

# **The War Within Us**

**Learn Acceptance, Build  
Resilience, & Create  
Work:Life Harmony**

**Steve M. Beauchamp**

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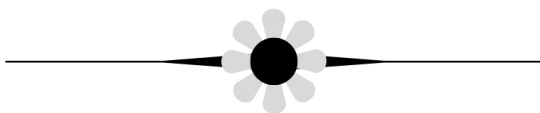
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*To my younger self and all of the other leaders out there  
who want to find work:life harmony*



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## **Preface**

Since 2006, I have been a leadership coach, project manager, and quality professional for three major organizations in both the Corporate and Public sectors; Kraft Foods/Cadbury (now known as Mondelez), Starbucks Coffee & Tea Manufacturing, and King County Metro Transit. Sometimes throughout this book, I will need to use a fictional name to protect an individual's privacy. Like my first book, this book will once again take you on a personal journey and open up a new perspective on how to lead yourself and others, using the Work:Life Harmony principle.

Let's talk about the definition of Work:Life Harmony. It is about being able to lead one life. It's not about feeling like you have to have two wholly disconnected lives that you trade between and try to find the perfect balancing act. It's about allowing yourself to find a job and/or a role that feels like a part of you. Whether the activities are ones you get paid for or not, it will help you discover an approach where you don't have to feel like one person at work

and another at home. Find peace from doing those things and foster harmony between your worlds.

In February 2022, I changed the course of my future. I began to work on my first manuscript, which was published as *Always Improving: Lessons from the samurai*. In that book, I provide a framework to start your journey by following the eight virtues of the Bushidō code. You can take simple steps to do this for yourself, and there is a Journal & Workbook to aid your development journey.

### **Work:Life Harmony Kamon**

One of the things I introduced in my first book was the kamon (家紋), which in Japan, was used to represent the different clans and daimyo. The word kamon is interpreted as a family crest or logo and describes one's lineage, bloodline, and status. It is an unspoken rule that you never use the kamon of another clan or family. It carries a sign of disrespect to do this.

The Work:Life Harmony Kamon symbolizes my passion and life direction. It's an eight-petal flower. At the center are the kanji characters for chōwa (調和): a personal search for natural balance and

harmony. On all the petals surrounding chōwa are the kanji characters for each of the eight virtues of Bushidō (Justice, Courage, Compassion, Respect, Integrity, Honor, Loyalty, and Self-Control).

**Fig 1: Work:Life Harmony Kamon**



### **The Ikigai Connection**

A critical piece of my journey to find Work:Life Harmony included the discovery of ikigai (生きがい) and a desire to nurture it. You may have heard

of ikigai being a Venn Diagram with; What the world needs, What you are good at, What you can be paid for, and What you love to do around the outside circles with ikigai at the center. However, this is not what ikigai means from a Japanese cultural point of view.

Ikigai is a Japanese word made up of two different words. Ikiru: “to live (in a daily sense)”; and gai: “value or worth.” When you combine the two words, you end up with "what makes our everyday life worth living." And when you compare that meaning to the popularized Venn Diagram, they can seem quite different.

The Venn Diagram tends to direct you toward looking for a big goal or life ambition. Although that is important for everyone to consider, it is not the only consideration that matters. At one point in my life, I expected to find a sweet spot or singular ambition to answer my inner desires, but I’ve found understanding my ikigai has shown me another path.

The last two years of studying ikigai and learning what it means from a Japanese cultural perspective have taught me what makes your life worth living shows you a path to creating Work:Life Harmony. If

you want to learn more about discovering your ikigai, please contact me. I would be honored to have the chance to help you with this. But, we will not cover this in detail in this book.

## **Fig 2: Not how you find ikigai**

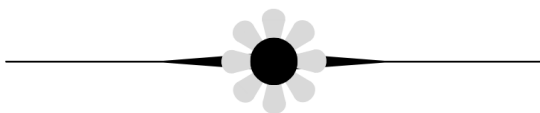
### **Lessons From The Samurai**

The books I choose to write and share with the



world are another crucial part of my Work:Life Harmony journey. Much of my research has included studying and learning from the samurai

culture and traditions. It has added so much to my life that I feel compelled to share it. You will see threads of that learning throughout this book. And you are holding this book in your hands right now because of that obligation. If you take the time to understand what the samurai have taught each other for centuries, it can help you find your path to Work:Life Harmony.



## Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote: “All men are bred for war.” So what kind of war are you going to fight? Will you constantly fight against everything around you, or will you fight against the war within you?

Learning is a lifelong process if you allow yourself to do so. No one will force you to learn; it is something that you must find the motivation for internally. Lifelong learning is a foundational aspect of who I am and something I encourage others to do. Whether you find yourself in a leadership position or not, learning is vital to our survival. It keeps us from becoming obsolete. Occasionally circumstances shake our foundation to let us know we need to do some internal work. If that has happened, there is nothing wrong with you; it just means that you need to work on accepting situations for what they are: Opportunities to learn.

If you are in a position of influence but people aren't willing to listen, you have a problem. If you are leading, but no one is following you, you are

simply going for a walk. If you don't see the importance of learning how to follow, you won't be able to inspire others to do this. It can be equally difficult to lead yourself if you ignore this truth. The place to start? Your core values and strengths.

Core values are the traits or qualities that are not just worthwhile; they represent your priority, deeply held beliefs, and fundamental driving force. They are the heartbeat of what makes you who you are and what you stand for in the world.

“In the early 2000s, something groundbreaking occurred in the social sciences: Scientists discovered a common language of 24 character strengths that make up what's best about our personality. Everyone possesses all 24 character strengths in different degrees, so each person has a truly unique character strengths profile.” - VIA Institute

Understanding what your primary character strengths are will lead you to understand the core values behind them better. After I took some time to explore more about the why behind the actions I took and the beliefs I had, things changed.

Truly taking the time to understand and develop your strengths around your core values is one of the

best ways to learn how to follow well. It will also give you insight into how to lead well. When you think about your core values, are they compelling enough for you to devote your life, time, and energy to? Do you even know what core values and strengths you have? If you aren't 100% sure, or even if you are, I would recommend taking the survey by using the following link:

**<http://stevebeauchamp.pro.viasurvey.org>**

It is a free survey, “Values in Action Character Strengths,” and will take 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey outcome provides you with the list of the 24 character strengths ranked in order of importance to you as an individual, and the results will be available without any cost to you. If you'd like to get more details on your results, you can purchase the upgrade – but you don't need to. I tell my clients that the top 10 that show up for you are the ones you could think of as the most prominent in their life.

It's interesting that the place to start your discovery of your ikigai also starts with your core values and strengths. From that understanding, you can begin to find things you can look forward to, even if there are challenges around you. Finding the

things we can hold on to is essential to lead ourselves well. When we lose sight of those things, mental exhaustion can take root, and we can struggle to find meaning in our daily life. Having both your core values and hope for the future can better provide you with meaning for the roles that you have in your life. But, by far, your most crucial part is leading yourself.

### **How I learned to walk alone**

For as long as I can remember, I was not the one that was picked first for sports, selected for special assignments, or asked to step into an opportunity that would likely turn into a promotion. So, I haven't had much handed to me in that way. But, I have always tried to be self-reliant and think outside the box, preferring to work smarter, not harder. One of the ways I have done this is to focus on my personal growth and development.

Twelve years ago, I learned a valuable lesson. I need more than just thinking about being outside the box to make the most of the opportunities available. I needed to take a front seat in making this happen to improve my situation. No one was going to do it for me. When I wanted to level up my continuous improvement skills, I found the money to pay for my training. When I desired to learn more

about being a better project manager, I paid for myself to go back to school and get my Project Management degree.

What makes some of this difficult is when you go back to school after age 35 or look for professional development opportunities, it can feel lonely. Only some have an internal desire to learn and develop themselves continually. It can be scary to make changes if your family and friends do not aspire to a similar lifestyle change. But I've discovered that when you lean into these types of opportunities for self-development, you will find like-minded people. They will be a support system for you as you are walking your path.

Learning to walk alone and practicing self-leadership has been a passion of mine and a large part of my journey. More people need to talk about a love of learning and the importance of self-development. There is a parallel between this idea of self-development and how the samurai lived.

### **Kaizen (改善)**

The samurai knew that no matter how long they had been training and practicing, daily devotion was necessary to find slight improvements and to

remain focused. In essence, they embodied continuous improvement and the idea of kaizen.

