

## This Is the Thing: About Life, Joy, and Owning Your Purpose

**Shane Jackson**

Greenleaf Book Group Press

(264pp)

979-888645287-7

*Rooted in positive psychology and wellness concepts, This Is the Thing is a supportive self-help text about finding meaning in one's life.*

Shane Jackson's purposeful self-help book *This Is the Thing* emphasizes connections between finding a sense of purpose and activities that create joy in one's work and personal lives.

Knowing that questions about what makes a person happy can feel grandiose, this book forwards accessible guidance to get at the real, vulnerable self-reflection needed to chart a more joyful, purpose-driven life. Limited views of happiness, it says, lead to empty cycles of craving and consumption. It breaks down how conscious and unconscious choices determine how life is lived and how the intentions behind a person's choices inform their sense of purpose.

The book suggests that short-term gains often lead to long-term regrets and suggests prioritizing a sense of legacy that is rooted in serving others. It also asserts that one's passions and strengths can change over time and encourages embracing such changes. It emphasizes the importance of relationships as part of the process of change and as a buffer to the challenges change presents. And it draws parallels between Jackson's personal experiences with stress and recovery in athletic pursuits and other kinds of personal growth, creating an embodied metaphor for how challenges lead to growth. A constructive parallel is made between the lack of recovery time as a source of injury in athletes and the lack of recovery from stress that plagues people who suffer burnout.

Organized into short, easy-to-digest chapters, the book's ideas are reinforced with relevant written exercises. These include guided questions and space to record important life events to discover what composes one's sense of joy. The exercises are also sequenced to reveal the elements of one's purpose—their passions, strengths, and legacy, connected to the overarching question "What gives you joy?" With its emphasis on finding balance, this is a text meant for active use, with focus on how even distribution of a person's needs keeps them steady. Because change is always part of balance, the book suggests, adjustments are a constant requirement.

Personal examples, as of Jackson training for a triathlon, are used to explain concepts like the difference between a comfort zone and a stress zone. Elsewhere, Jackson references his health-care company trusting their driving principles to make it through the challenges of COVID-19. Examples from others' lives are also included: In the section about strengths, an employee is coached to find an alternative path forward in his career rather than applying for a position that doesn't speak to his strengths.

While most of these stories are complementary to the book's points, some examples, as with the "Parable of the Engineer" in the legacy section, are superfluous, as the book makes an effective case for the related points without them. The book also draws from extant literature on positive psychology to support its arguments, including Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* and Arthur Brooks's *From Strength to Strength*, though it is not overreliant on such outside experts.

*This Is the Thing* is a logical self-help book for achieving joy through purposeful living and leaving a lasting impact on others.

RENÉE NICHOLSON (January 17, 2025)

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