

My Ikaigai

There's a Japanese phrase called *ikaigai*, which translates to *a person's sense of being, a reason for living*. It can be illustrated simply as an intersecting Venn diagram of your identity, ultimately allowing you to be a visionary in reinvigorating your purpose, forging your path towards self-awareness, and expanding your influence on your communities.

The first step in pursuing your *ikaigai* is *passion*. Growing up in San Diego, I was surrounded by the endless blue Pacific to our coast, the peaks of the Cuyamaca mountains as our neighbors, and canyon-filled deserts in our backyards. I have been a Girl Scout my whole life, constantly immersed in nature, often asking myself how I can constantly integrate eco-friendly actions into my daily life. Naturally, I was drawn to the sciences with a desire to understand its interconnectedness with and impacts on our people and planet. Seeing young activists like Xiye Batista and Greta Thunberg take initiative for the planet allowed me to see the potential of our power. My passion will change the world.

Next is a *vocation*: *What are you good at?* Interning with an environmental justice organization gave me the opportunity to fully immerse myself in climate advocacy and team leadership. Taking on the Youth4Climate Media Lead allowed me to combine my enthusiasm for the movement with my willingness to engage in discussion with my colleagues, my ability to communicate climate science to adapt to a variety of audiences, and teamwork skills in utilizing our various perspectives to find sustainable solutions for the planet. Being able to connect with so many other like-minded youth who are passionate about environmental justice is so motivating. Seeing how our efforts translate to victories is incredibly empowering. My vocation will change the world.

You can then take a step back and connect your passions to power in the external world to find your *mission*. Faced with systemic racism and redlining, low-income communities of color bear the brunt of the climate crisis, despite contributing the least to emissions. Both the people and the planet require renewable resources and clean energy to mitigate and tackle the root of the issue. We need to combine our organizational efforts towards collective action to foster real change. My mission will change the world.

Discovering the intersections of all of these pieces, allows one to discover their final piece: *profession*. In pursuing environmental science, I plan to indulge in a path of ecological discovery to gain a deeper understanding of our earth and work with individuals who share the same enthusiasm for climate as I do. We can achieve our common aspirations of climate justice through this collective power and by combining our perspectives, experiences, and curiosity to formulate an equitable, sustainable, and ultimately liveable planet. My profession will change the world.

Just as the climate movement is an intersection of environmentalism and social justice, *ikaigai* is a mosaic that allows me to reflect on the connectivity and complexity of your experiences and outlook on life's opportunities. My ikaigai will change the world.