Kaizen is a Japanese management philosophy often interpreted as “continuous improvement” in the Western world. It's commonly linked to Japan's post-World War II economic recovery when quality improvement efforts were introduced by W. Edwards Deming & Joseph Juran.

But this isn't just about business; the kaizen philosophy, according to Masaaki Imai, “assumes that our way of life — be it our working life, social life, or our home life — deserves to be constantly improved.” What I appreciate most about the concept is that it can simultaneously be profoundly personal and business-focused.

When I think about the path that I am on, I incorporate this idea of kaizen into my daily life. Being in tune with my authentic self (core values and strengths) and combining it with the concept of kaizen creates a fantastic model for living. The samurai undoubtedly understood both of these concepts and practiced them regularly.

## **The Life of Miyamoto Musashi**

Miyamoto Musashi was one of the most prolific swordsmen and calligraphers of the 16th & 17th Centuries. He was known to be a rōnin (masterless) and a Buddhist warrior monk. At the end of his life, he wrote about walking alone. He wrote 21 different precepts or principles that he dedicated to his disciple Terao Magonojo captured in a text referred to as “The Dokkōdō (独行道).” You may recognize these kanji characters from the front cover of this book. Dokkōdō, when interpreted in English, means The Art of Walking Alone. If you look at the kanji characters individually, 独 hito - single or alone; 行 yuku - going or journey; 道 do - the way or teaching. Musashi wrote this text while living in solitude in a cave - Reigandō (霊巖洞). If you study the kanji characters of Reigandō, you can interpret them as a soul or spirit living in a hollowed-out cavity of a rock. Reigandō was a cave deep in the mountains, surrounded by dense, lush forests, rocks, and waterfalls. Such a setting offered a suitable backdrop to have written such a text.

When Musashi wrote these precepts, he didn't have much more to prove to himself or the world. He was undefeated as a swordsman in both 1-on-1 combat and full-scale wars. He was nearing the end

of his life, and he knew it. He was respected as a swordsman, calligrapher, poet, and philosopher and had already written the book that we now know as *The Book of Five Rings*. He composed these precepts as a reflection on life moments before his death. He passed away one week later.

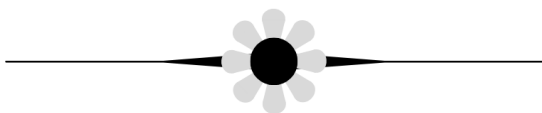
I have learned a lot about myself by studying these 21 precepts. They go beyond the study of martial arts and are widely applicable to Work:Life Harmony. It took years to uncover, but the only thing that stopped me from succeeding was myself. My thoughts and actions had a more significant impact on my life than any barrier put up by someone else. It was me that got in my way and stopped the forward progress that I was seeking. There's a war going on daily within me—the constant pull from sitting around and being lazy to getting up and working toward daily improvement. When I reflect on the situations and circumstances where I don't show up representing my authentic self, it is usually because I'm focused on the wrong things. I fight against people around me instead of the war inside me.

Let's revisit the questions from the beginning of the introduction:

What kind of war are you going to fight? Will you constantly fight against everything around you, or will you fight against the war within you?

## **Action Steps**

1. Complete the VIA survey and learn more about your top 10 core values and strengths.
2. Make a short list of things you look forward to; this can be a regular vacation, an upcoming major life event like a wedding or the birth of a child, or even an accomplishment like climbing a mountain.
3. After completing the first two exercises, think about your role in leading yourself and how important it is for you to lead well. No one will do this for you, so take the lead.



## Chapter 1: One Simple Thing to Live Happier

*“Don’t seek for everything to happen as you wish it would, but rather wish that everything happens as it actually will – then your life will flow well.”*

*- Epictetus, Enchiridion, 8*

In the past, I would often have black-and-white conversations. Getting into some discussions with people that would become heated because of my reluctance to see shades of gray was common. Sometimes that still happens, but I recognize those times more easily now and can quickly correct them. For example, going back about ten years, when working for Starbucks Coffee & Tea, I had a boss with the managerial courage to tell me that he saw something in me.

It was towards the end of the summer and our annual review time. “Joe” set up a meeting with me in his office, and we talked for about an hour. We discussed some projects and initiatives I had led

over the past year. We discussed how there were opportunities to adjust on all those items despite the favorable outcomes—In essence, looking for Continuous Improvement opportunities within our work.

