

Helping Clients Identify Purpose, Meaning, and Motivation

Syed Hassan Abdullah

ICBM-SBE, Hyderabad

ABSTRACT: This session explored how career professionals can help clients uncover purpose, meaning, and motivation through culturally sensitive approaches. Using tools such as narrative techniques, value assessments, and the Ikigai model, the discussion emphasized trust-building, reflection, and aligning personal identity with life and career choices for deeper, long-term fulfillment.

This session explored the complex and culturally sensitive process of guiding clients in discovering their sense of purpose, meaning, and motivation. Drawing from global perspectives, the session emphasized that purpose is not a one-size-fits-all concept but a dynamic and evolving integration of personal identity, values, culture, and lived experiences. Key objectives included defining purpose across cultures, identifying client motivations, and promoting inclusive global practices in career counseling. The session began by emphasizing why purpose matters: it enhances focus, drives motivation, aligns careers with values, and supports overall well-being. Concepts such as meaning (what feels significant), purpose (what one contributes), and motivation (what drives action) were explained as interlinked and shaped by personal history and sociocultural contexts.

Cultural dimensions of purpose were illustrated through contrasting values in individualistic societies (which emphasize personal achievement), collectivist societies (which focus on family and social roles), and spiritual communities (where purpose is

linked to faith), and economically constrained contexts (where purpose may stem from survival or financial stability). The presenter shared several effective techniques for helping clients uncover purpose, including career story interviews, strength and value assessments, life timeline exercises, guided journaling, and the use of frameworks such as the Ikigai model and motivational interviewing.

Cross-cultural case examples from the USA, India, Japan, and Nigeria illustrated how different clients define and pursue purpose—ranging from personal passion to entrepreneurship to social obligation. Participants were encouraged to share success stories and real-world strategies during the session, fostering collective reflection and knowledge exchange. The session concluded by reinforcing the importance of being culturally respectful and client-centered, supporting individuals in aligning their actions with values through small, consistent steps.

This session emphasized that purpose discovery is not a linear path but an ongoing process requiring empathy, deep listening, and contextual awareness from career

professionals. The shared insights affirmed the need for culturally adaptable, psychologically safe, and reflective practices in modern career guidance.