successful adaptation to stress in African American youth. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(3), 264–271.
- 31 Hong, J. H., Talavera, D. C., Odafe, M. O., Barr, C. D., & Walker, R. L. (2018). Does purpose in life or ethnic identity moderate the association for racial discrimination and suicide ideation in racial/ethnic minority emerging adults? *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. 10.1037/cdp0000245
- 32 Kiang, L., & Fuligni, A. J. (2010). Meaning in life as a mediator of ethnic identity and adjustment among adolescents from Latin, Asian, and European American backgrounds. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39, 1253–1264.
- 33 Fuligni, A. J. & Telzer, E. H. (2012). *The contributions of youth to immigrant families*. In A. Masten, D. Hernandez, & K. Liebkind (Eds.), *Realizing the Potential of Immigrant Youth* (pp. 181-202). New York, NY; Cambridge University Press.
- 34 Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (2009). *Children of immigration*. Harvard University Press.
- 35 Sumner, R., & Burrow, A. L. (2018). The development of purpose in life among adolescents who experience marginalization: Potential opportunities and obstacles. *American Psychologist*, 73(6), 740–752.
- 36 Chen, H. Y., Chiou, H., & Cheng, C. L. (2022). Purpose trajectories during middle adolescence: The roles of family, teacher, and peer support. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 51(2):291–304.
- 37 Yu, M. V. B., & Deutsch, N. L. (2020). Supporting youth purpose in adolescence: Youth-adult relationships as ecological assets. *The Ecology of Purposeful Living Across the Lifespan: Developmental, Educational, and Social Perspectives*, 115–135.
- 38 Fuligni, A. J. (2019). The need to contribute during adolescence. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 14(3), 331–343.
- 39 Fuligni, A. J., Smola, X. A., & Al Salek, S. (2022). Feeling needed and useful during the transition to young adulthood. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 32(3), 1259–1266.
- 40 Lawford, H. L., & Ramey, H. L. (2015). “Now I know I can make a difference”: Generativity and activity engagement as predictors of meaning making in adolescents and emerging adults. *Developmental Psychology*, 51,1395–1406.
- 41 Lund, T. J., Liang, B., Lincoln, B., White, A. E., Mousseau, A. M. D., Mejia Gomez, L. A., & Akins, E. (2022). Purpose in life among first-generation college students: Friends make a difference. *Youth*, 2(1), 12–22.
- 42 Burrow, A. L., Ratner, K., Porcelli, S., & Sumner, R. (2022). Does purpose grow here? Exploring 4-H as a context for cultivating youth purpose. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 37(4), 471–500.
- 43 Lincoln, B., White, A. E., Lund, T. J., Liang, B., Blustein, D. L., & Barnett, G. M. (2023). Moving from passion to purpose: A STEM-focused after-school program's influence on purpose outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 07435584231182137.
- 44 Ratner, K., Zhu, G., Li, Q., Estevez, M., & Burrow, A. L. (2023). Interacting with supportive adults predicts greater same-day psychosocial functioning among adolescents in a self-driven learning program. *Journal of Adolescence*, 95(4), 729–739.

- 45 Kiang, L., Malin, H., & Sandoz, A. (2020). Discovering identity and purpose in the classroom: Theoretical, empirical, and applied perspectives. *The Ecology of Purposeful Living Across the Lifespan: Developmental, Educational, and Social Perspectives*, 93–113.
- 46 Reeves, S. L., Henderson, M. D., Cohen, G. L., Seingut, R. R., Hirschi, Q., & Yeager, D. D. (2021). Psychological affordances help explain where a self-transcendent purpose intervention improves performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 120(1), 1.
- 47 Burrow A. L., O'Dell A. C., & Hill P. L. (2010). Profiles of a developmental asset: Youth purpose as a context for hope and well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39, 1265–1273.
- 48 Barber, C., Mueller, C. T., & Ogata, S. (2013). Volunteerism as purpose: Examining the long-term predictors of continued community engagement. *Educational Psychology*, 33(3), 314–333.
- 49 Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.) (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. National Academies Press.
- 50 Malin, H., Ballard, P. J., & Damon, W. (2015). Civic purpose: An integrated construct for understanding civic development in adolescence. *Human Development*, 58(2), 103–130.
- 51 Malin, H., Han, H., & Liauw, I. (2017). Civic purpose in late adolescence: Factors that prevent decline in civic engagement after high school. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(7), 1384.
- 52 Van Goethem, A., Van Hoof, A., Orobio de Castro, B., Van Aken, M., & Hart, D. (2014). The role of reflection in the effects of community service on adolescent development: A meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 85(6), 2114–2130.
- 53 Larson, R. W. (2020). Discovering the possible: How youth programs provide apprenticeships in purpose. *The Ecology of Purposeful Living Across the Lifespan: Developmental, Educational, and Social Perspectives*, 73–92.



UCLA
Center for
the Developing
Adolescent