



Ikigai and the theory of self-determination are two complementary approaches that highlight key factors in individual motivation, fulfillment, and well-being. The theory of self-determination, developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, posits that human motivation relies on the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social belonging. When these needs are met, the individual is more inclined to engage in activities that are intrinsically rewarding and contribute to their overall well-being.

The need for autonomy refers to the feeling of being the originator of one's own choices and actions, of acting in accordance with one's values and interests. In the quest for Ikigai, autonomy plays a central role, as it allows the individual to freely explore their passions, talents, and deep aspirations. When one discovers and pursues their Ikigai, they act with a sense of authenticity and freedom, guided by their internal compass rather than by external pressures or social mandates.

Take for example Sophie, a young woman passionate about photography. For a long time, she put aside her passion to follow a more conventional and secure path, meeting the expectations of those around her. However, by exploring her Ikigai, she became aware of the importance of autonomy in her life choices. She then decided to embark on a career change to become an independent photographer, aligning her career with her true aspirations. By acting autonomously, Sophie found profound meaning and intrinsic motivation in her work.

The need for competence refers to the feeling of personal effectiveness, mastery, and progress in the activities one undertakes. The theory of self-determination emphasizes that individuals are naturally inclined to seek optimal challenges, which allow them to develop their skills and feel accomplished. From the perspective of Ikigai, cultivating one's talents

and strengths is essential to nurture the feeling of competence and find lasting fulfillment in one's activities.

Consider the journey of Jean, a cooking enthusiast who found his Ikigai in culinary art. By training with great chefs and perfecting his techniques, he developed a growing sense of competence and mastery in his field. Each successful new dish, each positive feedback from his guests, boosts his confidence in his abilities and his motivation to excel. By cultivating his culinary expertise, Jean feeds his need for competence and finds profound meaning in expressing his talent.

Finally, the need for social belonging refers to the desire to feel connected to others, to maintain positive relationships, and to contribute to a community. The theory of self-determination stresses the importance of social bonds and mutual support in personal fulfillment. In the quest for Ikigai, finding one's place in the world and making a contribution to society is an essential dimension in making one's existence meaningful.

Take the example of Anna, a nurse who found her Ikigai in caring for terminally ill people. By forging authentic bonds with her patients and their families, she feeds her need for belonging and feels deeply connected to her work. Each moment of presence, each act of compassion, strengthens her sense of being part of a caring and supportive community. By contributing to the well-being of others in their most vulnerable moments, Anna finds profound meaning and intrinsic motivation in her profession.

The theory of self-determination and Ikigai converge in their vision of human fulfillment as resulting from the satisfaction of the fundamental needs of autonomy, competence, and social belonging. When these three pillars are present, the individual is more inclined to fully engage in activities that resonate with their values, talents, and deep aspirations. The discovery and pursuit of one's Ikigai then become a natural path towards a life rich in meaning, intrinsic motivation, and enduring well-being.

By incorporating the principles of self-determination theory into their search for Ikigai, individuals have a powerful framework for cultivating their personal and professional fulfillment. By ensuring to nurture their need for autonomy, developing their skills, and forging authentic connections with others, they create the conditions conducive to the emergence and expression of their *raison d'être*. Thus, Ikigai and the theory of self-determination mutually reinforce each other, offering a valuable compass to navigate towards a fulfilled and meaningful existence.

Key takeaways:

1. Ikigai and the theory of self-determination are two complementary approaches that highlight key factors in individual motivation, fulfillment, and well-being.

2. The theory of self-determination posits that human motivation relies on the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social belonging.

3. The need for autonomy refers to the feeling of being the originator of one's own choices and actions, of acting in accordance with one's values and interests. In the quest for Ikigai, autonomy allows the individual to freely explore their passions, talents, and deep aspirations.

4. The need for competence refers to the feeling of personal effectiveness, mastery, and progress in the activities one undertakes. Cultivating one's talents and strengths is essential to nurture the feeling of competence and find lasting fulfillment in one's activities.

5. The need for social belonging refers to the desire to feel connected to others, to maintain positive relationships, and to contribute to a community. Finding one's place in the world and making a contribution to society is an essential dimension in making one's existence meaningful.

6. When the three fundamental needs (autonomy, competence, and social belonging) are met, the individual is more inclined to fully engage in activities that resonate with their values, talents, and deep aspirations.

7. By incorporating the principles of self-determination theory into their search for Ikigai, individuals have a powerful framework for cultivating their personal and professional fulfillment.