The part of the conversation that sticks with me even today is when we got to interpersonal communication and relationships. I had a blind spot that no one had ever talked to me about, even though it was there. Joe leaned in toward me. “I’ve noticed that sometimes you can get frustrated with others because you see things so black and white. Then you show that emotion quickly, and it’s obvious. Learning how to control that emotion and turning it into a good outcome rather than a negative one will serve you well in your career.”

What I didn’t see in myself was the frustration with progress or the lack thereof on different projects that were obvious to others. As a result, it would bring down the morale of those around me, including teammates, project team members, & leadership. My black-and-white view, although helpful at times, wasn’t helping me meet people where they were at. I was thinking about how the circumstance was affecting me, and I wasn’t doing well with accepting situations for what they were.

## **How That One Conversation Changed Me**

Since that conversation with Joe, I've focused my fight on myself and am working on the concept of acceptance. Learning that situations are neither positive nor negative, but I attach the meaning to them, was the first step. My old thinking would connect the outcome to a problem before understanding what was happening. My snap judgment would lead me to behaviors and actions that would visibly show others my frustration.

I wouldn't say I've mastered my feelings and my outward expression of frustration. But, I am much more able to notice when those times are happening or about to happen and can course-correct them. There are now more instances of accepting situations as they are and staying curious about what makes them unique. Staying curious has given me some relief from the frustrated state I used to live in and helps me remain more connected to my authentic self.

Building this competency of acceptance has allowed me to feel much more confident in my ability to lead a happy life, which leaves me feeling more fulfilled. I don't enjoy getting into arguments with people, which can often leave me feeling a sense of guilt. When those moments of frustration

are caught in real-time, it leaves me with a much better view of myself. It also avoids the guilt associated with those times when frustration comes out. Showing up this way for others makes my relationships with them much more pleasant. As a beautiful byproduct of this, we can also get much more work done and accomplish much more than before.

### **Are You Staying Connected to Yourself?**

Are you hoping to live a fulfilled and happy life? Fulfillment and happiness can be different for everyone. What one person finds fulfilling or joyful will differ from the next. That's okay. It's what makes the world a beautiful place. But, I'm sure very few of us are secretly hoping for a life unfulfilled and to get to the end of it all, only to be bitter and empty. So, here's an important truth: Don't strive to be a carbon copy of someone else. We are all unique, and we are all working toward our purpose.

But just because we are all unique doesn't automatically mean that we will see that purpose come true. Consider that when we go against who we are at our core, we ignore our calling and deviate from our authentic selves. This, in turn, will prevent us from seeing that unique purpose come to life.

One of the best ways to stay connected to your authentic self is by accepting the truth—acceptance of yourself, your surroundings, and your current situation in life. Without acceptance, we risk trying to go against the nature of things. Miyamoto Musashi, a prolific samurai, philosopher, and poet in the 16th and 17th Centuries, wrote about this in his final manuscript, The Dokkōdō, right before he passed away. The Dokkōdō was a collection of 21 principles that Musashi instructed his students and fellow samurai to follow and pass on to others to live an honorable life.

**Dokkōdō Principle #1: yo yo no michi o  
somuku koto nashi (世世の道お背くことなし)**

**English translation: Do not go against the  
way of the human world that is perpetuated  
from generation to generation.**

In this first principle, Musashi says we need to accept ourselves and what is happening around us and not deny being whom we are meant to become. To learn acceptance and learn to take everything the way it is. The samurai practiced *arugamama* (在るがまま), a Japanese concept that emphasizes the naturalness of feelings and the acceptance of one's emotions as they are, non-judgmentally. Let a

situation be what it is and not attach any other meaning.

### **The Challenge of Acceptance**

This can be a challenging thing to do. It requires practice and discipline to accept a situation in this manner. But, like any other skill, hobby, or activity, the more intention you put behind practicing something, the better you will get at it. But, practicing arugamama is a skill I have found helpful.

In my 30's, I was striving to be something and someone I wasn't. I was working in a job that didn't completely resonate with who I was, I wasn't participating in the hobbies I enjoyed, and was living in a relationship that wasn't healthy. That left me feeling hollow and not at all my true self. Deciding to change and embracing my true self changed everything. The hollow feeling faded, and experiencing hope for my future became a new reality.

