# Why Are You in College?

We know that college is not mandatory—like kindergarten through 12th grade is—and it is not free. You have made a choice to commit several years of hard work to earn a degree or credential. In some cases, you may have had to work really hard to get here by getting good grades and test scores in high school and earning money to pay for tuition and fees and other expenses. Now you have more at stake and a clearer path to achieving your goals, but you still need to be able to answer the question.

To help answer this question, consider the following questioning technique called “The Five Whys” that was originally created by Sakichi Toyoda, a Japanese inventor, whose strategy was used by the Toyota Motor Company to find the underlying cause of a problem. While your decision to go to college is not a problem, the exercise is helpful to uncover your underlying purpose for enrolling in college.

The process starts with a “Why” question that you want to know the answer to. Then, the next four “Why” questions use a portion of the previous answer to help you dig further into the answer to the original question. Here is an example of “The Five Whys,” with the first question as “Why are you in college?” The answers and their connection to the next “Why” question have been underlined so you can see how the process works.

While the example is one from a student who knows what she wants to major in, this process does not require that you have a specific degree or career in mind. In fact, if you are undecided, then you can explore the “why” of your indecision. Is it because you have lots of choices, or is it because you are not sure what you really want out of college?

# The Five Whys in Action

Why are you in college?   
I am in college to *earn a degree in speech pathology*.

Why do you want to earn a degree in speech pathology?   
I want to be able to help people who have trouble speaking.

Why do you want to help people who have trouble speaking?   
I believe that people who have trouble speaking deserve a life they want.

Why do you feel it is important that people who have trouble speaking deserve a life they want?   
I feel they often have needs that are overlooked and do not get treated equally.

Why do you want to use your voice to help these people live a life they deserve?

I feel it is my purpose to help others achieve their full potential despite having physical challenges.

Do you see how this student went beyond a standard answer about the degree that she wants to earn to connecting her degree to an overall purpose that she has to help others in a specific way? Had she not been instructed to delve a little deeper with each answer, it is likely that she would not have so quickly articulated that deeper purpose. And that understanding of “why” you are in college—beyond the degree you want or the job you envision after graduation—is key to staying motivated through what will most likely be some challenging times

How else does knowing your “why,” or your deeper reason for being in college, help you? According to Angela Duckworth (2016), a researcher on grit—what it takes for us to dig in deep when faced with adversity and continue to work toward our goal—knowing your purpose can be the booster to grit that can help you succeed. Other research has found that people who have a strong sense of purpose are less likely to experience stress and anxiety (Burrown, 2013) and more likely to be satisfied in their jobs (Weir, 2013). Therefore, being able to answer the question “Why are you in college?” not only satisfies the person asking, but it also has direct benefits to your overall well-being.

# ACTIVITY

Try “The Five Whys” yourself below to help you get a better sense of your purpose and to give you a worthy answer for anyone who asks you “Why are you in college?”

## The Five Whys: Your Turn

Complete the following statements as best as you can, then save this document, and submit it to the Practice Written Assignment.

Why are you in college?

I am in college to study course about computer science

Why do you interested in comuter science?

I got the first computer in my 6 years old from my dad, study course about computer is one of my dream.

Why do you make study computer course as your dream?

I love new things, data science is one of the computer technology which is widely use in a data booming 21st centry.

Why do you think data science is widely use in 21st centry?

I think in morden society, work need efficiently and proper data processing which is make us yield twice the result with half the effort.

Why do you think study data science make work efficiently?

I like work-life balance life, a proper data processing makes people save a lot of time, we can spend more spare time with family and love ones. Data science program is a shortcut to learn how to process data effiently.

References:

* Duckworth, A. (2016). Grit: The Power and Passion of Perseverance. NY: Simon & Schuster.
* Burrow, A.L. & Hill, P.L. (2013). Derailed by diversity? Purpose buffers the relationship between ethnic composition on trains and passenger negative mood. Personality and Psychology Bulletin, 39 (12), 1610-1619. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213499377.
* Weir, K. (2013). More than job satisfaction: Psychologists are discovering what makes work meaningful--and how to create value in any job. American Psychological Association, 44 (11), 39.