

## ***Linking Spa and wellness practice with theory: The case of Ikigai?***

**Jerneja Lešnik, PhD**

**College for Catering and Tourism Maribor, Slovenia**

Roughly, the Japanese word Ikigai consists of two words, *iki* (to live) and *gai* (reason). Even though there is no exact English translation, Ikigai represents a *concept*, roughly meaning 'to live a purposeful life worth living' (Perry, 2018).

Mogi (2018) describes five pillars of Ikigai:

1. **Starting small** (waking up early, being humble, working diligently and executing every step of your work to perfection, recognising the richness of small advancements)
2. **Releasing yourself** (accept yourself for who you are, release your past and present)
3. **Harmony and sustainability** (the social element of Ikigai, referring to being comfortable and in harmony with your role in your family, job, and society; reservation and self-restraint is of primary importance)
4. **The joy of little things** (enjoying everyday things and events)
5. **Being in the here and now** (paying attention to the multitude of sensory experiences and small things you encounter in life, being mindful and appreciating the present)

In this regard, Mogi (2018) describes Ikigai as a cognitive and behavioural hub, around which various life habits and value systems are organised. Ikigai can be used in different contexts of life, being applied to small everyday things as well as big goals and achievements. It is often represented by the Venn diagram, combining one's *passion* (discovering what you love and what you are good at), *mission* (linking out on what you love with what does the world need), *vocation* (connecting what does the world needs with what you are paid to do) and *profession* (what you are good at and what you are paid to do).



Contemporary applications of Ikigai include clinical practice, wellbeing training and career guidance (Kotera, Kaluzeviciute, Gulcan, McEwan and Chamberlain, 2021).

In the context of Spa and wellness, the concept can be used at least in three different ways for three different stakeholders and beneficiaries. **Firstly**, the concept is useful for meditation practitioners, yoga instructors and/or forest bathing guides. Ikigai can be incorporated in meditation, physical and mindfulness exercises and/or forest bathing walks, where it can fuel the contents substantially. Evidence suggests several benefits of Ikigai on improved quality of life and longevity (Dayman, 2020). Psychologically, Ikigai is important for developing one's sense of goal attainability, self-understanding and problem-solving skills (Kotera et al., 2021). **Secondly**, the concept is useful for HR professionals, helping them link the needs of a company and the employee. This way, the goals of both parties can be achieved. The employees should be slotted into their roles by following a simple Ikigai approach and a three-step process: the employee loves the role and finds it enjoyable; the employee is good at it or wants to be good at the task assigned to him; the company finds value in the activity or derivatives of the employees so that no single party is a loss. (Gupta, n.d.). **Thirdly**, the concept is useful for VET providers and educators for the pre-working life of future skilled and competent employees in workplaces in Spas and wellnesses. All four Ikigai-centred questions seem relevant for navigating between our students' competencies and skills relevant for the labor market: a) What do they love? b) What are they good at? c) What the world needs? d) What they could be paid for? Equally, the concept is useful for building the resilience and physical and mental health of all parties involved in the education of our future generations.

Literature:

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