You might think, "So, how do you live with arugamama?" Well, in short, learn to practice self-reflection. To look inside and ask, "Am I embracing my surroundings and authentic self?"

The Japanese concept of hansei is a self-reflective practice that encourages you to make subtle changes in your life. But it isn't only a set of questions you ask, although it is a big part of it. Hansei works if you think about the questions from the perspective of opportunities for change. Admitting that you have a gap in your life is the first step. Then you view it with a sense of emotional connection. If you aren't connected to the fact that there's a gap, and you are not invested in closing it, you won't ever do it. When you are emotionally connected, you will look for opportunities to improve.

The message here is: Rather than trying to go against your human nature, recognize it's much easier to embrace it. Looking inside to understand your authentic self is the way for you to be able to embrace your true nature. It's going to be a lot of work. It will take discipline, accountability, and dedication.

## Hansei Questions

- What did I say I would do today that I didn't?
- What did I actually do instead?
- What am I proud of that I did today?
- What am I not proud of?
- How did I lead people?
- How did I follow others?
- If I could do today over again, what would I do differently?
- Looking to tomorrow, based on what I learned today, what will I do differently?

After integrating a hansei practice, keeping the idea of Work:Life Harmony at the forefront of the mind becomes natural. It's about fitting work into life rather than trying to fit life into work. Some people's lives are constructed so that they live to work. However, there is a better alternative: Constructing your life in such a way to work so that life can be truly lived. Take the time to regularly reflect on current situations, and ask: "Is the work I am choosing to get paid for leaving me feeling empty or fulfilled?"

### **Don't Live to Work, Work So You Can Live**

I have had jobs that didn't leave me with a great feeling inside. I was sacrificing my health and

happiness to be devoted to the job. At the end of the day, if the work doesn't support me feeling more connected to myself, it is time to look for something new. I strive to find harmony and do my best to remove things preventing me from feeling that connection.

The Japanese kanji character for harmony is wa (和), which can be interpreted as seeking harmony and peace in the world around us. I have been writing this kanji at the end of my morning journal entries for the last year. It has reminded me to strive to find harmony in whatever situation every day. Over the years since my conversation with Joe, finding little ways like this to remind myself to accept things as they are has been helpful. It reminds me to consider what is in my direct control and which is not. The things I have the power to change to find more harmony are the things that get done. Where there is no direct power to change, shifting my perspective to change my thinking is the goal. There are a few things in the world I have direct control over. The most important: My response to a situation.

Through this practice, I can process my frustration with more ease than before. Of course, I still get it wrong; this is a challenging process. But

that doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement each day.

I will leave you with a quote from Ken Mogi, a leading researcher on neuroscience and ikigai: "Accepting oneself as one often involves releasing yourself, especially when there is an illusory self, which you hold desirable. You need to let go of the illusory self, to accept yourself to be happy."

Acceptance of things as they are can give much insight into protecting your mind against seeking the wrong path. Staying true to yourself will better equip you to resist those temptations. What will you do to build more Work:Life Harmony for yourself?

## Action Step

Refer to the hansei questions earlier in the chapter.

1. How might you incorporate these into the daily or weekly routine you have for yourself?
2. Over the next day or two, commit to reflecting on these questions. Then, write down the answers to these questions and look at how you could improve your current self.

**Special Note:** One thing I decided to start doing differently was to add a new hobby into my life last year, learning Japanese calligraphy or shōdō. At the end of each chapter you will see my artwork for the precept covered in the chapter. You will also see my samurai signature on the bottom left corner, suteibu (守貞武). Interpreted in English my name means protector and warrior of truth.

世世の道お背く  
ことなし





# About the Author

**Steve Beauchamp** is a Certified Ikigai Tribe coach, a lover of nature, an aspiring mountain guide, and a Continuous Improvement mentor & practitioner holding both a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt and a degree in Project Management. His private coaching practice aims to teach and coach the concepts of building Work:Life Harmony through Japanese wisdom & philosophy. By building that harmony, he has helped his clients remove barriers to their success and achieve a transformation they didn't know was possible.



## **Thank you for reading my book**

I appreciate your feedback, and I love hearing comments about my writing. I invite you to share your thoughts and input to make the next version of this book and my future books better.

Please leave a helpful review on Amazon letting me and other readers know what you thought of the book.

Thank you so much,  
Steve M. Beauchamp